SHIFTING REALITIES:
UNREAL SPACES AND REAL HISTORY
IN RUSHDIE, SWIFT, AND WINTERSON

by

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Introduction

The future lies ahead like a glittering city, but like the cities of the desert disappears when approached. In certain lights it is easy to see the towers and the domes, even the people going to and fro. We speak of it with longing and love. The future. *But the city is a fake. The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky.*

Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*

Following the traumas of World War II, colonialism, and entering a nuclear age when it sometimes seems, in the words of *Waterland*'s Price, that "the only important thing about history [is that] it's probably about to end," it is perhaps no wonder that so many postmodern novels treat reality as something magical or unreal, where past, present, and future alike contain elements of the marvelous (Swift 7). The future, at least, resists accurate representation—conjecture is necessary to describe something that has not yet happened, and speculative fiction is always, technically, unreal. According to Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, the present is also difficult to discern properly: "the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems," but when you are too close to the movie screen of the present, "it inevitably seems more and more incredible" (Rushdie, *MC* 189). Applying the same degree of unreality and uncertainty to the past, however, has ramifications beyond future speculation or present disorientation. Past events are just that: passed. Allegedly set in stone, recorded as history,

the past has degree of finality and reality that the future and present lack. It happened, after all.

But the past is also a frequent object of fantastic revision. The overtly fantastical histories of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Graham Swift's *Waterland,* and Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* each takes place in a historically and regionally specific setting (Post-independence India, the Fens during WWII, and Restoration England, respectively), and the plots and themes within the novels deal closely with the historical events and figures of those settings. Their magical realist presentation of the events of recorded history alters and interprets those events in the context of a world that is both real and unreal. Specifically, their manipulation of the spaces of history reveals previously ignored facets of the structures behind the historical narratives that uphold centralized sources of power. The insertion of magical and unreal spaces into factual, historical settings disrupts our perception of the smooth integrity of historical truth, and allows these novels to resist the dominating effects of space controlled by oppressive forces, as when Saleem Sinai's telepathy makes the geographical space of the newly-formed country of India into a magical and uncontrollable space separate from a manifestly political realm.

Henri Lefebvre's theories on space in the *Production of Space* offer further insight on this politicized view of space. For Lefebvre, space is never merely an empty area or geometrical field, something vacuous to be filled by matter and bodies. Rather, space is the politically-charged product of social interactions, produced and controlled by those who dictate the social practices that can take place within it. Referring to these "social" spaces, Lefebvre writes, "they correspond to a specific use of that space, and

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hence to a social practice that they express and constitute" (Lefebvre 16). Space, then, is brought into being by the actions of political entities to achieve specific goals, and is perpetuated by the spatial practices (habits and actions that occur in space) that institute it, as those practices are simultaneously facilitated by the spaces in which they take place. As the "outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others" through its form and the social rules that arise from that form (73). Thus, "*(Social) space is a (social) product*" that has "taken on . . . a sort of reality of its own," since it initially "serves as a tool of thought and of action [by suggesting and producing practices] in addition to being . . . a means of control," but eventually, "escapes in part from those who would make use of it," when it achieves its own reality that allows for, and is engendered by, its use (26).

Each society, Lefebvre says, produces its own space(s), which depend on the particular modes of production that order that society, and the social relations that these modes of production prescribe. These spaces are not merely variations of character within some universal "space" which is the space of geometrical relationships, the empty Euclidean field. Instead, the world is made up of overlapping yet very different spaces that follow their own rules of social organization and logic, and these spaces do not necessarily share transferrable characteristics by which we can understand them. For example, Lefebvre notes that "The city of the ancient world cannot be understood as a collection of people and things in space . . . For the ancient city had its own spatial practice" (31). In order to understand the ancient city, it is therefore important to recognize the practices, assumptions, and modes of production that produce the space of

the city. By seeking to understand how and why space is produced in each society, we can begin to understand the forces behind that production.

However, our perception of space as a social product is constantly undermined by two pervasive illusions: the illusion of transparency and the realistic illusion, which feed off of one another as they conceal the production (and control) of space. Under the illusion of transparency, space is empty and insubstantial, merely a field to be populated by both physical objects and mental activity, thoughts and ideas. This conception of space "goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places. Anything hidden or dissimulated—and hence dangerous—is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates" (28). The illusion of transparency gives the impression that all that is seen is also known, and also true. By privileging the reality of the seen and the transparent, the illusion of transparency directs attention away from the unseen or invisible actions of political entities that produce space as a structure that itself constitutes the practices and organization of a society. Each of the three novels examined in this project works to dismantle this illusion by representing space as a dynamic and politically charged product of dominating forces: political, historical, and ideological.

The opposite illusion, the realistic illusion, similarly allows those forces to operate unobserved. With the realistic illusion, the world outside of the observer is more legitimate than the thoughts and desires of the observer. Deceptively, this illusion imbues space and objects in space with natural symbolism and chthonic substantiality, so that space becomes "a hard or dense reality delivered direct from the domain of Mother

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Nature," and thus cannot be the product of nefarious (or otherwise) political forces (30). Together, the realistic and transparent illusions (which constantly replace one another, since rejecting one means embracing the other), obscure the fact that space is neither transparent and innocent nor solid and natural, but social, produced and controlled by political actors.

Lefebvre posits a "conceptual triad" of spatial relationships that can describe a given space: *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *representational spaces*, which correspond to the *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived.* The first of these, spatial practice (perceived), has already been alluded to above; it comprises the practices, habits, relationships, and spatial assumptions that make up a society's daily life. The affinity between daily routine and urban reality (highways, intersections), for example, is one facet of spatial practice under neocapitalism (38). More simply, spatial practices are the things that people do in space—movement within houses, eating in restaurants, and deference for religious buildings.

Representations of space are then the images created to portray space. This can take the form of books, maps, blueprints, films, or any other medium which identifies "what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (38). Representations of space assume that their images of space correspond with lived reality, but this is almost always erroneous. Instead, representations of space portray "conceptualized space . . . the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers . . . social engineers [and] a certain type of artist with a scientific bent," which represents space as it exists in the mind, not in physical or lived reality (38).

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Lastly, representational spaces are spaces as they are lived by their inhabitants and users, experienced through their symbolic resonances as well as their associated practices. They are the spaces which have symbolic meaning layered on top of physical space, giving insight into the spatial practices and representations of space that informed and produced that space. For although representational spaces are the closest experiences of space as it functions in a society, they are also "dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" to match the conceptualized space in representations of space (39). A student's understanding of their classroom, for example, takes into account both the physical realities of the classroom and her own subjective experience of that classroom, but the abstract idea of "classroom" (a representation of space) can often impose its meanings on these personal perceptions.

The space that I have thus far described is what Lefebvre calls *abstract space*, space ruled over by a political state in a global capitalist system, and which has been divorced from the physical qualities, modes of production, and social relationships that define it. The process by which space becomes this abstract space is the history of space, starting with "the spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by a social practice" until they are unrecognizable, having been buried in abstract space (117). Natural (physical) space is the space that exists prior to human imposition of symbolism or meaning on the natural features of a landscape. The inhabitants of natural space understand it only insofar as it corresponds to their place within it, for the "networks of paths and roads ma[ke] up a space just as concrete as that of the body—of which they [are] in fact an extension" (193). Although directions, landmarks, and paths may be connected to memories and stories ("invested with affective significance"), they are not

yet completely symbolic, and their meaning adheres inextricably to their concrete physicality, so that natural space, even inhabited natural space, has "more in common with a spider's web than with geometrical space" (192, 193). Natural space is never entirely conceptualized, never divorced from its own physical qualities and rhythms.

When political and religious forces begin to populate natural space, it becomes absolute space, invested with symbolic significance and set apart as sacred. In natural space, all space is relative, understood only in the context of its surroundings, since each place only exists within the natural context in which it is apprehended. Absolute spaces, on the other hand, are seen as independent and stand alone due to the meaning invested in them. Previously natural spaces, revered for their natural qualities, such as a river or mountain, can become absolute through their identification with local deities, for example, which then imparts significance that is unrelated to the physical uses and rhythms of those spaces; "consecration end[s] up . . . stripping them of their natural characteristics" (48). Absolute space does have dimensions, like natural space, but these do not correspond to physical dimensions relative to use and experience. Instead, "Directions . . . have symbolic force: left and right, of course—but above all high and low," which communicate the hierarchies and values of a community (236). These absolute spaces, whether the space around a statue of a god (religious) or the center of a chief's hut (political), are "always at the disposal of priestly castes," either literally priests or their secular political equivalents, rather than equally available to all members of a community. But regardless of the actual religious or secular nature of the space, absolute space always exudes a religious character, because it conveys the symbolism (and the inherent holiness) of political or religious authority. Essentially, absolute space

comes into being when political and religious forces populate nature and imbue physical spaces with symbolic value that covers up the natural.

Out of this symbolic, politically—and religiously—motivated absolute space, Lefebvre says, arises historical space, which comes hand in hand with the space of accumulation. When production is separated from survival (and therefore social reproduction), communities have the opportunity to begin *accumulating*, amassing wealth that is not related to its immediate or reproductive needs. In this space of accumulation, owning *things* (especially owning more things than someone else) imparts power and prestige. The politics necessary to manage such wealth give rise to political centers of power, which wield violence as a tool to amass further wealth. According to Lefebvre, the quintessential historical space is the seventeenth-century Western town, which drew power to itself by partaking in early imperial endeavors and accumulating material wealth from merchant activities and the rural areas surrounding it. Because of these activities, "Space and time were urbanized," Lefebvre says; "in other words, the time and space of commodities and merchants gained the ascendancy, with their measures, accounts, contracts and contractors" (277-278). The historical space is one of measurement: measurement of commodities (wealth) and of space (size of territory in which wealth is accumulated). Lefebvre calls this period in the history of space the "birthplace and cradle of the modern state," because it is in this space that "the state's 'totalitarian vocation' took shape, its tendency to deem political life and existence superior" to other facets of social life (279).

But although it includes the state as "an imaginary and real, abstract-concrete 'being,'" historical space is still tied to the material (and spatial) indicators of its power,

only with the advent of capital does space transition to Lefebvre's third social space: abstract space (279). In a capitalist system, where money takes on an abstract existence of its own, accumulating wealth is no longer a matter of obtaining material, but merely of gaining an immaterial measure of value. This value is then applied to objects, people, spaces, and processes, effectively divorcing these things from their material existence, and locating their essence instead in a homogenous, exchangeable capital. The effect on space is similarly homogenizing. Abstract space is "Formal and quantitative, it erases distinctions" and above all privileges the "centres of wealth and power," the dominant forms of space which control all others (49). However, Lefebvre notes that "Abstract space is *not* homogenous; it simply *has* homogeneity as its goal, its orientation," meaning that although abstract space seeks to erase difference, it is (as of yet) always unsuccessful in doing so completely (287). Abstract space presents itself as homogenous, "sett[ing] itself up as the space of power" by virtue of its pervasiveness, and thereby crushing the lived experience of representational spaces (51). Since perceptions of abstract space involve seeing it as global, the historical, absolute, and natural spaces of the past disappear from view, and "History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret" as those spaces slip away (51).

However, abstract space is not entirely effacing, though it is concealing. As Lefebvre writes, "No space disappears in the course of growth and development," since "Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another" (86). Although this passage refers to social spaces within abstract space (the private and the public), this concept also applies to the accession of abstract space over historical, absolute, and natural space. Despite the transformations wreaked by each

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successive space, the history of space always leaves its traces in the present space. "No space ever vanishes utterly," and "natural (and hence physical and physiological) space does not get completely absorbed into religious and political space, or these last into historical space, or any of the foregoing into" abstract space (164). Instead, "natural objects—a particular mound or earth, tree or hill—continue to be perceived as part of their contexts in nature even as the surrounding social space fills up with objects and comes also to be apprehended in accordance with" new modes of spatiality (164). The same can be said for those symbolic absolute spaces, and for spaces invested with power due to their accumulative value. All spaces exist underneath the pervasive presence of abstract space.

For the most part, *Midnight's Children*, *Waterland*, and *Sexing the Cherry* work against the monopoly of abstract space, which, with its "frightening capacity for violence" in the pursuit of dominance, tends to destroy the diversity, memories, and spaces that these novels consider invaluable (52). Often, this resistance functions through magical realism, a literary style that, as its name suggests, involves the juxtaposition and combination of the historical real and the imaginary. The term was first used by Franz Roh, a German art critic, in 1925. He coined the term "magic realism" to describe the new phenomenon of Post-Expressionist painting, characterized by its desire to "celebrate . . . the mundane" with an "insatiable love for terrestrial things and a delight in their fragmented and limited nature" (Roh 17). By this Roh does not mean that Post-Expressionist or magic realist paintings reject the fantastic aspects and abstractness of Expressionism, but rather locate them inside solid, everyday objects, where "the mystery does not descend to the represented world but rather hides and palpitates behind it" (15).

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Although Roh's description applied not to literature, but to painting, and is not entirely congruous with what is currently understood as magical realism, it nevertheless contains some prominent components of the magical realist style: meticulous attention to realistic detail and recognition of the magical in the mundane.

Roh's ideas eventually found their way to Latin America during the intellectual exodus from Europe during World War II, and made the leap from painting to literature, as Irene Guenther explains in her essay on the history of the genre. Guenther cites Arturo Uslar-Pietri, Alejo Carpentier, Angel Flores, and Jorge Luis Borges, each of whom developed slightly differing definitions of the magical real, *lo real maravilloso americano*, and *el fantástico* (Guenther 61). Carpentier in particular espoused a vision of his *lo real maravilloso* in which the unreality of literature only matched the inherent unreality of the American continents. His essay, "On the Marvelous Real in America," disparages European Surrealism for its manufactured fantasy, and instead insists that the marvelous exists within physical and lived reality, in the "unbridled creativity of . . . natural forms with all their metamorphoses and symbioses" (Carpentier 85). This form of magical realism, which relies heavily on myth and the organic origin of the fantastic, is a hallmark of Latin American magical realist literature, apparent in well-known works such as Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the stories of Jorge Luis Borges. Because of the proliferation of Latin American magical realist texts, magical realism is sometimes portrayed as a solely Latin American genre. However, a European form of surrealist magical realism (including works from authors such as Günter Grass and Italo Calvino) developed alongside Latin American mythic magical realism, which Wendy Faris styles as a "northerly spare variety" with "less magic and a . . . more

circumscribed" range than the "tropical lush" Latin American style (Faris 165). Despite this initial distinction, Faris recognizes the problems of geographical categories, and notes that in today's literature the distinction between the two is ambiguous. This is especially true in the three novels discussed here, all of which, geographically, belong to the European tradition, but partake extensively in the mythic styles of Latin American magical realism.

In most of its literary incarnations, magical realism is the appearance of the magical, the unexplained, and the unreal in an otherwise realistic fictional world. The narrators of magical realist texts rarely acknowledge the strangeness of the events they narrate, instead accepting them as part of reality. Rawdon Wilson describes three types of fictional worlds: one in which the fictional space follows the logic of the real world, another in which the space functions differently from that of the real world, but still follows a closed system of logic within the text, and a third, which contains elements of both the first and second worlds (Wilson 217). By placing jarring elements of the fantastic within a world that seems to follow the rules of mundane reality, magical realism is able to question the reality of the reality that it portrays, not simply by critiquing real events or providing allegorical models as realism and fantasy do, but also by building new ways of viewing the real world and the historical events that have taken place in it.

Midnight's Children, *Waterland*, and *Sexing the Cherry* each use magical realism in conjunction with a specific historical and regional setting, as do many magical realist texts. According to David Mikics, because of their association with politically significant events, magical realist texts must "supply an approach to history, not merely literary

genre," and "address the weight of historical memory that survives in . . . day to day life" (Mikics 373). By offering a new view of reality, magical realist texts seek to offer new interpretations of the events that have resulted in certain people, groups, or ideologies holding power over marginalized groups. Amaryll Chanady, among others, posits magical realism as a way to resist the dominance of colonial and other forces which demand adherence to narrow views of history in which the state or the colonial power is always justified. To refute such claims to power, magical realism "challenges the dominant historiographical paradigm based on empiricism, and replaces it with one that does not correspond to what is traditionally regarded as truth" (Chanady 138). Doing so, magical realism questions the structuring concepts of reality which have been produced by central political and ideological forces in order to perpetuate their dominance.

In terms of space, magical realist texts do as Lefebvre attempts to do, dismantling and reading space in such a way such as to expose the historical and contemporary forces that order it into the familiar spatial codes. But magical realism also allows literature to exceed Lefebvre's capabilities. Where Lefebvre laments the homogenizing efforts of the state in abstract space, magical realism exposes those efforts, and also begins to build alternative spaces that defy the spatial logic of dominant forces. Each of the three novels examined here resists a specific kind of spatial domination: that of the state, of history, and of ideology, all of which are also bound up together.

This thesis examines different ways in which these novels expose and escape from the dominated spaces of history by introducing unreal portrayals of historically real events and space. The first chapter explores *Midnight's Children* as an attempt to undermine the creation of a centrally defined national space by establishing alternative

spaces in which the spatial logic of state authority does not function. The novel resists the national space which Lefebvre describes as homogenized, and in privileging the small, the individual, and the obscene, *Midnight's Children* establishes new national spaces through disruptive magical or irrational processes and modes that break the usual rules of spatial and temporal logic. These instances of magical realism accommodate new personal and public relations, which offer an alternative to the homogenized national space proposed and produced by the state.

In my second chapter, I argue that *Waterland* presents reality as a primarily spatial realm upon which humans have imposed linear temporality by attempting to transform space into a scene for linear progress. This traditional emphasis on temporality (manifested as a privileging of progress, history, and linear narrative) favors those who have the power to move narrative forward and create narratives of progress. *Waterland* depicts frequent attempts to transform space: both physical space (as in the drainage of the Fens) and other spaces created by those physical transformations. By imbuing space itself with an ontological magic akin to that in Latin American magical realist literature, Swift attempts to restore a spatial rather than temporal view of reality, which would discard narratives of linear progress across time in favor of the ongoing processes of negotiating space.

My third chapter examines the different ways in which Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* contests accepted patriarchal representations of history and space. Through the use of paradoxical and extreme geometries, Winterson's novel disrupts the assumptions of historiographic methods that posit space as something discrete to be conquered and owned, bolstered by the firm belief in linear (and narrative) time. Instead,

Winterson articulates a "feminine" geometry based not on traditional elements of patriarchal spatial logic, but on simultaneity, interconnection, and boundlessness. *Sexing the Cherry*'s rejection of the basic structures of received patriarchal space destabilizes the ideologies, political forces, and institutions that rely on those structures in order to justify their oppression of marginalized groups.

Instead of working within the established rules of spatiality and narrative, these texts champion a broader historiography that includes the suppressed narratives of appropriated rather than dominated spaces. Their "uncovering" of multi-faceted, and sometimes even inconsistent, suppressed narratives gives these magical realist texts the capacity both to contest dominant history and, at times, to acknowledge their own limitations as representations of space.

Multitudinously Shapeless as Ever:
Competing National Spaces in *Midnight's Children*

"I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time" (Rushdie, *MC* 3). With

this introduction, Saleem Sinai points to two defining features of his existence: his place,

and his time. But the novel's first line is also slightly misleading in its vagueness,

because, as Saleem will admit in the next moment, he was not born "once upon a time,"

but precisely, inescapably, at the moment when India became an independent nation, at

midnight on August 15, 1947, and the events of his life are, again, precisely and

inescapably bound up with the history of that moment. And although Saleem was born in

Bombay, in this case the specificity is misleading, because this is not a familiar, realistic

Bombay, but rather a Bombay, and an India, full of magical and unreal spaces. It is

Bombay and it is not Bombay. Through this first statement, Saleem reveals his narrative

strategy, which blends the impreciseness of fairy tale and myth with the specificity of the

real historical events that led up to and followed India's establishment as a modern

nation-state.

According to Lefebvre, the "modern state promotes and imposes itself as the

stable centre—definitively—of (national) societies and spaces" (Lefebvre 23). A state

can exist only when it exercises (violent) control over the geographical boundaries of its

nationhood, but even more so, it must exert control over the social space within its

borders—it must constitute the central and organizing force of production of that space.

In order to do so, Lefebvre says, the state attempts to be the center of "a space wherein

something is accomplished—a space, even, where something is brought to perfection:

namely, a unified and hence homogenous society" in which differences are suppressed or

ignored in order to legitimize state authority (281). Lefebvre identifies three dominant

characteristics of this homogenized national space. It is firstly *global,* or pervasive, wherein the state's national space is ubiquitous within its boundaries, and thus becomes uniform; secondly *fragmented,* wherein the state separates and classifies the places and local spaces within itself in order to control them; and thirdly *hierarchal,* wherein places are ranked from taboo to sovereign (282). When a space is global, in Lefebvre's sense, it penetrates through all levels of national and local space—there are no spaces within the geographical boundaries of the state which are *not* the national space. By fragmenting the spaces and places that exist within this pervasive national space, the state figures itself as the unifying center which both connects and controls (as well as creates) all of the fragmented spaces. The hierarchy of spaces, established when the state fragments and classifies space, and reinforced through spatial practice, expectedly privileges the spaces which exemplify the ideal characteristics and produce the ideal spatial practices of a homogenized national space. Spaces of difference, on the other hand, are suppressed and labeled as lesser or taboo. These conditions allow a centralized state power to present the space over which it presides as a natural and unified nation which relies on the centralized power for its cohesion.

    Midnight's Children explores the moment of and the many moments that follow India's emergence as such a nation and state. The early nation-building efforts of Indian leaders necessarily attempted to establish the kind of homogenized national space that Lefebvre describes, crushing difference and claiming unity. Saleem, as protagonist and narrator, attempts to undermine the creation of this centrally defined national space by establishing alternate spaces in which the spatial logic of state authority does not function. By endowing spaces of difference or obscenity with magical or irrational

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properties, Saleem locates national identity not in the state apparatus, but in the spaces of transgression and privacy, which do not appear in traditional historical narratives that help to produce the unified national space of the state. In the process of dismantling the accepted historical narratives and the national space that they produce, Saleem critiques the methods of historiography that contributed to the production of national space, but at the same time implicitly critiques his own representational methods. As it resists the homogenizing national space of the state, the novel self-consciously posits a different vision of the national space, one which celebrates rather than suppresses the multitudinous texture of India.

In 1947, India officially became an independent state, after over a century of colonial rule under the British crown. However, this transfer of power was not merely a matter of bidding farewell to the British Empire and returning to some preexisting Indian state. Instead, the leaders and people of this newly free India were tasked with shaping a nation out of, as Rushdie says in "The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987," a people and land which "in all the thousands of years of Indian history . . . never was such a creature as a united India" (Rushdie, "Riddle" 27). Upon the departure of the British, "the thing that had never existed was suddenly 'free'" (27). It is no wonder, then, that the India portrayed in *Midnight's Children* undergoes a crisis of self-identity rivaled only by that of Saleem himself, whose life is a counterpart to his nation's. Some of the most important leaders of the fledgling India—Gandhi, Nehru, and Indira Gandhi—are especially influential in this effort to discover or found Indian identity. In *Midnight's Children*, the ideologies of Gandhi and Nehru permeate the narrative subtly throughout and at critical moments of historical significance. The most obvious campaign of national

space production, however, occurs during Indira Gandhi's Emergency, where we see explicitly her attempts to establish an Indian nation through homogenizing and unifying the national space. These nation-building efforts, along with similar efforts in Pakistan, Land of the Pure, attempt to create a unified national space with its center in the state, which can maintain power because of its domination of that space which reflects its own uniformity.

India's national space includes each of the conditions Lefebvre outlines as necessary to the constitution of a centrally defined state. On the eve of India's independence, William Methwold, descendent of the first Methwold who purportedly dreamed up Bombay, officially transfers his Estates over to their new occupants, waiting until the last possible moment in order to correspond with the British transfer of power to an Indian government. The new Indian inhabitants put up with this eccentric egoism, and the instant after Methwold departs, Saleem records, "Suddenly everything is saffron and green" (Rushdie, *MC* 127). This moment represents the state's attempt to firmly separate itself in both time and space from its colonial history, and thus to establish a national space that is pervasive and reductive (global), effacing historical and present difference by conjuring a shining, independent India which is omnipresent and uniformly continuous in time and space. At the moment when the physical departure of the British makes India's geographical boundaries into political realities, the sudden ubiquity of the saffron and green of India's flag seeks to erase the marks of British presence from India's interior, denying the colonial history which, despite its problematic nature, also played a role in shaping India's present. Even time turns patriotic: "Saffron minutes and green seconds tick away" on newly independent clocks which again attempt to efface the

presence of British history from India's consciousness (127). The effusion of saffron and green at the minute of Indian independence is both a celebration and an attempt to define India as an independent nation which fills its own national space—even the inside of Vanita's body, a seemingly private space, is made up of "inner passages that are also, no doubt, similarly colorful" (127). Of course, there are cracks in this depiction of the newly independent nation as separate from other sovereign global spaces—the inhabitants of Methwold's Estates, for example, do not completely or immediately discard their British inheritance. Spaces such as these, which the "everything is saffron and green" India ignores, are the tools through which the novel attempts to dismantle the unified national space.

Within its geographical bounds, India also engages in the fragmentation of space that Lefebvre suggests is the second condition of state control over national space. In addition to the more obvious manifestations of this effort (temples, government buildings, pilgrimage sites, etc.), India also partakes in fragmentation of space on a larger scale. In 1955, Saleem records, "India [was] divided anew, into fourteen states and six centrally-administered 'territories,'" whose boundaries were based not on "rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words" (Rushdie, *MC* 216). Although the partition of India in this way is based on actual differences in language, and therefore seems like a return of power to local centers, it is important to note that when "Language divide[s]" the land, the idea of India holds it together, and so the purported investment of power in local hands is an illusion that dissimulates the national space which encompasses and presides over the fragmented local places (216). For although the language marchers in Bombay are certainly

passionate about their cause and their identities as Maharashtrians or Gujaratis, they would also certainly claim to be Indians. The partition not only consolidates power in the center while allegedly ceding power to local authority, but it also serves to create sacred places only accessible to the central state. Divided by language, the states must relate to one another through the common characteristic of Indianness. Equal access to the states is granted only to "India," while each individual state becomes a place set apart from the other states. This gives the central authority a monopoly on access to and control over the national space, which has been fragmented in an attempt to consolidate power.

Perhaps the most prevalent strategy for establishing the national space is imposing hierarchy on the spaces within the nation via the assumption of homogeneity. By legitimizing spaces and spatial practices which fit with the national ideal, the state creates a hierarchy of acceptable spaces. The ultimate effect of such a hierarchy is the suppression of difference (lesser or taboo spaces) so that the state can portray itself as the center of a homogenized, and therefore harmonious, space. One of the organizing principles of the hierarchy of space in *Midnight's Children* (and in much of modern abstract space) is the privileging of the visual and communicable/linguistic over the incommunicable or invisible (which in turn conceals the production of space on a social level by positing space as transparent and therefore nonexistent). Under this illusion of transparency, Lefebvre says, "communication brings the non-communicated into the realm of the communicated—the *incommunicable* having no existence beyond that of an ever-pursued residue" (Lefebvre 28-29). Essentially, by privileging that which is communicated (visually and linguistically) over that which is not, the state can suppress and ignore that which cannot be communicated, which then must persist only as remnants

which always defy the desire to translate them into communication. We might return to the effusion of saffron and green at the moment of India's independence, which, in its ubiquity of visual stimulus, suppresses those non-visual, and therefore nonexistent (in the eyes of the state) elements of difference. In Pakistan, Saleem points out the "Divorce between news and reality," where newspaper headlines proclaim optimistic results while peasants die of poisoned water (Rushdie, *MC* 382). Pakistan's truth, Saleem notes, relies heavily on its newspapers, and this reliance on language and visual communication allows the state to claim to be the Land of the Pure while ignoring the impurities that cannot be communicated, though the residue of the impure still exists as "rumors" and curses, those forms of speech which are not considered appropriate for the public sphere. By creating this hierarchy of space, where the state has access to and controls the most sacred of spaces while denying the legitimacy and even existence of sites of difference, the state perpetuates a conception of the nation which relies on the unity and homogeneity of the space it occupies.

Looking back on the early years of India's independence, Saleem recognizes and attempts to combat these centrally-defined attempts to establish a national space. In one strategy of resistance, he frequently inhabits and invests with power the small, private, and taboo spaces that the state suppresses and ignores. By locating national identity within these spaces, Saleem inverts the state's hierarchal ordering of spaces and restores importance to the individual. The first such space is the cellar in the Aziz's home, the place where Nadir and Mumtaz fall in love and live, for a time, as husband and wife. Since "things seem permissible underground that would seem absurd or even wrong in the clear light of day," in the cellar Nadir and Mumtaz can engage in the private,

interpersonal interactions that cannot occur in the "walled-in gardens of silence" created by Naseem's refusal to speak (59, 57). In a house where interactions must take place in silence, the cellar allows Nadir and Mumtaz to engage in communication with one another, and in this sense the cellar is a private space which exists between two individuals. The representational space of the cellar is not only isolated and protected from the conditions of the outside world, but it is also an "underworld," a place both completely removed from and dialectically involved with the upper-world (61). In their underworld, Nadir and Mumtaz can converse, develop their personal relationship, and also, "side by side . . . play . . . the old men's game" of spitting paan into a spittoon, engaging in this public ritual despite the fact that they are sequestered within a hidden place (61). Mumtaz recalls this double existence in the public and private spaces as "the happiest time of her life" (61). Although it is not explicitly magical, the hidden, almost fairy tale-like space of the cellar allows Mumtaz to escape the public spaces where she must perform the public aspects of her identity, without compromising her relationship with the upper/outside world.

Later, when Nadir has been exposed and Mumtaz has married Ahmed Sinai, her new husband suggests, "Throw Mumtaz and her Nadir Khan out of the window, I'll choose you a new name. Amina. Amina Sinai" (68). Ahmed demands that Mumtaz invert her previous hidden space of the cellar, throwing it out of the window and into the public sphere, thus rejecting the cellar as a desirable space. Her new identity will be based on this public conception, that the identity must reside in the upper world, as demonstrated by "the new, above-ground position of her bed" (71). For Mumtaz-turned-Amina, the cellar becomes representative of her true self, her inner self, which persists underneath

the public self that she constructs in order to please her new husband. Her new life demands that she forget the presence of the cellar in order to become the "reinvented" woman of Amina Sinai, much as India attempts to reinvent itself as a discrete entity, separate from its history and undesirable differences (71). But the cellar's presence permeates the text, reappearing again and again as Amina attempts to negotiate the vicissitudes of the upper-world. In the form of the silver spittoon, the cellar even follows Saleem into his time as the identity-less buddha, thus anchoring him to his past and identity. By focusing on this space as the location of private fulfillment and identity, the novel rejects the appropriateness of a public identity (a national, shared identity) as the basis of the self. Instead, the hidden space of the cellar has more potential and content than the public space of invented names and games.

Similarly, Saleem's adventure in the washing chest relies on this same idea that the private, hidden spaces of the world contain more than the larger, public spaces, and additionally locates this significance in the small spaces' ability to contain the obscene, that which the state and prevalent spatial practice label as taboo. The young Saleem turns to the washing chest as an escape from servants, school, friends and bullies, ugliness, drunk fathers, and the "glowing and inescapable mist of expectancy" that pressures him to discover the meaning of his life (174). The washing chest, like the cellar, is a private rather than a public space. But perhaps more importantly, as Saleem says, "A washing chest is a hole in the world, a place which civilization has put outside itself, beyond the pale" (177). Hiding amongst his family's dirty laundry, Saleem accesses the rejected and taboo spaces that the state suppresses and ignores. As Lefebvre notes, all:

walls, enclosures and facades serve to define both a *scene* (where

something takes place) and an *obscene* area to which everything that

cannot or may not happen on the scene is relegated: whatever is

inadmissible, be it malefic or forbidden, thus has its own hidden space on

the near or the far side of a frontier. (Lefebvre 36)

In order to escape the world, Saleem "conceal[s him]self in the unclean place," thereby

removing himself from the world of the *scene* and embracing the *obscene—*that which is

outside the space where things happen (Rushdie, *MC* 182). And in this hidden, rejected

space, Saleem is truly able to access his nation, and to begin creating his own version of a

national space. The figuration of a washing chest as a hole in the world, a repository for

the obscene, requires certain spatial practices in relation to that tiny space, and by using

the chest as a hiding spot, a place to go when he himself feels obscene, Saleem engages

in those appropriate practices. However, he also transforms them by not only accessing

the obscene, but also accessing the public—the scene—*through* the obscene space. His

magical gift of telepathy first makes itself known in the washing chest, which then

becomes not only an obscene space, but also a way to access the "scene" space of the

nation.

In the logic of the state's geometry, the big contains the small; the nation contains

and dominates the individual. But Saleem's adventure in the washing chest inverts this

geometry—his nation is contained "Inside a white wooden washing-chest, within the

darkened auditorium of [his] skull" (184). By investing this small, obscene space with the

magical, inverted geometry, Saleem frustrates the hegemony of a national space in which

the idea of the state encompasses and supersedes the idea of the individual. Saleem

instead accesses the nation through this sequestered space and through his own individual body, through that which has been deemed taboo. Inside the washing chest, the obscene, rejected space, Saleem first accesses the telepathy which is the gift of his birth, and eventually contacts the mind of every individual in India. He is connected to every member of his nation, and only through the magic of the washing chest does he gain this awareness of nationhood. The magic invested in this small space, so counter to the state's conception of the nation, paves the way for a radical redefinition of the nation space.

The novel's emphasis the small over the large and the private over the public is starkly apparent in the character of Saleem himself, whose body, life, and mind each contain, to some extent, his nation. The young Saleem's body, as his classmates like to remind him, resembles "the whole map of *India*," his nose representing "the Deccan peninsula hanging down," with birthmarks for the East and West Wings of Pakistan, and even a "large blob of shining goo" to, unintentionally, stand for Ceylon (265). The individual space of Saleem's body has been inscribed with the geography of his nation, but this does not imply his subordination to the national space, much as Jawaharlal Nehru would like to believe that Saleem is "the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young [and] will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own [nation]" (139). Although Nehru sees Saleem as an empty vessel, merely a reflection of an already-existent India, Saleem comes to learn that he has as much influence on his nation as it does on him; consequently the power of the nation resides not in the center, but in the space of the individual body. Saleem's "modes of connection," the "actively-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically and passively-literally" work in both directions; his actions and thoughts affect the life of his nation, and the events and

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atmosphere of India influence Saleem and his family (273). The mutual lines of connection demonstrate how Saleem's body and mind, in addition to being part of the larger nation-space, are also tiny spaces which represent and contain the nation.

Saleem's use of the individual body complicates and opens up the national space, but when Indira Gandhi, the Widow, similarly attempts to represent the nation in the space of her body, the effect is reductive and violent. In the Widow, "the equation between the State and [Saleem is] transmuted in 'the Madam's' mind, into that in-those-days-famous phrase: *India is Indira and Indira is India*" (483). Although Saleem calls the Prime Minister and himself "competitors for centrality," Indira's identification with India simplifies and homogenizes the national space because she not only claims connection with the nation, but also equivalency: either Indira contains the diversity of a nation, or a nation can be summed up in the identity of one individual (483). In Indira's case, it is the latter. David Price explains how "the Widow enacts a monumentalist strategy" in which "whole segments of [the past] are forgotten, despised, and flow away . . . and only individual embellished facts rise out" (Price 98, Nietzsche qtd. in Price 97). In order to become a representation of India, Indira must compact India into a dilute, reductive version of its diverse spaces and histories. Thus, her self-mythologizing (as Mother Devi, as a Nehru dynastic heir, and as Indira-India), and her attempts, both during and after Emergency, to erase dissenting and unpleasant elements and memories from India, serve to normalize the nation to such an extent that Indira really can be India, and India can be Indira.

In contrast to Indira's preoccupation with assimilating the multitudinous into the singular, thus endowing her own body with the full force of a homogenized national

space, the spaces of Saleem's body and mind invite the opposite result. Instead of consolidating the many into the one, Saleem uses the one, his own body, as a gateway to the many. In the hidden space of the washing chest, Saleem sniffs a pajama cord and becomes "a radio receiver" even "better than All-India Radio" (Rushdie, *MC* 186). The comparison itself is apt: Saleem becomes a conduit through which "the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike" pass as they "jostle . . . for space" (192). Whereas entering Indira initiates a tautological loop in which India and Indira replace one another without the possibility of variation, entering Saleem's mind increases rather than eliminates diversity. His mental space contains multiple identities: his own, those of the "teeming millions," and, of course, those of the (less than) thousand and one midnight's children.

When Saleem begins to broadcast out as well as in, contacting the other children of midnight, the mental space of the Midnight Children's Conference becomes yet another representational space which frustrates the state's hegemony on space. The Midnight Children's Conference, its members scattered "across the length and breadth of India's rough and badly-proportioned diamond," include children from every region, state, caste, and religion, each of whom can communicate through the radio that is Saleem's mind (or perhaps, nose) (225). Despite their geographical distribution and the divisions implied by their different backgrounds, the members of the MCC can communicate instantaneously and secretly, thereby inaugurating a new version of the national space which renders the geography of the subcontinent, on which the state relies for its continued authority, insignificant, and which provides a new medium, other than the idea of national identity, through which individuals can connect. Their convergence in

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the space of the MCC decenters the state as well. Saleem first learns of their presence when he hears them "sending their here-I-am signals, from north south east west . . . calling 'I,' 'I,' 'I' and 'I'" (214). These "I"s represent multiple centers of identity that do not rely on a conception of the nation for their orientation in space.

Furthermore, Saleem's telepathy, even apart from the MCC, allows him to begin dismantling the mechanisms through which the state produces its controlled space. Saleem soon discovers that his telepathy will allow him to access those spaces usually denied to ordinary people, especially ten-year-old boys. He recalls how he "deliberately invaded the head of our own State Chief Minister" while he "gurgled down a frothing glass of urine" and "became Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister . . . amongst a bunch of gap-toothed, stragglebeard astrologers and adjusted the Five Year Plan" (199). The magic of telepathy grants Saleem access to those sacred, set apart places that allow the state to maintain its authority. Saleem's invasion of these places divests them of their sacredness as, through his narration of this novel, he reveals their mundane (though absurd) contents. While Saleem exposes (to himself and his readers) the accessibility of the sacred space, he also offers up an alternative to these set apart and state-approved spaces: once again the washing chest grants access to the obscene. After a misstep involving archangels, Saleem discovers that the "voices [in his head], far from being sacred, turned out to be as profane, and as multitudinous, as dust" (192). The profanity of the voices stands in contrast to the sacred and the accepted. Saleem's nation, contained within the space of his head and accessed through the unclean place of the washing chest, once again relies on the obscene, that which is excluded, or at least not clean. The profane, furthermore, comes hand in hand with the multitudinous, so that great numbers and the diversity that

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should come with them are shown to be equally undesirable to the state. Saleem's telepathy, however, allows these excluded elements to retain their position within the nation-space, rather than being crushed under the weight of Indira's (and India's) homogenizing self-deification.

Partially because Saleem's telepathy does not rely on the primacy of visual and linguistic communication, those strategies of representation which allow the state to present insubstantial and uniform truths, he can destabilize the state's monopoly on space. When Saleem first begins experimenting with his telepathy, "before [he] beg[ins] to *act*—there [is] a language problem," and he cannot understand most of the voices, but he soon learns that "below the surface transmissions . . . language fade[s] away, and [is] replaced by universally intelligible thought-forms which far transcended words" (192). In defiance of the partitions-by-language, the mental space in which Saleem accesses his nation depends on neither visual nor linguistic means of communication, and although this distinction is mostly superficial (the thought forms still come to us in words), the disavowal of the linguistic, communicable and therefore public modes of representation undermines the state's claim to be representative of a unified space.

Later, Saleem undertakes a more radical re-representation of space by using his preternatural sense of smell to sniff out an alternate landscape to the one mapped by the linguistic deception of the Pakistani state. Since Pakistan is, as its name suggests, "the Land of the Pure," it is no surprise that, in order to build a nation, the state engages in similar homogenizing spatial practices to those of India (375). As noted above, the prevalence throughout the Pakistan chapters of newspapers and headlines as the arbiters of truth demonstrates this faith in the ability of language to communicate and therefore

fix truth. Saleem, however, has the ability to "see" beyond this façade by employing his magical nose to build a landscape of smells rather than of sights and words. As Lorna Milne has argued, in the case of Saleem and his enhanced olfactory senses, the "gap between the literal or 'real' and the metaphorical is narrow or nonexistent in the domain of smell," and therefore his "superhumanly perfect sense of smell guarantees the authenticity and authority of [his] nonolfactory insights too" (Milne 30). Lefebvre makes a similar observation about smell, noting that smells "do not signify; they *are*, and they say what they are in all its immediacy: the intense peculiarity of what occupies a certain space" (Lefebvre 198). Odors, for both Milne and Lefebvre, are a means of accessing a reality hidden behind the world of deceptive signs. So when Saleem begins to explore Karachi by smell, uncovering the "mournful decaying fumes of animal feces . . . the pustular body odors of young men . . . the knife-sharpness of expectorated betel-nut," his version of Karachi becomes more real and more authentic than the purported "purity" declared by Pakistan's name, and the prosperity declared by its newspapers (Rushdie, *MC* 362). Even when Saleem begins to categorize his smells into sacred and profane ("the science of nasal ethics"), his identification of profanity does not then necessitate its exclusion (364). Instead, he finds that "the pungency of the gutter . . . posess[es] a fatally irresistible attraction" (364). All that Saleem really discovers through his olfactory explorations are the elements of decay and corruption present in any city, but, in the context of Pakistan's purity, the contrast between the city of smells and the city of words is stark. By abandoning the hollow representations of words, Saleem establishes a different space for the city of Karachi, which includes all that is ignored by the space of the state.

Karachi's underbelly of both sacred and profane smells is not unique among the locations in *Midnight's Children*. In fact, the novel represents cities, and especially the central location of Bombay, as models for the nation, not because of any inherent national-ness, but because of their uncontrollable diversity. In "Postcolonial Politics of the Possible: City and Nation in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie," Stuti Khanna argues that "the city is the public face of the nation," but "At the same time, paradoxically, it embodies much that is at odds with, and even contrary to, the self-image of the nation; it is decidedly more heterogeneous, polyphonic, and impure than the nation would like it to be" (Khanna 401). Khanna recalls Gandhi's and Nehru's differing visions for India: the former imagined a stateless collection of rural communities while the latter saw the socialized city as the center of an industrial state. These two standpoints are not as incompatible as they appear, however, for as Khanna argues, "The faith in the city as the locus of progress and modernity goes hand-in-hand with a deep-rooted belief in the village as the repository of the nation's ancient spirit" (404). The city can only stand for the future if the authenticity of the past resides elsewhere—in the rural community. She goes on to claim that Rushdie's Bombay resists this temptation to valorize the rural by depicting the close-knit communities within the city ("remembered village[s]" [406]) as fleeting and unreliable. Instead, she argues, Saleem and the other characters must form communities through experience, rather than through the inherited ties of blood or geography, as when Saleem finds a new family in the magician's ghetto. Khanna's analysis of Bombay demonstrates how the city in *Midnight's Children*, specifically Bombay, functions as a hybrid space, an important site of national identity, but neither a modernizing force nor a stand-in for rural nostalgia.

Instead, the novel presents Bombay as a model for the nation in that it is a space made up of multiple, fractured spaces which celebrate rather than a suppress difference. Bombay is Saleem's home, the site of his birth and the formative events and people of his childhood. The love he feels for the city (exemplified in the joyous catchphrase "Back-to-Bom!") supplies the city with the emotional weight and authenticity that Khanna ascribes to the remembered village (Rushdie, *MC* 340). Because it is Saleem's birthplace and the location of the innocence of childhood (if anything in *Midnight's Children* can be called innocent), Bombay the city comes to replace the rural community as the seat of national authenticity. Furthermore, the city rather than the village is the model for the nation, not because of its forward-looking industrialization, but because of its ability to encompass and retain infinite difference. Within the city, travel is composed of a parade of disorienting names and places, colors and sights and smells. Each trip down the hill from Methwold's Estates must include mention of "Chimalker's Toyshop; Reader's Paradise; the Chimanbhoy Fatbhoy jewelry store; and, above all, Bombelli's the Confectioners, with their Marquis cake, their One Yard of Chocolates," as well as "the Band Box Laundry" and the "Breach Candy Swimming Club" (104). On his return from Pakistan, Saleem, "tainted with Bombayness," rejoices in "the rainbow riot of the city" and its "infinity of alternative realities" (355, 340, 373). Bombay is *full*, but not only is it full of the present, not only is the diversity representative of the diversity of India itself, but it is also, as the state is not, full of its own layered spatial history (373). When his parents first arrive in Bombay, before any description of the teeming city that the young Saleem grows up in, he is careful to note, "The fishermen were here first," living under the "benign presiding influence of the goddess Mumbadevi" (101). Then came the

Portuguese, and then the British, who transformed the fishermen's home into Bombay, the "Gateway to India" (102). And although the British, too, soon depart, each of these historical spaces, that of the Koli, the Portuguese, and the British survive: there are still Arab dhows, the name of the city comes from the Portuguese, and the British have left behind Methwold's Estates, among other things. This history is, as Lefebvre says, indelibly written into the space of Bombay, despite the effacing efforts of nation-building.

But the city, despite its multitudinous diversity, remains a space transformed by historical time into an abstract space subject to domination, manipulation, and control by the central authority of the state. Late in the novel, Saleem returns to a natural (physical) space, seemingly untouched by history. And yet, it is in this place, the Sundarbans, that he and his companions confront their own histories. This pairing of natural space, which, per Lefebvre, exists outside of historical time, and personal history suggests that the natural space always underlies and informs the character of the abstract space that is produced at its expense. After leading his fellow CUTIA soldiers "south south south" in pursuit of their target, buddha-Saleem stops in the Sundarbans, and narrator-Saleem admits, "there was no last, elusive quarry," but rather the buddha ran south due to "a miasmic longing for flight into the safety of dreams" (414). By fleeing to the jungle, in other words, Saleem escapes from the trauma of war. But in addition to escaping violence and corruption, by running "into the historyless anonymity of rain-forests," he also escapes historical time and the abstract space of the nation that it governs (414). The Sundarbans are characterized by their historylessness (lack of time) and their anonymity

(lack of identity). Both of these indicate their status as natural or physical space, that space which Lefebvre argues exists prior to the imposition of time and significance.

This natural space of the Sundarbans is simultaneously magical and terrifying, full of horrifying creatures and the recurring ghosts of memories and people. In this most unreal space, which is also, due to the absence of historical time and the obvious signs of human interference, the most real space, Saleem accesses the underlying physical and absolute spaces which inform his construction of India's national space. The novel initially portrays the Sundarbans as the natural space that they seem to be: outside of time and devoid of human influence, but as Saleem and Ayooba Shaheed Farooq interact with the jungle, it transforms into an absolute space, invested with their understanding of its sacredness. As nipa-fruits fall from the sky, Shaheed's "thoughts [become] full of his pomegranate-dream and it crosse[s] his mind that this might be where it [comes] true" (416). Shaheed begins to see the Sundarbans as a place with sacred significance, a site for the fulfillment of dreams. He and buddha-Saleem understand the Sundarbans as a destination, not merely a space, consciously identifying the jungle with something other than the mundane, and thus transforming it into an absolute space with supernatural significance.

This figuration of the jungle as absolute space becomes clearer as it begins to work its magic on the boys, sending them visions of their pasts to both torment and pacify them, and thus giving the narratives of individual history a place within absolute space. The rehearsal of the personal past in the jungle locates individual history outside of historical time and the nation space, severing the connection that Saleem insists upon everywhere else in the novel. Instead, the individual history is valid on its own terms, and

under the influence of the jungle's insanity, the three soldiers and Saleem come to know their own histories more intimately and more accurately than they could in the thrall of national history. Ayooba "underst[ands] his mother for the first time," Farooq finds "in the knowledge of his father's death and the flight of his brother the strength" to grow up, and Shaheed recovers his sense of personal responsibility which had been "sapped" by his time in the army (418, 419). Saleem, of course, begins the process of "reclaiming everything, all of it, all lost histories, all the myriad complex processes that go to make a man" (419). The jungle validates the individual as a locus of identity even separate from the national narratives that usually situate that identity in a larger, meaning-giving frame. Within the space of the jungle, there is no nation, only the self.

Furthermore, the Sundarbans, as an authentic natural or absolute space, contain the roots of the hugeness of Saleem's India; in addition to the limited experience of the individual, the Sundarbans also contain infinity. The jungle is both huge, "gaining in size, power and ferocity" with "huge stilt-roots of vast ancient mangrove trees" and trees "so tall that . . . the birds at the top must [be] able to sing to God," and tiny, containing "the concealed translucency of jungle-insects," invisible and therefore either unmeasurable or immeasurable (415, 416, 421). All in all, it is "both less and more" than expected; its possibilities and realities extend in both directions (414). In the "incomprehensibly labyrinthine salt-water channels" there is an enormity of space that defies understanding, much as the space of India, in Saleem's conception, continually multiplies and defies the limitations of singularity (415).

Saleem's India, like the India of Nehru and the India of Indira Gandhi, is composed of social and abstract space and governed by politics, but it also, unlike the

Indias of those historical figures, acknowledges its roots in natural space, which Lefebvre

reminds us "does not get completely absorbed into . . . historical space," but instead

continues to exist underneath the superimposed spaces of the state, both influencing and

being influenced by the new spaces (Lefebvre 164). In other words, the spatial history of

Saleem's India underlies and interpenetrates with its present. We can trace the

fundamental elements of Saleem's national space(s) from the natural-turned-absolute

space of the jungle, the basis of the physical and abstract space that India occupies. Due

to the terrifying magic of the jungle, Saleem's India can be full of unreal spaces and

unexplainable happenings. And like the vast space of the Sundarbans, his India is built on

the tiny spaces of individual bodies, which paradoxically contain the infinity-space of

national diversity. Grounded in the natural and absolute spaces from which it has been

transformed, Saleem's India acknowledges its own spatial history in order to adequately

establish space which is fragmented and diverse, based in the small rather than the large.

Although Saleem is largely the catalyst who allows for the creation of alternative

national spaces, he himself is still dependent on the forms of history that produce

homogenized abstract spaces. As soon as the jungle expels Saleem and his companions

on an erroneously dated tidal wave, "it [is] October 1971" (423). The soldiers find

themselves once again fixed in historical time. That Saleem cannot remain in the absolute

space of the jungle demonstrates his dependence on the idea of the nation, the same idea

that drives the state's production of a homogenized national space. Despite his resistance

to the idea of a centrally unified India, any revision Saleem makes to the national space

only creates new transformed spaces within the framework of the nation, because Saleem

certainly does not reject the centrality of national identity and historical significance. In

fact, Saleem recognizes his own biases, but does not allow that awareness to invalidate his certainty about the narrative. He admits to a "desperate need for meaning," which might drive him to "re-write the whole history of [his] times purely in order to place [him]self in a central role" (190). This, of course, is exactly what he does. From birth, Saleem claims, he has been "handcuffed to history," and indeed he displays a reliance on the myth-making of national narratives that calls into question his own apparent resistance to those narratives through establishing alternative national spaces (1). As Russell West-Pavlov has pointed out, even the Midnight Children's Conference, perhaps the most obvious example of a different national conception, "constantly rehearse[s] the inaugural moment of [Indian] independence" through its name and meeting time, and the geographical distribution of the children, in addition to the geometrical collapse mentioned above, also "charts the geographical expanse of the nation" (West-Pavlov 446). And so in the act of defying the production of national space, Saleem, through his creation of the MCC, subscribes to the same concept of nation that drives the state's actions.

Rushdie himself draws attention to Saleem's unreliability as a narrator for similar reasons in "'Errata': Or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children*." He recalls wanting to explore how "we remake the past to suit out present purposes, using memory as our tool" (Rushdie, "Errata" 24). Memory's reconstruction of the past may not be "true," per say, but "only a madman would prefer someone else's version to his own" (25). Saleem's construction of India relies on a fictional representation of space (his own) just as much as the state's unified, nationalist efforts do. His emphasis on the spaces of difference and obscenity, while they do combat the dangerous homogenizing tendencies

of the state, are just as much an attempt at nation-building as Indira Gandhi's are, since Saleem is still intent on maintaining a national space, even if his national space looks different from that which the state produces. For this reason Saleem cannot completely (or at all) disavow the traditional historical narratives and spaces that have contributed to India's codification as a nation, even while he questions the validity of those narratives and spaces. In fact, Joyce Wexler argues that magical realism as a strategy is even more suited for this task of national unification than strict realism, because it allows for the vertical, symbolic correspondences that are lost in a realist depiction of reality which "limits referents to observable reality" (Wexler 138). In *Midnight's Children*, she argues, the use of magical realist techniques allows us to see desire (for unity and meaning) connected to empirical reality that usually resists symbolism, thus giving rise to possibility that events are related to one another in some intelligible pattern, such as national identity.

Although it is clear that Saleem engages in a nation-building effort, his ideal nation is significantly different than the one championed by figures such as the Widow. The novel presents emphatically alternative representations of space, which, for the most part, avoid the totalizing and homogenizing effects of state production of space. The India in *Midnight's Children* is undeniably, to use one of Saleem's favorite words, multitudinous. Saleem's efforts to privilege alternative national spaces, those private, hidden, obscene, or ignored spaces, offers a new perspective on the historical narratives that uphold the concept of India as a nation-state. The unreal quality of these alternative spaces, rather than detracting from their legitimacy, enables them to destabilize the "realness" of the real historical places that they alter.

Saleem's Midnight Children's Conference is finally destroyed by the violence of the Widow's attempts to quash difference within her uniform national space. Their destruction is not the destruction of the novel's alternative spaces, however. Because although Saleem was attempting to alter the course of history, *Midnight's Children*, written in 1981, and like all accounts of history, written retrospectively, attempts not to change the actual events of history but to alter our perception of that history so that the future does not end up the same way. Though Saleem despairs in the end, Rushdie maintains that the novel is not a pessimistic one, for the form is, like Saleem's India, "multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country" (Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 16). The spaces of diversity, fragmentation, and privacy presented in the novel offer us a glimpse of how things could have been, and how they still could be.

About Land Reclamation: Restoring Spatial Reality in *Waterland*

Where Saleem spoke of his nation, Tom Crick, the narrator of Graham Swift's *Waterland*, speaks of his river. *Waterland* is a novel strongly grounded in setting, and, like *Midnight's Children*, it also works against those forces that would seek to make that space their own. Unlike that other novel, *Waterland* does not work against the centralizing force of a state government, but against the tyrannical rule of time itself. Tom Crick, history teacher, sets out to tell the history of his life (in lieu of and in addition to the French Revolution), and in doing so must delve into the intricate history of the Fens, the unvaryingly flat marshlands in the east of England, marshes which have been drained, fortified, reclaimed and dredged again and again since the time of the Romans in an attempt to tame them. The Fens are a contested space, one in which abstract space continually battles against natural space, but which retains much of its primordial power despite numerous and continuous attempts to dominate it.

The central narratives of *Waterland* follow the history of the Atkinsons, who work to build a vast business based on their control of the Fens' waterways, and the life of young Tom Crick, who grows up amidst those waterways. In their pursuit of wealth and prestige, the Atkinsons aggressively attempt to construct a linear narrative of their dynasty which negates the role of spatial understandings of reality. As these dominating forces in the novel attempt to deny the inherently spatial character of reality, viewing space instead as a mere vehicle for the movement of time, the Fens emerge as an unconquerable natural space, imbued with an innate, magical spatiality that refuses to disappear underneath the drive for progress. On the relationship between space and time, Lefebvre explains that

In nature, time is apprehended within space—in the very heart of space:

the hour of the day, the season, the elevation of the sun above the horizon,

the position of the moon and stars in the heavens, the cold and the heat,

the age of each natural being, and so on . . . Time was thus inscribed in

space, and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural

time. (95)

Lefebvre describes space and time as intertwined and reflective of one another, where

time is the apprehension of marks in space that indicate movement and growth. Real time

is the cycling of spatial rhythms. After "the advent of modernity," however, "time . . . is

recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and functionally

specialized as this time itself" (95). With the introduction of political and economic

concerns into space (processes which subordinate time to their own goals as a vehicle for

exerting power), time becomes divorced from its spatial indicators (the sun, tree rings,

etc.), and transforms into a separate entity which lives in measuring devices which mark

time without reference to the spatial changes that accompany its passing. Real, physical

time, known through the marks it creates in space, is lost. Instead, time becomes a way to

measure processes which occur in abstract space: progress and narrative.

Lefebvre also identifies two primary ways that people alter the space around

them. In the process of turning natural or physical space into absolute and eventually

abstract space, people engage in the appropriation and domination of space.

Appropriation occurs whenever a space is "modified in order to serve the needs and

possibilities of a group" (165). An appropriated space is not entirely transformed, but

rather utilized according to the needs of a group, and thus a natural space which is

appropriated can still be a natural space. These appropriated spaces are often dwelling places, which can range from huts (inhabited by individuals or families) to the larger spaces in which communities dwell, such as streets or plazas (165). Initially, the appropriation of space occurs as a result of spatial practices that engender certain modifications of space. A dwelling place, for example, becomes a house, and the lines along which travel occurs become paths.

In contrast, dominated space is the imposition of those modifications in order to *implement* spatial practice. Dominated space is "space transformed—and mediated—by technology, by practice" (164). A highway, for example, is a transformation of space (by technology) effected in order to facilitate perceived and desirable spatial practices. This process is almost always a violent one, in which technology imposes "a new form into a pre-existing space—generally a rectilinear or rectangular form" (165). Dominated space is thus homogenized, and specificity is lost when spaces are transformed into generalized forms. One highway is much like another. For this reason, Lefebvre argues, "Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out," divested of its regional or idiosyncratic characteristics (165).

The tensions present in *Waterland* are deeply concerned with the conflict between time and space, domination and appropriation. Tom Crick struggles to reconcile his Atkinson ancestors' aggressive domination of the Fens with his Crick ancestors' appropriative lifestyle, and sees this opposition also played out in their differing approaches to narrative—the telling of stories (or histories). Domination and appropriation make themselves felt in Tom's repeated insecurity about the nature of the history which records those actions. Many critics have pointed out that *Waterland*'s

treatment of narrative closely follows Hayden White's theories regarding history and narrative, or, rather, history as narrative. In "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," White writes that when historical events are narrated they are "revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do *not* possess as a mere sequence," and that, furthermore, "The reality of these events does not consist in the fact that they occurred but that, first of all, they were remembered and, second, that they are capable of finding a place in a chronologically ordered sequence" (White 9, 23). White proposes that 'telling' history is never innocuous, as the creation of a cohesive narrative adds morality and teleology to series of events that are not, by themselves, connected to any kind of larger narrative. Thus the creation of any account of history is also the creation of reality, of meaning out of raw materials. If narratives are always exercises in moralizing and emplotment, imposed on the unorganized texture of the "real," then no narrative account of history can ever truly access the reality which it purports to represent.

In *Waterland*, the creation of historical narratives goes hand-in-hand with the domination of space. *Waterland* as a novel (as a narrative), comprises of several smaller and simultaneous narratives. There is the story of Tom Crick the middle-aged history teacher, whose wife has kidnapped a baby; the story of Tom Crick's childhood and adolescence in the Fens, including the death of Freddie Parr and its attendant complications; and the story of the Atkinson family, which brings land reclamation and beer to the people of the Fens. This last narrative is the one which most obviously falls under the category of historical narrative, for it involves directly the kinds of monumental and political events which usually constitute recorded history, and Tom himself notes the

difference between this narrative and the remembered stories of his own life. In the chapter "About the Rise of the Atkinsons," the longest chapter of the novel, we learn how Josiah Atkinson first began to grow barley, how his son, William, expanded the business into malting, and how his son Thomas, in turn, began the process of drainage on "a series of meres, marshes and floodlands through which perhaps a watery artery is vaguely traceable" in order to "bring wealth to a wasteland" (Swift 68). The story of the Atkinsons is the story of the transformation of the Fens, that "wasteland," into a network of canals, locks, drains, sluices, and barge-pools that supports the Atkinson's business ventures. Although this story is peppered with moments of dubious factual accuracy, such as Sarah Atkinson's mad omniscience, Tom is careful to note, "History, being an accredited sub-science, only wants to know the facts," and it is important to "disentangle history from fairy-tale" (86). He takes care to present the history of the Atkinsons, their beer, and their drains as the true history of his family and his homeland. The title of the chapter, and of many chapters, betrays this belief in the veracity of historical narratives. Telling "About the Rise of the Atkinsons" or "About the Lock-Keeper" implies that the Atkinsons and the Lock-Keeper already exist in an accessible form, and must only be described in order to be understood.

But Tom is not entirely naïve about his profession, and often, as many critics have noted, seems to subscribe to Hayden White's view, that the telling of history is the imposition of meaning on meaningless material. As a young man, having seen the destruction of World War II in Germany, Tom begins to study history, and to "demand of history an Explanation," essentially looking for "the Grand Narrative, the filler of vacuums, the dispeller of fears of the dark" (62). Tom initially becomes a historian due to

a belief in the inherent meaningfulness of history and its ability to uncover the real reality. Later in life, although he tells his class that we study history in order "To uncover the mysteries of cause and effect. To show that to every action there is a reaction . . . To know what we are is what we are because our past has determined it," Crick secretly believes, and occasionally lets slip, that "we can find whatever meaning we like in history" because "Reality is uneventfulness, vacancy, flatness" (107, 140, 40). By the time he narrates this novel, Tom has come to understand that telling history is the same as telling a story—that fashioning narrative out of events is nothing more than an attempt to feel better about the emptiness of reality. History becomes, for Tom, a way to produce something out of nothing. For example, in recounting how he and Mary eventually married and moved to London, Tom mentions that a flood "brought about the death of the future history teacher's father," but, he says, "that is another story," and moves on without elaborating (122). Here Tom indicates that he is aware of the processes and strategies required to create the narratives we call history: he has purposefully omitted the full story of his father's death in order to highlight the other pieces of Tom and Mary's early life together, drawing connections between events without relying exclusively on chronology. In this case, mentioning Henry Crick's death as merely a footnote to the young couple's move from the Fens to London allows Tom to portray their marriage as uneventful, regulated, and "spiced with unspectacular variations" (123). By consciously manipulating his historical narrative, Tom can manufacture the kind of reality about which he wishes to tell stories.

Due to his understanding of reality as a product of narrative, Tom continually gestures toward and withdraws his faith in traditional narratives that claim access to truth.

Near the end of "About the Rise of the Atkinsons," he reveals his anxiety about narrative when he asks, "When can we fix the zenith of the Atkinsons? When can we date the high summer of their success? Was it on that June day in 1849? Or was it later . . . Was it before that . . . Or was it in 1848" (91)? Tom's hesitancy demonstrates both a belief in the importance of the convention (a narrative must, after all, have a climax), but also reminds us that he knows it is merely a convention, and an arbitrary one at that. In White's formulation of reality, the Atkinsons have no apex—they have, at that, no "Rise" about which to tell, and their "story" is made up of isolated events which only assume the forms of stories under Tom's tutelage. Indeed, the chapter titles take on a new significance if examined in light of White's theory of history. To tell "About" something is to describe it, certainly, but the word *about* can also mean "Around the outside; on every side, all round," thus indicating, from its place in the chapter titles, that in describing these events Tom will only circle around his topics, never truly penetrating their actual reality ("about, adv., prep.1, adj., and int.").

 According to D.A. Miller, a narrative is a narrative while it moves from a position of lack to a position of fulfillment, at which point it is no longer a narrative (Miller qtd. in Berlatsky). In other words, narratives rely on a linear system of temporality in which changes are a transition from one state to another, different state. When Tom rejects (reluctantly), the legitimacy of historical narratives, he must also reject the legitimacy of the linear temporality that drives the creation of such narratives. History, Tom says, is not a "record of inexorable progress," but instead, as he repeatedly notes, "history . . . go[es] in circles," ever retracing its own steps (153, 180). If events merely repeat themselves, and time does not march inexorably forward, then the narrative, which relies on a

beginning, middle, and end in that order, cannot exist. Tom's insistence on a cyclical view of history invalidates those narratives (including his own), which claim to describe progress based on a linear conception of time. The form of Tom's narrative demonstrates his lack of faith in the traditional linear narrative as a vehicle for meaning. Early in the novel, Tom addresses his students:

> Children. Children, who will inherit the world. Children (for always, even though you were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, candidates for that appeasing term 'young adults', I addressed you, silently, as 'children')—children, before whom I have stood for thirty-two years in order to unravel the mysteries of the past, but before whom I am to stand no longer, listen, one last time, to your history teacher. (5)

Tom's address to his class jumps from the future to the past, to different past, to a different, closer future, and finally to the present, cycling through multiple verb tenses in what is essentially a single request: to be listened to. This disorganized formulation is representative of the narrative as whole, which refuses to tell the story from beginning to end, starting with the first Atkinson (or perhaps the origins of the Ouse), and ending with Tom's forced resignation, and instead leaps from story to story, from the 1980s to the French Revolution to World War I and back. In Tom's words, "It goes in two directions at once. It goes backwards as it goes forwards. It loops, It takes detours;" although he is here referring to "history" in general, the description applies just as well to *Waterland*'s narrative logic (135). In his opinions and in his storytelling, Tom denies the logic of linear temporality, rejecting the idea that the horizontal and inexorable march of time can itself bestow meaning upon the events that occur in the course of this forward motion.

Although *Waterland* disavows the ability of narrative to tell "truth" or "reality,"

thus subscribing to White's constructivist historicism, it does not treat reality merely as a

byproduct of narrative, as White often does, but rather attempts to locate it elsewhere. In

"Historiography, Narrativity, and the 'Here and Now' in *Waterland*," Eric Berlatsky

argues that, far from rejecting the existence of an accessible material past, *Waterland*

grants us access to that past through non-narratable and anti-narrative moments. In

opposition to the linear, progress-driven narrative of the Atkinsons, Tom offers the story

of the Cricks, which perhaps is not properly a "story" at all, given that it has no real

beginning, middle, or end, "characterized almost completely by a lack of progress" as the

Cricks work to preserve the equilibrium between land and water (Berlatsky 272). The

processes of dredging, drainage, and land reclamation in which the Cricks participate,

Berlatsky claims, are non-narratable because they do not involve the fulfillment of desire

(for progress, for an end, for change) that characterizes all true narrative. Because these

processes are associated with maintaining the Fens, the geography of which the novel

repeatedly associates with "the wide empty spaces of reality," Berlatsky argues that

"reality itself is characterized by the non-narratable: the flat, the quotidian, the boring,

and the repetitive: the lack of events themselves" (Swift 17, Berlatsky 273). If reality

never truly changes, but is only a continual process of reclamation, then "the past is not

irremediably passed, but is, in fact, always present not only through its discursive traces"

(Berlatsky 275). By privileging the non-narratable process of dredging, the novel points

to a reality that is not only accessible but also present.

Furthermore, Berlatsky notes that *Waterland* presents another avenue to the real

in what he calls *anti-narrative* moments, events which cannot be assimilated into a

familiar narrative form. Such events are called the "Here and Now" in the novel, and are events so jarringly unique that they relocate "Crick outside of symbolization and narrativization and, instead, in a material reality that is not part of the story of history, but is, nevertheless, an indicator of material presence" (Berlatsky 278). When Tom watches his father fish out Freddie Parr's body with the boat hook, for example, he is struck by a sense of the Here and Now, which "inform[s him] that history was no invention but indeed existed—and [he] had become a part of it" (Swift 62). Berlatsky argues that unique or traumatic moments such as these exceed the ability of narrative to normalize them into recognizable forms, and they thus become and remain present in a way that other events do not, since it is not easy to assimilate them into a compact and linear narrative. Although the Here and Now is jarring and perhaps difficult to understand, it nevertheless possesses a reality separate from its presence in narrative, and in fact loses this reality when it is assimilated into a linear system of explanation. Through the anti-narrative moments of the Here and Now, *Waterland* rejects the idea that the real is equated with the narratable, and locates reality outside of its telling, in that which is not narrated.

However, the novel does not merely contest narrative's power in these isolated instances, but actually rejects the linear temporality that allows narrative to function, instead finding meaning in that other dimension, spatiality, which exists prior to and underneath historical time. The historical narrative of the Rise of the Atkinsons is not merely the creation of a moralizing narrative, but also the history of the domination of the Fens. Just as history and narrative impose form on time, the accompanying changes to space impose form on that realm as well. As the Atkinsons move their beer-making

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enterprise into the Fens, Thomas Atkinson begins the process of land reclamation, and "By the year of Trafalgar, [he has] drained 12,000 acres along the margins of the Leem; dykes had been dug by the score; some sixty or so wind-pumps [are] in operation . . . the river ha[s] been embanked and sluices and staunches built to control the flow" (Swift 70). Through these drastic alterations to the land, the Fens become a space transformed by Atkinson technology, the "realization of a master's project" to bring space under the control of Thomas Atkinson's desire for progress (Lefebvre 165). The Atkinsons' drainage projects, intended to make the Fenland waterways into reliable channels for trade, impose a new, unnatural form on the twisting marshes. Thomas' efforts to tame the marshes are "arduous" and "labyrinthine," but, eventually, the post-Atkinson Fens, "so regular, so prostrate, so tamed and cultivated," are "broken only by the furrowed and dead-straight lines of ditches and drains, which [run] like silver, copper or golden wires across the fields" (Swift 69, 70, 3, 2-3). In this rectilinear land, there is little space for variation: the domination of space has removed the messy, muddy arteries of the Fens and replaced them with interchangeable, uniform conduits, presided over by the technology that facilitates their continued domination.

Domination of space, as described by Lefebvre, is only possible when it is paired with an understanding of time that is linear and progress-driven—in other words, it operates under the assumption of historical time and effaces the existence of space. Likewise, the Atkinson domination of the Fens is consistently linked with this notion of linear temporality, fueled by the desire for progress. Josiah and William Atkinson first dreamed of a prosperous Atkinson business empire, seeking to expand their influence in order to increase their wealth, but by the time George and Alfred head the company, they

claim that "what moves them is indeed none other than that noble and impersonal Idea of Progress," for, after all, "Have they not brought improvement to a whole region, and do they not continue to bring it?" (92). The Atkinsons measure their success in progress, in irreversible change. Their conception of time is a linear one in which moving forward is the only option, or at least the only desirable one. In order to retain their places as *de facto* leaders of Gildsey, the brothers must deliver on the expectation that they "continue to bring [progress]" to the region. They must, in other words, continue to build the linear narrative of their dynasty, moving ever forward in time. This emphasis on linear time allows the Atkinsons to effectively dominate the space of the Fens, for by focusing on their unceasing temporal movement, they are able to dissimulate their production of dominated space. Although their empire rests on their ability to control space, the Atkinsons measure progress in time: the first Atkinson lighter to sail on the newly-fortified Leem "bear[s] on its bows, beside the bright red stem-post and the device, soon to be familiar, of two crossed yellow barley ears above a double wavy blue line, the name *Annus Mirabilis*" (72). In the moment when the Atkinson domination of space, the completion of a "newly navigable, brightly gleaming river" out of a mud-clogged waterway, is complete, the Atkinson's flagship bears a reference only to the passing of the year in which these spatial transformations took place, and relegates them to the abstractness of miracles. The Atkinsons and their narrative rely on a linear view of temporality, one which effaces the presence of space as another component of reality. This emphasis on the importance of linear, teleological time allows them to maintain their control over space by legitimizing narratives of power. The narrative which figures the Atkinsons as a naturally ordained dynasty, for example, leads to the "tacit principle . . .

that whoever, thereafter, would be nominal and official mayor [of Gildsey], the true mayorality of the town would belong always to its brewers" (91).

In opposition to this view of time that produces linear narrative and thus privileges those, like the Atkinsons, who have the desire and ability to make narratives of power, *Waterland* attempts to restore a spatial understanding of reality in which people interact with space through appropriation rather than domination. Tom Crick is descended on his mother's side from the entrepreneurial Atkinsons, but the Cricks, his paternal ancestors, were once "those who exist[ed] by water . . . those who ha[d] no need of firm ground beneath their feet," who "made their sodden homes in those stubborn swamps, took to stilts in time of flood and lived like water-rats" (10). These ancient Cricks, like Bill Clay who is perhaps their modern counterpart, "stank . . . of goose fat and fish slime, mud and peat smoke . . . wore . . . otter skin cap[s], eel-skin gaiters and [drank] poppy-head tea" (11). As "water people," their lives are conjoined with their space, the Fens, and even their bodies take on the characteristics and rhythms of the land (or, water) (13). Their "sodden homes," too, do not transform the space, but rather modify it: the homes bear that quality of all the Fens, soddenness, and adapt to its unique rhythms with stilts when necessary. These appropriative practices utilize space without destroying, transforming or reducing it, thus privileging it over any desire for progress.

Even when the Cricks eventually "thr[o]w in their lot with the drainers and land-reclaimers," they do "not cease to be water people," but instead become "amphibians. Because if you drain land you are intimately concerned with water; you have to know its ways" (12, 13). The Cricks, although they become involved with drainage and dredging, maintain an understanding of the rhythms of water, which "one day . . . may rise up and

turn all your labours to nothing" (13). As Berlatsky notes, the novel frequently uses

dredging, the process of maintaining the waterways of the Fens by removing silt, as an

alternative to the Atkinsons' forward-looking drainage projects. Dredging, land

reclamation, is one of the operations which allow drainage projects to progress, but it

itself is not progress. Tom explains:

> There's this thing called progress. But it doesn't progress, it doesn't go
>
> anywhere. Because as progress progresses the world can slip away. It's
>
> progress if you can stop the world slipping away. My humble model for
>
> progress is the reclamation of land. Which is repeatedly, never-endingly
>
> retrieving what is lost. A hard, inglorious business. But you shouldn't go
>
> mistaking the reclamation of land for the building of empires. (336)

Land reclamation, then, is merely a way to maintain the status quo, to perpetuate the flat,

emptiness of reality without attempting to fill it with narratives of progress or a false

sense of linear time. Like water itself, which periodically swells in great floods in order

to "return, at the slightest opportunity, to its former equilibrium," the process of dredging

follows a cyclical conception of time in which any changes only bring back a previous

iteration of equilibrium (72). In the logic of dredging, which is the logic of the Fens, time

is not a linear system which effaces spatiality, but is rather an aspect of spatiality, born

out of the rhythms of water and land. Because of this conception of time, space is

maintained as a location of access to reality.

     Waterland presents reality as a primarily spatial realm upon which humans have

imposed linear temporality by attempting to transform the space into a scene for linear

progress. This traditional emphasis on temporality (manifested as a privileging of

progress, history, and linear narrative) favors those who have the power to move narrative forward and create narratives of progress, and ignores those who do not undertake narrative enterprises. In a novel which takes its title from its setting, perhaps it is not surprising that space takes such a central role in its conception of reality, but *Waterland* not only posits a spatial over a temporal understanding of reality; it also invests the spaces of the novel, namely, the Fens, with an ontological magic akin to that in Latin American magical realist literature, which allows the spatial realm reclaim its agency and specificity from the essentializing narratives of power.

In his well-known essay, "On the Marvelous Real in America" Alejo Carpentier identifies something he calls *lo real maravilloso*, the marvelous real, which is the intrinsic magic of life and geography in Latin America that inheres in the land itself, an organic marvelousness that stands in sharp contrast to the manufactured marvelous of European Surrealism. Carpentier uses *lo real maravilloso* to define a specifically Latin American identity and literary style, which "presupposes faith" in the marvelous and the baroque, "a constant of the human spirit that is characterized by a horror of the vacuum, the naked surface, the harmony of linear geometry" (Carpentier, "Marvelous" 86, "Baroque" 93). Essentially, *lo real maravilloso* is the existence of magic in the everyday, believed in not because it is perceived that way, but because it is already a given. Wendy Faris links Carpentier's *real maravilloso* with one of two strains of magical realism identified by Roberto González Echevarría: ontological magical realism, wherein the world itself *is* magic, and epistemological magical realism, in which magic occurs as a result of an observer's perception (Faris 165). Carpentier's baroque, Latin American style

falls under the former category, while many European works rely on epistemologically marvelous worlds, though these geographic categories are more convenient than absolute.

Waterland's magic is quieter, perhaps, than the magic that Carpentier sees in *lo real maravilloso*, but the novel's unreal moments partake in both epistemological and ontological magical realism, and it is ultimately the ontological magic of the Fens that is able to constitute a version of reality which can combat the dominating linear narratives of power. *Waterland* is full of unusual stories which overlay a pall of perceived magic over the (apparently) realistic landscape. Sarah Atkinson, for example, becomes a local fairy tale after Thomas, in a fit of jealous rage, strikes her so hard that she loses her wits and never speaks, or moves again. The people of Gildsey come to regard Sarah, watching ceaselessly from her upper room, as their "Guardian Angel, Holy Mother, Saint Gunnhilda-come-again" who looks over the town "like a goddess" and who can "see and shape the future" (94, 83). And later, townsfolk will report, with varying degrees of hysteria, that they have seen Sarah's ghost roaming the town. Sarah maintains a pervasive presence throughout the rest of the Atkinson chapter, and Tom frequently invokes her supernatural abilities in order to add moments of uncertainty and strangeness to his narrative, but he is also careful to note the uncertain nature of her magic. Sarah first becomes the angel of the town when the people "begin . . . to tell stories" to remedy the fact that "Popular opinion learns scarcely anything of Sarah Atkinson" (83). Her magic, that is, resides not in her actual nature, but in the stories that are told about her. When Tom mentions her putative influence, furthermore, it is almost always in the form of a question ("Was this Sarah's work?" [87]), suggesting that the true extent of Sarah's supernatural abilities depends on the answers that observers provided to such queries.

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The epistemological magic of Sarah's prescience, far from contesting the Atkinsons' narrative of progress, only serves to reinforce their primacy by adding an element of the English Gothic to a tale already steeped in the cultivation of a mythic family dynasty. Her magic, which exists purely as a result of perception and the narration of perception, does not sufficiently disrupt the historical narratives which claim to represent reality. This power is reserved for the ontological magic inherent in the space of the Fens, which reasserts the value of a spatial understanding of reality. "We lived in a fairy-tale land," Tom says, and spends a novel proving that this is true (1). In "About the Ouse," he attempts to tell the history of the great river which flows through the Fens, and into which his local Leem empties itself. The Ouse, he claims, before men existed to give it a name, was known only by "the fishes which swam up and down it and the giant creatures which browsed in its shallows and whose fantastic forms we might never have guessed" if circumstances had not occasionally "preserve[d] their fossilized bones [so that] millions of years later, [they would become] a subject for human inquiry" (143). This primordial Ouse exists prior to the advent of human inquiry, prior to the advent of narrative explanation that could confer upon it the privilege of epistemological magic. Instead, its unperceived shallows house "fantastic" shapes that are magical in their own right, but which do not seem so to us today because of those happy, fossil-making circumstances. The presence of these fantastic beasts suggests that the Ouse has, to use Carpentier's phrase, an "unexpected richness of reality" which we recognize only when it is viewed outside of the discourse of human inquiry—its magic resides in its being, not in its knowing (Carpentier, "Marvelous" 86).

The chief characteristic of the Fens is their wateriness: "they are reclaimed land, land that was once water, and which, even today, is not quite solid," for, "Strictly speaking, they are never reclaimed, only being reclaimed" (Swift 8, 10). As the title suggests, the Fens are a *Waterland*, neither completely solid nor entirely liquid. Instead, they exist as a liminal, shifting space that evades simple categorization. In this unreal space, places and characteristics freely mingle and bleed into one another, as evidenced by the river Leem near Tom Crick's childhood home, which exudes a "smell which is half man and half fish" as it brings "down its unceasing booty of debris. Willow branches; alder branches; sedge; fencing; crates; old clothes; dead sheep; bottles; potato sacks; straw bales; fruit boxes; fertilizer bags. All floated down on the westerly current" (4). The watery channel of the Leem serves to collect and render equal the items from all over the Fens, mixing them into a single slurry of water/land. In the river, they are all a part of the Fens.

Just as the liquidity of the Fens exerts this mingling effect on the physical objects and spaces within it, it also has similar effects on the social and psychological lives of the Fen-dwellers. As "The waters rise" in the floods of 1874, "They wash up rumours and strange reports of many kinds" about the recent death of Sarah Atkinson, and "amid [this] flood-fostered rumour," "Mrs. Atkinson's . . . own waters . . . break in sympathy," and Ernest Atkinson is born (103, 105). The water of the Fens not only has primacy over the landscape, but also pushes itself into the lives of the humans who interact with it. Due to the overwhelming influx of water, the Fens give birth to rumor that causes social disruption, and effect a similar reaction in Maud Atkinson's body, which the novel frames as an instance of reversed pathetic fallacy: Maud's body responds with

"sympathy" to the actions of the living space around her. Similarly, the Fens are able to "drive a man to unquiet and sleep-defeating thoughts" due to their "unrelieved and monotonous flatness," which is simply "enough of itself" to create this state of mind (2). As the space of the Fens leaks into the lives of its inhabitants, it holds peculiar sway over their emotional and psychological conditions, infusing everything with the specific qualities of the shifting waterland. The Fens pervade and shape the lives of the people who live in its space, thus becoming more than a landscape or a setting, and demonstrating their all-encompassing, "natural forms with all their metamorphoses and symbioses," as Carpentier says (Carpentier, "Marvelous" 85). In *Waterland*, the Fens are a constantly changing (always transforming), pervasive space, made up of distinctive physical forms: the geometry of twisting water and horizontal fields that never cease to shape the interactions that are possible within this unreal space.

But the history of the Fens is also the history of the domination of this marvelous, natural space, of its transformation from a physical into an abstract space under the influence of the linear temporality of drainage engineers. In this process, the representational space of the Fens (shifting and uncontrollable) falls victim to the representations of space (rectilinear, tamed passage for trade and commerce) that the Atkinsons create to picture it. The novel, however, resists the idea that such domination has in any way diminished the inherent magic of the Fens, which continues to display a marvelous, baroque landscape underneath the reductionist revisions to its space. The Romans, the Dutch, and the Atkinsons all undertake a great endeavor: to tame "the old Ouse's perpetual if unhurried unruliness . . . its ungovernable desire to flow at its own pace and in its own way" (Swift 144). All of them must contend with "the tortuous,

reptilian Ouse," and the solution, as we have seen, it is to straighten it, to force it into regular, geometric patterns that separate land from water (144). The efforts of channel-builders attempt to create that "harmony of linear geometry" which Carpentier's baroque so despises, but the Fens actively resist this vision (Carpentier, "Baroque" 93). The waters of the Fens refuse to respect the limits imposed by artificial banks, and periodically act against geometric violence with boundary-effacing floods, filling the empty spaces between the channels and once again fusing land and water. Although Tom repeatedly refers to the Fens as empty, they are truly empty only when constricted by the dominating geometry of progress. Underneath the imposed linear geometry produced by narratives of power, the Fens possess a twisting, teeming geometry that seeks to flood and fill empty spaces, demonstrating the baroque "horror of the vacuum" that Carpentier identifies as an essential component of *lo real maravilloso*. As Jack Parr discovers when he lives through a night spent on the train tracks, "despite everything, despite emptiness, monotony, this Fenland, this palpable earth raised out of the flood by centuries of toil, is a magical, a miraculous land" (Swift 116). Regardless of the dominating narratives which figure space as an empty medium through which time moves, the Fens retain their inherent marvelousness, the ontological magical realism that restores to space its natural authority and refuses to submit to the Atkinsons' limiting representations of space.

By making the Fens into a true "fairy-tale land," the novel not only asserts the primacy of space over linear temporality; it also insists on the importance of the Fens themselves as a specific local space and place as opposed to the larger national and global spaces which rely on a progress-oriented temporality. This national and global space enters *Waterland* by way of the Atkinsons, who consistently attempt to link and

subordinate the local space of the Fens, and the local narratives of the Fens, to the national spaces and narrative of imperial progress, thus figuring the local as merely an extension of the national. Tom explicitly points to George and Alfred Atkinson's connection with the world of global history, claiming that in their works it is clear that "all private interest is subsumed by the National Interest and all private empires do but pay tribute to the Empire of Great Britain" (93). Though this explanation comes late in the Atkinson narrative, it is not a new concept—even as early as Thomas' time, the Kessling maltings is "christened, by inevitable choice, the Waterloo Maltings" (71). By naming the maltings after the site of Napoleon's defeat, Thomas Atkinson celebrates a national success, a valid cause of celebration if it means the end of war, but his choice of name also brings the national space into the local space, superimposing the nation's history over that of the local space, and thus rendering the local space of Kessling merely an accessory to the central national space. The Atkinsons even measure their successes by those of the nation, producing an ale for every occasion ("'The Grand '51'; 'The Empress of India'; 'The Golden Jubilee'; 'The Diamond Jubilee'" [93]) even though these events in the imperial history of Britain have almost nothing to do with the local events that concern the people of the Fens. By claiming affinity to the national space and history, the Atkinsons marginalize the local space and narratives of the Fens, which do not participate directly in the events of the national space and are thus "only the echo of real events, real achievements, real creations that have already occurred somewhere else" (Craig qtd. in Tange 78). The subordination of the regional to the national is another aspect of the Atkinsons' spatial domination of the Fens, in which local specificity must give way to global homogeneity.

In representing the Fens as a space imbued with primordial magic and focusing on the intricacies of Fenland history, *Waterland* presents, as Hanne Tange suggests, "English regionalism as an alternative to a history written and controlled by the centre" (Tange 77). The relocation of meaning and reality to previously peripheral locations such as the Fens serves to undermine the national and global narratives which insist on progress (and the violence necessary to achieve it) as the measure of success. In the Fens of Tom Crick's youth, national and global histories make their presence felt, but the novel never allows them to truly impinge on the primacy of the local space and its sense of temporality. When Mary goes to meet Dick alone for the first time, Tom explains that the eels Dick was tasked with collecting were, "in those wartime days . . . our staple diet [and] a source of clandestine income" (Swift 249). We learn, too, in passing, that Mary is wearing "her wartime curtain-fabric skirt" (250). These brief and subtle reminders that, outside of the very real, adolescent drama of the Fens, a World War is being fought serve to connect the world of Tom and Mary to the national world in which their home is situated. However, other than in moments where the family history intersects with national history (as when Henry and then Tom Crick are called off to war), the national events have little significant impact on the lives of the Fenlanders. In fact, as part of its effort to figure the Fens as a legitimate space in its own right, the novel represents national events as accessory to the space of the Fens. As Tom and Mary stumble toward Martha the Witch's hut, Tom hears the "Fen geese," which are not "the feathered, beaked and web-footed kind," but rather "made of aluminum and steel, wooden struts and Perspex; and with the trick of laying explosive and inflammatory eggs while still in mid-air" (298, 299). He is describing, of course, WWII bombers on their way to Germany, but

Tom and Mary treat them "as if they were a natural phenomenon, as if they were real geese" because such strange birds have become commonplace in 1943 (299). In this instance, the national historical narrative has indeed impinged on the isolated world of the Fens, but instead of allowing it to efface the local, the novel fashions the elements of national history into components of the local space by transforming planes into geese. Instead of a national intrusion on the Fens, the national becomes assimilated into the Fens, so that local space and local specificity do not succumb to the homogenizing tendencies of a national narrative. The local space regains its own specific identity rather than being merely an echo or extension of the national space which ever presses forward in pursuit of narratives of progress, which, as we have learned, never truly represent or access reality.

For Tom, the process of accepting a spatial view of reality is a difficult one. He is, after all, a historian by profession, concerned with those explanatory narratives that privilege linear systems of cause and effect. Although he seems to have lost confidence in traditional historical narrative, he never truly lets go of his desire for narrative closure. The Royal Observatory, sitting on longitude 0° with its "locked-up collections of antique chronometers, astrolabes, sextants, telescopes—instruments for measuring the universe" always has an irresistible draw for Tom, for he returns again and again to this point of clean measurement, rehearsing each time his desire to regulate time and space (147). The Observatory as a representational space, furthermore, signifies the ultimate globalization, and therefore homogenization, of space: rather than seeing space as a function of local specificity, the system of longitude which the Observatory marks turns space into a homogenized medium that marches uniformly along the equator. Tom cleaves to this

system, and his home in Greenwich, the center of longitudinal space, as he attempts to make sense of his personal history. The unrealities of the Fens, their resistance to linear temporality, their cyclical progression-which-is-not-progress, are a source of anxiety for him, as he is ever hesitant to truly "believe . . . that he's in fairy-land" instead of in the regulated world of linear temporality (148). For this reason he does not reconcile space and time, and time always remains something separate from the land it moves through without leaving a trace. As he sits outside of Martha's cottage while she performs Mary's abortion, Tom suddenly wakes up and realizes: "It's dark. I'm here; it's now" (308). Although this moment is one of those anti-narrative intrusions of the "Here and Now" which frustrate the efforts of linear narrative, Tom's understanding of it is still limited by his faith in the ability of narrative and history to order reality, so while "I" can be "here," it is only "it" that is "now." Time, for Tom, still operates separately from the space through which it moves, perhaps transparently. Despite his protestations about the flatness of reality, the circles of history, the lack of progress, and the virtues of land reclamation, he remains a history teacher, bound to see history as reality-giving explanation.

Although Tom does not succeed in unifying space and time, his brother Dick, the potato head, does. The novel repeatedly associates Dick with the Fens themselves. He "seems to have a natural instinct for the principles of dredging" (that process which Thomas Atkinson only learned through painstaking hours of study), and his body, fishlike, is "long, but finless, scaleless," always emanating a "residual whiff of the river-bed" (347, 190, 255). Though he is the child of an incestuous relationship between Helen and Ernest Atkinson, it seems that Dick is actually the natural heir of his false Crick

ancestors, those amphibious water people who first negotiated and appropriated the space of the Fens. So when Dick stands on the deck of the *Rosa II*, "He's here, he's now," in a union of space and time previously seen only in the natural rhythms of the pre-abstract space of the Fens (355). Whereas for Tom time exists in its linear form, moving through space as if it is the medium of progress, for Dick time is the time invoked in the history of space, that time which, as per Lefebvre, is the natural expression of the rhythms of space. Because Dick is here, he is also now.

Dick's ability to "be" in both space and time recognizes the spatial character of reality that persists underneath the signs of its domination by linear time. However, Dick's unique position does not serve him well. As the sole representative of this spatial reality, Dick stands alone against the linear temporality that seeks to place him in a teleological narrative. Specifically, the chain of causally-related events that Tom reconstructs in the novel drives Dick to leap from the *Rosa II* to his (assumed) death in the Ouse. Dick's death seems like a bleak, but inevitable ending to the increasingly tragic narrative that Tom presents. Tom's last invocation of the magic of the Fens, however, brings out the more nuanced implications of Dick's suicide. As his father, the Americans, and Stan Booth search for Dick's body, Tom becomes quiet, secretly convinced that, far from being dead, Dick is simply "on his way. Obeying instinct. Returning. The Ouse flows to the sea . . ." (357). Dick, the embodiment of the Fens in all their muddy spatiality, is not dead, but "Gone" (357). And like Helen Atkinson, who in her death was also "gone," that "awesome and open-ended" word, Dick's presence will not disappear entirely. By succumbing to the pressures of linear narrative, Dick in his suicide comes to represent the domination of spatial reality by linear temporality, which forces the spatial

into a transparent, submissive state. However, like the underlying spatial reality of the

Fens, Dick cannot die. He persists, "invisible, yet still there" (283).

Too Big, Madam: Feminine Space and History in *Sexing the Cherry*

When he is three years old, Jordan, the foundling child that his huge adoptive mother, Dog-Woman, finds in the mud of the Thames, "sets sail" for the first time, using the first banana ever brought to England as a mental portal to some tropical Pacific beach (Winterson 6). As Dog-Woman places her head next to his and looks where he looks, she sees "deep blue waters against a pale shore and trees whose branches sang with green and birds in fairground colours and an old man in a loin-cloth" (6). Jordan's infant gaze transforms the scene of the London crowd into an unfamiliar and fantastic space, and in so doing combines the imperial, historical moment of discovery with a journey of personal significance which defies historical reality. This tension between the realistic historical and the fantastic ahistorical is characteristic throughout Jordan's journeys in space and time, as well as in his mother's experiences of a history that seems like myth.

Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* takes place in seventeenth century London, and does not shy away from the sensual images of a rotting, stinking city. When the narrative makes occasional forays into the twentieth century, the depiction is perhaps less fragrant, but no less evocative in its presentation of historical reality. Dog-Woman's story presents intimate views of the most important events of the times: violent images and philosophical musings on the rise of the Puritans and the Civil War; a sympathetic image of Charles I before his execution. But despite its strong evocations of the sensory reality and impression of historical immediacy in the events depicted, the novel itself disavows the authenticity of these perspectives. The novel's two epigrams begin the shift away from a sense of physical historical reality:

The Hopi, an Indian tribe, have a language as sophisticated as ours, but no

tenses for past, present and future. The division does not exist. What does

this say about time?

Matter, that thing the most solid and the well-known, which you are

holding in your hands and which makes up your body, is now known to be

mostly empty space. Empty space and points of light. What does this say

about the reality of the world?

Jordan, the foundling whom Dog-Woman fishes out of the Thames, seems to have found

the answers. Among "Lies" about time, the novel includes "Lies 2: Time is a straight

line" and "Lies 4: We can only be in one place at a time" (Winterson 79). Having

traveled the world and had adventures both real and unreal, Jordan concludes that the

"future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the

borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating

city in the sky" (149). Instead, the past, present, and future all inhabit the same,

undifferentiated plane. For Jordan and seemingly for the novel, time as a linear system is

merely a way of imposing order and rigidity on a system of simultaneities. Time is not a

line but a "grid" upon which our multiple selves are scattered coordinates (92). He comes

to understand that time segmented into past, present and future is insufficient, for "If all

time is eternally present, there is no reason why we should not step out of one present

into another" (88). When Jordan meets Fortunata, for example, he adds the caveat, "The

scene I have just described to you may lie in the future or the past. Either I have found

Fortunata or I will find her. I cannot be sure. Either I am remembering her or I am still

imagining her" (92). Fortunata exists either as a memory or a daydream, but Jordan

makes no distinction between the reality of things remembered and things imagined,

because for him the past and the future are merely different words for the present.

Jordan's flights through time are made possible by a similarly unconventional

view of space and the matter that makes it up. Matter, that most solid of things, as the

epigram says, is "known to be mostly . . . Empty space and points of light," rather than

the dense and significance-bearing substance we perceive it to be. In Fortunata's dancing

school, Jordan witnesses "tens points of light spiraling in a line along the floor" before

each "form[s] into a head and arms and legs. Slower and slower . . . until on the floor

were ten women, their shoes in holes, their bodies wet with sweat" (92). Under

Fortunata's tutelage, the women learn to escape the limitations of their flesh, so that they

"*most resemble . . . freed spirit[s] from a darkened jar*" (66). In this more "free" form of

the body, the body is nothing but light. A universe where all matter is understood in this

way, a "thoughtful universe," would be "a theatre of changing sets, where we could walk

through walls if we wanted" because "space and place have no meaning" (101, 76). For

Jordan, matter is only a limitation in so far as we conceive of it as a solid form which

imposes weight, barriers, and form on that which is merely empty space.

The novel sets up these formulations of matter and time (where time is always

present and matter is empty) in opposition to the more apparent and prevailing

observations that, as Dog-Woman says, "the earth is surely a manageable place made of

blood and stone and entirely flat" (17). Dog-Woman's worldview acts as a practical

counterweight to Jordan's radical ideas about reality, and her statement reflects an

opinion based on the evidence of everyday experience. Her body, unlike those of

Jordan's dancers, is fiercely physical and dense. Her space is solid and her time is "manageable" in its linearity. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that strictures such as these are the relics of a patriarchal worldview which imposes masculine forms upon a genderless, or perhaps even feminine, world. And it is the institutions and conventions created by this patriarchal system that consistently oppress and distort the experience of those outside its narratives.

By introducing paradoxical and extreme geometries (of the world and of the individual body) into a world ordered by the logic of patriarchal space, *Sexing the Cherry* articulates a feminine geometry and theory of space that dismantles the patriarchal conceptions of space and time which uphold the institutions that marginalize and oppress. However, the novel does not merely seek to replace a masculine space with a feminine one. Instead, by interweaving the anti-geometrical feminine spaces with the patriarchal values of linear time and solid matter, it demonstrates how the two can speak to each other in order to form more informed representations of the world.

Sexing the Cherry depicts a world in transition, one which encompasses both the stagnant streets of London town and the shining water of the space of exploration. Lefebvre describes how early modern spatial relationships, such as between the town and the unknown world as depicted in the novel, relied on new geometrical rules that created rational relationships between locations in space. Whereas "primitive people" viewed space as oriented around and as extensions of the body, later the body became replaced by a "social object such as a chief's hut . . . or, later, a temple or church" (Lefebvre 194). This second idea of space figures individual bodies as only "one point among others in an abstract milieu," which can be described through "the space of 'plans' and maps" (194).

What Lefebvre describes is the transition from concrete space, in which features as well as bodies serve as spatial indicators due to their function, to geometrical space, in which those elements take on mathematically-determined relationships and thus become mappable by location rather than significance. This turn to the geometric coincides with the rise of the "space of history, of accumulation," a period when the number of *things* (capital, goods, people, resources, square miles) within a space was a sign of power, and when the accumulation of this wealth became the primary goal of violence (277). Since accumulation must occur around a central location, the emphasis on acquisition also served as the foundation for the establishment of towns and eventually states as centers from which violence could be exerted. Lefebvre traces the origins of the Western town in the sixteenth century as the center of a controlled space. When towns "assumed [their] own identity, and began to represent [themselves] graphically" as centers around which wars for accumulation raged, they became "the location of wealth, at once threatening (and threatened) 'objects' and 'subjects' of accumulation – and hence too 'subjects' of history (278). The space of the town both accumulates and is a space to be accumulated, and thus can participate in the creation of historical narratives through the consolidation of power. The struggle to be a center of accumulation rather than a space which is accumulated by another center is epitomized in the formation of empires, which seek to control the relationship of the center to the periphery by firmly establishing, through violence, the exact boundaries of those elements. "The spread of sovereign power [control over a space] was predicated on military prominence, generally preceded by plunder" (280). Here Lefebvre links a mechanism of accumulation (plunder) with a mechanism of political power (military prominence), both of which depend on an

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understanding of a "center-periphery relationship" in which plunder and violence are sanctioned because the periphery is always separate from (though connected to) the center (280). In the space of accumulation, where centers acquire wealth from the periphery in a strict geometrical relationship, power is consolidated in the space which contains the most.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson depicts the development of a Lefebvrean space of accumulation and the formation of patriarchal systems through the trope of exploration, the vocation of both Jordan and his mentor John Tradescant. Jordan himself identifies exploration as an exclusively masculine pursuit: explorers "wave goodbye to [their wives] and children at the docks . . . sorry to see them go but more excited about what is to come" (Winterson 102). These men are "one of the boys . . . back-slapper[s who] know a joke or two" (102). And when they come home, they are "heroes" while Dog-Woman is merely a "hero's mother" who is best employed "cleaning the hut" as a "good woman should" (110, 139). In Nicholas Jordan's "*Boys' Book of Heroes*," we learn about William the Conqueror, the "out-of-doors man," Christopher Columbus, discoverer of the new world, Francis Drake, the "masterthief of the Unknown World," and Lord Nelson, who had "been to the Arctic by the time he was fifteen" (116, 117). Heroes like these, Nicholas Jordan goes on to clarify, "have wide shoulders and plenty of hair," and "Mostly they enjoy the company of other men, although attractive women are part of their reward" (118). Explorers are heroes and heroes are men—manly men who inhabit a man's world. In the novel, exploration comes to stand for a patriarchal domination of space which presupposes certain similarly patriarchal characteristics of spatiality.

A journey through patriarchal space is an unambiguous undertaking, as travel through this space is linear, dependent on a conception of time that demands the satisfaction of linear narrative. While Jordan experiences time and space as unreal and shifting, "For Tradescant voyages can be completed. They occupy time comfortably. With some leeway, they are predictable" (103). As the quintessential explorer, Tradescant exists in a world where time operates as a linear series of motions through space, where journeys contain discrete beginnings, middles, and ends. His version of a journey, in other words, is a linear narrative which moves through all the expected stages of lack, journey, and fulfillment. But such a view of time can be problematic, for as Angela Marie Smith argues, "linear, teleological modes of history construct the political status quo . . . as the only possible history" (Smith 23). As in *Waterland*, the dominant powers in *Sexing the Cherry* rely on the existence of linear narrative in order to justify and perpetuate their control over space. Exploration, with its expectation of departure and inevitable return, upholds that linear understanding of time which brooks no critique of standing institutions and traditions.

Boundaries of time are not the only measurements which segment the space of exploration; Tradescant also relies on a firm belief in boundaries that exist within and around space**.** An explorer's goal is to find and found new spaces, leaving the known world for the unknown world in order to then turn the unknown into the known (despite the fact that these "unknown" spaces are likely inhabited and already "known" by others). In other words, explorers are driven by a desire to seek out and understand the extent of a discrete space. For people like Tradescant, "swarming over the earth with . . . tiny insect bodies and putting up flags and building houses," the act of exploration is also the act of

expansion, and it works by defining ever-widening boundaries (Winterson 77).

Exploration in *Sexing the Cherry* not only discovers new fruits, but also expands and

accumulates space for the center by mapping the boundaries of the center and the

periphery that allows it to accumulate wealth and power.

Finally, the goal of exploration in *Sexing the Cherry* is to return to the homeland

bearing the evidence of the journey. Jordan is inspired by the banana to seek out new

fruits, and eventually brings the first pineapple to England. Tradescant, too, "wants to

bring back rarities and he does," collecting plants and artifacts from around the world to

display in "'The Ark,' as it please[s] him to call his home" (102, 9) Tradescant's relation

to the space of exploration is made especially compelling by the fact that John Tradescant

was a real historical figure—John Tradescant the younger (1608-1662) was the son of

John Tradescant the elder, and followed his father in caring for the royal gardens as well

as traveling the world in search of botanical, natural, and cultural curiosities

(MacGregor). The Tradescants' home, the Ark to which Dog-Woman refers, was stocked

with wonders such as a piece of the True Cross and unicorn-horn cups, and eventually

became the first public museum in England. In the novel and in history, Tradescant's job

as simultaneous head gardener and exploratory botanist involves cultivating a space (a

garden) at home, and exploring and collecting items from the space abroad. His gathering

of exotic rarities suggests similarity to Lefebvre's concept of accumulation. In fact,

although Tradescant's curiosities seemingly hold little monetary value, as Lefebvre's

conception supposes, by gathering items of value from abroad Tradescant still amasses

power through the collection of things and thereby reinforces the centrality of the center.

Tradescant's museum and garden of foreign plants are a compression of space, an attempt

to recreate and re-present the periphery within the center, so that the center can actually *contain* the periphery, rendering it not only center but also totality. The process of accumulating wealth not only gives power to the center while taking it away from the periphery, but also continually repeats the process through which the center becomes the center, and thus always emphasizes those geometrical relationships that govern the center-periphery relationship.

Sexing the Cherry uses the trope of exploration to articulate a series of patriarchal assumptions about space that allow dominant and oppressive institutions to maintain power. This patriarchal space is a space with logical geometric relations, in which things are linearly connected and can be completed, are discrete and exact, which is segmented by boundaries that define and give meaning to a center which is always asserting its own centrality. It is, in other words, the space of our daily physical reality.

The novel contests the legitimacy of that reality and the space which constitutes it by insisting on the existence of paradoxical and extreme geometries that frustrate "realistic" spatial logic. It presents these alternative spaces through retellings of myth, fairy tales, and through Jordan's fantastical journeys to fantastic places. Additionally, in contrast to the strictly patriarchal space of exploration, the novel portrays the retold myths, fairy tales, and magical places as distinctly feminine. On his journeys, Jordan encounters several women who tell him familiar stories of myth and fairy tale, but in ways and with results that are entirely new. These reinterpretations of familiar stories cast doubt on the received traditions of myth (where men are heroes and women are their "home-makers") and instead depict female heroines. Fortunata tells him about the "goddess Artemis [who] begged of her father, King Zeus, a bow and arrows, a short tunic

and an island of her own free from interference" (Winterson 134). In the various versions of Artemis' story from Greek myth, Orion is her hunting companion, her lover, or mostly harmless attacker who dies for laying hands on her robes. Fortunata, on the other hand, recounts simply: "Orion raped Artemis and fell asleep" (135). This unambiguous retelling of the myth exposes the violence inherent in patriarchal representations of space. Orion rumbles uninvited onto Artemis' island and eats her food, forces her to stand in the sea off the shore before he "allow[s] her to wade in from the rising water," and finally violates her body as well as her space (135). Orion's actions assume that acquiring space through violence is a natural and expected process: as an explorer Orion can invade Artemis' island and displace her into the water. Likewise, his penis can invade her body and he can fall asleep without guilt.

But Artemis does not allow him this bliss for long. "Her revenge was swift and simple. She killed him with a scorpion" (136). The simple declarative sentences that describe violence in the story defray any ambiguity present in the myths—in this telling Orion is obviously an unwanted presence, obviously a rapist, and Artemis is clearly a capable and heroic figure. By retelling and clarifying the myth in this way, the novel casts Artemis, whose body and island are sites of violation, as a feminine foil to the masculine values of accumulation through violence. The novel's revision of Artemis' myth makes room for women to be "heroes" as well as "hero's mother[s]" (110).

Similarly, when Jordan meets the Twelve Dancing Princesses, they offer both a new version of that familiar fairy tale, as well as elaborations beyond "happily ever after" that further revise and recast received literary tradition in order to assert the presence of female subjects and offer critique of the patriarchal assumptions present in the narratives.

The twelve princesses in Winterson's reproduction of the Brothers Grimm story travel to a floating, "weightless city" rather than an underground castle, and at the end must marry twelve princes instead of ceding their inheritance to the old soldier (97). The story, narrated by the youngest princess, Fortunata, is the tale of twelve princesses whose secret, wonderful life is ruined by prying men, as opposed to an account of a clever and resourceful soldier who discovers the scandalous secret of disobedient girls, as it appears in the Brothers Grimm iteration. Their (literal) flight to the floating city with its freedom from gravity makes clear the fact which the fairy tale ignores: the princesses love their nightly adventures, and by solving the mystery the soldier/prince does not do a good deed but condemns them to a life of ordinary miseries. In Winterson's fairy tale, the male discomfort with unknown spaces and illogical spatiality is also obvious: the princesses must be "fattened up and given heavy clothes to wear," and their punishment consists partially of chains around their ankles that "contain" them in the world of gravity and heaviness (98). As Angela Carter has said of her own fairy tale revisions in *The Bloody Chamber*, the goal in retelling is not to make a new version of the old thing, but to "extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories" (Haffenden 84). *Sexing the Cherry*'s presentation of the Twelve Dancing Princesses draws out the implicit assumptions the story makes about space and the agency of men and women, and provides a new story to take into account these oppressive conceptions of reality.

Although this revision is compelling on its own, the princesses' accounts of their marriages offer even more biting retellings of literary tradition and conventional values. The princesses provide images of violent men, violent, intolerant societies, unhappy men,

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unhappy women, and fulfilling lesbian desire, most built with allusions to famous works of literature or myth. In the princesses' retelling, Rapunzel's witch-jailer is actually her lover, who once married a prince who turned into a frog; a princess turns into a roc-like creature and plucks out her husband's liver; another quotes Byron as she describes how her husband "walked in beauty"; and yet another refers to "my last husband . . . looking as though he were alive" in an inversion of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" (Winterson 44). Each of these allusions makes use of a familiar literary tradition to mock, upset, or frustrate the sexist, normalizing assumptions perpetuated by such stories, and creates new stories based on these now-visible values. The eldest princess explains, "as it says we lived happily ever after. We did, but not with our husbands" (43). In extending the princesses' stories beyond the culminating "happily ever after," the novel not only takes the opportunity to replace patriarchally-determined conditions with feminist ones, but also defies the authority of the "happily ever after" to satisfactorily conclude a narrative. The continuation, that is, denies the comfortable linearity and completeness of narratives and journeys. The princesses have more story to tell, and their stories additionally continue and alter other stories (poems, fairy tales, myths), that are usually considered complete in themselves. Reappropriation of myth and fairy tale allows the novel to contest the legitimacy of received patriarchal traditions, as well as question the narrative (and therefore historiographic) methods that underpin their existence. The novel does not merely replace patriarchal stories and histories with one in which women take center, but instead attempts to revise the conceptions of narrative, space, and time that brought those (his)stories into being.

Simply by presenting these fanciful narratives and spaces alongside the more mundane aspects of its narrative, the novel questions the legitimacy of linear time and the space through which it moves. Because the time and space of myth and fairy tale is strangely universal and specific at the same time, it can frustrate desires for linear connection. While myths and fairy tales are supposed to take place in some distant, inaccessible past (once upon a time) or in an indeterminate, extra-temporal eternity (happily ever after), they continue to be told because their lessons and meanings are relevant to the time of telling. Their setting is similarly doubled, for while the space of a myth or fairy tale is never "here," it is also somehow always "here," since, again, myth and fairy stories are relevant regardless of the location from which they are told. This at once universal and specific quality in the space-time of the fantastic indicates the presence of metaphorical and symbolic connections that do not follow cause and effect but instead leap across time and space much as Jordan claims to leap between presents and places. Between myth and real life, the strictures of linear time and discrete spaces (that due to fixed boundaries do not bleed into one another) do not apply. Instead, the space of myth and fairy tale is illogical: it is connected without recourse to geometrical relations, but nevertheless maintains its structure and manages to create relationships based on symbolic rather than literal content.

Winterson applies these characteristics of mythic and fabulous time to the fantastic spaces within the novel too, and articulates a feminine geometry that relies on simultaneity, boundlessness, and the denial of centers. Jordan describes a family that refused to "allow their feet to touch the floor," so that in their house, "you will see, not floors, but bottomless pits" over which the furniture hangs on chains and racks (14).

Guests eat dinner while "swinging their feet over the abyss where crocodiles live," listening to the "fearful crunching" that arises from the pit when food is dropped down (14). This custom continues despite the fact that "It is well known that the ceiling of one room is the floor of another, but the household ignores this ever-downward necessity and continues ever upward, celebrating ceilings but denying floors, and so their house never ends and they must travel by winch or rope from room to room" (14). Such a house is an impossible house, as it defies some of the most basic assumptions of geometry, physics, and architecture. The house's paradoxical shape resists the primacy of geometric relationships, instead following a new set of rules that allows for simultaneous logic and impossibility. "Floors" in the house are first "bottomless pits," then "the abyss where crocodiles live," and finally a pit "from whence a fearful crunching can be heard" (14). How can the floors be bottomless, but also be a home for crocodiles, which must do their crunching on some kind of surface? How can these abysses/pits also secretly maintain their identities as floors? The novel refuses to resolve these questions. In the house, the abyss can be both infinite and finite, containing something and containing nothing. Although Jordan hints that the absence of floors is merely a function of the family's denial ("the household ignores this ever-downward necessity"), their belief transforms the house into an illogical space: their house "never ends" and they "must" use ropes and pulleys to travel ever-upward. Even if the pits are really just distant floors, Jordan's description of the house refuses to see geometrical spatial relations as more legitimate or authoritative than paradoxical beliefs and perceptions of space, and allows the house to become infinite in pursuit of illogical new geometries.

In undermining the primacy of geometric relations, the novel also subverts that necessity of linear temporality that orders space into discrete spaces. Having arrived at a "house of some stature," Jordan speaks with a girl who believes that the house is a tall tower, and, "follow[ing] her gaze, down and further down" he too is able to see the sheer sides of the tower instead of a friendly town market (33, 34). Later, after he escapes, the townspeople tell him that there was once a tower, built as punishment for a girl "caught incestuously with her sister," but that a house has since been built in its place, through it is still haunted by screams from the trapped girl (35). For Jordan, who takes for granted his ability to travel through time, perhaps the leap from house to tower to house, from present to past to present, is not unusual—he certainly takes it in stride. But separate from Jordan's nonchalance, this occasion displays a strange interpenetration of past and present, where the tower, built at some indeterminate past time, continues to exist underneath and within the house built "Many years later" in the same location (35). As they persist in the present, the girl's screams continually rehearse the punishment she suffered because of her perceived sexual deviance, thus exploding one of the "Lies" of time ("Lies 1: There is only the present and nothing to remember") which relies on linear conception of time that states that the past, because it has been succeeded by the present, is no longer accessible or relevant (79). Instead, the tower and the house both exist in the same moment, so that because of the absence of a strict linear time, the spaces of the past and present are no longer discrete, but freely inhabit and replace one another. Such a relationship of past and present demands recognition of injustices, rather than allowing them to slip unnoticed into an inaccessible history.

These fantastic spaces appear frequently in the novel, and despite Jordan's occasional reminders that they exist only in his mind, he does not permit such a distinction to make them any less real. For this reason, they present a strange contrast to the spaces of historical reality that Dog-Woman inhabits: seventeenth century London, complete with a stinking river and the admirable and repulsive figures of Revolution and Restoration. But while the space of London seems to follow the basic rules of realistic spatiality, it also communicates a revisionist history that demonstrates how patriarchal conceptions of space have contributed to the perpetuation of oppressive and sexist regimes.

Jeffrey Roessner notes that in traditional historiography, the English Civil War is depicted as a "liberating event" which challenged a king's divine right to rule, thus ushering in a "more democratic form of government based on civil law rather than divine authority (Roessner 107). In contrast, in *Sexing the Cherry* the Puritan Revolution is clearly a battle between the "sexually repressed and hypocritical Puritans" and Charles I, the rightful king, who "goes with dignity to his execution" (107). Eventually, the Revolution helps to "establish the value of sexual repression and the naturalness of heterosexuality," values which consistently cause suffering and violence in the novel, and which Winterson is keen to dismantle (108). The Puritans, for whom Dog-Woman and the novel display an undisguised contempt, are able to maintain their hypocritical attitudes by subscribing to the primacy of geometric space that offers clean divisions between discrete and finite spaces. In a public square, the Puritans execute Charles, calling him a "Tyrant, Traitor, Murderer and Public Enemy," as well as waging war on his "sins of excess," by closing theaters, having sex only through holes in sheets, and

keeping "their member[s] . . . strapped between their legs with bandages" (Winterson 63, 60). The Puritans actively repress sexuality that does not perform a heterosexual, reproductive function, and publicly espouse these beliefs, enforcing them through violence. But when Dog-Woman visits her friend in the brothel, she is shocked to find that the customers are all Puritan men, fulfilling their sexual fantasies in excessive and grotesque displays that only occur behind the secretive doors of the brothel. Such overt hypocrisy is facilitated by the perceived secrecy of the space; because the brothel is physically separate from the public square and other open locations, the rooms closed to prying eyes, the Puritans believe it to be a discrete space, cut off from the world due to the physical boundaries of the walls and the geographical location. Their oppressive strictures against sexual expression and desire are buoyed by this belief in the integrity of geometrical space as a marker of real boundaries.

When Dog-Woman confronts Preacher Scroggs and Firebrace in the brothel, she puts a stop to their hypocrisy and the destructive behavior that it allows by collapsing the distinction between purportedly discrete spaces. As Firebrace and Scroggs prepare to "play Caesar and Brutus before the quarrel," Dog-Woman emerges from a hidden panel in the wall, appearing as "some giant in the uniform of an executioner," standing on "an executioner's dais [with] a block upon it," and thus recreating the scene of Charles' execution within the space of the brothel, previously considered separate from the space of the public square (85). Firebrace and Scroggs are startled by the appearance of a giant with an axe, but also by Dog-Woman's manner of presentation, which forces them to recognize that the brothel and the public square share connections not based on their geographical relationship, but on the meanings that bleed in between them. Dog-Woman

believes that their actions and beliefs should carry over between the two spaces, and so symbolically brings them together in her appearance at the brothel. What follows this collapsing of boundaries is a violent scene in which Dog-Woman visits Charles' fate upon the two Puritans, punishing them by their own disavowed values, as she does for countless other Puritan offenders in the city. In the presentation of these spaces of historical reality, the novel draws out the latent assumptions about space and its regulation that guided the development of the values which now govern society's conceptions of sex, gender, and identity.

Although these broad themes of reliance on geometric and patriarchal conceptions of space are pervasive in the worlds inhabited by *Sexing the Cherry*'s characters, and although Jordan's experiences as well as Dog-Woman's actions implicitly reject or counteract the assumptions of violent figures, the specific effects of patriarchal spatiality on the space of the body are the most immediate acts of violence. By reimagining the body, the novel resists the repressive and oppressive models of gender and sexuality, and creates new articulations of the body in order to dismantle patriarchal conceptions of the body as/in space.

Dog-Woman is "the most radically unconventional physical presence in the novel," a giant figure with superhuman strength, heavier than an elephant, pock-marked and black-toothed (Langland 101). Her body is anything but traditionally feminine and beautiful, and it is Dog-Woman herself who applies the term "hideous" to her appearance (Winterson 18). However, her unconventional body, rather than detracting from her femininity, instead serves as a site for the reassertion of gender separate from the narrow imaginings of patriarchal systems. For Dog-Woman, the measurement of gender is not

dependent on external conceptions of femininity; as Elizabeth Langland argues, "her gender identity is unproblematic to her—she bears her gender in her name of Dog-Woman," and, though she questions her beauty, she never questions her femininity (Langland 102). In fact, Dog-Woman's body further resists categorization via a male gaze when Dog-Woman confesses that she can never bear children because "you have to have a man for that and there's no man who's a match for me" (Winterson 3). Despite the fact that "no man can adequately fill her vagina or satisfy her," Dog-Woman's female identity is never destabilized by her inability to participate in sex, that act which physically defines the relationship between male and female anatomy, and often male and female identity (Langland 102). And even without recourse to male insemination, Dog-Woman is still able to be a mother, that exclusively female vocation, when she finds and raises Jordan. Her actions reformulate femininity as an independent and self-determined state by redefining motherhood to exclude the need for male participation. Similarly, Langland provides a reading in which Dog-Woman's insistence on traditional "'feminine' virtues of charity, graciousness, or maternality cites those concepts in ways that transforms them" (101). Dog-Woman frequently invokes her renowned virtues while pursuing decidedly unfeminine actions, such as killing and crippling Puritans or exerting violence in the name of maternal rage. As a result, "The anatomically huge physical body that readily cites gender norms of tenderness or charity . . . while threatening or performing mayhem destabilizes the conventional meanings of those terms and exposes their cultural construction" (102). The sheer presence of Dog-Woman's physical form, which is fiercely feminine in resistance to cultural conceptions of woman that say

otherwise, exposes the artificiality of gender norms which are "falsely naturalized" due to patriarchal conceptions of the body (Butler qtd. in Langland 102).

But it is not merely in its performance of gender identity that Dog-Woman's body contests patriarchal conceptions of gender. The physical space of her body also, by frustrating and ultimately overpowering male-dominated space, asserts a new feminine spatiality. "I did mate with a man," Dog-Woman says, "I had him jammed up to the hilt. As for him, spread on top of me with his face buried beneath my breasts, he complained that he could not find the sides of my cunt and felt like a tadpole in a pot" (Winterson 108). The hugeness of Dog-Woman's body causes the man a specific anxiety: he is unable to discover the boundaries of the space of her vagina, and therefore feels small. And when she "squeeze[s] in her muscles [to] bring [her] closer to his prong," she sees that she "ha[s] pulled him in, balls and everything" (108). Dog-Woman's vagina, that space figured so frequently only as a space to be invaded by the male "prong," proves to be an infinite, boundless space, defying the man's desire to discover its edges and fill it completely. Since he is a "gentleman," the man offers to satisfy Dog-Woman in another way, but soon stops, complaining that her clitoris is too large: "I cannot take that orange in my mouth. It will not fit. Neither can I run my tongue over it. You are too big, madam" (108, 109). Again, the hyperbolic dimensions of Dog-Woman's body frustrate male attempts to understand and encapsulate it. Specifically, the man is unable to fit her clitoris "in [his] mouth," and he is uncomfortable with his inability to surround and therefore define her.

Elsewhere, Dog-Woman's size, her "too big"-ness, allows her to gain power in a traditionally patriarchal sense, but also facilitates her continued resistance to such

understandings of space. If traditional conceptions of space see size as a sign of power, then Dog-Woman's bigness matches those male expectations, for her size grants her a superhuman strength that certainly allows her to maintain power over others. In this sense, her body confirms patriarchal spatiality. However, we are frequently reminded that Dog-Woman's size is not a stable quality, though her strength remains the same, so that "In the dark and in the water [she] weigh[s] nothing at all," and she has the ability to "be invisible when there is work to be done" (37, 87). Her material existence is both substantial and insubstantial, and the bigness itself is not always visibly apparent, suggesting that the power must reside somewhere other than in visible, mappable space. In Dog-Woman's twentieth century counterpart, the bigness is even more contradictory, for although it exists only as an "*alter ego*," the contemporary Dog-Woman's giant-inside allows her to fantasize about invading the sequestered spaces of patriarchal power, bursting into "the World Bank," "the boardroom," "the Pentagon," and "maximum security doors" in order to fix the problems of the world with "feminism and ecology" (127, 123, 124). This strength and bigness, however, is not visible from the outside. Instead, only once you "look . . . down [her] throat" can you see "the other one, lurking inside. She fits, even though she's so big" (129). This paradox of size, that the big resides within the small and yet continues to contain power, both empowers the female body and frustrates patriarchal expectations of space. Size still indicates power, but size is somehow unrelated to geometrical dimension. Through its manipulation of dimension, the female body becomes a space of resistance to patriarchal spatiality which follows its own rules (boundlessness, simultaneity, paradox) in order to consolidate feminine power.

In its various fantastical spaces—mythological, folkloric, literary, and bodily—

Sexing the Cherry contests the dominance of patriarchal spaces, those spaces that take for

granted the primacy of geometric over symbolic relationships and maintain power based

on linear conceptions of time. Instead, the novel offers new understandings of time and

space in which time is always-present, and matter is more meaningful in its metaphorical

connections than its physical relationships. These redefinitions of reality attempt to ease

the oppression of groups (genders, sexualities) whose marginalization arose from

constructed norms rather than germane difference. However, although the novel's

depiction of space is compelling and hopeful, it fails to overcome one crucial obstacle:

lived experience tells us that time is linear and that matter is solid. Jordan's experiences,

as he acknowledges, are rare at best, and, at worst, exist only in fiction.

The novel, however, is not as singularly prescriptive as it might seem. As Greg

Clingham argues, "the geographic and the psychic journeys of Tradescant and Jordan—

the historical and the postmodern . . . are to be taken *together* in Winterson's text and to

be understood in terms of each other, as part of a poetic unfolding of history" (Clingham

69). Clingham points out that the two versions of journeys in the novel (one which

adheres to a geometrical understanding of space, and the other which disregards such

restrictions) "represent . . . without replicating one another," as Jordan's journeys mirror

and yet illuminate the nature of Tradescant's, and Tradescant's offer the foil to Jordan's

nonlinear travels. The novel's conceptions of time and space, in fact, rely on an

awareness of historical linearity in order to make its nonlinear connections. Since the

twentieth century Jordan and Dog-Woman work as a kind of "historical echo" of their

seventeenth century counterparts, Clingham argues that the novel offers the two historical

moments as "part of a historical continuum, not as consecutively structured, but rather as interwoven, or superimposed, and integral to the apprehension of the simultaneity of all time that conditions the whole text" (69). In other words, we can only understand the contemporary characters as examples of simultaneity if we *also* recognize their place in a linear history. Both versions of reality contribute to an understanding of the other. The trick, then, becomes recognizing that the linear history which allows for our understanding of simultaneity is merely one representation of reality's relationship to time and space.

Jordan comments on the distance between daily life and the unperceived reality of time and space, but does not dismiss either view: "The world is both round and flat at the same time. This is obvious. That it is round appears indisputable; that it is flat is our common experience, also indisputable" (Winterson 76-77). Later, Jordan equates the experience of turning a globe with "recognizing that all journeys exist simultaneously, that to be in one place is not to deny the existence of another, even though that other place cannot be felt or seen, our usual criteria for belief" (87). The globe thus functions as a metaphor for the novel's truth about space and time, the reality that does not seem real, while the map, which represents our "common experience" of a flat world, corresponds to our daily experience of linear time and solid matter. Even though these two perceptions seem incompatible, neither really dominates the other in Jordan's conceit, for "The globe does not supersede the map; the map does not distort the globe" (77). However, though the globe does not replace the map, maps do distort (the Mercator projection works wonders for Greenland, but the Goode Homolosine says the orange-peel earth is punctuated by huge chasms of nothingness), just as a linear understanding of time

and a purely geometrical understanding of space create dangerous distortions in the perception of simultaneous time and space, which can then lead to the perpetuation of oppressive relationships. Yet, Jordan says, "Maps are magic" (77). How can this be so, when maps are the tools of generals and conquistadors? When faith in linear histories leads to wars and factories spewing mercury? He explains: "In the bottom corner are whales; at the top, cormorants carrying popeyed fish" (77). A map's magic, then, comes not from its representation of reality, but from the fact that it is a representation: the presence of fanciful, country-sized whales and cormorants (a description of the map's form, not its content), marks the map as a map, and it is in the recognition of the form that it gains meaning. Maps are magic when we understand that between the edges is "a subjective account of the lie of the land," not a faithful representation of coastlines and mountain ranges (77). In this figuration, maps are not infallible guides, but rather subjective guides to making sense of the world.

If maps (and their analogues: belief in linear time and solid matter) are able to communicate our common experience of reality, then they have some value, but they must be recognized as tools, not replacement globes. The project of *Sexing the Cherry* is to make that distinction, exposing the rules of patriarchal spatiality as constructed representations of reality by offering other conceptions of space and time. It does not entirely discard linear temporality or geometric space, but instead demotes them from reality to representation.

Although the novel presents an alternative system of spatiality in opposition to the assumptions of patriarchal space, and although it makes persuasive and persistent

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arguments for this new system, it ultimately does not insist on the superiority of understanding the world through in this way. Jordan advises:

> Fold up the maps and put away the globe. If someone else had charted it, let them. Start another drawing with whales at the bottom and cormorants at the top, and in between identify, if you can, the places you have not found yet on those other maps, the connections obvious only to you.
>
> Round and flat, only a very little has been discovered. (77)

Curiously, Jordan recommends ignoring both maps and globes, both patriarchal space and the novel's own understanding of time and space. The implication here is that the globe, despite its perhaps more "realistic" perspective, is, like the map, only a representation which can be regarded or disregarded at will. While Jordan can comprehend time as a grid and matter as nothing but light, Dog-Woman lives through the historical process of Revolution and Restoration, and for her this also is reality. With the awareness that both conceptions of reality are equally subjective, Jordan instead emphasizes the importance of creating new maps that consciously acknowledge their own subjectivity ("whales at the bottom and cormorants at the top"), but also privilege individual experience and values, "those connections obvious only to you." Like the idea of grafting, which in addition to positing a third gender free from patriarchal concerns, also seems to buoy the validity of conceptions that break from received systems of thought, the creation of new maps provides opportunities for revisions of established traditions that may or may not describe the world accurately. *Sexing the Cherry* offers one such revision, and by doing so manages to expose the oppressive and patriarchal assumptions of another, but it does not preclude the chance that yet another new

understanding of reality can offer an even more effective guide to reality. Of course, any

new representations of spatiality will still be merely representations—maps instead of

globes—but they will not be any less valid because of that fact.

Conclusion: Space, Magic, and History

Sexing the Cherry rejects the paradigms that govern a patriarchal view of space and history, those limitations of spatial practice which ensure the continued dominance of masculine space and narrative: spaces that allow for the violence of conquerors and explorers, and oppressive narratives that celebrate the power gained thereby. Its rejection of this received understanding of space extends to the rejection of the basic tenets of abstract space, where space is geometrical and homogenous, easily described with concrete spatial terms such as "boundary," "up," and "end."

The other two novels I have examined, though they do not go so far as to abandon the basic structures of geometry, nevertheless still combat the dominance of abstract space in which impersonal and violent forces hold sway over less powerful groups and their spaces. *Waterland* rejects views of space in which natural space becomes a vehicle for linear time, transformed into the abstract space of commerce and history in the process, fields which are controlled by those with the desire and ability to codify their own authority by shaping space into narrative. Tom Crick's presentation of alternative means of storytelling, in which the inherently marvelous, cyclical rhythms of nature persist in the linguistics of its description disavow any need for such narrative and spatial transformations. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem fights against the hegemony of the state, the most antagonistic actor in Lefebvre's conception of modern abstract space. While state powers seek to create a totalizing and homogenizing narrative that describes a similarly totalized and homogenized space, Saleem resists this by insisting on the presence of subversive spaces that defy an image of uniform national space.

Each of these novels recognizes and engages with the threat of abstract space in a

specific historical and regional setting, and although their struggles with space are indicative of nonspecific, theoretical challenges to space, they are primarily about engagement with the specific historical environments presented in the novels. *Midnight's Children* is an important indictment of the actions of the Indian state and Indira Gandhi in particular during the Emergency of 1975-1977, in which the state aggressively pursued the production of homogenous national space. *Waterland*'s depiction of a period spanning several centuries in the history of the Fens demonstrates the successive spatial policies and historical tendencies that have resulted in a defeated and regulated national space. And in *Sexing the Cherry,* Winterson's handling of the historical material exposes the origins of contemporary ideologies that continue to marginalize and oppress deviant sexual identities. By choosing to focus on these historical periods, the novels offer new modes of historiography that do not exclusively focus on the loud and linear narratives of a centralized state or other dominant voices. As Greg Clingham says of *Sexing the Cherry*'s setting in seventeenth century England:

> when we understand that the novel operates on the principle of alterity, and proposes historical and linguistic difference, as the *basis* of its functionality, then we can argue that *Sexing the Cherry*'s remarkable poetic textuality has as its object and purpose a *representation* of the seventeenth century rather than a pastiche of it or an escape from it. (Clingham 68)

These novels do not attempt reproduce the periods and events they portray in the forms in which they have already been portrayed to us. These forms (official historical narratives, national myths and realistic fiction which cannot overcome the limitations of empirical

history, etc.) in their emphasis on teleological narrative and the transparency of space only conceal that which the novels wish to expose. Instead, these magical realist texts provide us with a new reality (a new spatial understanding) that can take the place of or supplement our understanding of the abstract space in which we live. This is similar to Amaryll Chanady's claim that magical realism attempts to "introduce *poiesis* into *mimesis*," rather than rejecting the mimesis of realistic literature or stock-fantasy figures for the poiesis of pure fantasy (Chanady 130). While realist fiction, fantasy, and fairy tale must rely on the reproduction of recognizable spatial systems and readily understandable motifs, magical realist literature is free to create, that is, to offer us alternative systems of space through which to interact with the world. If the result is strange and unexplainable, it is also fertile historically, for only by presenting us with the illogical, that which cannot be assimilated into a traditional understanding of space, can magical realism remove us, however temporarily, from the space that always conceals its own existence and production.

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