

COUNTRY AND CITY IN THE NEW EUROPE

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You can dream about a place this beautiful.
Or you can visit England.
United Airlines can make Britain a reality for you this year.

Introduction

Central to the rise of the modern nation-state in the 19th century was the creation of powerful and stable city-centers through which any one government could establish political consolidation and the means of disciplinary control. In particular, capital cities organized the surrounding countryside and centralized the political frontiers between one national people and another. In this paper, I reflect upon the continuing significance of both capital and second-level cities in constructing images of nationalism in England. A central concern is how connections between cities and statehood may be altered by today's so called 'global cities' which are in a sense being loosened from their national contexts. Through specific reference to the City of London, and its relational opposite, the southern English countryside, I reflect upon the moving spatial reconfigurations in Europe between city-centers and their concentric peripheries, and what this suggests about the enduring stability of member-states. A critical feature is the extent that London, emblematic of Englishness and English governance, is increasingly participating in legal, political and economic practices located in Brussels which detract from its symbolism as a national center. Illustrating this, I briefly discuss the proposed high-speed rail link between London, Paris, Brussels, Cologne and Amsterdam, of which the Channel Tunnel is a part. The fast train's destruction of the southern English countryside is a symbolic instance of the widespread altering of relations between the City of London and its surrounding state context. How peripheral - provincial - English cities are reacting to London's participation in a wider Europe leads to my conclusion, where I point to the racial implications of these cities' retreat to a localized identity within an idealized rural landscape.

Country and City

The city is a cultural phenomenon. Amongst other things, it generates identity and articulates identification. Today, however, the sources through which such identity is mediated are unclear. Donatella Mazzoleni argues, as most notably has Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City*, that up until the industrial revolution the city defined itself and its spatial limits against the surrounding countryside, and so belonged to and situated itself as a central feature within a rural landscape (Mazzoleni 1993:293; Williams 1973:). Today, according to Mazzoleni, the city has no perceptual limits or clear territorial boundaries, and 'since it reaches the horizon, the metropolis is

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a habitat without a 'somewhere else'. It is therefore, a total interior' (Mazzoleni 1993:298)1. By implication, the countryside in the constitution of today's major cities no longer features.

In this paper I explore the possible meanings of this 'total interior' within cities in England. By necessity, I differentiate between types and symbolisms cities embody which are generally, but not necessarily, connected to respective city size. Hence I contrast the City of London, the nation's capital, with second-tier peripheral cities such as Manchester and Newcastle which are currently in the process of planned revitalization. This comparison highlights the extent images of poverty, houselessness, racial tension, and ethnic segregation circulate around the concept of London, once the central emblem of England and English power. Heightening the sense of London's internal fragmentation is the increasing characterization of it as a 'global city' rather than England's national capital (Sassen 1991, 1994a). Under the shadow of the European Community, London, despite open governmental resistance by Prime Minister John Major and his band of Eurosceptics, is being forced to open out and accommodate new hierarchies of power and new networks of politics, economics, and communication. What I hope to show is that this expansionism silences the significance of the countryside in the global city, thus redefining the country/city dichotomy and not, as Mazzoleni intimates, obliterating it.

In contrast to London's increasingly scattered horizons, England's second-level cities are reigning in their boundaries. According to the Arts Council of Great Britain, these second cities are reconstructing their cultural base and in the process undergoing an 'urban renaissance'. My concern here is not so much in the actual extent of this so-called 'renaissance', but in the explicit significance of the countryside in defining these second-city identities. What becomes apparent is that in a symbolic and ideological sense, the countryside is being intentionally brought inside these city interiors. In other words, the urban renaissance is predicated upon and constituted through an English country mythology despite the fact that topological distinctions between country and city have in many cases been dissolved by sprawling suburbanization.

What this examination of images of countryside within newly conceived city interiors suggests is a deep level of anxiety about current English society. Romanticized evocations of the country provide a pre-modern sense of security, intimacy and community made even more potent when held up against popularized understandings of corrupt and decayed London. A poignant illustration of the City of London's decline is the proposed fast rail link joining it to Paris and Brussels. The fast rail link, and the building of the Channel Tunnel on which it depends, has raised heated political debates in England both for and against the new physical and symbolic connections between the nation and the European mainland. Significantly, in joining up European cities, the fast rail link slices through intervening countrysides and diminishes the importance of open lands in the spacing and defining of cities and states. In England, the reduction of the countryside as a form of buffer zone, coupled with the prospect of open borders articulated through negotiations such as the Schengen agreement, poses the threat of invading immigrant aliens whom (it is widely presumed) will steadily speed onwards to London. What these public debates about the Channel Tunnel make clear is the extent postcolonialism's cultural implications. the return of the excluded other to the nation's metropolis - overlay London's global restructuring and the future of its transnational integration into the Community.

Against the sense of the breaking down of London as the embodiment of a controlled, ordered and leading national center grounded within a rural landscape, I examine the current nostalgic revitalization of the term 'country' as a means of redefining regional cities within England. What I suggest is that images of the countryside - a rural aesthetics - is being explicitly used as a marker of difference between peripheral English cities and the symbolically decayed City of London which appears to have no surrounding country. Providing an ideological and political strategy in the rebuilding of local centers and the creating of a sense of local autonomy, rural aesthetics emphasizes the extent English cities are rejecting London as the representative of national, regional and local interests. Thus above all, images of countryside point to a perceived and underlying need by local governments and the wider

English population to cordon off, distance, and in a sense avoid London's chaotic and ethnically plural (postcolonial and global) interior.

An Urban Renaissance

The Arts Council, the cultural branch of the British government, published in 1987 a document entitled 'An Urban Renaissance: The Role of Arts in Urban Regeneration' (Arts Council 1987). According to Kevin Robins, this is a 'superficial and opportunist document, reflecting the 'can do' attitude of the Arts Council in the face of the new enterprise logic. Its key terms - enterprise, renaissance, culture, image, community - reflect an optimism for our times' (Robins 1993: 307). With the expressed goal to regenerate urban life and redevelop deprived areas associated with modernism alienating concrete architecture and urban programs of the 1960s, the document sets out to 'rebuild communities' and 'provide focal points for community pride and identity' (Arts Council 1987).

Reflected throughout the document is a rather schematic chronology from modernism to postmodernism. This informs the negative depiction of modernism's instrumental functionalism which created large impersonal public buildings and resulted in the severing of identity from place. Such negativity is then contrasted with a positive postmodern vision of the need to reverse this process and reinstate the individual within a community. This simplistic inversion informs much debate about the character of architecture and development policy in Britain in the 1990s. The accommodation of multiculturalism and a politics of identity, a return to local and regional styles, a sense of intimacy, and attention to history is touted by architects and governmental bodies as the new direction in sensitive urban planning (see Cooke 1988:114). As David Ley has argued with respect to postmodernism:

In contrast to the isotropic space of modernism, post-modern space aims to be historically specific, rooted in cultural, often vernacular, style conventions, and often unpredictable in the relation of parts to the whole. In reaction to the large scale of the modern movement, it attempts to create smaller units, seeks to break down a corporate society to urban Villages, and maintain historical associations through renovation and recycling (Lay 1989:53).

Explicit in Lay's curious compound 'urban villages' is the concern for rootedness, authenticity, and a nostalgic romanticism of a bygone era. What exactly an urban village would look like is difficult to say. But its potency lies in the evocation of recycled images of a pre-industrial, rural and pastoral lifestyle which point to 'the yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, and existence 'closer to nature' (Marx 1964:6).

The mythology of the rural countryside, where people supposedly operate in a communal spirit of friendship and neighborliness, runs deep in the English identity and psyche. Of course the concept of the country, like the city, is a moving and multifaceted symbol of both positive and negative implications. But as Keith Thomas has noted, by the late 17th and early 18th centuries town-dwellers had started to idealize the country cottage and project a presumption of health and morality in its inhabitants in contrast to the vices found in cities (Thomas 1983:248). By the end of the 19th century it was London, with its swollen middle classes and imperial economic dominance over a declining industrial north, which focused the form of this rural idealization. In fact it was London's expanding imperial designs (and the concerns of anthropology in oral customs and cultures) that provided the impetus for an inward-looking movement known as English Folk Revival (see generally Boyes 1993). Robert Coils claims that this revival 'represented a flight away from external threats deep into the nation's racial and rural essence' (Coils 1986:47). And in this surge of interest in England's interior, Alun Howkins interestingly argues that the English countryside surrounding London established certain yardsticks of 'rurality' by which the rest of the national landscape came to be measured. This 'south country' was essentially a fantasized landscape of quasi-tudor thatched cottages, village greens, church spires, small cultivated fields and manicured hedgerows in which the wilderness of the Yorkshire moors or the flint cottages of Cornwall had no place (Howkins 1986:54). While Howkins does not expand his analysis beyond the 1920s, what is

fascinating is the extent 'south country' images still predominant today as the essential features of a readily recognized national - and racially homogenous - landscape.

Raymond Williams discusses the significance of the village ideal as a 'knowable community', epitomizing direct relationships and face-to-face contacts in contrast to the alienating qualities of the industrial metropolis (Williams 1973:165-81; see for early sociological analysis of the alienating city Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, 1928:85-186; Georg Simmel *Metropolis and Mental Life*, 1950:409-424). The village supposedly spoke of mutual responsibility and a sense of community duty, values which served to veil great economic disparities between a landed gentry and the majority of feudal based tenant farmers. For above all, Williams argues, the imagined village represented a certain consciousness about social hierarchies, class divisions, morality, and order (Williams 1973:165-6; see also Thomas 1983:243-53). Curiously this consciousness appealed to both the possibility of the return to a golden paternal age, where lords cared for their own, and an advance towards a classless community who equally share in the burdens and benefits of 'back to the land' agricultural programs (see Howkins 1986:75-6).

Today such community ideals are invoked and reanimated as part of a political program seeking to tap into the mythology of England's glorious past. It appears in public debate, such as Prince Charles' reflections on architecture and landscape and his declaration that 'man seems to function best in small, recognizable units - hence the village - where he is part of a community of people to which he can relate' (Jencks 1988)². And it appears in public policy, such as Prime Minister John Major's misguided 'back to basics' campaign which advocated the return to an archaic image of the family and neighborly values, and in Major's approach to Europe with such declarations that Britain, even within the European Community, will remain a nation of small villages, green commons, local shops and warm beer (*Guardian* 23 April 1993). The fact that the government's withdrawal of finances, transport and local services throughout the 1980s has seriously undermined the power of local government and so the future of many villages is deftly overlooked. What remains of this 'posthumous zone' is a 'green tranquillity buoyed up by Sainsbury's and the property market' (*Guardian* 18 Aug. 1994:16). Even in remote areas, such as the wilds of Romney Marsh on the Kent coast, small villages like Lydd are plagued by vandalism, drugs, violence and high unemployment.

One result of this idealization of a village-spotted countryside is a recharging of contrasting imagery linked to the city. But as Raymond Williams has tried to show, we must not limit ourselves to simple contrasts between country and city, but 'go on and see their interrelations and through these the real shape of the underlying crisis' (Williams 1973:297). In presenting the countryside as increasingly valued and vulnerable, there is a sense that the city is proportionately more violent and threatening (Ruhe 1979:112). The city is wild and out of control. This sentiment carries with it the sense that those disrupting community harmony should be excluded and expelled. And it marks the essential difference between the utopian 'garden city' movement in England at the turn of the century by social reformers such as Ebenezer Howard, who sought to establish community within the city, with current events where a sense of community is posited against the city. Hence today it is not a matter of replacing the manor house with a community health center, as planned in the past by Howard, but of re-establishing the ideal of the village green and the local corner store outside the city - and by implication the parochialism of a closed provincial community (on Howard see Jacobs 1961:18).

The reference to city 'wilderness' primarily refers to London and large urban centers. These are the municipalities which are no longer contained by reference to local histories and local communities, and in fact strive to transcend their immediate environment by competing in the networks, technologies and services of the so-called global economy. These are the cities who seek the status of 'global city'. By contrast, the majority of regional English cities have taken a very different strategy. These smaller centers have adopted a local economic approach which seeks to make places, communities, neighborhoods and cities less dependent upon global economic premises and to develop local resources (Bohm 1994:109). These cities are in many cases under programs and policies of rejuvenation, and local governmental attempts to inscribe them with a feeling of community identity is a means of asserting independence from London. Under the auspices of the heritage industry, these smaller cities are marketing themselves as protectors of an English heritage promulgated through local

histories, local politics, and local economies (see Montgomery 1990). London, on the other hand, is left to draw upon the wider and increasingly ambiguous idea of nation and the national identity as the source of its cultural characterization.

A great deal more could be said about the pastoral village and country idyll (see for instance Mingay 1989; Williams 1973:13-34). What is critical here is the English reappropriating of village imagery - and its historical trappings of an ordered, bordered, community sensibility - is occurring at the very moment when the idea of city is most confusing and ambiguous, particularly in the context of the new Europe (see Schoonbrodt 1994:85)³. The Green Paper for European Cities, put by the Commission before the Council and the European Parliament in 1990, acknowledges that cities are now experiencing deep environmental and planning crises (see Hastaoglou-Martinidis et al. 1993). These crises, which point to such things as new technologies, post-industrial economic restructuring and a mobile labor force raise the doubt whether 'city' adequately describes new forms of urban conglomeration seen to be devoid of a cultural identity or center (Green Paper 6-7). One response has been the allocation of limited EC structural funds to those European cities who demonstrate a commitment to the enhancing of their local communities.

Within England, this perceived need to reconstruct and redefine the city has been exploited by some of the more enterprising local governments. Following a logic of enterprise and opportunism established by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, a number of cities have made direct appeal to Brussels and set up their own corporate offices there. This has established the frame for European cities to develop the concept of a 'Europe of the cities', and organize urban networks such as Eurocities. Some analysts have argued that as a result, 'The former ports of Barcelona, Marseille, Glasgow or Genoa have much more to say to each other than to their capitals' (Guardian 21 Feb. 1995:20). Thus regeneration projects that have helped establish initiatives such as Liverpool's idea of being the City of Learning, Glasgow's City of Culture program, Manchester's G Mex, Swansea's Maritime Quarter and so on have been primarily aided by EC structural funds rather than the British government⁴. Sheffield, for instance, is seeking to be the venue for the next meeting of European leaders. The chief executive of Sheffield, John Hambidge, pointed out that European funding had helped pay for the supertram, the restored Lyceum theater, and the Arena stadium. 'Holding the summit here', Hambidge said, 'might demonstrate to European politicians that their money has been appreciated and well spent' (Guardian 13 Dec. 1994:9).

What I wish to stress is that the recentering of control at a suprastate level in Brussels and the hierarchical reshuffling of legal powers is helping to create geo-political anomalies. Certainly it could be argued that the yet untried Committee of Regions fails to treat cities as autonomous political entities in their own right, and so ultimately compromise the principle of subsidiarity Schoonbrodt 1994:94; Maastricht Treaty Art. 198 A; see also Art. 130 S and the potential intervention of the European Council in town and country planning). Yet despite inadequate representation in Brussels, throughout Europe some cities are emerging as serious political players and new hubs of economic competition while older more industrial based cities decline (Gurr and King 1987:157). In other instances, regions rather than specific cities are developing as the entity apparently more representative of popular needs and desires, attracting attention and potential funding from the EC's regional program. Across these differences, what is significant is that capital cities are no longer automatically considered the central players in representing collective state interests, be these nationalist based or otherwise. Capital cities, alongside other less nationally symbolic centers, are being both forced and encouraged to assume a relative degree of autonomy, and to (re)assert a sense of place and identity (Gurr and King 1987:150-84). The fact that in England this sense of identity is most commonly filtered through a nostalgic history and the conservation of old buildings, industries and skills associated with a golden past, has perhaps given support to some theorists suggesting emerging parallels with the Italian system of city-states. Indeed the Arts Council's terminology 'urban renaissance' conjures up connections to Max Weber's description of the medieval city in 16th century Europe (Weber 1958:157-91). As Anthony Sampson has noted, 'we are witnessing in Europe the emergence of a new generation of cities' (Sampson 1992:197).

With respect to the decline of London and its relationship to the English nation in this new age, Ken

Worpole argues:

London's loss has proved to be other cities' gain. Ironically, the abolition of the GLC and the subsequent decline of London as a metropolitan capital has inadvertently weakened the British nation-state, presumably not the intention of the Conservative government when it acted so decisively in 1986. London no longer dominates British politics and culture in the way it once did. Britain today appears a more decentralized, regionalized and disaggregate culture, and London is no longer the jewel in the crown but the decaying center of the ancient regime (Worpole 1994: 165).

It is difficult to argue against this interpretation if one accepts its mediation through a nationalist frame. It may well be the case that London does not adequately represent and embody the country and nation as it has in the past (Williams 1973:146). London may not be the capital city it once was. But then again, capitalism, which made London the great imperial city of the 18th and 19th centuries, is no longer structured through or contained by state structures (see for instance Ross 1990). In other words, as forms of money managing and production shift to accommodate a transnational market, it is difficult to expect London's characterization as the nation's center not to be affected. The idea of the city, as much as of the country, is never static. London, in particular, has undergone radical change in recent decades, and it is these transformations to its interior that I briefly touch upon in the next section under the guise of its being a 'global city'. What this new characterization of London highlights is the extent England's second cities are being defined primarily in opposition to London, rather than as smaller, less threatening versions of the capital as sought in the past. Moreover, thinking about London as a global site underlines why the imagery of the village spotted countryside has become such a critical and dominant metaphor in the planned rebuilding of regional city identities.

London as a global city

Raymond Williams, in thinking about alternative units of political power to that of the nation-state, suggested the rising prominence of large cities such as London. According to Williams, cities, in refusing 'to submit their perceived interests to the nation-state interest', are generating in the 1980s new locations of political activity (Williams 1984a:238; see also 1973:287). Today, over ten years after Williams' observation, this statement remains remarkably salient. 'Global cities', as strategic sites in what is commonly referred to as the global economy, have attracted much interest as an emerging phenomena related to practices of internationalization and transnationalism⁵. 'Cities are strategic to economic globalization because they are command points, global marketplaces and production sites for the information economy' (Sassen 1994c:28). In binding together such places as London, Sydney, Hong Kong, Zurich, Tokyo, New York and Paris, as well as Sao Paulo and Mexico City, it is argued that global cities are constituting 'new geographies of centrality' (Sassen 1994a:4-5).

However talk about the global economy in the city, and its elitist concern with the upper echelons of capitalism, too often veils what may be happening at the other end of the economic scale, amongst immigrants, illegal refugees, women, and the poor - the others who supply the basic services and labor that keep the metropolis in operation (Sassen 1994b:40). So at the same time that we can talk about cities and globalization, it should be kept in mind that cities represent relatively bounded spaces in which new social boundaries and formations are emerging. This localized perspective touches upon labor segmentation, ethnic, racial and gender discrimination, the homeless and the unemployed, and how these issues relate to the construction of particular neighborhoods, marginal associations, ghettos, and spatial divisions of inclusion and exclusion within the city context - in short a new configuration of inter-city inequalities and economic division.

In London, racial riots, such as those in Brixton in 1981, Broadwater Farm in 1985, and again in Brixton in 1991, have highlighted both English racism and minority retaliation against the poor economic standing in which non-white English disproportionately find themselves (see Gurr and King 1987:163-5). Of course these problems are not confined to the City of London. Still 40% of the country's ethnic minorities do live within Greater London, and especially the East End (Kyle 1994:58).

This concentration has a distilling and intensifying effect on levels of conflict, and links London to prominent, well publicized, moments of social disintegration. Critically, these moments of non-white and white friction, which have steadily escalated since the first West Indian migrations to Britain in the 1950s and Notting Hill riots in 1958, dramatically mark the social conditions of postcolonial England and the challenges alternative cultures and histories pose to the very notion of British homogeneity (see generally Gilroy 1991; Chambers 1994:76).

One consequence of this form of social unrest is that lawlessness and danger of the 'concrete jungle', images usually associated with large American cities, are more readily applicable to the conditions within which London's ethnic and economic minorities live (see Kasinilz 1995:387). A growing underclass is seen to be creating and sustaining urban frontiers (such as Waterloo Bridge), in turn promoting an idea that flourished around the end of last century of capitalist pioneers braving out the perils of the city (on the militarization of urban space and segregation of poor see Davis 1995:355, 365). Today, the crucial difference is that events such as Muslim attacks on Hindu temples, the stabbing of a Kashmiri taxi driver as a result of a clan dispute, and the death of an African student over a separate prayer room for Islamic militants at Newham College dominate over the preoccupations with health, housing and sewerage problems that figured in the late 19th century. Hence with the decline of the huge manufacturing sectors and factories in England, sources of disease and corruption, which at the turn of the century were seen as an inevitable consequence of poor labor conditions, are now linked to foreign immigrants and perceived as an introduced cultural import⁶.

These tensions in the reproduction of the city, between global or transnational forces, on the one hand, and localized community practices, on the other, situate this brief characterization about shifting public perceptions about the City of London⁷. As the capital, London has played a particular historical role in consolidating the modern nation-state and centering the national and imperial processes of capitalism throughout the 18th and 19th centuries (Williams 1973:142-52).

London was the first occidental city to develop at the rate it did and come so powerfully to symbolize the nation and the controlling authority of the state metropolis over both the surrounding country and the extended empire. Of course the country and city cannot be conceived without the other, and so share a complex social history. Yet under 19th century capitalism the city - particularly the capital city - became the dominant social form. As Williams remarks, from this period on, there was 'unequal interaction' between country and city (Williams 1973:147). The city was the site from which modern power flowed. It housed the institutions of authority embodied in the courts, parliament, stock-exchange, jails, police headquarters, as well as such things as state libraries, theaters, and museums and the palaces of the monarchy. From the city both civilization and order emanated (see Gurr and King 1987:30-33). Thus it was the city - essentially the capital city - which ultimately governed the shape and practices of the countryside through its controlling of interrelated elements such as labor markets, transport, education, export prices, and private and public property rights.

Today, however, this conflation of terms between capital city and state may be open to challenge. For if talk about global cities is taken seriously, and there is now in terms of a transnational market more similarities than differences between global cities than there is between them and their immediate regional surrounds, then there is a need to 'rethink traditionally held views of cities as subunits of their nation states' (Sassen 1994a:xJv). This raises numerous questions, such as what are the ways cities express challenges to both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the modern state? (MacGregor 1994:228). How may the material and iconographic symbolism of London be shifting to accommodate more complex relationships that are not perceptually framed or necessarily constituted through the national context? To what extent is London's global economic networks raising similarities with major postcolonial cities and thus altering its presumed position of western superiority and dominance?

Moreover, in the reconsidering of center/periphery relationships between former colonizers and colonized, is this affecting relations within the modern western state and in particular a construction of the countryside from which even the global city cannot be divorced. For despite Mazzoleni's claim that the metropolis is now a 'habitat without a 'somewhere else'', in the sense there is no longer the colonized outposts from which the state metropolis draws and defines its dominant identity, ideas of

the city and country still structure a mutually constituting relationship (Mazzoleni 1993:298). Throughout the 1980s, many middle class people left London for the 'country', leaving behind a widening disparity between the big business players, on the one hand, and a swelling underclass of displaced and devalorized others, on the other (Gurr and King 1987:153; see on the ghosting of the inner city, Wright 1985:215-50). Rising unemployment, racial tension and the decline of welfare subsidies suggest that now, perhaps more than in any other period in England's history, the country is viewed as a refuge, a retreat, a haven. Of course this may mean that the contemporary metropolis has a vested interest in silencing or ignoring the notion of a surrounding countryside. In fact I would suggest that the countryside's notable absence within the city may be a particular quality of the globalized metropolis⁸.

Transport networks and city-stations

A poignant example of spatial and relational shifts between city, country and nation-state is illustrated by the Trans-European Transport Network, which is a specific transportation scheme run by and orchestrated through the European Community. The overall plan of the Trans-European Network is to establish transport corridors linking up major European cities. So far, the cities targeted by the EC tend to be, but are not limited to, capital cities. The scheme is intended to have the effect that cities are not so much considered as a final destination, but rather more of a city-station along a circuitous route - a plan with obvious implications for the movement of peoples across national borders and the general deepening of European integration.

Under the Trans-European Transport Network eleven transport projects have been selected for priority funding by Brussels. One of the most spectacular and constructionally advanced of these projects is the high-speed rail link joining London to Paris, Brussels, Cologne and Amsterdam, of which the delayed completion of the Channel Tunnel has up until recently been a major obstacle. While the British government has been reluctant to assist this European Network, and is further stalling the building of the rail link between London and the English coast, it is anticipated that the eventual outcome will be an extremely effective and impressive method of ground transport. In bypassing conventional land and sea routes, and moving at a blinding speed of 180 mph through southern England's Kentish landscape, traveling time and perceived spatial distances between London, Paris and Brussels will be lessened. What the EC hopes is that people other than those already involved in transborder activities will take up opportunities to travel at greater convenience and efficiency, and thus promote wider movements in such things as labor, tourism, and services.

The Trans-European Transport Network is a concrete illustration of one set of communicative structures now confronting major European metropolises. It is indicative of many more nebulous administrative, electronic and technological links which characterize the new organizational modes of global cities. Still what has to be remembered about the fast train is that at the same moment that it links London to other places beyond the state borders, and so reinforces its characterization as a global city, it also alters London's internal relations within the state itself. This is dramatically illustrated by the building of the Channel Tunnel and the fast train tracks (of different gage to mainland Europe) through Kent, the region commonly called the 'garden of England'. Thus accompanying the intervention of high technology and a European presence on English soil has been the partial destruction of the 'south country', which as discussed above, is a particularly symbolic rural landscape widely hailed as quintessentially English. I have reflected elsewhere upon the importance of Kent's idealized countryside of rolling downlands, bountiful orchards, hop fields, oast houses and church spires in its association with law and order and its place in the imagined English identity (Darian-Smith 1995a, 1995b). Here I want to push this argument in a slightly different direction that speaks to the issue of London and its endurance as a capital city. What I suggest is that the implications from Raymond Williams' thesis that the country and city are 'indissolubly linked' (Williams 1984b:227; 1973:1-8) is that the fast train's destruction of the southern country landscape is a symbolic instance of a widespread altering of country and city relations, which in the past have been critical in maintaining the idea of the City of London as the nation's center.

The increasing power of the EC, of which the Trans-European Transport Network is indicative, suggests that the physical countryside and its symbolic imagery have in effect become a new focus of contestation between spheres of English and European governance. Of course, the countryside has long been a battleground over which different conceptions of rurality compete (Wright 1994:31). But what is often overlooked is how such battles also involve, and in fact may be generated from, competing notions of what constitutes the city through which the countryside is defined, mediated and renegotiated. The countryside, in short, is an urban construction, and so it is to new forms of urbanization that attention should be directed.

One such form is the current construction of an International Train Terminal in Ashford, a small, insignificant and rather unattractive town in the center of Kent. In name and intent, if nothing else, developers predict that this International Train Terminal will change the economic and social character of Ashford, creating a vast commercial complex and trading center in the terminal's surrounding environs. Moreover, Ashford will become a new location for customs controls, export and import duties, and general passport inspections. The International Train Terminal will alter preideas of what constitutes a predominantly rural-based countryside. Perhaps more significantly, the very presence of an international train terminal in London's surrounding countryside undermines the City as its central focus. At the same time, it suggests a redrawing of English territory by pushing inland an important feature of the legal relevance of the national border⁹. Thus Ashford may come to represent - if only perceptually - a relocation of control within the state, modifying both the nation's center and the nation's boundaries. It is a site overlaid by European Community authority, potently marked by large international shopping malls interspersed with the presence of French police carrying guns on British soil.

Amongst and between all this bulldozing, transporting, building, and development surrounding the fast train link, issues of center and periphery are raised and materialized through the shifting relations between the capital city and its surrounding countryside. As much as London is being transformed through transnational forces into something new, the idea of the country around it is having to adjust and adapt. And it is here that critiques against Raymond Williams from a postcolonial perspective become very apt. In general, these critiques highlight limitations in Williams' country/city thesis with respect to its implicit presumption of European centrism. Specifically, the argument is made that Williams inadequately takes into account the historical role of the colonies in shaping English culture, primarily because of his Marxist based concern in economics (Viswanathan 1993). Thus ultimately Williams designates the history of colonized peripheries as derivative upon the west (Skurski and Coronil 1993:234; Viswanathan 1993:220). With respect to thinking about the relations between city and country Williams too readily assumes it a model of universal application (Williams 1973:286). This underlines his failure to discuss the extent this model itself is shaped and constituted through the influential impulses of England's imperial frontiers playing back on the assumed center.

The 'other' has always been intrinsic to the defining and constitution of London's shifting city character. While the colonial presence in the 18th and 19th centuries was obviously not so overt or perceived as so threatening as it is today, nonetheless it has always been there. The unforeseen impact of empire on modifying British law, governance, religious practices, industry, banking, shipping, fashion and so on is a well rehearsed narrative. The primary difference in the late 20th century is that western culture is being forced to confront in an immediate and intimate way its own self in negation (Mazzoleni 1993:299). Thus it is hardly surprising that in contemporary England, there is a strong political rhetoric - in government and popular circles - of an impending foreign invasion, often linked to the 'advancing tide' of Europeanization (see Klinck 1994:54). This imagery is particularly marked with respect to talk about the Channel Tunnel which has symbolically undermined the national border, broken the island's isolation and opened the floodgates (Darian-Smith 1995c). While images of water are especially pertinent to an island nation, echoes of this rhetoric of flows, particularly with respect to movements of people, can be found across all of Europe. Within major (postcolonial and global) European cities, such as London, where various ethnic groups meet and co-exist, tensions between co-existing cultures and ethnicities and histories are both exacerbated and amplified. Under these conditions, the particular relations of center and periphery upon which the county and city model is based, and of which

imperialism was, according to Raymond Williams, the last expression, is threatened if not subverted (Williams 1973:279).

Other exteriors

Against the postcolonial presence within England, and London in particular, the appropriation of the countryside in the reconstruction of regional city identities raises concern. Of course ideas such as the 'urban village' and its nostalgic promotion of community values is of itself not necessarily disturbing. As Wendy Wheeler claims, nostalgia may be a way 'of exploring the kinds of languages and practices in which a progressive postmodern politics might be possible' (Wheeler 1994:95; see also Wright 1985:26; Massey 1991). Indeed the lobbying for EC funding by local city governments to support heritage projects is potentially radical and locally empowering. Nonetheless, in scratching below the surface of the heritage and town planning policies and their use of the idea of country, revealed is a deep anxiety about the nation's political and economic future and, perhaps even more critically, its cultural base.

The heritage industry is a phenomenon of the 1980s in England, but its activities have a longer history. Since the Second World War, there has been a steady interest in the museification of the country landscape. While this preserving of whole landscapes is not restricted to England, as Paul Claval notes it is a peculiarly western phenomenon linked to capitalism and society's relations to nature (Claval 1992:348). Conservation of the land through government agencies is a national project, a reaffirmation of the center and periphery paradigm. In the light of the dismantling of former colonies and London as the empire's center throughout this century, the reification of the country (and city) was and is a strategy for gathering in the national territory and for reasserting the significance and boundaries of an authoritative state¹⁰. The countryside embodies a world not affected by change, a pre-modern sensibility of predictable seasonal rhythms and agricultural self-sufficiency mixed with a modern appreciation for class and the central institutions of law and order. In England, ideas of the country are contained by a coast-lined vision mapping the limits of central power. Hence there is a powerful social imperative behind projects such as the preservation of 'the damp, green valley' made famous in Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie*, or Black Heath in Dorset, the landscape Thomas Hardy wrote about in his novel *The Return of the Native* and which is currently being cleared and restored to an open sweep of empty countryside. Patricia Ingham, an Oxford lecturer and expert on Hardy, said of this scheme that it is much better than a museum.

'People make pilgrimages to Dorset because of the landscape People feel they know it. The place is a shrine' (Guardian 9 June 1994:24).

This consolidation of the nation-state within the countryside brings to the fore a critical dimension in any discussion on the continuing construction of the rural landscape. For in interpreting the enduring country/city relationship, and analyzing how it provides an historical continuity on which to structure a sense of security, it is important to incorporate critiques that have been made of Raymond Williams with respect to the influence of the colonized in the metropolis. The postcolonial population in London (and elsewhere) have forced a break in England's historical narrative. While it often goes unremarked in talk about global cities, the postcolonial presence demarcates the City as being a global entity as much as London's participation in a transnational economy. As a result, London no longer has a single history, a single identity, a single culture. And as a consequence of it being so much more of a cosmopolitan metropolis, London is no longer entirely the nation's representative center. London poses a new definition of 'capital' and 'city' within England. At the same time, London's participation in transnational projects such as the fast train linking it to Paris and Brussels helps dissolve the spatial sense that London is surrounded by an encircling countryside, and so contests the construction of 'country'. These definitional ambiguities are further provoked from within England by a postcolonial population which implicitly challenges the heritage industry, forcing the question "whose tradition is being conserved and whose conception of a rural landscape?" As John Urry has argued, the countryside is largely constructed as 'white' (Urry 1990:142). Blacks and Asians do not regularly adopt the particularly English tradition of country walking as epitomized by the Ramblers' Associations. Nor

are they very responsive to billboard invitations such as that made by British Heritage to board weekend getaway trains and find in the nation's country periphery a 'Place in History'.

Conclusion

Through postcolonial and global forces, and more specifically the reconceptualizing of state sovereignty within the European Community, London has lost hold on its symbolism as the nation's capital. One consequence is that London's transnational interactions are generating new definitions of 'country' and 'city' that are not so easily conflated with understandings of national identity. What I have suggested in this paper is that this transition is marked by England's regional cities stressing ties to local communities and promoting the absence of unemployment, poverty and violence in contrast to the degradation experienced in London. A critical strategy in this process of the regional periphery distancing itself from the state's center is the explicit appropriation of ideas and values associated with the countryside in the reinventing of the smaller city identity. By bringing the country within and attempting to create an "urban village", what these cities are seeking is to avoid the racial tensions and right wing political responses linked to East London and such places as the Isle of Dogs (on avoidance see Young 1995:259). In an attempt to diffuse a reactionary nationalism and the disturbing questions raised by the return to the metropole of people formerly colonized, what is being projected is a singular English history and with that a sensibility of city that takes its shape in contrast to country and nation. The compromise, however, is that such a position denies minorities a freedom to assert their own historical and cultural narratives, build up an identity with a particular place, and perhaps one day call it home.

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