'Welcome to Dreamland': From place to non-place and back again in Pawel Pawlikowski's *Last Resort*

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Abstract

This paper explores the incorporation of anthropologist Marc Augé's theory of 'non-place' into the study of representations of travel, migration and displacement in contemporary European cinema. Taking the British film Last Resort (Pawlikowski, 2000) as its central example, the idea of 'home' as a structuring absence is considered by exploring the spatial geographies and practices within narratives of movement. Acknowledging the sedentariness of much of the travel and migratory experience, the non-place invokes the dreamscapes and imaginary spaces of Elsewhere from the realities of a quotidian spatio-temporal present. Last Resort, and other examples from contemporary film, employ a tripartite spatial structure of zones of arrival and departure, zones of stasis and zones of transition, to delineate the literal and metaphorical processes of displacement that mark the status of the traveller and migrant. Although the non-place provides a valuable and neglected area of study in filmic representations of anthropological and spatial practice, counter constructions of being and place are no less evident in a narrative gestalt where subjectivities are drawn from social and cinematic spaces which are ostensibly heterotopic.

There's No Place Like Home

Foucault's definition of utopias as 'sites of no real place ... [with] a direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society' (1986: 24) acknowledges and reinforces the important structuralist principle that the trajectories of societal discourse are ordered along lines of distinction or otherness; of demarcation from the indexical coordinates of the spatio-temporal present. Amongst anthropological studies of tourism and tourist motivation this has translated into the restlessness of the tourist-pilgrim in search of authenticity – of a wholeness felt to be lacking in the quotidian realities of postmodernity (MacCannell 1976; Graburn 1989).

In this analysis the dim and distant vistas of Shangri-La become inextricably bound up with the sociological and spatial contours of the here and now. An historical anthropology of film could likewise draw from over a century of popular cinema, from Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon* (1937) to Barbet Schroeder's *La Vallée/The Valley (Obscured by Clouds)* (1972), to open up the off-screen social, cultural and political spaces which frame the context of their respective protagonists' departure (and of those choosing to identify with the on-screen travellers). Utopia's promise of restored or regained selfhood, an ideal homeland or sense of collective belonging, constitutes what Arjun Appadurai describes as 'the imagination as a social practice' (1996: 31). The imaginary spaces, or non-places, of Dreamland become, ironically, the interwoven narratives of the real spaces of social and cultural practice. The dislocation and displacement inscribed in 'travel' as both a literal and

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metaphorical process is thus geographically located and enacted in the actual 'non-places' ('utopia' being derived from the Greek *u-topos*, or 'no-place') of sedentary and transitory experience. For Marc Augé, whose work is central to this discussion, '[t]he non-place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society' (1995: 111–12).

Perhaps the most iconic and recurrent of non-places in popular cinema, certainly in the West, is the motel. Often the refuge of the drifter and outsider (*Paris, Texas*, Wenders, 1984), the outlaw lovers (*Wild at Heart*, Lynch, 1990; *Natural Born Killers*, Stone, 1994), or the deranged (*Psycho*, Hitchcock, 1960), the motel in many respects provides a liminal zone where those who fall between or outside the structural and institutional coordinates of society are 'mapped' into a narrative of arrival and departure. In this '*metaphorai* of the pause' (Morris 1988: 41) lies the unfolding of individual narratives and spatial practices from which ideas of being and place are continuously tested and reconstructed.

For Morris, motels '*demolish* sense-regimes of place, locale and "history". They memorialise only movement, speed, and perpetual circulation' (1988: 3). Nowhere in the cinema is this more exemplified than in the road movie. Typically, these films follow a linear space/time trajectory in which the metaphor of the road is predominant, and the structuring absence of 'home' defines an ontology of movement and restlessness.

In an early classic of the genre, *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939), Dorothy returns from Dreamland with the realization that 'there's no place like home'; an ambiguous reflection which, in its reactionary sublimation of the local and familial, harbours the somewhat less reassuring message that 'there *is* no-place like home'. Home is a utopia, a non-place that cannot exist in spatio-temporal presentness. As van den Abbeele points out, 'the identity of home is breached by the very movement that constitutes it' (1992: xxiii).

The song 'Over the Rainbow' from the film has been described by Salman Rushdie as 'the anthem of all the world's migrants ... a grand paean to the Uprooted Self, a hymn – *the* hymn – to Elsewhere' (Rushdie 1992: 23). It is this emphasis on the Elsewhere that I shall argue is one of the defining features of filmic tropes of non-place.

The road movie is principally associated with a North-American cultural geography resonant with myths of the frontier, individualism and the pursuit of the American Dream (Cohan and Hark 1997). Where the genre has been translated by, or ascribed to, European film-makers, the culturally and geographically specific modalities of the ostensibly amorphous corpus of work that constitutes 'contemporary European film', opens up broader areas of enquiry than many of those presupposed within specific genre discourses such as that of the 'road movie'. This is not only to question the efficacy of approaching film in terms of genre or categories, whereby writers on film methodologically construct and delimit their subject matter and object of discourse (Naficy 1994). It is also to open up the possibility of new directions and interdisciplinary approaches to studies of travel and film. These offer the potential of informing and broadening existing categories of research.

The scant mention of the cultural and geographical role of the motel and other geographical markers of the non-place in key genre studies (Cohan and Hark 1997), in deference to an epistemologically privileged 'road', is but one example which highlights a need to rethink the spatial imaginings of anthropological practice in film. These would entail: the shift from ideas of place towards those of non-place, and a greater recognition of the sedentariness of much of the travel experience; a retreat

from a postmodern fixation with the cultural economy of the sign and its concomitant lack of fixity in social, cultural and political practice; and a move towards a reappraisal of the materiality and groundedness of discourse, and of the empirical subject. This subject occupies the precarious terrain of *spatial praxis*, or 'third space', between spatial metaphor and spatial materiality (Soja and Hooper 1993).

Pawel Pawlikowski's film *Last Resort* (2000), provides a key exemplar of a cinema of non-places, in its study of asylum and detention in contemporary Britain.

Last Resort

The film opens with Tanya and her 10-year-old son Artiom being shuttled through Stansted Airport towards immigration. Having just arrived from Moscow, Tanya is expecting to meet her English 'fiancé', Mark. When he does not show she decides to claim political asylum. Mother and son are taken to Stonehaven, a grim seaside resort and 'designated holding area', where they are to be held while their claim for asylum is being processed. The film's actual location is Margate in Kent. The view that greets them from the dingy tower block where they are housed is of a closed-off and abandoned amusement park. A sign reads 'Dreamland Welcomes You'.

Tanya tries to contact her fiancé from a solitary phone box, the sole means of connection with the outside world. They attempt to leave, but are observed on the ubiquitous surveillance cameras that constantly monitor the detainees.

Alfie, who works at the amusement arcade and bingo hall, strikes up a friendship with Tanya and Artiom. Tanya eventually gets through to her so-called fiancé, only to discover that he does not want to continue the relationship. Realizing she has made a mistake Tanya tries to withdraw her application for asylum in the hope of returning home to Russia. Learning that this too will take a long time to process, Tanya is even more desperate to leave the resort.

Alfie takes Tanya out on a date. The next day all three spend the day together. They walk along the beach where a boat is moored. That evening on the promenade Tanya tells Alfie, 'I'm looking for love. That is why I am here'. The beach and Stonehaven's seascape provide an atmosphere of intimacy and reflection that brings the two closer.

Witnessing Tanya's close encounter with on-line prostitution in a bid to fund her escape, and Artiom's slide into criminality, Alfie decides to help the couple. They hide in a boat overnight, and sail off at dawn around the headland. They make it to the main road heading towards London where Tanya and Alfie part. Hitching a ride in a lorry, Tanya and Artiom are driven off towards the capital. The film ends with mother and son being carried away once more by the airport shuttle.

Spatially, the film consists of three main zones through which Tanya and Artiom move: the zone of arrival and departure (London Stansted Airport); the zone of transition (between airport and holding area); and the zone of stasis (Stonehaven). Characteristic of all three, at least until the final scenes, is the absence of agency in movement. They are *conveyed* through the airport on the shuttle car, *processed* by the immigration officials, *despatched* by the police and *delivered* to the holding area, where the curtailment of travel, movement, and the breaching of borders define, by virtue of their absence, the spatial practices of resistance. These connect the detainees, both literally and metaphorically, to the actual or imagined communities 'outside'.

As Andrew O'Hagan observes, '[t]his is a film about journeys' (2001: 25), yet despite or because of this, much of what constitutes the action of the central characters is punctuated by long periods of waiting and enforced sedentariness.

These issues of agency and mobility, place and non-place can be more fully explored by a closer examination of the film's tripartite spatial structure.

From Place to Non-Place

1. Zones of arrival and departure

The novelist J.G. Ballard embraces the airport as a (post)modern landscape of transience, discontinuity and the camaraderie of the traveller (1997). In doing so he shares certain similarities with Marc Augé's (1995) anthropology of 'supermodernity'. Ballard's observation that '[airports] constitute the reality of our lives, rather than some mythical domain of village greens' (1997: 11) concurs with Augé's distinction between 'anthropological place' and 'non-place'. 'Anthropological place' is a bounded notion of place, localized in time and space, and defined by ideas of a shared identity and history. 'Non-place' is a concept ascribed to a world 'where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (...); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing (...); a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral' (1995: 78).

The relevance of traditional anthropological and sociological notions of place within the complex and increasingly porous frontiers and landscapes of late-capitalism has come under some considerable scrutiny in recent years. Augé comments: 'try to imagine a Durkheimian analysis of a transit lounge at Roissy [the airport serving Paris]!' (1995: 94). This shift from place to non-place in empirical and theoretical disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology and cultural geography, is increasingly reflected in studies of contemporary visual culture such as film, photography and new media.

The later films of the Greek film-maker Theo Angelopoulos, for example, reveal a markedly different spatial perspective and geographical imagination than that explored in his earlier work. As Fredric Jameson (1997) notes, the shift of locale from the small, autonomous towns of films such as *Anaparastasis/Reconstruction* (1970) makes way for an increased observance of borders and frontiers (*To Meteoro*

Figure 1. Tanya and her son Artiom in transit through the 'non-place' in Last Resort (Pawlikowski, 2000) Picture: Courtesy of Artificial Eye

Vima Tou Pelargou/The Suspended Step of the Stork, 1991; *To Vlemma Tou Odyssea/Ulysses' Gaze*, 1995; *Mia Eoniotita Ke Mia Mera/Eternity and a Day*, 1998), and (non-)places of waiting, transit and refuge, such as train stations (*Topo Stin Omichli/Landscape in the Mist*, 1988), motels and motorway stops (*O Melissokomos/The Beekeeper*, 1986), which his primarily exilic and existentially homeless characters move through and inhabit.

Zones of arrival and departure are central to Angelopoulos' 1995 Balkan odyssey *Ulysses' Gaze*. 'A', played by Harvey Keitel, journeys from northern Greece through Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia to Bosnia and war-torn Sarajevo, crossing a multitude of political, historical and national(ist) frontiers. Zones of transition ('A's' long taxi journey through Albania, past refugees streaming back towards the border with Greece; the barge journey along the Danube carrying the dismantled statue of Lenin) pass through and inevitably give way to zones of stasis. Sarajevo is the culmination of a long personal, historical and cinematic odyssey in which the 'gaze' offers 'A's' Odysseus no route homeward to Ithaca, merely the empty, displaced shell of a triumvirate vision of modernity.

Jameson suggests that *Ulysses' Gaze* 'consummates a kind of transnational spatiality ... anticipatory of realities not yet adequately confronted anywhere in the art beginning to emerge in our New World Order' (1997: 78, 89). Key to this is a narrative structure of the spatial which is able to engage both the postmodern valorization of movement and ontological uncertainty, with a spatial materialism of 'mappable' social and political coordinates, in some way approximate to Augé's notion of 'anthropological place'.

This dynamic tension between place and non-place defines much that is central to an experience of contemporary displacement as evoked in both the later work of modernist film-makers such as Angelopoulos as well as in more popular, and less uncompromisingly auteurist films, such as *Last Resort*. Here, the spatial practices of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Pawlikowski's Stonehaven constitute interwoven narratives of home and away, place and non-place, which both thwart and bolster the positing of national, physical and hegemonic boundaries.

Zones of arrival and departure are thus not only sites of entrance and exit between contingent and otherwise arbitrary points in space and time, but they are also potential *zones of transition* and *zones of stasis*. As *zones of transition* they represent a spatial and liminal confrontation between the promise, or threat, of 'here' and 'there'. As an example, the opening and closing travelling shots of Tanya and Artiom in the airport shuttle car can be seen as the spatial enactment of a positive mobilization of future aspirations in which they are the agents, or perhaps, as Iain Sinclair suggests, as a ludic substitution 'for the aerial thrills of the [closed] Dreamland park in Margate' (2001: 16). As *zones of stasis*, the zones of departure and arrival represent a temporal unfolding of spatial restriction, exemplified by the travellers' detention at airport immigration.

2. Zones of stasis

For those waiting for their fate to be determined, Stonehaven represents the most immediate of quotidian constraints on endeavours to mobilize and cohere a sense of place. Prevented from leaving the holding area, the detainees' movements throughout the resort are under constant surveillance and restriction. The railway station is closed 'until further notice', and the grey, imposing presence of the sea provides a natural barrier of containment and exclusion. The essential otherness

and objectification of the asylum seeker in *Last Resort* is further accentuated by the provision of food vouchers (with no change payable), which restrict their rights to exercise control and autonomy over their day-to-day patterns of consumption. Meagre cash benefits and the denial of the right to work compound their outsider status, leaving them ripe for exploitation.

The surrender of identity that accompanies this process of othering is inscribed in almost every form of interaction and material exchange between Tanya and the sedentary spatialities of Stonehaven. Tanya's desire to leave the resort becomes a desire to retrieve an experiential and phenomenological sense of being-in-the-world, akin to Augé's 'passenger through non-places [who] retrieves his (*sic*) identity only at customs, at the tollbooth, at the check-out counter' (1995: 103). Zones of stasis, such as the airport, detention area or the immigration and social services office '[create] neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude' (1995: 103). The denial of movement, which differentiates the zone of stasis from the zone of transition, is reflected in the spatial and narrative structure of *Last Resort*, in which travel and mobility take place both prior to and subsequent to the opening and closing airport scenes, and between the sedentary transit points of airport and resort. In this sense the trope of travel becomes metaphorically linked with agency and strategies of resistant subjectivity.

The ability to establish connections and relations beyond these imposed boundaries therefore becomes a central element within the social practice of the diegetic characters. The phone box on the seafront (which can only be operated by card) provides a focal point around which the asylum seekers and refugees gather. The exilic and diasporic spaces of London or other possible transnational connections permeate the experiential and geo-political borders of Stonehaven. Epistolary narratives locate and mediate ideas of space, time and homeland (Naficy 2001); imagined communities are precariously maintained; and the Elsewhere is further incorporated within the spatio-temporal present. The phone box becomes a transnational space by which a metonymic 'last resort' of parochial, historically contingent England is steadily undone. As such, its access is limited to cardholders only, and those willing to wait their turn.

The only other outside or transnational connections that breach this zone of stasis occur within the non-place that the Internet represents. Stonehaven's resident pimp, Les, (played by the real-life porn star Lindsey Honey aka Ben Dover), scouts around the town looking for attractive and vulnerable women to employ as virtual prostitutes for an on-line client base from across the globe ('We've got punters in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, everywhere'). Ironically it is the relative ease of the immigrants' breaching of the transnational boundaries of global capitalism, and their concomitant exploitation and commodification, that enables the town's most economically-viable industry to sustain the prevention, or delay, of the same immigrants' actual crossing of transnational boundaries of labour, and of economic and political disparity.

3. Zones of Transition

Dreamland, or an imaginary of 'home' as social practice, is revealed and constituted within the journey itself. Reflecting on her British odyssey in search of love, Tanya acknowledges to Alfie and to herself that, 'I have to stop dreaming – I've been dreaming all my life. I have to go back and start my life ... '. The closed-down amusement park's ambiguous reminder that 'Dreamland Welcomes You' becomes

an ironic and harsh rejoinder to the folly of utopia, in which a structuring absence is forever destined to conflate the expectation of arrival with the inevitability of departure. It is thus not the idealism of the dreamer that determines Tanya's ongoing pursuit of her life. Rather, she embarks on her journey through yet another zone of transition with a pragmatic recognition of certain of the realities of twenty-first-century Europe.

The 'flight' out of Stonehaven on the boat, which Alfie has stolen, juxtaposes movement with stasis and, in so doing, reinforces the distinction in the film's representation of space between zones of stasis and transition. The camera's meditative and disinterested gaze in this scene is a celebration of Deleuze's (1992) movement-image, combining the mobility of action with that of the cinematic image. The corporeal subjects that have thus far been incrementally and diachronically defined from the filmic narrative are held in suspension in an ontology of movement and embodied transition. The addition of dominant non-diegetic music further informs a disavowal of the discursive subject in a phenomenology of what Deleuze terms 'liquid perception' (1992: 77).

Both Deleuze (1992) and Bruno (1993) have explored the relationship of water, movement and film. For Deleuze 'water is the most perfect environment in which movement can be extracted from the thing moved, or mobility from movement itself' (1992: 77). The signification of the movement-image in this transitional scene in *Last Resort* is a gestalt of action in movement and movement in action. Nowhere in the film is an ontology of agency and mobility made more explicit. The distinction between what Sarap terms a 'space-based action', an action from which an agent can move on, and a 'space-bound action', where agency in movement is restricted (1994: 95), is dialectically framed within two opposing and interdependent zones of spatiality. Within the zone of transition through the coastal waters of a fortress Britain, Tanya literally becomes herself both *in* and *as* movement.

In discussing the 'fluid *meter-polis*' of Elvira Notari's filmic representation of Naples, Bruno argues that 'the sea epitomizes *transito*' (1993: 222), a concept derived from the Italian philosopher Mario Perniola. This theorizes the spatialization of desire as inscribed in physical and mental motion, incorporating states of transit, transition, movement and circulation. In Bruno's analysis the emphasis is ostensibly on the pleasures of the gaze in spatial and cinematic urban topographies.

With its emphasis on flows, movements and the spatial enactment of desire, *transito* addresses itself to *transgressions* of social, spatial and moral boundaries, and the desires and kinaesthetic pleasures of embodied perception. As such it contributes towards a social phenomenology of film, perception and movement which 'acknowledge[s] that forms of *transito* lie at the root of cinematic pleasures, and place[s] these pleasures in the context of journeys of the gaze through geographies' (Bruno 1993: 56).

As a transitory state the *transito* of Tanya, Artiom and Alfie's cinematic flight out of Stonehaven bears certain comparisons with a pivotal scene from Andrei Tarkovsky's Soviet film, *Stalker* (1979), in which the three central protagonists enter the forbidden Zone, having broken through the industrial-military fortifications that border the zone of stasis (the bleak, dystopic wasteland of everyday reality), and the preternatural Zone (of one's innermost desire). In a three and a half minute sequence Writer, Professor and Stalker are shown in close-up against a landscape-in-movement, which is sometimes blurred and at other times focused. The hypnotic rhythm of the flatcar as it moves slowly along the rails underscores a temporal

motility in which solitary profiles of each man are shown, motionless, in a state of pure *transito* against an unfolding, sepia landscape. When the flatcar finally comes to a rest in the stillness, and colour, of the Zone, Stalker announces that they are 'home'. Home in this context may be interpreted as a liminal, indeterminate space of possibilities and metaphysical mobility, in contradistinction to the crippling predictability and stasis of the world from which they have flown.

In both *Last Resort* and *Stalker* it is movement, and an unfolding potential of as yet unrealized goals, hopes or desires, that defines the spatial geographies within the film and frames an ontology of the traveller as 'an authentically migrant perspective (...) [which regards] movement, not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure-arrival, but as a mode of being in the world' (Carter, in Chambers 1994: 42).

From Non-Place to Place

In Augé's anthropology of a supermodernity, the mode of transport itself is as much a non-place as the social and geographical places of transit and waiting. In the terms I have articulated, therefore, the non-place is as much a feature of the zone of transition as it is that of the zones of arrival and departure, and of stasis. Furthermore, all three zones are interdependent and cannot be invoked in isolation.

Yet in fixing the boundaries firmly on the non-place it is important to keep in mind that for Augé, the non-place is ostensibly defined against a Durkheimian-Maussian notion of anthropological place, of an organic sociality rooted in space and time, with shared meanings and notions of personhood. Although Augé acknowledges that neither place nor non-place is fixed, and that each reconstitutes itself from the other in practice, there is arguably a danger of ascribing a negatively reconfigured sociality of place to that of non-place. A logical consequence of this would be to fix an idea of space where the solitary, contractual and transient become reified in an inverted geography, in which traditional anthropological referents are conceptually neutered. To apply such an analysis to *Last Resort* would be, at best, to overlook and, at worst, to distort a narrative gestalt in which place and non-place, self and other, are strategically complicit in their mutual constitution.

The relationship that develops between Tanya and Alfie, and to a lesser extent Artiom and Alfie, provides a central narrative thread in which the crafting of place from non-place is the basis of solidarity, collective endeavour, and strategies of resistance. The following examples all represent positive responses to the wider circumstances in which they find themselves, and contribute to a sense of place: the transformation of Tanya and Artiom's sparse and miserable temporary accommodation to a newly decorated and furnished 'home'; the role of the arcade and bingo hall in establishing a community centre and space of local interaction; and Artiom's trade and subsequent friendship with some local children.

The phone box on the seafront is, by any measure of Durkheimian anthropology, a totem of the Stonehaven asylum community, as well as being a portal from which the transnational and transcultural spaces of a globalized postmodernity are accessed and conceived. It represents a discontinuity in space that, by virtue of its capacity for spatial compression, is able to express continuity in time, and hence act as a marker of anthropological place, shared identities and established meanings. How shared or meaningful, is, of course, a question of degree. It is clear, however, that relationships are formed, conducted and negotiated in enforced spatial proximity amongst groups from different cultural, political, religious and linguistic

Figure 2. Alfie, Tanya and Artiom journey beyond the present in Last Resort Picture: Courtesy of Artificial Eye

backgrounds. The shared predicaments of these spatially 'othered' contribute towards some bases for collectivity-in-action which appears to be at odds with the solitary individuality and contractuality of Augé's non-place.

Similarly, the beach represents a liminal zone that defies spatial categorization in the terms presented here. Geographically it constitutes the interstitial zone between land and sea, whereas anthropologically and existentially it straddles boundaries of structure and chaos, place and non-place, enclosure and freedom.

'Stonehaven' sands provide the stage setting for reflection and memory, disclosure and intimacy, punctuating the narrative mid-point between arrival and departure. Tanya and Alfie's blossoming romance, although destined never to be, acts, in a way, as a catalyst in their respective desire for change and movement beyond the present. The beach in *Last Resort* marks this point of transition from which both are able to reflect on their lives and on why they are 'here'. Waiting for the incoming tide to liberate them from their moorings, Alfie, Tanya and Artiom's final night in Stonehaven is spent in this conflated zone of stasis and transition.

The transitional nature of the beach accords with Van Gennep's ideas on liminality and *rites de passage* (Van Gennep 1960). In this analysis liminality marks a period of transition from one stage of life to another. The temporal (and often spatial) interstices between social and institutional structures become ritualized in ceremonies and practices in which normative behavioural expectations are suspended or reversed.

The sociologist Rob Shields draws on these theories in his study of Brighton, and the 'ritual pleasures of a seaside resort' (1991: 73). Charting a social history of Brighton beach over the last two centuries, Shields shows how the beach as a carnivalesque leisure zone and site of mass tourism developed in the mid-nineteenth century out of Brighton's reputation as a sea-bathing site, a practice which sought to exploit its reputedly restorative powers. From medicalized bathing beach to pleasure zone, a more recent phase of Brighton's place-myths is characterized by an emphasis on sexual indulgence – the eponymous 'dirty weekend' – as well as violence, and a transgression of social norms, in which the liminality of the beach extends throughout the town itself. The marginal status of Brighton 'as a liminal destination, a social as well as geographical margin, a "place

apart"' (Shields 1991: 112) has more recently meant an increasing association with the homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, a trend that is echoed in other British seaside resorts, such as Margate. Faced with a severe shortage of social and temporary housing many local authorities have begun to implement an unofficial policy of dispersing asylum seekers to seaside resorts and port towns in the South East, where the cost of housing claimants is cheaper. These overwhelmingly white, Conservative and mono-cultural towns, also the temporary home and 'last resort' of those asylum claimants entering at ports of entry such as Dover or Ramsgate, provide the political and cultural backdrop to the contemporary setting for Pawlikowski's film. The added resonance of the beach in this context provides a further dimension to the social history of British coastal resorts, which remains relatively under-researched.

As a liminal space, the beach also falls between conceptions of 'public' and 'private'. The shot of Turkish asylum seekers singing and drinking on the beach in *Last Resort* can be juxtaposed with a scene in which Artiom and his friends voyeuristically invade the private space of another ethnic group expressing themselves in song, encamped inside the cramped interiors of their temporary 'home'. This juxtaposition is interesting as it throws into relief the presentation of migrants in terms of closure and exposure. Deniz Göktürk (2000) explores this in relation to Turkish-German cinema, citing Tevfik Baser's *40m²* Deutschland (1986) as characteristic of a 1980s mode of depicting migrants, particularly women, in claustrophobic spaces and narratives of imprisonment. A shift in representation from 'closed' to 'open' chronotopes (space-time) in film (Naficy 2001; Konstantarakos 2000), as evidenced in *Last Resort*, reveals spatialities in which migrant identities are not merely seen in terms of the marginal and subaltern, but are open, mobile and orientated towards a transnational mode of social, cultural and cinematic practice.

It is clear, therefore, that from within and beyond the parameters of non-place, multiple reclamations of place and identity are at play. The liminal status of Stonehaven and its zones of stasis and transition contribute to a *communitas* of being and belonging, forged in the interstices of social and cultural dichotomies. Naficy describes this interstitial conjunction of transitional (open) and static (closed) cinematic forms, as 'thirdspace chronotopicality' (2001: 212), after Bakhtin and Soja. The coexistent and divergent narrative space-times of Margate/Stonehaven define an ontological 'thirdspace' of hybridity and transnationality. These connections and disjunctions, which mark the status of the exilic and diasporic, map thirdspace topoi of hegemonic spatiality and geographies of resistance.

'Welcome to Dreamland': Documenting Displacement

The first sight of America that greeted New York-bound immigrants travelling from Europe in the 1890s was the giant Coney Island Ferris wheel which, it is said, could be seen long before they caught sight of the Statue of Liberty (Lencez and Bosker 1998: 168). 'Architecture of leisure' such as this, which '[turned] coastlines into successions of geometric and utopian fantasies' (1998: xxi), provides the contemporary, and very British, backdrop for Pawlikowski's Margate/Stonehaven. The ghost-like atmosphere of a time-locked, bygone age permeates a quotidian present in which the contingencies of history, of a post-colonial and post-communist *fin de siècle*, reveal a town where even access to the ludic, postmodern spaces of coastal resorts such as Gurinder Chadha's Blackpool in *Bhaji on the Beach*

(1993) have been denied. Stonehaven's Dreamland, like its railway station, is closed until further notice, inscribing a space-bounded insularity, which draws on the spatial and cognitive experiences of actual asylum seekers and refugees living in South-East England.

Researching the film in Margate, Pawlikowski recalls that 'my first contact was with the Roma, the Gypsies, who were the only refugees who interacted with the locals. Even with them, what struck me was how little their world extended beyond what they called Margatta. They would make epic journeys to a strange place at the far end of their known world called Greyvas End' (Gibbons 2001: 2). Gravesend on the Thames Estuary shared similar *fin de siècle* significance a century before for Joseph Conrad, who, like Pawlikowski, was a Polish-born immigrant and chronicler of English displacement. From the ebbing tides of Marlow's Gravesend in Conrad's 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*, the aura of narrative set this 'tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth', and the twentieth century, in motion – journeys of imperialism which have come full circle in Pawlikowski's post-colonial narrative of millennial Britain.

Pawlikowski is himself a former refugee, having arrived in Britain with his family at the age of twelve. He is more widely known as an award-winning documentary film-maker rather than a fiction film-maker. *Last Resort* blurs many of the boundaries between the genres, although it is clearly a work of fiction. Alongside the principal actors, 'real' asylum seekers are shot with shaky, hand-held cameras, and the immediacy of documentary realism in the film is offset by a meditative, restrained artifice that draws effectively on the town's experiential sense of isolation and its invocation of a spatial and temporal Elsewhere.

Approximately 3,000 asylum seekers have been displaced to Margate (a town with a population of 45,000 people) attracting inflammatory and racist rhetoric from right-wing politicians, neo-fascist organizations, and both the local and national media. Asylum seekers in nearby Dover were described by one local newspaper as 'human sewage' (Gibbons 2001: 2). The journalistic use of terms such as 'illegals' or 'clandestines' compounds this process of 'othering', and is complicit in the hegemonic denial and supplanting of subaltern subjectivities and migrant narratives. Although the narrative of *Last Resort* steers clear of these more overtly political issues, the film is able to articulate a politics of transnational spatiality that opens up the ethnographic and geographic spaces of marginal Britain to reveal the ontological insecurities of tenure in a globalizing, transnational world order. The proliferation of non-place over place is a central and as yet under-acknowledged component within these modalities of displacement. As Augé cogently argues, '[t]he world of supermodernity does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live, for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at. We have to relearn to think about space' (1995: 35–36).

However, despite the increasingly transient and permeable landscapes of late capitalism, an anthropology of supermodernity does not preclude the persistence of the anthropological place as a strategic, spatio-temporal marker of being and belonging. Communities, imagined or otherwise, that are able to claim some degree of organic sociality, are constructed in ethnographic and narrative spaces, which are ostensibly heterotopic. These are places without a place, 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real space (...) several sites that are themselves incompatible' (Foucault 1986: 25). Heterotopias are spaces that are simultaneously elsewhere and nowhere.

The heterotopic spaces of *Last Resort* chart a metonymic England/Britain

through which histories and identities, at once mappable and unmappable, pass. These are narratives that both posit and breach the literal and metaphorical borders to Elsewhere. Dreamland's *u-topos* thus inscribes a set of social, spatial and cinematic practices in which the non-place, as a realm of stasis and sedentary enclosure, generates *potentialities* of arrival and departure, from which narratives of transition and emergent subjectivity become mobilized towards the contingent contours of place.

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