

Postimperial Englishness in the Contemporary White Canon

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There is no understanding Englishness without understanding its imperial and colonial dimensions.

Stuart Hall, 2008.

Abstract

Building upon ‘contrapuntal’ readings of canonical fiction by white English writers, this thesis conducts a postcolonial analysis of major contemporary English novelists who are not commonly associated with issues of race, empire, and decolonisation.

The three main case studies are Alan Hollinghurst, Graham Swift, and Julian Barnes, but I also discuss a range of other prominent novelists including Ian McEwan, Hilary Mantel, and J.G. Ballard. Each chapter begins by challenging the dominant interpretative frameworks – Hollinghurst, sexuality; Swift, WWII; Barnes, postmodernism – within which each author is typically situated. The extended postcolonial readings that follow disrupt the critical separation of ‘postcolonial’ from ‘English’ contemporary fiction. These categories have led to ‘a consensual and still prevalent “parochiality” in terms of reading habits’, which I interpret as the refusal or inability to read for race, empire, and decolonisation where they are not expected – that is, in a Hollinghurst rather than a Rushdie – a division that seems to be conducted on biographical if not also racial criteria.

The overall argument of this thesis is that the contemporary canon of white English novelists – often separated or shielded from postcolonial scrutiny – can be redefined as postimperial. By this I mean that they are engaged in the critical examination of England and Englishness after empire, with a particular emphasis upon issues of sexuality, militarism, and masculinity. Alan Hollinghurst, Graham Swift, and Julian Barnes are much more historically, geographically, and politically aware and engaged as writers than we have tended to imagine them as being. They write in response to the conditions of post-war and postimperial Britain, as well as in dialogue with both imperial writing and postcolonial writing. In doing so, and whilst

addressing a range of other concerns and harnessing a number of different approaches, their fiction makes an important contribution to the registering and remaking of postimperial Englishness.

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Abbreviations

'ATB'	Alan Hollinghurst, 'A Thieving Boy'
<i>SPL</i>	Alan Hollinghurst, <i>The Swimming-Pool Library</i>
<i>FS</i>	Alan Hollinghurst, <i>The Folding Star</i>
<i>LoB</i>	Alan Hollinghurst, <i>The Line of Beauty</i>
<i>SC</i>	Alan Hollinghurst, <i>The Stranger's Child</i>
<i>OOTW</i>	Graham Swift, <i>Out of this World</i>
<i>A History</i>	Julian Barnes, <i>A History of the World in 10½ Chapters</i>

Introduction

We had, of course, none of the self-consciousness with regard to blacks that is so typical in middle-class England.¹

Alan Hollinghurst's first piece of published prose fiction, the short story 'A Thieving Boy' (1983), has received almost no critical attention. This is despite – or perhaps because of – its provocative intersection of sexuality, race, and empire. 'A Thieving Boy' ('ATB', hereafter) is narrated, rather unusually, in the first-person plural – using the collective pronouns 'our' and 'we' – by the unnamed godparents of Timothy Taylor.² They came to adopt Tim after his biological parents died; however, after raising him and supporting his successful scholarship to study at Cambridge, they found that he suddenly 'disappeared' (p.98). Twelve years later these retired teachers go on holiday to Egypt and – by coincidence – bump into him in the streets of Cairo. When he invites them to his flat a young man called Mustafa is introduced as Tim's servant but turns out also to be his lover. Towards the end of their trip they read in a local newspaper that Tim has been robbed and that his 'servant' is the 'prime, and indeed only, suspect' (p.109).

Hollinghurst, like the other contemporary white English novelists who are the subject of this thesis, has not, for the most part, been associated with postcolonial questions relating to race, empire, and decolonisation.³ These questions are typically reserved by critics for the work of black and Asian writers. As discussed later on,

¹ Alan Hollinghurst, 'A Thieving Boy', *Firebird 2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 93-109 (p.105). All further references to 'ATB' are incorporated into the text.

² I refer to the narrator of this story in the singular. Even though the narrative voice involves two people, it offers only one perspective.

³ The major exception, as we shall see, is Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988).

Hollinghurst's oeuvre is usually interpreted, and sometimes rather restrictively so, through the lens of queer theory. 'ATB' does not just concern sexuality but also the politics of race in postcolonial Egypt and so helps us to rethink or complicate that critical lens. It also takes us to the question at the core of this thesis: how do white English authors writing after the period of British imperial hegemony engage with and represent race, empire, and decolonisation?

One interpretation might be that Hollinghurst – like Graham Swift and Julian Barnes, the other key novelists in this thesis – creates belated imperial fiction: 'colonial discourse' continues to be reproduced in the work of these more contemporary writers. This belated and nostalgic imperial fiction might then be positioned in opposition to the fiction of postcolonial British novelists such as Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith, fiction that is more critically alert with regards to histories and ideologies of race and empire. I have chosen to begin this introduction, however, with the epigraph above because it suggests that Hollinghurst is more critically acute regarding his and his characters' relationships to race and empire than the belated interpretation would allow:

We had, of course, none of the self-consciousness with regard to blacks that is so typical in middle-class England. We had taught hundreds of them over the years, and liked them in general more than white children; the very school-oriented life we had always led gave us perhaps an edge of social intelligence over most people of our age and background. (p.105)

The very existence of this passage undermines the narrator's claims of unselfconsciousness. The godparents' praise for Mustafa translates into political point scoring over their peers as exaggerated liberalism patronisingly privileges black over white children. 'Blacks' are lumped together and categorically divided from whites. As Fredric Jameson glosses Edward Said, 'it does not matter much that the radical otherness of the culture in question is praised or valorized positively [...] the essential

operation is that of differentiation'.⁴ Despite heightened yet denied self-consciousness, these English travellers continue to reproduce, in the postcolonial era, the (erotic) exoticism and differentiation of colonial forbears such as E.M. Forster.

Erotic exoticism, Hollinghurst's intertextual relationship to Forster, and the story's Egyptian setting are discussed in detail in my chapter on Hollinghurst. What is important to note here is that Hollinghurst opens up an ironic gap between how the godparents view themselves and how the reader is likely to do so. In other words, Hollinghurst enables his narrator's perspective on race to be subjected to critical scrutiny. As 'ATB' continues, the godparents' imbrication with racial and imperial ideologies only becomes more and more apparent, despite their liberal protestations.

In these related ways, Hollinghurst, like the other writers in this thesis, is engaged in the critical examination of Englishness after empire, or, postimperial Englishness. I use the term 'critical' here primarily in the sense of 'involving or exercising careful judgement or observation', rather than of 'unfavourable criticism' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, OED hereafter), although the overlap between these two meanings is at times significant. My use of 'postimperial' rather than the more familiar term 'postcolonial' is also important. For me, postimperial defines a former imperial nation after the demise or transformation of its imperial status, whereas postcolonial defines a colony after its liberation from colonial rule. This thesis is concerned with writers who emerge from, and writing immersed in, the first of these contexts; although it is of course possible to relate to both contexts, my particular interest – against the grain of much postcolonial criticism – is in writers who primarily write from and about the former. More specifically, my argument is that the contemporary canon of white English novelists – often separated or shielded

⁴ Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text* 15 (1986), 65-88 (p.77).

from postcolonial scrutiny on biographical or racial grounds – can be redefined as postimperial. By this I mean that writers ranging from J.G. Ballard to Hilary Mantel provide previously overlooked literary interrogations of England and Englishness after empire.

This is not the same as redefining these writers as postcolonial. The fiction I am concerned with in this thesis does not, for the most part, belatedly and nostalgically repeat earlier imperial rhetorics, but neither, for the most part, does it articulate radical postcolonial critiques or subversions of former imperial narratives. Postimperial fiction is actively and critically engaged with histories and legacies of empire but ultimately remains metropolitan in its outlook. Postimperial fiction is not the fiction of migrations and diasporas, counter-voices and subversions; Mustafa, as I point out later on, is not given a voice in Hollinghurst's story. It is instead the fiction of 'working through', in Paul Gilroy's phrase, empire from the inside.

Alan Hollinghurst, Graham Swift, and Julian Barnes, as this thesis will show, are much more historically, geographically, and politically aware and engaged as writers than we have tended to imagine them as being. They write, to varying degrees, in response to the conditions of post-war and postimperial Britain, as well as in dialogue with both imperial writing and postcolonial writing. In doing so, and whilst addressing a range of other concerns and harnessing a number of different approaches, their fiction makes an important contribution to the registering and remaking of postimperial Englishness.

Postimperial Politics and Culture

Letting go of an empire is very hard to do.⁵

It is necessary to begin by laying out something of the historical and cultural context – postimperial Britain – to which contemporary English fiction, as I understand it in this thesis, responds, and into which it intervenes. As I hope will be clear throughout, I do not approach literary narratives as mere secondary reflections of prior historical developments, but as themselves providing insightful and compelling ways of intervening into national history and reformulating national identity. The narratives in this thesis primarily do so by encouraging their readers imaginatively to draw together and thus see anew ostensibly disparate histories and experiences of Englishness. This is why each writer and each text is afforded such detailed attention, and why I proceed on a case-by-case, or incremental, basis, as opposed to moving more freely between writers and texts. It is also why each novel or short story must be contextualised in a rigorous manner alongside a range of other literary and historical accounts. Doing so will enable us all the more clearly to recognise the unique contributions and interventions of the writers and texts in question to the critical examination of England and Englishness after empire.

I refer to postimperial *Britain* here because the empire is conventionally described as *British* and thus its decline is deemed to have affected all of the nations within Great Britain (in different ways). I refer to *English* rather than *British* fiction because the three main authors – Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes – discussed in this thesis were all born in England and, on the basis of their interviews and non-fiction,

⁵ Phyllis Lassner, *Colonial Strangers* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p.1.

usually self-identify as English rather than British; moreover, as the linguistic choices and geographical reference points of their works confirm, the nation they frequently (if not exclusively) write about is England and the national identity they repeatedly explore is Englishness. The reasons for focusing upon English writers specifically will be explained below.

Historical accounts that understand post-war Britain as a postimperial nation or set of nations build upon revisionist imperial historiography, conducted in the last thirty years or so, that emphasises the impact of empire at ‘home’. This ‘new’ imperial history revises ‘the history of the nation as it developed in the nineteenth century [which] was seen as relatively unconnected to that of the empire. Domestic history, it was widely assumed, could be separated from imperial history, for the empire did not seriously affect metropolitan society’.⁶ Catherine Hall, however, influenced by postcolonial and gender theory, ‘bec[a]me a historian of Britain who is convinced that, in order to understand the specificity of the national formation, we have to look outside it’.⁷ In her simultaneously domestic and imperial study of the intersections between Birmingham and Jamaica in the mid-nineteenth century – *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (2002) – she demonstrates that

Jamaican commodities, Jamaican family connections, Jamaican property in enslaved people, did not stay conveniently over there; they were part of the fabric of England, inside not outside, raising the question as to what was here and what was there, threatening dissolution of the gap on which the distinction between colony and metropole was constructed.⁸

Such historical and literary accounts, as the chapter on Barnes will make clear, critically disrupt the dominant impression that, prior to the epochal arrival of the

⁶ Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (eds), ‘Introduction’, *Race, Nation and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1-11 (p.1).

⁷ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects* (London: Polity, 2002), p.9.

⁸ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.10.

Empire Windrush in 1948, there was an ‘authentic British national life that [...] was as stable and as peaceful as it was ethnically undifferentiated’.⁹

One of the first historians to demonstrate the significant impact of empire within Britain, and thus an important precursor to Catherine Hall, was John MacKenzie. MacKenzie inaugurated the *Studies in Imperialism* series with Manchester University Press in 1984 with his book *Propaganda and Empire: Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*. In his introduction to the second book from that series – *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1986) – MacKenzie foregrounds ‘public interest and excitement [...] in foreign and imperial matters’.¹⁰ He does so in opposition to conventional assumptions about metropolitan ignorance of or indifference to empire. The contributors to his collection identify ‘imperial nationalism’ and ‘popular imperial fervour’ across a range of popular sources, from Music-Hall entertainment (Penny Summerfield) to juvenile fiction (J.S. Bratton).¹¹ A later *Studies in Imperialism* publication – Catherine Hall’s and Sonya Rose’s *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (2006) – builds upon these findings to argue that Britons’ ‘everyday lives were infused with an imperial presence’.¹² Ranging from sexuality (Philippa Levine) to gender (Jane Rendall), and from class (James Epstein) to ‘otherness’ (Laura Tabili), the contributors reveal how ‘Britain’s imperial project [...] shaped what was “taken-for-granted” ’ within metropolitan life, including conceptions of race. As its editors conclude, ‘empire was just there – out there. It was ordinary’.¹³

⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993), p.7.

¹⁰ John MacKenzie (ed.), ‘Introduction’, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 1-16 (p.2).

¹¹ MacKenzie, ‘Introduction’, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, p.4; p.5.

¹² Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (eds), ‘Introduction’, *At Home with the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-31 (p.21; p.2).

¹³ Hall and Rose, ‘Introduction’, *At Home with the Empire*, p.21.

Geoff Eley, whilst broadly sympathetic to such claims, also warns that ‘both the inevitability and the primacy of empire’s impact may too easily become assumed, encouraging the view that it was always and everywhere a decisive underlying explanation’.¹⁴ It is this danger, of over-emphasis and exaggeration, that Bernard Porter cautions against in his more traditional and empirical historical account *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2004). Porter’s aim here is to challenge ‘the idea that Britain was permeated with imperialism at every level’.¹⁵ Porter’s stance on imperial Britain is less important for this thesis than the ways in which he extends his argument into the post-war era: ‘impacting as little as this domestically in its lifetime, it is probably not to be expected that the empire would have left much of a residue when it died’.¹⁶ In his most recent book, *British Imperial* (2015), Porter details a few cultural and institutional legacies of empire – ‘old Indian Raj’ films, ‘many of Britain’s more draconian policing and security methods’ etc. – but continues to argue that ‘there was little sign of mass post-imperial demoralisation in Britain after the fall of the Empire’.¹⁷ For Porter, the British did not find it ‘hard’, as Phyllis Lassner suggests to the contrary, to ‘let [...] go of an empire’.

Porter’s ‘minimal impact’ thesis,¹⁸ regarding both imperial and postimperial Britain, has been contested by a number of historians and cultural critics.¹⁹ I do not

¹⁴ Geoff Eley, ‘Imperial Imaginary, Colonial Effect’, *Race, Nation and Empire*, 217-36 (pp.220-21).

¹⁵ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), viii.

¹⁶ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p.299.

¹⁷ Porter, *British Imperial* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), p.166; p.174; p.162. See also: Stephen Howe, ‘Internal Decolonization?’, *Twentieth Century British History* 14.3 (2003), 286-304.

¹⁸ Stuart Ward (ed.), ‘Introduction’, *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 1-20 (p.4).

¹⁹ See: Antoinette Burton, ‘*The Absent-Minded Imperialists* [review]’, *Victorian Studies* 47.4 (2005), 626-28; MacKenzie, ‘*The Absent-Minded Imperialists* [review]’,

wish to re-enact this well-rehearsed historiographical debate. Instead, I draw here upon a range of perspectives that, by challenging Porter's account directly or indirectly, help to contextualise the literary analyses that follow. In other words, I begin to outline some of the most salient features of Britain's postimperial politics and culture to which the writers in this thesis critically respond.

One way of doing this is by addressing the very idea of the end of empire. Thus far, I have referred to post-war Britain and postimperial Britain almost synonymously. This is because the Second World War is conventionally considered to mark the end, or at least the beginning of the end, of the British Empire (and European Empires more broadly). The end of the war in 1945, the Partition of India in 1947, the Suez Crisis of 1956, and Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' speech in 1960 have become key moments in the story of the decline of British imperial power. As John Darwin writes in *Britain and Decolonisation: the Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (1988), 'the British gave up their empire after 1945 and accepted, with apparent equanimity, the radical diminution in their power and influence that followed in the wake of the Second World War'.²⁰ However, Darwin's work on decolonisation (in this book and elsewhere) also reveals that 'much of their [British] policy in the era of decolonization (1945-1965) was meant to preserve an invisible empire of economic and political influence'.²¹ 'British leaders', he argues, did not 'adjust [...] their vision of Britain's place in the world to its reduced physical power and economic potential', even post-

The Round Table 94.379 (2005), 280-83. For Porter's response to his critics see: *Empire Ways* (2015).

²⁰ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), vii.

²¹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire* (London: Penguin, 2013), xiii.

Suez.²² From Malaya to Kenya, and from Cyprus to Northern Ireland, Britain to a certain extent continued to operate as, and believe itself to be, an imperial power even in the so-called ‘era of decolonization’. It is thus more accurate to refer, as Matthew Whittle does, to ‘the uneven and ongoing process of decolonization, *and* Britain’s renewed commitment to strengthen its imperial networks’ rather than to ‘a systematic or dramatic conclusion to imperialism’.²³ Whittle’s phrasing here has striking resonances, as we shall see, with contemporary discourses on Brexit.

The ‘grand illusion’ of imperial power, according to Darwin, ‘crashed to earth in January 1968’ with a speech by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson ‘announc[ing] the end of Britain’s East of Suez commitment’.²⁴ Wilson’s speech reappears in my chapter on Swift, a chapter that also discusses the postimperial or neoimperial significance of the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War.²⁵ For Stuart Hall, as for many other political and cultural commentators, the Falklands conflict demonstrated the disturbing revival of Britain’s ‘grand illusion’ in the minds of both leading politicians and the general public. In ‘The Empire Strikes Back’, an essay about the populist rhetoric of the war, Hall argues, *pace* Porter, that ‘imperial splendor [has] penetrated into the bone and marrow of the national culture [...] imperialism lives on’.²⁶ The chapter on Swift also discusses the Northern Irish

²² Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.383.

²³ Matthew Whittle, *Post-War British Literature and the “End of Empire”* (London: Palgrave, 2016), p.25; p.11.

²⁴ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.343; p.380.

²⁵ I refer to the 1982 conflict as the Falklands War (rather than using the islands’ Spanish name *Islas Malvinas*) because I am interested in its political and cultural impact within Britain.

²⁶ Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso, 1988), p.73. On the connections between imperialism and the Iraq War (2003-2011), see: Edward Said’s Preface to the republication of *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

‘Troubles’ within this context, for, as Liam O’Dowd writes, ‘the Irish case [...] demonstrates the limits of decolonization within the old imperial heartland’.²⁷

If, for some, ‘imperialism lives on’ in Britain’s post-war foreign policy, for others, it continues to define key aspects of Britain’s economic policy.²⁸ Kwame Nkrumah, writing in 1965, famously critiqued ‘neo-colonialism’ as ‘imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage’.²⁹ The leader of the newly independent Ghana argued that ‘neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means’ and that ‘where neo-colonialism exists the power exercising control is often the State which formerly ruled the territory in question’.³⁰ ‘The British Empire’, then, may have ‘become the Commonwealth, but the proceeds from the exploitation of British imperialism are increasing’.³¹ This ‘imperial designed neoliberalism’, as Mary Louise Pratt describes it in her discussion of Nkrumah, not only involves ‘control over trade and banking’ but also, and in Britain’s case especially, the exploitation of residual colonial networks.³² Nicholas Shaxson’s *Treasure Islands* (2011) unveils the concealed economic functions of Britain’s remaining ‘colonies’, from Jersey to the Cayman Islands.³³ These Crown Dependencies and Overseas

²⁷ Liam O’Dowd, ‘New Introduction’, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* by Albert Memmi (London: Earthscan Publications, 1990), 29-66 (pp.30-31).

²⁸ On the connections between imperialism, capitalism, and literature, see: Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies* (2004); and, Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2012). For a much earlier discussion of the economics of empire, see: J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (1902). For Hobson, imperialism ‘implies the use of the machinery of government by private interests, mainly capitalists, to secure for them economic gains outside their country’ ((London: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p.94).

²⁹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism* (London: Nelson, 1965), ix.

³⁰ Nkrumah, ix; x.

³¹ Nkrumah, p.52.

³² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (London: Routledge, 2008), p.238; p.226.

³³ Nicholas Shaxson, *Treasure Islands* (London: The Bodley Head, 2011). Numerous (travel) writers have documented – with varying degrees of sentimentality and nostalgia – ‘what remains of Britain’s possessions’ (Harry Ritchie, *The Last Pink Bits* (London: Sceptre, 1998), p.2). See also: Anthony Powell’s *The Empire Revisited*

Territories are not officially designated as colonies, but, as Shaxson shows, the line between colony and ex-colony – direct and indirect control, ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ empire – is often strategically unclear.³⁴ Instead of viewing these ‘offshore’ locations as irrelevant relics from a colonial past, Shaxson argues that they lie at the heart of an ‘imperial economic system’.³⁵ Rife with tax evasion and money ‘laundering’, this imperial system is centred upon the City of London and is integral to the British economy to this day.³⁶

If this economic system, discussed further in the chapters on Hollinghurst and Barnes, can be described as neocolonial then why continue to use the term *postimperial*? Perhaps, too, the Falklands and the ‘Troubles’ are neocolonial or neoimperial conflicts rather than postimperial ones.³⁷ The removal of the hyphen from the term ‘post-imperial’ is significant here. The hyphenated version, for me, suggests

(1985), Robert Aldrich’s *The Last Colonies* (1998), G.M.F. Drower’s *Britain’s Dependent Territories* (1992), and Simon Winchester’s *Outposts* (2003).

³⁴ In their influential article ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’ (*The Economic History Review* 6.1 (1953), 1-15), John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson outline the concept of ‘informal empire’ in nineteenth-century British imperialism. They use ‘formal empire’ to refer to the acquisition and control of colonies and ‘informal empire’ to refer to the operation of imperial power through economic means.

³⁵ Shaxson, p.282.

³⁶ The release of the so-called Panama Papers in 2016 and Paradise Papers in 2017 exposed the extent to which Britain’s (former) colonies are the locations for a variety of illegal economic practices. Both sets of Papers also revealed the close connections between these practices and Britain’s political and economic leaders and institutions (Robert Booth, et al., ‘David Cameron Admits he Profited from Father’s Panama Offshore Trust’, *Guardian*, 7 April 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/apr/07/david-cameron-admits-he-profited-fathers-offshore-fund-panama-papers>> [accessed 26 October 2017]; Caroline Mortimer, ‘Paradise Papers’, *Independent*, 6 November 2017 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/paradise-papers-queen-offshore-investments-royal-family-duchy-lancaster-estate-millions-tax-a8039636.html>> [accessed 27 November 2017].

³⁷ Even though Nkrumah refers to ‘neo-colonialism’, I prefer the term neoimperialism. Guided by John McLeod’s distinction between imperialism and colonialism – discussed in the chapter on Hollinghurst – I use neoimperialism to refer to the continuing operation of imperial power that does not necessarily involve colonial settlement.

that Britain's empire is, as Porter argues, definitively 'done, past, finished'.³⁸ The unhyphenated 'postimperial', on the other hand, operating as more of a critical and conceptual marker than an historical one, refers to the ambiguous state of coming after the major phase of imperial power without that transformation yet being complete. This does not exclude the possibility of neoimperial economic and military practices. Even if Britain continues to operate, by such means, as an imperial power, my concern is with the ways in which the 'great [...] reduc[tion]' of that power impacts upon contemporary British politics, culture, and fiction.³⁹

Various political and cultural critics have traced the impact of decolonisation within Britain. Many have focused upon the dramatic increase in migration to Britain in the post-war period – the so-called '*Windrush*' generation – and the transformative effects that this has had on British life and culture.⁴⁰ I do not wish to reiterate this dominant and important framework for understanding the impact of decolonisation at 'home'. By focusing on postimperial rather than postcolonial writers, i.e. on writers without colonial backgrounds, this thesis shifts away from the framework of migration and towards a number of other ways of understanding Englishness after empire.

³⁸ Porter, *The Lion's Share* (London: Longman, 1996), p.369. Again, I am guided by McLeod's terminological distinctions. For McLeod, 'the hyphenated term "post-colonial" seems better suited to denote a particular historical period or epoch, like those suggested by phrases such as "after colonialism", "after independence" or "after the end of Empire"' (*Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p.5). I include a hyphen in the term 'post-war' because the Second World War is definitively finished.

³⁹ Paul Gilroy, *After Empire* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.13.

⁴⁰ As Susheila Nasta writes, 'often neatly packaged as the "*Windrush*" generation, this remarkable gathering of writers, intellectuals and artists, from a variety of island locations, with different literary agendas, and racial and class backgrounds, provides the origins (like their Asian and African counterparts) of a "canon" of Black and Asian writing in Britain' ('1940s-1970s', *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature*, ed. Deirdre Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 23-39 (p.29)). See also: McLeod, *Postcolonial London* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); and, Ashley Dawson, *Mongrel Nation* (2007).

Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (1977) is primarily concerned with growing separatism within the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. But Nairn views both the 'crisis' and the 'neo-nationalism' of his subtitle as fundamentally postimperial problems. Drawing upon Karl Marx's understanding of imperialism, he intersects empire and class to argue, first, that imperialism 'fostered' a 'social order [...] in England. A regime so largely concerned with overseas and naval-based exploitation required, above all, conservative stability at home'.⁴¹ Nairn then argues that this hierarchical 'social order', 'fostered' by an empire that no longer exists, is at the heart of the enigmatic 'crisis' that was dominating political discussion at the time: 'the post-imperial crisis of the English people itself'.⁴² 'England', Nairn complains, 'has become culturally and politically isolated, imprisoned within her dying imperialism', and stuck with the 'hopelessly decaying institutions of a lost imperialist state'.⁴³

It is in within the context of 'dying imperialism' that Nairn situates the populist and racist ideas of Enoch Powell and his infamous 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech.⁴⁴ Powell's 'real aspiration', he argues, 'is to redefine this national identity in terms appropriate to the times – and in particular, to the end of empire. England's destiny was once an imperial one; now it has to be something else. Powell is not

⁴¹ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London: NLB, 1977), p.21.

⁴² Nairn, p.79.

⁴³ Nairn, p.287; p.82.

⁴⁴ Powell's anti-immigration speech, 'delivered to a Conservative Association meeting in Birmingham on April 20 1968', has been given this title due to the lines: 'as I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood"' (Enoch Powell, 'Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech', *Telegraph*, 6 November 2006 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]). Powell's quotation is from Virgil's *Aeneid*.

really sure what it is'.⁴⁵ More recently, Camilla Schofield's *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (2013) has also situated Powell within the context of 'empire's end'.⁴⁶ Drawing upon David Cannadine's argument in *Ornamentalism* (2001) that 'the ending of empire [w]as the ending of hierarchy',⁴⁷ Schofield argues that 'Powell, more than anything, was concerned with the break-up of the institutional and social structures of authority of a post-imperial Britain'.⁴⁸ Nairn's and Schofield's interpretations of Powellism are important here because they help to introduce the idea of postimperial nostalgia, whether that be for a sense of 'imperial destiny' or 'social authority'. For Paulo de Medeiros, who distinguishes his concept from Renato Rosaldo's better-known 'imperialist nostalgia',⁴⁹ 'post-imperial nostalgia [...] is a metropolitan desire not only for that which the metropolis has destroyed in the colonies [*a la* Rosaldo], but for the very possession of those colonies that have become irretrievably lost for the metropolis, which, as a consequence, also has *lost its status as metropolis*'.⁵⁰ Expanding upon de Medeiros's notion of lost metropolitan status, I define postimperial nostalgia as the yearning for past imperial power, prestige, and possessions. The writers in this thesis, for the most part, interrogate

⁴⁵ Nairn, p.250. Nairn's phrasing recalls the famous words of Dean Acheson, former US Secretary of State, in 1962: 'Great Britain has lost an Empire and has not yet found a role' (cited by: Niall Ferguson, *Empire* (London: Penguin 2004), p.365).

⁴⁶ Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.3.

⁴⁷ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.170.

⁴⁸ Schofield, p.12. For Cannadine, empire was fundamentally about hierarchy and so, 'as the imperial hierarchy faltered and fell abroad, the domestic hierarchy, which empire had both replicated and reinforced, also began to lose credibility and conviction' (p.172).

⁴⁹ Rosaldo's 'concern [...] resides with a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed' ('Imperialist Nostalgia', *Representations* 26 (1989), 107-122 (p.108)).

⁵⁰ Paulo de Medeiros, 'Post-imperial Nostalgia and Miguel Gomes's *Tabu*', *Interventions* 18.2 (2016), 203-216 (p.208, emphasis added). *Tabu* is a 2012 Portuguese film.

rather than merely reproduce postimperial nostalgia, although distinguishing between these two modes of historical engagement will require detailed textual analysis.

If Nairn reads Powell as the definitive postimperial figure, Bill Schwarz, writing over thirty years later, extends this approach to the politics of Margaret Thatcher. He argues that the ‘end of empire [...] was one of the subterranean components [...] of the Powell–Thatcher years’.⁵¹ This is not just a claim about individual politicians but also about the eras, the ‘years’, that they defined: Powellism (roughly, the late 1960s/1970s) and Thatcherism (1980s/1990s). For Schwarz, who writes in direct opposition to Porter and draws upon many of the empire at ‘home’ accounts cited earlier,⁵² ‘memories of the colonial past assumed a new resonance’⁵³ in ‘the Powell–Thatcher years’. In particular, as its title suggests, *The White Man’s World* (2011) focuses upon ‘memories of white authority’,⁵⁴ arguing that ‘prior racial assumptions and practices which themselves had been formed in the interstices of empire, in the metropole and on the colonial frontiers’ continued to be ‘live[d] out, in new ways’ in post-war Britain.⁵⁵

For certain political commentators, nostalgic and racialised ‘memories of the imperial past’⁵⁶ – or, ‘a residual set of attitudes accumulated during the imperial

⁵¹ Bill Schwarz, *The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.29. See also: Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality* (1994).

⁵² Schwarz cites numerous examples, including the aforementioned *At Home with the Empire*. See footnote 21 for a long list of relevant titles (*The White Man’s World*, pp.441-42).

⁵³ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.43.

⁵⁴ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.11.

⁵⁵ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.205. Similar arguments about the connections between Britain’s imperial past and its racist present were made during the 1980s by sociologists at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. See: *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982), especially chapters one and two.

⁵⁶ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.11.

period'⁵⁷ – resurfaced during the United Kingdom's 2016 referendum on membership of the European Union. Writing in the *New Statesman*, prior to the Leave vote, Sally Tomlinson and Danny Dorling argued that 'the EU referendum is the last throes of Empire working its way out of our systems'.⁵⁸ 'Nostalgia for empire', they declared, was at the root of the 'the violence in the Brexit rhetoric of "taking back control of our borders" '. In a 'Critical Legal Thinking' blog post, also prior to the vote, Nadine El-Enany claimed that 'the racist discourse that has defined the Brexit campaign must be understood in the context of Britain's imperial legacy. The terms on which the debate around the referendum have taken place are symptomatic of a Britain struggling to conceive of its place in the world post-Empire'.⁵⁹ In particular, El-Enany cited the 'preference' of Nigel Farage – prominent Leave campaigner and leader, at the time, of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) – 'for migrants from India and Australia as compared with East Europeans' as well as his commitment to 'stronger ties with the Commonwealth'. Some Leave campaigners drew directly upon the language of empire. Conservative MP Owen Paterson warned that

the Prime Minister's 'special status' for countries outside of the Eurozone will leave Britain as a colony of Europe if we vote to remain, with the Prime Minister reduced to a Roman governor handing down dictats from what Jose Manuel Barroso, former President of the European Commission, described as the 'empire'...⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Errol Lawrence, 'Just Plain Common Sense', *The Empire Strikes Back* (London: Routledge, 1992), 47-94 (p.70).

⁵⁸ Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson, 'Brexit has its Roots in the British Empire', *New Statesman*, 9 May 2016 <<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2016/05/brexit-has-its-roots-british-empire-so-how-do-we-explain-it-young>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁵⁹ Nadine El-Enany, 'Brexit as Nostalgia for Empire', *Critical Legal Thinking Blog*, 19 June 2016 <<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/06/19/brexit-nostalgia-empire/>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁶⁰ Marco Giannangeli, 'EUROPEAN EMPIRE', *Express*, 24 April 2016 <<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/663846/EU-referendum-David-Cameron-Europe-UK-power-Roman-Governor-Brexit>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

Paterson's terminology, reported in the strongly Europhobic tabloid newspaper the *Daily Express*, plays upon 'the anxiety of reverse colonization' and the history of Roman colonisation.⁶¹ He thereby figures the British as innocent victims rather than perpetrators of imperial oppression.

However, the extent to which postimperialism has or has not been a significant factor in post-war British politics – from the Falklands to Brexit – is not my subject here. My aim in this introduction, instead, is to present various arguments about the impact of empire and its decline on post-war Britain. These will help us to see how contemporary novelists have been influenced by, and have themselves critically reworked, narratives of postimperial Englishness. Having introduced some of the relevant *political* arguments – regarding, military and economic power, social hierarchies, race and racism, nostalgia, and Europe – I turn now to the ways in which post-war British *culture*, generally conceived, has also been understood as postimperial.

Stuart Ward's 2001 collection *British Culture and the End of Empire* opens with the following critique:

As far as the post-1945 era is concerned, the rigid conceptual barriers between metropole and periphery are still very much intact. [...] No attempt has been made to examine the cultural manifestations of the demise of imperialism as a social and political ideology in post-war Britain.⁶²

With chapters ranging from theatre (Dan Rebellato) to cricket (Mike Cronin and Richard Holt) and satire (Ward) to children's literature (Kathryn Castle), Ward's collection resists such 'rigid conceptual barriers' to provide a broad 'variety of

⁶¹ Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: "Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (1990), 621-45 (p.623). See also: Louise Bennett's poem 'Colonization in Reverse', *Selected Poems*, ed. Mervyn Morris (Kingston: Sangster's, 1982), 106-07.

⁶² Ward, pp.1-2.

cultural responses [to the end of empire]'.⁶³ In so doing, it shows how 'the demise of empire posed a formidable challenge, not only to the idea of Britain as a world power, but also to the legitimacy and credibility of key ideas, assumptions and values that had become implicated in the imperial experience'. The postimperial renegotiation of certain national 'ideas, assumptions and values' – in particular, 'gentlemanly conduct' – is central to the authors in this thesis (and especially Barnes).⁶⁴

Since *British Culture and the End of Empire*, 'the broad cultural impact of decolonisation' within Britain has been examined from a range of perspectives, from the architectural to the cinematic.⁶⁵ By far the most influential and widely cited thesis to emerge from the field of postimperial cultural studies is Paul Gilroy's *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004). Gilroy, like Ian Baucom before him, foregrounds 'postimperial melancholia' ahead of (yet alongside) postimperial nostalgia.⁶⁶ Since 1945, he argues, 'the life of the nation has been dominated by an inability even to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the Empire and consequent loss of

⁶³ Ward, p.12.

⁶⁴ Ward, p.51. 'Notions of duty, service, loyalty, deference, stoic endurance, self-restraint and gentlemanly conduct were insidiously undermined by the steady erosion of the imperial edifice' (p.12).

⁶⁵ See: Mark Crinson's *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (2003); Wendy Webster's *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), which 'focus[es] on popular narratives of nation told in mainstream British media' (p.3); *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain* (2006), edited by Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy; Priya Jaikumar's *Cinema at the End of Empire* (2006); and, *Film and the End of Empire* (2011), edited by Lee Grievson and Colin MacCabe.

⁶⁶ Gilroy refers to both 'postimperial melancholia' (p.98) and 'postcolonial melancholia' (p.149). The North American edition of *After Empire* is entitled *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Although Gilroy does not refer to Baucom, the latter examines 'the English discourse of postimperial melancholy' in his 1999 book *Out of Place* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.186). Baucom's relevant chapter, 'Among the Ruins: Topographies of Postimperial Melancholy', focuses mainly upon V.S. Naipaul's autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987).

imperial prestige'.⁶⁷ This is how 'the literary and cultural as well as governmental dynamics of the country have responded to' – or rather not responded to – 'the great transformation that quickly reduced the world's preeminent power to a political and economic operation of more modest dimensions'.⁶⁸ The nation has failed to transition from melancholia to mourning, from illness to recovery. His remedy is 'frank exposure to the grim and brutal details of my country's colonial past'.⁶⁹ 'Work[ing] through' its 'imperial and colonial history' will allow the nation, finally, to progress towards a more 'convivial' future, one that is more accommodating to 'strangers' and 'otherness'.⁷⁰

Although Gilroy refers to 'literary and cultural [...] dynamics' here, *After Empire* does not actually include much literary discussion. It focuses more on popular and political culture, from the chants of football fans to the rhetoric of Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair. A number of literary critics, however, have taken Gilroy's melancholia thesis and 'working through' remedy as the starting points for their own analyses of contemporary British literature. Following this necessarily brief overview of political and cultural criticism on postimperial Britain, it is to *literary* criticism that I now turn. I do so in order to draw insights from – and, crucially, locate the

⁶⁷ Gilroy, *After Empire*, p.98. Ferdinand Mount's *The Tears of the Rajas* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2015) also identifies 'a remarkable reluctance back in Britain to think or write about the whole imperial experience' (p.5). William Dalrymple, another historian of India, complains similarly that 'much of the story of the empire is still absent from our history curriculum' ('One Sure Way for Britain to Get Ahead', *Guardian*, 2 September 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/02/britain-colonial-history-islam-white-mughals>> [accessed 26 October 2017]). Michael Gove's recent education reforms only compound the problem by reducing English and History curricula to 'our island story' (Richard Garner, '“Jingoistic and Illegal”', *Independent*, 12 June 2013 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/jingoistic-and-illegal-what-teachers-think-of-michael-goves-national-curriculum-reforms-8656120.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁶⁸ Gilroy, *After Empire*, p.13.

⁶⁹ Gilroy, *After Empire*, p.3.

⁷⁰ Gilroy, *After Empire*, p.108.

limitations of – the current critical field, before conducting my own analysis of a range of literary texts in an ‘author survey’ chapter.

Critical Survey

Interpretations of post-war English literature as postimperial build upon critical accounts of the relationship between literary discourses and empire at ‘home’ in the period before decolonisation (much like, as we have seen, postimperial historiography builds upon imperial historiography). Patrick Brantlinger’s *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988) lays the groundwork for this type of postcolonial analysis – directed towards the literature of the metropole rather than the colony – through its identification of ‘imperialist ideology’ outside of ‘the usual list [...] a handful of late Victorian and Edwardian writers’ (Rudyard Kipling, H. Rider Haggard etc.).⁷¹ Arguing that writers between 1830 and 1914 ‘could be imperialists without subscribing to any formal doctrine, so thoroughly were the patterns of expansion and hegemony established at home and abroad’, Brantlinger locates imperialism in various unforeseen authors (Anthony Trollope, William Thackeray) and topics (free trade, the gothic).⁷² Brantlinger’s major intervention is to demonstrate that empire was not a specialist or minor subject for particular colonially-minded writers but in fact ‘influenced all aspects of Victorian and Edwardian culture’.⁷³

⁷¹ Patrick Brantlinger, *The Rule of Darkness* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.10. See also: Martin Green’s *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979). In the early 1980s, David Dabydeen argued for ‘an approach to English literature from the standpoint of empire’ (‘Preface’, *The Black Presence in English Literature*, ed. Dabydeen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), vii-x (ix)).

⁷² Brantlinger, p.23.

⁷³ Brantlinger, p8. Elleke Boehmer’s distinction between ‘colonial and colonialist’ literature is helpful here: ‘colonial literature, which is the more general term, will be taken to mean writing concerned with colonial perceptions and experience [...] As we

If Brantlinger mainly detects imperialist attitudes – ‘chauvinism’, ‘racial superiority’ etc.⁷⁴ – Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) exposes the cultural logic of empire across a broader time period and at the more fundamental level of narrative structure and voice. He does so through his method of ‘contrapuntal reading’. This is defined as ‘read[ing] the great canonical texts [...] with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented’.⁷⁵ Most famously, Said uses this methodology to transform the reading of Jane Austen’s canonical novel *Mansfield Park* (1814), by examining the narrative tension between the eponymous household and Sir Thomas Bertram’s ‘colonial sugar plantation’, from a domestically-oriented ‘English’ text to one more ‘implicated in the rationale for imperialist expansion than [it appears] at first sight’.⁷⁶ The ‘worldly’ outlook of Said’s contrapuntalism, his close attention to ‘the relationship between “home” and “abroad”’, is central to this thesis and many of the studies below.⁷⁷

Said’s chapter on W.B. Yeats, in which he ‘associate[s] Yeats’s poetry both with the poetry of decolonization and resistance’, was originally published in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (1990). This Field Day pamphlet provided the first significant postcolonial analysis of modernist literature, taking authors like Yeats and T.S. Eliot (who had formerly been somewhat separated from (imperial)

shall see, colonialist literature in contrast was that which was specifically concerned with colonial expansion’ (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.2-3).

⁷⁴ Brantlinger, p.8.

⁷⁵ Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p.78.

⁷⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.78; p.100.

⁷⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.85. As Said states in his influential 1983 essay ‘Secular Criticism’: ‘my position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted’ (*The World, The Text, and The Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991), p.4).

politics) and recontextualising (or repoliticising) their aesthetics.⁷⁸ In ‘Modernism and Imperialism’, Fredric Jameson argues that the modernists’ radical experimentations, their ‘inner forms’, did not signify transcendence of politics but were driven by the ‘impossibil[ity]’ of ‘mapping [...] the new imperial world’.⁷⁹ Since then, various critics have pursued an agenda best summarised by Jed Esty: ‘we must recognize imperialism as a significant context even for modernist works that seem insulated from imperial concerns [...] we must chart imperialism’s presence not only as visible and narrative data but as unexpected formal encryptments and thematic outcroppings in ostensibly domestic texts’.⁸⁰ Esty foregrounds ‘Ian Baucom’s *Out of Place* [1999] and Simon Gikandi’s *Maps of Englishness* [1996]’ as ‘overcom[ing] the longstanding divide between domestic and imperial cultures. Like Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest* [1989], these books reconceptualize Englishness – even in its apparently insular manifestations – as shaped and haunted by forms of imperial experience and knowledge’.⁸¹ Baucom focuses upon ‘spaces of instability in the geographies of Englishness’ via Victorian, modernist, and post-war writers (his last two chapters are on V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie, respectively).⁸² Likewise, Gikandi’s discussion of ‘the ways in which Englishness was itself a product of the colonial culture that it

⁷⁸ Said, ‘Yeats and Decolonization’, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, ed. Seamus Deane (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 69-95 (p.85).

⁷⁹ Jameson, ‘Modernism and Imperialism’, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, 43-66 (p.44; pp.49-50).

⁸⁰ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.6.

⁸¹ Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, p.6. See also: Esty, *Unseasonable Youth* (2012); Howard Booth and Nigel Rigby (eds), *Modernism and Empire* (2000); Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses (eds), *Modernism and Colonialism* (2007); Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel (eds), *Geomodernisms* (2005); and, Boehmer and Steven Matthews, ‘Modernism and Colonialism’, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 284-300.

⁸² Baucom, p.4.

seemed to have created elsewhere',⁸³ moves from Thomas Carlyle to a final chapter that is mainly on Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi.

Within a post-war English or British context, as Baucom's and Gikandi's final chapters suggest, postcolonial analysis – analysis that is directed towards questions of race, empire, and decolonisation – has typically been applied to black and Asian writers. Another way of putting this is that postcolonial reading methods have developed in response to the work of writers like Rushdie and Kureishi. Yet, this means that general surveys of contemporary English or British literature frequently use 'postcolonial' as a euphemism for 'non-white', and this becomes a way of lumping all such writers under one heading. Andrzej Gasiorek, in *Post-War British Fiction* (1995), restricts his discussion of 'colonialism' to V.S. Naipaul and George Lamming, and of 'post-colonialism' to Rushdie.⁸⁴ Peter Childs, in *Contemporary Novelists* (2005), associates 'Britain's imperial past and post-colonial present' with the familiar triad of 'Rushdie, Kureishi, and [Zadie] Smith'.⁸⁵ Nick Bentley, in *Contemporary British Fiction* (2008), connects 'the multiethnic nature of contemporary Britain' to these three, as well as Monica Ali, Courttia Newland, and Caryl Phillips.⁸⁶ Brian Finney, in *English Fiction Since 1984* (2006), places all of the non-white writers he discusses – Rushdie, Kureishi, and Kazuo Ishiguro – in a section entitled 'National Cultures and Hybrid Narrative Modes'.

Such literary categorisations are often tied to authors' biographies. This is true for gender and sexuality as much as for race. Most of the writers above – who are

⁸³ Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), x.

⁸⁴ Andrzej Gasiorek, *Post-War British Fiction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp.45-67; pp.166-74.

⁸⁵ Peter Childs, *Contemporary British Novelists* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), p.21.

⁸⁶ Nick Bentley, *Contemporary British Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp.18-19.

sometimes called ‘Black British’ writers – were born in, or their parents were born in, (former) British colonies.⁸⁷ As a result, they are perceived to have a particular investment in postcolonial questions of race and empire – a perception that is often, but by no means always, true.⁸⁸ Several critics have resisted such racial categorisation by arguing that white writers from Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland might also be considered postcolonial, or at least brought productively into postcolonial conversations; a certain, often under-theorised, parallel is suggested between the ‘peripheries’ of the empire and the ‘peripheries’ of the UK, especially in the era of devolution.⁸⁹ Others have sought to base their postcolonial comparisons on literary rather than biographical evidence. Philip Tew, for instance, argues that ‘cultural hybridity is not confined to writing from formerly or new “migrant” communities [...] This is despite some of these writers emerging from close to whatever passes for a

⁸⁷ See: Mark Stein, *Black British Literature* (2004).

⁸⁸ Numerous writers have complained about the ‘ghettois[ation]’ of black and Asian literature. In Bernardine Evaristo’s words, ‘if you are a black writer you are deemed to be writing about black subjects and that is generally perceived to be for a black audience’ (Alastair Niven, ‘Alastair Niven in Conversation with Bernardine Evaristo’, *Wasafiri* 16.34 (2001), 15-20 (p.18)); in Aminatta Forna’s words, ‘I have never met a writer who wishes to be described as a female writer, gay writer, black writer, Asian writer or African writer. We hyphenated writers complain about the privilege accorded to the white male writer, he who dominates the western canon and is the only one called simply “writer” ’ (cited by: Deirdre Osborne (ed.), ‘Introduction’, *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1-20 (p.9)).

⁸⁹ The ‘Cultural Hybridity’ section of *Contemporary British Fiction* contains chapters on Rushdie (9) and Phillips (11), as well as two Scottish writers (James Kelman and Irvine Welsh (10)): ‘hybridity is not simply an issue of migration but of plural cultural identities. Kelman and Welsh approach a fragmented notion of “Britishness” to re-invoke Scottish identity as a dynamic and countercultural force’ (Richard J. Lane and Philip Tew, ‘Introduction [to section on “Cultural Hybridity”]’, *Contemporary British Fiction*, eds Lane, Rod Mengham, and Tew (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 143-44 (p.143)). Likewise, Randall Stevenson claims that ‘Scottish writers – or those from other minority nationalities within the “United” Kingdom – can be seen to share some of the experience of post-colonial immigrants, finding English culture both familiar yet significantly foreign’ (*A Reader’s Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p.140).

cultural centre’;⁹⁰ his chapter on ‘Multiplicities and Hybridity’ thus begins with Smith and Rushdie before turning not only to the Scotsman Irvine Welsh but also white English writers such as Martin Amis, Pat Barker, and Jeanette Winterson. Likewise, James Acheson’s and Sarah Ross’s *The Contemporary British Novel* (2005) includes Marina Warner in its ‘postcolonial’ section, whilst Richard Bradford’s chapter ‘The Question of Elsewhere’ in *The Novel Now* (2007) analyses Will Self and W.G. Sebald alongside Rushdie, Kureishi, and Smith.

It is possible to make a distinction then between postcolonial authors and postcolonial texts. Amis and Self would not usually be viewed as postcolonial *authors* because they are white Englishmen with no personal or familial connections to empire: their biographies are not postcolonial. In much postcolonial criticism there is an implicit link between postcolonial author and text. As the opening page of a foundational work in the field declares: ‘this book is concerned with writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain’.⁹¹ The emphasis here is on *who* rather than *what*. Certain recent critics, however, ‘push against those expectations of experiential proprietorship’;⁹² in other words, they argue that ‘authorial ethnicity’ ought not define what is or is not considered a postcolonial *text*, or what is or is not considered a text worthy of postcolonial analysis. Michael Perfect, who includes the white British writers Chris Cleave and Stephen Kelman in his *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism* (2014), tells his reader that ‘authorial ethnicity is one form of “background” to which I have attempted to resist ascribing importance’.⁹³ Likewise,

⁹⁰ Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel* (London: Continuum, 2007), p.171.

⁹¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.1.

⁹² McLeod, ‘Comments at the *Thoughts on British Black and Asian Literature (1945-2010)* symposium’, Goldsmiths College, 27 January 2017 [unpublished].

⁹³ Michael Perfect, *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.8.

Alberto F. Carbajal rejects ‘identitarian’ conceptions of postcolonialism.⁹⁴ Informed by ‘[John] McLeod’s and [Ato] Quayson’s nuancing of the term’,⁹⁵ he uses ‘postcolonial’ to refer to ‘a form of writing’ and a ‘reading praxis’ rather than a type of person.⁹⁶ He thus includes the white English writer Paul Scott and the Anglo-Irish J.G. Farrell, alongside Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Anita Desai, in his study of Forsterian legacies in postcolonial writing.

White writers are not the primary objects of postcolonial analysis in these studies, but often supplements to those more conventionally discussed in terms of race and empire. My argument here is that putting sustained postcolonial pressure upon one of these white authors of the post-war period, as Said did to Austen, say, or Esty to Virginia Woolf, reveals that the versions of Englishness mobilised by their fiction are fundamentally bound up with postimperialism. Instead of attributing a vague and politically neutral sense of national identity to writers like Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes, we can instead recognise their historically and politically alert writing and rewriting of Englishness after empire.

The contentious critical reception of Philip Larkin provides a model for this kind of analysis. ‘During his lifetime’, as James Booth writes, ‘Larkin was most frequently ideologised as a harmless British eccentric bachelor, a decent, agonistic, welfare-state “poet of the common man”’.⁹⁷ In the wake of ‘the publication of Larkin’s Selected Letters in 1992 and Andrew Motion’s biography in 1993’, however,

⁹⁴ Alberto F. Carbajal, *Compromise and Resistance in Postcolonial Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.25.

⁹⁵ Carbajal, p.26.

⁹⁶ Carbajal, p.25. Quayson argues that ‘postcolonialism has to be perceived as a process of postcolonializing’ (*Postcolonialism* (Malden: Polity, 2000), p.10).

⁹⁷ James Booth, ‘Philip Larkin: Lyricism, Englishness and Postcoloniality’, *Philip Larkin*, ed. Stephen Regan (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 187-210 (p.188).

‘this figment has been dispelled for ever’.⁹⁸ For Lisa Jardine, writing in the *Guardian* in 1992, Larkin’s personal letters not only revealed him to be ‘a casual, habitual racist, and an easy misogynist’, but also had serious implications for interpretations of his poetry: ‘written against a background of everyday discrimination, everyday assumptions of white British superiority, Larkin’s poems, likewise, leave familiar prejudices intact’.⁹⁹ Identifying uncomfortable parallels between the letters and the poems, Jardine stated proudly: ‘we don’t tend to teach Larkin much now in my Department of English. The Little Englandism he celebrates sits uneasily within our revised curriculum, which seeks to give all of our students, regardless of background, race or creed, a voice within British culture’.¹⁰⁰ C.L. Innes, in a follow-up letter, firmly rejected Jardine’s patronising attitude: ‘I think students will be able to decide for themselves whether Larkin’s letters “matter” and to make their own judgments about the values (in all senses) of his poetry’.¹⁰¹

Various critics and students have indeed made ‘their own judgments’ on the aesthetic and political ‘values’ of Larkin’s poetry. Michael Gorra identifies ‘belatedness’ as the defining tone of Larkin’s poetic voice: ‘for Larkin everything important has already happened, and so one suffers from a sense of one’s own belatedness, capable only of waiting for a death that seems itself without meaning. And it is precisely that sense of living in an aftermath that made him the national poet of a postimperial England’.¹⁰² Tom Paulin, in a more critical register, deems ‘fading imperial power’ to be at the ‘heart’ of Larkin’s Englishness; this is ‘Larkin’s real

⁹⁸ Booth, p.188.

⁹⁹ Lisa Jardine, ‘Saxon Violence’, *Guardian*, 8 December 1992.

¹⁰⁰ Jardine, ‘Saxon Violence’.

¹⁰¹ C.L. Innes, ‘Narrow-Minded Apostles of Political Correctness’, *Guardian*, 15 December 1992.

¹⁰² Michael Gorra, *After Empire* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.161.

theme – national decline’.¹⁰³ For Booth, however, Paulin’s polemic reduces Larkin to pure ideology: ‘Larkin is a poet’, he asserts, ‘not a propagandist. He quite lacks the ideological assertiveness which Paulin attributes to him. [...] Larkin is [...] too complex to be a comfortable Little Englander’.¹⁰⁴

Booth’s insistence upon the political complexity of Larkin’s aesthetic opens up some more nuanced and less accusatory readings of his postimperial Englishness. Graham MacPhee offers a thoroughly historicised account, situating ‘Homage to a Government’, for instance, in relation to the Aden Emergency of 1967; the poem thus ‘nicely captures the subterranean connection between the post-war retrenchment of British national identity and its continuing commitment to and dependence on the Empire’.¹⁰⁵ Praseeda Gopinath also challenges the ‘singular trope of imperial nostalgia’ often associated with Larkin’s work, arguing instead that ‘Larkin’s poems describe, in nuanced and tortured detail, the trials and quotidian comforts of postwar, post-imperial English life’.¹⁰⁶ In particular, she identifies ‘a belated *manliness* that is both English and post-imperial’ as a crucial feature of Larkin’s oeuvre.¹⁰⁷ For John Osborne, ‘the biographical fallacy’ has blinded critics to Larkin’s radical ‘sense of deracination, exile and incomplete belonging [which] is more akin to that of ethnic minorities and immigrants – such as the heroine of his finest novel, *A Girl in Winter* – than to [Enoch] Powellite tribalism’.¹⁰⁸ Without going quite so far as Osborne,

¹⁰³ Tom Paulin, ‘Into the Heart of Englishness’, *Philip Larkin*, 160-77 (p.160).

¹⁰⁴ Booth, p.194.

¹⁰⁵ Graham MacPhee, *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p.52.

¹⁰⁶ Praseeda Gopinath, *Scarecrows of Chivalry* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2013), p.90.

¹⁰⁷ Gopinath, p.93 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁸ John Osborne, *Larkin, Ideology and Critical Violence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.11; p.26. See also: Osborne, *Radical Larkin* (2014). For Patrick Parrinder, likewise, ‘a distinguished mid-century example of immigrant fiction by an

Raphaël Ingelbien claims that Larkin dissolves, rather than upholds, Englishness: ‘in his poems, Larkin did not suppress the sense of alienation that he experienced in England; instead, he started constructing an elsewhere where England would become irrelevant, where it would become nowhere’.¹⁰⁹

This diverse array of postcolonial readings, which both enhance our understanding of Larkin’s poetry and complicate his role in the canon, emerged only after details from Larkin’s personal life were made public (even if some critics, particularly Osborne, resist referring to those details).¹¹⁰ Until then, in Susheila Nasta’s words, there had been ‘a consensual and still prevalent “parochiality” in terms of reading habits’, which I interpret as the refusal or inability to read for race, empire, and decolonisation where they are not expected – that is, in a Larkin rather than a Rushdie – a division that seems to be conducted on biographical if not also racial criteria.¹¹¹ Before critiquing ‘myopia in processes of reading and interpretation’, Nasta begins her article by claiming that

One can probably still count on one hand the number of ‘mainstream’ (though I don’t like that word) English novelists who have explicitly addressed, embraced, and imaginatively attempted to represent, the major social, political and cultural changes that the aftereffects of black and Asian migration brought to Britain.¹¹²

English-born writer is Philip Larkin’s second novel *A Girl in Winter* (1947)’ (*Nation & Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.398).

¹⁰⁹ Raphaël Ingelbien, ‘“England and Nowhere”’, *English* 48 (1999), 33-48 (p.42).

¹¹⁰ Seamus Heaney’s ‘Englands of the Mind’ provides an exception. In his 1976 lecture, Heaney argues that Larkin, Ted Hughes, and Geoffrey Hill write in response to ‘the loss of imperial power’ and articulate ‘a new sense of the shires, a new valuing of the native English experience’ (*Preoccupations* (London: Faber, 1980), 150-79 (p.169)).

¹¹¹ Nasta, ‘End of Empire and the English Novel’, *British Academy Review* 19 (January 2012), 46-49 (p.46). Nasta, like Evaristo and Forná, critiques the ways in which ‘some English writers, now deemed “postcolonial”, still remain bracketed into a location that conveniently separates them from the so called “mainstream” English novel in terms of ethnicity, colonial heritage and race’ (p.47).

¹¹² Nasta, ‘End of Empire and the English Novel’, p.48; p.46.

Nasta then cites Caryl Phillips's 2004 article 'Kingdom of the blind' in which he argues that 'the omission of black people from the [post-war] literary landscape is so glaring it does beg questions about the politics of literary representation' and that 'only he [Colin MacInnes], among British writers, seemed to want to see what was happening on the streets of Britain'.¹¹³ MacInnes, best known for his London novels *City of Spades* (1957) and *Absolute Beginners* (1959), is often considered to be the exception that proves the rule.¹¹⁴ The rule is that, apart from the contributions of '“postcolonial” or “migrant” writers [...] the English novel post-empire has largely remained parochial, inward rather than outward-looking';¹¹⁵ in Timothy Brennan's words, 'the postwar English novel has produced almost nothing to suggest the seething energies of a specifically *post-imperial* England'.¹¹⁶ The problem, according to this thesis, is not reading practices but writing practices: 'mainstream', or rather white and English-born, novelists having failed to engage with race and empire.

The 'parochial' thesis – and the related idea that 'the disappearance of the Empire simply impoverished British fiction'¹¹⁷ – have been contested, or at least nuanced, by a number of critics in recent years.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Nasta's article was written

¹¹³ Caryl Phillips, 'Kingdom of the blind', *Guardian*, 17 July 2004 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/jul/17/featuresreviews.guardianreview1>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

¹¹⁴ Nasta also cites MacInnes as an exception, alongside Shelagh Delaney, Alan Sillitoe, and Maggie Gee ('End of Empire and the English Novel', p.46). See also: Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, pp.159-64; and, Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp.127-28.

¹¹⁵ Nasta, 'End of Empire and the English Novel', p.46.

¹¹⁶ Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* (London: Macmillan, 1989), xi. 'Despite the brilliant work of William Golding, John Berger, Pat Barker, Alan Sillitoe, Doris Lessing and others, English novelists have managed to ignore what is really the essence of England right now – its being a colonizing spirit with little to colonise but itself [...] In fact, they have very little to say about Empire at all' (xi).

¹¹⁷ Stevenson, p.126.

¹¹⁸ The recent volume *British and Irish Fiction since 1940* (2016) sets out to 'challenge' the 'critical orthodoxy' that 'the post-war English novel was “parochial

in response to the publication of *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945* (2011), which made a major contribution to the field of what I am calling postimperial literary studies.¹¹⁹ This collection of essays, edited by Bill Schwarz and Rachael Gilmour, brings postcolonial analysis to bear upon several post-war English novelists usually considered outside of this framework, without relying upon biographical evidence to do so.¹²⁰ As Schwarz writes in his introduction, the contributors purposefully do not discuss those who ‘are either well known in the postcolonial canon or who in some way regard or regarded themselves as postcolonial’; postcolonial criticism’s ‘focus on the margins has perhaps concealed what occurred historically at the centre, and this is our concern here: that is, the English novel, at the time of decolonisation, at its most centred [...] the Anglo-British novel’.¹²¹ Whilst all of the ‘centred [...] Anglo-British’ novelists examined in the collection are white, this choice is not addressed satisfactorily – an issue discussed in detail below. Ranging from Anthony Burgess to Ian McEwan (including a chapter on ‘queer histories and postcolonial intimacies’ in Hollinghurst), the essays demonstrate how ‘fiction [...]

and inward looking” (Bergonzi 1970: 56) or tended to be restrictive rather than extensive with a “natural desire to withdraw from the large world into the little one” (Karl 1963: 4, 293)’ (Peter Boxall and Bryan Cheyette (eds), ‘Introduction’, *British and Irish Fiction since 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1-16 (pp.4-5)). The parochialism of the post-war English novel has often been read as an indication of a broader literary decline that is itself read as a symptom of a broader national decline; this is ‘the common view that British fiction is continuing to diminish in a post-empire context’ (Bentley, ‘Modern Literature’, *The Year’s Work in English Studies* 93.1 (2014), 824-950 (p.887)). Esty directly challenges the assumed conjunction of national and literary diminishment – typified by Hugh Kenner’s *A Sinking Island* (1988) – in the opening pages of *A Shrinking Island* (pp.1-2). See also: Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.155.

¹¹⁹ *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945* uses ‘post-imperial’ rather than ‘postimperial’.

¹²⁰ This is not to say that biographical information is excluded from the collection, but that it is not a prerequisite for postcolonial analysis.

¹²¹ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*, eds Schwarz and Rachael Gilmour (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 1-37 (p.18; p.3).

which does not appear to concern itself in any way with empire or its demise [...] nonetheless carries the memory-traces of these former histories'.¹²² In this way, many of the contributors are informed, often implicitly, by both Said's contrapuntal reading method and Gilroy's notion of postimperial melancholia. Before outlining the ways in which my project builds upon the achievements of this collection, it is helpful to recognise a range of other contributions to the field of postimperial literary criticism, many of which also inform the chapters to come.

After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie (1997) provides one of the earliest of such examples. As well as identifying postimperial belatedness in Larkin, as we have seen, Gorra dedicates his first chapter to Paul Scott's 'concern with what empire has left behind [...] That emphasis joins his work to [V.S.] Naipaul's attempt to come to terms with the "deep disorder" produced by the "great upheaval[s]" of both imperialism and its passing'.¹²³ Recalling Nasta's comments above, he argues that 'British writers like Scott', best known (as we shall see in the author survey chapter) for *The Raj Quartet* (1966-1975), are 'too often considered either in isolation from or in some sense inevitably opposed to those whose origins lie in the countries of England's former empire'.¹²⁴ MacPhee's *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (2011), also cited earlier in relation to Larkin, directly confronts this issue of 'isolation': 'rather than restricting the relevance of postcolonial studies to a particular body of writing by authors from British colonies and their descendants, this study argues that all postwar British literature needs to be read with a consciousness of the

¹²² Schwarz, 'Introduction', *End of Empire*, p.21. As Boxall and Cheyette write, 'even the most *English* of English novelists are deeply implicated in the feeling of rupture and discontinuity, a loss of national futurity, which followed the Second World War and the era of decolonization' (p.5).

¹²³ Gorra, pp.6-7. The embedded quotations are from V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.32.

¹²⁴ Gorra, p.7.

continuing relevance of that imperial legacy'.¹²⁵ MacPhee's wide-ranging investigation into Britain's 'post-imperial predicament' thus draws upon certain writers who are often discussed in postcolonial terms (Sam Selvon and Kazuo Ishiguro) alongside others who are not (Tony Harrison and Ian McEwan).¹²⁶ It is important to note that MacPhee refers to 'British literature' here and throughout his study. The focus of my thesis, as noted earlier, is upon English rather than Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish writers. This is in order to explore literary interrogations of postimperial Englishness, in contradistinction to aforementioned postcolonial approaches to white writers from the so-called 'peripheries' of the UK.

A number of studies have sought to intersect England's 'post-imperial predicament' with other political and cultural concerns. Peter J. Kalliney's *Cities of Affluence and Anger* (2006) brings class (back) into the frame. Building upon Esty's notion of the 'anthropological turn', Kalliney begins by arguing that 'the threat, and later the reality, of imperial decline forced the English to turn inward, to perform a thorough inventory of Englishness in the absence of an expansive imperial imaginary'.¹²⁷ Drawing upon a range of post-war sources – from the non-fiction of the New Left to the fiction of the Angry Young Men – he claims that this 'inventory of Englishness' was predominantly articulated in terms of 'domestic class politics'; 'class' became 'a', if not *the*, 'discursive site on which the English could reframe a

¹²⁵ MacPhee, pp.2-3. Silvia Mergenthal, in *A Fast-Forward Version of England* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2003), also foregrounds 'Britain's loss of empire' (p.13) and 'argues throughout that "native" writers such as [Peter] Ackroyd, [Graham] Swift, or [Ruth] Rendell are as implicated in the dynamics of writing in a multicultural society as are their colleagues Kazuo Ishiguro, Meera Syal, Caryl Phillips, Salman Rushdie, or Amitrav [sic] Ghosh' (p.73).

¹²⁶ MacPhee, p.3.

¹²⁷ Peter J. Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2006), p.6. For Esty, whose subject in *A Shrinking Island* is mostly late modernism rather than post-war writing, 'the anthropological turn' refers to the projection of 'England as the object of anthropological knowledge' (p.9).

highly provisional national unity in the face of imperial collapse'.¹²⁸ For Luke Strongman, the postimperial novel is intimately connected to the history of the Booker Prize. Writing in direct opposition to Brennan, Strongman argues that 'Angela Carter, Peter Ackroyd, Martin Amis [...] Penelope Lively, [and] Penelope Fitzgerald' – all Booker-winning or Booker-nominated novelists – 'express a particularly English response to aspects of British culture and society, empire and post-imperialism. Each of these writers is concerned with the vacuum left by imperial expansion'.¹²⁹ The author survey chapter will also show that critics have read contemporary British historical novels, contemporary country house novels, and contemporary novels set in Africa through the lens of postimperialism.

Despite the evident range of this growing critical field, there are three key limitations that my thesis aims to redress: first, the emphasis on the post-war over the contemporary novel; second, the lack of detailed attention given to each individual author and (thus) to political ambiguities; third, the lack of self-consciousness about the whiteness of the authors in question. I will now discuss these in order, thereby enabling me to explain the particular approach taken in this project.

Elleke Boehmer, in response to the publication of *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*, claimed that the 'emphasis' of the collection, 'for historically obvious reasons, [is] on novels of the '40s, '50s and '60s': the period in which the major events and processes of decolonisation were taking place.¹³⁰ Indeed, though more than half of the chapters focus on the English novel since 1979 – or, what I define below as the 'contemporary' rather than the 'post-war' English novel –

¹²⁸ Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger*, p.6.

¹²⁹ Luke Strongman, *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), p.225.

¹³⁰ Boehmer, 'Comments at the launch of *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*', British Academy, 2 November 2011 [unpublished].

beginning with William Boyd (chapter six), and moving through Penelope Lively (7), Tim Parks (8), Hollinghurst (9), Pat Barker and David Peace (10), and McEwan (11), ‘a sense of periodicity emerges most clearly in essays [...] which consider literature of the 1940s and 1950s and [they] are among the strongest in the collection’.¹³¹

Moreover, Schwarz’s introduction focuses, as we have seen, on ‘the English novel, *at the time of decolonisation*’.¹³² Schwarz does so in order to challenge aforementioned myths about the ‘parochialism and insularity’ of the post-war English novel.¹³³ This preoccupation means that novels written *after*, rather than *at the time of*, decolonisation become something of an afterthought: empire ‘*also* haunts the writings of more contemporary figures, such as William Boyd and Ian McEwan’, we are told; Swift’s *Waterland* (1983) and Penelope Lively’s *Moon Tiger* (1987) thus warrant only a paragraph each right at the end of the introduction.¹³⁴

Post-war figures like Scott and Burgess, who receive much more of Schwarz’s attention, appear again and again in postimperial criticism. We have already encountered Scott in Carbajal and Gorra. John McLeod’s ‘The Novel and the End of Empire’, whilst briefly engaging with Scott, focuses on Burgess’s *Malayan Trilogy* (1956-1959), Olivia Manning’s *The Balkan Trilogy* (1960-1965) and *The Levant Trilogy* (1977-1980), and J.G. Farrell’s *The Empire Trilogy* (1970-1978); McLeod also references ‘Joyce Cary, Lawrence Durrell, D.J. Enright, [and] John Masters’, all of whom mainly published novels in the 1950s-1970s.¹³⁵ Matthew Whittle’s *Post-War British Literature and the “End of Empire”* (2017) – the most recent major addition

¹³¹ Bianca Leggett, ‘Heart of Whiteness’, *Contemporary Literature* 54.2 (2013), 403-10 (p.404).

¹³² Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.3 (emphasis added).

¹³³ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.5.

¹³⁴ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.21 (emphasis added); pp.25-26.

¹³⁵ McLeod, ‘The Novel and the End of Empire’, *British and Irish Fiction since 1940*, 80-93 (p.81).

to the field – continues to prioritise this period as it discusses ‘a range of novels by writers with direct experience of the colonies through colonial service or settlement’.¹³⁶

To return to Boehmer, then, ‘we also need to think about the presence of empire, or the half presence, in the English novel since 1980’: how it ‘persists into the present day’.¹³⁷ I specify 1979 rather than 1980 as the transitional point between ‘post-war’ and ‘contemporary’ because it was the year of Margaret Thatcher’s election; the postimperial or neoimperial aspects of Thatcherism are discussed below. ‘We [...] need’ to attend to the contemporary English novel not only to add further examples to our knowledge of postimperial fiction, but, more importantly, to outline its distinct characteristics. ‘Anxieties regarding Americanization’, for instance, that Whittle finds to be some dominant in the immediate post-war decades, barely feature in my study.¹³⁸ Post-1979 is not, for the most part, the period of decolonisation itself, but of working through its aftereffects. Several historical factors speak to this difference and inform the writers studied here. In particular, Hollinghurst and Swift respond to the 1982 Falklands War and the postimperial or neoimperial rhetoric which surrounded it; suddenly, in the Thatcherite 1980s, the imperial was no longer ‘post-’ in quite the same way. The intimate connections between Englishness, empire, militarism, and nostalgia provoked renewed literary attention. Thatcherite neoliberalism (Barnes and Hollinghurst), the European Union (Barnes), and the

¹³⁶ Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, p.2. The main authors under discussion in Whittle’s book are: Burgess, Sillitoe, Graham Greene, Gerald Hanley, David Cate, and MacInnes.

¹³⁷ Boehmer, ‘Comments’, British Academy.

¹³⁸ Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, p.3. Whittle’s third chapter is entitled ‘America Moves In: Neo-colonialism and America’s “Entertainment Empire”’. Much of his fourth chapter is also preoccupied with ‘Americanization’ (p.110). See also: Parrinder, ‘The Road to Airstrip One: Anglo-American Attitudes in the English Fiction of Mid-century’, *End of Empire*, 38-52.

Northern Irish ‘Troubles’ (Swift) are some further historical contexts that inform the contemporary variant of the postimperial novel: all posed challenging questions about England’s ambiguous presence beyond its geographic borders, whether through flows of capital, political institutions, or military conflict.

Alongside these historical factors, there were also literary-critical ones influencing the writers in this study. The rise of postcolonial theory (often associated with the publication of Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978) and, to a much greater extent, the prominence of the postcolonial novel in English (often associated with the publication of Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* in 1981) raised new questions, I propose, of the white English writer in the 1980s and beyond. Postcolonial literature and literary ideas were of course circulating in Britain prior to the 1980s. Kalliney’s *Commonwealth of Letters* (2013) reveals the important role of intercultural networks between British modernists and (post)colonial writers between ‘the end of the war and the early-1960s’.¹³⁹ But, as McLeod writes, ‘a new generation of postcolonial novelists emerged in the 1980s – Salman Rushdie, Timothy Mo, Caryl Phillips – whose writing looked critically and playfully at the legacy of colonialism’.¹⁴⁰ Certainly, there are clear signs that postcolonial writers and writing underwent some ‘mainstreaming’, as John Marx has described, though the extent of it can be overstated.¹⁴¹ Marx, after all, specifies that this process has taken place primarily ‘in

¹³⁹ Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.36.

¹⁴⁰ McLeod, *J.G. Farrell* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2007), p.100. For Laura Chrisman, the 1980s was ‘a significant decade in the production of white and black British post-imperial identities, including as it did the Falklands War; the “race riots” of 1981 and 1984; the miners’ strikes; consolidation of the “new racism”; the 1989 publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and the subsequent “Rushdie Affair” ’ (*Postcolonial Contraventions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.9).

¹⁴¹ John Marx, ‘Postcolonial Literature and the Western Literary Canon’, *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 83-96 (p.95).

the [Anglo-American] university'.¹⁴² At the same time, the intertextual relations that I trace throughout this thesis do indicate that white writers like Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes were influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by postcolonial aesthetics and politics, and will have picked up these forms of awareness from their reading and other cultural activity. The precise nature of this influence will be discussed in more detail in relation to Barnes's *Arthur & George*, a discussion that then bridges across to the conclusion, in which I provide a set of explanations for the critical engagement with postimperial Englishness that the rest of the thesis explores.

In order properly to excavate and examine what Boehmer calls 'the half presence' of empire, we must dedicate considerable space to each contemporary author, rather than consider them as belated adjuncts to a story which took place much earlier, 'at the time of decolonisation'. Instead of focusing solely on *The Line of Beauty* (2004), as Sarah Brophy does in her essay on Hollinghurst, my chapter examines one of his short stories and four of his novels. It thus provides a sustained reading across his oeuvre, attendant to the significant parallels and contrasts from text to text. Moreover, by placing the chapter on Hollinghurst alongside equally lengthy ones on Swift and Barnes, as well as a wide-ranging author survey, I am able to conduct detailed comparative interpretations (something that is difficult to achieve in a multi-authored volume like *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*). The author survey chapter, in particular, enables a stronger case to be made about the range of postimperial responses in the contemporary English novel: from nostalgic, to satirical, to critical; from historical, to fantastical, to mythological. This chapter also allows me to explain why three authors have been selected for further scrutiny.

¹⁴² John Marx, p.95.

Bringing together multiple texts by multiple authors allows for a more nuanced analysis of the political ambiguities of postimperial fiction. I am referring here to the extent to which postimperial writers repeat, respond to, and/or reshape the strategies and ideologies of imperial writers. For many of the critics discussed at the beginning of this survey, the extent to which metropolitan writers from the imperial period could be considered to be implicated in or critical of imperialism is central. Boehmer is particularly attentive to this question, arguing, for instance, that ‘Virginia Woolf’s writing [...] houses persisting imperialist attitudes alongside anti-colonial sentiment’; ‘with Virginia as with Leonard Woolf, the critique of imperial wrongs does not preclude a kind of complicity’.¹⁴³ With regards to Burgess et al., McLeod ‘remain[s] sensitive to the cross-currents of critique and conformity which characterize so much writing about empire in the mid-century’.¹⁴⁴ Whittle, too, provides ‘a sustained reading’ in order ‘to determine the manner in which post-war British literature is both constrained by and moving away from the nation’s colonial past’.¹⁴⁵ When Whittle turns in his ‘coda’ to more contemporary literature, however, his readings are remarkably less nuanced. Referring mainly to popular culture, from *Beyond the Fringe* to the James Bond franchise, he argues that ‘in the decades that followed the era of extensive decolonization, colonialism was largely either satirized or celebrated. In both cases, responses were characterized by caricatured portrayals of Britain’s colonial past’.¹⁴⁶ Whittle fails to attend to the complexities and ambiguities of contemporary postimperial fiction.

¹⁴³ Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p.135; p.137.

¹⁴⁴ McLeod, ‘The Novel and the End of Empire’, p.90.

¹⁴⁵ Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, p.14.

¹⁴⁶ Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, p.192. On Ian Fleming’s *Casino Royale* (1953) and ‘imperial nostalgia’, see: Ashley Dawson, *The Routledge Concise History of Twentieth-Century British Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp.106-07; and, Stevenson, p.127.

In order to provide politically alert readings of contemporary postimperial fiction, this thesis is committed to counteracting the evasion or obfuscation of whiteness that is to be found in many of the aforementioned studies. As Leggett writes of Schwarz's introduction to *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*,

Schwarz's definition [of the 'centre'] does not quite satisfy. In a collection that exclusively addresses texts written by white authors, I was puzzled by the absence of any reference to the term whiteness as such in Schwarz's introduction and unsure what the term 'Anglo-English' (which seemed to be used in its place) might connote.¹⁴⁷

Leggett intuits hesitancy on Schwarz's part to be explicit about the strict focus upon white writers engaging with the end of empire, as opposed to the more conventional postcolonial emphasis upon black and Asian writers. For Schwarz, 'the decisive issue is not the – assumed – racial or ethnic identity of any single individual, as such, but rather their determinate *historical experience* of England', i.e., whether England is of 'first' or 'second [...] nature' to them.¹⁴⁸ This explains why white writers like Doris Lessing, 'born in Persia to an English family and who grew up in Southern Rhodesia', are not included.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, as Leggett suggests but does not make explicit, a number of issues arise from such a disavowal of whiteness.

First, there is the danger that 'English', 'Anglo-English', and 'centre' become implicitly synonymous with 'white' and that 'postcolonial' becomes or rather remains a euphemism for non-white. Specifying, as I do here, that the authors in question are 'white English', paradoxically, decouples the two terms: white English becomes a particular variant of Englishness and so needs naming as such. Second, Schwarz's racial hesitancy loses, as Leggett's Conradian title does not, the sense that the collection takes us deep into the 'Heart of Whiteness'. What certain essays in the

¹⁴⁷ Leggett, 'Heart of Whiteness', p.405.

¹⁴⁸ Schwarz, 'Introduction', *End of Empire*, p.18.

¹⁴⁹ Schwarz, 'Introduction', *End of Empire*, p.18.

collection achieve is what we might call the ‘whitening’ of supposedly racially-neutral authors. This is done not in order to dismiss them as inherently bound by imperial ideologies but to particularise their postimperial visions.¹⁵⁰

If Schwarz and other critics largely overlook questions about whiteness, the field of critical whiteness studies confronts them head on.¹⁵¹ Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992) provides the defining literary example. Ranging widely across the white American canon – from Willa Cather to Ernest Hemingway – Morrison asks ‘how is “literary whiteness” and “literary blackness” made, and what is the consequence of that construction? How do embedded assumptions of racial (not racist) language work in the literary enterprise that hopes and sometimes claims to be humanistic?’¹⁵² The heuristic of whiteness, she argues, ‘provide[s] access to a deeper reading of American literature – a reading not completely available now, not least, I suspect, because of the studied indifference of most literary criticism to these matters’.¹⁵³

In seeking to counteract this ‘studied indifference’, in an English rather than American literary context, one must also bear in mind prominent critiques of the

¹⁵⁰ In particular, Cora Kaplan discusses ‘the struggles of the white liberal conscience’ (‘Josephine Tey and her Descendants’, 53-73 (p.66)), Rachael Gilmour ‘white colonial society’ (‘The Entropy of Englishness’, 92-113 (p.105)), and Deborah Philips ‘the white woman’s burden’ and ‘white privilege’ (‘The Empire of Romance’, 114-133 (p.119; p.122)).

¹⁵¹ David Roediger, whose *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) is often considered to have founded the field, points out that ‘studying whiteness as a problem is perfectly consistent with an African American tradition, extending from Frederick Douglass forward’ (*Colored White* (London: University of California Press, 2002), p.20). This tradition (examples of which are collected in Roediger’s *Black on White* (1998)) includes W.E.B. De Bois’s ‘The Souls of White Folk’ (from *Darkwater* (1920)), James Baldwin’s ‘Stranger in the Village’ (1953), and bell hooks’s ‘Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination’ (from *Black Looks* (1992)).

¹⁵² Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), xii-xiii.

¹⁵³ Morrison, p.9.

field.¹⁵⁴ As the editors of *Historicising Whiteness* (2007) admit, whiteness studies has the ‘potential to simply re-inscribe white people at the centre of historical narratives [...] the charge that whiteness studies problematically returns the focus of historical scholarship back to its traditional subjects remains potent’.¹⁵⁵ In the words of Richard Dyer’s *White* (1997),

in the West in recent years there have been challenges to the dominance of white concerns and a concomitant move towards inclusion of non-white cultures and issues. Putting whiteness on the agenda now might permit a sigh of relief that we white people don’t after all any longer have to take on all this non-white stuff.¹⁵⁶

There is the ‘potential’, then, of simply ‘re-inscrib[ing]’ white authors at the heart of the contemporary English literary canon, and of proffering a reactionary response to the rise of theorists like Said and novelists like Rushdie. Explicit attention to the whiteness of these writers, however, helps to clarify what is at stake, politically, in their narratives of postimperial Englishness: to recognise, as Morrison would, that they address race, nation, and empire from a position of racial privilege rather than one of marginalisation or disenfranchisement. This does not preclude the possibility of textual critiques of racial and imperial ideologies but it does, as we shall see most clearly with Barnes, require us to consider carefully the perspective from which that critique or representation emerges.

Brenda Cooper’s *Weary Sons of Conrad: White Fiction Against the Grain of Africa’s Dark Heart* (2002) engages self-consciously with the issue of whiteness. For her, ‘white fiction’ is about literary tradition as much as, if not more so than, skin colour. As her title suggests, this tradition is that of Conrad. The qualifier ‘weary’,

¹⁵⁴ Vron Ware is the leading exponent of whiteness studies in a British context. See: *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (1992); and, with Les Back, *Outside the Whale: Color, Politics, and Culture* (2002).

¹⁵⁵ Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher, and Katherine Ellinghaus (eds), ‘Historicising Whiteness’, *Historicising Whiteness* (Melbourne: RMIT, 2007), vi-xxiii (xvii).

¹⁵⁶ Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.10.

however, is equally important; Cooper's aim is not simply to dismiss naive white perspectives on Africa that unthinkingly repeat earlier colonial rhetorics. 'The writers that I have chosen are politically aware and also sophisticated literary craftsmen' who

do not need me to point out the nature of the history of imperial plunder and the tropes, which played their roles on the African stage. These writers have, to greater or lesser extent, understood the past and its survivals and have attempted, by way of their unique and powerful fictions, to redress it.¹⁵⁷

White English novelists, such as Hollinghurst, approach Africa self-consciously, and with an intertextual awareness of imperial modes of representation. Yet, as Cooper's analysis reveals, 'critical understanding' does not necessarily enable 'redress', especially when dealing with issues of race and the burdens of empire.¹⁵⁸ As she writes of David Caute's *Fatima's Scarf* (1998), 'we are in no doubt that Caute fully understands and critiques the prejudices of Orientalism. How is it possible, in that case, that he reproduces them so profoundly in his fiction'?'¹⁵⁹ This balancing act, or 'razor's edge', between the reproduction and redress of colonial discourses in contemporary white fiction about Africa, as well as the array of politically ambiguous possibilities in between, is at the heart of Cooper's attentive close readings.¹⁶⁰

Robert Eric Livingston wonders why Cooper 'single[s] out white *male* writers for special treatment'.¹⁶¹ Cooper is in fact quite specific about the reasons why she chooses to focus upon 'male writers' – 'this lens ['Orientalism, and its African variations'] is constituted by gender as much as by race'¹⁶² – citing Said and Anne

¹⁵⁷ Brenda Cooper, *Weary Sons of Conrad* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002), p.1; p.294.

¹⁵⁸ Brenda Cooper, p.18.

¹⁵⁹ Brenda Cooper, p.24. On Caute, Frantz Fanon, and decolonisation, see: Whittle, '“These dogs will do as we say”', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 51.3 (2014), 269-82.

¹⁶⁰ Brenda Cooper refers to the 'razor's edge of Africanist discourse' (p.133) on several occasions.

¹⁶¹ Robert Eric Livingston, 'Weary Sons of Conrad [review]', *Research in African Literatures* 36.1 (2005), 134-35 (p.134, emphasis added).

¹⁶² Brenda Cooper, p.11.

McClintock on the ‘gendered dynamics of [empire]’.¹⁶³ ‘A good deal of evidence has emerged’, McClintock argues, ‘to establish that women and men did not experience imperialism in the same way’.¹⁶⁴ There is indeed extensive ‘evidence’ on ‘the imperial constitution of British masculinity’,¹⁶⁵ from Mrinalini Sinha’s *Colonial Masculinity* (1995) to Bradley Deane’s *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* (2014).¹⁶⁶ Likewise, Phyllis Lassner’s *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing the End of the British Empire* (2004) demonstrates the particular position of ‘British women writers’, from Olivia Manning to Elspeth Huxley, within the context of the end of empire: ‘though they were expected to identify with this imperial space, these women refused to be fixed, marginalized, or victimized by their historic and geopolitical conditions’.¹⁶⁷

I discuss several female novelists in the author survey chapter, including A.S. Byatt, Sarah Waters, and Hilary Mantel at length. The main chapters of this thesis, however, focus upon male writers. This is because postimperial Englishness often finds its expression in conjunction with masculinity; the two are bound up with one another, in both literary and historical terms. This intersection is touched upon briefly in the Boyd and McEwan chapters of *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*.¹⁶⁸ For David Alderson, writing in relation to McEwan, the ‘retreat from

¹⁶³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.5.

¹⁶⁴ McClintock, p.6. McClintock cites Ann Laura Stoler’s ‘Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia’ (1991).

¹⁶⁵ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.10.

¹⁶⁶ See also: Catherine Hall’s chapter ‘Going-a-Trolloping: Imperial Man Travels the Empire’ in *White, Male and Middle-class* (1992); and, Graham Dawson’s *Soldier Heroes* (2005).

¹⁶⁷ Lassner, p.4.

¹⁶⁸ *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945* also focuses primarily upon male authors. This is with the exception of its chapters on: Josephine Tey (by Kaplan); Mills & Boon fiction (Philips); and, Penelope Lively (Huw Marsh). Schwarz’s introductory essay claims (by way of a footnote) that ‘the more well-known novels

colonialism [...] would help to condition British masculine sensibilities more generally'.¹⁶⁹ In order to unpack this conjunction further, my readings are informed by both Cooper's and Gopinath's work on 'English masculinities after empire'.¹⁷⁰

Hollinghurst, whom Cooper discusses only briefly, draws masculinity and postimperial Englishness together in a more direct fashion than the other authors in this thesis. His early fiction, in particular, is preoccupied with the politics of interracial male homosexuality in both colonial and postcolonial settings. Swift merges war, empire, and masculinity together through his series of ex-military men nostalgic for the days of erotic and geographic freedom. For Barnes, the English gentleman – past and present, home and abroad – provides a key figure through which to satirise postimperial national identity.

This thesis, like most of the studies above, primarily discusses prose fiction in preference to other literary and cultural forms.¹⁷¹ It might be possible to extend my argument to poetry and drama: Larkin, as we have seen, can be situated productively within the context of postimperial Englishness; Tom Stoppard's play *Indian Ink* (1995), as we shall see in the author survey, provides a theatrical return to colonial India in the 1930s. Television and cinema also feature in the survey chapter, in relation to the so-called 'Raj revival'. But the three main chapters of this thesis focus upon novels. Each chapter begins with an analysis of an early short story or stories. This provides a provocative starting point before turning to the broader social and

about the end of empire have been written by men [...] it seems that the impressive feminist re-readings of empire in the historiography do not operate to the same degree in the fiction' (pp.35-36 (footnote 68)). One of the exceptions he gives is Doris Lessing.

¹⁶⁹ David Alderson, 'Saturday's Enlightenment', *End of Empire*, 218-37 (p.220).

¹⁷⁰ This is the subtitle of Gopinath's book *Scarecrows of Chivalry*. See also Webster's chapter 'Elegies for Empire: The Romance of Manliness' in *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965*.

¹⁷¹ MacPhee is atypical in discussing poetry and drama in detail, alongside fiction.

historical visions facilitated by the novel form. The novel emerges as a privileged form here because of its close connections to national and imperial history and identity. As Patrick Parrinder argues in *Nation & Novel* (2006), like Homi Bhabha before him, ‘novels have been influential sources of ideas of nationhood and national belonging’ since their emergence in eighteenth-century Britain; novelists have historically participated in and ‘continue to participate in the making and remaking of English identity’.¹⁷² For Steven Connor, likewise, the novel not only provides insight into (national) history – ‘the novel promises a view of that fine grain of events and experiences’¹⁷³ – but is also, crucially, ‘one of the ways in which history is made, and remade’.¹⁷⁴

Said ties the novel, more specifically, to the history of empire. ‘Without empire, I would go so far as saying, there is no European novel as we know it’.¹⁷⁵ ‘Said’s point also applies’, according to Strongman, ‘*after* empire, during its dismantling’.¹⁷⁶ This, at least, is my argument here: that the contemporary novel both registers and, in Connor’s language, ‘remak[e]s’ postimperial Englishness. By ‘remake’ I mean that the writers in this thesis do not merely rehearse pre-given narratives but make significant interventions into contemporary debates about the ways in which empire and its demise have shaped and reshaped Englishness. By proceeding incrementally through a number of texts by each writer, I will develop the

¹⁷² Parrinder, *Nation & Novel*, p.14; p.414; Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (1990).

¹⁷³ In Robert Young’s words, ‘fiction is the form of writing that can give an account of history at the same time as it shows what it is like for the individuals involved to live through such times, offering subjective accounts of objective processes [...] putting the psychic into dialogue with the social and the historical’ (*Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (Somerset: Wiley, 2013), p.150)

¹⁷⁴ Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.1.

¹⁷⁵ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.82. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry* (2017) has recently challenged the dominance of the novel in postcolonial studies.

¹⁷⁶ Strongman, xi.

argument that the fiction of Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes provides an alternative history of England and Englishness after empire and it does so, in particular, by bringing issues of sexuality, militarism, and masculinity to the fore. These are some of the most striking ways in which the writers in question ‘work through’, to return to Gilroy, England’s ‘imperial and colonial history’.

Alan Hollinghurst provides the most useful starting point, after the author survey chapter, as criticism of his work predominantly sees his fiction as associated with one concern: sexuality. Through an extended reading of ‘A Thieving Boy’ alongside his debut novel *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1998) the chapter begins by intersecting this topic with race and empire. It interrogates the political ambiguities of Hollinghurst’s belated imperial tropes, in particular his self-conscious use of erotic exoticism, adopted from Forster and others. This leads onto an analysis of a broader range of topics, such as the Belgian Congo in *The Folding Star* (1994), Thatcherism and the Falklands War in *The Line of Beauty*, and (post)imperial masculinity in *The Stranger’s Child* (2011). My overall argument in this chapter is that Hollinghurst’s fiction positions homosexuality as central to the project of empire and empire as central to historical and contemporary expressions of Englishness.

The most prominent historical context in Graham Swift’s fiction is the Second World War. But this is a context that Swift often connects to empire, entangling both in a mythology of militarised Englishness. It is this entanglement, and the difficulties of postimperial demythologisation, that form the basis of my chapter. I begin, as in the Hollinghurst chapter, with an interrogation of Forsterian belatedness in ‘Seraglio’, an early short story, before moving onto memories of North African colonies in *Last Orders* (1996) and the combination of imperial and neoimperial wars in *Out of this World* (1988). The central argument here is that Swift take his readers inside the lived

experience of demythologisation, or the difficulties of ‘working through’ (in Gilroy’s formulation) tenacious imperial mythologies.

By situating Julian Barnes alongside various colonial and postcolonial discourses, instead of dehistoricising and depoliticising postmodern ones, it becomes possible to read his fiction as a satirical response to postimperial Englishness. The object of Barnes’s satire in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1990) is the belated ‘English’ gentleman abroad, whilst in *England, England* (1998) Barnes targets both postimperial nostalgia and neocolonial revival. Barnes’s return to Edwardian England in *Arthur & George* (2005) enables him to examine the conjunction of liberalism and imperialism in the gentlemanly figure of Arthur Conan Doyle. The key argument in this chapter is that Barnes’s fiction is partially postcolonial: it is caught between competing conceptions of Englishness, between an awareness of postcolonial transformations and being embedded in more traditional literary and historical narratives. Partial postcoloniality appears most clearly in the chapter on Barnes but it in fact emerges as a concept across the whole thesis. This is due to the fact that I alternate throughout between reading these white English novelists through a postcolonial lens and reflecting upon the difficulties of such a reading.

The conclusion examines in more detail the question of *why* these writers provide critical interrogations of postimperial Englishness in their fiction. This is not a matter of establishing the intentions of each author; interviews and non-fiction inform my analysis throughout this thesis but they are engaged with critically and are not considered to determine the meaning of a writer’s literary output. Instead I present and weigh up three explanations that are based upon the textual evidence uncovered in the main chapters. Building upon the contextual material that has been provided in

this introductory chapter, I conclude that: imperial and postimperial history and politics are particularly important for Swift; intertextual engagement with imperial writers is central for Hollinghurst; and, finally, postcolonial literature and theory are influential for Barnes. The conclusion also provides a brief paratextual analysis of Hollinghurst's novels, and, to a lesser extent, those of Swift and Barnes. It does so in order to begin thinking about how the 'bracketing' of these novelists outside of the sphere of the postcolonial is conducted in material as well as critical terms. This will help to outline further avenues for this project, in particular the possibility of bringing book historical and reception-based approaches to bear upon the field of postimperial literary studies, and, more broadly of considering the contribution of the literary to historical and political debates.

Author Survey: Genres of Postimperial Literature

Empire pervades contemporary English fiction and its impact is pronounced even in the work of white writers who, for the most part, are separated from postcolonial scrutiny on biographical or racial grounds. This argument cannot be restricted to the novels of Alan Hollinghurst, Graham Swift, and Julian Barnes. Hilary Mantel's *A Change of Climate* (1994) is haunted by the violent legacies of colonialism in South Africa and Bechuanaland, whilst J.G. Ballard, in *Cocaine Nights* (1996), envisions British expatriate life on the Costa del Sol as an intra-European form of neocolonialism. In *On Chesil Beach* (2007), Ian McEwan situates his narrative of sexual liberation within the context of British post-war decolonisation, whilst David Mitchell's *Black Swan Green* (2006) narrates the disturbing internalisation of the rhetoric of the Falklands War by way of its jingoistic teenage protagonist.

This chapter will examine the role of race, empire, and decolonisation in the work of a range of contemporary white English writers. These writers are relevant to, but not the main focus of, my project; the reasons for dedicating chapters to Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes will be explained at the end of this survey, as will my use of the term canonical to describe these authors. In surveying a wide range of authors, from Matthew Kneale to Sarah Waters and (moving beyond the novel) from Tom Stoppard to Adam Foulds, my discussion of each will be necessarily truncated and will stop short of answering certain questions. Instead of discussing individual authors in meticulous detail and proceeding on a text-by-text basis through their oeuvres, as I will in the following chapters, here I refer to significant passages from relevant texts and situate these within critical discussion. This survey is not comprehensive, and there inevitably will be gaps, but it allows me to both extend my

argument beyond three core writers and to identify significant postimperial literary genres.

These partially overlapping genres are entitled: historical fictions of empire; the country house novel; ‘boomerang’ narratives; and, neoimperial narratives. Each of these genres provides the basis for analysis in later chapters. Hollinghurst’s *The Stranger’s Child*, for instance, is a partially historical country house novel which moves from the imperial to the postimperial period, much like McEwan’s *Atonement* (2007) and Waters’s *The Little Stranger* (2009). Swift’s *Out of this World* provides a ‘boomerang’ narrative that places the (post)colonial violence of the ‘Troubles’ at the heart of its narrative. Barnes’s *England, England*, finally, brings Ballard’s and Mitchell’s neoimperial satires closer to home by speculating upon the intra-United Kingdom colonisation of the Isle of Wight.

Historical Fictions of Empire

In her 1999 Richard Ellmann memorial lectures, A.S. Byatt commented upon ‘the sudden flowering of the historical novel in Britain’, a ‘flowering’ that was taking place in the face of (or in response to) long-standing critical disrespect for the genre.¹⁷⁷ This ‘renaissance’, to which Byatt’s own writing contributes, has been the subject of numerous critical monographs addressing the British historical novel across the post-war period.¹⁷⁸ As well as reflecting upon postmodern debates about history

¹⁷⁷ These lectures are collected in: A.S. Byatt, *On Histories and Stories* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), p.9. See also: David Mitchell, ‘On Historical Fiction’, *Telegraph*, 8 May 2010 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/7685510/David-Mitchell-on-Historical-Fiction.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

¹⁷⁸ See, for instance: David Leon Higdon’s *Shadows of the Past in Contemporary British Fiction* (1984); Margaret Scanlan’s *Traces of Another Time: History and Politics in Postwar British Fiction* (1990); and, Suzanne Keen’s *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* (2001).

and historiography, many of these critics identify the prominence of imperial history in post-war British historical fiction. Mariadele Boccardi's *The Contemporary British Historical Novel: Representation, Nation, Empire* (2009) particularly foregrounds narratives of empire and the politics of postimperialism. Discussing historical fiction from 1969 to 2005, from John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to Ronan Bennett's *Havoc in its Third Year*, Boccardi situates 'historical fiction in the context of a narrative and critical reflection on the state of the nation in the aftermath of the loss of the Empire'.¹⁷⁹

Two key points can be extrapolated from Boccardi's statement and these will be elaborated in the opening section of this chapter. The first is that there is a large body of historical fictions of empire – texts which return to the period of empire and often make use of colonial settings – written by white English writers who fall outside the purview of most postcolonial studies. Paul Scott and J.G. Farrell are often considered to be exceptions to the rule, the rule being, as we saw in the introduction, that post-war English fiction, typically separated from postcolonial fiction, is 'parochial and inward looking'.¹⁸⁰ The range of historical fictions of empire discussed in this chapter, as well as other postimperial genres, suggest that it is the rule itself that needs to be changed in order to accommodate writers who are currently being overlooked. The second key point, and one that is more contentious, is that these historical fictions offer 'critical reflection[s]' on empire and postimperial Englishness. Boccardi's analysis suggests that the most common critical terms – nostalgia and melancholia – for discussing white writing on empire are reductive. Boccardi's and others' identification of criticality, however, would also profit from further scrutiny.

¹⁷⁹ Mariadele Boccardi, *The Contemporary British Historical Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.26.

¹⁸⁰ Bernard Bergonzi, cited by: Boxall and Cheyette, p.4.

The critical reception of Scott and Farrell is worth briefly considering here, before addressing some more contemporary writers. Both Scott and Farrell make use of perhaps the most common setting for historical fictions of empire: India. Numerous popular television and cinematic productions have looked back to the period of British rule in India and its demise. Most recently, ITV's *Indian Summers* (2015-2016) explored the tensions of colonial life in 1930s India, with decolonisation on the horizon. *Indian Summers* recalls numerous popular visualisations of the Raj from the 1980s: James Ivory's and Ismail Merchant's cinematic version of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1983), David Lean's cinematic version of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1984), and ITV's *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984).¹⁸¹

The Jewel in the Crown was adapted from Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* (1966-1975), which narrates the story of decolonisation in India before, during, and after the Second World War. Salman Rushdie provided an influential critique of *The Raj Quartet*, and what he identified as a broader 'Raj revival', in his 1984 essay 'Outside the Whale'. He argued that, in Scott's novels

Indians get walk-ons, but remain, for the most part, bit-players in their own history. Once this form has been set, it scarcely matters that individual fictional Brits get unsympathetic treatment from their author. The form insists that *they are the ones whose stories matter*, and that is so much less than the whole truth that it must be called a falsehood.¹⁸²

This critique of Scott has been contested by a number of critics, such as Alberto F. Carbajal, but Rushdie's concerns about voice, sympathy, and historical truth continue to inform, as we shall see, discussions of postimperial fiction. J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) is another canonical Raj fiction and one that is debated in

¹⁸¹ These productions are typically situated within the contexts of Thatcherism and (what Robert Hewison calls) 'the heritage industry', and (so) critiqued for their 'imperial nostalgia'. Carbajal argues that 'it is the proliferation in the 1980s of popular film and television depictions of India, I suspect, that has relegated Scott's and Farrell's writings to the realm of imperial nostalgia' (p.30).

¹⁸² Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta, 1991), p.90.

similar terms.¹⁸³ This Booker-prize winner forms the second part of Farrell's 'Empire Trilogy', beginning with *Troubles* (1970), which returns to the Irish War of Independence (1919-21), and ending with *The Singapore Grip* (1978), which focuses on the fall of British Singapore during World War II. All three of these historical novels narrate challenges to British imperial rule, with *The Siege of Krishnapur* taking us back to a key moment of imperial crisis that will be discussed again in the chapter on Hollinghurst: the so-called 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857. For McLeod, Farrell's 'Trilogy' provides 'the most critical and enduring articulation of the waning of the British empire in mid-century novels of empire'.¹⁸⁴ Boccardi and Margaret Scanlan also discuss Farrell (and more specifically *The Siege of Krishnapur*) in terms of the deconstruction of 'imperial solidity' and the 'destruction of imperial idealism'.¹⁸⁵ For Suzanne Keen, however, *The Siege of Krishnapur* 'both mocks and celebrates British power, exposes foolishness, and celebrates the heroism of those who held out in the siege'.¹⁸⁶

Tom Stoppard's 1995 play *Indian Ink* raises a similar set of issues through its dramatic return to colonial India in the 1930s.¹⁸⁷ For postcolonial critic Antoinette

¹⁸³ Farrell is usually considered to be an English or Anglo-Irish writer. He was born in Liverpool to an Anglo-Irish family and moved to Ireland in 1979. He died there a few months later in an accident.

¹⁸⁴ McLeod, 'The Novel and the End of Empire', p.91.

¹⁸⁵ Boccardi, p.32; Margaret Scanlan, 'The Recuperation of History in British and Irish Fiction', *A Companion to the British and Irish novel 1945-2000*, ed. Brian W. Shaffer (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 144-59 (p.149).

¹⁸⁶ Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p.23. Keen also uses the term 'postimperial' and adopts it from 'George Landlow's "Contemporary Postcolonial and Postimperial Literature in English" website' (p.15).

¹⁸⁷ Whilst Stoppard's is the only play in this thesis, MacPhee examines two from the late 1950s – John Osborne's *The Entertainer* (1957) and John Arden's *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959) – in a section entitled 'Bringing the War Back Home?' (pp.127-133). Sinfield discusses these two plays, as well as Willis Hall's *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1958) and Edward Bond's *Saved* (1965), in similar terms

Burton, *Indian Ink* ‘sustain[s] Raj nostalgia [...] [as] an inexhaustible market for the exotic allure of British imperialism’.¹⁸⁸ But we can also question the extent to which Stoppard indulges in, or self-consciously responds to, ‘imperialist nostalgia’.¹⁸⁹ Certainly, protagonist Flora Crewe’s ‘carnival float’ attitude reproduces a rose-tinted view of white privilege in colonial India.¹⁹⁰ Yet, Stoppard also interrogates Flora’s perspective, and that of the colonial class she represents, rather than merely endorsing it. She becomes entangled in the paradoxes of what Homi Bhabha calls ‘colonial mimesis’ when she asks her servant Das to ‘be *more* Indian, or at any rate *Indian*, not Englished-up’.¹⁹¹ Her exoticist and colonialist demands are held up for scrutiny, even mockery. Later on, Das points out a further paradox of colonial policy, now in relation to education, when he ‘thank[s] Lord Macaulay for English’: ‘we have so many, many languages, you know, that English is the only language the nationalists can communicate in!’.¹⁹² In giving voice to nationalist stirrings and satirising the pretensions of colonial authority, Stoppard provides opportunities to resist the comforts of ‘Raj nostalgia’. This is not to deny the possibility of a nostalgic interpretation or production of *Indian Ink*, but to begin outlining the political ambiguities of the postimperial literary imagination.

Raj fictions like M.M. Kaye’s *Shadow of the Moon* (1957/1979) and *The Far Pavilions* (1978), as well as Francis King’s *Act of Darkness* (1983), have also been discussed and critiqued in terms of ‘imperialist nostalgia’.¹⁹³ But I am interested here

(p.139). See also: Ashley Dawson on Caryl Churchill’s 1979 play *Cloud Nine* (*The Routledge*, pp.148-51).

¹⁸⁸ Burton, *Empire in Question* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), p.252.

¹⁸⁹ Burton, *Empire in Question*, p.256.

¹⁹⁰ Stoppard, *Indian Ink* (London: Faber, 1995), p.4.

¹⁹¹ Stoppard, p.12.

¹⁹² Stoppard, p.19.

¹⁹³ Rushdie critiques *The Far Pavilions* in the aforementioned essay ‘Outside the Whale’.

in expanding critical awareness of historical fictions of empire beyond the usual focus upon the Raj. Most of the aforementioned writers have biographical connections to colonial India: Scott served there during WWII; Stoppard lived there for part of his childhood; Kaye was born there; and King was brought up there.¹⁹⁴ There are numerous other contemporary white writers who are classified simply as English but who also grew up in colonial or postcolonial locations and draw upon these in their (historical) fiction. One of the best-known examples is J.G. Ballard whose semi-autobiographical novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984) documents ‘the lives of the colonial British’ in 1941 in the Anglo-American Shanghai International Settlement, where the author himself was born and raised.¹⁹⁵ Ballard’s child protagonist Jim (Ballard’s first name is James, sometimes shortened to Jim) only knows about England through hearsay, ‘the stories she [his mother] told him of her childhood in England, a country far stranger than China where he would go to school when the war was over’, the ‘voices full of talk about a strange, inconceivable England’.¹⁹⁶ After the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, Jim and the other British residents are interned in a prison camp. For Jim, the British ‘in the camp wasted their time on nostalgia [...] And yet’, he admits, ‘the London street signs fascinated him, part of the magic of names that he had discovered in the camp. What, conceivably, were Lord’s, the Serpentine, and the Trocadero?’.¹⁹⁷ He too is seduced by the ‘photographs of Battle of Britain pilots sitting in armchairs beside their Spitfires, of a crashed Heinkel bomber, of St Paul’s floating like a battleship on a sea of fire’ that he pins to the walls by his bunk.¹⁹⁸ Jim’s

¹⁹⁴ As Boehmer points out in *Indian Arrivals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), many of the Bloomsbury – or ‘Indian Bloomsbury’ – group also had ‘close family involvements with the Raj’ (p.217).

¹⁹⁵ J.G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), p.267.

¹⁹⁶ Ballard, *Empire of the Sun*, p.64; p.24.

¹⁹⁷ Ballard, *Empire of the Sun*, p.168.

¹⁹⁸ Ballard, *Empire of the Sun*, p.174.

simulacrum, like Barnes's in *England, England*, manages to be both satirical of and nostalgic for the real England. Ballard's visions of England and Englishness, to which we shall return, have distinctly colonial foundations.

Cooper's aforementioned analysis of contemporary white fiction set in Africa, *Weary Sons of Conrad*, includes a number of historical fictions of empire and many of the writers in question, from Adam Thorpe to Lawrence Norfolk, share biographical ties to colonial or postcolonial locations.¹⁹⁹ In addition to Cooper's authors, one could also discuss the African novels of Giles Foden and Marina Warner's partly Caribbean novel *Indigo* (1992) as historical fictions of empire that are rooted in the authors' colonial/postcolonial backgrounds.²⁰⁰ But it is not only writers with particular biographical ties that write historical fictions of empire.²⁰¹ Matthew Kneale, in an interview conducted after *English Passengers* had won the 2000 Whitbread Book of the Year award, praised Farrell for 'wr[it]ing] about the British Empire – and scathingly – back in the 1970s, when few in Britain wanted to think about the uglier

¹⁹⁹ Cooper focuses her analysis of Thorpe on *Pieces of Light* (1998), which is 'fundamentally concerned with Africa, with Cameroon, where the author spent some of his adolescence, having also had a brief, but impressionable boyhood period in the Congo' (p.241). Norfolk, who does not have connections to Africa but to Iraq, provides an 'ironic critique', Cooper argues, of 'arrogant imperialist assumptions, whims and avarice' (p.72) in his novels *The Pope's Rhinoceros* (1996) and *Lemprière's Dictionary* (1991).

²⁰⁰ Foden moved between England and Malawi during his upbringing. He is best known for his 1998 novel *The Last King of Scotland* which focuses upon the rise of Idi Amin, President of Uganda (1971-1979), and was made into a popular film in 2006. Marina Warner did not have a colonial or postcolonial upbringing, but her 1992 novel *Indigo* was written in response to her familial connections to colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean (see: 'The Silence of Sycorax' and 'Between the Colonist and the Creole' in Warner's essay collection, *Signs & Wonders* (2003)).

²⁰¹ It is worth noting, however, just how many 'English' writers – both contemporary writers and ones from earlier historical periods – have colonial and/or postcolonial backgrounds.

parts of their country's past'.²⁰² Kneale's *English Passengers* also looks back scathingly (as well as comically) at the ugliness of empire.²⁰³ It begins with one of many narrators, Reverend Geoffrey Wilson, planning to undertake a voyage in order to prove his ill-conceived theory that Tasmania was the true location of the Garden of Eden. Kneale alternates between this expedition from the Isle of Man to Tasmania, which takes place in the wake of the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857, and accounts of Tasmania from earlier in the century.

In 1828, George Baines, employee of the New World Land Company describes 'quite the strangest creatures I have ever set eyes upon'.²⁰⁴ Expanding beyond the role of the Indian character Nazim in *Lemprière's Dictionary*, Kneale gives extended voice to one of these 'creatures' (whereas, for Keen, 'the remote and mainly voiceless victims of imperial expansion fade from view' in Norfolk's novel).²⁰⁵ As the 'Note on Language' at the beginning of the book reveals, Kneale took great care in attempting to 'portray someone intelligent and interested in words, who is from a culture wholly remote from that of white men but has been educated by them, absorbing English phrases, both formal and informal, that were common in the 1830s'.²⁰⁶ The narration of the Tasmanian Peevay appears at the end of many of the chapters and provides a counterpoint to the colonialist perspectives that come before. In Boccardi's words, Peevay offers 'a narrative of discursive resistance to the cultural

²⁰² Sinead Gleeson, 'Three Men in a Boat – Matthew Kneale', *RTÉ*, 22 June 2001 <<http://www.rte.ie/entertainment/2001/0621/393938-knealem/>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

²⁰³ Michael L. Ross discusses *English Passengers* as a 'work of comic subversion' (*Race Riots* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), p.248).

²⁰⁴ Kneale, *English Passengers* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000), p.62.

²⁰⁵ Keen, p.151.

²⁰⁶ Kneale, vi.

and physical impositions of colonial power'.²⁰⁷ In his unique form of English, Peevay speaks of 'long ago times, many summers past, before everything got changed':²⁰⁸

Ghosts came to their land [...] First these ghosts were friendly, but then they tried to steal Roingin women and fighting happened [...] Later Roingin killed some back, but now ghosts were too many [...] Roingin decided they must leave their own land or all get killed.²⁰⁹

This simultaneously disturbing and poetic account of 'ghosts' arriving in Tasmania takes us to the heart of the colonial encounter, with initial (apparent) friendliness followed by vicious (sexual) violence and 'Roingin' resistance.

These were 'real occurrences' in Tasmania, as Kneale's epilogue reminds the reader, 'from the stealing of the aboriginal women by sealers to the massacre on the cliff, [and] the bizarre cruelties of the convict system...'.²¹⁰ Kneale's intention, in narrating these 'occurrences' from the perspectives of both coloniser and colonised, is made clear in the aforementioned interview. Travelling around the world, he claims, opened his eyes to

the legacy of British occupation in many places, often so destructive and hurtful to this day, and this left me wanting to write about that time. I felt it was something important to do, even for the English themselves, as to me England still seems a country stuck in the shadow of its past. I feel that the only way it can truly move on, and make a real peace, is to face up to the terrible things it has been responsible for in the past.²¹¹

Through historical fiction, Kneale attempts to 'work through' Britain's imperial past. He writes, as Paul Gilroy recommends, in active resistance to melancholia.²¹²

D.J. Taylor understands *English Passengers* to be part of 'a spreading clump of historical fiction'.²¹³ Indeed, for Taylor, there are so many 'post-imperial j'accuse'

²⁰⁷ Boccardi, p.119.

²⁰⁸ Kneale, p.48.

²⁰⁹ Kneale, p.77.

²¹⁰ Kneale, p.455. The acknowledgements page gives details of Kneale's research in 'the Archive Office of Tasmania' (p.463).

²¹¹ Gleeson, 'Three Men in a Boat'.

²¹² Robert Edric's historical novel *Elysium* (1995) also casts a critical gaze upon the colonisation of Tasmania.

novels that he considers *English Passengers* to be ‘an example of a literary tradition in late maturity, rather than a dazzling new strike into the historical unknown’.²¹⁴ Alongside Farrell, Taylor cites Barry Unsworth’s *Sacred Hunger* (1992) which returns to mid-eighteenth century imperialism by way of the *Liverpool Merchant* slave ship.²¹⁵ This is a novel that, in the words of Sam Jordison, ‘may be set in the days of slavery but it’s designed to tell us about our own recent history. As Unsworth himself said in a 1992 interview, “It was impossible to live in the Eighties without being affected by the sanctification of greed. My image of the slave ship was based on the desire to find the perfect symbol for that entrepreneurial spirit...”’.²¹⁶ For Boccardi, Philip Hensher’s *The Mulberry Empire* (2002) was also written with contemporary political purpose: it ‘revisit[s] [...] the First Afghan War of 1839-1842 [...] in the light [...] of the NATO invasion of Afghanistan following the terrorist strike of 11 September 2001 in New York’.²¹⁷ Switching between Afghani, British, and Russian perspectives, ‘*The Mulberry Empire* reviews the history of Afghanistan in relation to Britain’s own narrative of nationhood’.²¹⁸

The ‘literary tradition’ that Taylor refers to and that has been critically surveyed in this chapter so far is one in which empire is front and centre, in which colonialism and/or postcolonialism are at the core of the writers’ historical imaginations. This tradition is significant within the context of this thesis because it

²¹³ D.J. Taylor, ‘Shadows of the Empire’, *Guardian*, 27 January 2001 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/jan/27/fiction>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

²¹⁴ D.J. Taylor, ‘Shadows of the empire’.

²¹⁵ *Sacred Hunger* shared the 1992 Booker Prize with Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*. It was the last time a shared prize was permitted.

²¹⁶ Sam Jordison, ‘Booker Club: *Sacred Hunger*’, *Guardian*, 10 June 2011 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/10/booker-club-sacred-hunger-barry-unsworth>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

²¹⁷ Boccardi, p.134.

²¹⁸ Boccardi, p.137.

helps to challenge aforementioned critical assumptions regarding the parochialism and nostalgia of the post-war English novel. But it is not only historical novelists like Kneale and Unsworth, committed to the fictionalisation of imperial history and motivated by specific political aims, who are implicated in and responsive to postimperial Englishness. Rather, like Bill Schwarz, I consider ‘some of the most interesting fiction [to be] that which does not appear to concern itself in any way’ – or rather, in any overt way – ‘with empire or its demise, but which nonetheless carries the memory-traces of these former histories’.²¹⁹

A.S. Byatt’s *The Children’s Book* (2009) is an historical novel in which empire plays a seemingly peripheral rather than central part. It thus provides a case study for the interpretative issues at stake in the chapters to come. Empire is introduced into Byatt’s late-Victorian and Edwardian narrative by way of economics. Early on in this lengthy novel, Humphry and Basil Wellwood engage in a ‘bimetallism dispute’;²²⁰ Humphry contends, much to Basil’s annoyance, that ‘silver and gold, both, should be basic monies, to the obvious advantage of our Empire and traders in India. Basil, with most of the City, staunchly supported the Gold Standard’.²²¹ The novel’s imperial context is then further embedded through their discussion of ‘the Kaffir Circus and the activities of the Randlords, who dealt in South African gold [...] Basil Wellwood [a banker in the City of London] made money in the Kaffir Boom’.²²² South African gold, filtered through the City of London, is a key source of wealth for at least one half of the Wellwood family.

Despite the inclusion of British-South African imperial economics, Elleke Boehmer, in her afterword to *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*,

²¹⁹ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.21.

²²⁰ Byatt, *The Children’s Book* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), p.43.

²²¹ Byatt, *The Children’s Book*, p.33.

²²² Byatt, *The Children’s Book*, p.35.

argues that *The Children's Book* provides a prime example of a recent English novel set at 'the height of formal imperialism' which fails to register that context in a sufficient manner.²²³ This is what Keen calls, in relation to *Possession* (1990), Byatt's 'selective amnesia about the past'.²²⁴ 'Laden' with historical detail – from 'experimentation in puppetry' to 'the 1900 Grande Exposition Universelle de Paris' – 'empire', Boehmer writes

never more expansive and confident than at this time in British history, never more implicated in the warp and weft of English social life, figures very small in the novel – mainly, and sporadically, in the oddly and inaccurately termed 'Kaffir market' ...²²⁵

Boehmer clarifies her argument by way of a footnote:

In defence of *The Children's Book* it might be asked why empire should in any sense be the concern of a fictionalised history of the growth of British children's literature. A fair point – were it not for the fact that that efflorescence was shaped in virtually every respect by imperialism. Consider only the child character's Indian connections in Frances Hodgson Burnett, the Indian relations in *The Railway Children* or the colonial motifs in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.²²⁶

I have quoted from Boehmer at length here in order to exemplify a wider trend in postimperial criticism of the English novel. This is a trend that we might call 'the Gilroy effect'. According to Boehmer, summing up the outlook of Schwarz's and Gilmour's collection,

following Paul Gilroy's 2004 thesis of postcolonial melancholia in contemporary Britain, *the nation's and hence the novel's symptoms* appear to be unmistakable. The predominant mode through which the post-1945 English novel has registered the British imperial experience as well as the retreat from world dominance more specifically, is melancholic.

Faced with the loss of empire's moral legitimacy after 1945, *the English novel (let stand English society)* shows clear signs of having avoided, repressed or erased the full implications of what that loss entailed...²²⁷

²²³ Boehmer, 'Afterword', *End of Empire*, 238-43 (p.242).

²²⁴ Keen, p.61.

²²⁵ Boehmer, 'Afterword', *End of Empire*, p.242.

²²⁶ Boehmer, 'Afterword', *End of Empire*, p.243 (footnote 8).

²²⁷ Boehmer, 'Afterword', *End of Empire*, p.239 (emphasis added).

Boehmer's reading of *The Children's Book* demonstrates that Gilroy's postimperial melancholia thesis provides a helpful model for thinking about contemporary English fiction and its (partial) engagement with empire. I have emphasised certain phrases, however, in the passage above in order to foreground Boehmer's symptomatic jump from nation to novel and novel to society. These connections are well supported with regards to Byatt's novel, but too strict an adherence to Gilroy's diagnosis has the potential to hinder rather than enhance our understanding of the varied aesthetic and political strategies through which novelists respond to postimperial Englishness. My aim, then, is not to dismiss Gilroy's thesis, but rather constructively to qualify its relationship with one particular literary form: the novel.

The historical fictions of empire analysed above address the imperial past in a 'fundamental, thoroughgoing way'²²⁸ and make a serious attempt to revisit and 'work through' that history. But a novel like *The Children's Book*, alongside Boehmer's reading, invites the question: how much empire is enough empire? Or rather, where and how is the line to be drawn between a melancholic and a subtly interrogative engagement with postimperial Englishness? One might maintain that the novels of Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes fall into the former rather than the latter category. In the chapters that follow, however, I will argue by way of extended textual analysis alongside careful contextualisation that race, empire, and decolonisation are central rather than peripheral to each author's work. This does not mean that they escape postimperial melancholia entirely but it does mean that melancholia does not define their writing. Empire is represented alongside, and intersected with, a range of other concerns in their narratives of post-war England and Englishness: it is one of the critical ways in which they revise national history and identity.

²²⁸ Boehmer, 'Afterword', *End of Empire*, p.241.

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2007) is another historical (or mostly historical) novel in which empire, even if it is not at the forefront of the text, plays an important and politically ambiguous part. This, at least, is the argument of Cynthia Quarrie, for whom *Atonement* does not succumb to but subtly 'interrupts' Gilroy's 'post-imperial melancholia': 'beyond being "disturbed" by and symptomatic of post-imperial melancholia, *Atonement* can productively be read as a self-reflexive performance of and comment on this same condition'.²²⁹ Quarrie is also helpfully alert to the possibility that this country house novel 'both invites nostalgia and undermines it simultaneously'.²³⁰ Unfortunately, Quarrie's lengthy discussion of the novel's temporal framework and narrative structure loses sight of the postimperial questions with which she begins. Burdened by trauma theory, Quarrie overlooks various relevant historical references. She does not mention, for instance, the potential significance of: 'Rabindranath Tagore and Quintus Tertullian' books 'on the library shelves' of the Tallis household; the simultaneous articulation and disavowal of 're-armament and the Abyssinia Question' (these topics are compared to 'divorce', which is 'simply not a subject' to be discussed); or reference to the role of Florence Nightingale, who 'had been in the Crimea long enough to see the value of discipline, strong lines of command and well-trained troops'.²³¹

Quarrie's reading of *Atonement* stands in direct response to Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace's postcolonial critique of McEwan's later novel *Saturday* (2005). According to Wallace, *Saturday*, which is set in 2003 on the day of the major anti-Iraq War demonstrations, conforms to Gilroy's thesis: '*Saturday* is mostly devoid of London's vibrant multicultural scene [...] what disturbs this novel is [...] a

²²⁹ Cynthia Quarrie, ' "Before the Destruction Began" ', *Studies in the Novel* 47.2 (2015), 193-209 (pp.193-94).

²³⁰ Quarrie, p.201.

²³¹ Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (London: Vintage, 2007), p.7; p.9; p.276.

psychological condition that sociologist Paul Gilroy, in a recent, provocative monograph, has called “postcolonial melancholia”²³² *On Chesil Beach*, by contrast, ‘explicitly locates [...] its sexual history’, as Schwarz writes, ‘against the backdrop of the end of empire’.²³³ McEwan’s historical novel explores the beginnings of the Swinging Sixties through the awkward struggle of protagonists Edward and Florence towards sexual liberation.²³⁴ Their new image of England is not only post-war but also emphatically postimperial. As the narrator states,

no one under thirty – certainly not Edward and Florence – believed a British Prime Minister held much sway in global affairs. Every year the Empire shrank as another few countries took their rightful independence. Now there was almost nothing left, and the world belonged to the Americans and Russians. Britain, England, was a minor power – saying this gave a certain blasphemous pleasure. [...] In a year or two, the older generation that still dreamed of Empire must surely give way to politicians like Gaitskell, Wilson, Crosland – new men with a vision of a modern country where there was equality and things actually got done. [...] The blimps, still fighting the last war, still nostalgic for its discipline and privations – their time was up. [...] The pipe smokers were downstairs in their silver-buttoned blazers, with their double measures of Caol Ila and memories of campaigns in North Africa and Normandy, and their cultivated remnants of Army slang – they could have no claim on the future. Time, gentleman, please!²³⁵

There are numerous crossovers here with Swift’s *Last Orders*, particularly in the connections drawn between WWII and decolonisation, as well as the nostalgic ‘memories of campaigns in North Africa’. Harold Wilson’s postimperial vision, as articulated in a famous speech of 1968, is also a key reference point in that analysis.

Whilst most of Swift’s characters lament the nation’s postimperial transformations,

²³² Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, ‘Postcolonial Melancholia in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*’, *Studies in the Novel* 39.4 (2007), 465-80 (pp.465-66). Alderson approaches *Saturday* through ‘the complex ways in which the legacies of British colonialism have served to legitimate a quite different form of imperialism, that of the US’ (*Saturday*’s Enlightenment’, p.219).

²³³ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.30 (footnote 35).

²³⁴ Edward’s complaint about Florence – ‘you carry on as if it’s eighteen sixty-two’ (*On Chesil Beach* (London: Vintage, 2008), p.114) – suggests that their story takes place in 1962, a hundred years later. This would be in keeping with various historical references in the novel: Suez, Wilson etc.

²³⁵ McEwan, *On Chesil Beach*, pp.24-25.

Edward and Florence celebrate them, siding with Wilson and his fellow modernisers in the Labour Party over ‘the blimps’ and ‘the pipe smokers’.²³⁶ These belated imperial figures, with their ‘silver-buttoned blazers’ and delusions of grandeur, are blatantly mocked here. But McEwan’s postimperial contextualisation remains, in Schwarz’s words, ‘backdrop’ to the personal and erotic story at the heart of the narrative. Opposition to empire and protesting ‘against the Suez invasions’²³⁷ demonstrate Edward’s and Florence’s modernity, their sense of 1960s optimism, but *On Chesil Beach* does not develop these historical references into an extended reflection upon the long-term effects of empire and postimperial decline on the English psyche, as, for instance, *Last Orders* does so poetically.

The Country House Novel

The English country house novel, as Quarrie’s reading of *Atonement* suggests, is one of the main literary genres through which critics have traced the influence of empire and its decline on metropolitan culture and society. Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* provide key examples for Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* (1989), as I discuss in the chapter on Swift, can be read as a postcolonial rewriting of the country house tradition. Indeed, Schwarz could be speaking of Ishiguro when he writes that ‘the

²³⁶ Florence’s father gives voice to the older generation later in the novel: ‘Harold Macmillan was a fool to be giving up the Empire without a struggle’ (p.53); ‘Edward listened to his future father-in-law’s views on the decline of British business, demarcation disputes in the trade unions and the folly of granting independence to various African colonies’ (p.114).

²³⁷ McEwan, *On Chesil Beach*, p.75.

piquant subgenre of the decline of the country house [...] can be situated in the larger public debates about the end of empire'.²³⁸ But situated how?

According to Marina MacKay, 'there is a standard methodology for a novel like [Angus Wilson's] *Setting the World on Fire* [1980]: fictions with stately homes at their centre invariably get read alongside the "heritage" industries that emerged in the early 1980s'.²³⁹ 'The next critical step', she writes, 'is to use the heritage industries as the bridge between these novels and the loss of empire; the novels then become melancholic elegies for a time when Britain was bigger'.²⁴⁰ MacKay contests this methodology, which she associates with Ian Baucom and others,²⁴¹ by arguing: first, that 'modernism's estate novels – work by Ford, Lawrence, Forster and Woolf' were 'by no stretch of the imagination [...] mourning the British Empire';²⁴² and second, that many of the more contemporary country house or estate novels 'are so self-conscious about the genre's provenance that they undertake fundamentally materialist and historicist critiques of its potential for the smug escapism offered by the backward glance at more luxurious times'.²⁴³ She then proceeds to read *Setting the World on Fire* as a novel which 'registers how the imperial project bleeds into the post-war period',²⁴⁴ from its references to Suez,²⁴⁵ 'the West India trade', and Rhodesia,²⁴⁶ to its scrutinising of 'imperial souvenirs'.²⁴⁷

²³⁸ Schwarz, 'Introduction', *End of Empire*, p.21. The 'Anglo-Irish Big House' novel has also been interpreted in terms of empire and its decline. See, for instance, MacKay's analysis of Henry Green's 1945 novel *Loving* (p.107).

²³⁹ MacKay, p.145. MacKay has in mind Hewison's aforementioned *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (1986).

²⁴⁰ MacKay, p.145.

²⁴¹ MacKay also cites John J. Su and Alistair Davies.

²⁴² MacKay, p.146.

²⁴³ MacKay, p.146.

²⁴⁴ MacKay, p.147.

²⁴⁵ MacKay, p.143.

²⁴⁶ MacKay, p.147.

²⁴⁷ MacKay, p.148.

MacKay's description of *Setting the World on Fire* as a 'knowing account of historical retrospection' also befits Sarah Waters's 2009 novel *The Little Stranger*.²⁴⁸ Narrated by a country doctor called Faraday (which, as Emma Parker points out, is also the name of the American owner of Darlington Hall in *The Remains of the Day*),²⁴⁹ *The Little Stranger* begins with Faraday recalling wistfully his first sight of

Hundreds Hall when I was ten years old. It was the summer after the war, and the Ayreses still had most of their money then, were still big people in the district. The event was an Empire Day fête: I stood with a line of other village children making a Boy Scout salute while Mrs Ayres and Colonel went past us, handing out commemorative medals...²⁵⁰

By including this reference to 'an Empire Day fête' in the opening sentences of the novel, Waters provides, in the words of Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga, an 'evocation of imperial England', as well as a broader sense of a militarily produced ('Boy Scout salute [...] commemorative medals') aristocratic order.²⁵¹ But this is 1919, 'the summer after the war', not 1913, the year before it; 1913, as we shall see, has been mythologised as the 'golden summer' of pre-war England and is the year in which the opening section of Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child* is set. The Ayreses 'still had most of their money then, were still big people in the district' (emphasis added). Already in this opening passage, Waters sows the seeds of familial, national, and imperial decline.

For Parker, the fact that Hundreds Hall was built in 1733 further 'situates the house in the context of the British Empire'.²⁵² She also points out that 'Mrs Baker-Hyde's 'slave-bracelets' and the 'little Indian monkey' owned by Mrs Ayres' Aunt

²⁴⁸ MacKay, p.145.

²⁴⁹ Emma Parker, 'The Country House Revisited', *Sarah Waters: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Kaye Mitchell (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 99-113 (p.107).

²⁵⁰ Sarah Waters, *The Little Stranger* (London: Virago, 2009), p.1.

²⁵¹ Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga, *Dreams, Nightmares and Empty Signifiers* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), p.115.

²⁵² Parker, 'The Country House Revisited', p.101.

Dodo link the wealth of the country house set to slavery and imperialism'.²⁵³ In fact, it was Mrs Ayres's '*father's* Aunt Dodo'²⁵⁴ that owned the 'little Indian monkey'.

Whilst this is only a minor detail, Parker also misses out on a more important feature of the passage. Mrs Ayres complains about the politically correct culture 'today' in which 'some society or other would prevent it [having a monkey as a toy]. Mr Gandhi would object. Probably monkeys have the vote in India now'.²⁵⁵ Mrs Ayres's lazy mockery of cultural sensitivity, 'Mr Gandhi', and nascent Indian democracy confirm her role as a belated imperial aristocrat.

Parker's overall argument is that Waters's novel 'subverts the tradition of country house literature'.²⁵⁶ '*The Little Stranger* revisits the tradition of country house literature' – as embodied, for Parker, by Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (both the 1945 novel and the 1981 television adaptation) – 'in order to highlight and resist the ways in which it continues to uphold heteropatriarchy as well as class hegemony'.²⁵⁷ Parker's faith in Waters's ability to 'subvert' traditions and 'resist' ideologies is mirrored, as we shall see, in her reading of Swift's *Last Orders*. If Burton was too quick to reduce Stoppard to nostalgia, Parker is perhaps too keen to relieve both Waters and Swift of complicity with the traditions and ideologies with which they are in dialogue. Waters herself admits, in an interview collected in the same volume as Parker's essay, that

I was worried when I was writing *The Little Stranger* that it would end up being conservative – having a conservative message about how upwardly mobile people would destroy you and suck the life out of you. I thought, 'God,

²⁵³ Parker, 'The Country House Revisited', pp.101-102.

²⁵⁴ Waters, p.242 (emphasis added).

²⁵⁵ Waters, p.242.

²⁵⁶ Parker, 'The Country House Revisited', p.112.

²⁵⁷ Parker, 'The Country House Revisited', p.100.

is it really any different from that vision of Hooper's Britain in *Brideshead Revisited*? Is Doctor Faraday just a malign Hooper?'²⁵⁸

To what extent and by what means can a writer overturn not only the 'conservative' but also the imperial politics (as identified by Said and others) of the country house tradition? This question, prompted by Mackay's and Parker's readings, will be addressed when we turn to Hollinghurst's queering of militarism in *The Stranger's Child*, as well as Swift's montage of imperial warfare in *Out of this World*.

'Boomerang' Narratives

Aimé Césaire coined the phrase 'boomerang effect of colonization'²⁵⁹ in his famous essay 'Discourse on Colonialism' (1950) to describe the way in which Hitler 'applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa'.²⁶⁰ If country house novels are haunted by numerous aspects of empire and its decline, what I am calling 'boomerang' narratives attend more specifically to the violence of empire and the ways in which this violence is reproduced or reinscribed in postimperial England.

Adam Foulds's *The Broken Word* (2008) is a long-form narrative poem that adopts the perspective of a young white Englishman during the so-called 'Mau Mau Uprising' against British colonial rule in Kenya (1952-1960).²⁶¹ It begins with the narrator, Tom, returning from England to his family farm in Kenya. Initially opposed

²⁵⁸ Kaye Mitchell (ed.), '“I'd love to write an anti-Downton!”: An interview with Sarah Waters', *Sarah Waters: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, 129-41 (p.133).

²⁵⁹ Aimé Césaire, 'Discourse on Colonialism [tr. Joan Pinkham]', *Postcolonial Criticism*, eds Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley (London: Longman, 1997), 73-90 (p.80).

²⁶⁰ Césaire, p.77. Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Zimmerer have extended Césaire's argument by detailing the ways in which colonialism came back (like a 'boomerang') to haunt Europe in the form of the Holocaust: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951); Zimmerer, 'Colonialism and the Holocaust', *Genocide and Settler Society*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 49-76.

²⁶¹ Kenya became independent in 1963.

to violence, he is encouraged to go out and hunt ‘*these awful niggers*’ by his racist father, quickly becoming ‘a connoisseur / of beatings’ and sexual assaults.²⁶² In this way, *The Broken Word* reverses dominant ‘stories’ in the British media which ‘attributed violence to the colonized rather than the counter-insurgency efforts of the British’.²⁶³ In the poem’s conclusion, Tom returns to Oxford, where he is a student, but struggles to overcome his violent past; he ‘feel[s] like an open sewer / deep poison seeping from him...’.²⁶⁴ On viewing a brawl outside a pub he scares his date by saying ‘*if you want to see them hurt, / I know how to make them suffer. // What? // I ... I mean ...*’.²⁶⁵ This fraught conjunction of home and abroad – and the idea that what happened ‘out there’ inevitably impacts back ‘here’ – is definitive of the ‘boomerang’ novels discussed below, as they, like Foulds’s poem, grapple with the violence of empire and of its demise.²⁶⁶

James Procter’s chapter in *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945* discusses the ‘regional’ novels of Pat Barker and David Peace in such terms, although he does not draw directly upon the language of Césaire. Barker, he argues, ‘parallels the (post)colonial violence of occupied Ireland with the sexual and class-based violence in the otherwise isolated world of *Union Street* [1982]’.²⁶⁷ In Peace’s Yorkshire-set novel *Nineteen Seventy Four* (1999), Procter claims, ‘the Mau Mau camps’ are ‘map[ped] [...] onto the current [violent and corrupt] situation in Leeds in

²⁶² Adam Foulds, *The Broken Word* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008), p.22; p.34.

²⁶³ Webster, p.120.

²⁶⁴ Foulds, p.50.

²⁶⁵ Foulds, p.56.

²⁶⁶ For David Wheatley, there are clear parallels between Foulds’s poem and Caroline Elkins’s *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (2005), which exposes the extremity of British violence in Kenya (‘Blood and diamonds’, *Guardian*, 12 April 2008

<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/apr/12/featuresreviews.guardianreview>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

²⁶⁷ James Procter, ‘The Return of the Native’, *End of Empire*, 203-17 (p.207). *Union Street* is set in the deindustrialised northeast.

1974'.²⁶⁸ Hilary Mantel's *A Change of Climate*, in a related manner, examines the postimperial repercussions of past violence. Mantel is best known for her Booker-prize winning historical novels about Thomas Cromwell, *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring up the Bodies* (2012). Two of her early novels, however, in the words of Francis Prose, 'follow hapless British couples to former colonial outposts'.²⁶⁹

Based on personal experience of living in Botswana for five years, *A Change of Climate* begins in Norfolk in 1980. Ralph and Anna Eldred's family life there is quickly disrupted by the return of repressed memories from their time working for a charity in southern Africa in the late 1950s. Mantel embeds their story in a long family history by way of Ralph's Uncle James, who 'was ordained in the Church of England just after the end of the Great War. He left almost at once for the African missions'.²⁷⁰ Uncle James's past experience provides him with a critical perspective on Ralph's own excursions:

My dear Ralph, of course you were not ready to go to Africa. You went out of your own need, not out of the need of the people you were supposed to serve. Don't blame yourselves for that. It is the usual European way. [...] The problems of our country seem so complicated [...] But when we think of other countries, we imagine their problems are easy to solve [...] How clear-sighted we are – how benevolent! Until we arrive, of course, and see the reality.²⁷¹

This firm debunking of 'the usual European way' in Africa – self-serving and patronising – is turned into an explicitly postcolonial critique by Koos, an Afrikaner doctor, who tells Ralph 'you have to try to understand these – my lot, I mean. The British put their women and children in concentration camps. [...] They have long

²⁶⁸ Procter, p.215.

²⁶⁹ Francis Prose, 'Culture Shocks', *New York Times*, 20 July 1997 <<https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/07/20/reviews/970720.20proset.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

²⁷⁰ Hilary Mantel, *A Change of Climate* (London: Penguin, 1995), p.33.

²⁷¹ Mantel, *A Change of Climate*, p.96.

memories, Afrikaners. Memory is their speciality'.²⁷² Memories of British 'concentration camps' during the Boer War cannot be divorced, Koos contends, from Afrikaner attitudes towards the British today. Likewise, in reference to anti-apartheid agitation in South Africa, 'the colonel' states 'you must understand, Mrs Eldred, that my government takes exception to people such as yourself coming out here to tell us how to run our country, coming out here in the guise of mission workers and then turning political and interfering in affairs that you don't understand'.²⁷³ The contested role of postimperial English travellers in a postcolonial world is central to my analysis of Barnes's *A History the World in 10½ Chapters*. This role, in both Mantel and Barnes, involves a failed attempt to transcend belated colonial attitudes: 'if we tell them what we think has happened', Ralph worries, 'we will pander to their filthy prejudices, we will seem to traduce a whole nation: savages, they will say'.²⁷⁴

As well as exposing colonial legacies abroad, Mantel's novel also integrates them back home. Like Foulds's *The Broken Word, A Change of Climate* moves between Africa and England, juxtaposing one with the other. Both texts use African violence to disrupt English peace; in Foulds's case, it was the narrator's own violent actions, in Mantel's, it is that of Africans themselves. The traumatic event at the heart of the novel is the abduction of the Eldreds' children by their nurse; this takes place in Bechuanaland (a British protectorate from 1885-1966) after the family have been deported from South Africa. They find their daughter but their son is presumed dead and so the Eldreds are unable to ever truly

return from Africa [...] Hostilities against the cockroach and the ant cease only gradually. A mark on the wall converts itself into a crawling tick, and there is effort and vigilance all the time – it is hard to sit in the fitful English

²⁷² Mantel, *A Change of Climate*, p.107.

²⁷³ Mantel, *A Change of Climate*, p.193.

²⁷⁴ Mantel, *A Change of Climate*, p.252.

sunshine, in the heat without threat, harmless insects brushing your bare arms.²⁷⁵

With an almost hallucinatory intensity, rural English life is forever marked by a colonial past that is not as distant, historically or geographically, as it might have seemed at the beginning of the novel. Mantel's revisioning of (rural) England brings disavowed histories of empire to the fore.²⁷⁶ But in foregrounding African rather than English violence *A Change of Climate* displaces imperial exploitation with African darkness and danger. Much like Boyd, as we see shall below, Mantel both imaginatively draws upon and, in doing so, is in danger of entrenching many of the pernicious tropes of 'Africanist discourse'.²⁷⁷

Neoimperial Narratives

The other Mantel novel that transports its readers to a 'former colonial outpost' is *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (1988), which is set, roughly contemporaneously, in an oil-rich Saudi Arabia. Based once again on personal experience, this time of living in Saudi Arabia for four years, Mantel uses this setting to explore ongoing tensions between Islamic and Western cultures. The English protagonist Frances Shore, whose husband has moved to Jeddah in pursuit of a lucrative work opportunity, struggles to dislodge 'the press reports [that] had left an image in people's minds, of lazy, glitzy, transient lives, of hard liquor and easy money, of amoral people turned scared and

²⁷⁵ Mantel, *A Change of Climate*, p.250.

²⁷⁶ Lucienne Loh's *The Postcolonial Country in Contemporary Literature* (2013) is relevant here, although Loh does not discuss Mantel.

²⁷⁷ Mergenthal critiques *A Change of Climate* for perpetuating the notion that 'Africa, the dark continent, apparently brings out the worst in human beings' (p.170). In a similar manner, Mergenthal critiques two contemporary English novels set in South East Asia – Jenny Diski's *Rainforest* (1987) and Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* (1991) – for their 'Orientalist discursive practices' (p.157).

sour'.²⁷⁸ Frances does not just unthinkingly perpetuate (what Said would call) 'neo-Orientalis[t]' attitudes but enters into debates about such judgments with her neighbour Yasmin.²⁷⁹ In a much-simplified version of Said's thesis in *Orientalism*, Yasmin tells Frances 'it is the mentality of the West, to discredit the Eastern people'.²⁸⁰ As the somewhat gothic plot unfolds, however, certain oriental stereotypes seem to come true, in particular regarding corruption and the oppression of domesticated women. The key question, from a postimperial perspective, is whether Mantel reproduces and reinforces belated imperial attitudes towards the east even as she attempts to explore them self-consciously.²⁸¹ This is a question that I take up with Hollinghurst's 'A Thieving Boy' and Swift's 'Seraglio', both of which intersect sex, violence, and the east in politically ambiguous ways. *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* also shares with these foreign-set stories (as well as Barnes's parody of travel writing, 'Upstream!') the colonial trope of 'going native'. As Frances states in her diary, 'they always say, we'll do just another year. It's called the golden handcuffs. No matter how much they complain about life here, they hate the thought of leaving'.²⁸² Now figured in terms of 'the golden handcuffs', there is something about the exotic east which continues to seduce and horrify characters like Frances as well as writers like Mantel.

Although I primarily discussed *A Change of Climate* as a 'boomerang' narrative, it is also one that raises questions about neoimperialism, questions that come to the fore with *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street*. Both of these novels hover ambiguously on the border between neoimperialism and a critique of neoimperialism;

²⁷⁸ Mantel, *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (London: Penguin, 1989), p.18.

²⁷⁹ Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995), xxi.

²⁸⁰ Mantel, *Ghazzah Street*, p.70.

²⁸¹ For Prose, Mantel's anxious tone is uncomfortably close to 'the less than sympathetic travel writing of Paul Theroux' (online).

²⁸² Mantel, *Ghazzah Street*, p.104.

in other words, their use of (former) colonial settings provide opportunities for both perpetuating imperial attitudes and critiquing the continuing operation of these attitudes.

Critiques of neoimperial aesthetics have usually been conducted in relation to western representations of Africa.²⁸³ One of the authors that Brenda Cooper discusses in these terms is William Boyd. She focuses her analysis on *Brazzaville Beach* (1990), which is set, in the words of its narrator Hope Clearwater, ‘on the edge of Africa’.²⁸⁴ Cooper is less confident than she is regarding Thorpe and Norfolk about Boyd’s ability to balance atop the ‘razor’s edge of Africanist discourse’, arguing that, ‘if [the novel’s] strength lies in its unraveling of male gender constructions, then its weakness is its refusal of engagement with the historical and political contexts of its setting’.²⁸⁵ Cooper thus foregrounds the fraught political ambiguities of Boyd’s aesthetic, finding both ‘strength[s]’ and ‘weakness[es]’ in his negotiation of ‘Africanist discourse’.

Michael L. Ross places firm emphasis on the former. *A Good Man in Africa* (1981), Ross contends, successfully satirises ‘Britain’s lingering colonialist aspirations’.²⁸⁶ Contrasting Boyd with Waugh, as Parker did in her analysis of Waters,

²⁸³ See, for instance: John Cullen Gruesser, *White on Black: Contemporary Literature about Africa* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and, Abena P.A. Busia, ‘Manipulating Africa’, *The Black Presence in English Literature*, 168-85. Many of these critiques draw upon Christopher Miller’s influential analysis of ‘Africanist discourse’ in *Blank Darkness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

²⁸⁴ William Boyd, *Brazzaville Beach* (London: Penguin, 2009), p.3. Boyd, like many of the authors discussed earlier, has biographical ties to empire. As Gruesser writes, ‘Boyd, while he grew up in West Africa, left there for secondary school and university in the United Kingdom and Europe, eventually moving to England permanently’ (xi). Boyd has stated interview that: ‘because I was born in Africa and grew up there I think my imaginative horizons were greatly expanded from an incredibly early age. I am, to put it simply, more interested in “abroad” than “home”, more interested in “over there” than “here” ’ (Anon., ‘Interview with William Boyd’, *O Globo Magazine*, June 2007 <<http://www.williamboyd.co.uk/o-globo-interview>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

²⁸⁵ Brenda Cooper, p.133.

²⁸⁶ Ross, ‘Passage from Kinjiana to Pimlico’, *End of Empire*, 134-51 (p.134).

Ross argues that this debut novel ‘overturns’ the ‘constitutive premises’ of ‘comic antecedents like Waugh’s *Black Mischief* [1932] or [Joyce] Cary’s *Mister Johnson* [1939] [...] humorously puncturing the melancholia which still clings to them’.²⁸⁷

With this reading, Ross helpfully counters the assumption that contemporary English fiction merely repeats the melancholic outlook Gilroy identifies elsewhere in national culture: ‘Boyd’s comic treatment of his glum British misfits elegantly accomplishes Gilroy’s imperative’.²⁸⁸

Certainly, Boyd works hard to mock the neocolonial pretensions of the British ex-pats residing in the fictional ‘town of Nkongsamba, state capital of the Mid-Western region, Kinjanja, West Africa’, a former ‘British colony’.²⁸⁹ Oxford graduate Dickie Dalmire adopts an ‘affected old-colonial attire. Ghastly wide shorts, billowing Aertex shirts and his college tie’,²⁹⁰ whilst the Deputy High Commissioner Arthur Fanshawe indulges in a highly clichéd form of orientalism: ‘Fanshawe was a Far East man [...] Both Fanshawes were given to lyrical outbursts about the grace and dignity of the East’.²⁹¹ Boyd’s satire of British belatedness is articulated most explicitly by Adekunle. Adekunle is a local politician whom the ambassadors try to court in order to ‘ensure the safety of UK investment – heavy, and heavily profitable – and to encourage its maintenance and expansion in the coming years’:²⁹²

Adekunle gave a loud laugh. ‘My good God,’ he said. ‘You British are indeed astonishing. You still think that all you need to do to get an African politician eating out of your hands is to offer first class air tickets and bed and breakfast at Claridges. [...] I will see if I can fit it into my itinerary.’

‘Itinerary?’ Morgan repeated, nonplussed. ‘Do you mean...?’

‘Yes, my dear Mr British Deputy High Commission man. You are a very late bird to catch this worm, as the saying goes. Once I’ve been to Washington,

²⁸⁷ Ross, ‘Passage from Kinjana to Pimlico’, pp.138-39.

²⁸⁸ Ross, ‘Passage from Kinjana to Pimlico’, p.135.

²⁸⁹ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.11; p.184.

²⁹⁰ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.13.

²⁹¹ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.27.

²⁹² Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.20.

Paris, Bonn and Rome I'll see if I can drop in on London. Thank you again, My Leafy,' he said still smiling. 'No wonder the Empire went. Yes?'²⁹³

Postimperial delusions of power are torn apart here by the reduction of London to a mere place to 'drop in on' amidst a busy 'itinerary'. British meddling in local democracy comes under direct critique from 'Femi Robinson, the Mid-West representative of the Marxist-Leninist People's Party of Kinjanja', who leads a group of protesters holding various anti-colonial banners: 'NO UK IMPERIALISM IN KINJANJA';²⁹⁴ 'NO SUEZ IN KINJANJA';²⁹⁵ 'FANSHAWE IS A FASCIST IMPERIALIST CRIMINAL'.²⁹⁶

Cooper's 'razor's edge' reading of *Brazzaville Beach* encourages us, however, to consider the extent to which *A Good Man in Africa* upholds certain Africanist tropes – inherited from Waugh, Cary, Graham Greene and others – even as it strives to undermine British neoimperialism. Ross, like Parker but unlike Cooper, is overly confident in the capacity of fiction to 'overturn' antecedents and ideologies; as Bianca Leggett neatly summarises, 'Ross's reading of *A Good Man in Africa* seems strained in its attempt to vindicate Boyd of complicity with the imperial world he describes'.²⁹⁷ Morgan Leafy, the novel's protagonist and narrative focal point, ultimately perpetuates imperialist ideas about Africa as 'a dead-end place'; Kinjana, he claims, is 'a not-very-significant West African country [...] you couldn't even call it a backwater'.²⁹⁸ When Morgan catches gonorrhoea, interracial sex becomes figured as a threat, a figuration that also appears in Hollinghurst's 'A Thieving Boy' and *The Line of Beauty*, as well as Swift's 'Seraglio'. The question of narratorial distance from

²⁹³ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, pp.142-43.

²⁹⁴ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.213.

²⁹⁵ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.236.

²⁹⁶ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.294.

²⁹⁷ Leggett, 'Heart of Whiteness', p.408.

²⁹⁸ Boyd, *A Good Man in Africa*, p.17.

or proximity to this English ‘gentleman’ abroad is key here, as it will be with Barnes. Whilst Morgan is one of many objects of Boyd’s satire, he is also a partially sympathetic character whom the reader is encouraged to root for in the novel’s dramatic climax. How far, then, does the novel enable us to move beyond Morgan’s derogatory vision of Africa?²⁹⁹

David Mitchell’s *Black Swan Green* also provides a satire on British neoimperialism, but within the specific context of the Falklands War. Set in 1982, the Falklands – which features in the chapters on Hollinghurst and Swift – is introduced into this otherwise rather domestic novel via Tom Yew, ‘a minor legend’ in the eponymous Worcestershire village, who ‘serves in the Royal Navy on a frigate called HMS *Coventry*’.³⁰⁰ When the Falklands begins, he is sent out to fight and so Jason Taylor, the thirteen-year-old narrator, spends most of chapter five (‘Rocks’) discussing the war. From his adolescent perspective, ‘it was obvious, Great Britain was going to thrash them’.³⁰¹ His certainty is reinforced by the ‘brass bands on the quayside and women waving and a hundred thousand yachts and honkers and arcs of water from the fireships...’.³⁰² Jason’s adoration for Thatcher – ‘she’s so strong, so calm, so sure’³⁰³ – and enthusiasm for warfare are revealed, however, to be the ventriloquised opinions of *The Daily Mail*:

²⁹⁹ Colonial and/or postcolonial Africa provides the setting for various other Boyd novels, including *An Ice-Cream War* (1982), which is set in East Africa during WWI. Boyd’s recent novel *Solo* (2013), a continuation of the James Bond franchise, is set in 1969 and is based on the Nigerian Civil War. Bond’s antagonist Kobus Breed is a Rhodesian mercenary who served previously with the Rhodesian Light Infantry, a counter-insurgency regiment who fought in favour of Ian Smith’s white minority rule in Rhodesia. Boyd has also set several short stories in Africa, such as ‘Killing Lizards’, ‘Next Boat from Douala’, and ‘The Coup’ (the latter two featuring Morgan Leafy), which are collected in his 1981 collection *On the Yankee Station*.

³⁰⁰ David Mitchell, *Black Swan Green* (London: Sceptre, 2006), p.8.

³⁰¹ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.121.

³⁰² Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.121.

³⁰³ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.126.

The Daily Mail says the Argies should've thought about the consequences before they stuck their poxy blue-and-white flag on our sovereign colony [...] *The Daily Mail* says that Leopoldo Galtieri only invaded the Falklands to distract attention from all his own people he's tortured, murdered and pushed out of helicopters over the sea. [...] *The Daily Mail* says...³⁰⁴

Through the repeated use of the phrase '*The Daily Mail* says...', Mitchell ironises Jason's teenage militarism and that of the nation at large. Eventually, Jason's disturbing obsession with the war – 'I dip my fountain pen into a pot of ink, and a Wessex helicopter crashes into a glacier on South Georgia. I line up my protractor on an angle in my maths book and a Sidewinder missile locks on to a Mirage III...'³⁰⁵ – is interrupted by 'Tom Yew's death [which] killed the thrill'.³⁰⁶ The Falklands not only takes on a 'horrible draggingness'³⁰⁷ but its legitimacy is challenged by his sister Julia's copy of 'the *Guardian*, which has got all sorts of stuff not in the *Daily Mail*'.³⁰⁸ This counter-narrative, pointing out that 'it would've been cheaper to set every Falkland Islander up with their own farm in the Cotswolds than to've gone to war',³⁰⁹ is complemented by Tom's letter back home: 'our navy men thought the Falkland Islanders were a bunch of inbred bumblers'.³¹⁰

Black Swan Green is an unusual novel in the Mitchell oeuvre. Most of his genre-defying fiction jumps from place to place and time period to time period. This has allowed him to make use of various colonial and postcolonial settings: the first and last sections (both entitled 'The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing') of his multi-part novel *Cloud Atlas* (2004) are set on the Chatham Islands in the 1850s and *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010) is set in Batavia in 1799 (Batavia, as the

³⁰⁴ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.126.

³⁰⁵ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.132.

³⁰⁶ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.140.

³⁰⁷ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.141.

³⁰⁸ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.145.

³⁰⁹ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.145.

³¹⁰ Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*, p.145.

author's note informs us, 'was the headquarters of the Dutch East Indies Company').³¹¹ Mitchell's debut novel *Ghostwritten* (1999) is also comprised of multiple sections, one of which, 'Hong Kong', is set in this former British colony (sovereignty was transferred from the UK to China in 1997). Amidst racist references to 'slitty-eyed moneymakers' and 'chinks', Neal Brose, a corrupt financial lawyer, reminisces about 'being crushed on the Dear Old Circle Line back in Dear Old Blighty'.³¹² In the words of Nicholas Dunlop, Mitchell's protagonist thus embodies the 'phantasmic return of the repressed colonial voice [...] [he is] a synecdochic figure of imperial complicity'.³¹³

Much of Ballard's fiction, although not quite as experimental as Mitchell's, is also of a speculative nature. If, in *Empire of the Sun*, Ballard looked back to the end of empire, *Cocaine Nights* is more typical of the Ballard oeuvre in merging the contemporary with the futuristic. It does so in order to prophesise about the socio-cultural dynamics of neocolonialism. The novel begins in Gibraltar, which the narrator Charles Prentice dismisses as the 'last outpost of the British Empire [...] quaint tea-rooms, camera shops and policemen disguised as London bobbies'.³¹⁴ After crossing the border into southern Spain, Charles encounters various signs of its Moorish past, from 'the ruins of a Moorish watch-tower' to the 'Moorish gates' of Residencia Costasol.³¹⁵ This prepares both Charles and the reader for the realisation that 'Britain's occupation of the Rock' is not in fact a 'geo-political relic';³¹⁶ if the Moors once ruled this part of Spain, now it is 'the British who had settled the

³¹¹ Mitchell, *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (London: Sceptre, 2011), no page reference.

³¹² Mitchell, *Ghostwritten* (London: Sceptre, 1999), p.71; p.78; p.72.

³¹³ Nicholas Dunlop, 'Speculative Fiction as Postcolonial Critique', *David Mitchell: Critical Essays*, ed. Sarah Dillon (Canterbury: Gylphi, 2011), 201-224 (p.210).

³¹⁴ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights* (London: Flamingo, 1997), p.9.

³¹⁵ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights*, p.145; p.210.

³¹⁶ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights*, p.33; p.10.

coast'.³¹⁷ 'Estrella de Mar', the elite expatriate resort on the Costa del Sol where most of the action is focused, is described as 'a seventeenth-century New England settlement' with 'a thriving Anglican church', whilst its neighbouring resort Residencia Costasol has 'almost imperial boulevards'.³¹⁸ The tennis coach Robert Crawford, who is both Charles's antagonist and mentor, even 'reminded me of a young district commissioner in the days of Empire, faced with a rich but torpid tribe that inexplicably refused to leave its huts'.³¹⁹ Crawford expands upon this explicit reference to 'the days of Empire' when he explains his back-story:

'I wasted a couple of years at Cambridge reading anthropology, played a lot of tennis and then joined the army on a short-service commission. The regiment went out to Hong Kong, working with the Kowloon police. A totally demoralized bunch – morale was flat on the floor. They were waiting for the mainland Chinese to take over and send them all to Sinkiang. The villagers in the New Territories were just as bad, already paying cumshaw to the Chinese border guards [...] It's a pity I couldn't have stayed on longer, I might have put some backbone into the colony. [...] The curious thing is that Estrella de Mar and the Residencia Costasol are rather like Kowloon.'³²⁰

Unable to 'put some backbone into' Hong Kong, a British colony until one year after the novel was published, Crawford has imported his ideal image of colonial life back into Europe. No longer welcome in Asia, Ballard seems to suggest, the British are now colonising where they can. How these newer, subtler forms of colonisation – closer to home, on European shores – relate back to previous models is a question at the core of both *Cocaine Nights* and Barnes's *England, England*.

This question is also submerged within *Concrete Island* (1973). As Ballard states in his introduction (added to the text in 1994): 'the day-dream of being

³¹⁷ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights*, p.33.

³¹⁸ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights*, p.116; p.66; p.211.

³¹⁹ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights*, p.218. 'Ex-colonial officers' also appear in McEwan's *Sweet Tooth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), where they are subjected to satirical scrutiny: 'one in particular I remember was Jack MacGregor, who had a dry, gingerish look and the tightly swallowed vowels of a South African, though he originally came from Surrey' (p.73).

³²⁰ Ballard, *Cocaine Nights*, p.246-47.

marooned on a desert island still has enormous appeal, however small our chances [...] But Robinson Crusoe was one of the first books we read as children, and the fantasy endures'.³²¹ Daniel Defoe's foundational colonial novel is referenced once within the narrative of *Concrete Island*. The narrator says to himself: 'Maitland, poor man, you're marooned here like Crusoe – If you don't look out you'll be beached here for ever ...'.³²² *Robinson Crusoe* also acts as an important intertext elsewhere in Ballard's oeuvre, from his early science fiction novel *The Drowned World* (1962) to his late autobiography *Miracles of Life* (2008). Through his nods to Defoe, Ballard encourages us to read *Concrete Island* as a late capitalist and postimperial rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe* in which the enduring colonising 'fantasy' has, ironically and perversely, been redirected within the nation itself.³²³ Instead of seeking islands across the waves, most of which have already been 'discovered', Maitland finds his – a traffic island, a concrete island – hidden beneath the ultimate symbol of domestic banality: the motorway.³²⁴ Imperial impulses live on in the English psyche, but in perverted and internally directed forms.

Author Selection

The major disadvantage of surveying a wide range of texts in this manner is that the analysis of each one is necessarily cut short. One is left with a partial rather than a definitive sense of how a writer like Ballard or Mitchell relates to postimperial Englishness. This is something that the following chapters try to avoid by paying

³²¹ Ballard, *Concrete Island* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.4.

³²² Ballard, *Concrete Island*, p.32.

³²³ Chris Beckett discusses Ballard's 'ironical' rewriting of Defoe in similar terms ('J.G. Ballard's "Elaborately Signalled Landscape"', *Electronic British Library Journal*, 2015, pp.5-6).

³²⁴ Gruesser also reads Ballard's novel *The Day of Creation* (1987) through the lens of 'Africanist discourse' (p.132).

considerable attention to individual authors and texts, and thus dissecting the unique contributions of, and issues raised by, each. What this survey chapter has enabled, however, is the mapping of a broader literary field within which the main writers in this thesis can be situated. Moreover, it has allowed me to outline significant postimperial literary genres to which they contribute and respond.

Alan Hollinghurst, Graham Swift, and Julian Barnes have been selected for more detailed investigation for three reasons. The first is that they have each won the foremost prize for the English-language novel – the Booker prize (for *The Line of Beauty* (2004), *Last Orders* (1996), and, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), respectively) – and have been shortlisted on at least one other occasion. They have also all featured in *Granta* magazine’s decade-by-decade ‘Best of Young British Novelists’ lists: Swift and Barnes in 1983; Hollinghurst in 1993. These markers of canonicity are significant because the overall argument of this thesis is that those major literary novelists, closely associated with how the contemporary English novel is defined and taught, are engaged in the critical examination of the nation’s postimperial condition. Postimperial Englishness is not to be found at the margins of the contemporary white canon, but at its core, right under our critical noses.

Many of the authors surveyed above – such as McEwan and Mantel – are also Booker prize-winning authors.³²⁵ This brings me onto the second part of my reasoning. Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes engage with race, empire, and decolonisation across several works in their oeuvres and from a range of thoroughgoing perspectives: they allow us to think about how imperialism and postimperialism relate to sexuality, militarism, and masculinity, amongst a range of other issues. The third reason is that, for each author, there is a history of reception

³²⁵ McEwan has won once, for *Amsterdam* (1998), and Mantel twice, for *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*.

that can be revised substantively by way of postcolonial analysis. Each chapter thus begins by challenging or complicating the dominant interpretative framework – Hollinghurst, sexuality; Swift, WWII; Barnes, postmodernism – within which each author is typically situated. These frameworks are not dismissed but rather complicated by the new emphasis placed upon the historical and political conditions of Englishness after empire.

Alan Hollinghurst: Sexuality and Postimperial Englishness

The sexual fetishisation of a black ‘criminal’ in postcolonial Egypt; the homoerotic diary of a colonial officer in Sudan; a wealthy Belgian family whose fortunes trace back to the Congo; black and Middle Eastern lovers in the house of a Thatcherite MP; and a 1913 English country house saga centred on an imperialistic and bisexual young aristocrat: moving from the short story ‘A Thieving Boy’ (1983), through the novels *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988), *The Folding Star* (1994), *The Line of Beauty* (2004), and *The Stranger’s Child* (2011), this brief sketch of Alan Hollinghurst’s literary output presents an author interested and implicated in issues of both sexuality *and* race – moreover, sexuality alongside histories of empire and decolonisation. Such a portrait of Hollinghurst, which is developed in this chapter by way of his fiction and non-fiction, complicates dominant queer readings of his work. These readings tend to overlook the postimperialism – the negotiation of England after empire, or what Hollinghurst has called in interview an ‘imperium in decline’ – at stake in his representations of race and nation.³²⁶

Hollinghurst’s debut novel *The Swimming-Pool Library*, like the rest of his oeuvre, is ‘generally read as a “gay novel”’,³²⁷ ‘a determinedly gay novel in every way available’.³²⁸ It received the Gay/Lesbian Book Award from the American Library Association, as well as the Stonewall Book Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Men’s Debut Fiction. The journalistic response to Hollinghurst’s 2004

³²⁶ This comment appears in response to a question about ‘great writers’ on the contemporary British ‘scene’ ([Interview with] Alan Hollinghurst’, *Something Inside*, ed. Philip Gambone (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 231-46 (p.243)).

³²⁷ Simon Lewis, *British and African Literature in Transnational Context* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), p.91.

³²⁸ Joe Brooker, *Literature of the 1980s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.206.

Booker Prize victory for *The Line of Beauty* indicates the reductive extremity of restricting him to this category; the day after the ceremony the right-wing tabloids the *Express* and the *Sun* announced, respectively, ‘BOOKER WON BY GAY SEX’ and ‘GAY BOOK WINS [BOOKER]’.³²⁹ Whilst lurid fascination with the homosexual content of Hollinghurst’s novels might be expected from the conservative tabloid press, Stephen Moss, writing for the liberal broadsheet the *Guardian*, also perpetuates this line of thinking. In an interview entitled ‘Sex on the Brain’, Moss admits that ‘all people really want to know, he [Hollinghurst] once complained, is have I really fucked as many men as that? – but you can’t help it’.³³⁰ This statement is indicative of (in Moss’s own half-apologetic words) the ‘absurdly reductive’ journalistic obsession with Hollinghurst’s homosexuality.

Various literary critics have developed more nuanced and less personalised accounts by situating Hollinghurst within the context of queer theory, thus recognising his sexually explicit and historically informed literary exploration of homosexuality.³³¹ As Hollinghurst has stated in interview, however, ‘the sex tends to blot out all sorts of other things that are going on [...] I find with writing a book which has sex in it that people ignore the fact that it’s about dozens of other things’.³³² Recognising this, critics have begun to adopt a broader set of approaches to his

³²⁹ Anon., ‘Booker Won by Gay Sex’, *Express*, 20 October 2004, p.39; anon., ‘Gay Book Wins’, *Sun*, 20 October 2004, p.15.

³³⁰ Stephen Moss, ‘Alan Hollinghurst: Sex on the Brain’, *Guardian*, 18 June 2011 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/18/alan-hollinghurst-interview>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

³³¹ See, for instance: Allan Johnson, *Alan Hollinghurst and the Vitality of Influence* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Robert Corber, ‘Sentimentalizing Gay History’, *Arizona Quarterly* 55.4 (1999), 115-41; and, Julie Rivkin, ‘*The Stranger’s Child* and *The Aspern Papers*’, *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, eds Michèle Mendelssohn and Denis Flannery (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 79-95.

³³² Hollinghurst, ‘[Interview with] Alan Hollinghurst’, *Something Inside*, p.241.

writing.³³³ Sexuality and postcolonialism have occasionally intersected in Hollinghurst criticism, but usually only with regard to his debut novel. Such analyses, as we shall see, have problematised, historicised, and ultimately enhanced (rather than supplanted) our understanding of sexuality in *The Swimming-Pool Library*.

My overall aim in this chapter, however, is to push a postcolonial reading of Hollinghurst in new directions: beyond his debut novel and beyond the problematics of racial representation and interracial desire. In doing so, I make two main claims. First, Hollinghurst's oeuvre presents a sustained response to England and Englishness after empire: across a series of fictional and non-fictional texts he explores the aesthetic and political implications of postimperialism at the levels of erotic exoticism, historical narration, national identity, and masculinity. Second, this response is critical, by which I mean that Hollinghurst does not merely 'muddle' (in the words of James Wood) through England's 'post-imperial wake':³³⁴ for the most part, his texts actively interrogate the condition of postimperial Englishness.

I begin by returning to Hollinghurst's early short story 'A Thieving Boy', which was discussed at the opening of this thesis but has been largely overlooked by critics.³³⁵ This Egyptian, Forsterian tale lays the ground for a resituating of Hollinghurst's later and better known novelistic works in a postimperial context. I move through his novels chronologically in order to trace the shifting relationship

³³³ The recent collection *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence* (2016), for instance, discusses Hollinghurst's work in relation to economics, cinema, and modernism, amongst other topics. *Sex and Sensibility in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst* (2017), edited by Mark Mathuray, was published too late unfortunately for consideration here.

³³⁴ James Wood, 'Sons and Lovers', *New Yorker*, 7 October 2011 <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/10/17/sons-and-lovers-james-wood>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

³³⁵ *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, despite being the first 'collection [...] to encompass the variety of genres in which he has worked', does not mention Hollinghurst's short stories (Mendelssohn and Flannery, 'Introduction', 1-11 (p.4)).

between sexuality, race, and empire as Hollinghurst extends his geographical and temporal ambitions. In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, the erotic exoticism of ‘A Thieving Boy’ comes back to the metropolitan centre, allowing Hollinghurst to work through the intersection of race and sexuality that dominates his intertexts. His later novels carve out a more original, if more subtle, path through their engagement with: imperial history (the Belgian Congo in *The Folding Star*); the neoimperial present (Thatcherism and the Falklands War in *The Line of Beauty*); and militarism (Cecil Valance and his tomb in *The Stranger’s Child*).³³⁶ In Hollinghurst’s fiction, as we shall see, homosexuality is central to the project of empire and empire is central to historical and contemporary expressions of Englishness. Hollinghurst challenges conventional narratives of the nation and of national identity by rewriting those narratives from both a homosexual and a postimperial perspective.

Egypt, E.M. Forster, and Erotic Exoticism in ‘A Thieving Boy’

‘A Thieving Boy’ (‘ATB’, hereafter) is structured around two narratives of discovery.³³⁷ First, having previously only ‘tak[en] a break in Bournemouth or Swanage’ (p.95), the provincial couple from Southampton, who narrate the story, discover ‘the liberating influence of abroad’, where ‘inhibitions [...] suddenly reveal themselves’ (p.101). Second, Tim’s ‘coming out’ tale is one that recurs, in various forms, throughout Hollinghurst’s fiction, from Lord Nantwich and his erotic diaries in

³³⁶ I have excluded only two of Hollinghurst’s novels, *The Spell* (1998) and *The Sparsholt Affair* (2017), from this chapter. The latter, unfortunately, was published too late for consideration. Brenda Cooper provides a brief postcolonial analysis of the former, but she relies too heavily upon ‘the first chapter of *The Spell* [which] is set in Indian territory in the desert of Phoenix Arizona’ (p.232) and upon reading ‘this desolate, sand swept desert [a]s a microcosm for other colonised and impoverished places’ (p.233). I consider Hollinghurst’s other novels to provide much more detailed examinations of postimperial Englishness.

³³⁷ A synopsis of ‘ATB’ was provided at the beginning of the thesis.

The Swimming-Pool Library to Cecil Valance and his posthumous memorialisation in *The Stranger's Child*. Tim's travels through 'Turkey, Syria, the Holy Land' (p.99), and finally Egypt, allow him to develop his sexuality and 'come out' to his godparents.

This revelation does not just concern sexuality but also the politics of race in postcolonial Egypt. In other words, by reading 'ATB' through an imperial context we can historicise its narrative of sexual awakening. In doing so, I demonstrate the persistence of imperial aesthetics in Hollinghurst's story and discuss the extent to which this self-aware writer consciously negotiates the problematics of orientalism. By returning to the very start of Hollinghurst's literary career, and rethinking his intertextual relationship to E.M. Forster, we can begin to construct a different narrative about this 'gay' author, one in which sexuality, race, and empire are intimately connected – and in which sexual liberation is haunted by imperial histories of racial exploitation.

Britain occupied Egypt in 1882 and, in the words of M.W. Daly, 'there began a long new chapter in Egypt's foreign domination and Britain's global empire'.³³⁸ The British supposedly 'intend[ed] to end the occupation as soon as possible' but in fact 'prolonged their control until the 1950s'.³³⁹ This was because, in Edward Said's terms, 'Egypt was not just another colony [...] it was to become the triumph of English knowledge and power'.³⁴⁰ The Egyptian Revolution of 1952 brought about Independence. British involvement then came to a disastrous climax in 1956 with the Suez Crisis: the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel in order to regain western control of the Suez Canal (a lucrative trade link to the east) and overthrow

³³⁸ M.W. Daly, *The Cambridge History of Modern Egypt. Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.239.

³³⁹ Daly, p.251.

³⁴⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, p.35.

Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser. When the British were made to withdraw by a critical international community, Suez 'forcefully reasserted Britain's subaltern role on the world stage' and has come to mark the symbolic – although not actual – end of British imperial power *in toto*.³⁴¹

Britain's occupation of Egypt would not have been particularly prominent in the public imagination when Hollinghurst's story was published in January 1983, but the recent Falklands War against Argentina certainly would have been.³⁴² In contrast to the Suez catastrophe, which led to Prime Minister Anthony Eden's resignation after only a year in office, the Falklands victory of April-June 1982 resulted in Margaret Thatcher's landslide re-election (in June 1983) and a renewed wave of imperial pomp and nostalgia. As Anthony Barnett writes, 'in her 1982 victory speech on the lesson of the Falklands, Thatcher proclaimed that Britain was still "the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world . . . The lesson is that Britain has not changed"'.³⁴³ It is within this context of renewed imperial pride that I situate Hollinghurst's return to the location (Egypt) of Britain's postimperial nadir (Suez), as an opportunity to explore the nation's recent past and its legacy for Britons and Egyptians today.³⁴⁴

The legacy of empire is most apparent in the orientalist gaze of Hollinghurst's holidaymakers, indicating that, as Ali Behdad argues, 'tourism (in the "Third World")

³⁴¹ Schwarz, 'Introduction', *End of Empire*, 1-37 (p.9).

³⁴² Hollinghurst has stated in interview that the story was written in 1980, prior to the Falklands. But I am interested here in the unintended political resonances of 'ATB', as well as the intentions of the author (David Galligan, 'Beneath the Surface', *James White Review* 14.3 (1997), p.7).

³⁴³ Anthony Barnett, 'The Falklands Syndrome', *openDemocracyUK*, 12 June 2012 <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/anthony-barnett/falklands-syndrome-30-year-legacy-of-iron-britannia>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

³⁴⁴ For Barnett, as for many others, the Suez/Falklands parallels were clear: 'the most apt and widely drawn comparison, however, has been with the Suez crisis of 1956' ('Iron Britannia', *New Left Review* 134 (July-August 1982), 5-96 (p.5)).

is “an extension of cultural domination” by the industrial nations’.³⁴⁵ Here, for instance, is one of their descriptions of Cairo:

if the first way to know a foreign place is by its smell, then our introduction was unhesitating and violent. [...] The smell in Cairo [...] insist[ing] on the otherness of where we were, was a rank and soft smell of rotting matter, absolutely pervasive as soon as one stepped into the street. (p.100)

The apparently obvious – ‘if the first’ – conflation of the ‘foreign’ with the sensory, in this case smell, exposes an assumed division between the rational west and the chaotic east. The anxious metaphorical association of aroma with violence belies the fear of ‘otherness’, just as its ‘rotting’ quality is suggestive of a backward society. Such judgments are made on the basis that their own country and history has nothing to do with Cairo’s ‘otherness’; the phrase ‘as soon as one stepped onto the street’ stresses the distinction between the safety of colonial hotels (geared for westerners) and the violent, rotting east just beyond their doors. The couple’s journey of discovery is reliant upon this ‘backward glance’ (in Chinua Achebe’s phrase) at Egyptian life, a visual and verbal construction of the exotic and barbarous east, wrenched out of its postcolonial context, which reinvigorates their dull lives: ‘returning to England, incredibly enriched and ready to talk of our experience for ever’ (p.109).³⁴⁶ Although, post-Suez Egypt is no longer technically a colony, it continues to serve a thoroughly orientalist function in the postimperial imagination of these English tourists.

Whilst his godparents’ gaze provides the most obvious manifestation of ‘belligerent neo-Orientalism’,³⁴⁷ at the level of description, Tim’s permanent migration from Southampton to Cairo and his relationship with Mustafa are more

³⁴⁵ Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers* (London: Durham University Press, 1999), p.37.

³⁴⁶ As Chinua Achebe protests in his famous critique of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, ‘if Europe, advancing in civilization, could cast a backward glance periodically at Africa trapped in primordial barbarity it could say with faith and feeling: There go I but for the grace of God’ (‘An Image of Africa’, *Massachusetts Review* 18.4 (1977), 782-94 (p.792).

³⁴⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, xxi.

subtly interwoven, at the level of narrative, with the ideological frameworks of imperialism and postimperialism. An implicit division between the stultifying west and the transformative east is established at the beginning of Tim's story, partially through the adoption of a first-person plural perspective which binds the reader to the narrator and creates a logic of 'us and them'. The image of 'godparents' at 'the font', on the first page, specifies the Christian background – 'our' – from which Tim escapes (p. 95). Tim's upbringing is also traditionally English and middle class. This 'quiet, introspective, temperamental' boy, with 'his intelligence, his good bookwork, his interest in learning' (p.96), 'won an open scholarship to Cambridge' (p.98). Through a nautical image, the narrator warns that 'there was no coming back to the harbour, no re-absorption into the life from which he had broken away' (p.99). They fear that the corrupting possibilities of travel will alter him beyond repair. The former colony will undo his civilised Englishness and turn him into a 'native'.

It is through such anxieties that we can read the racialised descriptions of Tim in Egypt. When the narrator first re-encounters him,

his hair [was] much fairer, bleached by the sun to what seemed almost an artificial colour, and his skin a brown that months back in England would not wholly have been able to fade. He wore a high-necked cotton shirt which seemed more Indian than Egyptian, and which made him look oddly, comically, like a missionary in an ecclesiastical collar. (p.102)

Tim's 'bleached [...] artificial' hair and 'brown' skin reveal the physical changes that have taken place during his time abroad. Like the eponymous protagonist of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), Tim is presented as a racially ambiguous 'desert Englishman'.³⁴⁸ This transformation, the narrator worries, could not be reversed even with 'months back in England'. Implicit here is the racist association that Robert Young identifies with the imperial period: 'Englishness often came to

³⁴⁸ Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), p.48.

function as a coded term for whiteness, for the invisible norm against which all other ethnicities were measured and defined'.³⁴⁹ There is little possibility of re-absorption into national life because, at least in terms of appearance, Tim has lost his racial purity and become an ethnic outcast.

Tim's new clothing suggests further assimilation into Egyptian society, something that the narrator also struggles to accommodate (as indicated by the use of the 'missionary' simile). By insisting upon his specifically Indian sartorial appearance, 'more Indian than Egyptian', the narrator evokes another literary racial hybrid. Kipling's English-Irish-Indian 'imperial boy' Kim, despite being 'dressed as a low-caste Hindu boy',³⁵⁰ 'is "white", although poor, bazaar-fostered, and "burned black as any native" '.³⁵¹ The description of Tim thus contains an allusion that reveals the persistence of imperial fears around racial hybridisation and the continued 'precarious investment' in adolescent males of what Don Randall refers to as 'the national and imperial future'.³⁵²

The tension between Tim's new identity and his godparents' resistance to it is most apparent in the following passage:

Tim's next surprise was one which we ought to have foreseen: he addressed Mustafa in Arabic. It didn't quite have the choking, erotic coarseness on his lips that it would have had from a native speaker [...] it seemed incredibly chastened as he used it, in that way that any foreign language spoken with an English accent sounds as if corrected of a natural tendency to libidinous and incomprehensible fluency. (p.105)

Tim's voice, like Kim's 'clipped uncertain sing-song', is hybrid.³⁵³ It both is and is not Arabic, just as he both is and is not Egyptian. The narrator admits that Tim speaks Arabic, and has 'a number of books in Arabic' on his shelves (p. 104), but also insists

³⁴⁹ Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p.239.

³⁵⁰ Don Randall, *Kipling's Imperial Boy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p.143.

³⁵¹ Randall, p.120.

³⁵² Randall, p.7.

³⁵³ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Macmillan, 1951), p.1.

that his use of it is fundamentally different to that of a ‘native speaker’. Native Arabic has a ‘choking, erotic coarseness’, a ‘libidinous’ quality which Tim’s English voice ‘chasten[s]’. His voice ‘correct[s]’ the original, setting up a clear moral hierarchy between wholesome English and seedy Arabic.

The narrator’s concerns about Tim’s transformation – at the levels of body, clothing, and voice – can be situated in a long tradition of imperial literature. For Rod Edmond, ‘the phenomenon of “going native”, of the European becoming decivilized in savage surroundings’ can be traced through ‘Conrad’s Kurtz [...] back at least as far as *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)’.³⁵⁴ In these texts, Edmond argues, ‘the fear of degeneration in colonial settings’ poses the question ‘would civilization survive the encounter with its other?’.³⁵⁵ Hollinghurst’s story suggests that ‘the nightmare of “going native” ’ persists in the postcolonial global system,³⁵⁶ still ideologically divided into Manichean binaries – east and west, black and white, primitive and civilised – which produce fears (as well as fantasies) of hybridity and conversion.

I refer to fantasies here because ‘going native’ narratives often included an erotic component: ‘desire for the cultural other [and] for forsaking their own culture’ were bound up in one another.³⁵⁷ It is important to recognise, by way of a short digression, the relevance of Forster in this context. Forster’s influence on Hollinghurst’s *The Stranger’s Child* has been widely noted,³⁵⁸ but he has been a guiding presence throughout Hollinghurst’s career, beginning with his postgraduate

³⁵⁴ Rod Edmond, ‘Home and Away’, *Modernism and Empire*, eds Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 39-63 (p.43).

³⁵⁵ Edmond, p.43.

³⁵⁶ Brantlinger, p.39.

³⁵⁷ Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.3.

³⁵⁸ As Hollinghurst has confirmed in interview, ‘Forster loomed large when I was starting *The Stranger’s Child*’ (‘The Art of Fiction No. 214’, *The Paris Review* 199 (2011) <<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6116/the-art-of-fiction-no-214-alan-hollinghurst>> [accessed 3 April 2017]).

thesis ‘The Creative Uses of Homosexuality in the Novels of E.M. Forster, Ronald Firbank and L.P. Hartley’. Hollinghurst’s thesis discusses *A Passage to India* (1924), Forster’s key imperial text, in terms of simultaneous erotic and exotic discovery: ‘it is significant that Forster makes this moment of revelation about India [...] a striking homoerotic description’.³⁵⁹ In this early queer reading, Hollinghurst foregrounds Forster’s suggestion of an interracial, homosexual, colonial romance between protagonists Fielding and Aziz.³⁶⁰ This trope is much more explicit in two of Forster’s short stories which are not discussed in Hollinghurst’s thesis.³⁶¹ In ‘The Life to Come’ (written in 1922) the English missionary Mr Pinmay, who is bringing about the ‘advent of civilization’ in an unidentified foreign location, tries to repress his night of ‘pleasur[e] with a native’ called Barnabas.³⁶² The idea that leaving home, watching ‘England recede’, increases the possibility of such illicit activity finds its fullest expression in the ‘The Other Boat’ (written in 1957-58).³⁶³ The English Captain Lionel and the ‘half-caste’ Coconut develop a sexual relationship as

the ship [bound for India, where Lionel is to meet his potential wife Isabel] entered the Mediterranean. Here resistance weakened under the balmier sky, curiosity increased. [...] More happened off the coast of Sicily, more, much more at Port Said, and here in the Red Sea they slept together as a matter of course.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁹ Hollinghurst, ‘The Creative Uses of Homosexuality’ (Unpublished M.Litt. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1979), p.57.

³⁶⁰ This reading is encouraged by parallels between Aziz and Syed Ross Masood, the Indian man whom Forster loved but who did not love him. Forster stated in interview that ‘Aziz is modelled on Masood, my greatest Indian friend’ (cited by: Tariq Rahman, ‘Syed Ross Masood and E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*’, *ANQ* 4 (1991), 78-81 (p.78).

³⁶¹ For Oliver Stallybrass, ‘Forster [is] at the height of his powers’ in these two stories and ‘it is perhaps significant that each is concerned with an East-West encounter’ (‘Introduction’, *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, ed. Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), vii-xxi (xvi)).

³⁶² E.M. Forster, ‘The Life to Come’, *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, 65-82 (p.73; p.74).

³⁶³ Forster, ‘The Other Boat’, *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, 166-97 (p.175).

³⁶⁴ Forster, ‘The Other Boat’, p.177.

The further south and the further east they travel, under balmier skies, the more their desires and sexual encounters increase.³⁶⁵ This eventually leads to a melodramatic climax in which Lionel murders Cocanut before ‘div[ing] into the sea’.³⁶⁶

If eroticism, exoticism, and death are merged in Forster’s fiction, this seems to emerge out of his personal life, both his frequently discussed experiences in India and the considerable time he spent in Egypt.³⁶⁷ As recounted in P.N. Furbank’s biography, published in 1977-78 and cited several times in Hollinghurst’s contemporaneous thesis, Forster ‘embarked from England for Egypt’ in November 1915 to begin working for the International Red Cross.³⁶⁸ ‘In October [1916] he had a casual escapade with a soldier on the beach. It was his first full physical encounter’, shortly followed by a relationship with a tram ‘conductor, a young, slightly negroid-looking Egyptian’ called Mohammed el Adl;³⁶⁹ Mohammed died prematurely in 1923. Although Nicola Beauman’s biography, published ten years after Hollinghurst’s story, denies that this was ‘mere “nostalgie de la boue” ’ –³⁷⁰ defined as ‘a desire to regress to more primitive social conditions or behaviour than those to which a person is accustomed’ (OED) – Furbank claims that this ‘was the realization of all [Forster’s] secret ambitions. He had, or so he had felt, broken through the barriers of class and

³⁶⁵ This conflation of foreign climates with increased sexual impulses and activities, homosexual or otherwise, is a common trope in English travel writing. Recall, for instance, Lord Byron’s *Don Juan* (1819-1824): ‘What men call gallantry, and gods adultery, / Is much more common where the climate’s sultry’ (*The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.393).

³⁶⁶ Forster, ‘The Other Boat’, p.196.

³⁶⁷ *Arctic Summer* (2014), a novel by the South African writer Damon Galgut, reimagines Forster’s erotic experiences in India and Egypt; chapter 5 (‘Mohammed’) focuses on the latter.

³⁶⁸ P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978), pp.19-20. Hollinghurst refers to Furbank as ‘Forster’s biographer’ (p.12) and cites both volumes; Forster’s Egyptian experiences appear in the second volume.

³⁶⁹ Furbank, p.35; p.36.

³⁷⁰ Nicola Beauman, *Morgan* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), p.302.

colour'.³⁷¹ As well as viewing 'class and colour' as 'barriers' between Forster and his first proper lover, one might propose that Mohammed's social and racial exoticism (and the fact that their encounter took place in the liberating environment of the colony) were integral to Forster's desire. This is an interpretation that is supported not only by his fiction, but also by his association of Mohammed's 'African-Negro blood' with 'handsome[ness]'.³⁷²

This would be to situate Forster's colonial romance, his 'going native', within the tradition of Egyptian homoerotic fantasy documented by Joseph Boone: 'of all the regions of the Near East, Western writers [from Gustave Flaubert to Norman Mailer] most readily came to associate ancient and modern Egypt with the spreading "contagion" of homosexuality'.³⁷³ Egypt was the archetypal 'Western fantas[y] of the "Orient"', a 'non-Western mecca [...] where European men [...] traveled to act on those homoerotic desires legally persecuted and socially condemned at home'.³⁷⁴ For Boone and others, the colonies, and this colony in particular, were not merely the locations of homoerotic experiences but also the driving force behind such fantasies.

In the following section, on *The Swimming-Pool Library*, I discuss the wider scholarship – from Ronald Hyam to Robert Young – addressing the relationship between homosexuality and empire. Here, the main observation to make is that Forster's romance has clear parallels with Tim's: they both present racialised homosexual awakenings taking place in Egypt, one in a colonial and one in a postcolonial context. Later Hollinghurst texts are focalised through the perspective of

³⁷¹ Furbank, p.40.

³⁷² Wendy Moffat, *E.M. Forster* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p.152. Forster's class preference is suggested by a 'Personal Memorandum, 1935' which reads: 'I want to love a strong man of the lower classes, and be loved by him and even hurt by him' (Stallybrass, xiv).

³⁷³ Joseph Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p.51.

³⁷⁴ Boone, xviii; p.228.

their young gay male protagonists, but at this point the echoes of Forster's 'homoerotics of Orientalism' or erotic exoticism (the sexual fetishisation of darker-skinned races) emerge most starkly in the narrator's depiction of Mustafa:

his appearance was intensely striking, his skin the blackest it could possibly be. There was something so aesthetically calculated about his presence that the idea could only have sprung from the imagination of a white person: the boy was the absolute focus of attention in the scholarly virginal cell of the room. (p.104)

In Cooper's analysis of the story, Hollinghurst 'is in some difficulty [...] with his passive, parental spectators' when trying to describe Mustafa; the desire expressed belies the author's own closeted homosexual attraction, inappropriately ventriloquised through his narrator.³⁷⁵ However, we can also interpret such strained descriptions as indicative of the godparents' double-edged exoticism, their indulgence in and attempted distance from the trope of the 'beautiful [Arab] boy' which Boone identifies in Middle Eastern and orientalist writing.³⁷⁶ At risk of admitting desire for his 'handsomeness [which] grew second by second' (p.104) – desire which is potentially both homo- and heterosexual as the narrator's gender is left ambiguous – the apparently 'virginal' quality of the room dampens the intensity. This image is not just presented, but converted into 'the imagination of a white person', the narrator essentially admitting that the scene is 'aesthetically calculated' to produce a nostalgic imperial fantasy of the virile yet pacified 'blackest' body.

This uneasy combination of racial description and self-aware commentary continues in the passage discussed at the beginning of the thesis: 'we had, of course, none of the self-consciousness with regard to blacks that is so typical in middle-class England...' (p.105). The vicious potential of the narrator's racial differentiation is then revealed in the story's hasty conclusion. Via the *Egyptian Gazette*, an English-

³⁷⁵ Brenda Cooper, p.170.

³⁷⁶ Boone, pp.54-67.

language newspaper founded by the British in 1880, the narrator informs us that Tim ‘had been robbed of all his possessions by his Egyptian servant’, or rather, ‘it had not been proved that the boy was the culprit but his complete disappearance from the flat at the same time as the valuables [...] made him the prime, and indeed only, suspect’ (p.109). On the basis of little evidence, a binary between Egyptian criminal and white victim is produced, between the danger of foreign seduction and the safety of old England. Mustafa’s involvement in the plot is limited to seducing an Englishman, gaining his trust, and then breaking that loyalty.

Having outlined the story’s specific modes of imperial persistence – in terms of perspective, intertextuality, description, and plotting – we can now turn to its central political ambiguity: its ability to function as both a belated imperial narrative and a critique of enduring imperial attitudes. ‘This is the political razor’, as Cooper argues, ‘on which Hollinghurst skates in his story’.³⁷⁷

The first reading is supported by Hollinghurst’s non-fiction, which often praises orientalist strategies in imperial writers such as Forster and Firbank. This is particularly the case in his appraisal of Firbank. In celebrating Firbank’s many ‘hybrid’ locations, Hollinghurst quotes the author himself – ‘half way to the East already’ – before clarifying: ‘Firbank uses the term “the East” in the old Orientalist

³⁷⁷ Brenda Cooper, p.174. Cooper discusses Hollinghurst’s little-known poem ‘Dry Season Nights’ (1988) in similar terms: ‘this poem is rendered in a mixture of realism and fantasy as Hollinghurst dances on the tightrope of race, sexuality and history. The poem mixes Camp seriousness with the allure of other places and black bodies of Caribbean boys’ (p.189). Bernard O’Donoghue, the only other critic to discuss this poem, identifies its ‘cool and confident exoticism’, citing the lines: ‘Slick, shuffling demons of the carnival, / the Jab-Jab boys have bodies black with oil / they grab you if you do not give them coins’ (‘Abjuring Innocence’, *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, 12-24 (p.21)). I refer to another one of Hollinghurst’s Caribbean poems, ‘Sugar Mill’, in the section on *The Folding Star*.

sense to mean North Africa and the Middle East, not the Orient itself'.³⁷⁸ Orientalism is not interrogated here, as it is by Said and other postcolonial theorists. 'Orientalist' is merely an 'old' term which needs explaining.³⁷⁹ If orientalist depictions of the east are applauded in Hollinghurst's commentary, so too is Firbank's fusion of exoticism and homosexuality: 'a significant part' of Firbank's 'hybrid' settings are 'the "wonderful boys" that are to be found there' and 'the sexual freedom of [an] "Eastern" homeland'.³⁸⁰

Whilst this conflation of otherness and desire endorses the 'homoerotics of Orientalism', Hollinghurst's defence of Robert Mapplethorpe engages the politics of race and representation in more complex ways. In 1983, the same year as 'ATB' appeared, Hollinghurst wrote the introduction to Mapplethorpe's exhibition catalogue.³⁸¹ Recognising that Mapplethorpe's images have been 'criticized for their content – the black males, the [...] S/M photographs', he insists that 'Mapplethorpe is [not] unaware of the political implications of a white man shooting physically magnificent black men';³⁸² 'his art has continued to thrive on stereotypes which are allowed their full potency at the same time as they are ironized'.³⁸³ For Hollinghurst, Mapplethorpe's 'formative ambiguity' both celebrates and ironizes stereotypes.³⁸⁴ As with Firbank and Forster, Hollinghurst is consciously defending a white artist who

³⁷⁸ Hollinghurst, 'Introduction', *Three Novels* by Ronald Firbank (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), vii–xxiv (xv).

³⁷⁹ As Alderson points out, 'Hollinghurst makes no reference in his [M.Litt.] dissertation to Edward Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism*, first published in 1978' ('Desire as Nostalgia', *Territories of Desire in Queer Culture*, eds Alderson and Linda Anderson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 29-48 (p.47 (footnote 17))).

³⁸⁰ Hollinghurst, 'Introduction', *Three Novels*, xv–xvi.

³⁸¹ The exhibition was held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London.

³⁸² Hollinghurst, 'Introduction', *Robert Mapplethorpe* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1983), 8-17 (p.8).

³⁸³ Hollinghurst, 'Introduction', *Robert Mapplethorpe*, p.11.

³⁸⁴ Hollinghurst, 'Introduction', *Robert Mapplethorpe*, p.13.

artistically addresses race in potentially problematic ways. ‘What is important [...] in Firbank’s work’, he writes, is the ‘development away from the merely “decorative” use of negroes [...] towards giving them central roles in the fiction’.³⁸⁵ If this is questionable in Firbank, then it is certainly so in ‘ATB’: the narrator even describes Mustafa’s smile as ‘almost decorative’ (p.104). In light of Hollinghurst’s quotation marks around this term in his thesis, ‘decorative’ might also be deemed ironic, thereby producing distance between the story and its prejudiced narrator. John Sutherland’s brief review in the *London Review of Books* picks up on the fact that Hollinghurst ‘cunningly manipulates the frustration of the reader irritated that the narrative is in quite the wrong hands’; however, his comments do not explain how this occurs or what the implications are.³⁸⁶

Ironic detachment is created by the fact that the guidebook in which the narrator learns about Ancient Egypt is the 1928 Baedeker, ‘the most up-to-date information we could get’ (p.105). This famous brand of German guidebook, with its ‘smug and secure Eurocentrism’,³⁸⁷ helps to explain the archaic impression of Cairo they arrived with: ‘a primitive desert city’ (p.100). Hollinghurst’s awareness of the reductive ‘language and point of view of the guidebook’ is suggested by his review of Forster’s diaries, in which he mocks the ‘Baedeker-type stars’ that Forster awards throughout ‘the almost unreadably boring schoolboy journal of his visit to

³⁸⁵ Hollinghurst, ‘The Creative Uses of Homosexuality’, p.138. Christopher Lane defends Firbank along similar lines, claiming that ‘black characters are rarely peripheral to his narrative[s]’ (*The Ruling Passion* (London: Duke University Press, 1995), p.179). McLeod, however, critiques Firbank’s ‘problematic ways of constructing otherness’ (‘Race, Empire and *The Swimming-Pool Library*’, *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, 60-78 (p.61)).

³⁸⁶ John Sutherland, ‘Short Is Sharp’, *London Review of Books*, 3 February 1983 <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v05/n02/john-sutherland/short-is-sharp>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

³⁸⁷ Moffat, p.139.

Normandy'.³⁸⁸ With this context in mind, it appears that Hollinghurst is mocking his narrator's touristic gaze much like Miss Lavish mocks Lucy Honeychurch in the second chapter – 'In Santa Croce with No Baedeker' – of Forster's *A Room With a View* (1908).

After finding out that Mustafa is Nubian, the narrator admits that 'our knowledge of them was coloured by the general notes in our Baedeker' which state that Nubians are often 'boots [...] Mustafa was clearly not a boots, but he was still in service *chez* Tim' (p.105).³⁸⁹ 'Coloured' by their guide, as the narrator puts it in clearly racialised terms, the couple form an impression of Mustafa – servile – based on his ethnic background. This perception leads them to interpret his actions in certain ways: 'as we entered the room a black boy was arranging, rather than simply placing, some bowls of the delicious Egyptian roasted peanuts' (p.104). The choice of 'arranging' over 'placing' verbally indicates his servile status, as opposed to being another guest in Tim's flat. Likewise, the last clause of the phrase 'the very strong gins Mustafa had given us, probably at his employer's suggestion' (p.105) is drawn into question by the revelation of Tim's sexuality – maybe Mustafa is not so subservient; perhaps, although not necessarily, he has more agency (as a lover) than their assumptions afford him?

Bound by a peculiar choice of narrative perspective, such attention to Mustafa's experience is absent from the text itself. There is in fact more consideration for Barnabas, Cocolnut, and certainly Aziz in Forster's writing. Hollinghurst does not offer Mustafa's point of view, or even Tim's, as an alternative or counterpoint to the

³⁸⁸ Hollinghurst, 'Poor Dear, How She Figures!', *London Review of Books*, 3 January 2013 <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n01/alan-hollinghurst/poor-dear-how-she-figures>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

³⁸⁹ 'Boots' refers to boot boys, the lowest rank of English household male servants.

maternal-paternal gaze. His strategy instead is to undermine the representation of Cairo and its inhabitants provided by his narrator. Pushing this undermining to its political limits, narratorial detachment enables a critique of the lingering attitudes of the postimperial English, a critique that would have been particularly pertinent in the midst of Thatcherism and in the wake of the Falklands. In Graham Huggan's terms: 'exoticism is effectively *repoliticised*, redeployed both to unsettle metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness and to effect a grounded critique of differential relations of power'.³⁹⁰ 'Metropolitan expectations' are put under strain in this story, but the 'differential relations of power' between postimperial England and postcolonial Egypt are hardly acknowledged. Due to the imperial baggage of the literary and historical tradition within which Hollinghurst is working, a much stronger sense of ironic detachment would be required in order to associate 'ATB' with Huggan's critical, postcolonial aesthetic; moreover, some consideration of Mustafa's perspective and *his* desire might have led Hollinghurst further away from his forbears.

For many of the contributors to *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, Hollinghurst successfully 'cut[s] his fiction (and us) loose from the very past that inspires him'.³⁹¹ 'ATB', perhaps because it is his first work of fiction, does not reveal so sharp a break; it remains embedded in an imperial tradition and its ideological parameters, particularly through the narrative premise of Egyptian erotic exoticism. But Hollinghurst also begins, as I have shown, to ironize this premise and the assumptions attached to it. In his debut novel, as I reveal below, erotic exoticism is relocated to the metropolitan centre. This allows Hollinghurst to move away from his intertexts and to develop his critical exploration, begun in 'ATB', of the intersections between sexuality, race, and postimperial Englishness.

³⁹⁰ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* (New York: Routledge, 2001), ix-x.

³⁹¹ Rivkin, p.123.

The Swimming-Pool Library: Erotic Exoticism, from Colony to Metropolis

The Swimming-Pool Library (*SPL*, hereafter) established Hollinghurst's name as a literary novelist and as one particularly interested in sex and sexuality.³⁹² Set in London in 1983, the same year as 'ATB' was published, *SPL* is narrated by Will Beckwith,³⁹³ a promiscuous gay 25 year-old who is 'riding high on sex and self-esteem'.³⁹⁴ In the opening chapter this aristocratic protagonist – 'belong[ing] to that tiny proportion of the populace that indeed owns almost everything' (p.3) – meets Charles Nantwich, an old Lord with an infamous gay past. Charles shows Will his personal diaries and asks him to turn them into a biography. These diaries, containing homoerotic stories about his time at public school, at Oxford, and then as a colonial officer in Sudan in between the wars, eventually reveal that Charles was imprisoned as a result of the ruthless anti-homosexual prosecution of Will's grandfather, Sir Denis Beckwith. They also provide vivid accounts of his sexual desire for African men, culminating in his love for Taha, a Sudanese boy whom he brings back to London. Taha eventually leaves Charles in order to marry and is later killed by a racist gang.

³⁹² Edmund White, in an early review of the novel, described it as 'the best book about gay life yet written by an English author' ('The Shimmer of Romance', *Sunday Times*, 21 February 1988).

³⁹³ As Sarah Antonia Jones writes, the name of Hollinghurst's protagonist is often considered to be an allusion to 'William Beckford, the writer best known for his eighteenth-century gothic novel, *Vathek*' ('An Alternative Namesake', *Notes and Queries* 63.2 (2016), 304-05 (p.304)). 'This association adds to the network of queer-political allusion' due to the fact that Beckford 'was ostracized because of his homosexual affairs' (p.304). Beckford also adds to the novel's network of colonial references. 'Beckford's stupendous wealth', as Thomas Keymer reminds us, was 'from inherited sugar plantations in Jamaica' ('Introduction', *Vathek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), ix-xxix (ix)). *Vathek* itself, for Keymer, is an 'oriental epic' (ix), an 'imaginative immersion into the East' (xxii).

³⁹⁴ Hollinghurst, *The Swimming-Pool Library* (London: Penguin, 1988), p.3. All further references to *SPL* are incorporated into the text.

A number of postcolonial writers and critics have critiqued the novel's representations of blackness and interracial homosexuality. For Brenda Cooper, *SPL* is 'stained' by 'the history of colonial violence and racism that are simultaneously being interrogated and exposed';³⁹⁵ for John McLeod, '*The Swimming-Pool Library* cannot be fully detached from this problem in its black characterizations, but its racial politics are not fully defined by it too'.³⁹⁶ McLeod objects, for instance, to its 'set-pieces of black vernacular culture – customized cars with tinted windows carrying local hoods in the back seats – [which] do little to dislodge predominant paradigms of racialized representation', but his overall argument, like Cooper's, is appreciative of the novel's complex 'racial politics'.³⁹⁷ He outlines two main strategies through which Hollinghurst self-consciously tries to transcend the belated erotic eroticism of his protagonist: first, through the (subtly produced) distance between the time of the narrative and its narration; second, through the text's political ambivalence about its intertexts, particularly Firbank and Forster.

My analysis is provoked by a question that McLeod asks but does not have the opportunity fully to answer: 'Will's frankness', he writes, 'begs an important question. Which is worse: Charles's denial of the culpably racist aspects of his predilection of [sic] black lovers, or Will's knowing indulgence in the dubious domain of race and his clear-eyed admission of the excitements derived from toying with slavery's image?'.³⁹⁸ Several critics consider Charles's homosexual 'colonial

³⁹⁵ Brenda Cooper, p.204.

³⁹⁶ McLeod, 'Race, Empire and *The Swimming-Pool Library*', p.69. In his aforementioned article 'Kingdom of the blind', Caryl Phillips writes: 'while one is grateful to see black characters represented [in *SPL*], we are encouraged to view most of them through the prism of sexuality' (online).

³⁹⁷ McLeod, 'Race, empire and *The Swimming-Pool Library*', p.68.

³⁹⁸ McLeod, 'Race, empire and *The Swimming-Pool Library*', p.66.

desire' to be repeated by Will's postcolonial version of it:³⁹⁹ James Brown and Patricia Sant identify the 'continuing homoerotics of [...] exploitation';⁴⁰⁰ Christopher Lane argues that 'the diary [...] interrupts every contemporary relationship [...] Hollinghurst demonstrates that Britain has become mired in [...] a paralyzing conviction';⁴⁰¹ and Rebecca Walkowitz claims that Will 'thinks he is rejecting Britain's imperial past and resisting sexual persecution but is in many ways reproducing both'.⁴⁰² McLeod however, points to the different political valences of Charles's and Will's narratives.

McLeod's differentiation can be developed further. First, we might address the critical debate about the imperial or anti-imperial function of homosexual colonial desire: what is the ideological baggage, exactly, of Charles' erotic exoticism? Second, we can examine Will's responses to Charles's diaries and contest an overly simplistic mapping of colonial onto metropolitan conditions, a direct continuation or reproduction of the relationship between race, desire, and power from one context to the other. Hollinghurst's redeployment of erotic exoticism from 'ATB' to *SPL*, from postcolony to metropole, does not just embed Will in imperial history: Will's postimperial erotic exoticism constitutes not only a belated but also an intensified version of Charles's imperial affect. This intensification – and the ways in which his black partners respond to it – is central, I argue, to Hollinghurst's critique of the *new* ways in which race and empire play themselves out in the postimperial metropolis.

³⁹⁹ Young defines 'colonial desire' as 'desire for the cultural other' (*Colonial Desire*, p.3).

⁴⁰⁰ James Brown and Patricia Sant, 'Race, Class, and the Homoerotics of *The Swimming-Pool Library*', *Postcolonial and Queer Theories*, ed. John C. Hawley (London: Greenwood Press, 2011), 113-27 (p.118).

⁴⁰¹ Lane, p.231.

⁴⁰² Rebecca Walkowitz, 'The Post-Consensus Novel', *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 223-37 (p.231).

Erotic exoticism – defined, once more, as the sexual fetishisation of darker-skinned races – is much more prevalent in *SPL* than ‘ATB’. This is due to the fact that the novel is narrated in the first-person through the eyes of a virile young man. By only its second sentence, Will has already begun fantasising about a ‘severely handsome black’, fetishising not only his skin colour but also his status as a manual labourer, someone whose ‘occupation depended on our travel’ (p.1). Once again we find the Forsterian combination of racial and class-based exoticism. Will has ‘a taste for black names, West Indian names’ (p.1) and glorifies ‘the blackness of his skin’ (p.22), ‘his’ referring to Will’s first sexual partner in the novel, the 17 year-old working-class Arthur. I will return to Will and his intensely racialised sexual imagination in due course, but first it is important to consider the ways in which Charles’s entry into the novel historicises Will’s erotic exoticism.

Via Charles, it becomes clear that the history of British colonialism in Africa underpins Hollinghurst’s contemporary London narrative. As James (Will’s best friend) puts it, Charles is ‘the Khedive of Tower Hamlets’ (p.84), a phrase that ironically juxtaposes his belated colonial authority with the multicultural borough of East London in which he now lives. Before the erotic contents of the diaries are revealed, Charles’s home in Tower Hamlets introduces some of the aesthetic legacies of empire. Will immediately recognises ‘the eccentric rectitude of a colonial staying on’ (p.70) in a house full of exotic paraphernalia. First, there is ‘an unusually large David Roberts of a Nubian temple’ (p.71). Roberts, a nineteenth-century Scottish painter, was known for his orientalist prints of Egypt;⁴⁰³ his aesthetic thus befits Charles’s sentimental, ex-imperialist vision of Africa as an exotic paradise. Charles

⁴⁰³ According to the art historian Gerald M. Ackerman, Roberts is ‘probably the most famous of all [...] painter-travelers [that] may be called “professional orientalists” ’ (‘Why Some Orientalists Traveled to the East’, *Picturing the Middle East*, eds Henry Krawitz and J. David Farmer (New York: Dahesh Museum, 1996), 1-13 (p.1)).

also shows off his prized-possession – a ‘stele showing the King Akhnaten [sic]’ (p.76) – acquired, legally or not, ‘in Egypt before the war. [...] I was coming back from the Sudan for the last time’ (p.77). Charles’s fetish for black bodies is first suggested, before the diaries appear, by the portraits adorning the walls of his house. Will notices ‘a life-size chalk drawing of a black boy’ (p.72) – which turns out to be Taha – and ‘an eighteenth-century colonial servant; evidently a favoured one. “It’s Bill Richmond,” Charles explained [...] “a slave [...] brought back to England” ’ (p.78). Charles’s yearning for the colonial era is then suggested by his ‘lapse into reflection on the fate of Bill Richmond’, his ‘nostalgic expression as though he had known him personally’ (p.78).

Charles’s diaries reinforce the connections between Britain’s colonial past, nostalgically displayed throughout the house, and Will’s erotic exoticism. One of Charles’s first observations when he arrives in Africa is that ‘groups of natives’ are ‘largely or wholly naked’ (p.96). He becomes obsessed by the fact that ‘here no one wears a stitch of clothing’ and so ‘the beauty of the men is so openly displayed’ (p.108); in the words of Ondaatje’s English patient, ‘there were rivers of desert tribes, the most beautiful humans I’ve ever met in my life’.⁴⁰⁴ This ‘beauty’ is heavily racialised. Charles speaks of ‘intense blackness’ (p.96) and ‘the radiant darkness of the Nuba’ (p.114); as in ‘ATB’, Nubians are particularly fetishised, perhaps because of perceptions of their servility. Hollinghurst’s introduction of various intertexts for Charles’s diaries confirms our impression of Charles’s erotic exoticism. References to Evelyn Waugh, Firbank, and Forster situate Charles’s diary not only in a lineage of imperial writing but also in a particularly homoerotic version of that lineage.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Ondaatje, p.138.

⁴⁰⁵ See: Lane, *The Ruling Passion* (discussed below).

When James learns that Charles's diaries are filled with such eroticised depictions of black men, he says to Will: 'you're very keen on the grace, nobility and so forth of Negroes' (p.87).⁴⁰⁶ Although Will is initially uninterested in the diaries, bored by 'the trivia of colonial existence' (p.96), the reader, like James, can perceive the obvious parallels: the importation of erotic exoticism from its colonial foundations to the postimperial metropolis, and from one generation to another. Many of Will's sexual encounters take place at the Corinthian Club ('the Corry'), which acts as a kind of metropolitan substitute for the bath houses frequented by colonial travellers; as Boone writes, the bath house or 'hamam' provided such travellers with 'a return to an infantile world of anarchic desires'.⁴⁰⁷ This 'anarchic' space is now located deep within Hollinghurst's London, beneath 'Great Russell Street' (p.8). Will yearns for the relaxed, as he perceives it, colonial office that Charles previously held. When Charles states, 'I want you to have a job' (p.239), Will responds 'I just don't want the wrong one [...] I'd like it if I could simply disappear, like you did. It was wonderful how you could disappear into Africa' (p.240). He is particularly jealous that Charles was 'able to turn [his] caprices into a career' (p.242). Whilst such a 'career' is no longer (so easily) available to him in a largely decolonised world, Will manages to perpetuate the 'caprices' that Charles developed during his time as a colonial officer.

In order to complicate this narrative of perpetuation, in which Will merely repeats Charles's colonial exploitation in a new setting and a new era, it is helpful to draw upon the field of empire and sexuality studies. This will enable us to rethink the ideological baggage of Charles's erotic exoticism. Ronald Hyam's seminal work,

⁴⁰⁶ In the words of Daniel Mendelsohn, 'both men, it turns out, have a taste for young black men, and the novel is, among many other things, a sophisticated investigation into what you could call the erotic component of colonialism' ('In Gay and Crumbling England, *New York Review of Books*, 10 November 2011, 15-17 (p.15)).

⁴⁰⁷ Boone, p.78.

Empire and Sexuality (1990), discusses heterosexual and homosexual relations in a range of imperial locations. In the ‘surviving evidence’ that Hyam draws upon, ‘there is a built-in tilt towards same-sex activity, because the empire was often an ideal arena for the practice of sexual variation, and there were many scandals of this sort’.⁴⁰⁸ For Sandeep Bakshi, Hyam’s and others’ revisionary histories help to counter ‘the “predominantly heterosexual frameworks of postcolonial theory” ’ which have resulted ‘in the elision of same-sex desire’.⁴⁰⁹ A key question within the field, and one that is pertinent here, is: did homosexual colonial desire reinforce or challenge imperial power? Many postcolonial readings of *SPL* assume that it was inherently exploitative due to the political context within which these erotic interactions took place. Brown and Sant, in their analysis of the novel, identify the ‘complicity of English male desire for the African (male) Other with the (ongoing) project of English imperialism’.⁴¹⁰ Whilst their brackets around ‘male’ suggest that this argument can be made for heterosexual attraction too, Young argues that homosexuality was especially complicit in the imperialist project: ‘same-sex sex [...] posed no threat [to imperial rule] because it produced no children; its advantage was that it remained silent, covert and unmarked’.⁴¹¹ Unlike heterosexual interracial relations, ‘same-sex sex’ avoided the risk of ‘half-caste’ children and thus circumvented the perceived threat posed by racial hybridity. Consequently, Young claims that imperial authorities even ‘encourage[d] same-sex sex (playing the imperial game was, after all, already an implicitly homo-erotic practice)’.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp.5-6.

⁴⁰⁹ Sandeep Bakshi, ‘Past Matters’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 51.5 (2015), 543-555 (p.544). Bakshi is citing Hema Chari.

⁴¹⁰ Brown and Sant, p.113.

⁴¹¹ Young, *Colonial Desire*, pp.25-26.

⁴¹² Young, *Colonial Desire*, p.26.

Charles's description of his time in Africa ostensibly confirms Young's account of colonial homosexuality:

'On the gay thing [...] they [those at the top of the colonial hierarchy] were completely untroubled – even to the extent of having a slight preference for it, in my opinion. Quite unlike all this modern nonsense how we're security risks and what-have-you. They had the wit to see that we were prone to immense idealism and dedication. [...] And of course in a Muslim country it was a positive advantage...' We laughed at this, though the implications were not quite clear. (p.241)

Charles makes a similar argument to Young but provides different reasoning. Instead of the lack of children, it was the 'immense idealism and dedication' of homosexuals that helped to produce effective colonial officers. Homosexuality is said to have been especially helpful 'in a Muslim country', although it is not explained why: perhaps due to relatively conservative attitudes towards female sexuality in certain Islamic societies, or relatively tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality.⁴¹³ The complicity of homosexual colonial desire in methods of imperial rule is further demonstrated by the moment in which Charles falls in love with Taha:

Everything in this job is personal: it is government on the ground [...] It is not sitting at a desk: it is standing in scant shade & deciding between one naked tribesman and another. It is not bookish and bureaucratic: it takes place in open spaces almost without end, in which the rare, unobvious & beautiful people materialize out of the quivering heat. [...] At once I saw he [Taha] was my responsibility made flesh: he was all the offspring I will never have, all my futurity. He became so beautiful to me that my mouth went dry... (p.210)

The imperial project and Charles's 'personal', erotic one have become so intertwined that they are now indistinguishable in his mind. For Charles, his job is about being active, 'on the ground [...] in open spaces', but this seems to equate to staring at and desiring native bodies: 'deciding between one naked tribesman and another'. Taha, 'all my futurity', becomes the embodiment of this synthesis: Charles's 'responsibility

⁴¹³ On the historically and geographically contingent relationship between Islam and homosexuality, see: 'From Armchair Anthropology to Islamicate Sexuality Studies' (Boone, pp.44-49).

made flesh'. One suspects, however, that loving Taha was not Charles's real 'responsibility'. Contra Young, Charles's homosexual desire could be considered to undermine, rather than enhance, his colonial authority – his obsession with 'naked tribesman' acting as a serious distraction from his duties.

This reading comes closer to Christopher Lane's 'propos[al] that sexual desire between men frequently ruptured Britain's imperial allegory by shattering national unity'.⁴¹⁴ 'Homosexual desire helped to unmake', he argues by way of Forster, Firbank, and others, 'some of Britain's imperialist policies by fostering a contrary interest, or counteralliance, with the colonized'.⁴¹⁵ Elleke Boehmer has developed a similar argument in relation to Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908). This is a book that brought into being a movement that was 'intended in part to secure the empire' but that also promoted homosocial (if not explicitly homosexual) 'brotherly friendship between boys' that, in range of different contexts, had varying 'anti-imperial' effects.⁴¹⁶ For Leela Gandhi, likewise, 'the life and work of the socialist reformer Edward Carpenter' exemplifies 'the strange and emphatic conjunction of homosexuality and anti-imperial thought'.⁴¹⁷

Charles is by no means 'anti-imperial'. By invoking these revisionary readings of homosexual colonial desire, it is possible, however, to consider his homosexual gaze as producing sympathy for his colonial subjects, rather than merely affirming his authority. As well as deconstructing the colonial context that underpins Charles's

⁴¹⁴ Lane, p.4.

⁴¹⁵ Lane, p.4.

⁴¹⁶ Boehmer, 'The Text in the World', *Ten Books That Shaped the British Empire*, eds Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 131-52 (p.131; p.140; p.132).

⁴¹⁷ Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p.10-11.

erotic exoticism, one might also recognise something genuinely affectionate when he claims

there was this absolute adoration of black people [...] you could say blind adoration, but it was all seeing ... I don't know. I think it was more of a sort of love affair for me than for most of the others. I've always had to be among them, you know, negroes... (p.242)

If Charles's 'adoration' still seems rather generic, and shrouded in racist language, his 'choking grief' and 'torture' over Taha's death (recounted across several paragraphs) reveals the intensity and intimacy of his feelings (p.259). When Charles hears that Taha has been killed by 'a gang of youths' in 'an act of racial hatred and ignorance' (p.258) he claims that 'the light of my life went out' (p.258), 'it was a terrible destitution' (p.259). Wounded by Taha's tragic fate, he speaks passionately about the racism afflicting contemporary Britain: 'it was impossible to imagine the hatred that would be unleashed against them [black people] [...] there are times when I can't think of my country without a kind of despairing shame' (p.244).

In response to Charles's anti-racist pleas Will can only muster 'I know what you mean' (p.244). Charles's emotional statements stand in sharp contrast to the dispassionate or affectless perspective of Will, a postmodern rake interested in sex and little else. Throughout the novel, Will is seemingly unmoved by the racism that is evident around him. Unlike Charles he is not horrified by the National Front graffiti – 'Kill All niggers'; 'Wogs Out' – that he sees in East London (p.171). The emotive gulf between them is most clearly exposed when Charles's diary recounts

the terrible stories of slavery, mutilation, castration: how they weighed the boys down with sandbags, razored off their balls & patched them up with – melted butter, I think it was. I believe many of them died. And all this going on nearly in my lifetime! The sheer evil of it oppressed my heart... (p.205)

Will never comments on these atrocities, but continues to describe Charles's time in Africa as 'a dream [...] like a life set to a kind of music' (p.240).

If Will is less compassionate than Charles seems to be, he is also more aggressively racialising in his language.⁴¹⁸ Will's description, for instance, of 'the laid-back Ecuadorian Carlos with his foot-long Negroni sausage of a dick' (p.142) both recalls and amplifies Charles's erotic exoticism, taking the fetishisation of the racial and cultural other to an almost parodic level. Abdul (Taha's son and the chef at Wicks's, the elite club that Charles belongs to) is fetishised in even more caricatured and Africanist terms: 'the high, haunted African brow, and the high, rolling African ass, and the long, dangling, fishing, musical hands' (p.187).⁴¹⁹ In contrast to Charles's love for Taha, Will reduces Abdul to African taxidermy – 'like some exquisite game animal, partly skinned and then thrown aside still breathing' (p.188) – in an ethnographic museum. Even Abdul's 'moustache' is said to have 'lent a subtle violence to his expression' (p.39).

Will's actions also suggest a racialised sense of authority over his black partners. Despite the fact that he 'fucked him [Arthur] cruelly' and 'snarled at him to shut up', Will claims that 'we both exploited each other, my role as protector mined by the morbid emotion of protectiveness' (p.31). However, the next sentence reveals the true control this 'protector' wields: 'I saw him becoming more and more my slave and my toy' (p.31). The suggestion of enslavement in an interracial sexual partnership exposes an historical power imbalance – produced by inequality in terms of both race and class – that Will's language and actions only perpetuate.

⁴¹⁸ Alderson puts it the other way around: 'Nantwich does not demonstrate the disdain which is integral to Beckwith's desires' ('Desire as Nostalgia', pp.34-35). For Alderson, this indicates Hollinghurst's nostalgia for Charles's 'liberal coloni[alism]' (p.33), or 'colonial idealism' (p.35); Will, by contrast, embodies the 'degeneration of former principles' (p.35).

⁴¹⁹ Miller, in his aforementioned critique of 'Africanist discourse', argues that 'Africa has been made to bear a double burden, of monstrousness *and* nobility, all imposed by a deeper condition of difference and instability' (p.5).

This power imbalance, however, is not static. Will's first description of Abdul – 'Abdul [...] stood abstractedly sharpening his knife on the steel and gazing at me as if I were a meal' (p.42) – seems to perpetuate racist myths about black (erotic) aggression; in David Alderson's words, Abdul's 'sexual potential [is] figured as cannibalistic threat – a kind of savage promise'.⁴²⁰ But the idea that Will has become Abdul's meal, rather than the other way round, foreshadows the power reversal to come, a reversal that may have been more difficult for Taha to achieve in colonial Sudan. Near the end of the novel Will, who is looking for Charles at Wicks's, accidentally encounters Abdul. Will informs us that Abdul 'ill-temperedly [...] fucked me with a thrilling leisured vehemence'; Abdul then tells Will to 'fuck off out of here, man' (p.262). This scene recalls Will's aggressive sex with Arthur, only now there is an undercurrent of revenge. The prior discussion of Charles's imprisonment (and of Abdul visiting him in prison with Taha) suggests that Abdul's anger stems from the death of his father at the hands of white youths.

This glimpse into Abdul's perspective as he 'fuck[s] Will' is significant because 'black queerness', as Nadia Ellis argues, is usually written out of histories of post-war Britain; it sits awkwardly between implicitly heterosexual migration narratives and implicitly white narratives of sexual liberation. When the 'black queer figure' does appear, he (and it usually is a he) is 'figured as potentially vulnerable to the compromising desire of queer white men'.⁴²¹ 'Colonial migrants' are the 'victims' rather than agents of homosexual desire.⁴²² Hollinghurst's novel does not entirely counter this figuration. Will describes Arthur, after all, as his 'slave' and 'toy'. But Abdul's domination of Will in the scene above begins to contest the impression of

⁴²⁰ Alderson, 'Desire as Nostalgia', p.31.

⁴²¹ Nadia Ellis, 'Black Migrants, White Queers', *Interventions* 17.6 (2015), 893-915 (p.895).

⁴²² Ellis, p.900.

black queer vulnerability; as Alan Sinfield writes of this moment, ‘the empire fucks back’.⁴²³ Gabriel’s sexual encounter with Will is also significant here. ‘I could whip you’, the Argentinian proposes, ‘for what you did to my country in the war’ (p.275), referring of course to the Falklands War (which had taken place a year previously). For Will, ‘I think that might be to take the sex and politics metaphor a bit too seriously, old chap’ (p.275), but this invocation makes clear that Gabriel knows the imperial context within which their interracial sexual activities take place.⁴²⁴ Gabriel is not only alert to the power dynamics that underpin their encounter but seeks to reclaim the upper hand.

These moments of ‘black queerness’, articulated in response to Will’s intensified version of Charles’s erotic exoticism, suggest not only that colonial legacies continue to resonate in Hollinghurst’s postimperial metropolis, but also that they have taken on new and contested forms. Empire is not merely imported but reworked in his contemporary London, a London that is bursting with sexual liberation, vicious racialisation, and glimpses of resistance. Hollinghurst has thus developed his exploration of the intersections between sexuality, race, and empire as he has moved from Egypt to London, from ‘ATB’ to *SPL*. His subsequent novels, as I suggest in the rest of this chapter, go on to examine empire and postimperial Englishness both inside and outside of the realms of sexuality.

The Belgian Congo and Imperial Constructions of Englishness in *The Folding Star*

Edward Manners’s first sexual encounter in *The Folding Star* (*FS*, hereafter), Hollinghurst’s second novel, carries on from where Will left off. ‘Cherif, a Moroccan,

⁴²³ Sinfield, p.97.

⁴²⁴ Will clearly considers Gabriel to be racially other, describing his ‘primitive’ lips (p.272), ‘dully beautiful face’ (p.272), and ‘brown hairy thighs’ (p.274).

but born in Paris and uncircumcised',⁴²⁵ is immediately defined in terms of his foreign origins and the ethno-religious signals of his body; his name also alludes to the North African protagonist of Firbank's novella *Santal* (1921). Edward, the English protagonist and first-person narrator of *FS*, soon tires of his exotic lover. Edward's fetishisation of Cherif's Africanness then slides into blatant racism:

'This is all very North African, dear,' I said; 'but I don't actually approve of smoking in the bedroom.' I was banging about, clearing the place up, powered by a few dull resentments. 'Lovely in a brothel in Tangier, I'm sure, but here...' (p.282)

The apparent incivility of 'smoking in the bedroom' is patronisingly and disparagingly aligned with Cherif's assumed city of origin. Exotic indulgence in 'Tangier' might well be 'lovely', but it is not to be brought 'here'. European domesticity, with its rituals of cleaning and 'resentments', must be kept free of such malign foreign influences.

Most critical accounts of *FS* tend to concentrate on the familiar issues of sexuality, queerness, and intertextuality.⁴²⁶ Pia Livia Hekanaho, however, draws attention to Edward's exoticism and orientalism, noting that 'Edward's unequal relationship with the French Moroccan Cherif highlights the theme of colonial

⁴²⁵ Hollinghurst, *The Folding Star* (London: Vintage, 1998), p.9. All further references to *FS* are incorporated into the text.

⁴²⁶ Robert L. Caserio focuses on the novel's 'genealogies of gay life' ('Hollow Auguries', *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, 110-24, (p.112)); Alderson, on the ways in which 'the experiences of desire and loss are interwoven' ('Desire as Nostalgia', p.39); Allan Johnson, on the 'queerness of being late' (p.62); Mendelssohn, on the novel's 'debts to gay pornography' ('Poetry, Parody, Porn and Prose', *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, 40-59 (p.49)); and Alistair Stead, on its 'serious parody of a Symbolist fiction' ('Self-Translation and the Arts of Transposition', *Translating Life*, eds Shirley Chew and Alistair Stead (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 361-84 (p.361)).

injustice and its repercussions'.⁴²⁷ Moreover, she briefly connects this to the novel's use of historical background:

The murky colonial past haunts Bruges in the spectral presence of King Leopold II and the colonial atrocities carried out in [the] Belgian Congo. Thus, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) takes its place as one of the intertexts of the novel...⁴²⁸

Hekanaho's focus on the 'richly interwoven history of Gothic fiction and queer studies'⁴²⁹ means that she does not take this postcolonial reading any further or establish how Hollinghurst negotiates 'the murky colonial past'. I do so here by foregrounding Hollinghurst's introduction of an imperial heritage for both his central Belgian family – the Altidores – and his English protagonist. First, I examine the political ambiguity of Hollinghurst's brief references to the Altidores' 'business' in 'the Congo': to what extent do these historical markers invoke or evade colonial atrocities? Second, I discuss Edward's reflections upon his 'Aunt Tina', her life in colonial Africa, and her 'fantasy of England'. My analysis of these moments does not amount to a comprehensive reading of the novel. Instead, they enable me to introduce ideas – relating to the deployment of historical context and to imperial constructions of Englishness – that move away from issues of sexuality and towards those that will inform my readings later in the chapter.

FS begins with Edward, who is 33, arriving at an unnamed town in Belgium to start work as an English tutor. One of his students in this Flemish town, which closely resembles Bruges, is Marcel Echevin.⁴³⁰ Marcel's father Paul runs the local museum dedicated to Edgard Orst, a fictional fin-de-siècle Belgian Symbolist painter. Edward

⁴²⁷ Pia Livia Hekanaho, 'A Stranger in a Silent City', *Gothic Topographies*, eds P.M. Mehtonen and Matti Savolainen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 57-70 (p.60).

⁴²⁸ Hekanaho, p.60.

⁴²⁹ Hekanaho, p.57.

⁴³⁰ 'Although not named in the novel, the location is recognizably Bruges, a city famous for its long history and medieval architecture' (Hekanaho, p.59).

falls in love with his other student, the rebellious 17 year-old Luc Altidore. Edward's perverse, Lolita-like, obsession with Luc eventually leads to them sleeping together before the young boy disappears.⁴³¹ Finally, as a result of researching Orst together, Paul 'comes out' to Edward by revealing that he had a secret affair with a Gestapo officer during the Nazi Occupation of Belgium.⁴³²

Nazism and the Second World War thus come to dominate the novel's denouement. Earlier on, however, it is the story of 'The Fall of the House of Altidore' (p.142) that helps to transform an otherwise personal and sexual narrative into a broader national and historical one. Luc's allusion to Edgar Allan Poe contributes, most obviously, to the novel's sense of gothic haunting;⁴³³ in 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839), Madeline, who has been buried alive, arises from her tomb to kill her brother. This precocious literary reference also enables Edward to learn that

His [Luc's] great-grandfather Guillaume, apparently, had created a little publishing firm in the 1890s [...] I hadn't realised how wealthy and grand the Altidores had been: the publishing was just a *jeu d'esprit* of Guillaume, who presided at the family's apogee [...] but the mercantile empire that financed them had dwindled away. Luc's grandfather had [...] lost a fortune in the Congo [...] Luc's father had inherited a moribund business [...] and in the boom of the early eighties things picked up. He had visions, said Luc, of their regaining something of their turn-of-the century grandeur. Workmen had been sent to repair the roof of the little château. (p.142)

⁴³¹ Hollinghurst has described the novel as 'a sort of gender-flipped [...] *Lolita*' ('[Interview with] Alan Hollinghurst', *Something Inside*, p.232).

⁴³² In the middle section of the novel, entitled 'Underwoods', Edward returns to England to attend the funeral of his first sexual partner, Dawn. James Wood describes this section as providing 'a very beautiful subversion of pastoral Englishness' in which 'homosexuality [...] forces Englishness out of its soft, hushed inaudibility into voice' ('An Activity not an Attribute', *The Revision of Englishness*, eds David Rogers and McLeod (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 55-64 (p.63; p.64)).

⁴³³ Hekanaho notes the influence of Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892). Rodenbach's gothic and Symbolist novella, as Hollinghurst writes in his introduction to a recent edition of the text, is the story of a 'bereaved and obsessive hero, Hugues Viane, haunting the deserted quays, in strange subjection to his chosen city' ('Introduction', *Bruges-la-Morte* (Cambridgeshire: Dedalus, 2005), 11-19 (p.12)). Hekanaho also discusses Hollinghurst's other intertexts, from Henry James to Vladimir Nabokov.

Until this point, the Altidores have been portrayed as a fairly generic wealthy family. They now become symbolically associated with Belgium's imperial past and its postimperial present. The Altidores' current affluence is traced back to the 'mercantile empire that financed them'; their financial ups and downs thus map out Belgium's own imperial and postimperial economic fortunes. Most significantly, we find out that 'Luc's grandfather had [...] lost a fortune in the Congo', a potent colonial marker that is discussed further below. Notwithstanding the fall of that 'empire', Luc's father clings on to 'their turn-of-the-century grandeur': empire not only haunts the family but its majesty is actively sought out. Luc appears to have acquired his father's ambitions, becoming obsessed with the idea of doing up the old family house and even getting 'out the original plans' (p.364); Edward describes the 'account' above as 'meticulous [...] something he [Luc] had worked out for himself rather than something half-forgotten he had been told' (p.142). No longer an innocent young fantasy for Edward to pursue, Luc becomes part of a broader familial and national history.

The Altidores' imperial heritage is established further by way of one of their family portraits. Just after the contextualising passage above, Luc describes a portrait in which 'my grandfather Theo was dressed up [...] for a fantasy [...] like an Indian prince with a long sword' (p.144). Towards the end of the novel, Edward stumbles around the Altidores' crumbling family home (whose gothic sense of decay is further reminiscent of Poe's House of Usher). He discovers the picture for himself:

Theo Altidore [Luc's grandfather] stood in the middle, hand on hip, turbaned and robed in red, a scimitar in his belt. I couldn't tell if his rajah's moustaches were real or part of the costume. [...] He reminded me of [...] the Duke of Somewhere, a frightful old monster, got up as a sheik or an Indian prince, never anything less than his own status. And it was notable how Theo had chosen the glamour of another empire than the one that was to ruin him. (pp.368-69)

For Luc, Theo was only enacting a ‘fantasy’. Edward, however, is alert to the politics of performativity at work in the act of imperial cross-dressing. Uncertainty over the reality of the rajah moustache indicates to Edward that the Altidores were not merely ‘got up’ but actually wielded ‘frightful’ imperial power and ‘status’, reinforced by such exoticist activities. Theo is not directly connected to the Congo here, as he had been earlier. But, as Edward is aware, through ‘the glamour of another empire’, or rather his freedom to play with its stereotypes, his imperial credentials are implied.

‘Implied’ is an appropriate word here because of the remarkably vague or enigmatic nature of Hollinghurst’s historical framework. The true ‘horror’ (to invoke Conrad) of Belgium’s ‘mercantile empire’ is not revealed by the passages above, or elsewhere in the novel. One might recall Said: ‘these signs of “abroad” include, even as they repress, a rich and complex history’, and so, ‘in reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded’.⁴³⁴ What is ‘excluded’ or ‘repress[ed]’, in Hollinghurst’s fleeting reference to the Congo, is the fact that ‘between five and eight million died during [King] Leopold’s 23-year rule [1885-1908]’ of the Congo and the ‘the fin-de-siècle rubber boom’ that he oversaw.⁴³⁵ Leopold’s ‘killing climate’,⁴³⁶ his ‘regime of terror’,⁴³⁷ may have funded or at least

⁴³⁴ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.111; p.79.

⁴³⁵ Adam Shatz, ‘Ca va un peu [review of David Van Reybrouck’s *Congo*]', *London Review of Books*, 23 October 2014 <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n20/adam-shatz/ca-va-un-peu>> [accessed 3 Apr 2017].

⁴³⁶ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), p.93.

⁴³⁷ Adam Hochschild, ‘Introduction’, *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts* by Jules Marchal (London: Verso, 2008), vii-xxii (xiv). Hochschild explains that ‘the forced labour system for gathering rubber was at the core of a tremendous death toll in the Congo during and immediately after Leopold’s rule. Many of the male forced labourers were in effect worked to death’ (xiv). Missionaries ‘described what they had seen: Africans whipped to death, rivers full of corpses, and [...] piles of severed hands’ (xv).

enabled the Altidores' '*jeu d'esprit*'.⁴³⁸ It is impossible to be certain: all we know is that the family conducted business in the Congo at around this time.

Later on, Paul informs Edward that the Altidores have had variable fortunes over the centuries and that 'it was only with the Congo business that they suddenly shot up again' (p.180). We are reminded once more of the Altidores' imperial heritage, but the euphemistic term 'business' refuses to admit complicity with a colonial 'system that rewarded ruthless, devastating plunder'.⁴³⁹ Alongside its economic sense, 'business' might also suggest some awareness of untoward activity, but this is an awareness that neither Paul, Edward, nor the narrative itself seem keen to expose. Set against the gruesome accounts of Belgian atrocities provided by historians such as Adam Hochschild and David Van Reybrouck, and first exposed by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, *FS* could be accused of perpetuating what Paul Gilroy calls postimperial melancholia. Edward (and the novel as a whole) refuses to acknowledge 'the grim and brutal details' of the 'colonial past',⁴⁴⁰ thus enabling his desire for Luc (and Hollinghurst's plot) to carry on unencumbered.

The parentheses in the previous sentence signal an important ambiguity: is it Edward or Hollinghurst that is melancholic? One might argue that by the very act of introducing the Congo – which, in Hochschild's words, is 'a symbol of colonial brutality'⁴⁴¹ – Hollinghurst alludes subtly to Conrad and thus points his reader towards colonial violence and exploitation, without allowing his novel to become overly didactic. This strategy of historical implication rather than explication can be made clearer by way of one of Hollinghurst's poems. 'Sugar Mill' was written

⁴³⁸ 'A playful display of wit or cleverness, esp. in a work of literature; a witty or humorous trifle' (OED).

⁴³⁹ Hochschild, 'Introduction', *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts*, xiv.

⁴⁴⁰ Gilroy, *After Empire*, p.3.

⁴⁴¹ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (London: Pan, 2006), p.4.

‘during a month spent in Carriacou in the Windward Islands in early 1989 [or 1987]’.⁴⁴² This short poem, possibly based on Hollinghurst’s experiences as a tourist, simply consists of an unnamed speaker being shown inside a ‘ruined sugar-mill’ by a local man named Zephren:⁴⁴³

When we climb down through the floor / into a cool, flagged cellar / Zephren is nervous and sulky: / ‘Will you give me ten dollars?’ / I look up through the tree-choked tower / and ask politely, ‘What for?’ / ‘Ice cream’, he says, and means it.

The ghosts of slavery hover at the very edges of this exploration of a ‘ruined sugar-mill’ on a Caribbean island. Zephren’s shift in mood as he enters the cellar suggests awareness, on his part and potentially that of the speaker, of this traumatic past. His request for ‘ten dollars’ seems to stand in for calls for historical reparations. The change in tone, however, instituted by the final line reveals that this interpretation is one that the reader and potentially the speaker have foisted onto the situation. Zephren’s actual desire, or at least the desire that he articulates, is for something much simpler and more immediately satisfying: ‘Ice cream’.

The Congo might be considered to function in a similar manner in *FS*. Like the eponymous ‘sugar-mill’, it stands in for colonial atrocities that are not quite articulated but that nonetheless haunt Hollinghurst’s novel. Documenting these atrocities clearly is not Hollinghurst’s aim: he is no historian, nor is he an historical novelist. This leaves him open to the charge of postimperial melancholia, but it does not mean that his fiction is reducible to this charge. Hollinghurst’s interest in empire, as I shall now begin to argue, has less to do with exposing dark historical realities than with reconsidering imperial constructions of Englishness. This is an interest

⁴⁴² O’Donoghue, p.24. Hollinghurst recalls visiting Carriacou in 1987 rather than 1989 (‘Interview’, *Prac Crit*, June 2015 <<http://www.praccrit.com/interviews/from-confidential-chats-with-boys-interview-by-julian-gewirtz/>> [accessed 3 April 2017]).

⁴⁴³ Hollinghurst, ‘Sugar Mill’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 May 1988, p.579.

which surfaces momentarily in *FS*, but is developed further in *The Line of Beauty* and *The Stranger's Child*.

Africa first enters the novel, one hundred pages or so before the introduction of the Congo, when Edward discovers a book by one of his family members in a Belgian bookshop. 'Aunt Tina', he explains,

had spent a long childless adulthood in Africa, married to a Scottish coffee-planter, and her novels had come to her almost unbidden, like letters full of homesickness and childish make-believe. The more she wrote of England the more romantic her picture of it became – after three or four books it was barely recognizable; but her gaffes began to attract her a new audience, who loved the inadvertent comedy of her naively lofty style. [...] I remembered the disappointment I'd felt as a child when she returned from Kenya and I discovered that she wasn't black, merely tanned and wizened [...] And then she had ended up in Chislehurst, in eccentric isolation amid some private fantasy of England. (pp.45-46)

There are three key points to be made about Hollinghurst's use of a colonial African backstory.⁴⁴⁴ First, this passage suggests an explanation for Edward's exoticist desire for Cherif: Edward's attraction to African men seems to stem from his impressions of Aunt Tina living in Africa. His 'disappointment' that 'she wasn't black' reveals the alluring racialised fantasy that her colonial location produced on his young psyche. Second, if Edward has constructed Africa (and Africanness) through Aunt Tina, then she has constructed England (and Englishness) through Africa; we might recall Charles in *SPL*, who 'reconstructed [...] an episode of his English life' whilst sitting 'amid the boulders and thorn-bushes of Africa' (p.98). Her Firbankian⁴⁴⁵ 'private

⁴⁴⁴ It seems likely that Aunt Tina would have lived in Kenya during the period of British colonial rule. As with the Congo passage, Hollinghurst leaves us to try and work out the time period in question by working back through the generations. The fact that Edward alternates between 'aunt' and 'great-aunt' adds to the difficulty. For Caserio, 'the protagonist's great-aunt [...] would have been a contemporary of Firbank's' (p.112).

⁴⁴⁵ For Caserio, 'a reminder of Firbank in *The Folding Star* is the play with names of churches and schools (St Vaast, St Narcissus, St Opportune) and the camp title of a book, *Careful, Mary!*, written by the protagonist's great-aunt' (p.112). The fact that Aunt Tina's 'private fantasy' is said to take place in Chislehurst enhances this

fantasy of England' has less to do with the real England than with an imaginative response to living in Africa. As Young writes regarding imperial discourse: 'Englishness [was] not sustainable any more within England itself, [it had become] a lost identity that had to be created in the colonies'.⁴⁴⁶ Crucially, however, and this is the third point, Aunt Tina's 'creat[ions]' are enjoyed by readers ironically. Her 'childish make-believe' England, penned from colonial Africa, registers as comically naïve. Edward's bookshop discovery, then, serves a satirical rather than narrative function. This strategic coincidence (recalling the re-entry of Tim into the narrative of 'ATB') not only imports Aunt Tina's imperial imaginary into Edward's Belgian tale but also undermines its national vision.

Aunt Tina does not play a prominent role in the rest of the novel. Ultimately, it is Nazism rather than imperialism that brings together the novel's various narrative threads – Symbolism, homosexuality, Belgium – as Paul Echevin's guilt-ridden tale provides a synecdoche for the nation's wider complicity with the Nazis and its subsequent post-Occupation shame. It is for this reason that I have not dedicated as much space to this novel as to Hollinghurst's others. *FS* has, however, enabled me to expand my analysis of Hollinghurst's postimperialism beyond the remit of erotic exoticism. After briefly discussing Edward's relationship with Cherif, this section has addressed Hollinghurst's enigmatic references to the Congo and his satirical account of Aunt Tina's imperial imaginary. This has enabled me to establish two of the key claims of the chapter: first, that *SPL* is not the only one of Hollinghurst's novels to engage with issues of race and empire; second, that his interest in these topics is not restricted to their intersections with sexuality.

intertextual connection: Firbank grew up in Chislehurst, living there with his parents from 1887 to 1907.

⁴⁴⁶ Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, p.220.

The Line of Beauty: Otherness, Englishness, and Africa

The third-person narrative of *The Line of Beauty* (*LoB*, hereafter), Hollinghurst's fourth novel and a Booker Prize winner in 2004, is focalised through the perspective of another gay young man. Nick Guest comes from a middle-class background in Northamptonshire but spends the novel lodging with the wealthy Fedden family in West London, where he is writing, or pretending to write, a graduate thesis on style in Conrad, Henry James, and George Meredith at University College London. Gerald Fedden, whose son Toby studied with Nick at Oxford, has recently been elected to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. He became MP for Barwick, Nick's hometown, during her 1983 landslide re-election. The novel is divided into three sections, which are set in 1983, 1986, and 1987, respectively. After a brief sexual relationship with a black council worker named Leo Charles, Nick begins a cocaine-fuelled one with Wani Ouradi, an aspiring film producer from a wealthy Lebanese family. When Leo is killed by AIDS and Wani begins to suffer from it, Nick's hedonistic lifestyle is finally exposed. The novel ends with Gerald evicting him from their grand Notting Hill house and the privileges of upper-class life.

Much of the critical discussion regarding *LoB* has focused upon its political relationship to Thatcherism. For Simon During, through its exposition of 'the contradictions between [Thatcherism's] dissenting, family-based values and its economic neo-liberalism', *LoB* forms part of the 'literary sub-genre [...] which I will simply call the anti-Thatcherite novel'.⁴⁴⁷ As During admits, however, 'the novel is too positively embedded in Thatcherism for it to work simply as critique';⁴⁴⁸ in James

⁴⁴⁷ Simon During, 'Queering Thatcher', *Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies* 3 (2013), 1-13 (p.9; p.6).

⁴⁴⁸ During, p.10.

Wood's words, Hollinghurst is 'secretly in love with the world of Gerald Fedden'.⁴⁴⁹

This kind of political analysis has provoked consideration of how Hollinghurst negotiates 'the nostalgic colonial national identity that Thatcher coveted for the late twentieth century'.⁴⁵⁰ Sarah Brophy argues that 'the novel puts pressure on the troublingly "suppressive" nostalgia of England after empire' and that it does so by queering the country house tradition.⁴⁵¹ This is a tradition that, as we saw in the author survey chapter, has significant material and symbolic ties to empire.

It is not just the 'logic of heritage', however, that draws empire into Hollinghurst's novel.⁴⁵² Nor is 'heritage' the only aspect of postimperialism that it 'puts' under 'pressure'. I begin by demonstrating the persistence of (erotic) exoticism and orientalism in Hollinghurst's 1980s London. These belated imperial attitudes, now instituted at the level of the nation's governing elite, inform Thatcherite constructions of racial and sexual otherness. Second, I examine the postimperial nostalgia and neoimperial revivalism mobilised by Gerald's panegyric to 'a classic English scene' and the rhetoric surrounding the Falklands War.⁴⁵³ Finally, I situate Badger's suspicious financial ties to Africa in a history of imperial plunder and local resistance. My analysis is supported at two points – in relation to this final claim about Africa and in relation to Gerald's Englishness speech – by referring to the 2006 BBC television adaptation of the novel. This is an envisioning of *LoB* that brings to

⁴⁴⁹ James Wood, *The Fun Stuff* (London: Vintage, 2014), p.313.

⁴⁵⁰ Kim Duff, 'Let's Dance', *Thatcher and After*, eds Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 180-98 (p.196).

⁴⁵¹ Sarah Brophy, 'Queer Histories and Postcolonial Intimacies', *End of Empire*, 184-202 (p.185).

⁴⁵² Brophy, p.185.

⁴⁵³ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Picador, 2012), p.270. All further references to *LoB* incorporated into the text.

the fore the national and international politics with which I am preoccupied here.⁴⁵⁴ Rather than being ‘secretly in love’ with the Thatcherite 1980s, as Wood suggests, I argue that Hollinghurst critically resituates this era and its political ideology within the contexts of empire and decolonisation.

LoB, as Walkowitz writes, ‘also [like *SPL*] presents a young charmer, Nick Guest, who admires Henry James, [and] prefers sex with black men’.⁴⁵⁵ As in ‘ATB’, this erotic preference defines the protagonist’s homosexual awakening: Nick’s first encounter is with the black council worker Leo. Nick’s description of colour-contrast – ‘how black he [Arthur] looked, in the white skirt of a bath towel’ (p.177) – and his choice of waiter ‘on grounds of beauty, the dark, full-lipped one’ (p.375) clearly recall Hollinghurst’s other racially-obsessed protagonists: Tim, Will, and Edward. Wani points out Nick’s fetishisation of black skin on numerous occasions, often using racist slurs. In relation to their drug dealer Ronnie, he says, ‘you only like him because he’s a wog’ (p.253), and, when Wani picks someone up at Hampstead ponds, he jokes, ‘I mean I know he’s not one of your nig-nogs’ (p.191).

The name that Nick chooses for the art magazine that he and Wani work on together – ‘Ogee’ – suggests that Wani’s Middle Eastern background carries both erotic and aesthetic significance for him. Most critics have pointed to the intertextual connection, noted by the aesthete Nick (p.200), between ‘the ogee curve, or “line of beauty” ’ and ‘William Hogarth’s *Analysis of Beauty* (1754), where Hogarth identified the sinuous S-shaped double curve as an exquisitely elegant form [...] an

⁴⁵⁴ *The Line of Beauty*, dir. By Saul Dibb (BBC, 2006). The script was written by Andrew Davies. The series was divided into three one-hour episodes, mirroring the three sections of the novel.

⁴⁵⁵ Walkowitz, p.231.

expression of pure aestheticism'.⁴⁵⁶ But as Nick states elsewhere (in more Firbankian terms): 'Ogee had come to him: it had a rightness to it, being both English and exotic, like so many things he loved' (p.200). To Nick, Wani himself is 'both English and exotic'; they share cultural interests in London, but Wani has enough 'exotic family protocols' to keep Nick intrigued (p.203). Ogee – referring to a type of architectural design which, according to Nick, 'originates in ... well, in the Middle East, in fact, and then you see it in English architecture from about the fourteenth century onwards' (p.225) – compliments the 'Egyptian bathroom' in the editorial office (p.199). Its orientalism (or 'ornamentalism')⁴⁵⁷ also suits the magazine's content: 'all extraordinary things, buildings, weird Indian sculptures' (p.224). The only edition that is published, before Wani's premature death, contains 'short features on mah-jong sets and toy soldiers of the Raj' (p.489). Nick's aestheticist posturing, then, belies his exoticist desire for all things (Middle) Eastern.⁴⁵⁸

The erotic and aesthetic exoticism of protagonist Nick operates alongside the more blatantly racist attitudes of the elite Thatcherite circle that he moves in and, to some extent, becomes a part of. Paul (or 'Polly') Tompkins, we are told, 'mocked' Wani at Oxford for being

only the son of a grocer, an immigrant orange-and-lemon seller, 'a Levantine cockney tart' was Polly's phrase – he was a cute little Lebanese boy who'd been sent to Harrow and turned into a drawling English gentleman. (pp.188-89)

Paul's disdain is partially class-based: it is directed towards Wani's lack of respectable ancestry, his family's new rather than old money. Not only is Wani 'the son of a grocer', but his father Bertrand – a Lebanese millionaire who made his

⁴⁵⁶ Robert Macfarlane, 'The Line of Beauty', *The Good of the Novel*, eds Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan (London: Faber, 2011), 170-85 (p.181).

⁴⁵⁷ Cannadine's *Ornamentalism* is referred to in my introduction.

⁴⁵⁸ On the relationship between exoticism, orientalism, and fin-de-siècle aestheticism, see: Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp.142-176.

fortune by creating ‘the Mira supermarket chain’ (p.64) – is specifically rebuked for being ‘an immigrant orange-and-lemon seller’; both his occupation and his foreignness are ridiculed. Likewise, the phrase ‘Levantine cockney tart’ combines Wani’s class status (‘cockney’) with his ethnic background (‘Levantine’), using this archaic term – meaning, ‘pertaining to the east’ (OED) – to castigate him as an unwanted other. Wani is a ‘drawling’ rather than a real ‘English gentleman’, Paul insists. The addition of ‘tart’, finally, evokes the orientalist conflation of lasciviousness and the east that underpinned the Forsterian narrative of ‘ATB’.

Paul’s prejudices towards Wani foreground one of the novel’s key themes (adapted from Henry James): the relationship between old and new money, or old and new Tories, in the Thatcherite 1980s. Much of the novel’s comedy and drama derives from the interactions between these two groups. When Lady Partridge, Gerald’s pompous mother, attends a dinner with Bertrand, ‘Nick knew it was upsetting for her to sit next to what she always called an A-rab, but something seemed to kindle in her too at the closeness of so much money’ (p.239). In this instance, the influx of new money helps to overcome old racial prejudices. The Ouradis, despite their Middle Eastern background, are allowed to enter the elite lives of white English Tories and businessmen. Leo and the West Indian taxi driver Brentford most certainly are not; Brentford is abused at the door of the Feddens’ house – ‘you keep your hands off her, you...’ (p.149) – simply for bringing Catherine home. Still, ‘money’ does not dispel Lady Partridge’s racism, merely abates it momentarily. She ‘always’ uses the word ‘A-rab’. This is a term that her son Gerald (‘Beaten at boules by a bloody A-rab!’ (p.356)) and Lord Shepton (‘you bloody Arab’ (p.91)) also deploy. When Bertrand meets Lady Kimbolton – ‘the tireless party fund-raiser’ (p.239) – Gerald introduces him as ‘one of our great supporters’ (p.251) and she replies: ‘“splendid!” [...] and

gave him a smile in which political zeal managed almost entirely to disguise some older instinct about Middle Eastern shopkeepers' (p.252). Bertrand's patronage cannot buy him respect, only a single word and a smile. Even the Lady's smile betrays 'some older instinct', one that combines class- ('shopkeepers') and race-based ('Middle Eastern') prejudices.

Orientalist attitudes are not only directed towards the Ouradis on the grounds of race, but also, more unusually, Pat Grayson and Nick on the grounds of sexuality. Whilst on holiday in France, the Feddens find out that Pat, Catherine's godfather, has died of AIDS. In order to obscure the real cause of death from the snobbish multi-millionaires Maurice and Sophie Tipper, Gerald's wife Rachel tells them that he 'picked up some extraordinary bug in the far East last year. No one knew what it was. It's thought to be some incredibly rare thing. It's just frightfully bad luck' (p.334). Not only does Rachel homogenise 'the far East' into some mysterious foreign space, but her very use of this geographic shorthand as a substitute for AIDS promotes the idea of a threatening orient riddled with 'extraordinary' and 'rare' diseases, sexual or otherwise. 'The far East' is indirectly designated as a site of homosexual transgression, much like Egypt in 'ATB' and Sudan in *SPL*, but now it is one with fatal consequences.

Rachel's casual orientalism draws upon and perpetuates nineteenth-century imperial fears – dissected by John Barrell in *The Infection of Thomas de Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (1991) – regarding the 'unimaginable horrors' of 'the East [...] as an unknown, empty space'.⁴⁵⁹ de Quincey, as Catherine Hall writes, 'was constantly terrorised by his fear of infection from the East'.⁴⁶⁰ In the UK and the

⁴⁵⁹ John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas de Quincey* (London: Yale University Press, 1991), pp.7-8.

⁴⁶⁰ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.19.

US in the 1980s and 1990s, ‘fear of infection’ became politicised in new ways as the HIV/AIDS epidemic became entangled with older orientalist and Africanist discourses.⁴⁶¹ The English travel writer Bruce Chatwin, for instance, describes his contraction of a ‘disease’ (which would later be revealed to be AIDS-related) in thoroughly orientalist terms: ‘trust me to pick up a disease never recorded among Europeans. The fungus that has attacked my bone marrow has been recorded among 10 Chinese peasants (China is presumably where I got it), a few Thais and a killer whale cast up on the shores of Arabia’.⁴⁶² The ‘rhetoric of AIDS’, as Simon Watney describes it within a UK context,⁴⁶³ coupled the disease with otherness – whether sexual, racial, or cultural – thereby distancing it from familial, national, and western norms.

For Gerald, the foreign ‘bug’ that Rachel refers to has smuggled its way into his household. Gerald’s brutal tirade near the end of the novel (pp.478-82) portrays Nick’s homosexuality, which has just been exposed by the press, as a destructive intrusion into the properly English domestic order of what he calls (despite his adultery and Catherine’s dissidence) ‘a real family’ (p.481). Gerald accuses Nick of manipulating them with ‘an old homo trick. You can’t have a real family, so you attach yourself to someone else’s’ (p.481). The language of attachment figures Nick as a parasite feeding off a host, recalling Rachel’s description of Pat’s Eastern ‘bug’. Nick, who tries to explain that he is not an ‘alien invader’ (p.480) but was invited and

⁴⁶¹ On AIDS and Africanist discourses, see: Cindy Patton, ‘Inventing African AIDS’, *New Formations* 10 (1990), 25-39; and, Neville Hoad, *African Intimacies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

⁴⁶² Bruce Chatwin, *Under the Sun*, eds Elizabeth Chatwin and Nicholas Shakespeare (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010), p.465. This is from a letter to his mother-in-law, Gertrude Chanler, dated 13 October 1986.

⁴⁶³ Simon Watney, *Policing Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.4.

welcomed into the house, has become Gerald's 'enemy within', his 'fifth column'.⁴⁶⁴ These terms, by which Thatcher 'define[d] all those who challenge a dominant order as a common, natural enemy',⁴⁶⁵ now seem to belie a particularly postimperial, as well as class-based, paranoia: what should be exterior (the colonial) has now become interior (the immigrant, the homosexual, the socialist). Pat, as both homosexual and 'madly left-wing' (p.334), thus poses a double threat. Conservative – big and small 'c' – fears about the intrusion of AIDS align with concerns about the vulnerability of postimperial England, a national body politic attempting to redefine its identity by shoring up its borders against former colonial subjects and the carnal 'bugs' that they supposedly carry.⁴⁶⁶

The examples gathered here support Robert Macfarlane's claim that 'the novel has observations to make concerning the prejudices of racism, homophobia and snobbery during that decade, and how happily these three grim biases nested together'.⁴⁶⁷ But Macfarlane's overall assessment of the novel's relationship to Thatcherism is rather equivocal. He argues, like James Wood, that 'repeatedly in *The Line of Beauty*, Hollinghurst reveals himself to be more in love with the careless style of the aristocracy, and the languid beauties made possible by wealth, than he can acknowledge or even sense'.⁴⁶⁸ On the basis of the examples above, however, I consider Hollinghurst's historically- as well as socially-informed narrative to critically expose, rather than be seduced by, postimperial constructions of otherness

⁴⁶⁴ Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.29; p.53.

⁴⁶⁵ Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, p.29.

⁴⁶⁶ Watney also recognises the ways in which AIDS and AIDS sufferers became associated with the idea of 'an enemy within [...] enemies of "the family", the sacred and largely imaginary locus of neo-conservatism in all its variant forms and voices' (p.16).

⁴⁶⁷ Macfarlane, p.179.

⁴⁶⁸ Macfarlane, p.182.

within the Thatcherite 1980s. These constructions include the erotic and aesthetic exoticism of protagonist Nick, the racial prejudices of relatively minor characters like Lady Partridge, and the orientalist figuration of AIDS as an ‘extraordinary’ eastern ‘bug’.

But what, exactly, constitutes the national centre that Gerald (and the Thatcherite ideology he embodies) seeks to defend against otherness? In the middle section of the novel, set in 1986, Gerald visits his constituency in Barwick, Northamptonshire, to open a village fete.⁴⁶⁹ The narrator’s description of the fete – ‘today the field was ringed with stalls, there was a skittle alley hedged with straw bales, a traction engine [...] the silver prize band...’ (p.268) – evokes an idyllic, Larkin-esque vision of rural England.⁴⁷⁰ As Gerald puts it in his speech to the local crowd: ‘this is a classic English day [...] and a classic English scene’ (p.270). The BBC adaptation of the novel significantly extends his patriotic rhetoric:

This is a classic English day, a classic English scene, and classic English weather. Every time I come back to Barwick I think, this is the true England, these are the people, this is the true British spirit, we fought two world wars, yes and the Falklands War, to preserve, and there’s nothing better than a jolly good country fete, and I for one can’t wait to get started, without more ado, I hereby declare the Barwick fete well and truly open.⁴⁷¹

As well as being ‘a classic English scene’, the fete now becomes an embodiment of ‘the true England’, or what is often referred to in British political discourse as ‘middle England’. This is a description that Northamptonshire fits geographically, being more or less centrally located, as well as politically, being a predominantly Conservative county. If this ‘true England’ is rural and traditional, it is also overwhelming white.

⁴⁶⁹ There is a real English village called Barwick, but it is in Somerset rather than Northamptonshire.

⁴⁷⁰ Recall, for instance, Larkin’s 1973 poem ‘Show Saturday’, in which: ‘There’s more than just animals: / Bead-stalls, balloon-men, a Bank; a beer-marque that / Half-screens a canvas Gents; a tent selling tweed’ (*Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 2003), p.149).

⁴⁷¹ *The Line of Beauty*, episode two.

The camera initially faces Gerald as he speaks, but then, after the phrases ‘classic English weather’ and ‘these are the people’, it cuts to an all-white crowd. Gerald’s ‘true England’ provides a marked contrast to the multicultural London of Leo, the Ouradis, and Notting Hill Carnival; at the beginning of the novel the family escape from London’s famous West Indian carnival, taking place on their doorstep, to the Kesslers’ Victorian country house (p.44). As in ‘ATB’, ‘Englishness’ acts ‘as a coded term for whiteness, for the invisible norm against which all other ethnicities were measured and defined’.⁴⁷²

In Andrew Davies’s television script, Gerald’s ‘classic’ England is also proudly militaristic. England was ‘preserve[d]’ on the beaches of Normandy, he reminds his audience, and once again in the seas of the South Atlantic: the logic of the speech is that today’s ‘jolly good country fete’ was made possible by these heroic sacrifices. Whilst the former sacrifice may well have been necessary, the latter was manifestly not; or rather, in the Second World War the nation *as a physical entity* was defended from invasion, whereas in the Falklands the soldiers fought for the nation *as an idea*. They fought for what Thatcher, in her famous post-Falklands address, called ‘the real spirit of Britain’.⁴⁷³ For Gilroy, Thatcher’s war and rhetoric about the war epitomised the ‘yearning for a return to national greatness’ that was at the core of the Thatcherite project.⁴⁷⁴ Gerald’s speech does not directly invoke the ‘Empire’ as the locus of that ‘return’, as Thatcher’s does.⁴⁷⁵ But his triumphant language promotes the

⁴⁷² Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, p.239.

⁴⁷³ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham’, 3 July 1982 <<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104989>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

⁴⁷⁴ Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, p.62.

⁴⁷⁵ For Thatcher, the Falklands proved that Britain was still ‘the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world . . . The lesson is that Britain has not changed’ (‘Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham’).

resurgence of national pride, mobilising this resurgence, like Thatcher, through the ‘spirit of the South Atlantic’.

The Falklands is not mentioned in Hollinghurst’s version of the village fete scene. Elsewhere in the novel, however, Gerald and his fellow Thatcherites vociferously celebrate the victory; Thatcher’s 1983 landslide re-election, after all, which brought Gerald and many of his colleagues to power, has often been attributed to ‘the so-called “Falklands Factor”’.⁴⁷⁶ At one of the many Notting Hill dinner parties, the revellers ‘were talking about the Falklands War and the need to commemorate it with a monument and to celebrate it with an annual public holiday’ (p.134). John Timms, ‘a junior minister in the Home Office’ (p.134), notes that ‘the Prime Minister favours an annual parade [...] as well as a prominent memorial. It was truly her triumph’ (p.135); his wife then reminds him that ‘the men were staunch’ and he confirms: ‘they were dauntless’ (p.135).⁴⁷⁷ The discussion focuses, then, upon memorialisation and the need to commemorate the Falklands victory in order to educate future generations. ‘The lesson of the Falklands’, in Thatcher’s own words,

is that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history. [...] If the lessons of the South Atlantic are to be learned, then they have to be learned by us all. No one can afford to be left out.⁴⁷⁸

Proposals for parades and memorials, seen in this context, are not frivolous stabs at postimperial nostalgia, but serious contributions to Thatcherism’s neoimperial revival. For John Timms, a new public holiday could become ‘a Trafalgar Day for our times’ (p.134). His wife responds by asking: ‘why not revive Trafalgar Day itself? Trafalgar

⁴⁷⁶ ‘In 1983, the Conservatives won 397 seats to Labour’s 209 [...] The so-called “Falklands Factor” played a huge part in the government’s recovery of popularity in 1982-3’ (Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.25-26).

⁴⁷⁷ In the BBC adaptation, Nick suggests ‘a statue of Mrs Thatcher perhaps’ at this point (*The Line of Beauty*, episode one).

⁴⁷⁸ Thatcher, ‘Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham’.

Day itself must be revived! Our children are forgetting the War Against the French...’ (p.134). John MacKenzie’s description of Britain’s postimperial ‘consciousness’ is pertinent here: ‘as the Falklands war demonstrated yet again [...] the values and beliefs of the imperial world view settled like a sediment in the consciousness of the British people, to be stirred again by a brief, renewed challenge in the late twentieth century’.⁴⁷⁹ Britain’s past military glory (Trafalgar) is ‘stirred again’ via its recent triumph (Falklands). The latter becomes part of this grand tradition and it is hoped that, via memorialisation, this victory will inspire ‘our children’ to facilitate national renewal.

I will return to the role of education in England’s neoimperial revival when discussing *The Stranger’s Child*. I wish to conclude this section on *LoB* as I did the one on *FS*: by considering its enigmatic references to Africa. Towards the end of the novel, as Gerald’s finances come under public scrutiny, the family is finally forced to discuss something that they have largely taken for granted: money. Catherine raises the topic of ‘asset-stripping’. ‘That’s what Sir Maurice Tipper does’, she continues, ‘Toby told me. Maurice Tipper, Asset Stripper. That’s when they get hold of something, like an old house, they strip out all the marble fireplaces before they demolish it’ (p.451). ‘And’, as Nick continues,

‘leave everyone on the street,’ [...] ‘Exactly!’ said Catherine. ‘That, of course, is what Badger’s supposed to have done all over Africa,’ said Rachel, with a guilty grimace. ‘I don’t know if it’s true.’ ‘Oh, Badger...’ said Catherine, indulgent and dismissive at once. ‘What’s become of poor old Badger, lately, I wonder.’ ‘He’s often away,’ said Rachel, as if to excuse her vagueness about him... (pp.451-52)

Catherine’s pithy summary of Maurice’s ruthless business practices leads, somewhat surprisingly, to the indictment of Badger’s actions ‘all over Africa’. Badger, an old

⁴⁷⁹ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.258.

friend of Gerald's from Oxford, is a minor character about whom we know very little. There is 'something seedily hush-hush about Badger' (p.145) and so his work and his wealth are not discussed in much detail. It thus seems significant that he suddenly appears in this context. The ruthless logic of asset-stripping, when conducted by a British businessman 'all over Africa', raises the spectre, I contend, of imperial plunder. Despite formal decolonisation in Africa, British capitalists – like Cecil Rhodes and Lord Leverhulme before them – continue to extract vast profits by 'strip[ping]' out the continent's resources and 'leav[ing] everyone on the street'. This may explain why 'in parts of Africa, according to Toby, he was known not as Badger but by one of a number of words for hyena' (p.132).⁴⁸⁰

In order to situate Badger's enigmatic African business practices deeper within an imperial context it is helpful to invoke McLeod's distinction between imperialism and colonialism. For McLeod, imperialism is 'an ideological concept which upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another', whereas colonialism is 'only *one form of practice* which results from the ideology of imperialism, and specifically concerns the *settlement* of one group of people in a new location'.⁴⁸¹ 'While *colonialism* is virtually over today', McLeod goes on to explain, '*imperialism* continues apace as Western nations such as America are still engaged in imperial acts, securing wealth and power through the continuing economic exploitation of other nations'.⁴⁸² There is no suggestion that Badger is

⁴⁸⁰ Hyenas are not only 'carnivorous' animals, but their name is 'applied to a cruel, treacherous, and rapacious person' (OED).

⁴⁸¹ McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, p.7. Boehmer distinguishes between imperialism and colonialism in similar terms (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p.3).

⁴⁸² McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, p.8. For Derek Gregory, colonialism is by no means over: 'the constellations of power, knowledge, and geography that I describe here continue to colonize lives all over the world' (*The Colonial Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), xv).

involved in colonial settlement or in the direct control of postcolonial African countries. He does, however, seem to contribute to ‘the continuing economic exploitation of other nations’. ‘Formal’ decolonisation does not preclude the possibility of ‘informal’ imperial power ‘continu[ing] apace’.⁴⁸³ As John Darwin recognises, the post-war period of decolonisation was

no time to relax Britain’s grip on colonial resources [...] it seemed vital to stand guard over the Middle East’s oil (supplying some 60 per cent of British consumption) and the vast British-owned refinery at Abadan in Iran. For those who stood in its path, it was easy to think that British imperialism, far from fading away, had acquired an aggressive new edge.⁴⁸⁴

The ‘wind of change’ may well have been ‘blowing throughout [the African] continent’, as Harold Macmillan declared famously, but this did not mean that Britain no longer sought to protect its economic interests. British businessmen, as Daniel Litvin argues, have continued to amass ‘empires of profit’ by riding roughshod over the interests of local populations.⁴⁸⁵

The destructive consequences of Badger’s African ‘asset-stripping’ are subtly suggested by the passage above. Rachel’s ‘guilty grimace’ and Catherine’s lament, ‘Oh, Badger...’, reveal a degree of discomfort. However, it is Davies’s television script which once again, like Said’s contrapuntal method, ‘draw[s] out, extend[s], give[s] emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented’.⁴⁸⁶ After Catherine defends Badger’s actions, Rachel states: ‘I rather think some of the Africans weren’t too thrilled about it’.⁴⁸⁷ Rachel both introduces and euphemistically downplays the possibility of African resistance to Badger’s

⁴⁸³ See: Gallagher and Robinson.

⁴⁸⁴ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.353. Darwin uses the phrase ‘economic colonialism’ (p.353).

⁴⁸⁵ In *Empires of Profit* (London: Texere, 2003), Litvin argues that contemporary multinational companies, from Nike to Shell, are ‘imperial in their own way’ (xii).

⁴⁸⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.78.

⁴⁸⁷ *The Line of Beauty*, episode three.

actions. ‘It was the case nearly everywhere in the non-European world’, Said writes, ‘that the coming of the white man brought forth some sort of resistance’.⁴⁸⁸

Hollinghurst’s novel does not invoke resistance in this way. Rather, as we have seen, the major contribution of *The Line of Beauty* to the critical examination of postimperial Englishness is to expose the numerous ways in which Thatcherite conceptions of otherness, Englishness, and Africa continue to be informed by imperial attitudes and anxieties. These anxieties, particularly as they relate to ideals of masculinity, are central to Hollinghurst’s next novel, *The Stranger’s Child*.

Queering Imperial and Postimperial Masculinities in *The Stranger’s Child*

Most Hollinghurst novels, like *LoB*, span relatively short time periods in the 1980s and/or 1990s. *The Stranger’s Child* (*SC*, hereafter) has a far more ambitious temporal structure, providing a narrative of changing England across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Its first section is set in 1913. Cecil Valance, a young poet, is visiting his fellow Cambridge student George Sawle at the Sawles’ family house, Two Acres in Middlesex. In-between Cecil’s and George’s secret sexual encounters, Cecil flirts with George’s younger sister Daphne and then writes a poem, ‘Two Acres’, which seems to be dedicated to one (or both) of the siblings. The second section presents a gathering in 1926 at Corley Court, the Valance family home in Berkshire; they gather in memory of Cecil, who ‘fell at Maricourt’ during one of the battles of the Somme in the First World War.⁴⁸⁹ The third is set in 1967 and is focalised by Paul Bryant, a young bank clerk who begins a relationship with Peter Rowe, a teacher at Corley (which has now become a boarding school). The fourth is set in 1979-80 when

⁴⁸⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xii.

⁴⁸⁹ Hollinghurst, *The Stranger’s Child* (London: Picador, 2011), p.350. All further references to *SC* are incorporated into the text.

Paul is researching a biography of Cecil and interviewing the key figures in his life. In the final section, set in 2008, Paul attends a memorial service for Peter where a young book dealer called Rob Salter becomes interested in the Sawle-Valance history.

Nostalgia has dominated critical discussions of *SC*, a novel which moves from the ‘golden summer’ of pre-war England to the near present.⁴⁹⁰ For Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga, ‘*The Stranger’s Child* opens with a nostalgic look into the past’, but, as she goes on to argue, Hollinghurst’s ‘engagement with the country-house tradition [is] more complex’.⁴⁹¹ Terentowicz-Fotyga identifies a ‘mixture’ of ‘nostalgia’ and ‘irony’,⁴⁹² just as Daniel Mendelsohn ‘feel[s]’ a ‘tension between the author’s gritty subversiveness and a certain sentimental nostalgia’.⁴⁹³ Mendelsohn mostly associates this ‘tension’ with *SPL*. ‘What marks *The Stranger’s Child*’, by contrast, ‘is a strong nostalgia for the old style of life’.⁴⁹⁴ Mendelsohn considers this ‘strong nostalgia’ to be part of ‘a certain taste in popular entertainment, which cannot get enough of “old” England – Downton Abbey, most recently, to say nothing of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, [and] the endless succession of Austen and Forster adaptations’.⁴⁹⁵

This is precisely the kind of nostalgia that Hollinghurst hoped to avoid. He has revealed in interview that he ‘had to be careful this book [*SC*] wasn’t marketed as a Downton Abbey-type thing, and I hope it doesn’t trade in easy nostalgia and fantasy about the past; rather the opposite’.⁴⁹⁶ Elsewhere, he has complained about ‘this whole spurious nostalgia for the Edwardian period. I’m very fed up with all these

⁴⁹⁰ On nostalgia and the ‘golden summer’ of 1913, see: Charles Emmerson, *1913: The World before the Great War* (2013).

⁴⁹¹ Terentowicz-Fotyga, p.199.

⁴⁹² Terentowicz-Fotyga, p.205.

⁴⁹³ Mendelsohn, p.16.

⁴⁹⁴ Mendelsohn, p.17.

⁴⁹⁵ Mendelsohn, p.17.

⁴⁹⁶ Moss.

adaptations of Forster's books, where the treatment is so nostalgic and makes them seem so picturesque. All their point and sharpness gets taken straight out'.⁴⁹⁷

Nonetheless, for James Wood as for Mendelsohn, *SC* 'struggles to escape' an 'old-fashioned, period feel'. 'Hollinghurst', Wood argues, 'seems too ready to perpetuate a fond English elegy that he should, instead, be scrutinising. "Muddle" is the quintessential postwar English word: for decades, the country has been muddling along in its own post-imperial wake'.⁴⁹⁸ Unlike previous commentators, Wood explicitly connects the novel's elegiac tone to England's postimperial condition. More specifically, he links this tone with England's inability to do more than 'muddle' (a quintessentially Forsterian word) through its 'post-imperial wake'.

Wood's review, however, does not provide a detailed reading of the novel's aesthetic or ideological relationship to England's 'post-imperial wake'. I do so here by considering the ways in which *Hollinghurst*'s historical and intertextual references situate the central figure of Cecil – as poet, soldier, historian, and entombed man – in a militarised and imperial context. In particular, I discuss Cecil's interest in the 'Indian Mutiny' and General Havelock, drawing upon Graham Dawson's account of the 'imperial soldier hero'. The memorial that is dedicated to Cecil after his death and the educational ideals of the school that Corley Court becomes lead me onto a discussion of the ways in which *Hollinghurst* queers imperial and postimperial masculinities. In using the term 'queer', I do not intend to link *Hollinghurst*'s fiction with queer theory. As Kaye Mitchell notes, *Hollinghurst* 'reveal[s] few obvious debts

⁴⁹⁷ Hollinghurst, '[Interview with] Alan Hollinghurst', *Something Inside*, p.244. In his review of the 1987 cinematic adaptation of Forster's novel *Maurice*, Hollinghurst complains that 'the central struggle is muffled by the nostalgia with which the period is viewed, and the society which Forster is criticizing becomes almost involuntarily an object of veneration' ('Suppressive Nostalgia', *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 Nov 1987, p.1225).

⁴⁹⁸ James Wood, 'Sons and Lovers'.

to recent queer theory'.⁴⁹⁹ I find the verb 'to queer' useful, however, as a way of articulating how Hollinghurst playfully revises dominant ideologies – in this case, regarding masculinity – through the lens of homosexuality. By bringing his interests in sexuality and empire together once again, Hollinghurst critically lays bare the connections between militarism, imperialism, masculinity, and homosexuality.

I begin by discussing one of Hollinghurst's most explicit references to the imperial context of his novel. In the second section, Daphne and Dudley (Cecil's younger brother) are married and have two children, Wilfrid and Corinna. The young Wilfrid is observed by his uncle George in the library: 'Wilfrid stood listlessly spinning the large coloured globe, with its well-known splodges of British pink, first one way, then the other. His hands smacked lightly on the bright varnished paper, and the world echoed faintly inside' (p.231). Those synecdochic 'well-known splodges' suggest the familiarity and even banality of Britain's colonial possessions for an aristocratic family in 1926. Wilfrid, by the age of six, is already used to seeing 'British pink' spread around the globe. One might recall Said's claim that 'Fanny's ignorance [in Austen's *Mansfield Park*] when she arrives at Mansfield as a frightened ten-year-old is signified by her inability to "put the map of Europe together"'.⁵⁰⁰ In 'listlessly spinning' his globe 'one way, then the other', Wilfrid, by contrast, is becoming naturalised as a citizen of the imperial metropolis. He feels able not only to play freely with this miniature globe, like his compatriots do with the real one, but

⁴⁹⁹ Kaye Mitchell, ' "Who are you?" ', *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence*, 174-190 (p.188). For Rivkin, 'Hollinghurst might [even] have an allergic relation to queer theory' (p.81).

⁵⁰⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.102.

also to unleash his anger upon it: to ‘smack [...] the world’ until it ‘echoe[s] [...] inside’.⁵⁰¹

Wilfrid’s nascent imperial confidence and aggression finds its full realisation, I contend, in the novel’s central figure. Cecil is typically associated with the war in which he died. His most famous poem, ‘Two Acres’, is primarily interpreted both inside and outside of the novel as a patriotic First World War poem and compared with Rupert Brooke’s ‘The Soldier’ (1915).⁵⁰² But Daphne’s granddaughter, Jenny Keeping, provides an alternative reading when she declares: ‘I think Uncle Cecil’s poems are awfully imperialist, Granny’ (p.263). For the critic Christopher Tayler, Jenny’s pithy remark merely reflects the naïve opinion of a ‘student type’.⁵⁰³ It is difficult to assess the quality of Jenny’s interpretation without being able to read Cecil’s poems in full; ‘Two Acres’ is only ever presented to the reader in fragments. For me, Jenny’s ‘imperialist’ critique provokes a reassessment of Cecil’s character – his attitudes and interests – in the first section of the novel, as well as the ways in which he becomes posthumously mythologised.

Cecil explains in his very first conversation with the Sawle family that his mother is known as ‘“The General” [...] or sometimes “The Iron Duke”, on account of her very faint resemblance to the first Duke of Wellington’ (pp.19-20). By proudly

⁵⁰¹ Wilfrid is angry because his mother won’t allow him to watch her being drawn (p.231).

⁵⁰² After Cecil’s death, the journalist Seby Stokes says to George: ‘the War made his name, you’d have to agree; when Churchill quoted those lines from “Two Acres” in *The Times*, Cecil had become a war poet’ (p.162). As various critics have noted, this reference to Churchill reinforces an intertextual link between ‘Two Acres’ and Brooke’s ‘The Soldier’ (Thomas Mallon, ‘Alan Hollinghurst Imagines a Fallen Poet’s Literary Afterlife’, *New York Times*, 21 October 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/books/review/the-strangers-child-by-alan-hollinghurst-book-review.html>> [accessed 3 April 2017]).

⁵⁰³ Christopher Tayler, ‘The Rupert Trunk’, *London Review of Books*, 28 July 2011 <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n15/christopher-tayler/the-rupert-trunk>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

associating Lady Valance with the ‘Duke of Wellington’, Cecil attaches her to an historical lineage that is both militarist and imperialist; as Darwin writes, ‘the battle of Waterloo’, Wellington’s most famous victory, ‘was vital to’ Britain’s ‘global expansion after 1815’.⁵⁰⁴ ‘The Iron Duke’, as the Sawles find out, is ‘all for killing. She likes me to get a gun out when I can [...] I’m quite a fair shot [...] The General sent me out with a gun when I was quite small, to kill a whole lot of rooks...’ (p.23). The Valances’ version of rural life is brutal rather than pastoral. Their enthusiasm for hunting becomes particularly disturbing when discussion turns towards the forthcoming war:

Cecil seemed ready to fight at once – he said he would jump at the chance [...] ‘no question, old chap’ [...] He’d told them already how much he liked killing, and clearly Germans would represent an exciting advance on mere foxes, pheasants and ducks. (p.53).

Cecil’s hunting experiences are explicitly connected to the fact that, in Daphne’s later words, ‘he loved the War’ (p.480) that was to kill him and millions of others.

This is not Larkin’s nostalgic vision, in ‘MCMXIV’ (1964), of pre-war ‘innocence’: ‘Never such innocence, never before or since [...] Never such innocence again’.⁵⁰⁵ Cecil might be naive about the dangers of war, but he is not innocent. He and his mother are too violent for that and too embedded in the nation’s military history. Cecil’s appetite for violence exists in dialogue with his historical studies. One of the few details that the Sawles know about Cecil before their first meeting, presumably having been informed by George, is that he’s ‘already quite an expert on some aspect of the Indian Mutiny’ (p.9). As with Wilfrid’s globe, the fact that this elicits no further comment suggests the familiarity and banality of empire in 1913.

⁵⁰⁴ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.322.

⁵⁰⁵ Larkin, ‘MCMXIV’, *Collected Poems*, p.99.

For Hollinghurst's contemporary reader, however, Cecil's choice of historical expertise may require more explanation.

The so-called 'Indian Mutiny' began in Meerut on 10 May 1857 with a mutiny of sepoys in the British East India Company's army.⁵⁰⁶ Sepoy was the name for an Indian 'trooper, usually an infantryman' at the time.⁵⁰⁷ This revolt sparked violent military and civil conflicts which spread across India, and were suppressed by force, lasting until 1859. What, then, does Cecil find of interest in this major event in British imperial history and in the history of anti-colonial resistance – this 'great symbolic event', in the words of Said, 'by which the two sides, Indian and British, achieved their full and conscious opposition to each other'?⁵⁰⁸

The conversation quickly switches, in the scene above, to the personal domain of George's and Cecil's friendship. This recalls the familial disavowal of Badger's ties to Africa in *LoB*. Later in this opening section, however, Cecil says to George, 'I'll have to get ahead with my paper on Havelock this week' (p.88). Much later in the novel, in a conversation with some Oxford academics, Paul is asked:

'Did he [Cecil] ever finish his work on the Cathars?', said the man on the right.

'Not as far as we know,' [...] Was the man thinking of someone else? Cecil's work at Cambridge had been on the Indian Mutiny, for some reason. [...]

'Or have I got that wrong?'

'Well ...' Paul paused. 'His research – which he never finished, by the way – was on General Havelock.'

⁵⁰⁶ For many commentators, the term 'mutiny' criminalises and denounces what is better seen as a series of anti-colonial uprisings against the rule of the British East India Company. As Richard Steadman-Jones writes, 'mutiny' suggests 'an irrational eruption of lawlessness' ('Colonial Fiction for Liberal Readers', *End of Empire*, 74-91 (p.75)). Numerous other names – from 'the Sepoy Rebellion' to 'India's First War of Independence' – have been used in pre- and post-independence India. I continue to use the term Indian Mutiny here as this is how it is referred to in Hollinghurst's novel.

⁵⁰⁷ Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xi.

⁵⁰⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.177-78. For Steadman-Jones, 'the Indian "Mutiny" [was] a moment of crisis that became crucial to British conceptions of imperialism in the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond' (p.75).

‘Oh, well not the Cathars at all’ (pp.441-42)

Cecil’s ‘expertise’ is focused upon a British Major General who was ‘prominent in the Victorian imperial march across Asia’, serving ‘in Burma, Afghanistan and India’, but whose ‘finest hour’ came in 1857 when he played a major part in suppressing the Indian Mutiny.⁵⁰⁹ Havelock ‘was responsible’, in the uncompromising words of the historian Patrick French, ‘for slaughtering large numbers of rebels in India in the aftermath of the Mutiny’.⁵¹⁰ This turned him into a national and imperial hero, with a prominent statue standing on Trafalgar Square to this day.⁵¹¹ Havelock became ‘the prototype’, as Dawson argues in *Soldier Heroes* (2005), ‘of those Victorian imperial soldier heroes who played such a powerful role in national imaginings before the First World War’.⁵¹² Dawson’s neat phrase – ‘imperial soldier heroes’ – helps us to recognise the function of Havelock and the Mutiny in Hollinghurst’s construction of Cecil’s masculinity. We do not know what Cecil’s take on Havelock would have been, but we can recognise that both Cecil’s personal aggression and his historical

⁵⁰⁹ Paul Kelso, ‘Mayor Attacks Generals in Battle of Trafalgar Square’, *Guardian*, 20 October 2000 <<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/oct/20/london.politicalnews>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

⁵¹⁰ Patrick French, ‘Today’, *BBC Radio 4*, 13 March 2015.

⁵¹¹ The accompanying plaque reads: ‘To Major General Sir Henry Havelock KCB and his brave companions in arms during the campaign in India 1857. “Soldiers! Your labours, your privations, your sufferings and your valour, will not be forgotten by a grateful country” H. Havelock’. Kelso’s article, cited above, was prompted by a suggestion from Ken Livingstone (the Labour Mayor of London at the time) that Havelock’s statue be removed from Trafalgar Square.

⁵¹² Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p.6. Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s 1879 poem ‘The Defence of Lucknow’ celebrates Havelock’s heroism during the Indian Mutiny: ‘Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the blessing of Heaven!’ (*The Poems of Tennyson Volume Three*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1987), 36-39 (p.39). Hollinghurst encourages us to identify this allusion by having several of his characters refer to Tennyson throughout the novel, and also by taking his novel’s title from Tennyson’s magnum opus ‘In Memoriam A.H.H’: ‘And year by year the landscape grow / Familiar to the stranger’s child’ (*The Poems of Tennyson Volume Two*, ed. Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1987), 304-459 (p.422)).

studies align with this ‘national imagining’. Cecil is not only a poet and a martyr of WWI, but also an imperial soldier hero in the making.

After Cecil’s death, the memorial that is dedicated to him in Corley Court chapel both consecrates and queers his status as an imperial soldier hero. For Paul, ‘the tomb made some grander case for Cecil’ (p.349). If Cecil is turned into something more than a ‘second-rate’ poet (p.349), what exactly does he come to embody? Most obviously, like Brooke, he becomes a martyr of WWI. When George visits the sculpted marble tomb in section two, he comments on ‘the long curved nose ... the wide cheekbones ... the decisive mouth’ that emphasise Cecil’s commanding figure (p.153). This leads him to identify ‘the soldierly commonplace of the body’ (p.154); Cecil is ‘laid out in dress uniform’ with special ‘attention on the cuff-badges, the captain’s square stars, the thin square flower of the Military Cross’ (p.153). Even ‘his hair’ is described as ‘short and soldierly’ (p.154).

But what kind of soldier does Cecil come to represent, and what kind of militarism does his tomb evoke nostalgically?

It [the tomb] struck George, as the chapel itself had on that first day, as a quietly crushing assertion of wealth and status, of knowing what to do. It seemed to place Cecil in some floating cortège of knights and nobles reaching back through the centuries to the Crusades. George saw them for a moment like gleaming boats in a thousand chapels and churches the length of the land. (p.153)

There are numerous associations at work here: Christian, aristocratic, chivalrous, and medieval. The reference to ‘the Crusades’ mobilises all of these, but it also subtly situates Cecil in an imperial lineage. ‘The association of a crusading past with the imperialist present’, for the historian Jonathan Riley-Smith, ‘was a feature of [...] empire-building’;⁵¹³ he cites, for instance, ‘Sir Claude Conder’s *The Latin Kingdom of*

⁵¹³ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2008), p.60.

Jerusalem, published in 1897', which drew parallels between early Crusaders in Palestine and the British in India.⁵¹⁴ Cecil, once again, is not confined to the context of WWI. By invoking the Crusades, Hollinghurst suggests that Cecil's 'soldierly' spirit reaches further back and raises the spectre of imperial expansionism. This spectre is reinforced by the nautical vision of 'gleaming boats' and the Horatian epigraph – 'Tomorrow we shall set forth upon the boundless sea' (p.349)⁵¹⁵ – which indicates the potential for future conquests.

Cecil's nostalgic, knightly tomb recalls the eponymous one in Larkin's 1956 poem 'An Arundel Tomb'. Dedicated to a fourteenth-century earl and his wife, the Arundel Tomb in Chichester Cathedral provides Larkin with a critical counterpoint to the contemporary 'hollow of / An unarmorial age'.⁵¹⁶ Larkin's 1969 poem 'Homage to a Government' goes on to explain what exactly is so 'hollow' about post-war England. Its third and final stanza reads:

Next year we shall be living in a country
That brought its soldiers home for lack of money.
The statues will be standing in the same
Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.
Our children will not know it's a different country.
All we can hope to leave them now is money.⁵¹⁷

For Graham MacPhee, 'the poem's blank repetition mimes the evacuation of meaning from national space, whose monuments will henceforth "look nearly the same" but which have, like the statuary of "An Arundel Tomb", been drained of the meaning that once animated them'.⁵¹⁸ They have been drained of meaning, for MacPhee, because the imperial nation in whose honour they were built is no longer in existence;

⁵¹⁴ Riley-Smith, p.60.

⁵¹⁵ Peter translates the epigraph from the Latin, which reads: CRAS INGENS ITERABIMUS AEQUOR.

⁵¹⁶ Larkin, 'An Arundel Tomb', *Collected Poems*, p.117.

⁵¹⁷ Larkin, 'Homage to a Government', *Collected Poems*, p.141.

⁵¹⁸ MacPhee, pp.53-54.

he associates this poem, dated 10 January 1969, with the ‘Aden Emergency [of 1967] [...] the effective end of empire’.⁵¹⁹ If Suez was the symbolic end of empire, Larkin’s poem laments the real thing, the moment when the ‘soldiers [came] home’ and England became a fundamentally ‘different country’.

‘Homage to a Government’ suggests that the fact that statues ‘look nearly the same’ does not indicate that their meaning has been left intact. Cecil’s tomb, then, which was initially built in honour of his sacrifice in WWI, might well strike the contemporary reader as the embodiment of faded national glory – his death as the death of a crusading and imperial nation, his memorialisation as a desperate attempt to resist national decline, and to cling on to the ‘golden summer’ of 1913. In particular, the sculptural fetishisation of his ‘soldierly [...] body’, described above, begins to disclose a pervasive set of imperial and postimperial anxieties. According to Bill Schwarz, ‘without the empire, the argument went, and without the manly, martial values which derived from the experience of colonial life, the English nation would disintegrate’.⁵²⁰ This is the problem that, according to Boehmer, Baden-Powell’s post-Boer War *Scouting for Boys* sought to redress.⁵²¹ Implicit in the adoration of Cecil’s soldierly ‘male physique’, then, is the idea that the nation needs to return to ‘manly, martial values’, the values which built (and were built by) the empire. *England Trembles* – as the title of Paul’s biography of Cecil puts it – since the loss of Cecil and everything that he apparently represents.

⁵¹⁹ MacPhee, p.53.

⁵²⁰ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.11.

⁵²¹ Boehmer, ‘Introduction’, *Scouting for Boys* by Robert Baden-Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xi-xxxix (xii). Hollinghurst, in his review of Boehmer’s edition, also claims that ‘anxieties about [...] the vulnerability of the empire lay behind the book [*Scouting for Boys*]’ (‘Tenderfoots Need Not Apply’, *Guardian*, 13 March 2004

<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/mar/13/history.highereducation>> [accessed 3 April 2017]). I discuss the Boer War in more detail in the chapters on Swift and Barnes.

The adverb ‘apparently’ in the previous sentence draws attention to what I consider to be the novel’s central irony, and the means by which Hollinghurst manages to outflank nostalgia: that Cecil’s hidden homosexuality does not fit so easily into dominant ideological constructions of masculinity, militarism, and imperialism. Historically, as Joseph Bristow argues in *Empire Boys* (1991) and as we saw in *LoB*, homosexuality has been associated with emasculation and the deterioration of national integrity and military-imperial power; ‘the homosexual’ was considered to be ‘a threat [...] to the foundations of the state [...] as the twentieth century wore on, the homosexual was constructed as a potential traitor, one who would betray his country for sexual favours’.⁵²² ‘The following claim about male homosexuality’, for Neville Hoad, ‘can be taken as typical: “Rome fell, other nations are falling and if England falls, it will be this sin, and her unbelief in God, that will be her ruin”’.⁵²³ Cecil, then, both is and is not the Havelock-like imperial soldier hero that his tomb shapes him to be. Hollinghurst queers this figure by inserting a hidden homosexual history – ‘this sin’ – into conventional conceptions of imperial masculinity. Homosexuality underpins and undermines empire. This queering is playfully suggested by the fact that the very features of the memorial which militarise Cecil – his ‘long curved nose [...] wide cheekbones [...] decisive mouth’ – are also homoerotic signifiers for many of the novel’s homosexual characters. ‘Cecil’s tomb’, after all, is the site of Paul’s and Peter’s ‘very first date – an unusual sort of first date,

⁵²² Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), p.88. The fate of the Irishman Roger Casement, whose homosexuality was used against him in his trial for treason, provides one such example (Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces* (London: Penguin, 2015), pp.137-38).

⁵²³ Hoad, p.10. Hoad is citing Reverend J. Wilson. On the associations between homosexuality and (Anglo-)Catholicism in the nineteenth-century, see: Alderson, *Mansex fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-century British Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

but that was Peter for you!' (p.533). 'Cecil' is 'their codeword' for getting together in the first place (p.340).

Peter's music lessons at Corley Court also interweave imperial masculinity and homosexuality. In order to understand how, we need to recognise the broader relationship between education and empire. In the final three chapters of *Propaganda and Empire* (1984), MacKenzie argues that education was an essential tool in the production of imperial subjects and the maintenance of empire: 'if the younger generation did not prepare itself for defence, the Empire would be lost'.⁵²⁴ The strength of the 'imperial nation-state', as Randall writes in relation to Kipling, is 'at stake in the disciplining and education of children'.⁵²⁵ For MacKenzie, imperial 'disciplining and education' took many forms, from the 'ideology of athleticism' to the 'rituals of dress, music, and symbolic literature'.⁵²⁶ This mode of schooling, he contends, was 'accelerated' as a result of WWI⁵²⁷ and 'resistance to change was so great that, in all essentials, it survived the Second too': 'the racial tone is, perhaps, less pronounced, but they [school textbooks] were still nationalist and patriotic, devoted to stories of great men and of significant events (usually wars) in a national march to greatness'.⁵²⁸

By 1967, and the novel's third section, most of the colonies in which young Englishmen could develop their masculinity were long gone. However, as Corley's transformation testifies, the elite all-boys boarding schools that trained them up were not.⁵²⁹ Unsurprisingly, residues of empire pervade this public school.⁵³⁰ The boys'

⁵²⁴ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.183.

⁵²⁵ Randall, p.7.

⁵²⁶ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.229; p.231.

⁵²⁷ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.216.

⁵²⁸ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.190.

⁵²⁹ Hollinghurst attended an elite boarding school called Canford, in Dorset. It was boys only for part of the time that he studied there.

captivation with military toys – ‘their Airfix and their Biggles [...] a constant battle in the air’ (p.273) – is complemented by the school’s provision of a ‘lovely set of Indian clay figures in the dress of different ranks and trades – military piper, water-seller, chokidar’ and ‘a Gurkha kukri knife’ (p.288). These institutionally legitimated colonial ornaments – to recall David Cannadine – find their contraband counterparts in ‘arousing pictures of tribal women in *National Geographic*’ (p.299). Corley boys play with military weapons openly and indulge their erotic exoticism secretly.

Between handling Indian objects and leering over ‘tribal women’, Peter teaches the boys some military songs. First they sing ‘The Saucy Arethusa’: ‘Come all ye jolly sailors bold [...] While English glory I unfold [...] And now we’ve driven the foe ashore, Never to fight with Britons more’ (pp.271-72). This blast of naval nationalism is followed by ‘Hearts of Oak’:

‘Come, cheer up, my lads, ’tis to glory we steer!’ And a minute later he [Peter] had them all at it.

Hearts of oak are our ships, jolly tars are our men,
We always are ready – Steady, boys, steady!

and he joined them to stiffen up the sinew: ‘We’ll fight and we’ll conquer again and again!’ (pp.273-74)⁵³¹

‘Hearts of Oak’ (1760) – the official march of the Royal Navy – celebrates various military victories in 1759 (‘Annus mirabilis’) against Britain’s main imperial rival at the time: France. The song’s popularity was also boosted by victory at the Battle of

⁵³⁰ On the relationship between public schools, in particular, and empire, see: P.J. Rich, *Elixir of Empire: English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry and Imperialism* (1993).

⁵³¹ The phrase ‘stiffen up the sinew’ alludes to the famous ‘Once more unto the breach’ speech in *Henry V*: ‘Then imitate the action of the tiger. / Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood, / Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage’ (William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: Henry V*, ed. Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), III.i.6-8).

Wandiwash in India, in 1760.⁵³² The repetition of ‘again’ and the refrain ‘we always are ready’ connects such historic imperial strength to the military potential of the nation’s youth today, thereby indicating the possibility of neoimperial conquests.⁵³³

For Bristow, such popular imperial songs ‘obliged boys to consider their duty to fight for their country [...] they are the England they should be fighting for’.⁵³⁴

The example he gives is the 1887 song ‘Old England’s Heroes’, which features the lines: ‘Come, boys, let us tell of the heroes / Who have fought and dar’d to die, / For St. George and merry England’.⁵³⁵ Apparently benign musical education, then, interpellates these young boys as patriotic citizens, helping them to situate themselves in a long tradition of military men and imperial glory. Like Cecil’s poetry and his tomb, the school does so aesthetically, softening the harsh realities of violence and domination via ‘jolly’ songs that young boys ‘belt [...] out’ (p.271) for fun.⁵³⁶

There is also something faintly ridiculous, however, about belting out these songs in 1967. This is due to the sharp disjuncture between their bombastic refrains – ‘we’ll conquer again and again’ – and the reality of a no longer imperial (post-Suez, post-Aden) nation. One is reminded of Peregrine Worsthorpe’s provocation in 1959: ‘what is the point of maintaining [...] a public school system designed to produce a

⁵³² Judith Hancock, ‘The Royal Navy Heart of Oak’, *HubPages*, 31 July 2016 <<http://hubpages.com/hub/The-Royal-Navy-March-Heart-of-Oak>> [accessed 3 April 2017].

⁵³³ According to Graham Dawson, popular support for the Falklands War (which took place fifteen years after this section of the novel) ‘depended upon narratives whose psychic charge tapped the childhood bases of subjectivity in generations brought up on either the national heroics of the Second World War or the imperial epic before it’ (p.281). Dawson discusses the relationship between boys’ play and (imperial) militarism at length in chapter nine (pp.233-58).

⁵³⁴ Bristow, p.45.

⁵³⁵ Bristow, p.45.

⁵³⁶ Baden-Powell also provides a number of patriotic and imperialist songs, including Henry Newbolt’s ‘Play the Game’, at the end of *Scouting for Boys*.

race of colonial administrators without any colonies to administer?'.⁵³⁷ Corley boys are not really heroic 'sailors' or 'jolly tars'. The title of this section – 'Steady, boys, steady', taken from the lyrics of 'Hearts of Oak' – thus comes to suggest homosexual rather than naval intimacy. What might once have been defiant expressions of imperial unity – 'Come all ye jolly sailors bold'; 'Come, cheer up, my lads, 'tis to glory we steer!' – now become highly camp.⁵³⁸

Hollinghurst is playing here with the idea that, as Bristow puts it, 'homosexual desire is, ironically enough, enabled by the public school even though it is actually forbidden there'.⁵³⁹ 'It is clear', Bristow argues, 'that the manly team spirit advocated by the schools with its stress on hero-worship bore a precarious relation to same-sex desire'.⁵⁴⁰ This combination of 'hero-worship' and 'same-sex desire' is not only a feature of Cecil's tomb (now housed in the Corley Court chapel), but also of the school's education system more broadly, as Peter's music lessons suggest. Hollinghurst's queering of postimperial masculinity (and its educational framework) is perhaps most clearly articulated by the fact that the only pupil from Corley who reappears later in the novel is Sir Nigel Dupont. He is not an imperial soldier hero but (in a potential nod to Bristow) a leading queer theorist at a 'Southern Californian university' (p.522).

I began this chapter with a brief sketch of Hollinghurst's literary output, a sketch that sought to reposition him as an author interested and implicated in issues of both sexuality *and* race – moreover, sexuality alongside histories of empire and

⁵³⁷ Peregrine Worsthorne, 'Class and Conflict in British Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs* 37.3 (1959), 419-431 (p.431).

⁵³⁸ Bristow provides a helpful definition of camp as 'a discourse which thrives on a principle of ironically turning accepted values on their heads' (p.84).

⁵³⁹ Bristow, p.87.

⁵⁴⁰ Bristow, p.82. See also: Alderson's *Mansex fine* on 'eroticised manliness' and the 'games ethic' of public schools (pp.64-70).

decolonisation. The main body of the chapter has provided evidence from across his oeuvre to support such a rereading. It has also moved beyond previous postcolonial analyses of his work which have been restricted to his debut novel and to the question of racial representation. I have taken a more holistic, as well as historical and intertextual, approach, ranging from Hollinghurst's intersection of sexuality and race through the concept of erotic exoticism (mainly 'ATB' and *SPL*), to his negotiation of imperial histories (mainly *FS* and *SC*), imperial conceptions of Englishness (mainly *FS* and *LoB*), and imperial constructions of masculinity (mainly *SC*).

Race and empire do not displace Hollinghurst's primary focus upon sex and sexuality. Rather, his texts provide a range of characters, interactions, and social situations – from Tim in Egypt, to Cecil in Corley Court chapel; from Will with Abdul, to Nick with Wani – that embed postimperial Englishness within the intimate and often homosexual lives of twentieth-century Englishmen. His narratives of England and Englishness not only refer, to a greater or lesser extent, to their imperial and postimperial contexts, but also critically interrogate the impact of empire and decolonisation on the nation, its citizens, and their sexualities.

Homosexuality, empire, and Englishness are tightly bound up in one another throughout Hollinghurst, and his fiction forces its readers to revise their understandings of each central concept. In this way, Hollinghurst challenges conventional accounts of the contemporary nation and national identity in which homosexuality, empire, and their intersections often appear to be relatively peripheral. This is how Hollinghurst remakes history: he produces for his readers an alternative version of the twentieth-century nation and national life. In his envisioning of (post-war) England and Englishness, experiences of homosexuality and masculinity, as well as of race and empire, are at the heart of the national condition.

Graham Swift: War and Postimperial Englishness

Clearly, there is no such phenomenon as the Falklands Novel...⁵⁴¹

War permeates Graham Swift's fictional landscape and this provides him with a particular vantage point upon histories and memories of empire and decolonisation. The 1982 Falklands War, which appears in his 1998 novel *Out of this World* (*OOTW*, hereafter), featured several times in the previous chapter on Alan Hollinghurst, mainly appearing in relation to *The Line of Beauty*: Hollinghurst's novel about the Thatcher decade. Nigel Leigh's 'A Limited Engagement: Falklands Fictions and the English Novel', from which the epigraph above is taken, was published twelve years before *The Line of Beauty* and so does not refer to it. Lamenting the fact that the 'main influence [of the Falklands] has been on exploitation literature and, to a lesser degree, the popular novel', Leigh claims that 'there have been remarkably few attempts among British writers at what Walter Holbing calls, in the context of Vietnam literature, "literary sense-making"'.⁵⁴² Leigh finds only 'passing references to the Falklands in a number of literary novels', singling out Paul Theroux's *O-Zone* (1986), Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and Swift's *OOTW*.⁵⁴³ Stef Craps, however, critiques such 'limited engagement' with Swift's novel, arguing that 'the Falklands War is more than a passing reference' in *OOTW*: 'as a powerful instance of

⁵⁴¹ Nigel Leigh, 'A Limited Engagement', *Framing the Falklands War*, ed. James Aulich (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 117-28 (p.127).

⁵⁴² Leigh, p.126.

⁵⁴³ Leigh, p.124. Colm Tóibín's *The Story of the Night* (1996) and Tim Binding's *Anthem* (2003) are also concerned with the Falklands, but they were published after *Framing the Falklands* (1992).

the dangers attendant on the resurrection of discredited mythologies, its presence in the text adds greatly to the poignancy of the novel's ethical vision'.⁵⁴⁴

I will return to the Falklands and the idea of 'discredited mythologies' later on. First, it is helpful to consider how my foregrounding of this 1982 conflict revises conventional narratives about Swift. In certain ways, emphasising the role of the Falklands is in keeping with the broad critical appreciation of the centrality of history in Swift's writing. In particular, the relationship between past and present is considered to be at the core of Swift's fictional project. As Hollinghurst comments in his review of Swift's first short story collection, *Learning to Swim & Other Stories* (1982), 'Swift secures much of this authority precisely by considering how he and his generation stand with regard to the past'.⁵⁴⁵ 'One of Swift's key thematic preoccupations', in Craps's words, is 'the insidious hold exerted over the present by a traumatic past'.⁵⁴⁶

That 'traumatic past' often relates to war. 'War figures', as Gaby Wood notes, 'in all the novels except *Ever After* [...] Swift returns to it continually'.⁵⁴⁷ The First World War features in many of Swift's novels – from his debut *The Sweet-Shop Owner* (1980) to his most recent *Mothering Sunday* (2016) – but it is the Second World War which overshadows Swift's oeuvre. 'In particular', as Emily Horton

⁵⁴⁴ Stef Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p.201.

⁵⁴⁵ Hollinghurst, 'Falling Short', *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 August 1982, p.920.

⁵⁴⁶ Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift*, p.2. Swift also explores these ideas in his non-fiction: 'why should we summon up the past? Why should we remember anything, whether it's personally or collectively? Does it do us any good? Does it hinder us?' (*Making an Elephant* (London: Picador, 2010), p.84). Emily Horton goes so far as to claim that 'Swift reinvigorates the importance of historical study within global modernity' (*Contemporary Crisis Fictions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p.59).

⁵⁴⁷ Gaby Wood, 'Involuntary Memories', *London Review of Books*, 8 February 1996 <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v18/n03/gaby-wood/involuntary-memories>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

argues, ‘Swift’s novels figure World War II centrally as a locus of historical analysis which continually informs post-war experience’.⁵⁴⁸ This may be because ‘Swift grew up in the 1950s sharply aware of his father’s wartime experience and surrounded by [in Swift’s own words] “all the physical evidence of war”: “so the second world war, which I never went through, has been my great history lesson” ’.⁵⁴⁹ It is a ‘history lesson’ that Swift has worked and reworked throughout his career: from his early short story ‘Gabor’ (in *Learning to Swim*), whose narrator claims nostalgically that ‘this was the only war, its mythology ousted other, lesser intrusions into peace’,⁵⁵⁰ to his second novel *Shuttlecock* (1981), whose narrator painfully discovers that his father is not the WWII hero he claims to be; from his most critically acclaimed novel *Waterland* (1983), whose narrator served in WWII, to the Booker Prize-winning *Last Orders* (1996), whose protagonists are glued together by the war, or more precisely, their memories of it.

There is no doubt that WWII is the dominant historical context in Swift’s post-war fiction and that his fiction attests to what Marina MacKay calls ‘the relentlessness of the war in “ordinary life” in the United Kingdom’.⁵⁵¹ But by ‘writing across the war [...] not writing directly about it’, as Max Saunders states regarding the role of WWI in Ford Madox Ford’s *Parade’s End* (1924-1928),⁵⁵² Swift introduces histories and memories of empire and decolonisation into his narratives of post-war Englishness. I shall make this case by way of two of Swift’s novels, *Last Orders* and *OOTW*, and I will also provide a critical survey of a range of his other relevant texts

⁵⁴⁸ Horton, p.59.

⁵⁴⁹ Peter Widdowson, *Graham Swift* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2006), p.2.

⁵⁵⁰ Swift, ‘Gabor’, *Learning to Swim & Other Stories* (London: Picador, 1982), p.80.

⁵⁵¹ MacKay, p.17.

⁵⁵² Max Saunders, ‘Introduction’, *Parade’s End* by Ford Madox Ford (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992), xiv-xv (xi). Saunders adapts the phrase ‘writing across the war’ from Malcolm Bradbury.

(focusing in particular on an early, Forsterian short story entitled ‘Seraglio’). *Last Orders* is discussed before *OOTW*, contrary to chronology, because this novel enables me to contest the central critical charge that is levelled at Swift: parochialism. For certain critics, as we shall see, Swift’s fiction (and *Last Orders* in particular) typifies a ‘peculiarly British kind of self-deprecating, parochial sentiment [...] absorbed with the petty foibles of our insular way of life’.⁵⁵³ By foregrounding the roles of Egypt and Aden in *Last Orders*, I shall argue, by contrast, that Swift figures WWII and its aftermath in specifically global and imperial terms. Moreover, I will claim that Swift uses this historical framing to examine the effects of decolonisation – the Fall of Aden/Eden – on the dynamics of race and class in post-war England. Class, in this novel, is central to experiences of imperial and postimperial Englishness. The ‘boomerang’-like repercussions of decolonisation are also at stake in *OOTW*, a novel which has typically been read, like its metafictional predecessor *Waterland*, through a dehistoricised and depoliticised postmodern lens. This historically-informed, geographically-mobile, and politically-engaged novel is concerned with the material and violent – rather than merely constructed or representational – ways in which imperial history lives on in the nation’s contemporary military activities. Swift achieves this through his ‘multidirectional’⁵⁵⁴ drawing together of the Boer War, the Northern Irish ‘Troubles’,⁵⁵⁵ and the Falklands.

⁵⁵³ Lisa Jardine, ‘How Britain Wrote Off the English Novel’, *Telegraph*, 8 May 1997.

⁵⁵⁴ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁵⁵ Robert Welch defines the ‘Troubles’ as ‘the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland in 1968 following civil-rights demonstrations to the ceasefires of 1994’ (*The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p.571). I place quotation marks around the ‘Troubles’ because I consider it to be a euphemism through which a colonial or postcolonial – depending upon one’s interpretation – military conflict is reduced to something less threatening and more domesticated.

This drawing together is ‘one of the ways in which history is made, and remade’ in Swift’s novel, as Steven Connor argues of the (post-war English) novel more broadly.⁵⁵⁶ Swift also remakes history, in both of these novels, by embodying it, by showing us ‘how the world [i]s lived on the inside’.⁵⁵⁷ Specifically, he takes us ‘inside’ the lived experience of demythologisation, or the difficulties of ‘working through’ (in Paul Gilroy’s formulation) tenacious imperial mythologies. Swift conveys both the power of myth as well as its painful contradictions and false promises. His fiction does not offer postcolonial subversion or critique, then, but an examination of postimperial processes in action, of the breaking from and clinging to imperial ideas and actions in post-war England.

Empire, Nostalgia, and ‘the exotic East’: a Critical Survey

The Swift narrative with the most direct references to imperial history (and history in general) is *Waterland*. Indeed, it is the only one of Swift’s texts to feature, albeit briefly, in *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*. Bill Schwarz writes: ‘the products of the Armstrong [sic] brewery find their way throughout the empire, each bottle of ale a sign of modernity and confirmation of the civilisation of the English entrepreneur’.⁵⁵⁸ Schwarz is commenting upon the fact that, in the words of the novel’s narrator Tom Crick (a history teacher), ‘Atkinson India Ales was being regularly shipped thousands of miles to Bombay for consumption by Her Majesty’s Forces’.⁵⁵⁹ This ‘private empire’ contributes ‘to the Empire of Great Britain’ itself.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁶ Connor, p.1.

⁵⁵⁷ Alison Light, *Forever England* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.3. For Light, Virginia Woolf ‘introduce[d] [...] the question of subjectivity, of how the world was lived on the inside’ to the writing of history (p.3).

⁵⁵⁸ Schwarz, ‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, pp.25-26. The brewery in question is named Atkinson rather than Armstrong.

⁵⁵⁹ Swift, *Waterland* (London: Picador, 1984), p.79.

Through references to colonial trade, Swift builds up a broader picture of Victorian and Edwardian imperialism; he ‘evoke[s] an intrepid Britannia’, an ‘imperialist and monarchical Britain’ where ‘Empire Day was regularly celebrated with no small enthusiasm’, a period in which ‘European powers were scrambling for colonial loots...’.⁵⁶¹ In doing so, *Waterland* opens English history up to that which had been (perceived to be) external: ‘echoes from the wide world began to penetrate to the Cricks [...] news reached them at last, though they never went looking for it, that the Colonies had rebelled, that there had been a Waterloo, a Crimea [...] For centuries the Cricks remain untouched by the wide world’.⁵⁶² The insular, parochial England that Swift is sometimes criticised for reproducing is directly challenged here; it is the Cricks who want to fend off ‘the wide world’ and its ‘news’ of colonial violence, but Swift as narrator who forces it upon them.

Despite an abundance of imperial references throughout *Waterland*, the central thrust of this 1980s novel is towards postmodern reflections upon history as discourse: ‘when the world is about to end there’ll be no more reality, only stories. All there’ll be left to us will be stories. Stories will be our only reality’.⁵⁶³ Pamela Cooper has tried to bring the novel’s postmodern and postcolonial concerns together, but struggles to do so effectively.⁵⁶⁴ This is because, within the postmodern framework of *Waterland*, imperial history is one of many historical constructions (‘stories’) to be

⁵⁶⁰ Swift, *Waterland*, p.80.

⁵⁶¹ Swift, *Waterland*, p.81; p.155; p.156; p.173.

⁵⁶² Swift, *Waterland*, p.16.

⁵⁶³ Swift, *Waterland*, p.257.

⁵⁶⁴ Cooper’s prose is impenetrably abstract: ‘in Derridean language, the ground of reference for the “centered structure” of imperial effort inscribes within itself the terms of its own evacuation’ (‘Imperial Topographies’, *Modern Fiction Studies* 42.2 (1996), 371-96 (p.379)). Schwarz, so precise and insightful elsewhere in his introductory essay, also struggles to connect *Waterland* to the themes of the collection. He claims to find in the novel an ‘explicitly post-imperial [...] shifting, fissile conception of time’ (‘Introduction’, *End of Empire*, p.26).

played around; it is not, in Craps's words once again, 'a traumatic past' exerting an 'insidious hold [...] over the present'.

Three recent short stories from the collection *England and Other Stories* (2014) provide better examples of the interaction that often takes place in Swift's work between post-war and postimperial Englishness, as well as of the role of nostalgia. Prompted by memories of Peter O'Toole playing the lead role in David Lean's classic film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), the aged female narrator of 'Lawrence of Arabia' reflects on 'those blue eyes, that golden hair, that man in the white robes, striding along the roof of a train. [...] And what girl wouldn't? In her dreams'.⁵⁶⁵ This eroticised Aryan image awakens a broader expression of colonial nostalgia for 'all those crazy Englishmen – and Peter O'Toole wasn't even English, was he? – who went off to foreign parts, to do crazy things, wear Arab costume or whatever, to make their mark on the world, take charge. All those crazy Englishmen in the midday sun'.⁵⁶⁶ The half-acknowledged complication of O'Toole's Irishness gestures towards the Anglo-Irish tensions of *OOTW*, just as the narrator's desert nostalgia, as I shall term it, is developed by the North African experiences of the protagonists in *Last Orders*.

'Saving Grace', another story in the *England* collection, is narrated, unusually for Swift's fiction, from the perspective of a second-generation Indian immigrant. In this story, a doctor explains how his father, who was born in pre-Independence India, moved to England after being wounded in WWII. As in *Last Orders*, Swift invokes WWII alongside the empire and its demise: 'when the war broke out in 1939 there was no question that my father, when he came of age, would sign up with the Indian

⁵⁶⁵ Swift, 'Lawrence of Arabia', *England and Other Stories* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), p.146.

⁵⁶⁶ Swift, 'Lawrence of Arabia', p.147.

Army to fight for the British in their war'.⁵⁶⁷ 'Saving Grace' also expands upon the belated imperial pride of 'Lawrence of Arabia'. Dr Shah tells us that his father 'was born into one of those families who revered the British [...] he'd grown up worshipping everything English. [...] And there he was in the English countryside, in spring – thatched cottages, primroses, bluebells, everything he'd only read about in books'.⁵⁶⁸ This is the nostalgic and mythologised conception of rural Englishness that Sophie clings to traumatically in *OOTW*.

Postimperial nostalgia is expressed in more subtle terms in the eponymous story of the collection. The narrative voice of 'England' is focalised through Kenneth Black, a coastguard in Exmoor.⁵⁶⁹ Kenneth describes his coastal view admiringly:

bigger, broader pockets of sea, touched, as the land wasn't yet, by rays of pink-gold light from the east. It was the Bristol Channel. It was also the Atlantic Ocean. It was, at this point, a satisfying expanse of water. [...] Ships, he knew, had once sailed up the Bristol Channel with cargoes of sugar. On the way out they'd made for Africa. Then sailed west.⁵⁷⁰

Initially, 'the Bristol Channel' and 'the Atlantic Ocean' form only 'a satisfying expanse of water'. But then that image is historicised by three potent words: 'sugar', 'Africa', and 'west'. Through these coded terms Swift gestures towards the slave trade that produced much of the wealth of Bristol and imperial Britain more broadly. This context is not developed any further. Kenneth comes to focus instead upon 'a decommissioned lighthouse'⁵⁷¹ and in the story's final paragraph 'the familiar tower of the lighthouse appeared before him, its topmost, no longer functioning section nonetheless touched with pink glittering light. He sat on the edge of England,

⁵⁶⁷ Swift, 'Saving Grace', *England and Other Stories*, pp.86-87.

⁵⁶⁸ Swift, 'Saving Grace', *England and Other Stories*, pp.86-87.

⁵⁶⁹ In terms of plot, 'England' consists of Kenneth meeting a black comedian from Yorkshire, named Johnny Dewhurst, before the two go their separate ways and Kenneth is left in a pensive mood.

⁵⁷⁰ Swift, 'England', *England and Other Stories*, p.273.

⁵⁷¹ Swift, 'England', *England and Other Stories*, p.266.

supposedly guarding it, looking outwards'.⁵⁷² 'Touched with pink', the 'no longer functioning' lighthouse produces no light of its own. The coastguard, with little to do, is only 'supposedly guarding it'. There is something deeply melancholy about this belated coastguard, out of time, out of place – fossilised, like Cecil's 'quietly crushing' tomb in Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child*. Kenneth is not really guarding anything in this postimperial (and so post-naval) nation, but idly, foolishly even, 'looking outwards'. By filtering such coastal descriptions through Kenneth's consciousness, Swift registers the affective experience of belatedness: to be in the shadow of a 'history' that you know little to 'nothing about', but to feel it pressing upon you nonetheless.⁵⁷³

The highly self-conscious author figure, Jane Fairchild, in *Mothering Sunday* attempts to distance herself from such expressions of postimperial nostalgia.⁵⁷⁴ Various colonial writers are name-checked in this novel – '[H.] Rider Haggard, G.A. Henty, R.M. Ballantyne, [Robert Louis] Stevenson, Kipling'⁵⁷⁵ – before Joseph Conrad is discussed at length:⁵⁷⁶ 'it [*Youth, a Narrative; and Two Other Stories*] was loosely based on Conrad's own early experiences and on his first encounter (she would come to know that he wrote about it often) with a thing – a vision, a promise, a fact, an illusion – called "the East"'.⁵⁷⁷ Quotation marks around 'the East' indicate self-awareness about the belated orientalist implications of this phrase. 'Yes, of course', as the Jane-focalised narrator goes on to say, 'by 1924 Conrad was arguably

⁵⁷² Swift, 'England', *England and Other Stories*, p.274.

⁵⁷³ Swift, 'England', *England and Other Stories*, p.274.

⁵⁷⁴ In the second half of the novel we discover that the protagonist of the first half is now a successful author and that she has been reflecting back on her youth. The first half of the novel is set in 1924; in the second half Jane is 84.

⁵⁷⁵ Swift, *Mothering Sunday* (London: Scribner, 2016), pp.66-67.

⁵⁷⁶ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, pp.123-130.

⁵⁷⁷ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, p.123.

out-moded, already behind the times. Sailing ships? The exotic East? Didn't he know what had happened to the world?'.⁵⁷⁸

Forsterian Echoes in the 'sensuous, uninhibited East' of 'Seraglio'⁵⁷⁹

The narrator of one of Swift's early short stories does not seem to recognise 'what had happened to the world' – even by the late 1970s – and thus readily deploys the imagery of 'the exotic East'. 'Seraglio' (1977/1982), like Hollinghurst's contemporaneous short story 'A Thieving Boy', follows an anonymous English couple on holiday in the contemporary Middle East.⁵⁸⁰ Swift's story portrays, in the first-person present tense, the experiences of its narrator and his wife as tourists in Istanbul. The plot turns, as in 'A Thieving Boy', on the allegation of a crime committed by a local 'boy' against an English person. Whereas young Tim was, according to a newspaper report, 'robbed of all his possessions by his Egyptian servant', it is the narrator's wife in 'Seraglio' who (in her own words) is 'touched' by 'the boy – I mean the porter' (p.6); this incident recalls, or so I shall argue, the notorious Marabar caves episode of E.M. Forster's canonical imperial text, *A Passage to India* (1924). Traumatized by this sexual harassment or (attempted?) rape – which, in another parallel with Forster, is never described in any detail – the couple fly back to England earlier than planned, hoping to avoid further danger.

Egypt enabled Hollinghurst to draw, most obviously, on the erotic exoticism of Forster's biography, as well as the longer tradition of what Joseph Boone calls 'the homoerotics of Orientalism'. Turkey also occupies a particular, yet fundamentally

⁵⁷⁸ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, p.127.

⁵⁷⁹ Swift, *Learning to Swim*, p.6. All further references to 'Seraglio' are incorporated into the text.

⁵⁸⁰ 'Seraglio' was originally published in the *London Magazine* in 1977, five years before the *Learning to Swim* version. I refer to the 1977 version as the 'original version'.

different, place in the cultural imagination of Europe and European imperialism.⁵⁸¹ As Edward Said reflects in his discussion of Erich Auerbach (whose seminal work *Mimesis* (1946) was written in Istanbul whilst in ‘exile’ from Nazi Germany):

Throughout the classical period of European culture Turkey was the Orient, Islam its most redoubtable and aggressive representative. [...] The Orient and Islam also stood for the ultimate alienation from and opposition to Europe [...] For centuries Turkey and Islam hung over Europe like a gigantic composite monster, seeming to threaten Europe with destruction.⁵⁸²

Turkey’s geographical position on the very cusp of Europe – between east and west, orient and occident – means that it has not only been figured as in ‘opposition to Europe’ but also ‘hung over’ it, ‘seeming to threaten’. Turkey, a former imperial centre itself, both is and isn’t European.⁵⁸³

In Istanbul, this is quite literally the case, something that Swift’s narrator stresses repeatedly through his observations on the Bosphorus River that divides the city into two. From their hotel ‘balcony’, the narrator explains, ‘you can look from Europe to Asia [...] There are few places in the world where, poised on one continent, you can gaze over a strip of water at another’ (p.3). He clearly relishes the rare experience of being ‘poised’ between two continents, although he has decided to book accommodation on the European side. He and his wife hope to keep Asia at bay, yet, as the narrative suggests, even this level of proximity compromises their safety.

Few critics have remarked upon, let alone provided detailed analyses of, Swift’s short stories. Daniel Lea, who discusses ‘Seraglio’ in some detail, foregrounds

⁵⁸¹ Swift’s interest in Turkey and Istanbul may have been prompted by his own trip ‘at the age of seventeen [...] from mainland Greece island-hopping across the Aegean, zigzagging overland as far as eastern Turkey, back again to Istanbul and European Turkey...’ (*Making an Elephant*, p.19).

⁵⁸² Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p.6. As Lisa Lowe confirms, ‘in many eighteenth-century texts the Orient signifies Turkey, the Levant, and the Arabian peninsula occupied by the Ottoman Empire, now known as the Middle East’ (*Critical Terrains* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p.7).

⁵⁸³ In Galgut’s *Arctic Summer*, Forster describes ‘Constantinople’ as ‘a try-out for the real East’ (p.57). ‘The real East’ for Forster, of course, is India.

the story's 'exaggerated continental drift which separates Asia from Europe at the nexus of Istanbul [...] the arbitrary borderline of the Bosphrous [sic]'.⁵⁸⁴ For Lea, the story's Istanbul setting thus provides further evidence of 'Swift's fascination with the space of the interim [...] the third space of the liminal and its liberating impalpability'.⁵⁸⁵ But Lea's postmodern approach – 'the third space' alludes to Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha – overlooks the fact that Swift does not deploy an 'abstract [...] interim'⁵⁸⁶ but a geographically particular one: Europe and Asia constitute an historically and ideologically produced continental binary. Like many of Barnes's critics, as we shall see in the following chapter, Lea moves swiftly through the contested politics and imperial lineages of cultural representation in order to locate the apparently 'liberating' postmodernism of Swift's aesthetic.

Instead of decoding references to the Europe/Asia divide as metaphors for the couple's tempestuous relationship and 'the space of the interim', I read them in relation to the narrator's broader orientalist outlook, in particular his projection of danger onto Turkish and Islamic culture. This will lead me to identify echoes of Forster in the interracial rape allegation that structures the text, and to argue that the anxious racial and gender politics of the Marabar caves episode continue to haunt Swift's postimperial fiction at this early stage in his literary career.

Istanbul is depicted in recognisably orientalist terms – as mysterious, exotic, and threatening – from the beginning of Swift's story. This depiction, it is important to reiterate, is provided by an anonymous first-person narrator, and Swift's level of critical distance from this perspective will be considered in due course. With his very first sentence, the narrator declares: 'in Istanbul there are tombs, faced with

⁵⁸⁴ Daniel Lea, *Graham Swift* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.62.

⁵⁸⁵ Lea, pp.67-68.

⁵⁸⁶ Lea, pp.67-68.

calligraphic designs, where the dead Sultan rests among the tiny catafalques of younger brothers whom he was obliged, by custom, to murder on his accession' (p.1). Terms like 'calligraphic', 'Sultan', and 'catafalques', immediately bespeak linguistic and cultural differences for Swift's predominantly English (or at least English-language) readership. Moreover, these differences have been converted into intrigue, violence, and danger by the end of the first sentence. Not only have historic murders taken place here, but, we are told by way of a casual yet confident subclause, they happen 'by custom'.

One could identify numerous other examples of the narrator's 'belligerent neo-Orientalism', as Said might call it:⁵⁸⁷ from his vision of 'the washed up corpses of centuries' lining the streets (p.1) to his description of the taxis which 'cruise round Istanbul like turquoise sharks' (p.2); from the 'cripples in the streets near the Bazaar, shuffling on leather pads, whom the tourists notice but the inhabitants do not' (p.2) to the 'mosque' with 'minarets like thin blades' (p.4). I want to focus, however, on what these ominous signs are building up to: the particular threat that, so Swift's plot suggests, the 'sensuous, uninhibited East' poses towards women, and white Englishwomen in particular.

The gendered nature of violence in Turkish and Islamic culture is first suggested when the narrator's wife asks 'so were they just kept here?' (p.1), 'here' referring to the seraglios of the story's title.⁵⁸⁸ By assuming female passivity, the

⁵⁸⁷ In the preface accompanying the 2003 republication of *Orientalism*, Said argues that 'Orientalism continues' (xvii) into the twenty-first century in the form of a 'belligerent neo-Orientalism' (xxi) (as exemplified by the rhetoric surrounding the Iraq War). In the 1996 introduction to *Covering Islam* (1981), Said also describes 'a strange revival of canonical, though previously discredited, Orientalist ideas about Muslim, generally non-white, peoples' ((London: Vintage, 1997), xi).

⁵⁸⁸ The term 'seraglio' refers to 'the part of a Muslim dwelling-house (esp. of the palace of a sovereign or great noble) in which the women are secluded; the apartments reserved for wives and concubines; a harem'. It can also refer, more

narrator's wife creates an impression of male aggression and female vulnerability, an impression that will be dramatised by her own testimony.⁵⁸⁹ It is her husband who mediates this testimony, after he finds her 'lying now on the bed in our hotel room':

My wife is beautiful. She has a smooth, flawless complexion, subtle, curiously expressive eyebrows, and a slender figure [...] She looks best in very dark or very pale colours. She is fastidious about perfumes, and tends devotedly our garden in Surrey. (p.3)

This caring woman, who 'tends devotedly' to their 'garden in Surrey', is 'smooth' and 'slender', in contrast to the 'upturned shields and spears' of the Istanbul 'skyline' (p.1). She is also, as we find out at the end of the next paragraph, 'crying' (p.3). This vulnerable English lady, with 'certain inviolable zones that mustn't be trespassed on' (p.7), has been left alone whilst her careless husband has 'been out taking photos, in the morning light' (p.4). In the short period of time that she has been exposed, unchaperoned, Istanbul's latent danger has been made manifest: 'something has happened – she has been interfered with in some way – between her and one of the hotel porters' (p.4). As she half-explains to her husband, 'it was the boy – I mean the porter. You know, the one who works on this floor [...] he came up to me – and touched me' (p.6). When asked 'what do you mean' (p.6) she replies only 'oh, you know' (p.7).

What is at stake in this enigmatic accusation? In both 'A Thieving Boy' and 'Seraglio', a Middle Eastern 'boy' poses a criminal threat to a white English outsider. In Hollinghurst's case, it was not so much the suggestion of criminality as of

generally, to 'a polygamous household' or an 'enclosure, place of confinement' (OED). Such 'oriental' gender dynamics are also invoked by the protagonist of another story in the *Learning to Swim* collection, 'The Watch': 'the wives [...] followed very much the oriental pattern where women are little more than the property of their husbands' (p.91).

⁵⁸⁹ Lowe locates similar ideas in earlier (male-authored) orientalist travel narratives about Turkey: 'one of [Jean] Dumont's chief condemnations of Turkish men [in *New Voyage to the Levant* (1696)] is his claim that they enslave their women' (p.39).

interracial homoeroticism that drew upon Forster, and specifically, his personal experiences in Egypt. With Swift, it is (the accusation of) a violent interracial heterosexual encounter that brings to mind this key English imperial writer. Forster does not feature, to my knowledge, in any of Swift's non-fiction, nor is he an obvious influence or intertext in any of his other fiction.⁵⁹⁰ This is in sharp contrast to Hollinghurst, who refers to Forster directly and indirectly throughout his fiction and non-fiction. Nonetheless, as I shall demonstrate, 'Seraglio' continues to be embroiled in the racial and gender politics of an imperial novel like *A Passage to India*, thus demonstrating one of the many ways in which Swift's fiction negotiates the literary and political conditions of postimperialism.

For Sara Suleri, the Marabar caves episode of *A Passage to India* is a highly 'familiar [...] tropolog[y]', regardless of one's direct interest in Forster.⁵⁹¹ Mid-way through the novel Miss Adela Quested, a young Englishwoman who is due to marry Ronny Heaslop (whom she does not love), visits the caves with (amongst others) the Indian Muslim protagonist Dr. Aziz. Although it is unclear what takes place there, Mr McBryde, the District Superintendent of Police in Chandrapore, soon proclaims the criminal charge laid down by Adela against Aziz: 'that he followed her into the cave and made insulting advances. She hit at him with her field-glasses; he pulled at them and the strap broke, and that is how she got away. When we searched him just now, they were in his pocket'.⁵⁹² Aziz is then tried for sexual assault. During the trial Adela withdraws her charge and the case is dismissed.

⁵⁹⁰ I am only aware of one critic who has compared these two authors. Pamela Cooper briefly discusses *A Passage to India* alongside *Last Orders*, commenting on their shared use of a 'modernist quest narrative' (*Graham Swift's Last Orders* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p.32).

⁵⁹¹ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.132.

⁵⁹² Forster, *A Passage to India*, p.164.

With these ‘insulting advances’ at the heart of its plot, *A Passage to India*, as Jenny Sharpe argues, ‘reenacts in the drama surrounding a rape the fears and fantasies of an imperial nation over the intermingling of two races, the colonizer and the colonized’.⁵⁹³ Indeed, for various colonialists within the novel, Adela’s horrific experience – ‘the unforgiveable crime of desecrating English womanhood’ – provides a firm rebuttal to calls for interracial sociability, let alone the dissolution of colonial rule.⁵⁹⁴ In the words of Mr Turton, the city’s tax collector, ‘I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially’.⁵⁹⁵ For Sharpe, the honourable yet fragile English Lady was fundamental to this racist line of reasoning. Since the ‘Indian Mutiny’ of 1857, she argues, the trope had been aggressively ‘circulat[ed]’ in ‘colonial discourse’ to entrench the need for British rule in order to curb ‘the native’s savagery’.⁵⁹⁶ Indian men, as Benita Parry recognises, were considered to harbour dangerous ‘erotic obsessions’ about white women, or,⁵⁹⁷ in Patrick Brantlinger’s words, ‘an oriental sex drive close to pornographic’.⁵⁹⁸

By reviving the provocative plot device of *A Passage to India* – ‘native’ male sexually assaults white English female –⁵⁹⁹ Swift might be considered to perpetuate

⁵⁹³ Jenny Sharpe, ‘The Unspeakable Limits of Rape’, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 1993), 221-43 (p.221).

⁵⁹⁴ Sharpe, p.228.

⁵⁹⁵ Forster, *A Passage to India*, p.161.

⁵⁹⁶ Sharpe, p.225.

⁵⁹⁷ Parry, ‘Passage to More than India’, *Forster*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 160-74 (p.168).

⁵⁹⁸ Brantlinger, p.209.

⁵⁹⁹ Forster did not invent this plot device. As Brantlinger shows, various Mutiny novels – such as James Grant’s *First Love and Last Love: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny* (1868) and Henry Kingsley’s *Stretton* (1869) – also exploit the symbolism of interracial rape. Brantlinger’s relevant chapter is entitled ‘The Well at Cawnpore: Literary Representations of the Indian Mutiny of 1857’; for Grant and Kingsley, see pp.209-212.

such imperialist constructions of oriental (specifically, Muslim) lasciviousness and its threat to the ‘inviolable zones’ of white femininity. ‘The fears and fantasies of an imperial [now, postimperial] nation over the intermingling of two races’ live on in the experience of Swift’s tourists at the edges of Europe (although Swift’s tourists are in a former imperial centre rather than a former British colony). The English Lady continues to be ‘interfered with in some way’ (p.4), his plot suggests, when abandoned by her English gentleman and left in the company of an untrustworthy Indian or ‘Turk’ (p.7). Swift’s postimperial Turkish tale certainly runs the risk of this belated interpretation. His narrative, however, like Forster’s and Hollinghurst’s, is more self-conscious and ambiguous with regards to the racial and (post)imperial ideologies that it puts into motion. This can be made clearer by way of further critical engagement with Forster and his refusal to explain or even describe the scene at the heart of his novel.

‘That Forster deliberately created this gap’, as Brenda Silver points out, ‘is clear from the original version of the scene, where an assault definitely occurs’.⁶⁰⁰ The manuscripts for the novel include ‘a four-page draft fragment’ which, according to their editor, answers ‘the question which in the final version Forster leaves so scrupulously unanswered: of what actually happened in the fatal cave’.⁶⁰¹ In this draft version, the narrator tells us that ‘she [Adela] struck out and he [Aziz, it is implied] got hold of her other hand and forced her against the wall, he got both her hands in one of his, and then felt at her <dress> \breasts/ [...] she was to be throttled as far as necessary and then...’.⁶⁰² As Frank Kermode explains, originally ‘there was an assault

⁶⁰⁰ Brenda Silver, ‘Periphrasis, Power, and Rape in “A Passage to India”’, *NOVEL* 22.1 (1988), 86-105 (p.86).

⁶⁰¹ Oliver Stallybrass, *The Manuscripts of A Passage to India* (London: E. Arnold, 1978), p.241.

⁶⁰² Stallybrass, *The Manuscripts of A Passage to India*, p.243.

on Adela, or possibly even a degree of consent on her part: “Aziz & Janet [Adela] drift into one another’s arms – then apart” runs a jotting. In another she “discovers she loves him”’.⁶⁰³ ‘In the published version’, however, ‘not just the violent physical attack but the entire scene in the cave is elided’.⁶⁰⁴

For Kermode, ‘leaving everything in doubt’ was an ‘excellent idea’: excellent because it has produced such intrigue amongst readers and critics. ‘Into the interpretive space opened by this elision’, as Silver writes, ‘critics have not feared to rush’.⁶⁰⁵ Silver does not try to establish precisely what happened in the cave; instead she focuses on the political possibilities that result from Forster’s evidently deliberate use of silences. As Sharpe explains,

If one decides, in keeping with the novel’s anti-imperialist theme, that the crime lies in a system capable of reducing an Indian man to his pathological lust for white women, then even the slightest hint of an actual rape cannot be entertained. Conversely, a defense of Adela’s fear of assault brings with it a condemnation of the Indian patriarchy and Aziz’s objectification of women as sex objects.⁶⁰⁶

Essentially, we are encouraged to follow either an ‘anti-imperialist’ line by dismissing Adela’s accusation of rape in order to defend Aziz, thereby perpetuating the familiar ‘masculinist’ silencing of women’s voices in rape cases;⁶⁰⁷ or we can acknowledge Adela’s claims and her dignity, thereby ‘reducing an Indian man to his pathological lust for white women’.

⁶⁰³ Frank Kermode, ‘Fiction and E.M. Forster’, *London Review of Books*, 10 May 2007 <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n09/frank-kermode/fiction-and-em-forster>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁶⁰⁴ Silver, p.86.

⁶⁰⁵ Silver, p.86.

⁶⁰⁶ Sharpe, p.222.

⁶⁰⁷ ‘A masculinist reading of the mystery in the cave (such as Lean’s) is based on the “common knowledge” that frigid women suffer from sexual hysteria and that unattractive women desire to be raped’ (Sharpe, p.223). Sharpe is referring to the 1984 film adaptation of Forster’s novel, written and directed by David Lean.

‘Seraglio’, which is just as (if not more) cryptic in narrating its central incident, also asks its reader whom to trust: ‘the native man or the white woman’?⁶⁰⁸ Swift’s narrator doubts his wife’s claims to victimhood before he has even heard her speak, much as he judges Turkey before arriving there. The fact that she only began crying when asked ‘what’s wrong?’ seems to him ‘like a kind of obstructiveness’ (p.4). He immediately suspects that she ‘may be dramatizing, exaggerating [...] perhaps she is blowing up some small thing, a mistake, nothing at all’ (p.4) and later wonders ‘whether [...] the Turk touched my wife at all; whether if he did touch her, he only touched her or actually assaulted her in some way (p.7). The assumption here is not one of Turkish guilt but of female hysteria and deceitfulness. His wife, it seems, is the problem and not the porter.

Swift’s narrator, however, is clearly not to be trusted or admired. Not only are his moral credentials undermined by the fact of his affair (p.5), but he also admits that he ‘blamed her [his wife] for the miscarriage’ (p.5) (which occurred 8 years prior to their trip to Istanbul). Caught up in the ‘process of being harsh towards my wife’s suffering’ (p.4), he even suggests that she might have ‘encouraged his [the porter’s] advances’ (p.7).⁶⁰⁹ He thereby retreats to a characteristic misogynistic response to rape allegations: that the woman desired her own rapist. Such blatantly offensive comments may well encourage the reader to reject the narrator’s version of events. But, to believe that the narrator’s wife is *not* lying is to reinsert the perilous ‘erotic obsessions’ of oriental men. It is to suggest that ‘the Turk’, like Aziz, really does pose a threat.

⁶⁰⁸ Sharpe, p.222.

⁶⁰⁹ The original version reads ‘even encouraged his advance *in the first place*’ (p.85, emphasis added), further implicating the narrator’s wife in her own rape.

‘Seraglio’, then, continues to be embroiled in the racial and gender politics of *A Passage to India* despite Swift’s choice of a different setting and, more crucially, despite the end of the empire that underpinned Forster’s narrative. By relying upon the Forsterian tropology of interracial rape in the way that it does, Swift’s early short story is seemingly *caught up in* postimperial politics; it is not, as I shall argue of *Last Orders* and *OOTW*, *interrogative of* postimperial politics. This is a tricky distinction but one that close attention to intertextual and perspectival details can help us to make. ‘Seraglio’, unlike these two multi-perspectival novels, does not take us deep inside the mind-sets of its postimperial protagonists; Swift’s anonymous narrator is not afforded much of an inner life, remaining a fairly unsympathetic husband and tourist figure, or type, throughout the story. Swift’s later novels, by contrast, provide extended first-person narratives that allow for an exploration of the affective purchase of imperial mythologies and the experiential difficulties of demythologisation.

Parochialism, Nostalgia, and the Postimperial Working-Class in *Last Orders*

The sustained use of a foreign setting, as in ‘Seraglio’, is rare in Swift’s fiction. Without exception, his novels focus upon English lives, locations, and topics. He is, as various critics have noted, ‘a chronicler of English life’ and ‘an interrogator of England’, a novelist concerned above all with the ‘changing face of England’.⁶¹⁰

Surprisingly, then, in a 1986 interview with Patrick McGrath, Swift critiqued post-

⁶¹⁰ Lucy Scholes, ‘*England and Other Stories* review’, *Guardian*, 3 August 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/aug/03/england-other-stories-review-graham-swift-affectionate-chronicle-everyday-lives>> [accessed 26 October 2017]; Leo Robson, ‘“Mothering Sunday: A Romance”, by Graham Swift’, *Financial Times*, 19 February 2016 <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/5976c500-d3ff-11e5-829b-8564e7528e54.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]; Benjamin Markovits, ‘*Wish You Were Here* by Graham Swift’, *Guardian*, 12 June 2011 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/12/graham-swift-wish-you-here>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

war English fiction for being ‘terribly self-absorbed and isolated [...] terribly bound up by its own Englishness’.⁶¹¹ This ‘might seem’, as Leo Robson comments, ‘an odd statement’:

At the time [of the interview] Swift was himself best known for *Waterland* (1983), a novel preoccupied with the history of the Fens, and his later work, as well as showing an interest in vernacular language and local customs, has dealt with the Falklands war, the early days of Sussex University, mad cow disease, various bits of south London, and – in *Last Orders*, which won the 1996 Booker Prize – a long, slow walk from Bermondsey to Margate. Add to this the title of his most recent book (*England and Other Stories*) and Swift’s charge of narrow patriotism seems a classic instance of the pot calling the kettle black...⁶¹²

Robson points out that, despite Swift’s critique of the ‘self-absorbed and isolated’ English novel (a critique that is familiar from my introductory chapter), the ‘charge of narrow patriotism’ might easily be applied to Swift’s own nationally specific oeuvre. Indeed, this is the charge that was levelled at Swift after the publication of his sixth novel, *Last Orders*, and especially after it won the Booker Prize in 1996.⁶¹³

The narrative confinement of *Last Orders*, which focuses on a single day’s journey through South East England, offers a stark contrast to the temporal and conceptual expansiveness of Swift’s breakthrough novel, *Waterland*. *Last Orders* ‘feels far more confined and prosaic’; it operates ‘primarily on a domestic scale’.⁶¹⁴

This is only a minor aesthetic criticism for Sam Jordison, but, as Catherine Klincksieck recognises, it became a highly charged and politicised one for ‘a few acid

⁶¹¹ Swift, *Making an Elephant*, p.93.

⁶¹² Robson (online).

⁶¹³ For details of a separate controversy, regarding Swift’s supposed ‘inert borrowing’ from William Faulkner, see: Various, ‘The Sound and the Fury’, *Independent*, 16 March 1997 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/the-sound-and-the-fury-1273239.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]; and, Swift, ‘I Never Pretended my Novel Owed no Debt to Faulkner’, *Times*, 10 March 1997, p.3.

⁶¹⁴ Sam Jordison, ‘Booker Club: *Last Orders*’, *Guardian*, 24 July 2012 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jul/24/booker-club-graham-swift-last-orders>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

critics [who] condemn[ed] his [Swift's] alleged nostalgia and parochialism'.⁶¹⁵ Most prominently, Lisa Jardine – in line with James Wood's contemporaneous comments – claimed that by contrast with the ‘“wider and bigger contemporary issues”’ tackled by American writers, ‘too many English authors were “smug and parochial” and wrote “narrow-minded” books with little appeal for the world market’.⁶¹⁶ Alongside Martin Amis, Pat Barker, and Julian Barnes, Jardine specifically ‘dismiss[ed] Swift's Booker prize-winner’, stating: ‘“it's a book about four middle-aged men in a pub worrying about their friend's ashes. The subject is parochial. It is meaningless to a wider audience outside this country”’.⁶¹⁷ For Kate Flint, Jardine's ‘remarks are somewhat missing the point: it is not so much the delimited location that is troubling about Swift's work, but the selectivity of the novel's vision’.⁶¹⁸ In particular, Flint points out that ‘apart from this stereotype [of Hussein], seen through the stereotype of a racist gaze, Swift's South London, or at least the South London of his characters, seems self-protectingly free of all possible multiculturalism’.⁶¹⁹ ‘Swift's narrow-minded parochialism’⁶²⁰ and ‘nostalgia for a fading way of life’⁶²¹ are also critiqued by Nicholas Tredell who argues that ‘feminists, gays and ethnic minorities are almost invisible’ in Swift's fiction, and this novel in particular; furthermore, ‘images of past,

⁶¹⁵ Catherine Pessa-Miquel Klincksieck, ‘From Historiographic Metafiction to Bedtime Stories’, *Études Anglaises* 60.2 (2007), 135-47 (p.147).

⁶¹⁶ Nigel Reynolds, ‘Book Prize Judge Attacks “smug” English Novelists’, *Telegraph*, 7 May 1997, p.5. Reynolds is quoting Jardine here. In his chapter entitled ‘England’ in John Sturrock's contemporaneous *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Wood argued that post-war English fiction, unlike American, had been dogged by ‘a certain parochialism [...] an inability to rise out of material contexts and up into some upper atmosphere of the soul’ (p.133).

⁶¹⁷ Reynolds.

⁶¹⁸ Kate Flint, ‘Looking Backward?’, *Unity in Diversity Revisited?*, eds Barbara Korte and Peter Klaus Müller (Tübingen: Narr, 1998), 35-50 (p.42). See also: John Boland, ‘Swift Rebuttal’, *Irish Times*, 24 May 1997 <<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/swift-rebuttal-1.75638>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁶¹⁹ Flint, pp.40-41.

⁶²⁰ Flint, p.43.

⁶²¹ Flint, p.40.

problematic glories (the British Empire, the industrial Revolution, the Second World War) cast a warm, nostalgic glow over an alien present'.⁶²² Swift is made to stand in contrast, then, to postcolonial writers such as Hanif Kureishi and Caryl Phillips who, for Flint, 'energize much of the best of current British writing' through their 'forces of mobility and transculturation' and their transcending of 'national boundaries or identities'.⁶²³

I will address these issues of racial representation and national nostalgia in due course. First, I want to insist as I did in my introduction that these critics are too quick to divide white and non-white contemporary English authors into, respectively, politically incorrect and correct sealed camps: parochial and nostalgic versus diverse and progressive. In doing so, they overlook both the range of literary responses to England after empire and the fact that this range is not necessarily determined by race. Swift's non-fiction collection, *Making an Elephant* (2009), makes clear that he does not adhere to racialised literary divisions in his personal life; it details his friendships and literary conversations with white writers like McGrath and Ted Hughes, as well as Kazuo Ishiguro, Caryl Phillips, and Salman Rushdie, who are typically categorised as postcolonial authors. More importantly, Swift has repeatedly and persuasively rejected critical assumptions about the irrelevance or limitations of 'the local'. 'The London suburbs', he suggests in a potential nod to Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), 'are as rich a field as anywhere, as rich a beginning to a novel as any beginning'.⁶²⁴ 'localness is the key. If you are going to write about things which are in

⁶²² Cited by: Ingelbien, p.33.

⁶²³ Flint, p.37; p.37; p.48.

⁶²⁴ Craps, 'An Interview with Graham Swift', *Contemporary Literature* 50.4 (2009), 637-661 (p.652). In this interview, Swift directly confronts accusations of being 'narrow-minded' and 'parochial'. In a separate article, Swift refutes Jardine's accusation that English fiction has 'little appeal for the world market' by noting that

fact universal and timeless, then the way to do it is through the focus of the local [...] that small world opens up to the big world'.⁶²⁵

Last Orders intersects 'small' and 'big' worlds in two ways, both of which draw histories of empire and decolonisation into the novel's depiction of post-war Englishness. First, the protagonists' memories of the North African desert contribute to a reconceptualisation of WWII in specifically global and imperial terms. Second, Vince's memories of Aden (in present-day Yemen) provide Swift with a potent symbol of the postimperial 'Fall'. These two historical and geographical contexts allow us to see that Swift's *Last Orders*, as Raphael Samuel writes of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851-53), is both a 'provincial' novel *and* one that registers external, or rather imperial, 'pressure'.⁶²⁶ After contesting dominant readings of the novel as parochial, I will turn to the aforementioned issues of race and nostalgia, doing so, respectively, via Vince's prejudices against Hussein, and, the other protagonists' sense of lost freedoms. These analyses will lead me to argue that Swift – to a greater degree than the other writers in this thesis – foregrounds class as a determining factor in experiences of imperial and postimperial Englishness.

there is 'plenty of enthusiasm overseas for British fiction' ('Swift Response to a Slur', *Guardian*, 22 May 1997).

⁶²⁵ Craps, 'An Interview', pp.651-52. In 'I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside: Nice, 1997', Swift claims that 'the key to the universal is always the local, if only because it's a universal truth that all experience is and must be local, all experience is placed' (*Making an Elephant*, p.311). Pamela Cooper finds in these arguments an echo of Thomas Hardy, for whom: 'there was quite enough human nature in Wessex for one man's literary purpose [...] beings in whose hearts and minds that which is apparently local should be really universal' (*Graham Swift's Last Orders*, p.15).

⁶²⁶ For Samuel, 'Mrs Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851) is as provincial a novel as it would be possible to imagine [...] Yet India is quite an insistent pressure on the story' (*Theatres of Memory Vol. 2* (London: Verso, 1998), p.74). Procter, in his aforementioned analysis of Pat Barker and David Peace, argues that 'the regional novel has played, and continues to play, a significant imaginative role during the period of empire's passing' (p.203).

Last Orders is narrated in the first-person by, for the most part, four men – Ray, Vince, Lenny, and Vic – as they drive from their native Bermondsey to the seaside town of Margate. They are travelling, on 2 April 1990, in order to scatter the ashes of their recently deceased friend Jack Dodds. Their journey is interspersed with each character’s memories, many of which return to their respective experiences of WWII. These wartime memories act as the glue which holds the protagonists together: Ray and Jack became best friends on the battlefield; ‘somewhere in the same desert Lenny [“Gunner”] Tate was advancing and retreating, though we never knew him then’;⁶²⁷ Vic was in the navy during the war; and Vince – ‘a war baby’ (p.156) – was adopted by Jack and his wife Amy after his parents were killed in the Blitz. Lenny’s dad was also killed in the war.

For Ingrid Gunby, Swift deploys these memories of WWII in order to revise progressively post-war Englishness and avoid the trap of regressive nostalgia. ‘In *Last Orders*’, she argues, ‘Swift has created an elegy that seeks to move postwar Englishness from melancholia towards mourning’.⁶²⁸ Gunby is keen to separate WWII from the empire and its decline, her overall thesis being that the latter tends to dominate discussions of post-war Englishness at the expense of the former.⁶²⁹ There are, however, many important connections between the two, both historically and within Swift’s text. According to MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge, WWII ‘ultimately hastened the end of the empire and the superpower status attendant on it. Financially bust by 1941 and unmistakably a satellite of American power, Britain

⁶²⁷ Swift, *Last Orders* (London: Picador, 1996), p.90. All further references to *Last Orders* are incorporated into the text.

⁶²⁸ Ingrid Gunby, ‘Postwar Englishness in the Fiction of Pat Barker, Graham Swift and Adam Thorpe’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2002), p.246.

⁶²⁹ Gunby, p.9.

was losing the war while winning it'.⁶³⁰ Consequently, for Gilroy, contemporary Britain's obsessive memorialisation of WWII is incessantly haunted by a repressed awareness of postimperial decline. In particular, the 'ugly chant' sung at England football matches – 'Two world wars and one World Cup' – gives voice not only to 'warped patriotism', but also 'supply[s] a wealth of valuable insights into the morbid culture of a once-imperial nation that has not been able to accept its inevitable loss of prestige in a determinedly postcolonial world'.⁶³¹ For Bernard Porter, 'anyone who really believes that modern British nostalgia (of which there is plenty about) has much to do with the Empire should take a look at the British films, TV dramas and documentaries that were made during this period, right up to the present, where World War II must outnumber "imperial" themes by at least twenty to one'.⁶³² Yet, as Cynthia Quarrie summarises, 'for Paul Gilroy, the British fixation on the war is itself a symptom of post-imperial melancholia: it reflects a fantasy of return that is a substitute for the Empire that, now tinged with shame, was once loved and lost'.⁶³³ In other words, WWII acts as a cipher through which to at once disavow and covertly mourn the loss of empire.

Gunby's separation of the war from empire and decolonisation is not only drawn into question at a theoretical level, by critics such as Gilroy, but also at a narrative one, by novelists such as Evelyn Waugh and Olivia Manning, as well as more contemporary ones like Swift and Michael Ondaatje.⁶³⁴ The eponymous figure

⁶³⁰ Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge, *British Fiction after Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p.6. As MacKay writes elsewhere, 'the war and the loss of the empire were closely connected – politically and economically, as well as imaginatively' (*Modernism and World War II*, p.17).

⁶³¹ Gilroy, *After Empire*, p.117.

⁶³² Porter, *British Imperial*, p.168.

⁶³³ Quarrie, p.89.

⁶³⁴ Waugh's *Sword of Honour Trilogy* (1952-1961) follows Guy Crouchback's WWII experiences in British Egypt and Dakar (French West Africa), amongst other places;

of Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992) – Ladislaus de Almásy – is described as a 'desert Englishman' and 'colonist';⁶³⁵ he was also, as we come to learn, a smuggler of German spies across North Africa during the war (betraying the expertise he gained as a British cartographer/explorer in the region). The ending of the war, described in *The English Patient* as 'a strange time [...] a period of adjustment',⁶³⁶ provides an excuse for extended colonial nostalgia, expressed in the form of romantic yearnings for the North African desert: 'some of the English love Africa. A part of their brain reflects the desert precisely. So they're not foreigners there'.⁶³⁷ Ondaatje's eponymous explorer, heavily invoking the mythology of 'Lawrence of Arabia', describes the desert as 'a place of faith', where one 'disappeared into landscape [...] I wanted to erase my name and the place I had come from. By the time the war arrived, after ten years in the desert, it was easy for me to slip across borders, not belong to anyone, to any nation'.⁶³⁸ This mobile, trans-/post-national zone is precisely the one that Prentis, the narrator of Swift's *Shuttlecock*, yearns for: 'we are all looking for a space where we can be free, where we cannot be reached, where we are masters'.⁶³⁹

Manning's *Levant Trilogy* (1977-1980) follows Harriet and Guy Pringle, as well as Simon Boulderstone, in wartime Egypt, Jerusalem, and Syria. As McLeod argues, 'Manning's writing highlights the crucial relationship between the Second World War and decolonization' ('The Novel and the End of Empire', p.88).

⁶³⁵ Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), p.48; p.141.

⁶³⁶ Ondaatje, p.54.

⁶³⁷ Ondaatje, p.33.

⁶³⁸ Ondaatje, p.139. In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), Lawrence's loosely autobiographical account of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Turks, he writes: 'for years we lived anyhow with one another in the naked desert, under the indifferent heaven. By day the hot sun fermented us; and we were dizzied by the beating wind [...] devoted to freedom' ((Stroud: Nonsuch, 2006), p.21).

⁶³⁹ Swift, *Shuttlecock* (London: Picador, 1997), p.36. In his job as an archivist, Prentis uncovers files on men, like Arthur Leonard, who also served in 'N. Africa, 1941-2' (p.102), and Ronald Francis, who 'served, [in] North Africa, [and] Sicily' (p.113). Prentis's boss/nemesis Quinn had 'men under [his] command who'd been in Italy and North Africa' (p.191). In Swift's short story 'Gabor', the narrator's father 'had been in North Africa [...] during the war' (*Learning to Swim*, p.81).

Nostalgia for the lost freedoms of the wartime desert can also be located in *Last Orders*. WWII and the empire are imbricated in this novel due to the fact that Ray's and Jack's only military experiences took place in Britain's North African colonies. They first met in Egypt, as documented by 'a photo of Jack and me, taken that afternoon, sitting on a camel, with the Pyramids behind us. There must be a thousand bloody photos of old desert campaigners sitting on camels with the Pyramids behind them' (p.90). The reference to 'old desert campaigners' embeds Ray and Jack in a colonial lineage; WWII was by no means the first, or last, time that British troops would be stationed in Africa. Ray recalls how he 'advanced with Jack from Egypt into Libya and retreated with him to Egypt and advanced again into Libya. A small man at big history' (p.90). That last sentence evokes Ray's sense of pride as he moves from colony to colony, from 'Belhamed' (Libya) to 'Matruh' (Egypt) (p.90) to the 'battle of El Alamein' (Egypt) (p.100).⁶⁴⁰ As he happily proclaims: 'we're in Cairo, in Egypt, in Africa, in the middle of a war' (p.92).

The colonial theatre of war enabled Ray, as his father puts it, to 'see a bit of the world [...] more than the back end of Bermondsey' (p.279). This freedom to travel recalls not only *The English Patient* but also the narrator of Hollinghurst's 'A Thieving Boy', who felt liberated in the former colony of Egypt. There is a further parallel to be found when Ray and Jack seek out some local prostitutes: 'I looked, and I thought, I want one of those. I want one like that' (p.89). Although Swift doesn't articulate Hollinghurst-esque erotic exoticism, he does convey a similar sense of the ease with which white British colonial soldiers (or later, travellers) feel entitled to

⁶⁴⁰ 'In Manning's vision', as Lassner writes, 'El Alamein is a center of action that, even as it becomes the site of British victory, destabilizes the imperial presence' (p.35). The Battle of El Alamein is also referred to in *The English Patient* (p.164).

take their ‘pick’ of sexual options (p.91).⁶⁴¹ As Jack says: ‘different place, different rules, eh?’ (p.89).⁶⁴²

Vince is the only one of Swift’s protagonists who was too young to fight in WWII, whether in Africa or Europe. But, as David Malcolm notes, he also ‘learns his trade and some of his attitudes in the British Army’, doing so ‘as it fights to hold on to then withdraws from Aden in the 1960s’.⁶⁴³ Swift thus introduces another military-imperial context into his oeuvre. Vince refers to his time ‘in the Middle East’ (p.44), ‘the arsehole of Arabia’ (p.103), throughout the novel. Although these phrases are geographically imprecise, his specific location is named several other times: when he refers to ‘the hippie trail to Aden’ (p.104); when he asks rhetorically, ‘you ever done a stretch in Aden?’ (p.159); and by ‘the tattoo on his forearm, blue and red, made in Aden, a little scroll with his initials on with a fist holding a thunderbolt on top: “V.I.P.”’ (p.249). All of these instances indicate the sense of pride – macho pride, as the ‘fist’ and ‘thunderbolt’ on his tattoo suggest – that Vince attaches to his memories of military service in Aden. The particular place that it holds in his personal memory and historical consciousness is most clearly expressed by the phrase ‘the bleeding garden of Aden’ (p.157). His pun on Aden/Eden conjures up the former colony as an idyllic, heavenly location. It also invokes the myth of the Fall of Man – both the biblical loss of innocence and the historic loss (‘last orders’) of British power and prestige.

⁶⁴¹ Ondaatje’s protagonist recalls Hollinghurst more directly, in particular Lord Nantwich in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, when he describes ‘rivers of desert tribes, the most beautiful humans I’ve ever met in my life’ (p.138).

⁶⁴² ‘The brothels of Cairo, Port Said, Bombay and Singapore’, according to Hyam, ‘routinely provided sexual initiation for young Britons travelling east of Suez’ (p.212).

⁶⁴³ David Malcolm, *Understanding Graham Swift* (Columbia: South Carolina Press, 2003), p.21.

Aden becomes mythologically entangled with the Fall in this way because, as Peter Widdowson points out, in 1967 ‘Britain finally evacuated its armed forces from Aden [...] thus indicating that it was abandoning any role east of Suez and was effectively no longer a world power’.⁶⁴⁴ The phrase ‘east of Suez’ alludes to Kipling’s famous poem ‘Mandalay’ (1892), which popularised this saying as a marker of Britain’s colonial commitments.⁶⁴⁵ John Darwin, like Widdowson, associates the retraction of the east of Suez commitment – ‘the most far-reaching change in Britain’s world position to occur since the withdrawal from India twenty years before’ –⁶⁴⁶ with withdrawal from Aden. In Graham MacPhee’s terms,

British withdrawal from its colonial base at Aden on the Arabian Peninsula in 1967 in the wake of a bloody counter-insurgency war known as the Aden Emergency, quickly followed by withdrawal from its Gulf protectorates in 1971, signalled for many the effective end of the Empire.⁶⁴⁷

The postimperial significance of Aden was most clearly expressed in a speech by the Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson on 1 October 1968. Wilson’s leader’s address at the Blackpool Party Conference justified ‘the evacuation of Aden’ and the ‘withdrawal of all our forces from our Far Eastern bases and from the Persian Gulf’ as part of ‘the emerging pattern of post-Imperial Britain, of the new Britain in a fast changing world’.⁶⁴⁸ ‘Our people’, he argued, need

to accept Britain’s new role in the world for the later 1960s and the 1970s. This is not easy. It has not been easy for any of us to readjust to the new

⁶⁴⁴ Widdowson, p.80.

⁶⁴⁵ ‘Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst’ (Kipling, ‘Mandalay’, *Empire Writing*, ed. Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107-09 (p.109)).

⁶⁴⁶ Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation* (London: Macmillan, 1992), p.291.

⁶⁴⁷ MacPhee, p.53. As MacPhee points out, and as *Out of this World* will make clearer, this was not really the end of Britain’s formal empire: ‘a number of the troops who returned from Aden in 1967 were redeployed to Derry in the North of Ireland following the Battle of the Bogside’ (pp.68-69 (footnote 29)).

⁶⁴⁸ Harold Wilson, ‘Leader’s Speech, Blackpool 1968’ <<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=166>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

situation [...] the rejection of unilateral, go-it-alone, do-it-yourself, military adventures, the rejection equally of Suez imperialism...⁶⁴⁹

Aden was meant to be a post-Suez turning point and the beginning of ‘post-imperial Britain’. This was a beginning that Wilson encouraged people to ‘accept’, even, tentatively, welcome.⁶⁵⁰

Wilson’s hope that Britain might ‘adjust to the new situation’ of a modernising and decolonising world stands in sharp contrast to a speech (cited in the chapter on Hollinghurst) made by the Conservative Prime Minister fourteen years later.⁶⁵¹ For Thatcher, ‘those’ – like Wilson perhaps – who thought ‘that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world [...] were wrong’.⁶⁵² The Falklands victory was the moment that Britain ‘ceased to be a nation in retreat’.⁶⁵³ Thatcher was tactically vague as to the specific date at which ‘retreat’ began, but India (1947), Suez (1956), and Aden (1967) would have been the most common reference points in her own and her audience’s minds. As Said writes,

⁶⁴⁹ Wilson (online).

⁶⁵⁰ Wilson (online). Wilson had given a similar speech earlier in the year, on 16 January 1968, to the House of Commons. For Darwin, this ‘mark[ed] the terminus of Britain’s three-century career as a great Asian power. It also signalled the final collapse of the postwar campaign to remain a world power’ (*Unfinished Empire*, p.380). Darwin also cites Harold Macmillan’s so-called ‘Winds of Change’ speech, delivered to the Parliament of South Africa at the start of the decade. On 3 February 1960 the Conservative Prime Minister famously declared that ‘the wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact’ (Harold Macmillan, ‘The Wind of Change’ <<http://www.africanrhetoric.org/pdf/J%20%20%20Macmillan%20-%20%20the%20wind%20of%20change.pdf>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁶⁵¹ Wilson’s speech also stands in contrast, more recently, to the findings of the Chilcot Report on the Iraq War. Blair’s now infamous verbal commitment to President Bush, ‘I will be with you, whatever’, typifies a newfound, post-9/11, enthusiasm for interventionist foreign policy (Various, ‘“I will be with you, whatever”’, *Washington Post*, 6 July 2016 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/06/full-text-annotated-tony-blairs-2002-iraq-memo-to-george-bush/>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁶⁵² Thatcher, ‘Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham’.

⁶⁵³ Thatcher, ‘Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham’.

certain ‘British intellectuals, political figures, and historians believe that giving up the empire – whose symbols were Suez, Aden, and India – was bad for Britain and bad for “the natives,” who both have declined in all sorts of ways ever since’.⁶⁵⁴

How, then, does Swift’s deployment of a highly symbolic (post)colonial location – Aden – relate to these competing visions of postimperial Britain: one of modernisation and one of nostalgia? It is important to remember that not only was Vince stationed in Aden, but, as Widdowson points out, he has ‘the honour of being one of the last troops to clear out of Aden’ (p.69). This detail suggests that Vince acts as a nostalgic emblem of the postimperial Fall, of the generation who lived through (or was unable to prevent) Britain’s loss of status as a world power. This epochal shift is stamped, in tattoo form, onto his body. For Emma Parker, however,

rather than affirming ‘a cosy version of England’, as Flint proposes, Swift uses his central characters [in *Last Orders*] as representative of a conservative and stereotypical version of national identity in order to offer a post-colonial critique of the limits of white, English masculinity. By evoking the totalising boundaries of Englishness only to erase them, Swift creates what Homi Bhabha terms a ‘counternarrative of nation’.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁴ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.163. The continuing postimperial resonances of Aden are evidenced by an article, published by the *Telegraph* in 2014, endorsing the British military’s ‘return to [the] region [it] abandoned with the end of the British empire’: ‘the then defence secretary Dennis Healey announced in 1968 that British troops would be withdrawn from all major military bases “East of Aden”. The decision, often described as the East of Suez declaration in reference to a poem by Rudyard Kipling [...] was seen as marking a formal end of the British Empire’ (Richard Spencer, ‘Britain Returns “East of Suez”’, *Telegraph*, 6 December 2014 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11277194/Britain-returns-East-of-Suez-with-permanent-Royal-Navy-base-in-Gulf.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁶⁵⁵ Emma Parker, ‘“No Man’s Land”’, *Posting the Male*, eds Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 89-104 (pp.99-100). Parker’s argument is echoed by Hywel Dix’s claim that ‘*Last Orders* is an example of the “writing back” that started to develop in England at approximately the same time as devolution in Britain’ (‘Devolution and Cultural Catch-Up’, *Literature of an Independent England*, eds Michael Gardiner and Claire Westall (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2007), 188-199 (p.193)).

This ‘post-colonial’ defence of *Last Orders* as ‘a “counternarrative of nation” ’ is echoed by David Rogers’s claims about its ‘fundamental undoing’ of Englishness,⁶⁵⁶ and Raphaël Ingelbien’s about ‘England dissolv[ing] into nothing’.⁶⁵⁷ These critics do not mention Aden, but one might follow their logic to argue that Vince’s memories of Aden allow Swift to critique rather than condone the delusions of postimperial nostalgia. Vince’s obsession with Aden demonstrates ‘the limits of white, English masculinity’.

Swift is not such a straightforwardly identitarian or postmodernist writer. *Last Orders* does not invoke conservative myths ‘*only* to contest’ them;⁶⁵⁸ ‘the totalising boundaries of Englishness’ are not invoked *only* to be ‘erase[d]’. Swift, as argued in the introduction to this chapter, is not as interested in the theoretical deconstruction of mythologies as the difficulties of demythologisation at an individual level, the staying power, as it were, of what Parker calls ‘imperial conceptions of Englishness’.⁶⁵⁹ What happens, he asks, when these conceptions outlast the material reality of empire, when the ‘past [...] lingers’, as Pamela Cooper writes, ‘as a cultural myth’?⁶⁶⁰

Aden reappears in a key scene later in the novel, as Vince is negotiating a business deal with Hussein. Hussein is the only non-white character in *Last Orders*.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁶ David Rogers, ‘Englishness in Transition’, *The Revision of Englishness*, 169-84 (p.179).

⁶⁵⁷ Ingelbien, p.40. Ingelbien refers to both *Last Orders* and *Waterland* but focuses mainly on the latter.

⁶⁵⁸ Parker, ‘“No Man’s Land” ’, p.102 (emphasis added).

⁶⁵⁹ Parker, ‘“No Man’s Land” ’, p.90.

⁶⁶⁰ Pamela Cooper, *Graham Swift’s Last Orders*, p.55. As Brian Finney writes, for Swift’s characters ‘the past cannot simply be left behind’ (*English Fiction Since 1984* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2006), p.194).

⁶⁶¹ Heike Hartung-Brückner argues that another racial stereotype features in the novel. For her, Swift deploys and then overturns clichés about gypsies: ‘the social categories that are seemingly absent from the romanticized cliché [gypsies as outlaws] are re-introduced’ (‘(Re)constructions of History and (De)constructions of “Englishness” ’ <<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/uk/gswift/lastorders/hhb3.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

He is also, in Flint's aforementioned words, a 'stereotype, seen through the stereotype of a racist gaze'.⁶⁶² Hussein, as we shall see, is certainly reduced to stereotype by Vince's 'racist gaze'; Vince's 'gaze', however, is not *itself* stereotypical. In a significant if risky manoeuvre, *Last Orders* situates Vince's racism historically and socially. Swift shows that it emerges from a specifically postimperial and working-class location. In this way, Swift's narrative challenges the one provided by Porter, in which the British working-classes were largely unaffected by empire or its demise.⁶⁶³

Vince, a used-car dealer, associates Hussein's negotiating skills with 'haggle fever, call of the old bazaar' (p.166). Recalling the orientalist and gendered language of 'Seraglio', Vince then claims that 'where he [Hussein] comes from they dress 'em up like nuns' (p.166). This comment is prompted by Vince's guilt at pimping out his daughter Kath in order to make a sale: 'there goes Vince Dodds who sold his daughter to an Ayrab' (p.166). Vince's 'rejection of alterity' (in Craps's words) is not only orientalist but, as his stream of consciousness narration goes on to reveal, bound up with the Fall of empire.⁶⁶⁴ It becomes clear that Vince's hatred of Hussein's 'brown bollocks' (p.165) stems from his fear

that he knows I've got to smile and lay it on thick and act like I'm his humble servant when what I'm thinking is, You towel-head toe-rag, we used to shoot your lot when we was in Aden. And your lot used to take off squaddies' heads [...] there I was once, showing the flag, oiling the rag, in that stinking, flyblown heat-trap he'd be at home in, and now here he is at the bottom end of Bermondsey Street, slipping across from his City glass-house, getting me to find him fancy cars, getting me to say, 'Right you are, Mr Hussein, yes sir, Mr Hussein,' at a wave of his wallet. (pp.165-66)

⁶⁶² Flint, p.4.

⁶⁶³ The British Empire, Porter claims, did not 'impact significantly on the culture (or cultures) of the non-elite majority' (*The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p.194). For an opposing view, see: James Epstein, 'Taking Class Notes on Empire', *At Home with the Empire*, 251-74.

⁶⁶⁴ Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift*, p.160.

Vince hates having to ‘act like I’m his humble servant’ because he, or rather ‘we’, once had the upper hand. Where? ‘In Aden’, of course. Orientalist images of Hussein as a ‘towel-head toe-rag [...] tak[ing] off squaddies’ heads’ stem from memories, or rather memories turned into fantasies, of colonial military experience. The rhythm and rhyme of the phrase ‘showing the flag, oiling the rag’ conveys poetically Vince’s romantic attachment to time spent fighting ‘your lot’ in the Middle East. The shift from the imperfect tense of ‘used to’ to the present of ‘now’ signals just how much that pride has dissipated. Central to this post-Aden/Eden sense of national diminishment is what Alison Light calls ‘the treacherous instability of former models of masculine power’;⁶⁶⁵ Vince’s macho tattoo, ‘made in Aden’, provides no salvation for him now. If anything, it probably diminishes his opportunities back home: ‘it doesn’t seem to help a man much’, as Ray laments, ‘having been at the battle of El Alamein’ (p.100).

As well as providing a highly mythologised historical grounding for Vince’s racial prejudices, this passage also intersects racial and class conflict. This is despite Swift’s claim, after the publication of *Last Orders*, that ‘I don’t think in terms of class. I write about human beings’.⁶⁶⁶ Vince resents having to struggle to close a deal with the wealthy businessman Hussein. He feels like he has been reduced to a ‘humble servant’, attendant upon the ‘wave of his wallet’. Vince’s expression of racism, then, is also an expression of working-class angst against a man with ‘a bleeding Rolex’ (p.167) and a ‘posh pad’ (p.168); as Brian Finney writes, Vince’s ‘racist attitude towards Hussein [...] is itself partly the product of his resentment at Hussein’s wealth and privileged status’.⁶⁶⁷ Vince takes a swipe at the ‘City’ and the

⁶⁶⁵ Light, p.8.

⁶⁶⁶ Cited by: Anon., ‘Untitled’, *Scotsman* 31 October 1996.

⁶⁶⁷ Finney, p.197.

culture of deference – ‘Right you are, Mr Hussein, yes sir’ – to which he must conform in order to make a decent living.

Swift is in controversial territory here, politically speaking. It is clear from the extremely offensive and violent register of Vince’s language that Swift is not endorsing his perspective. Moreover, Vince’s moral character is fundamentally undermined by his exploitation of his young daughter’s body for commercial purposes. For Parker, ‘the novel itself in no way condones the sexism and racism of its characters and presents attitudes as aspects of a masculinity that is profoundly problematic’.⁶⁶⁸ Parker once again exaggerates her defensive reading beyond plausibility, claiming that Swift uses ‘the marginalized history of post-colonial subjects like Hussein’ to subvert ‘the imperialism of official history’;⁶⁶⁹ the Thatcherite ‘myth of English pre-eminence [...] is undermined by Hussein’.⁶⁷⁰ Parker’s statements suggest that Swift gives voice to Hussein, when in fact he is only viewed through Vince’s perspective (and for no longer than four pages). Hussein’s ‘marginalized history’ is never articulated. By engaging so intimately with the mentality of racism, at the expense of Hussein’s perspective or that of any other non-white characters, Swift might be considered to provide a justification for prejudice – or at least, to fail to provide a counterpoint.

Swift also risks perpetuating another form of prejudice: demonising white working-class communities as parochial, nostalgic, and ultimately racist. As Owen Jones argues in *Chavs* (2011), contemporary political discourse in Britain often presents the white working-class

as a lost tribe on the wrong side of history, disorientated by multiculturalism and obsessed with defending their identity from the cultural ravages of mass

⁶⁶⁸ Parker, ‘“No Man’s Land”’, p.92.

⁶⁶⁹ Parker, ‘“No Man’s Land”’, p.100.

⁶⁷⁰ Parker, ‘“No Man’s Land”’, p.101.

immigration. The rise of the idea of a ‘white working class’ fuelled a new bigotry. It was OK to hate the white working class, because they were themselves a bunch of racist bigots.⁶⁷¹

These race- and class-based risks cannot be avoided in Swift’s novel. However, as various postcolonial writers and critics argue, there can be something politically progressive in taking seriously, rather than instinctively rejecting, the postimperial anxieties experienced by certain parts of the white working-class (anxieties that are by no means exclusive to, but perhaps felt in particular ways by, white working-class communities). For Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, ‘the easiest thing in the world would be to deride [...] attempts at finding something to replace lost kingdoms and dreams’.⁶⁷² As she sees it, ‘the more challenging task is that of deconstruction and reconstruction’ in order that the English might ‘develop this confident, post-imperial cultural identity, [instead of being] locked as they are somewhere between embarrassment and guilt’.⁶⁷³

Likewise, for Kureishi,

It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn’t what it was. [...] Much thought, discussion and self-examination must go into seeing the necessity for this, what this ‘new way of being British’ involves and how difficult it might be to attain.⁶⁷⁴

Stuart Hall specifies the class-basis of this project: ‘if you’re serious about a multicultural society, you would address the sense of alienation of white working-class people, who have to be won over to a new conception of themselves where Britain’s not lording it from a gunboat’.⁶⁷⁵ Alibhai-Brown impels us to ‘reconstruct’, Kureishi to ‘think’ and ‘discuss’, and Hall to ‘address’. These verbs are all rather

⁶⁷¹ Owen Jones, *Chavs* (London: Verso, 2012), pp.8-9.

⁶⁷² Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, ‘Bring England in from the Cold’, *New Statesman* 11 July 1999, 24-26.

⁶⁷³ Alibhai-Brown.

⁶⁷⁴ Hanif Kureishi, ‘London and Karachi’, *Patriotism*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989), 270-86 (p.286).

⁶⁷⁵ Cited by: Maya Jaggi, ‘Prophet at the Margins’, *Guardian*, 8 July 2000 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/jul/08/society>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

vague. How, then, might a work of fiction like Swift's relate to this otherwise rather imprecise theoretical and political project?

The issue of voice adoption – or, the problem of speaking *for* other groups – has dominated critical discussions of class in *Last Orders*. As Klincksieck writes, 'some critics, like Nicholas Tredell, have accused Swift of writing in an unauthentic [sic], condescending idiom'.⁶⁷⁶ Lawrence Driscoll has politicised this critique by accusing *Last Orders* – like *The Line of Beauty* and great swathes of contemporary British literature – of adopting 'the view from above: a presentation of a working-class world by someone *outside* that class [...] an extended look into that working-class milieu from a middle-class authorial perspective'.⁶⁷⁷ In particular, Driscoll claims that 'the novel quite clearly illustrates that even in the act of "resisting" their duty, the ideological and economic boundaries in these characters [sic] lives ensures that there really is nowhere for them to go'.⁶⁷⁸

Swift's close attention to his characters' experiences of fixity and stasis – as opposed to freedom and movement – does not, however, have to be considered as an aesthetic or political problem. It is precisely these experiences which bring the thematics of class and postimperialism together in his novel. One of the first jokes in *Last Orders* is that, despite its name, their local pub the Coach and Horses 'aint ever

⁶⁷⁶ Klincksieck, p.139. For Gaby Wood, the characters' 'Cockney twang, can seem tricky, and the slang is sometimes forced' (online); for Jordison, it 'all seem[s] a bit cor-blimey-guvnor' ('Booker Club: *Last Orders*').

⁶⁷⁷ Driscoll, p.147. The class disjunct between the backgrounds of Swift and his characters isn't as strict as Driscoll makes out. Swift's 'mother came from the more up-market end of Sydenham, while his father – a naval fighter pilot in the Second World War – was brought up in the lower-class area of Sydenham down the hill' (Widdowson, p.2). Swift attended the elite boarding school Dulwich College as 'a scholarship boy' (*Making an Elephant* (p.203)).

⁶⁷⁸ Driscoll, p.148. Dix is one of the few critics to discuss class outside of this narrow framework. For him, *Last Orders* 'decoupl[es] the literature of England from "English Literature" and thereby allow[s] more space for the diverse experiences of working-class communities and people' (p.196).

gone nowhere, has it?’ (p.9). It is a joke that the protagonists return to because it doubles as a form of self-denigration. Ray tells himself several times throughout the novel that he ‘could see the world’, but, apart from his time in Africa during the war, it never comes to be (p.128; p.281). As Jack complained to him once: ‘it’s like the whole world’s bugging off. ’Cept Amy [his wife] and me’ (p.191). Ray agreed: ‘me and Carol [his wife, who had just left him] are just getting all cooped up, we aint seeing much of the world, are we? I’ll get us a means of travel’ (p.191). Yet, by the time of Jack’s death in 1990, he is still pretending that he ‘could see the world. I could go to Bangkok’ (p.128); ‘I could see the world. It can’t all be sea and desert. I could see the other side of the world, Sydney Harbour, Bondi Beach, it must knock Margate into a cocked hat...’ (p.281).

Ray singles out Sydney because that is where his daughter Sue emigrated many years ago. Sue’s experience reminds us that it is not the case that the postimperial English, working-class or otherwise, are unable to ‘see the world’. Indeed, according to Vince, the most important shift in post-war Britain is ‘mobility [...] Time was when the only way you got to travel was in the Army [...] But watch ‘em all on the move now, watch ‘em all going places’ (p.105). This boom in ‘mobility’, however, is the exact opposite of the protagonists’ own experiences, all of whom (including Vince) only travelled ‘in the Army’. At one stage they believed themselves to be ‘small m[e]n at big history’, able to ‘see a bit of the world’, but now this illusion has disintegrated into what Light terms a ‘strongly anti-heroic mood’.⁶⁷⁹

This sense of diminished freedom and entrenched parochialism is tied both to the end of the war and the Fall of Aden. Lenny’s most significant revelation in the novel is that he once convinced his daughter Sally, who had become pregnant through

⁶⁷⁹ Light, p.8.

‘Vincey’s doing’, to have an abortion: ‘it was me who said, when she came right out with it and said she wanted to have the baby, “No you don’t, my girl.” [...] And she aint ever forgiven me since’ (p.203). He recalls the event in disturbingly militaristic terms:

And the fact is that when you can remember, just a few years before, loading and firing, loading and firing, whacking it home and knowing that that’s a few more of ‘em blown to bits, and not thinking twice about it, even being glad, because it’s them not you, less of them to do it to you and it’s only what’s asked of you, any case, what you’re trained for, then what’s one little unborn sod who aint ever going to see the light of day? (p.204)

Lenny claims that his experience of war has directly influenced his inability to empathise, to take into consideration either ‘one little unborn sod’ or his daughter’s feelings on the matter. He is trapped in what Marianna Torgovnick calls a ‘wartime consciousness, [which] can last beyond the end of hostilities’.⁶⁸⁰ Lenny justifies the forced abortion further by stating,

And what they call a sin and a crime and against the law at one time aint at another, is it? Like if it’d been five years later, we could’ve solved that little problem, no fuss, all above board and legal. Different times, different rules. Like one moment we’re fighting over a whole heap of desert, next we’re pulling out of Aden snappy. (p.204)

Lenny was not stationed in Aden. Aden is referenced here, it seems, because the Abortion Act – which legalised abortion by registered practitioners – was passed in the same year that Britain began its withdrawal from Aden: 1967. Swift thus highlights a parallel between these seismic shifts in Britain’s legal and imperial histories, two aspects of Wilson’s modernising, liberalising vision. But there is also a violent potency to Swift’s choice of symbolic partners – abortion and decolonisation – that cannot be contained by such precise historical contextualisation. The conflation of imagery suggests that the end of empire might be considered as a form of abortion

⁶⁸⁰ Marianna Torgovnick, *War Complex* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.1.

on a national or global scale, just as Sally's was on a personal one. Although Lenny enforced this abortion, he later recognises that 'that's when it really happened, that's when we parted company, though it wasn't till later, till she teamed up with that Tyson toe-rag, then started taking on all-comers, that I washed my hands altogether' (p.204). If the abortion was the moment when Lenny's and Sally's relationship began to collapse, 'pulling out of Aden snappy' suggests a hastily severed relationship between Britain and the Middle East: a catastrophic rupture that will be difficult to repair.

This is a much more visceral response to the postimperial Fall than that which was identified in the chapter on Hollinghurst. For an ex-colonial Lord like Charles Nantwich, the loss of empire was keenly felt, but the diminishment of power and privilege that it entailed prompted an elegiac form of nostalgia: 'quietly crushing' in Hollinghurst's phrase from *The Stranger's Child*. The characters in *Last Orders* seem to experience it as a kind of death, or aborted life. In this way, Swift's novel provides a particularly white working-class and male version of postimperial Englishness: this is one in which memories of military service abroad intersect with and compound experiences of fixity in post-war life.

The 'Troubles', The Falklands, and Postimperial Trauma in *Out of this World*

Swift 'return[s] again and again to the years of the Second World War' in his fiction and *OOTW*, like *Last Orders*, is no exception.⁶⁸¹ Harry Beech, one of the novel's two protagonists, served in the war as an aerial photographer; this is an experience which led to his eminent post-war career as a photojournalist specialising in global

⁶⁸¹ Adrian Poole, 'Graham Swift and the Mourning After', *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Mengham (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 150-67 (p.157).

conflicts.⁶⁸² Harry's father, Robert, supplied the Allies with arms and Harry met his first wife, Anna Vouatsis, 'in Nuremberg [...] [where] they were itemizing the deaths of millions' (p.31). Joe Carmichael, the husband of Harry's daughter Sophie, grew up amidst the rubble of a 'bomb-site in Thorndyke Road' (p.156).

WWII is by far the most frequently discussed historical event in *Last Orders*. *OOTW*, however, draws upon a much more diverse and unusual set of global conflicts. As Adrian Poole writes, '*Out of this World* extends its perspective beyond the others to take in not only the death-camps and Nuremberg trials, but Vietnam, the Greek Civil War and the Falklands (the novel is headed with the date "April 1982")'.⁶⁸³ Harry's first-person narrative begins with recollections of the 1969 moon landing (p.11) before turning to the Vietnam War, a war that Harry has recently documented with his camera (p.12). Harry's profession enables Swift to refer back to a range of military histories from the mid- to late-twentieth century, the high point of global decolonisation. Harry recalls, for instance, his visits to 'Algiers, '61; [and] Stanleyville, '64' (p.115). The former refers to the 1954-1962 Algerian War of Independence, designated elsewhere by another place name and date: 'Oran, 1960' (p.78). 'Stanleyville, '64' refers to another Francophone colonial conflict: the 1964 Simba Rebellion in the Belgian Congo. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War also appears in Harry's narrative, as he recalls 'that summer' when he got his 'sun-tan in the Sinai Desert, snapping young Israeli soldiers, whooping and singing, racing armoured cars over undefended sand, not believing war could be so easy' (p.57). So too does 'the summer [1974] the Turks invaded Cyprus and the Junta fell in Greece' (p.59).

⁶⁸² Swift, *Out of this World* (London: Viking, 1988), pp.46-47. All further references to *OOTW* are incorporated into the text.

⁶⁸³ Poole, p.157. According to the *OOTW* book-jacket, this is 'Swift's most far-reaching novel [...] ranging from the towers of Manhattan to the ruins of Greece and from Nuremberg to Vietnam' (n.p.).

OOTW was published in 1988, two years after the aforementioned interview with McGrath in which Swift critiqued the ‘self-absorbed and isolated’ English novel: ‘English fiction of the immediate post-war period, up to the Sixties and early Seventies, was terribly bound up by its own Englishness [...] it just didn’t travel’.⁶⁸⁴ For Malcolm, *OOTW* successfully reverses this isolationist postimperial outlook by ‘go[ing] beyond the parochial [...] to touch on a whole century of European history’.⁶⁸⁵ On the one hand, Malcolm underplays Swift’s internationalism: *OOTW* travels far beyond European history, taking in Asian, African, and Middle Eastern contexts too. On the other hand, he overstates Swift’s ‘remarkable ambitio[n]’ in engaging with these regions.⁶⁸⁶ ‘Oran, 1960’ (p.78) does not lead to a detailed account of the Algerian War of Independence. Such brief allusions seem to function instead as shorthand for global violence and disorder.

For the majority of critics of *OOTW*, this is because ‘armed conflict’ is little more than a ‘backdrop’ for Swift’s real interest in postmodern issues of reality and representation.⁶⁸⁷ These are issues which received extended treatment in his previous novel, *Waterland*. The fact that global conflicts are viewed through Harry’s camera lens, and so they are almost always mediated rather than directly experienced, enables the novel to ‘reflect [...] at great length on the part (to be) played by photographic and textual representation’.⁶⁸⁸ Various critics cite the contemporaneous work of postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard (who also features heavily, as we shall see, in

⁶⁸⁴ Swift, *Making an Elephant*, p.94.

⁶⁸⁵ Malcolm, pp.131-32.

⁶⁸⁶ Malcolm, p.131.

⁶⁸⁷ Linda Gray Sexton, ‘The White Silence of their Lives’, *New York Times Book Review*, 11 September 1988 <<http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/11/books/the-white-silence-of-their-lives.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁶⁸⁸ Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift*, p.105.

criticism on Barnes).⁶⁸⁹ Harry's assertion, 'when you put something on record, you make a simulacrum of it' (p.55), suggests Swift's familiarity with Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), which was published seven years prior to his novel. Baudrillardian ideas about representation superseding reality in postmodern culture, which were highly influential in literary-critical circles during the 1980s and 1990s, recur throughout Harry's narrative: 'times have changed since then. The camera first, then the event. The whole world is waiting just to get turned into film. And not just the world but the goddam moon as well' (p.13).

Yet, despite the evident influence of a postmodern zeitgeist on *OOTW*, it is surely reductive to claim that 'the novel *as a whole* is a meditation on the truthfulness or not of representation'.⁶⁹⁰ What is lost in such totalising statements is the role of historical and contemporary conflicts as something other than pretexts for postmodern 'meditation'. The assassination of Harry's father by the IRA, at the heart of Swift's novel, has less to do with reflections upon representation than with the history and politics of empire. I shall now make this case at length, before turning to the novel's two other postimperial focal points: the Falklands War; and Sophie's trauma.

If it is significant that Harry Beech's profession is photography, it is also important to remember that Robert Beech is 'a manufacturer and supplier of arms' (p.89). This implicates him, his family, and their household, in direct and material ways, in many of the conflicts in the novel; he is the locus at which, in Said's terms, 'home' and 'abroad' are brought together. Robert does not readily reveal these connections between the domestic and the foreign: the 'fields BMC [Beech Munitions Corporation] was now operating in, and what exactly was its area of development' is

⁶⁸⁹ Jakob Winnberg, *An Aesthetics of Vulnerability* (Sweden: Gothenburg Studies in English, 2003), p.132; Widdowson, p.52; Craps, p.106.

⁶⁹⁰ Widdowson, p.50 (emphasis added).

highly secretive (p.90) (much like Badger's 'seedily hush-hush' activities 'all over Africa' in *The Line of Beauty*). Harry, however, immediately follows the phrase above, 'manufacturer and supplier of arms', with the subclause, '- to, amongst others, our lads in Ulster -' (p.89). The full import of this reference to conflict in Northern Ireland will become apparent just a few pages later.

First, Harry provides a montage of his father's career in munitions. This helps to situate Robert's company – Beech Munitions Corporation – in a long imperial lineage. Harry 'cut[s] to 1941. A rare, brief clip of Robert Beech in a factory yard with Winston Churchill (grey bowler, cigar primed)' (p.89). This is the heroic version of Robert's past: contributing to the Second World War effort by arming Churchill's men. But the company goes back much further, having been founded in '1875 [...] Beech armaments used in the Sudan and South Africa. Cut – cut (representative material: howitzers at Omdurman; Mafeking celebrations)' (p.89-90). 'Omdurman' links back to the previous 'clip', as Churchill was one of the soldiers who fought in this 1898 colonial battle in Sudan;⁶⁹¹ 'howitzers' are types of cannon that were used at Omdurman, a battle that is famous for its 'massacre' of 'Sudanese Dervishes' through the use of 'new military technology'.⁶⁹² 'Mafeking' refers to a famous British victory in the 'Second Anglo-Boer or South African War' (1899-1902);⁶⁹³ the lifting of the siege of Mafeking, in 1900, was celebrated jingoistically back home (on 'Mafeking Night') and 'subsequently came to indicate excessively extravagant enthusiasm for

⁶⁹¹ See: Winston Churchill, *The River War* (London: Longmans, 1902) (especially chapter five, 'The Battle of Omdurman', pp.269-300).

⁶⁹² David Shonfield, 'Battle of Omdurman', *History Today* 48.9 (1998) <<http://www.historytoday.com/david-shonfield/battle-omdurman>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁶⁹³ 'Second Anglo-Boer or South African War' is Boehmer's phrase ('Perspectives on the South African War', *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, eds Derek Attridge and David Attwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 246-61 (p.246)). I refer simply to the 'Boer War' from now on.

the glories of British imperial expansion'.⁶⁹⁴ Harry's montage, then, reveals that BMC has been producing the armaments with which the British Empire – from South Africa to Ulster – has been defended and expanded for the past hundred years or so.

Harry's allusion to the Boer War sets up an intertextual link to Ishiguro's contemporaneous novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989).⁶⁹⁵ Ishiguro's text, which is much more commonly interpreted through a postcolonial lens,⁶⁹⁶ is narrated by an English butler named Stevens. Early on, Stevens informs us that his 'elder brother, Leonard, was killed during the South African War'.⁶⁹⁷ He then explains that

Naturally, my father would have felt this loss keenly; but to make matters worse the usual comfort a father has in these situations – that is, the notion that his son gave his life gloriously for king and country – was sullied by the fact that my brother had perished in a particularly infamous manoeuvre. Not only was it alleged that the manoeuvre had been a most un-British attack on civilian Boer settlements, overwhelming evidence emerged that it had been irresponsibly commanded with several floutings of elementary military precautions, so that the men who had died – my brother among them – had died quite needlessly. In view of what I am about to relate, it would not be proper of me to identify the manoeuvre any more precisely, although you may well guess which one I am alluding to if I say that it caused something of an uproar at the time, adding significantly to the controversy the conflict as a whole was attracting.⁶⁹⁸

Through heavily-coded language – 'sullied'; 'particularly infamous'; 'un-British'; 'irresponsibly commanded' etc. – Stevens tries to diminish (but in so doing neatly

⁶⁹⁴ M. Keith Booker, *Ulysses, Capitalism, and Colonialism* (London: Greenwood, 2000), p.95. See also: Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) (especially chapter one, 'The War at Home', pp.1-31).

⁶⁹⁵ Swift and Ishiguro are good friends, as we learn in 'Buying a Guitar with Ish'. Swift is complimentary in this essay about *The Remains of the Day*, claiming that it goes 'to the very quick of Englishness – or its fossilized, emblematic shell – in the form of the fastidiously spoken, emotionally hampered butler, Stevens' (*Making an Elephant*, p.100). It is possible that the two authors discussed their contemporaneous novels as they were writing them.

⁶⁹⁶ See Horton (pp.27-30) for a critical review of the reception of Ishiguro. For Horton, certain critics have restricted Ishiguro's fiction to a postcolonial lens as a result of his family background (Ishiguro was born in Japan in 1954 and moved to England in 1960).

⁶⁹⁷ Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p.40.

⁶⁹⁸ Ishiguro, p.40.

encapsulates) the sense of national shame that came to be attached to ‘the South African War’.⁶⁹⁹ The refusal to name the specific ‘manoeuvre any more precisely’ is clearly not an oversight on Ishiguro’s part but a way of articulating-by-not-articulating. Stevens personifies what Catherine Hall calls the ‘disavowal of the past [...] [the] forgetting [of] the violence, pain and shame’ of empire, a disavowal that, for Hall, defines the attitude of postimperial Britain with regards to its (now) disreputable imperial forefathers.⁷⁰⁰ In this early scene, then, Ishiguro initiates his systematic deconstruction of the ideals of country house England. This culminates in the revelation of the collusion that took place between Lord Darlington (an English aristocrat), Stevens (his deferential butler), British fascism, and Nazism, at Darlington Hall in the 1930s.

Swift’s invocation of the Boer War is much briefer than Ishiguro’s, and he does not associate it with disrepute in any way; neither, as we shall see, does Barnes in *Arthur & George*. ‘Mafeking celebrations’ are name-checked (like ‘Algiers’, ‘Stanleyville’, and ‘Oran’) but ‘violence, pain and shame’ are not mentioned or even suggested, as they are in Ishiguro.⁷⁰¹ Disavowal, in Hall’s sense, continues apace. But what Swift does achieve, which neither Ishiguro nor Barnes attempt, is to connect British imperial history (in Sudan and South Africa) with the nation’s contemporary

⁶⁹⁹ According to Boehmer, ‘within the international arena, especially across the British Empire, the South African War represented a body blow to British imperial morale and Liberal idealism’ (‘Perspectives on the South African War’, p.247).

⁷⁰⁰ Hall, ‘Britain’s Massive Debt to Slavery’, *Guardian*, 27 February 2013 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/27/britain-debt-slavery-made-public>> [accessed 26 October 2017]. In exposing the (deleterious) domestic consequences of the Boer War, *The Remains of the Day* recalls several earlier responses to the war in English fiction. See, for instance: Somerset Maugham’s 1901 novel *The Hero* and 1903 play *A Man of Honour*; John Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Saga* (1906-21); and D.H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* (1915).

⁷⁰¹ In *Waterland*, Tom Crick’s grandfather, Ernest Atkinson, briefly mentions ‘the disgraces of the South African War’ as part of his broader anti-imperial critique (p.140).

military activities (in Northern Ireland and, later, the Falklands).⁷⁰²

There are significant historical links between Swift's South African and Irish colonial contexts. According to Roy Foster, 'the radicalization of Irish politics in the early twentieth century arose out of the opposition to the Boer War around 1900';⁷⁰³ 'Irish declarations of solidarity', as Elleke Boehmer writes, 'recognized in the Boers a republican people apparently as colonially beleaguered as nationalist Ireland felt itself to be'.⁷⁰⁴ *OOTW* does not make these connections explicitly, as Boehmer does in both her non-fiction and fiction,⁷⁰⁵ and as James Joyce does in *Ulysses* (1922).⁷⁰⁶ Swift's project, instead, is to construct a 'multidirectional' image of imperial history: to 'recall', like Michael Rothberg in his study of Holocaust memory through the lens of decolonisation, 'history's overlapping forms of violence'.⁷⁰⁷ Harry's montage is an ideal form for such multidirectionality: it allows the reader to identify and imaginatively pursue connections between overlapping histories. In particular, Harry's montage helps to situate an act of terroristic violence – Robert's assassination – within an imperial framework.

Harry jumps from past to present – from imperial to postimperial violence –

⁷⁰² *The Remains of the Day* begins in July 1956, on the cusp of the Suez Canal Crisis, and Stevens narrates his story from there. Ishiguro leaves this contemporary contextualisation implicit (p.1).

⁷⁰³ Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p.456. The Boer War, Foster continues, had a 'galvanic effect' and was 'nearly as crucial an event for Irish Nationalism as the death of [Charles] Parnell' (p.448).

⁷⁰⁴ Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.27.

⁷⁰⁵ See Boehmer's novel *Bloodlines* (2000). Giles Foden's novel *Ladysmith* (1999), which is set during the siege of Ladysmith (1899-1900), also explores the connections between Irish nationalism and the Boer War.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ulysses*, set on 16 June 1904, explores the aftermath of the Boer War in Dublin. See, in particular, the "Khaki Hamlets" section of episode nine ((London: Penguin, 2000), pp.239-40). For commentary on the role of the Boer War in *Ulysses*, see: Booker's chapter ' "Khaki Hamlets Don't Hesitate": *Ulysses*, the Boer War, and British Imperialism' in *Ulysses, Capitalism, and Colonialism* (pp.85-103).

⁷⁰⁷ Rothberg, p.35

by informing us that Robert, who has committed his life to arming British soldiers, is ‘an avowed critic of what he called Britain’s post-war “relaxation” ’ (p.92). As Harry continues,

This was ’72. Ominous times. The flowers of the Sixties faded. The long trough of the new decade yawning. The Irish trouble. And the sense of a new, barbarous world encroaching, a world no longer keeping to its former demarcations, former protocol. Bombs going off in airports, embassies, shopping centres, homes. (p.92)

‘These’, as Stevens states enigmatically at the beginning of *The Remains of the Day*, are ‘changing times’.⁷⁰⁸ The colonial ‘world’ that ‘kep[t] to its former demarcations’, as enforced by BMC-armed soldiers, has begun to unravel by the end of the decolonising 1960s; ‘the places they [‘the soldiers’] guarded, or kept orderly, / Must guard themselves, and keep themselves orderly’, as Larkin laments in ‘Homage to a Government’ (1969). ‘The Irish trouble’, in particular, has introduced colonial disorder into the national narrative.

The fact that Robert’s company has been arming ‘our lads in Ulster’ comes back to haunt him in the central event of the novel. McGrath also considers Robert Beech’s assassination by the IRA, in April 1972,⁷⁰⁹ to be at the core of Swift’s novel: ‘like Conrad’s *Secret Agent*, *Out of This World* is a book built around an

⁷⁰⁸ Ishiguro, p.16.

⁷⁰⁹ Swift chose his date carefully. ‘In 1972’, as Declan Kiberd informs us, ‘the political scientist Richard Rose pronounced the Northern Ireland problem intractable’ (*Inventing Ireland* (London: Vintage, 1996), p.575). 1972 could be described as the nadir of the ‘Troubles’ and at least two major events took place that year: ‘the “Bloody Sunday” shooting of fourteen Catholics by the British Army at a Derry civil rights march on 30 January 1972 [and] the IRA’s “Bloody Friday” killing of five protestants, two British soldiers, and two Catholics in a Belfast bomb attack on 21 July 1972’ (Alex Houen, *Terrorism and Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.266). Although both of these took place in Northern Ireland itself, the assassination of Robert may have brought to mind (for English readers in the late 1980s) the various IRA bombings that had taken place on English soil. Two of the most significant were the ‘Birmingham Pub Bombings’ of 1974 and the attempted assassination of Thatcher in Brighton in 1984.

explosion'.⁷¹⁰ Yet, for McGrath, 'unlike Conrad, Swift does not use his explosion – the detonation of a terrorist bomb that blows up the narrator's father to bits – as a metaphor of a broader, more pervasive disintegration'.⁷¹¹ Swift's descriptions of the scene, however, do translate the explosion into allegorical terms. The destruction of Robert and 'his home for nearly fifty years' (p.91) – Hyfield – comes to symbolise the 'broader, more pervasive disintegration' of the postimperial nation (just as Conrad's bomb registered national anxieties at around the height of Britain's imperial power (1907)).⁷¹²

Robert's assassination is transformed, through Harry's words, into 'the final sacrifice' (p.92) of a man, or 'martyr' (p.89), 'ever ready throughout his life to defend the old ways' (p.92). These are deeply English and aristocratic 'old ways'. The national significance of the bombing is indicated most obviously by the fact that it takes place on 'St George's day!' (p.68), the principal day of English patriotic celebration.⁷¹³ Various icons of the English aristocracy are smashed by the blast:

The explosion not only totally destroyed a Daimler New Sovereign but gouged a crater in the gravel drive, shattered every window in the front of the house – in several cases damaging irreparably the Queen Anne window frames and

⁷¹⁰ Swift, 'Interview with Patrick McGrath', *BOMB* 26 (Winter 1989) <<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1164/graham-swift>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁷¹¹ Swift, 'Interview with Patrick McGrath' (1989).

⁷¹² In *The Secret Agent* (1907), as John G. Peters argues, 'Conrad reveals anarchy and chaos in the very heart of Western civilization. By setting the novel in London, Conrad shows that even the seeming order of civilization in the West is illusory' (*The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad*, ed. Peters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.82). The novel's central bombing attack takes place at the Greenwich Observatory, the location of the prime meridian and thus the site, symbolically-speaking, from which London dictates its power over time itself. For Seamus Deane, *The Secret Agent* provides an 'expert conflation of Fenian and Russian anarchist stereotypes' (*Civilians and Barbarians* (Derry: Field Day, 1983), p.11).

⁷¹³ Many IRA bombings took place on carefully chosen dates, for instance, 'on November 8, 1987, when 11 people were killed by an IRA bomb at a Remembrance Day ceremony in the Fermanagh town of Enniskillen, an atrocity that inflamed murderous sectarian divisions even further' (Liam Harte, *Reading the Contemporary Irish Novel, 1987-2007* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp.3-4).

lacerating the furniture inside – gashed the brickwork and stucco, blew in the front door, and deafened the other three occupants of the house on that Monday morning... (p.22)

‘Not only’ is a Jaguar car destroyed, an emblem of upper-class English life, but ‘every window’ of ‘the Queen Anne’ family home. The verbs (‘destroy’, ‘gouge’, ‘shatter’, ‘lacerate’, ‘gash’, ‘blew’, ‘deafen’) and adverbs (‘totally’, ‘irreparably’) emphasise the total obliteration wrought by this event. The Beech family’s ‘country house’ is not an ‘empty simulacrum’, as the postmodernist Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga argues,⁷¹⁴ but an aristocratic, royalist, and ‘stucco’ building which has been torn apart by those opposed to the values that it embodies. It is, moreover, ‘the unofficial headquarters of BMC [...] the arsenal’ (p.62). Violence from the colonies – explicitly ‘Ulster’, but implicitly also those other sites of (post)colonial disorder in the novel – has come back, like Aimé Césaire’s ‘boomerang effect of colonization’ predicted,⁷¹⁵ to destroy a key institution of imperial power (BMC) and the ‘perfect English gentleman’ (p.174) at its helm.

Swift’s representation of an IRA bombing can be situated, to some extent, within the tradition of what Anne Fogarty calls ‘Troubles writing’.⁷¹⁶ This qualified yet nonetheless inescapable link will help to clarify Swift’s particularly English and postimperial perspective. Fogarty cites *Cal* (1983), by the Northern Irish writer Bernard MacLaverty, as her first example of the genre, a novel whose eponymous Catholic protagonist becomes embroiled in ‘insurrectional violence’: ‘oppressed peoples’, according to his friend/nemesis Crilly, ‘have the right to throw off the yoke

⁷¹⁴ Terentowicz-Fotyga, p.11.

⁷¹⁵ Césaire, ‘Discourse on Colonialism’. Césaire’s ‘boomerang effect’ is defined in the author survey chapter.

⁷¹⁶ Anne Fogarty, ‘Ireland and English fiction’, *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*, 102-113 (p.110).

in whatever way they see fit'.⁷¹⁷ Seamus Heaney has also 'recorded the post-colonial repercussions of Northern Ireland', although he does so more obliquely and often by way of colonial (literary) history.⁷¹⁸ 'Bog Oak' invokes 'Edmund Spenser / dreaming sunlight',⁷¹⁹ the sixteenth-century English poet and colonial civil servant in Ireland whose 'part in England's imperial ambitions', according to Andrew Hadfield, 'is signalled and shadowed throughout his work'.⁷²⁰ 'Ocean's Love to Ireland' writes back to another sixteenth-century English colonist in Ireland, Sir Walter Raleigh: 'Raleigh has backed the maid to a tree / As Ireland is backed to England // And drives inland',⁷²¹ 'Act of Union' builds upon this colonial rape allegory via a narrative voice who speaks on behalf of England: 'I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder [...] I am still imperially / Male, leaving you with pain, / The rending process in the colony, / The battering ram'.⁷²² This 'act', Heaney's poem suggests, has 'sprouted an obstinate fifth column / Whose stance is growing unilateral'.⁷²³

Swift, however, unlike MacLaverty and Heaney, is not concerned with the domestic realities of life during the 'Troubles' or the (literary) history of colonialism

⁷¹⁷ Bernard MacLaverty, *Cal* (London: Vintage, 2014), p.159.

⁷¹⁸ Rand Brandes, 'Seamus Heaney's Working Titles', *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, ed. Bernard O'Donoghue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19-36 (p.33).

⁷¹⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Bog Oak', *New Selected Poems 1988-2013* (London: Faber, 2015), p.19.

⁷²⁰ Andrew Hadfield (ed.), 'Introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-12 (p.5). Spenser's 'work [especially *The Faerie Queene* (1590)] is defined by the Tudors' attempt to expand their boundaries and unify a nebulously conceived ideal of Britain, as well as exploit and subdue other nations and cultures. At the same time, Spenser's works participate in and reflect upon that enterprise in an active way, as Spenser himself participated in English colonial expansion via his career as a government official in Ireland' (Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) (p.12).

⁷²¹ Heaney, 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p.46.

⁷²² Heaney, 'Act of Union', *North*, p.49.

⁷²³ Heaney, 'Act of Union', p.49.

on Irish soil. *OOTW* never ventures across the Irish Sea.⁷²⁴ Swift's description of ornate English furniture being lacerated by Irish bombs comes closer to the work of another postimperial English writer, Hilary Mantel, than it does to Northern Irish 'Troubles writing'. Mantel's 2014 short story 'The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher' is narrated by an anonymous resident of Windsor; her flat has been taken over by a man attempting to assassinate the Prime Minister. The assassin appears to be from Liverpool – based on his accent – but he was 'brought up in a tradition' and inspired by 'those boys on hunger strike'.⁷²⁵ This republican sympathiser disrupts the tranquillity of 'true-blue' royalist England.⁷²⁶ 'Home Counties' England –⁷²⁷ 'a quiet street, sedate, shaded by old trees: a street of tall houses, their facades smooth as white icing, their brickwork the colour of honey. Some are Georgian, flat-fronted. Others are Victorian, with gleaming bays...' –⁷²⁸ is threatened by that which it cannot keep at bay: 'the Irish trouble'.

One way of interpreting both Mantel's and Swift's relatively brief invocations of Northern Irish contexts within firmly English narratives would be through colonial discourse analysis; this would be to posit their fiction as the extreme opposite of 'Troubles writing'. Said argues that in the Victorian and Edwardian novel 'England was surveyed, evaluated, made known, whereas "abroad" was only referred to or shown briefly without the kind of presence or immediacy lavished on London, the countryside...'.⁷²⁹ By reproducing this unevenly distributed narrative geography, Said

⁷²⁴ Robert is killed just as Harry is due to fly to Belfast on photojournalism duty.

⁷²⁵ Mantel, *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), p.229.

⁷²⁶ Mantel, *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*, p.223.

⁷²⁷ Mantel, *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*, p.223.

⁷²⁸ Mantel, *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*, p.207.

⁷²⁹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.85.

continues, ‘the novel [...] became a main element in the consolidated vision, or departmental cultural view, of the globe’.⁷³⁰

Mantel’s and Swift’s assassins, however, resist such a ‘departmental [...] view’; in these texts, abroad is no longer ‘felt vaguely and ineptly to be out there’, as it was for Said’s imperial writers, but has begun to encroach back home.⁷³¹ Both writers thus play upon the particularly ambiguous position of Ireland in England’s imperial ‘vision’. Terry Eagleton argues that ‘the status of Ireland’ in the English imagination is ‘oxymoronic. The country was a metropolitan colony, at once part of the imperial nation and peripheral to it’.⁷³² ‘Unsettlingly close to hand’, Ireland ‘trouble[d] the distinction between “inside” and “outside”’.⁷³³ *OOTW* literalises the metaphor that Eagleton uses to describe this fraught relationship: ‘Ireland is a biological time-bomb which can be heard ticking softly away beneath the civilized superstructures of the Pall Mall clubs’.⁷³⁴ By placing an IRA bomb under Robert’s

⁷³⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.87-88.

⁷³¹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.87. The relationship between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ is also explored in one of Swift’s more recent novels, *Wish You Were Here* (London: Picador, 2011), which is structured around the repatriation of the body of the protagonist’s brother. Initially, Jack’s knowledge of the Iraq War, in which his brother has died, is rather vague: ‘there was a war going on, that was the story. Though who would know, or want to know, down here at Sands End?’ (p.60). But when he attends his brother’s military funeral he recognises that: ‘though this was Oxfordshire’, it was ‘as if [...] war was being waged only just over the skyline’ (p.166). The violence of war comes back to haunt pastoral England – ‘it all came back, by way of Iraq, their old, left-behind life’ (p.212) – disrupting family life (by driving a wedge between Jack and his wife Ellie) and almost leading to Jack’s suicide.

⁷³² Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London: Verso, 1995), p.124.

⁷³³ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.127. ‘One of the reasons why Ireland was so profoundly disturbing’, according to Catherine Hall, ‘was because of its geographical proximity and the white skin of its “aboriginal” inhabitants: it was too close and too different’ (*Macaulay and Son* (London: Yale University Press, 2012), xxii). For more on Irishness and whiteness see the section on *Arthur & George* in my chapter on Barnes.

⁷³⁴ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.9.

Jaguar, Swift figures Northern Ireland ‘as Britain’s unconscious’,⁷³⁵ threatening to derail its apparently ‘civilized superstructures’ – in this instance, country houses and arms manufacturers are at risk, rather than Pall Mall clubs.

What kind of a ‘superstructure’ is a country house? As we saw in the author survey chapter, MacKay argues that country house novels ‘invariably get read alongside the “heritage” industries that emerged in the early 1980s [...] the novels then become melancholic elegies for a time when Britain was bigger’.⁷³⁶ Swift’s country house is subtly connected, as we have seen, to the loss of empire but it is blown up before it has a chance to become ‘heritage’ and Harry, at least, is not ‘melanchol[y]’ about its passing; Sophie, as we shall see, reacts rather differently. The preponderance of destructive terminology in the indented passage above – beginning, ‘The explosion not only totally...’ – suggests that Harry finds something cathartic in the violence done to his place of upbringing. His language indicates the glee with which he verbally deconstructs his family home: ‘shatter[ing]’ its illusions.

Harry is not traumatised by the death of Hyfield or of his father because he is not enamoured by the latter’s apparent heroism. As Patrick Parrinder writes, ‘to the extent that *Out of this World* turns on Harry Beech’s questioning of his father’s heroism, it might be seen as a re-run of the plot of *Shuttlecock* [...] Both novels rather blatantly set out to debunk the *Boy’s Own Paper* ethos’.⁷³⁷ In *Shuttlecock*, Prentis discovers that his ‘father did not escape from the Germans [...] he succumbed under

⁷³⁵ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.9. Procter discusses the role of Northern Ireland as an unconscious ‘haunting’ in his analysis of Barker and Peace (p.208).

⁷³⁶ MacKay, p.145.

⁷³⁷ Parrinder, ‘Verbing a Noun’, *London Review of Books*, 17 March 1998 <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v10/n06/patrick-parrinder/verbing-a-noun>> [accessed 26 October 2017]. Bristow helps to clarify what Parrinder means by ‘the *Boy’s Own Paper* ethos’: ‘in the world of B.O.P., because boys are identified not so much with but rather as the nation, they are in effect being entreated to fight for themselves. That is, they are the England they should be fighting for’ (*Empire Boys*, p.45).

interrogation, betrayed several resistance units and the whereabouts of three British agents'.⁷³⁸ This shameful truth has been lying 'behind or in between the lines' of his father's self-aggrandising autobiography, 'Shuttlecock: The Story of a Secret Agent'.⁷³⁹ The grand-father figure in *OOTW* is not exposed as a fake; his son just interprets his actions differently. Robert, who 'had sacrificed a limb [his arm] in his country's service' (p.90), was, according to most, 'a holder of the V.C. and a hero of the First War' (p.114), 'a gentleman, a true Englishman of the old school' (p.91).⁷⁴⁰ But Harry tells us that he 'didn't worship [his] father' and didn't want 'to be a hero' himself (p.46). Harry rejects munitions – 'Beech and Son, the two of us in tandem, the greater glory of BMC' (p.46) – to take up aerial photography, to fly 'out of *his* world' (p.208, emphasis added) (Harry's sense of liberation recalls Prentis's post-revelation feeling that '*I* had escaped; I was free').⁷⁴¹ Harry is opposed to the 'world' ('the old school') that his father and his father's company represent. Unlike the protagonists of *Last Orders*, Harry resists being nostalgic for a time before the mythical 'Fall'.

Harry's resistance to the allure of national and imperial mythology comes under pressure later in the novel, with the introduction of the Falklands War. Swift's depiction of the war, according Widdowson, 'pre-empt[s] Jean Baudrillard's view that the Gulf War of 1991 only "happened" as a media simulacrum'.⁷⁴² Harry's commentary on the Falklands – 'a show-case war. An exhibition war' (p.185) – certainly encourages such a reading; 'it's no longer easy', he asserts in rather clichéd Baudrillard-esque language, 'to distinguish the real from the fake, or the world on the

⁷³⁸ Swift, *Shuttlecock*, p.182.

⁷³⁹ Swift, *Shuttlecock*, p.214.

⁷⁴⁰ This last phrase echoes a description of Lord Darlington in *The Remains of the Day*: 'he's a gentleman, a true old English gentleman' (p.223).

⁷⁴¹ Swift, *Shuttlecock*, p.183.

⁷⁴² Widdowson, p.52. Widdowson is referring to Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1991/1995).

screen from the world off it' (p.188). Craps, however, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, directs his attention towards Swift's political relationship to the war. He quotes from a 1988 interview with the novelist David Profumo in which Swift rejects the 'crass' and

sentimental vision of England, Britain, in the past, which no longer pertains, even if it did a hundred years ago. And there are obvious political examples of that, like the Falklands episode, which was so absurdly grotesque, you know, it's very disturbing.⁷⁴³

Swift translates his personal political critique into a fictional one, so Craps argues, by challenging 'the consummation of mythical redemption' that pervaded the rhetoric surrounding the war.⁷⁴⁴ Yet Swift goes on, in the aforementioned interview, to describe the Falklands as 'an example of an event which in some grotesque, farcical way illustrated the fact that there is a myth, and it can suddenly be revived, and there is a great urge to make it real. I think it's utterly misguided, but it's there'.⁷⁴⁵ This statement ostensibly supports Craps's thesis: that Swift and his novel debunk myths about the war, revealing them to be 'grotesque' and 'misguided'. But what Swift really focuses upon here is the power of 'myth' – myths that are 'there' even if one is aware of their falsifications.

This helps to explain Harry's self-consciousness and equivocation in the following passage:

And it's strange to think that I could be there. True, I'm sixty-four, but I'm a fit man, my eye's still good. (And I feel young, absurdly young.) They would give me a flak-jacket and a helmet. They would pay me the slightly begrudging respect due to some worthy veteran. But (thank God!) no editor or one-time crony has phoned me actually to suggest it. How about it, Harry? And what have you been doing for these last ten years anyway? What do you say? For old time's sake?

For old time's sake!... (pp.185-86)

⁷⁴³ Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift*, p.104.

⁷⁴⁴ Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift*, p.118.

⁷⁴⁵ David Profumo, 'The Attraction of the Pessimistic View', *Sunday Times*, 6 March 1988, G.9.

Harry pretends not to be interested in photographing the war – which he elsewhere describes as ‘preposterous’ (p.185) and compares to an ‘imperial expedition’ (p.186) – but in so doing betrays his yearning to ‘be there’. He insists he could still do it (‘I feel young...’), thinks about the procedure (‘They would give me...’), and even imagines the conversation he would have to arrange it (‘How about it, Harry?...’). The parenthetical phrase ‘(thank God!)’ reveals that his resistance to the war is more self-conscious than it is instinctive; he is trying to convince himself (and seemingly an imagined reader) that he doesn’t want to be part of the military adventure.

Swift’s interest in myth also helps to explain Harry’s use of an extended Trojan War analogy – ‘it was the Trojan War all over again. Someone had raped our precious Falkland Isles, so the ships must sail’ (p.186) – although this adoption of a classical register falls outside of my purview.⁷⁴⁶ What is significant here is that the Falklands section of *OOTW* returns us to an idea explored earlier via *Last Orders*: the staying power of what Parker calls ‘imperial conceptions of Englishness’. This is an idea that resonates most strongly with the novel’s other major protagonist and narrator: Harry’s daughter Sophie.

Whilst Harry rejects his ‘perfect English gentleman’ father categorically, Sophie, a generation on and now living in New York, continues to uphold Robert’s honour throughout the novel. She describes him as a ‘hero and true British gentleman’ (p.65), ‘a hero [with a] Victoria Cross and a tin arm’ (p.90). Sophie is thus traumatically disturbed rather than politically invigorated by her grandfather’s death. Her narrative consists of one-side of a dialogue with her therapist. One might query the gender imbalance of Swift’s novel here. Why is Harry afforded the ability to see through national and imperial mythology, whereas the mournful and therapy-bound

⁷⁴⁶ For Lea, Swift ‘parallel[s] the wars of antiquity with the impending Falklands conflict in a bleak summation of humanity’s bellicose temperament’ (p.106).

Sophie cannot? This becomes especially problematic when we consider that, as various critics note, Swift has not often given sustained voice to his female characters.⁷⁴⁷

Sophie, however, is no dupe. She is ‘not blind to the fact that what Joe sells every day’

is just the same dream only in reverse: golden memories of the Old World. Thatched cottages and stately homes. Patchwork scenery. Sweet, green visions. Oh to be in England now that – (Now, so it seems, they are off to fight the Argentines.) (p.15)⁷⁴⁸

Sophie is aware that Joe sells ‘dream[s]’ rather than realities, but finds herself caught up, nonetheless, in the desire ‘to be in England now’. Sophie’s response is further complicated by the caesura following this phrase and the subsequent realisation that her ‘green visions’ sit awkwardly alongside the (bracketed) news of a neocolonial war. She tries to reject ‘miracles’, assuring herself that ‘picture-books aren’t real. The fairy-tales all got discredited long ago, didn’t they? There shouldn’t be thatched cottages still, tucked away among green hills’ (p.79). Yet, the ‘fairy-tale’ image can’t be ‘discredited’ quite so easily. As Rogers writes, there is ‘an inescapable allure of idealism within conventional notions of Englishness’,⁷⁴⁹ even if one is alert to their mystifications.

⁷⁴⁷ As Lea writes, ‘Sophie’s account is the first significant female narrative to appear in Swift’s writing and is, to date, his only extended prose written from a woman’s perspective’ (p.101). Lea’s book was published in 2005 and since then Swift has released two novels narrated by women: *Tomorrow* (2007) and *Mothering Sunday* (2017).

⁷⁴⁸ Joe works ‘in a New York [travel] office, offering credulous Americans the charms of cosy old England’ (p.58).

⁷⁴⁹ Rogers, p.180.

It is through Sophie's personal experience of trauma that Swift articulates the difficulties of abandoning 'conventional notions of Englishness', of completing the process of postimperial demythologisation.⁷⁵⁰ After Robert's death

Something happens to time. Something happens to normality. A hole gets blasted in it. A hole with no bottom to it. So what is over in an instant just goes on happening. It happens in long slow-motion. And then it just keeps on happening. So that afterwards, when I was some place else, here in New York, three thousand miles away, it wasn't afterwards or some other place, I was still there, on the terrace at Hyfield, standing, frozen, as if I might never move again, with that strange noise in my ears, the noise of absolute silence. (p.109)

As Saunders writes of *Parade's End*, Sophie's narration 'renders not just the experiences at the time, but the after-effects of war on the mind'.⁷⁵¹ 'Time' and 'normality' were blown apart for her along with her grandfather; the explosion has had a *longue durée*, 'happening' again and again, in another time and another place. Even now she that lives in New York, she is 'still there, on the terrace at Hyfield'.

Sophie's psychological trauma leaves her caught between innocence and experience:

the past [...] used to be a good refuge, once, the past. I used to clop across the stable yard on Tony, and later on Hadrian, and make-believe it was the reign of Queen Anne. I used to imagine I was Mrs Hyde, wife of Nicholas Hyde. Mistress of the manor. (p.66)

The past 'used to be', and therefore no longer is, a 'good refuge' for her. 'Memory', as Light argues regarding the fiction of Daphne Du Maurier, is 'a treacherous route back'.⁷⁵² Sophie knows now that the apparent freedom and security of her childhood was actually reliant upon the latent violence of the arms trade (much like, for Said,

⁷⁵⁰ My argument here expands upon Horton's claim that 'Sophie's personal crisis mirrors the national crisis produced by the Falklands War and the IRA bombings' (p.81).

⁷⁵¹ Saunders, 'Introduction', *Parade's End*, xii.

⁷⁵² Light, p.182.

Fanny Price's upbringing at *Mansfield Park* was contingent upon the slave trade).⁷⁵³ The 'sudden [...] explo[sion] from green lawns and mellow brick walls' (p.17) has revealed to Sophie the falsity of her earlier belief that 'there wasn't a trace of BMC at Hyfield itself' (p.62).⁷⁵⁴ Yet, despite her fallen awareness, Sophie clings to Hyfield as a place of monarchic and aristocratic order.

Sophie's desperation to preserve Hyfield's homeliness is typified by her insistence on having her wedding 'at Hyfield [...] Where else? Where the debris had only just been cleared and the damage hastily covered or repaired. Fresh gravel on the drive' (p.86). She thus proclaims

defiance in the ruins. 'Business as usual'. Echoes of former, testing times. As if the pocks in the walls and the scorch-marks on the lawn were only there to embellish the theme that had already been squeezed dry by the newspaper piece and the TV clips. The old warrior. The one-armed hero. The true Brit. (p.86)

Sophie tries to save Hyfield in the face of its destruction and thus reinforces the ideals of the country house – the 'business as usual' (or, 'keep calm and carry on') attitude of 'the true Brit'. This is the 'Brit' of 'former, testing times', a phrase highly suggestive of the Blitz Spirit. Yet, there is something tragic, even pathetic (in the classical sense), about this marriage amidst 'the ruins'. 'The pocks in the walls and the scorch-marks on the lawn' do not just signify Churchillian ('we were down but we were not out') heroism, but also defeat – namely, the defeat of Robert and the imperial militarism that he embodies.⁷⁵⁵ The irony of Sophie's 'defiance' is that she had already decided, before the bomb, to leave for America: 'she didn't want it [...]

⁷⁵³ According to Said, 'Sir Thomas [Bertram]'s property in the Caribbean would have had to be a sugar plantation maintained by slave labor (not abolished until the 1830s)' (*Culture and Imperialism*, p.107).

⁷⁵⁴ Sophie is referring to the fact that Robert didn't turn Hyfield 'into a sort of company headquarters' (p.62) until after she left. As she now knows, however, it was always already reliant upon the profits of BMC.

⁷⁵⁵ Barnett, 'Iron Britannia', p.48.

that old world, my past' (p.66). Having 'carried it off like an actress', the performance must end. If Sophie's England is preserved, it is only in memory and only as imagined from afar.

Sophie's traumatic psychological retention of mythic England comes under strain, therefore, when she prepares to return home for the first time in ten years. She decides to write (or at least imagines writing) a letter to her twin sons – 'Dear Paul, dear Tim' (p.137) – who have no direct experience of her homeland. She wants them to know, primarily, that their great-grandfather 'was a hero, you see. A real hero. His business was in – But that's another story' (p.140). As with the earlier phrase, 'Oh to be in England now that –', Sophie's simultaneous awareness and displacement of violence is signified by the pause of the caesura and by her inability to complete her own sentences. 'His business' is central to the family history – 'BMC had been his life' (p.67) – but its details must be pushed into 'another story' in order to maintain a purely hagiographic narrative; the 'Troubles', the Boer War, and the empire as a whole must be displaced from view, and Swift shows us this process of disavowal in action. When her children ask (as they inevitably will one day) how exactly Robert died, Sophie will be forced to confront this uncomfortable personal and national 'story'.

Towards the end of the novel, Sophie imagines imparting familial and national history to her 'darlings':

England is like a little hunched-up old lady at the seaside, her back turned towards the rest of Europe, dipping her toe into the Atlantic Ocean and pulling up her skirts round her shrivelled body. [...] Someone has thrown in her direction a two-tone beach-ball called Ireland and she is screwing up her face in displeasure.

You wouldn't believe that she was once a big, plump, bossy Empress. And you wouldn't believe that even now, in 1982, there is a fleet of ships

sailing off to fight, on behalf of this little old lady, for some even tinier islands on the other side of the world. (p.191)⁷⁵⁶

Sophie's cartographic analogy, between England's visual appearance on a map and its national characteristics, articulates a sense of the nation's postimperial confusion: turned against Europe, lurching towards America, anxious about 'two-tone[d] [...] Ireland'. Sophie's depiction is partially mournful of England's transition from 'big, plump, bossy Empress' to 'a little hunched-up old lady'. But there is also affection here for that 'lady at the seaside'. She is both comic and tragic at once. She is caught, much like Sophie, somewhere between past and present iterations of the nation.

'Two-tone[d] [...] Ireland' presses upon *OOTW* much like Aden did in *Last Orders*: both military contexts challenge dominant assumptions regarding, first, Swift's strict focus upon WWII (at the expense of other global and imperial conflicts), and second, his English parochialism. The 'Troubles', however, are not a distant memory but an ongoing reality in *OOTW* (as they were at the time of its publication). This is a contemporary conflict which, via Harry, becomes situated within an imperial lineage and used to explode the ideals of country house England. These are ideals which Sophie clings to, enabling Swift to examine the tenacious and traumatic mythological entanglement of war, empire, and Englishness.

Critical focus upon Swift's postmodernism, as we have seen in the final section of this chapter in particular, has tended to depoliticise his narratives; this is a problem relating to the criticism of contemporary British fiction that we will turn to in more detail in the following chapter on Barnes. Yet, at the heart of *Last Orders* and *OOTW* are the military and psychological effects of decolonisation: empire is shown to live on in the nation's contemporary conflicts and in its nostalgic or traumatised

⁷⁵⁶ There is a potential nod here to satirical cartoons of Thatcher produced in the 1980s.

citizens. The violent and visceral grip of postimperialism in Swift's work contrasts with the focus upon sexuality and intimacy in Hollinghurst, as well as the dominance of satire and irony in Barnes. Barnes's approach to postimperial Englishness, and the 'English' gentleman in particular, will be discussed in the following chapter. Swift's major contribution to the fiction of postimperial Englishness, as this chapter's close and incremental textual analysis has revealed, is his prolonged exploration of the 'boomerang effect[s]' of decolonisation and the difficulties of postimperial demythologisation, as well as his attention to the ways in which these processes interact with experiences of class and gender. In Swift's version of post-war Englishness the breaking from and clinging to imperial ideas and actions, particularly as they relate to war, are fundamentally constitutive of national life.

Julian Barnes: The ‘English’ Gentleman and Postimperial Englishness

Speaking in 2011 at a launch event for Bill Schwarz’s and Rachael Gilmour’s *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*, Marina Warner proposed that Julian Barnes, who is not included in the collection, is another ‘postimperial writer who is not identified with postcolonial issues’.⁷⁵⁷ In particular, she suggested that his then most recent novel, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), which had just won the Booker prize, enacts formally the nation’s postimperial condition as it is structured around an ‘ending [that] only makes itself known by going back’.⁷⁵⁸ Warner’s comments on the symbolic resonances of ‘return and redress’ are brief and rather enigmatic, but they provide a helpful starting point for thinking about Barnes’s broader fictional negotiation of postimperial Englishness in this chapter.⁷⁵⁹

Barnes’s first and third novels, *Metroland* (1980) and *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984), the latter of which was nominated for the Booker and brought Barnes to literary-critical prominence, singled him out as a Francophile. Barnes was celebrated as something unusual in English letters: a writer fascinated by French aesthetics and philosophy. Since then, his short story collection *Cross Channel* (1996) – which, as its title suggests, is preoccupied with the relationship between England and France – and his recent collection of essays on art *Keeping Your Eyes Open* (2015) – which dedicates thirteen out of seventeen of its chapters to French artists – have reinforced this reputation.⁷⁶⁰ Barnes’s apparent Francophilia has complemented predominant

⁷⁵⁷ Marina Warner, ‘Comments at the launch of *End of Empire and the English Novel Since 1945*’, British Academy, 2 November 2011 [unpublished].

⁷⁵⁸ Warner, ‘Comments’.

⁷⁵⁹ Warner, ‘Comments’.

⁷⁶⁰ See also: Barnes’s *Something to Declare: Essays on France and French Culture* (2002). For critical discussion of Barnes and French culture, see: Richard Locke, ‘Flood of Forms’, *New Republic* 201.23 (1989), 40-43 (p.40); and, Richard Bradford,

readings of his work as postmodern. This is due to the centrality of Guy Debord, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard in that theoretical movement. Barnes's fiction, to a greater degree than Graham Swift's even, has been associated with 'theories of postmodernism, deconstructionism and narratology'⁷⁶¹ and his novels are frequently discussed, like Swift's *Waterland*, through Linda Hutcheon's notion of 'historiographic metafiction'.⁷⁶² These are theories that Barnes engages with self-consciously, particularly in his early fiction. Yet, when I turn to *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989), I will demonstrate how restrictive, dehistoricising, and depoliticising such readings can be and how, in the words of one critic, 'it is only by deliberately ignoring a significant part of his production that some critics persist in calling him a postmodernist writer'.⁷⁶³

Alongside his Francophone affiliations, Barnes is frequently associated with national questions regarding his place of birth. Frederick Holmes, like most critics, attends to Barnes's postmodernism, but he also notes that Barnes is a 'quintessentially English author in the sense that his *oeuvre* reflects his upbringing and education in the 1950s and 1960s'.⁷⁶⁴ Michael Wood, in his review of *The Sense of an Ending* entitled

'Julian Barnes's *England, England* and Englishness', *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, eds Peter Childs and Sebastian Groes (London: Continuum, 2011), 92-102 (p.93).

⁷⁶¹ Vanessa Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p.4.

⁷⁶² Hutcheon defines 'historiographic metafiction' as 'fiction [...] whose metafictional self-reflexivity (and intertextuality) renders their implicit claims to historical veracity somewhat problematic, to say the least' ('Historiographic Metafiction', *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, eds Patrick O'Donnell and Robert C. Davis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 3-32 (p.3)). For references to Hutcheon in Barnes criticism, see: Gregory Salyer, 'One Good Story Leads to Another', *Journal of Literature and Theology* 5.2 (1991), 220-33 (p.221); and, Christina Kotte, *Ethical Dimensions in British Historiographic Metafiction* (Trier: WVT, 2001), p.74.

⁷⁶³ Guignery, 'Introduction', *American, British and Canadian Studies* 13 (2009), 15-23 (p.16).

⁷⁶⁴ Frederick Holmes, *Julian Barnes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), pp.14-15; p.12.

‘Stupidly English’, goes further by claiming that ‘Julian Barnes specialises in Englishness [...] no one knows the dark, quiet corners of its pathology better than he does’.⁷⁶⁵ Barnes’s interest in, and often ironic take on, England and Englishness is confirmed by much of his non-fiction, in particular his collection *Letters from London* (1995), which features essays ranging from ‘Britannia’s New Bra Size’ to ‘Left, Right, Left, Right: The Arrival of Tony Blair’.

Certain critics connect Barnes’s explorations of nation and national identity with his upbringing in the post-war era of decolonisation. Richard Bradford notes that Barnes was ‘born in 1946’ and educated ‘during a period when few, if any, questioned the heroism of England and Britain in World War II and even perceived the demise of the Empire’, although he does not explain the significance of this contextualisation.⁷⁶⁶ Holmes, placing a different emphasis, claims that Barnes ought to be understood in terms of ‘England’s waning importance, as both a world power and a literary landscape’.⁷⁶⁷ These statements foreground Barnes’s (post)imperial Englishness through biographical and non-fictional means, but, as with Alan Hollinghurst and Graham Swift, Barnes’s *fiction* has not been readily discussed in this way. Admittedly, many of Barnes’s novels, including perhaps his most famous novel *Flaubert’s Parrot*, are not obviously engaged with such issues. If *The Sense of an Ending*, for Warner, is open to a fairly oblique contrapuntal reading, against the grain of a surface that is not concerned with empire, Barnes’s debut *Metroland* contains a

⁷⁶⁵ Michael Wood, ‘Stupidly English’, *London Reviews of Books*, 22 September 2011 <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n18/michael-wood/stupidly-english>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁷⁶⁶ Bradford, p.99.

⁷⁶⁷ Holmes, p.16.

few references to ‘Suez’ and ‘the processes of decolonisation’ but little with which to conduct a substantial analysis.⁷⁶⁸

My three chosen novels – *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (*A History*, hereafter), *England, England* (1998), and *Arthur & George* (2005), to be discussed in chronological order – provide a clearer indication of Barnes’s increasing engagement with postcolonial concerns (a process balanced by his decreasing ties to postmodern ones) and of the ways in which he has used fiction to reflect critically on those postcolonial concerns. There is of course a great deal of crossover between the histories, theories, and literatures of postmodernism and postcolonialism. For Sara Upstone, the difference may in fact be ‘a matter of reading practice, rather than textual content’:

whereas a postcolonial reading [of *Midnight’s Children*] might emphasize Rushdie’s [...] disruption of colonial realist narratives and the imposition of European culture on the Indian subcontinent, a postmodern reading, while acknowledging Rushdie’s political concerns, would place emphasis on the same devices as part of a more generalized shift away from metanarratives.⁷⁶⁹

My aim, as in the chapter on Swift, is not to establish a firm generic distinction between postmodern and postcolonial fiction, but to counteract the particularly dehistoricised and depoliticised postmodern ‘reading practice’ that is applied to Barnes’s fiction. My analysis seeks to emphasise the role of race, empire, and decolonisation in Barnes’s work, rather than his ‘more generalized shift away from metanarratives’. This will enable us to recognise the ways in which his historically and politically alert fiction satirises postimperial Englishness, especially as it is

⁷⁶⁸ Julian Barnes, *Metroland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990), p.87; p.118.

⁷⁶⁹ Sara Upstone, ‘The “Post” in Postcolonial’, *The Cambridge History of Postmodern Literature*, eds Brian McHale and Len Platt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 262-77 (p.264). Upstone cites Kwame Anthony Appiah’s important earlier essay, ‘Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post in Postcolonial?’, *Critical Inquiry* 17.2 (1991), 336-57. See also: Quayson’s chapter entitled ‘Postcolonialism and Postmodernism’, pp.132-55.

incarnated in the figure of the ‘English’ gentleman. The extent to which we can persuasively describe Barnes’s fiction as postcolonial will be considered in detail in the final section on *Arthur & George*.

The significance of the ‘English’ gentleman will be most apparent in the sections on *A History* and *Arthur & George*. I refer to the ‘English’ gentleman, with inverted commas, because both Franklin Hughes (in *A History*) and Arthur (in *Arthur & George*) have Irish and/or Scottish backgrounds: their Englishness is partially performative. For Praseeda Gopinath, in her study of ‘English masculinities after empire’, ‘the English gentleman is defined by his ability to control himself and “govern others”’.⁷⁷⁰ Without ‘others’ to ‘govern’, officially at least, the postimperial ‘English’ gentlemen of *A History* are men out of time and, in the foreign settings of this novel, out of place. Barnes’s characteristically ‘knowing’ aesthetic works critically here to expose the endurance of imperial attitudes and ideologies, much as it does with regards to neocolonialism in *England, England*.⁷⁷¹ Yet Barnes’s satire upon the belated ‘English’ gentleman also enables this ironized figure to remain, in narrative and symbolic terms, at the centre of attention. Arthur Conan Doyle’s gentlemanliness in *Arthur & George* is equally ambiguous, from a postcolonial perspective, as it underpins both his liberalism and his imperialism. The novel’s representation of Arthur takes us to the core, I argue, of Barnes’s partial postcoloniality.

⁷⁷⁰ Gopinath, p.24. For imperial historians P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, ‘the imperial mission was the export version of the gentlemanly order’ (*British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993), p.34); for Mrinalini Sinha, ‘the model of masculinity in the colonial administration was that of the “gentlemanly administrator”’ (p.103).

⁷⁷¹ James Wood critiques Barnes for developing ‘knowingness as an aesthetic’ (‘Julian Barnes and the Problem of Knowing Too Much’, *The Broken Estate* (London: Pimlico, 2000), 261-72 (p.269)). For Wood, Barnes’s narrator ‘speaks[s] over [his] characters, and tell[s] them in effect [...] that they *do not know enough*’ (p.263).

Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, and the ‘English’ Gentleman Abroad in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*

A History of the World in 10½ Chapters is ‘usually considered’, according to Vanessa Guignery, to be ‘Barnes’s second postmodernist masterpiece after *Flaubert’s Parrot*, displaying as much heterogeneity in style, form and approach’.⁷⁷² Its inventive deconstruction of grand (historical) narratives, from Noah’s Ark to the sinking of the Titanic, and its metafictional ingenuity with novelistic form, as suggested by the witty ½ in the novel’s title, have earned it a place in the canon of postmodern British literature and helped to cement Barnes’s name in that canon. Whilst Barnes’s playfully postmodern approach to history is evident in the chapters most commonly discussed by critics – ‘The Stowaway’, ‘The Survivor’, ‘Shipwreck’, and ‘Parenthesis’ – it is put under pressure elsewhere in the text. In particular, two of the most under-analysed chapters of *A History* – ‘The Visitors’ and ‘Upstream!’ – not only draw upon specific colonial histories – in the Middle East and South America, respectively – but also examine their violent impact on contemporary international relations.

The novel’s title, as various critics have pointed out, begins with an indefinite rather than definite article: ‘A’ rather than ‘The’. Instead of providing a holistic account of global history, then, it jumps freely from period to period and place to place, from major to minor events and protagonists. Its unique diversity of both form and content can be made clear by way of a brief synopsis: the first chapter (‘The Stowaway’) rewrites the Biblical story of Noah’s Ark from the perspective of a woodworm; in chapter two (‘The Visitors’) ‘Arab’ terrorists hijack a cruise liner in the Mediterranean; chapter three (‘The Wars of Religion’) imagines a trial, in 1520, in

⁷⁷² Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, p.61.

which woodworms stand accused of damaging a church; the protagonist of chapter four ('The Survivor') flees the aftermath of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster by boat, although it is also suggested that her story is a paranoid hallucination; chapter five ('Shipwreck') begins by recounting the fate of the French naval ship *Méduse* which crashed off the coast of Mauritania in 1816, before proceeding to an analysis of *Théodore Géricault's* famous artistic depiction of the scene, *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-1819); in chapter six ('The Mountain') a religious woman undertakes a journey in 1839 to a monastery on Mount Ararat in Turkey; chapter seven ('Three Simple Stories') begins with the reminiscences of a survivor of the Titanic, followed by the Biblical tale of Jonah and the whale, and ending with the story of the Jewish refugees who tried to escape Nazi Germany in 1939 aboard *MS. St Louis*; chapter eight ('Upstream!') is comprised of letters from a contemporary English actor trying to shoot a film in a Venezuelan 'jungle'; the unnumbered half-chapter ('Parenthesis'), in which 'Julian Barnes' addresses the reader directly, provides a philosophical reflection on history and love, amongst other topics; in chapter nine ('Project Ararat') an American astronaut Spike Tiggler tries to find the remains of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat; and in chapter ten ('The Dream') the narrator initially enjoys the luxuries of Heaven but eventually finds that the satisfaction of all his desires becomes tiresome.

A History is 'post-modern' for Salman Rushdie, 'post-modernist in conception' for Joyce Carol Oates, and reliant upon an 'almost programmatic Post-Modernity' for Frank Kermode.⁷⁷³ Published in 1989, around the height of the

⁷⁷³ Rushdie, p.241; Joyce Carol Oates, ' "But Noah Was Not a Nice Man" ', *New York Times Book Review*, 1 October 1989 <<https://www.nytimes.com/books/01/02/25/specials/barnes-history.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]; Frank Kermode, ' "Stowaway Woodworm" ', *London Review of*

influence of postmodern theory on literature and literary criticism,⁷⁷⁴ Barnes's novel is considered by many critics to 'discredit official historical narratives' and to show, like Lyotard and other postmodern theorists, that 'there is no master discourse'.⁷⁷⁵ If numerous critics associate *A History* with the deconstructive postmodern zeitgeist of the late-1980s, many of them recognise that Barnes's fiction does not necessarily conform to the extreme relativism of certain iterations of postmodern theory.⁷⁷⁶ (The 'Author's Note' at the back of the novel, which provides a short bibliography of historical sources, provides one of many clues that Barnes still clings to the idea of (historical) 'facts'.)⁷⁷⁷ For the most part, however, critics understand Barnes's problematising of (what his narrator in the chapter 'Parenthesis' calls) the 'beguiling relativity' (p.246) of postmodernism as an exploration of that theoretical framework rather than a way of moving beyond it and interrogating other issues.⁷⁷⁸ For me, as in Hutcheon's conception of postmodern fiction, Barnes's questioning of historical relativism does not just have philosophical but also political potential. In holding onto the possibility of 'objective truth', Barnes is able to counterpose 'the victor's' truth with 'the victim's' (p.246): to rewrite history from below.

This resistant narrative strategy is most evident in 'The Stowaway', where the woodworm's point of view enables 'the wailings of the rejected' (p.7) to provide an

Books, 22 June 1989 <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v11/n12/frank-kermode/stowaway-woodworm>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

⁷⁷⁴ Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* was published in 1987 and Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, in which she outlined her influential definition of 'historiographic metafiction', in 1988.

⁷⁷⁵ Finney, p.36; p.46.

⁷⁷⁶ See, for instance: Leggett, 'Alternatives to Metanarrative in the Work of Julian Barnes', *American, British and Canadian Studies* 13 (2009), 26-38.

⁷⁷⁷ Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (London: Picador, 1990), p.311. All further references to *A History* are incorporated into the text. Barnes also includes a bibliographic 'Author's note' at the end of *Arthur & George*.

⁷⁷⁸ Jackie Buxton, 'Julian Barnes's Theses on History (in 10½ Chapters)', *Contemporary Literature* 41.1 (2001), 56-86; Merritt Moseley, *Understanding Julian Barnes* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

‘instant rewriting of history’ (p.25) (this is a phrase that the woodworm uses to describe Noah’s own account of the voyage). The chapter thus recalls Canadian author Timothy Findley’s postmodern subversion of the same Biblical story in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984). Both Findley’s and Barnes’s symbolic uses of animals are suggestive of racial as well as class politics and postcolonial as well as Marxist critique.⁷⁷⁹ Barnes’s animals are brutally divided into ‘the clean and the unclean’ (p.10); ‘miscegenation’ (p.24) is vilified and ‘cross-breeds’ (pp.15-16) are killed. Noah’s son Shem ‘had this thing about the purity of the species’ (p.16).

Certain critics call attention to the political potential of Barnes’s historical rewritings,⁷⁸⁰ but only Guignery directly associates the novel’s marginal historical perspective with the political and cultural project of postcolonialism. Barnes’s rewriting of ‘official history’, she argues, is ‘typical’ not only of ‘postmodernist’ but also ‘post-colonial literature’; some of Barnes’s ‘victors’, after all, are ‘the colonisers’.⁷⁸¹ One of the novel’s most explicit allusions to colonisers and colonial history appears in ‘The Survivor’, which begins with the epigraph ‘in fourteen hundred and ninety two / Columbus sailed the ocean blue’ (p.83). When this famous rhyme reappears in ‘Parenthesis’ it is followed by the question: ‘and then what? Everyone became wiser? People stopped building new ghettos in which to practise the old persecutions?’ (p.241). What, Barnes asks jokingly, are the legacies of the first colonial voyage?

These legacies are at the centre of the two chapters that concern us here: ‘The Visitors’ and ‘Upstream!’. When these chapters are discussed by critics, which is not

⁷⁷⁹ On Findley, see: Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (eds), ‘Christianity, Cannibalism and Carnivory’, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2010), 162-84.

⁷⁸⁰ Rushdie, p.241; Childs, *Julian Barnes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p.73; and, Salyer, p.221.

⁷⁸¹ Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, p.69.

very often, their historical and political concerns are often neutralised by the imposition of postmodern clichés about ‘reality and fabulation’ or ‘media spectacle’.⁷⁸² But this is to overlook Barnes’s critical redeployment in these stories of colonial histories and rhetorics. By way of narratives of terror and travel, Barnes satirises the delusions of the belated ‘English’ gentleman (whether he is to be found at sea or in the jungle). This figure, however, remains central to Barnes’s history of the world. Counter-voices, as we shall see, are only partially admitted into his white English narratives.

The narration of ‘The Visitors’ is focalised through Franklin Hughes, a middle-aged television presenter working as a history guide on a cruise ship – *Santa Euphemia* – travelling around the Mediterranean. When the ship stops for supplies at Rhodes it also takes on ‘some visitors’ (p.39) who turn out to be a group of armed ‘Arab’ (p.41) terrorists. They have hijacked the ship in order to force ‘Western governments’ to release ‘three members of the Black Thunder group [...] freedom fighters’ (p.56). The terrorists proceed to divide the passengers by nationality. Franklin becomes their spokesperson, in exchange (he hopes) for saving his girlfriend Tricia: if he explains their version of ‘the politics of the Middle East’ (p.55) she will be granted ‘Irish nationality’ (p.52), rather than ‘the diabolic British’ (p.49), which will move her much further down the list of those to be executed. When it becomes apparent that their demands will not be met, the terrorists begin executing two passengers every hour. Eventually, American Special Forces come aboard and rescue the remaining passengers.

Despite the gravity of the situation, Franklin’s immersion in the world of TV leads him to compare the events on the ship to his own programmes. He is, after all,

⁷⁸² Kotte, p.93; Oates (online).

an ‘expert at presenting the ideas of others as plausibly as possible. But never had he felt such apprehension at a script; never had a director imposed such conditions; never had his fee been so bizarre’ (p.54). In ironic and postmodern fashion, reality and fiction have merged, or rather, the former has been translated into the latter: this is merely another one of Franklin’s performances. Whilst Franklin might view the situation this way, Tricia does not. By rejecting him at the end (‘never sp[eaking] to him again’ (p.58)) it becomes clear that she does not consider his lecturing to be a witty example of postmodern theory in practice but a betrayal of her and the other passengers on board: a collusion with terrorist demands. Ultimately, Franklin is not acting on TV but is actively complicit in an atrocity in which seventeen passengers and five terrorists are killed. In Jackie Buxton’s terms, Barnes’s deconstructive playfulness ‘slap[s] into the figurative iceberg of history: “Aphrodite Cultural Tours” [the name of the travel company] runs into Palestinian terrorism’.⁷⁸³

Franklin’s metafictional reading of the situation is further drawn into question by the fact that the story is based on actual historical events. As Matthew Pateman notes, ‘the hijacking of the *Santa Euphemia* of the story bears a close resemblance to the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* in 1985’, which resulted in the death of Leon Klinghoffer.⁷⁸⁴ In both cases, Middle Eastern terrorists hijack a cruise liner in the Mediterranean and divide the passengers by nationality. During the *Achille Lauro* crisis, as Antonio Cassese recounts, ‘the captain [was asked] to point out the Israeli, American and British passengers, and to separate them from the others’.⁷⁸⁵ In ‘The Visitors’, Franklin informs the other passengers that ‘the order of executions has been decided according to the guilt of the Western nations for the situation in the Middle

⁷⁸³ Buxton, p.70.

⁷⁸⁴ Matthew Pateman, *Julian Barnes* (Tavistock: British Council, 2002), p.45.

⁷⁸⁵ Antonio Cassese, *Terrorism, Politics and Law* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), p.25.

East [...] Zionist Americans first. Then other Americans. Then British. Then French, Italians and Canadians' (p.57). 'Separating the clean from the unclean' (p.44), as Barnes's Mr Zimmerman puts it, in an echo of the woodworm's language in 'Stowaway'.

Before addressing the postcolonial politics of this 'order of executions', it is important to contextualise the story's representation of terrorism. For Robert Eaglestone, writing in a 2007 special edition of the journal *Wasafiri* entitled 'Cultures of Terror', various contemporary novelists have responded to the threat of terrorism in the post-9/11 period, but so far their attempts have been unsuccessful.⁷⁸⁶ Surveying three Anglo-American novels about terrorism published in 2005 – Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, and Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* – Eaglestone argues that 'these [are] interesting failures' because their inability to 'engage with the otherness of the terrorists and their ideas' is symptomatic of broader limitations in 'western thinking'.⁷⁸⁷ In each case, they construe the terrorist as 'a pantomime villain, an image not the locus of an act of communication [...] only a cipher of evil, lacking a real sense of motivation'.⁷⁸⁸

Barnes's pre-9/11 story initially seems to conform to the 'western intellectual framework' that Eaglestone critiques.⁷⁸⁹ Franklin refers to the terrorists as simply 'the Arab[s]' (p.41) and constructs an orientalist image of them as 'people who wear red tea-towels on their heads' (p.43). He lumps Middle Eastern terrorists and the IRA together as 'worldwide groups of homicidal maniacs' (p.49). The cultural and

⁷⁸⁶ Robert Eaglestone, ' "The Age of Reason is Over...an Age of Fury was Dawning" ', *Wasafiri* 22.2 (2007), 19-22 (p.19).

⁷⁸⁷ Eaglestone, pp.20-21.

⁷⁸⁸ Eaglestone, p.21. Eaglestone finds 'these characteristics [to be] highlighted again in Martin Amis's recent short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" [2006]' (p.21).

⁷⁸⁹ Eaglestone, p.21.

political ignorance betrayed by Franklin's simplistic language, however, suggests that he is being mocked by Barnes's 'knowing' irony. In particular, Franklin's postimperial belatedness is held up to satirical scrutiny. He describes 'one of those red check head-dresses which used to be shorthand for lovable desert warriors loyal to Lawrence of Arabia but in recent years had become shorthand for baying terrorists eager to massacre the innocent' (p.40). Franklin is an embarrassingly old-fashioned 'Englishman' abroad, clinging on to an image of honourable imperial gentlemen like T.E. Lawrence despite the global power shifts instituted by decolonisation. Wearing a 'khaki bush-shirt' (p.34), he laments the fact that 'the world was no longer a welcoming place where the old dark-blue British job [passport], topped up with the words "journalist" and "BBC", got you what you wanted. "Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State" [...] Wishful thinking' (p.37). The 'Old World' (p.33) order, in which British imperial dominance assured its citizens the ease of global travel, has come to an end. 'Gone', as Hsu-Ming Teo paraphrases post-war British travel writers, 'were the esteem and admiration for white skin wrought by the civilising influences of British colonialism and Christian missionary work'.⁷⁹⁰

Indeed, in certain postcolonial locations, racial hierarchies have been inverted. It is now 'thought', according to Franklin, 'that white-skinned ones [journalists] pretending interest in archaeological sites were obviously British spies' (p.38). Consequently, Franklin 'travelled on a green Irish passport' (p.37). This is a decision which turns out to save his life: the terrorists assume that, as a fellow colonial victim of the British, he is in solidarity with them. Franklin is thus an 'English' rather than English gentleman abroad: he seems to identify with the English and British but holds 'a Guinness passport awarded through some genealogical fluke' (p.49) which he is

⁷⁹⁰ Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Wandering in the Wake of Empire', *British Culture and the End of Empire*, 163-79 (p.166).

willing to use to his advantage. The irony here is that, despite Franklin's nostalgia for the days of Lawrence of Arabia, it is now safer for a postcolonial Irishman to travel across the Mediterranean than it is for a postimperial Englishman. The historic hierarchy in Anglo-Irish relations has been inverted.

I will return, via 'Upstream!', to Barnes's ironizing of the postimperial 'English' gentleman-traveller. What I want to emphasise here is that 'The Visitors' seems to be distinct from the post-9/11 novels that Eaglestone critiques due to its satire on (rather than endorsement of) the 'pantomime' terrorist that Franklin conjures up. Through his belated protagonist, Barnes mocks the postimperial imagination that sustains this simplistically villainous image. To what extent, however, does his story also provide the more complex representation of terrorists and terrorism that Eaglestone is looking for? What kind of counter-voice, if any, is provided?

Colonial and postcolonial history are central to the terrorists' understanding of themselves and their actions. This is exemplified by their insistence upon a specific 'order of executions': those nations with a history of imperial involvement in the Middle East are to be terrorized first. Past and present violence are to be aligned. As the terrorists' leader informs the passengers: "I understand that you have been lectured on the palace of Knossos [...] This is good, it is important for you to understand other civilizations. How they are great, and how" – he paused meaningfully – "they fall..." (p.43). He wants them to understand 'how they are mixed up in history. What that history is' (p.51). Clearly, this terrorist is not (just) a 'homicidal maniac', or 'violent religious fanaticis[t]' as one critic claims,⁷⁹¹ but an eloquent and

⁷⁹¹ Wojciech Drag, "I don't believe in God but I miss Him", *American, British and Canadian Studies* 13 (2009), 130-42 (p.132).

historically informed ‘active agent of resistance’.⁷⁹² ‘We have tried being good and hoping’, he complains, ‘that we would be rewarded by getting our land back’ (p.50). In specifying the struggle over ‘land’, it becomes apparent that these terrorists, like their *Achille Lauro* counterparts, are motivated by the historical and ongoing illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine.⁷⁹³

The fact that Palestine is alluded to but not actually named in the story will be discussed later on, but for now I want to emphasise that the terrorists’ sense of imperial history distinguishes Barnes’s story from the novels that Eaglestone considers. As well as focusing his attention upon the reductive image of the terrorist, Eaglestone critiques contemporary novelists’ failure to recognise that ‘the “War on Terror”, whatever its newness as a paradigm, has its political antecedents in imperial and colonial histories’.⁷⁹⁴ ‘So much terrorism’, as Alex Houen writes, ‘has been about contesting history’.⁷⁹⁵ Whilst Eaglestone’s Anglo-American fictions are unable to confront this fact, Elleke Boehmer argues that ‘postcolonial narrative maps a chronology on to the “moment of danger”’.⁷⁹⁶ This ‘alternative reading of terror’ is essential, for Boehmer and others, because it resists the ideological construction of western victimhood by situating contemporary violence in a longer imperial durée.⁷⁹⁷ Terrorist actions do not take place in a vacuum but ‘are mixed up in history’ (p.51).

‘The Visitors’ provides what Boehmer and Stephen Morton call ‘a turn (back) to certain modes of imperial history in order to understand and to explicate these

⁷⁹² Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.13.

⁷⁹³ The *Achille Lauro* terrorists were members of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF).

⁷⁹⁴ Eaglestone, p.19.

⁷⁹⁵ Alex Houen, *Terrorism in Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.13.

⁷⁹⁶ Boehmer, ‘Postcolonial Writing and Terror’, *Wasafiri* 22.2 (2007), 4-7 (p.6).

⁷⁹⁷ Boehmer, ‘Postcolonial Writing and Terror’, p.6.

apparent continuities'.⁷⁹⁸ This is exemplified by the following passage in which Franklin speaks on behalf of the terrorists, an issue I shall return to. He takes his 'audience' (p.40)

back to the nineteenth century, long before the establishment of the state of Israel [...] Hughes sketched in an idyllic nineteenth century, all nomads and goat-farming and traditional hospitality which allowed you to stay in someone else's tent for three days before being asked what the purpose of your visit might be. He talked of early Zionist settlers and Western concepts of land-ownership. The Balfour Declaration. [...] militarism, expansionism, racism. [...] The refugee camps. The theft of land. The artificial support of the Israeli economy by the dollar. The atrocities committed against the dispossessed. (pp.55-56)

This passage 'interrogat[es] the category and experience of terror from the standpoint of the colonized and the abject of history'.⁷⁹⁹ This is something that is entirely absent from Hollinghurst and Swift, whose perspectives are almost entirely white and English. The alternate 'standpoint' offered above indicts both America and Britain in Palestinian dispossession and in the manufacture of contemporary terrorism; it exposes old (European) and new (Israeli, American) forms of imperialism in order to explain the terrorists' 'behaviour as a reaction to [...] structural violence'.⁸⁰⁰ The Balfour Declaration – which initiated 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' –⁸⁰¹ is invoked, as is the fact that 'Britain defended

⁷⁹⁸ Boehmer and Stephen Morton (eds), 'Introduction', *Terror and the Postcolonial* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1-24 (p.7).

⁷⁹⁹ Boehmer and Morton, p.12.

⁸⁰⁰ Dominic Davies, 'Critiquing Global Capital and Colonial (In)justice', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 50.1 (2015), 45-58 (p.51). Davies cites Johan Galtung on structural violence: 'we shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct, and to violence where there is no such actor as structural or indirect' (p.49).

⁸⁰¹ The Balfour Declaration of 1917, composed by the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour, states: 'His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object' (Robert John, 'Behind the Balfour Declaration', *The Journal of Historical Review* 6.4 (1985-6), 389-450 <http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v06/v06p389_John.html> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

America's action at the United Nations' (p.56). Britain's contribution to what Derek Gregory calls 'the colonial present' is extended to its presence in Northern Ireland through reference, elsewhere, to the IRA (p.49). If British citizens are in danger both at home (due to the IRA) and abroad (due to pro-Palestinian terrorism) then both conflicts are situated in a postimperial context, both are tied back to Britain's former imperial deeds and its continuing dominance on the international stage.

The fact that Franklin speaks on behalf of the terrorists, however, severely undermines the extent to which we can read this passage and 'The Visitors' as a whole through Boehmer's definition of 'postcolonial narrative'. One is reminded here of Marx's famous words, cited by Edward Said as an epigraph to *Orientalism*: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented'.⁸⁰² Barnes's narrative explanation – that the terrorists request the expertise of a television presenter – fails to negate the patronising effect of Franklin's ventriloquising. The farcical pastoral image in the passage above of 'all nomads and goat-farming and traditional hospitality' alerts us to the nostalgic idealisation inherent in this pre-colonial vision. Franklin's performance of the terrorists' postcolonial consciousness actually undermines their critique of 'the colonial present': things were not *really* so perfect, his ironic tone suggests, before western intervention. Moreover, the anti-Semitic lumping together of 'Jews' problematises the terrorists' own opposition to 'racism'.

When the terrorist perspective is heard more directly it is still channelled through one figure, an unnamed leader, who acts as an archetypal mouthpiece for the rest of the group and for Middle Eastern oppression more broadly. Moreover, he speaks in recognisably Barnesian language. Character and author share a hectoring and didactic tone: the leader asks 'is it lawful to drop bombs on refugee camps, for

⁸⁰² Said, *Orientalism*, xiii.

instance?’ (p.48), much like the fictionalised ‘Julian Barnes’ in ‘Parenthesis’ enquires ‘whose truth do we prefer, by the way, the victor’s or the victim’s?’ (p.246). These are two leading questions which warrant only the ‘right’ answer from the listener or reader. The ‘knowingness’ that James Wood critiques in Barnes’s writing has infiltrated its way into (at least) one of his supposedly independent characters: ‘the cognitive neatness, the fondness for direct statement, the fat hand with theme and symbol’.⁸⁰³ Barnes thus imitates or pastiches the rhetoric of postcolonial critique rather than convincingly inhabits the non-western perspective which underpins his story. The absence of the word ‘Palestine’ throughout contributes to the impression that these are generic terrorists with generic demands. It also ensures that Barnes gestures towards but remains safely removed from the fraught arena of international politics.

‘The Visitors’, then, provides a more historically informed engagement with terrorism and its motivations than Eaglestone finds in Foer, McEwan, and Rushdie, whilst also repeating their tendency to ‘bring all “otherness” inside its own hegemonic discourse’.⁸⁰⁴ Barnes’s story presents its terrorists as politically aware, eloquent figures – one of them at least – and situates their actions in the contexts of the colonial past and present. But this is not to claim that ‘The Visitors’ mobilises a radical critique of western hegemony, for, as discussed above, its postcolonial rhetoric is undercut by the inauthenticity of Barnes’s vocalisation. There is a tension here between the ironizing tendencies of postmodernism and the historically- and politically-engaged ones of postcolonialism. Barnes boldly tackles the subject of contemporary terrorism and its imperial foundations, but contains the subversive potential of this topic within his persistently ‘knowing’ tone.

⁸⁰³ James Wood, ‘Julian Barnes and the Problem of Knowing Too Much’, p.263.

⁸⁰⁴ Eaglestone, p.21.

Whilst ‘The Visitors’ foregrounds a tangible and urgent legacy of British and European imperialism – terrorism – ‘Upstream!’ is engaged with a much subtler one: travel writing. This chapter is told in epistolary form, comprised of letters from Charlie, an English actor working on a film in the Venezuelan ‘jungle’ (p.193), ‘somewhere near the Mocapra’ river (p.196). Charlie’s letters back to his girlfriend Pippa in London initially reveal his excitement and enthusiasm for the ‘Indians’ (p.197) that he meets; this is followed by confusion, fear, and horror when two of them purposefully crash their boat, killing his friend and fellow actor Matt. Charlie offers two theories for their actions. First, they don’t understand the difference between acting and reality: ‘they actually think that when Matt and I are dressed up as Jesuits we actually are Jesuits!’ (p.203). Second, they are exacting revenge on the Europeans who exploited their forefathers centuries ago. Barnes suggests as much by the fact that the film they are making is an historical drama about ‘Jesuit missionaries trying to find their way back to the Orinoco’ (p.201).⁸⁰⁵

Both of Charlie’s theories draw upon familiar postmodern concepts: first, the blurred line between fiction and reality, acting and actions; second, the notion of the historical becoming (merely) representational. Where once there was real colonialism, now there is Hollywood. Trained, like Franklin, in the art of illusions, Charlie does not take his misfortunes overly seriously. He is already imagining another film at the end of the story: ‘I shouldn’t be surprised if Hollywood sends a plane to bomb the Indians and punish them for the death of Matt. Or does a remake’ (p.218). Bombs and remakes have become interchangeable, the artistic levity of the latter undermining the violent gravity of the former.

⁸⁰⁵ This fictional film, as Finney notes, is ‘suggestive of Robert Bolt’s *The Mission*, 1986’ (p.37). Although Barnes does not provide a precise date for the setting of the film, *The Mission* is set in the 1750s.

Already we can see how Charlie's postmodern playfulness is challenged by Barnes's provocatively postcolonial contextualisation. The locals refuse to act in the westerners' film and this, as Charlie begins to understand, is not deconstructive but reconstructive; they are not interested in questioning the status of reality but in confronting the history of (Jesuit) colonialism in their region. The crashing of the boat is not a postmodern stunt but a resistant response to the colonial past and present. As Pateman argues, 'the film, and the story it is presenting, are also both indicative of the West's colonization of other areas of the world, first through religion, then multinational capitalism (signified by the Coca-Cola signs near the jungle), and now by the spread of high-tech information systems'.⁸⁰⁶ Barnes indicates continuity between colonial missionaries and contemporary filmmakers as different forms of western imposition.

'Upstream!' does not develop this particular line of neocolonial critique much further. It does, however, bring the genre of travel writing within the remit of this critique in politically ambiguous and unacknowledged ways. This textual claim will require some critical contextualisation. For Mary Louise Pratt, European travel writing was complicit in the imperial project and continues to be complicit in the 'neocolonial' project. 'Travel books', she argues, 'gave European reading publics ["at home"] a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized'.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁶ Pateman, p.52. Another film production that in many ways recreated the colonial practices that it seemed to be critiquing was Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), based on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. As Robert Sellers recalls, Coppola 'later raved during a Cannes press conference, his film wasn't about Vietnam, "It is Vietnam!"' ('The Strained Making of "Apocalypse Now"', *Independent*, 24 July 2009 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/the-strained-making-of-apocalypse-now-1758689.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁸⁰⁷ Pratt, p.3. Martin Green views 'adventure novels' in a similar way: 'the adventure novels that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more

‘The genre of travel writing’ was thus not only ‘the cultural by-product of imperialism’,⁸⁰⁸ but actively ‘perpetuated “the rhetoric of empire” ’:⁸⁰⁹ ‘travel writing disseminated discourses of difference that were then used to justify colonial projects’.⁸¹⁰ Travel writing and its imbrication with ‘colonial projects’ have, according to Pratt’s and others’ research, particularly shaped the continent of South America for European readers ‘at home’. For Neil L. Whitehead, ‘travel writing in South America [...] is filled with the discovery of the fantastic, the survival of the anachronistic, and the promise of marvellous monstrosity’, constituting ‘a particular aesthetic in the writing of the Amazon’.⁸¹¹

On the surface, Barnes’s fictionalised version of contemporary South American travel writing reproduces the archetypes of ‘the fantastic’, ‘the anachronistic’, and the ‘monstro[us]’ that are to be found in famous works of the genre such as Peter Fleming’s *Brazilian Adventure* (1933), as well as canonical novelistic renditions of the region such as we find in Virginia Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* (1915) and Evelyn Waugh’s *A Handful of Dust* (1934).⁸¹² Charlie’s letters belatedly construct an exotic, primitive, and dangerous image for readers ‘at home’; despite the ‘discovery’ of South America centuries before, Charlie, to invoke Ali

after Robinson Crusoe were, in fact, the energizing myth of English imperialism’ (*Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (London: Routledge, 1980), p.3).

⁸⁰⁸ Douglas Ivison, cited by: Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund (eds), ‘Introduction’, *Postcolonial Travel Writing* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2011), 1-16 (p.1)

⁸⁰⁹ David Spurr, cited by: Edwards and Graulund, p.1.

⁸¹⁰ Edwards and Graulund, p.1.

⁸¹¹ Neil L. Whitehead, ‘South America / Amazonia’, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 122-38 (p.122; p.123).

⁸¹² In *Unseasonable Youth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Esty foregrounds the ‘ersatz Amazonian landscape’ and ‘tropical setting’ (p.131) of ‘Woolf’s most obviously colonial novel’ (p.128). Waugh ‘consulted Fleming’ before his trip to South America (Robert Murray Davis, ‘Introduction’, *A Handful of Dust* (London: Penguin, 2000), ix-xxvii (xiii)).

Behdad, is 'belatedly searching for the disappearing exotic'.⁸¹³ He encounters unusual food (monkey (p.197)) which makes him ill (p.198) and uses exoticising language to describe what he encounters: 'Jungle' (p.193) instead of rainforest; 'tribe' (p.198) or 'Indians' (p.197) instead of locals. 'The fantastic' and 'the anachronistic' quickly become 'monstro[us]' when relations with the locals turn sour. The jungle becomes the 'bloody jungle' (p.208); the Indians become 'those fucking Indians' (p.211). When Charlie finds out that his language instructor has been deceiving him, this serves as a precursor to the climactic betrayal of Matt and the descent into chaos.

Charlie's exoticising language can also be found elsewhere in *A History*. In 'The Survivor', the narrator claims that 'tribes [...] have the key to living with nature. They wouldn't castrate their cats. They might worship them, they might even eat them, but they wouldn't have them fixed' (p.93). Once again, 'tribes' are considered to be 'living with nature', only now they also indulge in idolatry. In 'The Mountain', Miss Ferguson imagines 'the ignorant savage in the darkened jungle who could not possibly have known the light' (p.147) and in 'Parenthesis' the narrator states: 'he had the heart of an ox': a phrase from the literature of Empire, of adventure, of childhood. Those pith-helmeted cavaliers who despatched rhinos with a single well-placed slug from an army-pistol' (p.237). The language of empire is employed and alluded to but not unravelled or critiqued here; it is merely a part of Barnes's historical fabric.

In 'Upstream!', however, as in 'The Visitors', Barnes repeatedly mocks rather than endorses his protagonist's perspective. Charlie's exaggerated tale is clearly a parody, rather than a repetition, of Fleming's exotic adventuring and his lament for

⁸¹³ Behdad, p.47.

‘the age of geographical discovery [...] the age of territorial annexation’.⁸¹⁴ Barnes’s use of parody is complicated, as we shall see later on, by the fact that Fleming himself was already, in Boehmer’s words, a ‘self-conscious and parodic inheritor of the *Boy’s Own* type of narrative’.⁸¹⁵ But for now it is important to recognise that Barnes’s parodic revision of travel writing complicates Pratt’s correlation of the genre with imperialist politics.⁸¹⁶ This is in keeping with Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund’s claim that ‘in the field of postcolonial studies, travel writing [since Pratt] has often been demonized [...] But more recently a new generation of cultural and literary critics has begun to identify alternative representations of travel and to challenge Eurocentric understandings of the genre’.⁸¹⁷ For Edwards and Graulund, this critical ‘challenge’ responds to the emergence of travel *rewritings*, by authors such as Jamaica Kincaid and Amitav Ghosh, which subvert the genre from the perspective of non-European peoples. ‘Upstream!’, whose author and protagonist are both white male Englishmen, clearly does not fit this model. Barnes’s ironic tone, however, enables him to subvert the genre (and in so doing its implicitly imperialist politics) *from within*. As Carl Thompson argues, ‘it is not only travel writers from obviously “postcolonial” backgrounds whose work contributes to this project’.⁸¹⁸ The complications of this insider’s critique, and the politics of self-consciousness, shall be addressed in due course.

First, it is important to recognise how Barnes uses Charlie to satirise the contemporary traveller-writer’s continuing exoticisation of the racial other, long after

⁸¹⁴ Peter Fleming, *Brazilian Adventure* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), p.32.

⁸¹⁵ Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 150.

⁸¹⁶ Pratt recognises travel writing’s critical potential – she asks not only ‘how do the signifying practices of travel writing encode and legitimate the aspirations of economic expansion and empire?’ but also ‘at what points do they undermine those aspirations?’ (p.4) – however this is not a central part of her analysis.

⁸¹⁷ Edwards and Graulund, pp.1-2.

⁸¹⁸ Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.166.

Fleming's era of imperial dominance.⁸¹⁹ Charlie's fascination with the locals raises the possibility of his 'going native'. This trope, which we located in Hollinghurst, is also central to *Brazilian Adventure*, as Fleming searches for the lost explorer Colonel Fawcett, who has disappeared into the jungle and is now presumed to be 'mentally deranged'.⁸²⁰ Conrad's Kurtz is the archetypal literary example of a European 'going native'; by the time Marlow finds Kurtz in the depths of the Congo, he has taken 'that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot'.⁸²¹ 'Going native' narratives not only enforce a firm division and hierarchy between (white) traveller and (non-white) native, they also warn against the dangers of intimacy and transgression between the two. As Chinua Achebe explains parodically, 'Mr. Kurtz of *Heart of Darkness* [...] foolishly exposed himself to the wild irresistible allure of the jungle and lo! the darkness found him out'.⁸²² If Barnes flirts with the imperial tradition of 'going native' narratives, his 'knowing' version, ironic and parodic as ever, comes closer to Achebe's than Conrad's. Charlie suggests to Pippa that 'I could get one of those bags you carry babies around in like the Indians have had for centuries. [...] By the way, I really am sorry I hit Gavin' (p.206). His enthusiasm for the caring ways of 'the Indians' is immediately undercut by his evidently violent disposition, just as his conflation of topics suggests that he is not particularly serious about either. When Charlie tries to comfort Pippa by writing 'it's all right, sweetie, I'm not coming back with a bone through my nose, but I might

⁸¹⁹ I prefer 'traveller-writer' here to the more common term 'travel writer' as Charlie's primary purpose is not to write about his travels: this is secondary to his work as an actor. Graham Huggan and Patrick Holland use 'traveler-writer' in *Tourists with Typewriters* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), ix.

⁸²⁰ Fleming, p.257. Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* also plays with the idea of 'going native' in the South American jungle through the figure of Mr Todd.

⁸²¹ Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pp.113-14.

⁸²² Achebe (online).

come back with a bit less of a bone in my head' (p.200) his clichéd language further undermines his commitment to cultural conversion.

Charlie's attraction to 'Indian' ways of living also points to the continued potency of what Renato Rosaldo calls 'Imperialist Nostalgia': ' "we" valorize innovation and then yearn for more stable worlds, whether these reside in our own past, in other cultures, or in the conflation of the two'.⁸²³ Charlie peers back nostalgically at another world; he momentarily admires its otherness before desperately trying to return to the west. Yet Charlie thinks of himself as being actively resistant to such imperialist nostalgia. For him, the fact that 'THEY DON'T HAVE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES!!! and they don't have a name for their language either' is 'incredibly mature. It's like, nationalism out of the window' (pp.200-201). He believes that their refusal to act in the film does not indicate primitivism, as the rest of the crew assume, but the achievement of 'a post-acting civilization' (p.203).

Charlie's resistance to imperialist nostalgia indicates his partial self-consciousness as a western traveller-writer. He is aware of cultural stereotypes and the need to avoid them. This partial self-consciousness, however, is also subject to Barnesian parody. Throughout his letters, Charlie tries to distinguish himself from the judgments of 'the crew'. He proudly claims, for instance, to be less pampered than 'some of the crew' who, he presumes, 'thought there'd be wheels right into the Jungle and food trucks parked every few miles and they'd get burgers and chips served by girls wearing flower garlands round their necks. Fat Dick the sound man probably packed a Hawaiiian shirt' (p.197). The rest of the westerners are not only lazy but also out-dated, clinging on to exoticist images of 'girls wearing flower garlands' and embarrassing Hawaiian shirts. Only Charlie understands the brilliance rather than

⁸²³ Rosaldo, p.108.

primitivism of the natives: ‘all the crew here think the Indians are fantastically primitive just because they don’t have radios. I think they’re fantastically advanced and mature because they don’t have radios’ (p.200).

Charlie’s partial self-consciousness does not enable him to transcend cultural stereotyping. Instead, it positions his narrative as an ‘anti-conquest’. This is a term that Pratt uses ‘to refer to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony’.⁸²⁴ By drawing attention to the difference between one’s own language and ‘older imperial rhetorics’, the ‘modern’ traveller-writer maintains cultural dominance through a veneer of ‘innocence’.⁸²⁵ Charlie’s casual anti-Americanism – ‘call me old-fashioned, but I think a lot of American actors just do a sort of swagger and leave it at that’ (p.204) – provides a particularly effective component of his ‘anti-conquest’. As Teo argues, ‘stereotyped American tourists’ are a common feature in British travel writing,⁸²⁶ serving to distinguish the ‘self-styled “traveller”’, a gentlemanly English figure, from ‘the universally despised “tourist”’.⁸²⁷ Fleming, who claims that his book ‘differs also from most books about the interior of Brazil’,⁸²⁸ deploys Americans in just such a way; ‘how dare they pose’, as Valentine Cunningham paraphrases Fleming, ‘as sham Britons’.⁸²⁹

Charlie’s anti-Americanism extends to a critique of globalisation when he complains about the ‘bloody tin sign for Coca-Cola at a trading post this morning. I ask you, hundreds of miles from bloody anywhere and the Coke reps have been there

⁸²⁴ Pratt, p.9.

⁸²⁵ Pratt, p.9.

⁸²⁶ Teo, p.170.

⁸²⁷ Teo, p.171.

⁸²⁸ Fleming, p.11.

⁸²⁹ Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.389.

before you and shat on the landscape. Or some chum of Matt's put it there to make him feel at home' (p.195). Charlie's vague opposition to what we might call neocolonialism serves to absolve himself and his nation of guilt by assuming that one of Matt's (American) 'chum[s]' must be to blame. The irony of these repeated attempts to separate himself from the (mostly American) 'crew' is made clear when they set up camp:

I said why didn't we have one big camp, for Christ's sake. Some of the crew were against this because they thought they'd get their watches stolen (I ask you) and some in favour so that they could get a closer look at the women (I ask you). [...] they wouldn't share their camp with us anyway, which is quite funny I suppose. (p.199)

Charlie's self-professed anti-racism and anti-elitism are exploded by Barnes's final sentence. Despite his repeated protestations, 'I ask you', the fundamental connection between Charlie and the rest of the crew is that they all presume the right to decide where the 'Indians' camp. Charlie, who purports to egalitarianism, has afforded them no choice in the matter.

If Charlie's attempts to distinguish himself from the rest of the crew further embed him in the 'conquest' narrative that he presumes to have transcended, then we must reconsider the politics of authorial self-consciousness in the story as a whole. In other words, how different is Barnes's 'knowing' irony from Charlie's? As noted earlier, many of the travel narratives that Barnes seems to be parodying already positioned themselves as parodies. 'The longwindedly maintained joke of Fleming's *Brazilian Adventure*', according to Cunningham, 'is continuously to refuse to be a "Jungle Epic"'.⁸³⁰ It is in fact a ' "Jungle Lampoon" [...] guying a whole roster of available styles of travel writing'.⁸³¹ Boehmer, in a much more critical and postcolonial register, argues that in the self-conscious writings of Fleming – as of

⁸³⁰ Cunningham, p.389.

⁸³¹ Cunningham, p.390.

other white English (travel) writers such as Woolf and Waugh, as well as Graham Greene and Joyce Cary – ‘colonialist idioms were questioned, [but] they also survived – indeed, survived by being questioned’.⁸³² ‘In the late imperial context’, she claims, ‘irony could work as a support for, as well as a scourge of, imperial stasis’.⁸³³

Boehmer focuses her critique of travel writing upon ‘the late imperial context’ of (mainly) the 1930s, but many critics have extended a similar argument into the more contemporary period. Pratt recognises that various post-war writers, from Richard Wright to Joan Didion, have ‘parod[ied] and rework[ed] the inherited tropology’, yet, ‘ironized and modernized, their [forebears’] vivid imperial rhetoric endures today’.⁸³⁴ Self-consciousness and irony are not (just) ineffective critical tools but actually methods of perpetuating ‘imperial rhetoric’ and thereby contributing to the project of ‘neocolonialism’.⁸³⁵ In the decades since Pratt’s publication, numerous critics have reinforced this suspicion towards the ‘post-imperial travelogue’⁸³⁶ by developing critiques of some of its most ideologically-charged tropes, such as the ironic ‘English gentleman’ (Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan) or ‘the cosmopolitan vision’ (Debbie Lisle).⁸³⁷

⁸³² Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p.150.

⁸³³ Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p.150-51. As Hutcheon argues, ‘there is nothing intrinsically subversive about ironic skepticism or about any such self-questioning [...] irony can and does function tactically in the service of a wide range of political positions, legitimating or undercutting a wide variety of interests’ (*Irony’s Edge* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.10).

⁸³⁴ Pratt, p.217; p.197.

⁸³⁵ Pratt, p.226.

⁸³⁶ David Taylor, ‘Bruce Chatwin: Connoisseur of Exile, Exile as Connoisseur’, *Travel Writing and Empire*, ed. Steve Clark (London: Zed Books, 1999), 195-211 (p.196).

⁸³⁷ Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters* (especially chapter one), and Holland and Huggan, ‘Varieties of Nostalgia in Contemporary Travel Writing’, *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, eds Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 139-51; Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) (especially chapter three). For Lisle, ‘it is the travel writers who enact a cosmopolitan vision who are most

Holland's and Huggan's critique is particularly pertinent to Charlie and this chapter as a whole. 'The gentleman abroad, in a postimperial context, might well appear ridiculous', they argue, 'but ridicule, precisely, becomes his license to perform'.⁸³⁸ Barnes continues to inhabit the perspective of the English gentleman-traveller (amongst the unruly 'Indians') whilst purporting to dismiss him through irony; but irony, in fact, is what keeps him alive and at the centre of attention. 'Upstream!' is locked into Charlie's perspective, or a performance of his perspective, by way of its epistolary form. This means that, as John McLeod writes of Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), 'there is no attempt to get to the heart of native culture or understand African [or rather, South American] life'.⁸³⁹ Barnes's comic tale demonstrates considerable 'knowingness', then, about the genre of postimperial travel writing, but shows no interest, ultimately, in providing a counter-voice to Charlie's narrative or in constructing South America outside of his belated terms of reference. 'Upstream!', like *A History* as whole, gestures outwards – to foreign peoples and places, and to critiques of colonial discourse, knowledge, and power – but this mainly serves as a pretext for an exploration of a familiar white male perspective, the perspective, that is, of the 'English' gentleman abroad.

Postimperial Nostalgia, Neocolonial Revival, and the 'eloquent silence' of Race in *England, England*

Barnes's 1998 novel *England, England*, like *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, has predominantly been interpreted as 'a typical postmodernist' text due to its playful deconstruction of the boundaries between reality and illusion, authenticity and

alarming, for they smuggle in equally judgmental accounts of otherness under the guise of equality, tolerance and respect for difference' (p.10).

⁸³⁸ Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, p.31.

⁸³⁹ McLeod, 'The Novel and the End of Empire', p.83.

replica.⁸⁴⁰ Its title and central plot have assured that, unlike *A History*, such critical focus has been directed towards issues of national identity, namely, the extent to which Englishness has become an empty signifier open to (commercial) appropriation. But Barnes also uses this national lens to satirise postimperial nostalgia and, with more originality and political potency, neocolonial revival.⁸⁴¹ In other words, *England, England* approaches contemporary Englishness not only from a postmodern perspective, interested in the play of national signs and signifiers, but also a postcolonial one, interested in the material realities as well as discourses of territorial (dis)possession: ‘theft, conquest and pillage’.⁸⁴² In this way, Barnes provides a critique not only of the culture of commerce but also of colonial histories, presents, and futures; indeed, these two critiques are intertwined. The final section of the novel necessitates a significant shift in the emphasis of my argument. With reference to Nick Bentley’s critical comments on (the absence of) race in the novel, as well as to various theorists of whiteness, I will attempt to ‘see the specificity of whiteness, even when the text itself is not trying to show it [...] doesn’t even know that it is there to be shown’.⁸⁴³ This critical attention to whiteness, and the ‘eloquent

⁸⁴⁰ Daniel Bedggood, ‘(Re)constituted Pasts’, *The Contemporary British Novel*, eds James Acheson and Sarah Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 203-16 (p.213).

⁸⁴¹ Barnes stated in a 1998 interview with the *Observer* that he is ‘awkward with the word “satire” ’ and prefers the ‘word “semi-farce” ’ to describe *England, England* (‘He’s Turned Towards Python [Interview]’, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, eds Guignery and Ryan Roberts (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 27-30 (p.28)). I continue to use the term ‘satire’ because of its associations with ‘social or political commentary’: ‘a poem or (in later use) a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary’ (OED). ‘Farce’ is defined in much less political terms: ‘a dramatic work (usually short) which has for its sole object to excite laughter; an interlude’ (OED).

⁸⁴² Julian Barnes, *England, England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998), p.107. All further references to *England, England* are incorporated into the text.

⁸⁴³ Dyer, pp.13-14.

silence' of race,⁸⁴⁴ will help to qualify Barnes's postcolonial criticality and thus build towards my explication of his partial postcoloniality in the final section on *Arthur & George*.

England, England is divided into three sections: 'England'; 'England, England'; and, 'Anglia'. The first is focused on Martha Cochrane's rural upbringing in an undisclosed part of England. Martha recalls her first (invented) memory and a village fete/agricultural show she once attended. The fete will return as a key motif in the final section, but her first memory – which involves a jigsaw of the counties of England – foreshadows in a synecdochic way the dissection of the nation, its deconstruction and reconstruction, in part two. 'England, England', which comprises the majority of the novel and is set some time after the millennium, concerns the City of London business tycoon Sir Jack Pitman and his audacious plan to reproduce England's key attractions – Manchester United, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Sherlock Holmes etc. (p.142) – as a lucrative tourist theme park on the Isle of Wight. The final section recounts Martha's return, after having worked on 'England, England', to England itself (now called 'Anglia') which has suffered heavy decline due to the greater popularity of Jack's replica version.

Critics have generally focused upon the second section of the novel, where issues relating to 'the boundary between the "real" and its simulation' as well as 'the processes of commodification' are most prominent.⁸⁴⁵ This reading is encouraged by the fact that the novel's 'French intellectual' (p.52) – who argues that 'we prefer the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself' (p.53) – seems to provide a barely concealed allusion to either Debord (*The Society of the Spectacle* (1967)),

⁸⁴⁴ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.89.

⁸⁴⁵ Bedggood, p.213.

Baudrillard (*Simulacra and Simulation* (1981)), or both.⁸⁴⁶ Gregory Rubinson shifts attention away from these postmodern readings by picking up on a ‘suggest[ion]’ by ‘Jerry Batson, one of Sir Jack’s most expensive consultants [...] that the decline of empire has led to England’s relative insignificance as a political and economic power’.⁸⁴⁷ As Rubinson’s brief comment suggests, and Lucienne Loh’s and Sarah Henstra’s more developed arguments confirm, the historical circumstance of postimperial decline, as well as the theoretical one of postmodern simulation, provides the impetus for Jack’s ‘Island Project’.⁸⁴⁸ Barnes’s contemporaneous essays and interviews evidence his interest in postimperial decline and nostalgia. In ‘Britannia’s New Bra Size’ (1993), he cites Dean Acheson’s famous 1962 comment – ‘Great Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role’ – before claiming that this ‘continue[s] to sting because it continues to be accurate’.⁸⁴⁹ In a 1998 interview about *England, England* with the *Irish Times*, Barnes describes England as ‘an ageing nation, failing in its powers and selling ourselves to people who come to this country’.⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁴⁶ Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, p.110; Leggett, ‘Alternatives to Metanarrative’, p.31; Bentley, *Contemporary British Fiction*, p.185.

⁸⁴⁷ Gregory J. Rubinson, ‘Truth Takes a Holiday’, *American, British and Canadian Studies* 13 (2009), 39-49 (p.41).

⁸⁴⁸ For Loh, who relates *England, England* to the politics of heritage, ‘Sir Jack stands for Conservative efforts, from the 1980s onwards, to revive imperial pride’ (‘Comparative Postcolonial Ruralities and English Heritage’, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 51.2 (2016), 302-315 (p.307)). Henstra’s argument is discussed below.

⁸⁴⁹ Barnes, *Letters from London* (London: Picador, 1995), p.177.

⁸⁵⁰ Barnes, ‘Inventing England [Interview]’, *Irish Times*, 8 September 1998 <<http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/inventing-england-1.190953>> [accessed 26 October 2017]. Barnes adopts a more critical perspective on postimperial nostalgia in a 2002 *Guardian* article recalling media representations of the Falklands War. Parodying right-wing reporting of the war, he writes: ‘the fact that the rest of the world viewed the [Falklands] war as a bizarre and brainless squabble between nostalgic imperialism and nostalgic fascism was irrelevant’ (‘The Worst Reported War since the Crimean’, *Guardian*, 25 February 2002

Through the comic mouthpieces of his fictional characters in *England, England*, Barnes satirises rather than propagates such statements; postimperial anxieties are central to his narrative but they are not uncritically repeated. Consider, for instance, protagonist Jack's complaint that

‘the days of the old buccaneers are past, I fear. We have become dinosaurs. Do it by doing it, that was always my motto. Nowadays it's Don't do it unless you have witchdoctors and market researchers and focus groups holding your hand. Where's the dash, where's the flair, where's the good hard basic balls of it all gone? Farewell, oh ye merchant venturers – isn't that the melancholy truth?’ (p.215)

Jack yearns for an era of ‘dash’, ‘flair’ and ‘balls’, for the ‘old buccaneers’ and ‘merchant venturers’ of colonial exploration. But Barnes's purposefully juvenile, arrogant, and macho language ensures that this anti-modern ‘melanchol[ia]’ – which is the driving force behind the Island Project – comes across as pathetic rather than sympathetic.

Jerry vehemently opposes the declinist attitude, articulated by both Jack and the ‘King’,⁸⁵¹ of ‘old-timers’ still ‘nostalgic for the British Empire’ (p.37): ‘the days of sending a gunboat, not to mention Johnny Redcoat, are long gone. [...] We are no longer mega. Why do some people find that so hard to admit?’ (p.39). Like Gilroy in *After Empire*, yet in much more colloquial and simplistic terms, Jerry challenges the obstinacy of postimperial nostalgics and melancholics. This is part of his broader anti-imperial perspective: ‘Britain had once held dominion over great tracts of the world's surface, painted it pink from pole to pole. As time went by, these imperial possessions

<<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/feb/25/broadcasting.falklands>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁸⁵¹ See, for instance, Barnes's satirical description of the King's flight from the Island back to Old England: ‘it always made the King a little melancholy to realize [...] how small his realm was compared to that which his ancestors had once ruled...’ (p.160).

had spun off and set themselves up as sovereign nations. Quite right too' (p.38).⁸⁵²

Others working on the project share, or pretend to share, Jerry's viewpoint. Jack, despite his lament above, claims that 'dispos[ing]' of 'the last bits of Empire' is 'entirely rational' (p.106) and Mark explains to the residents of the Isle of Wight that

the original purchase of the Island in 1293, by Edward I from Isabella de Fortuibus, for the sum of six thousand marks, was manifestly dubious and quite possibly illegal. Six thousand marks was chickenfeed. It has clearly not been an arm's-length deal. Duress was still duress, even if it had taken place at the end of the thirteenth century. (p.126)

The Island Project is thus construed as an anti-imperial and pro-independence movement, a resistance to British occupation, 'even if' it began over seven hundred years ago. The Island's separation from Britain becomes known as 'Independence' (p.129) and the culmination of 'the long struggle for liberation on the part of the Islanders, a struggle marked by courage and sacrifice down the centuries' (p.172).

Crucially, however, the fact that businessmen from the City of London impose this discourse onto the people of the island ironizes their arguments against external imposition. It is Jack, rather than the islanders, who deploys the term 'Independence'. The accuracy of the report on 'the original purchase of the island' is drawn into question when the narrator tells us that 'contract lawyers and constitutional experts' produced this on behalf of Jack's company (p.126). Barnes exposes the sheer commercial hollowness of the project's anti-imperial rhetoric when Martha is 'accompanied by a bodyguard of late-thirteenth-century yokels [...] Among the yokels were various Pitco [Jack's company] executives with rehearsed sound-bites on both the original land-grab and the subsequent, centuries-long cover-up' (pp.171-72).

⁸⁵² Jerry extends this argument to Northern Ireland: 'he didn't, for instance, see anything except historical inevitability in the notion that the whole of Ireland should be governed from Dublin' (p.37). This is a claim that would have had particular resonance for readers when the book was published in 1998, the year of the Good Friday Agreement which brought about the official end of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

‘Pitco executives’ have constructed and ‘rehearsed’ this narrative, duping the locals into believing it through masquerade. After independence is pronounced, ‘Island patriots everywhere were invited to wave the Pitco-sponsored flags which had been tossed from the back of Sir Jack’s motorcade’ (p.171). Jack has created and then ‘exploit[ed] historical resentment’ (p.106) amongst the locals in order that his own company’s flag is flown. Beneath his language of self-determination, the old colonialist desire for conquest persists: ‘ownership was irrelevant as long as you had control: and yes, for the moment he had all the land options and planning concessions he needed’ (p.107). As the narrator reveals later in the paragraph,

beyond and beneath all this legitimate buccaneering, there lay a more primal urge, an atavistic yearning to cut through the red tape of contemporary life. It would have been unfair to call Sir Jack Pitman a barbarian, though some did; but there stirred within him a longing to revisit pre-classic, pre-bureaucratic methods of acquiring ownership. Methods such as theft, conquest and pillage, for example. (p.107)

The narration is focalised here through Jack’s consciousness. Yet, Jack is still referred to by his full title in the third-person, ‘Sir Jack Pitman’, thereby distancing the reader and foregrounding Barnes’s authorial control. Evidently, Barnes is keen to mock his protagonist, calling him ‘a barbarian’ even if Jack suggests that this label is ‘unfair’. Hidden ‘beneath’ the oxymoronic and obfuscatory phrase ‘legitimate buccaneering’ lies an ‘atavistic yearning’ for ‘theft, conquest and pillage’: the original methods of colonial possession.

The commodification and exportation of Englishness which dominates the novel amounts, for Henstra, to ‘a new kind of territorial expansion – the conquest and control of the global tourist trade’.⁸⁵³ Although Henstra uses the language of ‘conquest and control’, her version of ‘expansion’ is conceptual rather than physical,

⁸⁵³ Sarah Henstra, ‘The McReal Thing’, *British Fiction of the 1990s*, ed. Bentley (London: Routledge, 2005), 95-107 (p.98).

‘McReal’ rather than real (as her title has it); it is about ‘sell[ing]’ an ‘external *idea* of Englishness’.⁸⁵⁴ But Pitco’s commercial takeover of the Island also draws upon histories, languages, and practices of direct colonial occupation and settlement. Barnes’s precise phrasing – ‘legitimate buccaneering’ (p.107); ‘corporate invader’ (p.124) – and his behind-the-scenes exposure of the workings of the Island Project produce a detailed critique of neoliberalism-as-neocolonialism.⁸⁵⁵

Barnes’s figuration of Jack is evocative, in particular, of what Tom Nairn calls the ‘liberal, City [of London] imperialism that has carried the old order into the last quarter of the 20th century’, and what Nicholas Shaxson defines as ‘the City’s new imperial project’.⁸⁵⁶ Barnes’s descriptive terms carefully position Jack as an archetypal City capitalist-come-imperialist. Jack’s business portfolio constitutes ‘the Pitman empire’ (p.29) and his waiting room holds a plaque describing him as ‘imperious when necessary’ (p.29). His office is ‘the product of imperious but erratic taste’ (p.48) and the American journalist who visits the Island comments on ‘Sir Jack Pitman’s roguish, buccaneering style’ (p.179). Jack is himself aware that ‘if they [the islanders] saw [him] they might come over all chippy and defensive, as if he were a *corporate invader* rather than a massive benefactor’ (p.124, emphasis added). Such neoimperial and neocolonial suggestions recur throughout the planning process. Jack and his team consider the location of the project, for instance, in such terms: ‘a map of the British Isles had been laid out on the Battle Table, and Sir Jack’s Co-ordinating

⁸⁵⁴ Henstra, p.98 (emphasis added).

⁸⁵⁵ I use the term ‘neocolonialism’ here – rather than the ‘neoimperialism’ of my introduction – because, like Gregory in *The Colonial Present*, ‘I want to retain the active sense of the verb “to colonize”’ (xv). Nicola Smith defines ‘neoliberalism’ as an ‘ideology and policy model that emphasizes the value of free market competition’ and she associates it with both the Thatcher and Reagan governments of the 1980s (‘neoliberalism’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/neoliberalism>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁸⁵⁶ Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, p.24; Shaxson, p.278.

Committee stared at the jigsaw of counties [...] They peered at the map as if cartography was a dubious new invention' (p.61). Martha's seemingly innocent childhood puzzle, 'her jigsaw, her England' from section one (p.6), has morphed into a familiar imperialist game of divide and conquer. Barnes's 'Battle Table' recalls images of European leaders at the infamous 1884-85 Berlin Conference (known euphemistically as the 'Scramble for Africa'), despite the fact that Jack's committee seem to think 'cartography' is a 'new invention', thereby denying their imperial forbears. What *is* 'new' is that their colonising gaze has been turned inwards, onto Britain itself: it is their own nation that has 'been laid out', awaiting 'corporate inva[sion]' in whichever location Jack chooses.

In order to make this decision, Jack complements cartographic scrutiny with territorial exploration. He sends Mark – or 'Marco Polo' as he renames him, a reference to the thirteenth/fourteenth-century Venetian travel writer from whom Christopher Columbus drew inspiration – to the Isle of Wight on an investigative excursion. When Mark returns Jack asks him to 'summarize, Mr Polo. Summarize your exotic travels for us' (p.76). Barnes thus provides a contemporary spin on Pratt's aforementioned argument about travel discourse and its domestication of 'distant parts of the world'. The Isle of Wight is by no means 'distant' – it is only a few miles off the coast of mainland Britain – but it has been construed as 'exotic' in order to justify Jack's sense of 'ownership, entitlement and familiarity'.⁸⁵⁷ He renames the island's 'inhabitants [...] grateful future employees' (p.63), having already decided what function they shall serve. The current occupants of the island are to be used for Jack's own profit-making purposes, much like the human and material resources mined throughout the British Empire.

⁸⁵⁷ Pratt, p.3.

The language of anti-imperialism, as we saw earlier, provides Jack and his team with an effective rhetorical toolbox through which to enact their commercial exploitation. Barnes's satire thus, once again, recalls Pratt and her definition of the 'anti-conquest'. The Island Project claims to be the exact opposite of conquest: independence. In order to convince the islanders to support the scheme, Mark assures them that 'any breach the present crisis might force upon us would be with Westminster, not the Crown. If anything, we should seek to strengthen the royal link' (p.127). He thus promises an ongoing, actually improved, relationship with what is constituted as the true seat of national authority – the Crown – and a separation from the 'antique planning legislation' dictated by 'the contemptible Palace of Westminster' (p.128). In suggesting that Westminster is holding back, rather than looking after, the people of the island, Mark's pro-monarchy and anti-state rhetoric not only draws upon the strategy of the 'anti-conquest' but also, more subtly, what Robert Young calls 'the idea of English ethnicity'. As Young's study of that name shows, nineteenth-century imperialist discourse constructed the myth that 'Englishness paradoxically became most itself when it was far off'.⁸⁵⁸ In particular,

after [James Anthony] Froude, Englishness abroad came increasingly to represent an Englishness not sustainable any more within England itself, a lost identity that had to be created in the colonies. The English colonists became more English than the English – more patriotic, more healthy.⁸⁵⁹

This sums up perfectly the ideals behind the Island Project: taking a nostalgic vision of the nation, populated by 'Beefeaters' and 'Morris-dancers' (p.142), and reviving it away from 'the yoke of Westminster' (p.171).⁸⁶⁰ The Island is meant to be a site in

⁸⁵⁸ Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, p.2.

⁸⁵⁹ Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, p.220.

⁸⁶⁰ Barnes's use (via his character Mark) of the term 'yoke' mirrors Schwarz's description of Froude's ideology in *The White Man's World*: "other Englands" are as England was: before the imposition of the Norman yoke' (*The White Man's World*, pp.79-80).

which England's 'lost identity' can be 'created' anew, where the islanders can become 'more English than the English'. In Barnes's parodic version, however, the new nation is populated by actors for whom 'the professional disguise would wear off after a few minutes' (p.197).

When imperialist discourse advocated the regeneration of England and Englishness abroad, this was articulated, explicitly or implicitly, in response to the perceived decline of the home nation. As Schwarz writes, 'the white colonies were imagined by Froude as the pure counterpoint to the decay, degradation, and dirt of domestic England'.⁸⁶¹ I will return to the significance of 'white' in this sentence and the issue of race in Barnes's novel, but first we must challenge Froude's idea (as framed by Schwarz) of a 'counterpoint'. Recent imperial historians, as emphasised in my introduction, have revealed the close interrelationships between home and abroad, internal and external, both during and after Britain's period of imperial dominance. Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* expands this idea towards, amongst other things, economic analysis. To this end, he cites a 1971 article from the *New Left Review* in which the Marxist economist Bob Rowthorn argues that

the weakness of the British state is to be explained not by the simple decline of British capitalism as such, but by the very strength of the cosmopolitan activities of British capital, which had helped to undermine further its strictly domestic economy.⁸⁶²

'Cosmopolitan activities' are directly related to the 'domestic economy', but in an inverse manner. Imperialism's 'overseas' investments helped to 'cripple' the economy at home.⁸⁶³ Froude's 'counterpoint' – sunlight abroad, darkness at home – thus obscures the fact that, according to Rowthorn and Nairn, it is the process of imperial expansion itself which causes stultification and decay at the centre.

⁸⁶¹ Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, p.79.

⁸⁶² Nairn, pp.45-46 (footnote 29).

⁸⁶³ Nairn, pp.45-46 (footnote 29).

Moreover, the legacy of imperialism means that this split in the nation's economy – between domestic production and overseas investments (channelled through the City) – has produced ‘a society hoist by the petard of its own past success in industry and finance’.⁸⁶⁴

With *England, England* Barnes takes this vision of a nation whose overseas economy is destroying its domestic one to an absolute extreme. Old England undergoes drastic decline as a result of the Island Project sucking away tourism and investment: ‘while the London Stock Exchange endured such a Black Tuesday that dealing was suspended at lunchtime for the foreseeable future, Pitco shares soared worldwide’ (p.172). Pitco directly benefits from London's immiseration. If England had been wilting before, it now enters ‘a state of free-fall [...] its diminishing population knew only inefficiency, poverty and sin; depression and envy were apparently their primary emotions. Whereas on the Island a bright and modern patriotism swiftly evolved’ (p.202). The hyperbole here is partially due to the fact that this is ‘the official Island line’ (p.250); it is the perspective of Pitco, who have a vested interest in demoting Old England in order to promote their replica version. Nonetheless, the detailed depiction of England as an ‘economic and moral waste-pit’ (p.202) seems to offer a warning. Within Barnes's seemingly farcical prophecy lies the suggestion that, if England follows the at once neoliberal and neocolonial model – excessive commercial expansionism as a reaction to (perceived) decline – it will only end up precipitating its actual demise. Or rather, it will exacerbate the geographical tensions produced by ‘uneven and combined development’ – a Marxist-Trotskyist description of capitalism that has recently been updated as a theory of ‘world-literature’ by the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) – until it is torn asunder. In

⁸⁶⁴ Nairn, p.44.

Barnes's prescient near future, the different locations of the United Kingdom have become so 'radically uneven' that they can no longer exist in national union.⁸⁶⁵

Whilst this postcolonial (and Marxist-materialist inflected) version of *England, England* is grounded in the satirical and critical tenor of Barnes's narrative, it is an interpretation that is problematised by the novel's 'eloquent silence', or partial silence, on matters of race. I borrow this term from Pierre Macherey, for whom 'silence', paradoxically, is a 'source of expression': 'in order to say anything, there are other things *which must not be said*'.⁸⁶⁶ 'What it tacitly implies, what it does not say' is integral to a text's structure, and so, forms a part of 'the juxtaposition and conflict of several meanings which produces the radical otherness which shapes the work'.⁸⁶⁷ As Alan Sinfield writes, with this methodology 'Macherey taught us to interpret the gaps and silences, the unconscious of the work'.⁸⁶⁸

In order to hear the unconscious eloquence of Barnes's racial silence – to make that silence 'meaningful', to paraphrase Michel-Rolph Trouillot⁸⁶⁹ – we must return to Schwarz's accompanying of the term 'colony', in Froude's ideological construction, with the epithet 'white'. Schwarz's main contribution to the analysis of imperialist discourse in *The White Man's World* is to provide a more detailed investigation of the role of whiteness (informed by the relatively recent field of whiteness studies). Imperialist 'conception[s] of overseas', he writes, 'evoked an imagined or a lost time, and [...] articulated this desire through the categories of racial

⁸⁶⁵ Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p.12. In 2014, Scotland almost became independent as 44.7% of Scots voted 'Yes' in the Scottish independence referendum.

⁸⁶⁶ Macherey, pp.95-96.

⁸⁶⁷ Macherey, pp.94-95.

⁸⁶⁸ Cited on the back cover of the 2006 Routledge edition of Macherey.

⁸⁶⁹ 'Historical narratives necessarily produce silences that are themselves meaningful' (Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.1.).

whiteness'.⁸⁷⁰ The Island Project conjoins 'overseas' ideals with 'racial whiteness' at an implicit rather than explicit level. Jack's 'replica' of the nation constitutes what Antoinette Burton calls 'a whitewashed Britain'.⁸⁷¹ England's multicultural present is displaced by a populist version of the nation's past in the form of the 'Great Scenes from English History': 'Hampton Court [...] the White Cliffs of Dover [...] the Battle of Britain...' (p.142).⁸⁷² Burton primarily relates the idea of 'a whitewashed Britain' to contemporary American popular culture, particularly television; for her, 'eternal Britishness' satisfies 'a certain segment of the American public seeking relief from racial tension and ugliness in the apparently racially harmonious past (and present) of the mother country'.⁸⁷³ This perhaps explains why 'the new Island state [...] prove[s] a role model' (p.178) for the *Wall Street Journal* reporter who visits it (pp.178-85). Yet, the Island's popularity with English expats suggests that they too seek 'relief from racial tension'; Dover and 'Princess Di' (p.142) facilitate an evasion or occlusion of (post)millennial debates regarding immigration, national identity, and cultural cohesion.

Alongside the content of the Island's vision ('the fetish of Britain as whiteness'), the very rhetoric of waning national power, to which the project is clearly a response, carries a distinct racial character in post-war Britain.⁸⁷⁴ Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech encouraged white Britons to perceive the growing

⁸⁷⁰ Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, p.164.

⁸⁷¹ Burton, *Empire in Question*, p.78.

⁸⁷² This page-long listing of idealised national features recalls a famous speech, from 1993, by the then Conservative Prime Minister John Major: 'fifty years from now Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and – as George Orwell said – "old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist" and if we get our way – Shakespeare still read even in school. Britain will survive unamendable in all essentials' ('Mr Major's Speech to Conservative Group for Europe', 22 April 1993 <<http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1086.html>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁸⁷³ Burton, *Empire in Question*, p.78.

⁸⁷⁴ Burton, *Empire in Question*, p.91.

‘immigrant-descended population’ as symbolic of ‘a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre’.⁸⁷⁵ The popular phenomenon of Powellism (and later Thatcherism) converted non-white immigrant communities into the ultimate markers of national decline by reviving ‘racial encodings of order, as whiteness, and disorder, as blackness’ from the imperial era.⁸⁷⁶ Froude’s sense that ‘England itself is no longer properly the real England’⁸⁷⁷ became, for many whites in the post-war period, more persuasive than ever; indeed, despite decolonisation, many continued to search for that elusive ‘real England’ by emigrating to ‘the traditional white dominions’.⁸⁷⁸

Barnes does not draw attention to the uncomfortable ‘racial encodings’ of the Island Project. They must be unearthed, as I have done here, against the grain of Barnes’s parodic prose. The central plot of *England, England* is suggestive of the Powellite-Thatcherite split between order and disorder, between colonial freedom and the metropolitan ‘yoke’, but Barnes does not push this towards a critique of embedded racial ideologies. Even though Jack’s postimperial nostalgia and neocolonial revivalism are heavily satirised, Barnes’s postcolonial criticality is limited by his lack of reflection upon race, upon how the promotional language and commercial appeal of the Island Project are bound up with pervasive national discourses that celebrate whiteness and denigrate its others.

The absence of race in *England, England* becomes more troubling in the final section of the novel. In order to understand how, we must first consider what is present, rather than absent, in ‘Anglia’. It is in this final section that we learn that there were ‘two distinct periods’ after the ‘establishment of the Island Project’ (p.251). The first of these resulted in disaster, as described above; Old England

⁸⁷⁵ Enoch Powell, ‘Rivers of Blood’.

⁸⁷⁶ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.11.

⁸⁷⁷ Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, p.220.

⁸⁷⁸ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.57.

‘attempted to compete with England, England’ leading only to ‘vertiginous decline for the mainland’ (p.251). This approach involved ‘territorial reacquisition’, as the ‘Government of Renewal [...] sen[t] the army north to reconquer territories officially designated as occupied but which in truth had been sold’ (p.252). The alternative to this policy of internal recolonisation was ‘isolationism’: ‘new political leaders proclaimed a new self-sufficiency. They extracted the country from the European Union [...] declared a trade barrier against the rest of the world...’ (p.253).

It is important here to remember that *England, England* was published in the late 1990s, amidst a decade of fierce debates in the UK (particularly in the Conservative Party) about the nation’s role in the European Union (especially with regards to the Maastricht Treaty, the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, and the Euro).⁸⁷⁹ It is within this context that Barnes’s vision of ‘extract[ion]’ provocatively predicts what life might be like outside of the EU. This parochial stance, whilst a ‘reduc[tion]’ (p.253) for some of the characters in the final section of the novel, also appears to be rather pleasant; hence the name ‘Anglia’ – the Latin word for England – with its archaic and idyllic connotations. There is a strong sense of nostalgia in the final section, partially because our aged narrator Martha is reminded of her rural childhood: ‘now the split village had recovered its wholeness’ (p.256). The key parallel between the first and last sections is the central role of the village fete. ‘Anglia’ provides a long list of festive activities – ‘there were lemonade and ginger-beer stalls; skittles, bowling-for-a-pig and guess-the-weight-of-the-goose; a coconut shy...’ (p.263) – which is reminiscent of Larkin’s famous poem *Show Saturday*: ‘There’s more than just animals: / Bead-stalls, balloon-men, a Bank; a beer-

⁸⁷⁹ See, for instance: Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society* (London: Aurum, 2013), chapter five.

marque...'.⁸⁸⁰ Just as Barnes's fete enables the 'split' in the village to be overcome, the 'show' in Larkin's poem is 'something they share / That breaks ancestrally each year into / Regenerate union'.⁸⁸¹

The Larkin-esque 'regenerate union' of Barnes's final section provides, for many critics, a counterpoint to the postmodern despair of the previous one. Recognising that 'after Empire, the assertion of Englishness has been tainted with imperialism', Dominic Head commends Barnes's 'tentative investigation [in 'Anglia'] of a more positive construction of Englishness, rooted in humility'.⁸⁸² Bradford, similarly, argues that 'in a period dominated by post-colonial guilt or sceptical indifference to nationality, this novel, peculiarly, offers a kindly, quirkily patriotic view of Englishness'.⁸⁸³ 'Post-colonial guilt' is rejected by both critics as a mere inhibitor to patriotism.

The highly self-conscious Barnes is in fact much less dismissive of concerns regarding rural and national identities. His prose works hard to parody the 'invented traditions' of Anglian pastoralism and thereby provide a less conservative and nostalgic vision than that which is associated with Larkin and to resist the allure of utopian anti-EU rhetoric.⁸⁸⁴ As Patrick Parrinder recognises, 'the novel's bucolic final section is [...] just as artificial as the Island Project'; they are two versions of

⁸⁸⁰ Larkin, 'Show Saturday', p.149.

⁸⁸¹ Larkin, 'Show Saturday', p.151.

⁸⁸² Dominic Head, 'Julian Barnes and a Case of English Identity', *British Fiction Today*, eds Mengham and Tew (London: Continuum, 2006), 15-27 (p.17).

⁸⁸³ Bradford, p.96. For Roger Scruton, in his deeply conservative *England: An Elegy* (London: Continuum, 2006), Barnes's novel 'contains a strangely moving evocation of the old tranquility [of England]' (ix).

⁸⁸⁴ Barnes refers to 'invented traditions', a phrase he borrows from Eric Hobsbawm, several times in his non-fiction. In the aforementioned *Irish Times* interview, for instance, he states: 'I suppose you could say I am interested in what you might call the invention of tradition. Getting its history wrong is part of becoming a nation' (online). The latter sentence paraphrases the nineteenth-century French philosopher Ernest Renan.

‘retrotopia’.⁸⁸⁵ The ‘city-bred American’ farrier Jez Harris, much like the Island Project itself, is a replica that supplants the original; his archaism is shown to be ‘convincing’ but ultimately ‘fraudulent’ (p.261). The village fete is the epitome of such fabricated traditionalism:

Jacky was to be Queen of May, though as someone pointed out it was now early June, which as someone else pointed out was irrelevant because May was the tree not the month, at least they thought so, which sent them to consult Mr Mullin the schoolmaster who said he’d look it up... (p.261)

This elongated sentence conveys syntactically the villagers’ exasperated and ill-informed attempts to revive apparently instinctive local customs. The difference between the fete and the Island Project is the competence of imitation, not their relative levels of authenticity. Whilst Larkin’s ‘regenerate union’ appeared to be organic, Barnes makes clear that ‘England, England’ and ‘Anglia’ are competing replicas.⁸⁸⁶

Barnes’s persistently parodic tone, however, does not entirely undermine the overall impression of the fete as a harmonious, jovial, and ultimately regenerative event. It still functions, as it did in Larkin’s poem, as a synecdoche for personal and national reunification, for the healing of an enigmatic ‘split’. If anything, these light-hearted jibes contribute to, rather than subvert, Anglia’s patriotic sense of unity. Satire, as we know from Jonathan Swift, often mocks or subverts ideologies and

⁸⁸⁵ Parrinder, ‘The Ruined Futures of British Science Fiction’, *On Modern British Fiction*, ed. Zachary Leader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 209-33 (p.230). In the aforementioned *Irish Times* interview, Barnes rejects the idea that his ‘attack’ on the Island project ‘is [...] fired by nostalgia for the past’, arguing that the final section is his take on ‘what would happen if a modern industrialised nation fell out of the loop and had to start again’ (online).

⁸⁸⁶ Ishiguro also plays with the idea of England-as-replica in *The Remains of the Day*. Farraday, Stevens’s new American employer at the end of the novel, is anxious to know that ‘this *is* a genuine grand old English house, isn’t it? That’s what I paid for. And you’re a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You’re the real thing, aren’t you? That’s what I wanted, isn’t that what I have?’ (p.124).

hierarchies only to affirm them; for John Clement Ball, ‘satire, even at its most revolutionary, gazes nostalgically and conservatively back upon a privileged golden age’.⁸⁸⁷ Part of what makes Barnes’s fete so ‘bucolic’, to use Parrinder’s term, are its amateurish yet committed participants, its flaunting of the facts in the service of cohesion: in sum, its English quaintness. The villagers might not be knowledgeable about the ‘Queen of May’ but they all band together to figure something out. They might not really believe in God but the vicar is still a pillar of social life (p.262). ‘Anglia’ not only provides a nostalgic return to Christian England but also to its militarist and imperialist past. ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ is blasted out several times, recalling the use of nationalistic hymns at Corley Court in Hollinghurst’s *The Stranger’s Child*. The authority of this song is somewhat undercut by the fact that ‘some villagers thought [it] a hymn in deference to the vicar, and others an old Beatles song from the last century’ (p.263). But it is still sung alongside Phil ‘waving a plastic flag bearing the cross of St George. Patron Saint of England, Aragon and Portugal, she [Martha] remembered’ (p.265). Again we have a light satirising of the symbols of patriotism, as Martha recalls the fact that the national flag is not as uniformly English as one might assume, but this amounts to little more than what D.J. Taylor decries as ‘gentle mockery’ and ‘demure ironies’.⁸⁸⁸

Amidst such festivities, the local publican dons a ‘turban’ and converts himself into an eastern mystic offering ‘fortunes from lime tea-leaves’ (p.263). This is a significant moment because it helps us to recognise that those critics who commend

⁸⁸⁷ John Clement Ball, *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel* (London: Routledge 2003), p.9. Stuart Ward makes a similar argument regarding Britain’s post-war ‘satire boom’: ‘much of the apparently progressive criticism of the British establishment that characterised the satire boom was in fact fundamentally rooted in a nostalgic reflection on the imperial past’ (‘“No nation could be broker”’, *British Culture and the End of Empire*, 91-110 (p.92)).

⁸⁸⁸ D.J. Taylor, *A Vain Conceit* (London: Bloomsbury, 1989), p.27; p.86. Taylor is not referring specifically to Barnes but to the contemporary English novel more broadly.

Barnes's revival of postimperial patriotism fail to consider or tactically overlook the implicitly racialised aspects of 'independent' Anglian life; they do not unpack the 'embedded assumptions' of what Toni Morrison calls 'racial (not racist) language'.⁸⁸⁹ The publican's orientalist appropriation – conflating turbans with fortune telling – must be situated within the context of a newly white nation. This is a whiteness that is not explicitly stated but 'embedded'. As Morrison writes of Eddy in Ernest Hemingway's novel *To Have and Have Not* (1937): '[he] is white, and we know he is because nobody says so'.⁸⁹⁰

One critic of *England, England* has tuned his ear to the unconscious eloquence of 'the novel's silence on issues of Empire and contemporary ideas of the nation as multicultural'.⁸⁹¹ For Bentley, who contrasts Barnes's novel with Zadie Smith's contemporaneous *White Teeth* (2000),

This is one rather worrying aspect of *England, England*. England's colonial heritage, reference to discrete racial identities within the nation, and multiculturalism are all written out of the text: there is no mention of them anywhere in the book. [...] There are, in fact, no Black or Asian characters anywhere in the book. Given the multicultural make-up of contemporary England, this is an unsettling omission for a novel that takes the nation as one of its main themes.⁸⁹²

England, England does not contain any 'Black or Asian characters', but there is actually a subtle 'reference to discrete racial identities within the nation' in the final section of the novel. 'The invisibility of whiteness as a racial position', as Richard Dyer describes it,⁸⁹³ is made partially visible when Barnes's narrator tells us that 'emigration was permitted, immigration only in rare circumstances' (p.253). This rather enigmatic statement relates back to a passage on the previous page: 'mass

⁸⁸⁹ Morrison, xii.

⁸⁹⁰ Morrison, p.72.

⁸⁹¹ Bentley, 'Re-Writing Englishness', *Textual Practice* 21.3 (2007), 483-504 (p.495).

⁸⁹² Bentley, 'Re-Writing Englishness', p.495.

⁸⁹³ Dyer, p.13.

depopulation now took place. Those of Caribbean and Subcontinental origin began returning to the more prosperous lands from which their great-great-grandparents had once arrived' (p.252). England's 'regenerate union' has been enabled by the fact that 'Caribbean and Subcontinental' immigrant communities have returned to their ancestors' lands.

With this comment, Barnes provides a brief opportunity for his readers to consider the racially exclusionary dynamics that enable and underpin Anglian life. But we are afforded little sense of how and why 'mass depopulation' took place – it is only suggested that the emigrants sought out prosperity – and what its consequences have been. For Bentley, the lack of attention to race in Barnes's nation-themed novel is 'worrying' and 'unsettling', but he does not really explain why. The danger of evading, or at least occluding, race is that Anglia's lightly ironized yet nonetheless seductive form of nostalgia becomes bound up with the racist fantasy of an all-white England. Without unpacking its racial foundations, Anglia remains mystified rather than politicised, it appears bucolic rather than racially exclusionary.

England, England provides a fraught combination of postcolonial criticality and 'unsettling' racial silence, of satirising postimperial nostalgia, neocolonial revival, and the 'invented traditions' of Englishness whilst drawing back from the racial underpinnings of these ideological frameworks. It is this sort of political tension that will form the focus of my analysis of *Arthur & George*. This is a novel which provides us with Barnes's first and only extended attempt at inhabiting the voice of a character who is not white. If race is occluded in the texts we have considered so far, it is central to, or at least appears to be central to, *Arthur & George*.

The Partial Postcoloniality of *Arthur & George*

Barnes's 2005 novel *Arthur & George* explores the racial politics of Edwardian England by taking one historical case study (the so-called 'Edalji controversy') as symptomatic of contemporaneous attitudes and anxieties. This is a controversy that enabled a little-known relationship to develop between George Edalji, an obscure figure of Indian-Parsee heritage, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the world famous creator of Sherlock Holmes. Their paths crossed in 1906-07 when Doyle, or Arthur as he is known in Barnes's novel, attempted to clear George's name after he had been falsely accused of, and imprisoned for, mutilating horses. Barnes, adopting an unusual narrative structure, relates their two lives side-by-side. In the novel's first two sections, we witness George's upbringing (in Great Wyrley, Staffordshire) and the Edalji family's racist persecution at the hands of an anonymous letter-writer (or group of writers) and the legal system. This story runs parallel with Arthur's early adulthood. Arthur and George come together in the third section of the novel as Arthur attempts to use his famous detective's imagination to save George from disrepute. Eventually George is granted a partial pardon and the two men part ways.

Arthur & George, unlike Barnes's other novels, has been read as a 'subtly postcolonial narrative'.⁸⁹⁴ This is due to the central role of an English-Indian lawyer in the imperial-era 'metropole', as well as Barnes's foregrounding of issues of racial and national identity. Various critics highlight Barnes's engagement with race, and race is often discussed alongside the novel's depiction of Victorian and Edwardian England. For some, *Arthur & George* offers a 'pin-sharp portrait of Edwardian

⁸⁹⁴ Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals*, p.198. Elsewhere in *Indian Arrivals*, Boehmer refers to the novel as a form of 'contemporary postcolonial or transnational writing' (p.13).

England’;⁸⁹⁵ for others, it not only evokes but also ‘ironically challenges the Victorian (and early Edwardian) definition of identity as based on racial classification’.⁸⁹⁶ In Christine Berberich’s words, ‘whereas many twentieth-century novels depict the Edwardian era as some kind of Indian summer of English supremacy and unchallenged greatness, Barnes depicts [...] Edwardian Englishness as an unstable concept’.⁸⁹⁷ Likewise, Frederick Holmes claims that ‘far from celebrating the years just prior to the First World War as a glorious idyll’, *Arthur & George* reveals that they were ‘beset with class and racial animosities, plagued by widespread uncertainties and fears, and menaced by violence’.⁸⁹⁸ For both Berberich and Holmes, then, Barnes disrupts dominant impressions of the Edwardian period as one of supremacy and serenity. More so than his previously postmodern or metatextual works, such as *Flaubert’s Parrot*, *Arthur & George* is viewed as an historically and politically alert text that destabilises national mythologies in order to challenge nostalgia.

Katherine Weese, in her recent analysis of the novel ‘in light of postcolonial reconsiderations of the detective-fiction genre’, draws out the contemporary relevance of this challenge to nostalgia.⁸⁹⁹ Through his attention to the constructed or open-ended nature of Englishness, ‘Barnes [...] seems to answer precisely the call that [Stuart] Hall makes for “re-defining the nation, re-imagining ‘Britishness’ or

⁸⁹⁵ Jon Barnes, ‘The Pig-chaser’s Tale’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 July 2005, p.19.

⁸⁹⁶ Elsa Cavalie, ‘Constructions of Englishness in Julian Barnes’s *Arthur & George*, *American, British and Canadian Studies* 13 (2009), 88-100 (p.98).

⁸⁹⁷ Christine Berberich, ‘“All Letters Quoted Are Authentic”’, *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, 117-128 (p.123).

⁸⁹⁸ Holmes, p.23.

⁸⁹⁹ Katherine Weese, ‘Detection, Colonialism, Postcolonialism’, *Journal of Narrative Theory* 45.2 (2015), 301-329 (p.302).

‘Englishness’ itself in a more profoundly inclusive manner”’.⁹⁰⁰ Weese unites Barnes’s novel with Stuart Hall’s article on ‘“British Heritage” from the perspective of [...] multicultural Britain’ in order to suggest not only that Barnes disrupts nostalgia – *à la* Berberich and Holmes – but also that he redefines Englishness for the multicultural twenty-first century.⁹⁰¹

Weese’s detailed analysis mounts the strongest case for the ‘postcolonial perspective’ on *Arthur & George*, a case that revises conceptions of an author usually considered outside of this framework.⁹⁰² Nonetheless, she begins by stating that it is ‘not a post-colonial novel per se’, without expanding further upon this apparent assertion of fact or suggesting how it affects her argument.⁹⁰³ In the final section of this thesis, I will dwell upon and interrogate, rather than push to one side, that rather ambiguous qualifier ‘per se’. Indeed, I will argue that the *partial* postcoloniality of *Arthur & George* is emblematic of an unresolved yet productive tension in Barnes’s writing between competing conceptions of Englishness and of the English novel.

I begin by situating Barnes’s novel in relation to ‘new’ imperial history, as well as revisionist accounts of pre-Windrush black and Asian migration to Britain. This helps us to see how Barnes’s fictionalised recovery and imperial contextualisation of

⁹⁰⁰ Weese, p.323.

⁹⁰¹ Stuart Hall, ‘Whose Heritage?’, *Third Text* 49 (1999), 3-13 (p.3). Contemporary multiculturalism appears to have been on Barnes’s mind as he wrote the novel: ‘I thought that it was going to be a novel set in two historical periods, the late nineteenth/early-twentieth century part of Arthur and George, and then a contemporary case of racism and violence in Shropshire. But as I got closer to writing the novel I realized that everything in this historic case could be true now *mutatis mutandis* – that setting something back in time doesn’t mean that it’s not about today, that’s one of the basic things about fiction’ (‘Filling the Gaps’, *What is a Story?*, BBC Radio 4, 13 July 2015). Barnes was influenced, in his writing of the novel, by the racist murders of Errol McGowan and Jason McGowan, that took place in Telford, Shropshire, in 1999 and 2000 (‘Private Conversation’, Wolfson College, University of Oxford, following Barnes’s ‘Some of My Best Friends are Biographers’ lecture, 26 January 2016).

⁹⁰² Weese, p.323.

⁹⁰³ Weese, p.302.

a largely forgotten historical figure contributes to the postcolonial project of making empire visible within Britain. Barnes's extended life-writing shows how one English-Indian figure – George Edalji – adopts, adapts, and confronts the imperial ideologies he faces in the metropolis.

The second half of the analysis delineates what I call the novel's partial postcoloniality. This is a concept that I find to be helpful, if inherently slippery, for interrogating the extent to which Barnes's postcolonial gestures are undermined or delimited by other aspects of his narrative. Therefore it also gives us a critical sense of the extent to which a postcolonial reading of *Arthur & George* is both possible and restricted. First, I consider whether the isolation of the Edaljis in Barnes's otherwise completely white Edwardian England inhibits the capacity for his novel to revise dominant conceptions of the period. Second, with reference to Doyle's non-fiction, I consider whether Barnes's depiction of Arthur challenges or indulges heroic accounts of this gentlemanly imperial figure and the nation he embodies. By scrutinising the ambiguous racial, national and imperial politics embedded in Barnes's protagonists, I argue that *Arthur & George* exhibits a recurrent tension between subversion and nostalgia, between postcolonial critique and a continuing attachment to English (literary) traditions. I conclude with the implications of partial postcoloniality for conceptions of Barnes more broadly.

Boehmer's use of a qualifying adverb in the phrase '*subtly* postcolonial narrative' (emphasis added), like Weese's ambiguous 'per se', suggests a certain discomfort about associating Barnes and/or his novel with the word 'postcolonial'. The question of how an author's racial identity impacts upon postcolonial interpretation was addressed at length in my introductory chapter. The key point, for now, is that despite being written by a white English *author* it is possible to align

Arthur & George, as *text*, with the ‘project’ of postcolonialism. This ‘project’ has been theorised in numerous ways, but I refer here to a definition given by the influential collection *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (2005): ‘making visible the long history of empire’.⁹⁰⁴ Barnes’s novel makes this history visible *within* Britain and so can be situated alongside ‘new’ British imperial history, conducted in the last thirty years or so, that emphasises the impact of colonialism on the imperial metropole.

Barnes interweaves ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ – metropole and colony – primarily through his fictionalised historical portrait of George, the son of Shapurji Edalji (a mid-nineteenth century Indian migrant to England who became a Church of England-educated vicar). *Arthur & George* thus relates to a specific aspect of ‘new’ imperial history: that which is focused upon migrants and their descendants. Varying from more historical (Peter Fryer, Rozina Visram, David Olusoga) to more literary (C.L. Innes, Sukhdev Sandhu, Boehmer) accounts, various writers reveal that ‘the presence in Britain of people from the Indian sub-continent did not begin in the 1950s’, and that ‘black people – by whom I mean Africans and Asians and their descendants – have been living in Britain for close on 500 years’.⁹⁰⁵ This is an essential literary, historical and, political project because it disrupts the dominant impression that, prior to the epochal arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, there was an ‘authentic British national life that [...] was as stable and as peaceful as it was ethnically

⁹⁰⁴ Ania Loomba, et al. (eds), ‘Beyond What?’, *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1-38 (p.1). For the editors of this volume, the postcolonial ‘project’ also includes ‘learning from those who have opposed it [empire], and [...] identifying contemporary sites of resistance and oppression’ (p.1).

⁹⁰⁵ Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain* (London: Pluto, 2002), p.354; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power* (London: Pluto, 1984), xi. Fryer begins by stating: ‘there were Africans in Britain before the English came here’ (p.1). See also: Boehmer’s *Indian Arrivals*; Sandhu’s *London Calling*, referenced below; Innes’s *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (2002); and, Olusoga’s *Black and British* (2016).

undifferentiated'.⁹⁰⁶ Through George's drama, then, *Arthur & George* not only challenges the notion of a 'stable and peaceful' pre-war Britain, as critics have suggested, but also the myth of Edenic ethnic purity.

In this way, Barnes's novel recalls various canonically postcolonial English texts, such as Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* (2001) and Caryl Phillips's *Foreigners: Three English Lives* (2007). Evaristo, Phillips, and Barnes all foreground black or Asian lives in pre-Windrush Britain, from AD 211 Londinium (Evaristo), to eighteenth-century London (Phillips), and early twentieth-century Staffordshire (Barnes). In particular, *Arthur & George* recalls the first of Phillips's 'lives', entitled 'Dr Johnson's Watch', which focuses upon the relationship between a famous white English writer, Samuel Johnson and his manservant Francis Barber, an obscure non-white figure. These comparisons can be made despite the fact that Barnes does not share these authors' biographical connections to empire.⁹⁰⁷ I will later discuss the limitations of such comparisons, but for now they help us to recognise the postcolonial literary tradition within which George's story – or Barnes's telling of it – can be situated.

George's very presence as a protagonist in the novel would be enough to contribute to the postcolonial project of historical rewriting, but Barnes also carefully employs George's perspective to explore the complicated intersections between colony and metropole at the turn of the century. During his daily commute to Birmingham, George

reads the newspaper and tries to develop views on what is happening in the world. Last month there was an important speech at the new Birmingham Town Hall by Mr [Joseph] Chamberlain about the colonies and preferential tariffs. George's position – though as yet no one has

⁹⁰⁶ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p.7.

⁹⁰⁷ Evaristo was born in London to a Nigerian immigrant father and an English mother; Phillips was born in St. Kitts and moved to England as an infant.

asked for his opinion on the matter – is one of cautious endorsement. Next month Lord Roberts of Kandahar is due to receive the freedom of the city, an honour with which no reasonable man could possibly quarrel. (p.74)

The newspaper enables George, like many other busy commuters, to immerse himself in (and form opinions on) Britain's empire. As Catherine Hall shows in her study of imperial Englishness in the mid-nineteenth century, the newspaper was one of the key sites of interaction between imperial centre and colonial periphery. She alludes to Benedict Anderson's influential definition of the nation, and argues that 'newspaper readers [...] could enter the imagined community of nation and empire, as well as that of the town, as they read of strange doings elsewhere and reflected on their own different and not so different daily lives'.⁹⁰⁸ George's ability to give serious consideration to imperial affairs not only allows him to enter into the regional, national, and imperial imagination, but also to become, in the words of Barnes's narrator, a 'reasonable man', a proper English gentleman. Empire is not peripheral but central to George's personal and professional development.

One of the most overt manifestations of the novel's imperial context comes in an early exchange between George and his father. Shapurji asks his son: 'what is England'? To which George replies,

'England is the beating heart of the Empire, Father.'

'Good. And what is the blood that flows through the arteries and veins of the Empire to reach even its farthest shore?'

'The Church of England.'

⁹⁰⁸ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.273. Both Hall and Barnes demonstrate the impact of empire on the midlands city of Birmingham and its surrounding areas. Most empire-at-home accounts focus on the metropolis in the literal sense of that word: Jonathan Schnerer reveals the 'suffu[sion of] imperial discourse' but only in London (*London 1900* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.10); Sandhu demonstrates 'how black people have been enlivening *the life of the capital* over the centuries' (*London Calling* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), xiv (emphasis added)); and Boehmer admits that 'as in Burton [in *At the Heart of the Empire*] many of the case studies brought together here focus on London; however, an expanded narrative of Indian arrival could equally include Bristol, Brighton, or Edinburgh in legitimate and lively ways' (*Indian Arrivals*, 7).

‘Good, George.’ (p.17)

The imperialist image of England as the central organ of an extensive empire recalls Kipling’s rousing, patriotic poem ‘A Song of the English’ (1893) in which ‘Empire’s loom [...] weaves us’ together across continents.⁹⁰⁹ In articulating this image through the Edalji family, based in rural Staffordshire, Barnes confirms Burton’s claim that ‘the United Kingdom could be as much of a “contact zone” as the colonies themselves [...] imperial power was staged at home [...] in the social spaces of “domestic” Victorian imperial culture itself’ –⁹¹⁰ staged, but also interacted with. As we see in the passage above, George wearily reels off, rather than proudly proclaims, the answers to his father’s questions. As Cavalie argues, ‘the fact that these random quizzes about his English identity take place at dawn, when George is only half-awake, gives the feeling that the young boy is almost brainwashed into becoming English’.⁹¹¹ The imperial rhetoric is diluted as it is articulated: George does not seem to express any passion for these ideas but has been forced to learn them as a ‘repetitive mantra’.⁹¹²

By intimately depicting George’s conflicted, bedside relationship with such national, imperial, and religious imagery, Barnes explores how ideology was both disseminated and received, propagated and negotiated. For the most part, George is a rather passive and conformist recipient, a lawyer who aspires to the life of a bourgeois English gentleman. He is racially abused throughout the novel, beginning with his classmate Sid Henshaw making ‘monkey faces’ (p.9) at him and culminating in the hoax-letter campaign directed against the Edalji family – ‘I do not like natives’ (p.82) – that leads to George’s eventual imprisonment. It is important to remember however

⁹⁰⁹ Kipling, ‘A Song of the English’, *The Cambridge Edition of the Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Thomas Pinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.320.

⁹¹⁰ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire* (London: University of California Press, 1998), p.1.

⁹¹¹ Cavalie, p.91.

⁹¹² Berberich, p.124.

that, as Burton writes and various postcolonial narratives confirm, ‘the dynamics of “resistance” and “complicity” only partially capture the dialectics of the colonial encounter’.⁹¹³ Even whilst trying to assimilate, George is able to subtly question the prejudice he faces:

‘Is she [Dora Charlesworth] a darkie?’ to which he [George] replies:
 ‘She’s English, just like me.’
 ‘Just like you, George? *Just* like you?’
 (p.57)

Although George does not directly resist his colleagues’ racist language and assumptions, his insistence on being English exposes the contradictions of what Homi Bhabha defines as ‘colonial mimesis’. The repetition and italicisation of the modifier ‘just’ positions George as ‘a mimic man’: ‘he is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicised is emphatically not to be English’.⁹¹⁴ The central paradox of George’s ‘flawed colonial mimesis’ is slyly demonstrated when George ‘for once [...] has had enough’ (p.59). George asks Greenway to ‘roll up [his] sleeve’:

George then does the same, and holds his forearm next to that of Greenway, who is just back from a fortnight sunning himself at Aberystwyth. Their skins are the same colour. Greenway is unabashed, and waits for George to comment; but George feels he has made his point... (p.59)

If full membership of the nation depends on white pigmentation, then surely – George seems to ask – hasn’t he as much of a claim as Greenway? Through such exchanges, we see how Barnes not only invokes postcolonial concepts, but also how he transports into the routine interactions of the midlands workplace questions of belonging that Bhabha locates in the colonies.

Whilst such moments suggest George’s capacity to challenge racism, they are ultimately rather subtle and ineffective. ‘Greenway is unabashed’, as it matters little

⁹¹³ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, p.16.

⁹¹⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.125.

to him that the visual basis of his distinction is unfounded. The accusations laid against George for being ‘uppish’ (p.26) indicate resistance to social mobility on grounds of both race and class. Greenway is disturbed by George’s claims to gentlemanly bourgeois status. I will discuss gentlemanliness and the intersecting hierarchies of race and class further in relation to Arthur. For now, it is important to recognise that George’s experience in the domestic ‘contact zone’ confirms Burton’s claim that ‘many Britons, even those who never left Britain, were implicated in imperial power relations’, and that those ‘power relations’ were always contested.⁹¹⁵

Such ‘power relations’ did not, of course, disappear with the end of empire but persisted throughout the period of post-war postcolonial migration, the post-Windrush era. With reference to Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, Schwarz identifies

the perception that the simple social presence of blacks in Britain would bring to an end the civilized attributes of England as ‘a white man’s country’ [...] love-making between black men and white women would (it was feared) produce *identity-less* children – ‘half-castes’, ‘neither one thing nor the other’ – destroying England from within, unseen, from within the bedroom, and in the process jeopardizing white mastery itself.⁹¹⁶

Arthur & George confronts several of these myths. It not only shows that such fears, particularly regarding the ‘half-caste’ George, were prevalent and active during the period of empire itself but also that England was not really ‘a white man’s country’ prior to post-war migration. In Michael Gorra’s words, ‘the imagery of race has a much longer lineage in English cultural life than the aura of postwar novelty allows us to see’.⁹¹⁷ Moreover, ‘white mastery’ was never as assured as Powell’s nostalgia suggests. George’s treatment in the novel indicates not so much an authoritative social order, confident in its policing of citizens, but an insecure and class-riven public

⁹¹⁵ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, p.3.

⁹¹⁶ Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, p.47.

⁹¹⁷ Gorra, p.168.

sphere, prone to irrational prejudices and paranoia about an unassuming and, in actuality, highly conformist English-Indian lawyer.

If, in certain ways, Barnes's portrait of George expands upon revisionist (literary) histories of pre-Windrush migration, in others it offers only a pale reduction of their scholarly depth. This is primarily because the Edaljis are not embedded in a broader context of 'Indian Arrivals'. Boehmer's book of that title evokes a dense tapestry of 'early Indian presences in Britain (bodies, knowledge, forms of awareness)'.⁹¹⁸ Barnes's Victorian/Edwardian England is by no means 'striated' in this way.⁹¹⁹ Whilst Boehmer 'picture[s] Indians as forming an intrinsic and definitive part of the energy and modernity of London's crowded streets',⁹²⁰ Barnes is perhaps restricted by his non-metropolitan focus, his trip 'up North'. With its events taking place in rural Staffordshire, *Arthur & George* is geographically and culturally distant from the numerous colonial/metropolitan encounters that Boehmer and others uncover.

Omitting the broader history of colonial migration within which George Edalji is situated (even if it is largely a London-based one) fundamentally alters how George's narrative functions. The Edaljis, in Barnes's fictional world, are a one-off, a drop in the ocean of whiteness that otherwise constitutes the nation. Their story only partially disrupts the Powellite image of an 'ethnically undifferentiated [...] authentic British national life'.⁹²¹ There is little sense that 'in 1900 – the heyday of an Empire often assumed to have been a foreign affair [...] – black and Asian people were common sights in London: peddling religious tracts in Whitechapel; walking, law

⁹¹⁸ Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals*, p.9.

⁹¹⁹ Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals*, p.9.

⁹²⁰ Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals*, p.23.

⁹²¹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p.7.

books in hand, to the Inns of Court where they were students...'.⁹²² Without access to these sights, George's tale provides a rather reductive and stereotypical model of migrant life, one that is innocent of, but nonetheless embroiled in, crime.

The aforementioned historians of 'black Britain' reveal that there were, of course, a wide variety of ways of being a colonial migrant, Indian or otherwise, in turn of the century Britain. During the period of George's drama, Sir Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownagree, 'originally from Bombay [...] the son of a wealthy Parsi merchant' was Conservative MP for Bethnal Green North-East (1895 to 1906), the second Indian MP in Britain after the Liberal Dadabhai Naoroji (1892-1895).⁹²³ 'It is hard to imagine', Jonathan Schneer writes, 'a colonial figure supporting British imperialism more wholeheartedly or adapting better to the British way of life than Bhownagree'.⁹²⁴ If this description recalls George's experience and attitude, Boehmer reminds us that there was also a 'radicalization of Indian politics in the first decade of the twentieth century':

a growing number of Indian students in British universities, especially those clustered around India House, set about defining themselves in opposition rather than in relation to the imperial 'homeland' [...] These polarizing tendencies came to a head with the assassination in 1901, by an Indian extremist, of a high-ranking colonial civil servant on the steps of the Indian Institute in South Kensington.⁹²⁵

Arthur's and George's battle with injustice is perhaps more palatable to contemporary multicultural ears – attuned to ideals of harmonious integration and diversity – than accounts of anti-colonial agitators and assassinating extremists. George's experience suggests wrongs can be righted, and that (imperial) politics can be transcended by friendship, kindness, and liberalism. To be sure, Barnes balances this rosier picture

⁹²² Sandhu, xvi.

⁹²³ Schneer, p.240.

⁹²⁴ Schneer, p.247.

⁹²⁵ Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals*, p.24.

with the harsh reality of racial prejudice and the intransigence of the justice system, seen in the taunts of Greenway and Stentson and the refusal to grant George a full pardon. Yet, to only tell one version of the migrant story, with little recognition of broader activities and tensions, is to risk having George stand in for ‘the other’. This is in contrast to the ‘three English lives’ – Francis Barber, Randolph Turpin, and David Oluwale – of Phillips’s aforementioned text, lives that all end in tragedy but that present an array of migrant narratives.⁹²⁶

For the most part George remains rather anonymous, a cipher for an historical period and its racial tensions rather than a deeply psychologised or contextualised character; his Parsee background, for instance, is left unexplored. Even in the more intimate moments, such as the ‘bedroom catechism’ scene, he thinks in generic terms: ‘he lies there thinking of arteries and veins making red lines on the map of the world, linking Britain to all the places coloured pink...’ (p.17). There is a sense, as with the terrorists in ‘The Visitors’, that these words have been forced into George’s mouth, and that he provides a vehicle for imperial ideology.

Whilst George is largely isolated and passive in the novel, Arthur is both socially embedded and highly active. He becomes the focus of the novel’s second half, crucially bringing about its resolution. Structurally, then, Barnes’s insertion of an ‘alien’ presence in the imperial metropole provides only ‘a nod to the interconnectedness that “The World” foisted on “New Britain”’.⁹²⁷ Barnes seems to be more heavily invested in the symbolic significance of Arthur than George (as suggested by the order of its title). If George is beset by both direct and institutional racism throughout the novel, the figure of Arthur allows Barnes to avoid a completely

⁹²⁶ Barber, as stated earlier, was Samuel Johnson’s manservant; Turpin, a boxing champion; and Oluwale, a tailor who became a fatal victim of police violence.

⁹²⁷ Burton, *Empire in Question*, p.73.

antagonistic picture of race relations at the turn of the century. Their eponymous relationship provides a fairly optimistic vision of antiracist resistance. Captain Anson's racist accusations are only one side of a dialogue with Arthur. Instead of accepting Anson's stereotypes, Arthur ridicules them: 'are you saying that George Edalji slit the bellies of horses because that's what his ancestors did five centuries ago in Persia?' (p.275). Parsees, he insists, are 'the most highly educated and commercially successful of Indian sects' (p.275).

For Boehmer, the novel's 'one-on-one Indian-British friendship' provides 'an effective illustration of that core tenet of Kwame Appiah's cosmopolitanism, namely, that amity expressed between similarly positioned individuals [...] can work to [...] counteract the negative effects of racial prejudice in society at large'.⁹²⁸ Despite the ostensibly amicable and egalitarian direction of Barnes's plot, Appiah's optimistic 'cosmopolitanism' is undermined by various suggestions that racial and imperial ideologies have infiltrated Arthur's perspective as much as they have his supposed opponents. He is less liberal than he thinks, or rather, his liberal and imperial attitudes operate in conjunction with one another.⁹²⁹ When Arthur visits Cairo with his first wife Touie, for instance, he 'concluded that while the ancient Egyptians had indubitably raised the arts and sciences to a new level, their reasoning power was in many ways contemptible' (p.72). Arthur's judgment here, adapted from Doyle's autobiography and recalling Tim's godparents in Hollinghurst's 'A Thieving Boy', simultaneously praises and denigrates Egypt in relation to the supreme rationality of

⁹²⁸ Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals*, pp.199-200.

⁹²⁹ For a strong critique of the historic and contemporary connections between liberalism and imperialism, see: Priyamvada Gopal, 'Renegade Prophets and Native Acolytes', *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 197-216.

the west.⁹³⁰ A sense of specifically British superiority is implied when he enquires about his sister's new boyfriend: 'Hornung. What is he, this Hornung? Half Mongol, half Slav, by the sound of him. Could you not find someone wholly British?' (p.59). Like the police officers who mock George because of his foreign-sounding name (p.26), Arthur associates 'Hornung' with inferior – i.e. non-British – racial origins. Indeed, it becomes clear that Arthur's transcendence of George's own racial identity is only partial when he refers to George as being 'of Oriental origin' (p.210) and associates being 'more handsome' with looking 'more Occidental' (p.224).

Barnes's references to Arthur's racism problematise the ostensibly liberal and cosmopolitan ideals that structure the novel's plot. Instead of viewing Arthur's intervention in George's case as a kind or friendly gesture, one can read it as conforming to the trajectory of an imperial adventure tale: an upper-class white English gentleman rescues a lower-class dark-skinned 'colonial' subject. This critical reading of events, recognising a racial and class-based hierarchy between the givers and receivers of help, is suggested by Arthur's repeated commitment to chivalry: 'for Arthur the root of Englishness lay in the long-gone, long-remembered, long-invented world of chivalry' (p.23). Chivalry, a particularly refined and nostalgic incarnation of gentlemanliness, 'was the prerogative of the powerful', something largely faded 'in this modern world of Birmingham' (p.23). As Head recognises, Arthur is still wedded to 'a form of Englishness – rooted in fourteenth-century chivalry – that presumes dominion'.⁹³¹ Arthur's nostalgia for a world of sanctioned male power is not only

⁹³⁰ In his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Doyle says of the Egyptians: 'their arts seem to have been high but their reasoning power in many ways contemptible' (p.13).

⁹³¹ Head, 'Julian Barnes and a Case of English Identity', p.24. As Barnes writes of Ford Madox Ford's most famous protagonists – Ashburnham (*The Good Soldier* (1915)) and Tietjens (*Parade's End*) – Arthur exhibits 'a streak of romantic feudalism' ('A Tribute to *Parade's End* by Ford Madox Ford', *Guardian*, 24 August

suggested by his interactions with George but also his relations with women: ‘I have come to think that women – other women – are like distant lands. Except that when I have been to distant lands – out on the veldt in Africa – I have always been able to find my bearings’ (p.189).

In referencing ‘the veldt’, we are reminded that ‘when the South African War breaks out, Arthur volunteers as a medical officer’ (p.184). Arthur does not just harbor imperial views but is also a proud imperial agent.⁹³² The Boer War provides an escape from being ‘among women too long [...] yearn[ing] for the world of men [...] some cleansing of the spirit [...] he has been safe too long, has lost muscle, and requires danger’ (p.184) (at this stage in the novel, Arthur is embroiled in an affair with Jean Leckie whilst still being married to Touie). Arthur articulates an anxiety here that was particularly acute at the beginning of the century. ‘Following the pyrrhic victory’, writes Boehmer, ‘of the Anglo-Boer War, a war marked by setbacks, stalemates, and stasis’ came ‘a period of wavering imperial self-confidence [...] where the failing strength of the nation was mirrored in the alleged deterioration of the male physique’.⁹³³ If Arthur can regain his own bodily strength, then perhaps the empire can revive itself too.

To a certain extent, then, *Arthur & George* conducts a postcolonial deconstruction, or ‘subversion’, of a lauded national figure and one at the heart of the literary canon.⁹³⁴ Weese considers Barnes to be ‘critical of the fictional Arthur Conan

2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/aug/24/julian-barnes-parades-end-ford-madox-ford>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁹³² Doyle had wanted to take on a military rather than medical role in the Boer War but was ‘not accepted by the military’; Doyle ‘suggested, in letters to the War Office and to the newspapers, innovations in military strategy and equipment’ (Krebs, p.86).

⁹³³ Boehmer, ‘Introduction’, *Scouting for Boys*, xi-xxxix (xii).

⁹³⁴ Weese, p.313.

Doyle',⁹³⁵ particularly his 'conception of Englishness', his 'chivalric heroism', and his 'assumptions about the superiority of the British Empire'.⁹³⁶ *Arthur & George* challenges the impression given by biographers such as John Dickson Carr, for whom Doyle's intervention in the Edalji case was heroic: 'hating color prejudice as much as he hated racial or religious prejudice, he cut loose', 'again Conan Doyle charged into battle'.⁹³⁷ For Andrew Norman, likewise, Doyle was 'a champion of the oppressed and the underdog'.⁹³⁸ Barnes's version of Arthur is not quite so heroic or nostalgic, instead exposing his (racial) arrogance, outmoded chivalry, and military enthusiasm.

Doyle's non-fiction, autobiography, and personal letters, however, reveal a much more aggressively imperialist attitude than Barnes's novel would suggest, a point overlooked by Weese in her search for outright 'subversion'.⁹³⁹ In his letters to his mother Mary, Doyle speaks of the Boer War as an 'exciting' adventure, justifying it as a 'righteous war & worth sacrifices'.⁹⁴⁰ As we have seen, such expressions of militarism are included in Barnes's novel. However, Doyle's two histories of (or

⁹³⁵ Weese, p.305.

⁹³⁶ Weese, p.311.

⁹³⁷ John Dickson Carr, *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (London: John Murray, 1949), p.228; p.234.

⁹³⁸ Andrew Norman, *Arthur Conan Doyle* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), p.9. In a similar vein, Peter Kemp's review of *Arthur & George* is entitled 'Conan Doyle to the Rescue' (*Sunday Times*, 26 June 2005

<<http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/culture/books/article138394.ece>> [accessed 26 October 2017]).

⁹³⁹ Doyle's fiction, which barely features in Barnes's novel, is also heavily imbricated with empire. See, for instance: Joseph McLaughlin, *Writing the Urban Jungle* (2000), chapters 1-3; and, Catherine Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle* (2002). Doyle's spiritualism, which features prominently in *Arthur & George*, has also been read as 'a kind of psychic emigration and colonization' (Brantlinger, p.253). In Barnes's novel, the whole industry of spiritualism seems to rely on the haunting presence of the racial other. In one of many séances, a spirit appears to Arthur in the shape of 'a black man with a spear' (p.39). At Arthur's funeral, 'Mrs Estelle Roberts, Sir Arthur's favourite medium' informs her audience that she must wait for 'Red Cloud to appear'. The person sitting next to George explains: '“that's her spirit guide [...] Many of the guides are Indians.” The woman pauses, then smiles and adds, without the slightest embarrassment, “Red Indians, I mean”' (p.347).

⁹⁴⁰ Doyle, *A Life In Letters*, p.425; p.434.

apologias for) the Boer War, published during the war itself – *The Great Boer War* (1900) and *The War in South Africa* (1902) – extend Doyle’s claims about its righteousness. In the latter, he argues that ‘it was honestly considered that the country was in too distracted a state to govern itself’.⁹⁴¹ If this paternalistic justification for military intervention is a familiar one, both during and after the imperial period, so too is the one Doyle offers to his mother: ‘without war South Africa would have gone & South Africa is the keystone of the Empire’.⁹⁴² Behind the public rhetoric of benevolence lies the private reality of hubris, the desire for ‘the British Flag [to] fly over a united South Africa’.⁹⁴³ Despite claiming that the war was conducted according to ‘an honourable and philanthropic view of the rights of the native and the claim which he has to the protection of the law’, Doyle writes in his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (1924), that ‘the health of the Empire was to be honoured’.⁹⁴⁴ Ultimately, for Doyle, Britain’s ‘position in the world [...] the possession of South Africa and the unity of the Empire were at stake’.⁹⁴⁵

Doyle’s military-imperial pride becomes particularly disturbing when used to defend the British army’s notorious use of concentration camps. Chapter VII of *The War in South Africa* is dedicated to defending these: ‘it was the duty of the British, as a civilised people, to form camps of refuge for the women and children’.⁹⁴⁶ According to Thomas Pakenham’s authoritative study of the Boer War, ‘no one knows how many Boers – men, women and children – died in the concentration camps. Official

⁹⁴¹ Doyle, *The War in South Africa* (London: Smith, 1902), p.8.

⁹⁴² Doyle, *A Life in Letters*, p.448.

⁹⁴³ Doyle, *A Life in Letters*, p.438.

⁹⁴⁴ Doyle, *The War in South Africa*, p.3; Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, p.152.

⁹⁴⁵ Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith, 1900), p.439.

⁹⁴⁶ Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, p.72. Doyle ‘would be credited with turning much foreign public opinion around on the question of British conduct in the war’ (Krebs, p.85).

estimates vary between 18,000 and 28,000'.⁹⁴⁷ For Doyle, Britain was not responsible for this death toll, despite the camps' appalling conditions. If Barnes touches upon but does not fully expose Doyle's ruthless imperialism, he also provides only a partial account of Doyle's racism. In *The Great Boer War*, Doyle describes the Boers as 'one of the most rugged, virile, unconquerable races ever seen upon earth'.⁹⁴⁸ His autobiography evidences his racism towards 'unpleasant negro traders' who 'have no cultivated taste [and] can only spend their money on drink, debauchery and senseless extravagance'.⁹⁴⁹ 'The natives were all absolute savages', he goes on to state, 'offering up human sacrifices to sharks and crocodiles'.⁹⁵⁰

This additional biographical information – in particular, the chilling apologia for mass death at the hands (if not the conscious will) of the British, as well as a severe objection to 'negro traders' – provides a radically less sympathetic version of Doyle than the one presented by Barnes's novel. It takes us a long way from the 'genuine civic nationalism' that Head finds in Arthur and his interactions with George.⁹⁵¹ There is no obligation, of course, for Barnes to include or exclude any particular contextual data, or represent Arthur in a certain way. Drawing upon this biographical material, however, allows me to qualify earlier claims about the postcolonial criticality of Barnes's historical reconstruction (as, in the previous section, I did via George's isolation). For Weese, we recall, Barnes was 'critical of the

⁹⁴⁷ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 2000), p.572. According to Travis Crosby, 'the concentration camps in time contained more than 100,000 inmates, both black and white. Crowded conditions and poorly maintained sanitary facilities led to successive epidemics of measles, dysentery, pneumonia, and whooping cough. Death rates were extraordinarily high, especially among children, reaching 344 per 1,000 in the latter months of 1901' (*Joseph Chamberlain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p.114).

⁹⁴⁸ Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, p.1.

⁹⁴⁹ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, p.49.

⁹⁵⁰ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, p.53.

⁹⁵¹ Head, 'Julian Barnes and a Case of English Identity', p.26.

fictional Arthur Conan Doyle' and, for Frederick Holmes, the novel exposed the Edwardian period as 'beset with class and racial animosities'.⁹⁵² Barnes's selection of certain biographical and historical details and his omission or lack of awareness about others results in a more ambivalent version of both Arthur and his historical moment. The heroic-liberal narrative, Arthur's pursuit of 'justice and fair play', sits alongside – instead of being displaced by – the 'class and racial animosities' of the man and the period.⁹⁵³ There is a tension between subversion and nostalgia, between critiquing Arthur and his chivalrous values and relying upon them for the resolution of the plot.

There is one key scene in which Barnes digs deeper into Arthur's investments in racial and class-based hierarchies. If Arthur ostensibly challenges the racism of the police force, his long conversation with Anson demonstrates the real affinity between these two middle to upper-class English gentlemen. In the face of Anson's prejudice against the 'half-caste', Arthur emphasises George's social status: 'we are talking, Anson, not of some butcher's boy, but of a professional Englishman, a solicitor in his late twenties, already known as the author of a book on railway law' (p.268). Whilst Arthur appears to be celebrating middle-class professionalism instead of discussing race, Anson is aware that this distinction makes little sense:

'You are facetious, Doyle. You yourself believe in blood. You believe in race. You told me over dinner how your mother had proudly traced her ancestry back five centuries. Forgive me if I misquote you, but I recall that many of the great ones of the earth have roosted in your family tree.'
(p.275)

The reader thus confronts the falsity of the division that has been set up so far between liberal crusader (Arthur) and outdated bigot (Anson). Anson turns Arthur's

⁹⁵² Weese, p.305; Holmes, p.23.

⁹⁵³ 'Justice and Fair Play' is the title of Norman's chapter on Doyle's involvement with Edalji.

assumptions against him, exposing the fact that he is implicated in ideologies he is unaware of. This exemplifies what Michel Foucault calls ‘the thematics of blood’:

a whole politics of settlement (*peuplement*), family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property [that] received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race.⁹⁵⁴

By celebrating his own upper-class status – ‘It is her boast – our boast – that we have a family tree on which many of the great ones of the earth have roosted’ (p.263) – Arthur endorses the hierarchies of ‘blood’, ‘race’, and ‘ancestry’ (‘a whole politics of settlement’) that underpin George’s persecution. Despite liberal protestations, Arthur ultimately shares Anson’s ‘mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood’.

Arthur is keen to safeguard what Alfred J. Lopez calls ‘hegemonic whiteness’.⁹⁵⁵ This seems to explain his resistance to his sister’s ‘half Mongol’ boyfriend. It is important to remember Doyle’s ambiguously English heritage here: his father was English but of Irish Catholic descent and his mother was Irish Catholic. As Barnes’s narrator puts it, ‘Irish by ancestry, Scottish by birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits, Arthur became English’ (p.23). For various theorists of whiteness, Irishness is a fundamentally liminal identity category. According to Dyer, ‘for much of British history, the Irish have been looked down on as black’.⁹⁵⁶ This counterintuitive notion is exemplified by Noel Ignatiev’s argument in *How the Irish Became White* (1995) that ‘while white skin made the Irish [immigrants to America] eligible for membership in the white race, it did not guarantee their admission; they had to earn it’.⁹⁵⁷ It was something they ‘opted’ for.⁹⁵⁸ Arthur’s

⁹⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, tr. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979), p.149.

⁹⁵⁵ Alfred J. Lopez (ed.), ‘Introduction’, *Postcolonial Whiteness* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005), 1-3 (p.6).

⁹⁵⁶ Dyer, p.52.

⁹⁵⁷ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.59.

‘belief in blood’ expresses his desire to achieve, or to opt for, a racial and national status that he is on the cusp of but not automatically included in.

Barnes is at his most incisive and critical in the Arthur-Anson showdown, defying the liberal logic of his own plot to implicate both Arthur and the gentlemanly Edwardian Englishness he represents in a ‘thematics of blood’. As I have argued, however, claims about Barnes’s postcolonial criticality are restricted by his deployment of context. George’s story revises conventional Edwardian images of idyllic (white) England, but his isolation and passivity provide only a limited challenge to this potent Powellite myth. Arthur is subject to a certain degree of demythologising, particularly in terms of his racial attitudes, yet the absence of particular biographical details prevents an outright subversion of his imperial role in national (literary) history. Moreover, his complicity in George’s persecution is confined to only one scene.

How, then, can we explain this partial postcoloniality? A rather uncharitable interpretation might be that Barnes has, opportunistically, chosen to reposition himself in the contemporary literary field, alongside more conventionally-defined postcolonial English writers – Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith etc. – who have risen to prominence during his literary career (1980-present). By writing this racially-engaged novel, Barnes saves himself from potential charges of parochialism, of only writing about the ups and downs of dead white men whilst other writers take the novel in newer, more interesting, and successful directions; these are directions which, according to Luke Strongman, have been privileged by the judges of

⁹⁵⁸ Ignatiev, p.59. ‘The popular cartoons of the day’, as selected by Vincent J. Cheng, reinforce the notion that ‘in the nineteenth century [...] the Irish/Celtic race was repeatedly related to the black race not merely in terms of tropes, but insistently as *fact*, as literal and biological relatives, both Celtic and “Negro” races being positioned lower on the hierarchical ladder of racial superiority’ (*Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.26).

the foremost prize for the English language novel. ‘All of the Booker prize-winning novels’, Strongman argues, ‘have an implied relationship with empire’.⁹⁵⁹ Writing in 1989, D.J. Taylor famously ‘accuse[d] senior English novelists [of the 1970s and 1980s] of insularity, of lacking any sort of coherent worldview’, and ‘slumbering on “inside the whale” in Orwell’s lustrous phrase’.⁹⁶⁰ Taylor’s only actual mention of Barnes in *A Vain Conceit* – which discusses Kingsley Amis, Margaret Drabble, and others in more depth – comes in relation to *Flaubert’s Parrot*, which he praises on aesthetic grounds for its ‘conflation of styles, objectives and intent’.⁹⁶¹ Nonetheless, Barnes, who tends to write about white England (and sometimes France), has been accused, as we saw with *England, England*, of (racial) ‘insularity’. The *partial* postcoloniality of *Arthur & George*, then, could be read as a symptom of his gestural rather than genuine conversion to new, critically and commercially viable ways of thinking and writing.

This, however, would be to doubt unfairly the sincere anti-racism driving Barnes’s fictional project, and, more importantly, to overlook the significant contributions his novel makes to a postcolonial rewriting of British history. My equivocating analysis, instead, complicates classifications of Barnes as a ‘quintessentially English author’,⁹⁶² ‘specialis[ing] in Englishness’.⁹⁶³ Barnes’s Englishness is balanced (or caught) between Arthur and George, between the death of an imperial past and the seeds of a postcolonial future, between a yearning for heroic

⁹⁵⁹ Luke Strongman, *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), x. Strongman continues: ‘whether this [relationship] be writing in the form of counter-discourse, subscription to imperial rhetoric, nostalgia for empire, or of an articulation of identity in the fluid internationalisms which emerge after empire’ (x).

⁹⁶⁰ D.J. Taylor, *A Vain Conceit*, p.15; p.132.

⁹⁶¹ D.J. Taylor, *A Vain Conceit*, p.116.

⁹⁶² Holmes, p.12.

⁹⁶³ Michael Wood (online).

liberalism and a more radical critique of the British imperial and literary establishment.

These are the tensions that we found expressed through the ironized yet preeminent figure of the ‘English’ gentleman abroad in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* and the combination of neocolonial critique and racial silence in *England, England*. In all three novels Barnes grapples with postimperial Englishness in more direct ways than Hollinghurst and Swift. He ironizes his belated ‘English’ gentlemen and satirises the persistence of imperial ideologies; Hollinghurst and Swift, on the other hand, engage with Englishness after empire in much more oblique ways – via sexuality and war, respectively – and with less of an obvious sense of critique. Self-consciousness and irony, however, can only partially disentangle Barnes from the traditions and ideologies he satirises, as the close analysis of each novel across this chapter has made clear. The ‘English’ gentleman, from Franklin to Arthur, still stands tall in his fiction: mocked yet at the centre of attention, comical yet guiding the direction of the narrative. Even when George’s voice is introduced, this voice is displaced, as we have seen, by the canonical weight of Arthur and his version of Englishness. The partial postcoloniality of *Arthur & George* is emblematic, then, of a deeper tension running throughout Barnes’s work: a tension between competing conceptions of Englishness, between an awareness of postcolonial transformations and being embedded in more traditional literary and historical narratives.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have critically analysed representations of race, empire, and decolonisation in the works of white English novelists writing after the period of British imperial hegemony, and have situated these in the wider literary, cultural, and political context of postimperialism. From this I have argued that Alan Hollinghurst, Graham Swift, and Julian Barnes, as well as a range of other contemporary writers who are usually placed outside an often racially-determined postcolonial framework, are engaged in the critical examination of Englishness after empire, or, postimperial Englishness.

The selected writers have been shown critically to explore postimperial Englishness in several ways. The chapter on Hollinghurst argued that his fiction brings homosexuality, empire, and Englishness into close and often tense relation with one another, forcing its readers to revise their conceptions of each. The chapter on Swift suggested that his historically-focused fiction takes his readers inside the lived experience of demythologisation, or the difficulties of ‘working through’ tenacious imperial mythologies (in Gilroy’s formulation). Barnes’s satire on postimperial masculinity, finally, was found to be partially postcolonial: caught between subverting traditional conceptions of Englishness, and yet expressing a degree of nostalgia for them.

These readings return us to the words of Stuart Hall that were cited as the epigraph to this thesis: ‘there is no understanding Englishness without understanding its imperial and colonial dimensions’.⁹⁶⁴ For many critics, the most appropriate fiction to support this statement is that already considered definitively and canonically

⁹⁶⁴ Stuart Hall, ‘Keynote Lecture at *The Missing Chapter*’, May 2008, Autograph ABP, Rivington Place [unpublished].

postcolonial, particularly work by black and Asian British writers. Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), to a greater extent than Swift's *Last Orders*, say, embeds contemporary Englishness within imperial history and asks its readers to reflect upon those connections critically. Smith's invocations of the Indian Mutiny and visions of 'pith-helmet-wearing gentlemen' in London's curry houses can be weighed against Swift's less explicitly postcolonial references to Egypt and Aden.⁹⁶⁵ I have chosen to focus in this thesis upon white English writers, however, not only because their engagements with race and empire have typically been overlooked or under-interpreted, but also because doing so resists what Susheila Nasta calls the 'bracketing' of the postcolonial. For Nasta, we recall, 'some English writers, now deemed "postcolonial", still remain bracketed into a location that conveniently separates them from the so called "mainstream" English novel in terms of ethnicity, colonial heritage and race'.⁹⁶⁶ Postcolonialism, under this familiar formulation, is in danger of becoming an add-on, an optional extra that can be safely bound to certain writers who are deemed to be outside of the 'mainstream' on the grounds of biographical and racial background. What this thesis demonstrates, however, is that postcolonial questions of race, empire, and decolonisation cannot be bracketed in this way, and that these questions are at stake whenever we are reading, teaching, and writing about contemporary English literature. This does not, as emphasised in the introduction, mean that Hollinghurst *et al.* can be simply renamed postcolonial. My chapters have sought to strike a balance between providing postcolonial readings and considering the limitations of such readings, a balancing act that reached its apogee in the chapter on Barnes and in the articulation of partial postcoloniality.

⁹⁶⁵ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.206.

⁹⁶⁶ Nasta, 'End of Empire and the English Novel', p.47.

My discussion of Barnes's relationship with his literary peers returns us to a key question that was raised in the introductory chapter, namely, why do these writers interrogate postimperial Englishness? Most of the preceding analysis has been concerned with uncovering and examining the ways in which Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes, primarily, write the postimperial, and the ways in which their versions of Englishness are bound up with these political and cultural contexts. In other words, I have asked how rather than why, and in doing so have come to a better position from which to judge the relative contribution of the three influencing factors outlined in the introduction: historical and political interests; imperial writers and writing; and, postcolonial writers and writing.

Imperial and postimperial history and politics strongly inform all of the authors in this thesis. Their fiction is permeated with references ranging from the Belgian Congo and the Falklands in Hollinghurst, Aden and the 'Troubles' in Swift, and the *Achille Lauro* crisis and the Boer War in Barnes. Swift, as we have seen, is particularly preoccupied with imperial history and the ways in which its legacies are lived 'on the inside'. Imperial writers and travellers, from E.M. Forster and Ronald Firbank to Evelyn Waugh and Peter Fleming, form key intertexts for Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes. These authors and their perspectives on empire remain central to contemporary English fiction. The influence of imperial literature is particularly marked in Hollinghurst's work, as he replicates, revises, and 'works through' the erotic exoticism of Forster, Firbank, and others. Postcolonial writers and writing appear to have been most influential on Barnes's fiction. Ishiguro is a key intertextual resource for Swift, but Barnes's *Arthur & George* provides an extended response to the tradition of literary and historical rewriting that revises (pre-Windrush) British history from a postcolonial perspective. Numerous other factors, of course, may have

influenced the writers in question, but these three have emerged most clearly from my textual analyses.

I want to close this thesis by returning to the issue of the ‘bracketing’ of the postcolonial, and by emphasising that this process does not just operate at the level of critical interpretation. Generic classifications and judgments are formed in dialogue with, and are to some degree preceded by, avenues of publication and processes of production. Graham Huggan’s oft-cited argument about the ‘marketing [of] the margins’ raises the question, within the context of this thesis, of what ‘the postcolonial exotic’ is implicitly defined against: what is the other of otherness?⁹⁶⁷ How, in other words, is the ‘non-postcolonial’ constructed in opposition to the postcolonial? And how are authors and texts marketed in ways that do not encourage postcolonial readings or even readers, and that position them instead as ‘English’ in some more traditional or ‘classic’ sense of the term? I will end here by conducting a brief paratextual analysis of Hollinghurst’s oeuvre in order to begin thinking about how the ‘bracketing’ of the non-postcolonial functions in material terms and what impact this might have upon readers and critics.⁹⁶⁸

The marketing of Hollinghurst’s novels strongly encourages their association with homosexuality. There are of course various editions of Hollinghurst’s books and these frame their contents in different ways. But it is striking that many publishers have chosen to display naked male torsos on Hollinghurst’s front covers. The original 1988 Penguin paperback edition of his debut novel *The Swimming-Pool Library*,

⁹⁶⁷ Huggan argues in *The Postcolonial Exotic* that the ‘term [postcolonial] [...] circulates as a token of cultural value; it functions as a sales-tag in the context of today’s globalised commodity culture’ (ix).

⁹⁶⁸ This kind of paratextual analysis of genre is informed not only by Huggan but also by a range of scholars working in the field of book history. See, in particular: D.F. McKenzie’s *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1999); John Frow’s *Genre* (2005); Sarah Brouillette’s *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2011); and, Claire Squires’s *Marketing Literature* (2007).

which set the tone for the marketing strategies and readerly expectations of his later works, shows ‘a detail from *The Dying Slave* by Michaelangelo’.⁹⁶⁹ This ‘detail’ depicts the upper part of the naked or semi-naked torso of a handsome young man, whose right hand appears to be stroking his right breast. Many of the quotations on the reverse cover of this edition also indicate homosexual content. The gay American novelist Edmund White, for instance, celebrates its ‘classic English prose ... surely the best book about gay life yet written by an English author’ (cited from the *Sunday Times*). White not only points to Hollinghurst’s depiction of ‘gay life’ but also positions his novel as a ‘classic’ and, moreover, as classically ‘English’.

Hollinghurst’s later works are often marketed in ways that continue and reinforce these associations of homosexuality, classics status, and Englishness. The 1998 Vintage edition of *The Folding Star* and the 1999 Vintage edition of *The Spell* both feature naked male torsos on their front covers. *The Folding Star* is advertised as a ‘universal tale’ and as ‘typical of the best classics’ (cited from *Marie Claire*); many of the quotations accompanying *The Spell* refer to sex and sexuality. The front cover of the 2005 Picador edition of *The Line of Beauty* features a shot from the BBC television adaptation of the novel. It shows Nick, Toby, and Wani in a swimming pool, the upper parts of their naked torsos are on display once more. Sebastian Faulks’s introduction to the 2015 Picador Classic edition of *The Line of Beauty* not only reduces the novel to its interests in sexuality and superficiality but actively discourages ‘political’ readings of the novel: ‘he [Nick], and his author, have grander things in mind’.⁹⁷⁰ The 2017 Picador Classic edition of *The Stranger’s Child* features another statue of a naked male torso on its cover; this time the man’s muscles are

⁹⁶⁹ This is how the image is described on the back page of the book.

⁹⁷⁰ Sebastian Faulks, ‘Introduction’, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Picador, 2015), ix-xiii (xi).

more pronounced and his penis is only just out of sight. Earlier editions of *The Stranger's Child* were not so explicitly associated with homosexuality. The original 2011 Picador edition features a green hedge maze on its cover, whilst the 2012 Picador edition shows two men and one girl – presumably representative of Cecil, George, and Daphne – running down a long, green garden. These are evocative of England as both the ‘green & pleasant Land’ of William Blake’s famous poem ‘Jerusalem’ (1808) and as the seat of grand country estates.⁹⁷¹ The blurb of the 2011 edition informs us that this is a novel about ‘an England about to change forever’, offering ‘an absorbing picture of an England constantly in flux’. Hollinghurst, according to a quotation on the back sleeve from the *Observer*, is ‘a great English stylist in full maturity’.

I have not drawn attention to these paratextual features in order to suggest that the marketing of Hollinghurst’s novels is inaccurate. Homosexuality and Englishness are indeed central to his work and one can understand why publishers would want to market his books in these ways and thus appeal to certain audiences. What is significant here, however, is that ‘the processes by which marketplace categories are constructed’⁹⁷² differentiate novels like *The Swimming-Pool Library* from novels like *White Teeth* in both material and visual terms, terms that precede and inform critical interpretation.⁹⁷³ None of the issues relating to race, empire, and decolonisation that I have foregrounded in this thesis are at all apparent, in paratextual terms, in any

⁹⁷¹ Blake’s poem, which is better known as ‘Jerusalem’, is in fact entitled ‘And did those feet in ancient time’.

⁹⁷² Squires, ‘Too Much Rushdie, Not Enough Romance?’, *Postcolonial Audiences*, eds Bethan Benwell, James Procter, and Gemma Robinson (New York: Routledge, 2012), 99-111 (p.101).

⁹⁷³ On the foregrounding of Smith’s ethnicity in the marketing and reception history of *White Teeth*, see: Squires, *Marketing Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.177-83.

editions of Hollinghurst's novels. One is not encouraged to read him in this manner, and yet, as we have seen, his work is deeply engaged with all three interrelated issues.

Swift's novels are also marketed in ways that invert the process of postcolonial exoticisation. Englishness is foregrounded, but Swift's version of Englishness, much like Hollinghurst's, appears to stand in opposition to postcolonial versions. A nearly empty pint glass appears on the front cover of various editions of *Last Orders*, whilst the white cliffs of Beachy Head (not quite Dover) are to be found on the cover of *England and Other Stories*.⁹⁷⁴ Barnes's novels for their part tend to be presented in a playful, light-hearted manner, using bright colours and comic, cartoon-like figures, as might befit his 1980s reputation as a postmodern writer. However, these features are also reminiscent of the marketing of Zadie Smith's work, providing further evidence, perhaps, for my claims about Barnes's partial postcoloniality.

Certainly, these speculations need grounding in more detailed paratextual analysis, for which a future study may provide scope. This kind of analysis might also be accompanied by a consideration of what readers *do* with these books; how their interpretations are framed by marketing techniques but also how readers respond to framing in individual and potentially resistant ways. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception* (2012) provides a model for this kind of reception-based postcolonial analysis, alert as it is to the agency of readers as well as the influential power of marketing. Extended book historical and reception-based analysis would enable me to establish the sort of impact that the novels that I have discussed in this thesis have on readers' conceptions of race, nation, and empire, and would move my thesis beyond interpretative claims based on close readings of texts. Yet, as I have

⁹⁷⁴ The image is from Eric Ravilious's painting 'Beachy Head' (1939).

tried to show throughout, these close readings have been crucial for an analysis of the previously overlooked postimperial Englishness of Hollinghurst, Swift, and Barnes.

Proceeding incrementally through each literary text in meticulous detail, whilst situating its analyses both intertextually and historically, this thesis has attempted to make clear the individual contributions and interventions that three particular writers make to the critical examination of postimperial Englishness. These literary authors operate within a wider discourse, as demonstrated by my introductory and author survey chapters, but they are not confined by its parameters. They respond to broader historical and cultural narratives, as well as to imperial and postcolonial writing, but they do so in order to provide an alternative history of England and Englishness after empire. This alternative history, which has been largely overlooked as a result of dominant critical practices, might now inform further teaching and research on the post-war English novel.

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