PILTDOWN, REALISM, AND PUBLIC TRUST IN 1950s ENGLAND

"'And the moral of that is . . .?' Well, what is the moral of the story of the Piltdown man, who (the layman must assume) vanished finally at a meeting of the Geological Society last night?"

The Times, July 1, 1954.[1]

"Cautious and scholarly doubt may grow into cynical and overwhelming distrust. We hear the voice of Henry Ford saying 'History is bunk.' We deplore the vulgarity, but draw our gowns more closely about our shoulders. There is a chill wind blowing from the Sussex Downs and the Anatomy Department of this university. Only the ghost of Piltdown man can be smiling, for the roots of learning have been shaken, and where will the axe fall next?"

N.E. Buxton, letter to *The Spectator*, December 4, 1953.[2]

In late November 1953, *The Times* announced the discovery of the most sensational anthropological hoax of all time when it reported from the *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History)* that "Piltdown Man" was a spectacular fraud. No longer was it tenable that the missing link between human beings and their ape ancestors—and the very first Englishman, at that—had lain buried on the Sussex Downs until his discovery in 1912 by amateur archaeologist Charles Dawson. Thanks to a team from the University of Oxford, equipped with new research on the fluorine dating of fossils by one of the investigators,

physical anthropologist Kenneth Oakley, it was now beyond doubt that the evolutionary oddity known as *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, Dawson's Dawn Man, consisted merely of a modern human skull and an orangutan jaw with doctored teeth. The revelations drew extraordinary attention from both the broadsheet and the popular press, and Piltdown became a familiar feature of Britain's national newspapers throughout the winter of 1953-4 and beyond. But, as *The Times* asked the following summer, what is "the moral of the story" of the Piltdown debacle? My second epigraph, from a letter to *The Spectator* by Nigel Buxton, then a history undergraduate at Oxford, offers one disconcerting answer, that the Piltdown revelations augured disastrously for public confidence in expert knowledge: "where will the axe fall next?"[3]

Given that it was almost certainly an amateur who perpetrated the hoax, the Sussex solicitor Dawson, whereas eminent scientists from a major university eventually exposed it, the moral of Piltdown could be taken exactly otherwise: that Piltdown ultimately confirms rather than undermines the authority of institutional expertise. Nonetheless, Buxton was right about how Piltdown would be popularly understood, having immediately intuited that its significance would be not just scientific but cultural. In what follows, I reconstruct the reception of the Piltdown revelation, and propose that this seemingly ephemeral media event illuminates some of the most important features of British culture in the 1950s: above all, a pervasive concern with the public trust and a deep skepticism about the self-protective nature of national institutions. "*Albion perfide*," quotes a German historian in Angus Wilson's novel *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956), but the quasi-axiomatic untrustworthiness of the English has a definitively 1950s cast by the end of the novel when the same character jokes that "in England . . . they specialize in

Piltdowns."[4] In Wilson's novel, a historian of early medieval England finally brings himself to investigate a long-suspected hoax perpetrated forty years earlier by a former friend killed in the Great War; he finds English fraudulence of one kind or another almost everywhere he looks, in a tangle of institutional inertia and cover-up that reaches back to the Edwardians.

"The Comedy of Piltdown"

Traditionally the most prestigious of British print outlets, *The Times* was unusual in its initial attempts to put a normalizing slant on the Piltdown revelations, although even its own writers abandoned the effort within weeks. Tracking the *Times* coverage, we find that the first report of this "startling discovery"—the announcement on 21 November—ends on the resounding note that the exposure "is a tribute to the persistence and skill of modern palaeontological research": a somewhat generous way of addressing a hoax that had taken forty years finally to uncover.[5] Three days later, an editorial titled "Early Man" offered another affirmative interpretation by describing "[t]he solution of the Piltdown problem [as] an important step forward in understanding": later fossil finds had rendered Piltdown Man an unaccountably anomalous instance of ancient humanity.[6] But as early as their review of the year's events, only a matter of weeks later, these stabilizing efforts have been abandoned. Even allowing that the year-in-review as a genre allows more playfulness than the pontifical *Times* leader, this is unmistakable backpedaling: "The scientists tried their best to put a good face on it: the exposure of the hoax, they said, simplified what we knew of the story of man; the Piltdown skull had been a tiresome complication. But the British public would not listen. It enjoyed—at the expense of the

scientists, whether justly or not—one of the best laughs of the century."[7] As the evidence shows, it was as much *The Times* as "the scientists" that had "tried their best to put a good face on it."

Much less debatable, however, was their suggestion that the keynote of the Piltdown episode was—perhaps surprisingly—laughter. Even Oxford biologist Joseph Weiner, one of the investigating scientists, granted in his book *The Piltdown Forgery* (1955) that Piltdown could have been some sort of "prank."[8] Although the necessary planning and persistence suggested to Weiner "a motive more driving" than mere larking, "the joker might have had the pseudo-scientific aim of discovering how far the palaeontologists could be taken in."[9] (It supports the prankster theory that the artifacts found with this first Englishman included a bone implement resembling a rudimentary cricket bat.) The language of joking opens the distinguished British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes's response to the news of the exposure: "In a book published a few years ago I said of Piltdown Man, 'I like this Yorick who must jest, even with his bones,' but I had no notion when I wrote of the extent and depth of the jest which for the past week has been putting my Yorick into the headlines."[10] The revelations also raised at least a smile in venues ranging from *Country Life*—which editorialized under the headline "The Comedy of Piltdown" that "[h]owever much we may disapprove of hoaxes in principle we cannot help being a little amused by a good one in practice"—to the House of Commons, where, on 26 November 1953, a motion of no confidence in the trustees of the British Museum over Piltdown led only to the usual parliamentary badinage about "spurious" motions and the inheritance of "old skeletons" from the previous government.[11] "The Piltdown Man sets the House laughing," the *Daily Mail*

reported, and earlier the same week one of the *Mail*'s own columnists had been laughing too: "A hoax that is well played, without any suggestion of spite or wickedness, holds an almost universal attraction."[12] The contemporary response to Piltdown survives residually to this day in its customary designation as a hoax rather than a fraud or a forgery.

Tellingly, what made Piltdown amusing was the revelation that someone had managed for so long to dupe the "Establishment," to use a thoroughly symptomatic 1950s expression. The term was popularized by British political journalist Henry Fairlie in what became a famous 1955 analysis of the wider national implications of the Burgess-Maclean (the so-called Cambridge Spies) scandal, and then as now it encompasses senior members of Britain's national institutions such as parliament, the judiciary, the civil service, Oxbridge, and the BBC: "By the establishment I do not mean only the centres of official power—though they are certainly part of it—but rather the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised."[13] In such mid-century concern over the workings of Britain's most prestigious national institutions, we might find the otherwise absent "moral" of Piltdown: its licensing of cynicism about the propensity within and among the country's self-governing professional elites to close their ranks. As Weiner explained in 1955, the main reason why Piltdown Man had survived as science for forty years, even as ongoing findings in paleoanthropology rendered his ill-fitting bones ever more an outlier, was "the enormous weight of authority which buttressed Dawson and his discovery" at the outset among leading biologists, anatomists, and paleontologists.[14]

Some significant fiction of the mid-century period points to this Piltdown moral as well: how institutional authorities, particularly knowledge-based authorities, can

betray the public trust through essentially self-insulating forms of inaction and evasion. This is one reason why historical practice, in the very literal sense of history as an academic profession, should be placed under such scrutiny in 1950s English fiction. Whereas Saul Bellow's "cranky historians," as Sanford Pinsker dubbed a familiar Bellow type,[15] offer idiosyncratic and often penetrating reflections on the history of ideas and the mid-century conscience—one of Moses Herzog's habitual imaginary letters begins, "*Dear Doktor Professor Heidegger, I should like to know what you mean by the expression 'the fall into the quotidian'. When did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?*"[16]—English counterparts tend instead to be concerned with the fundamentally social and bureaucratic structures within which historians work. Of course, the distinction between philosophical and institutional concerns with history could never be absolute. For instance, the protagonist of Wyndham Lewis's *Self Condemned* (1954) is an eminent London scholar of modern history who renounces his university chair and puts himself into unemployed exile during the Second World War because he refuses to advance any longer what he considers the orthodox treatment of the past. He has come to deplore a tradition whereby "History" is the history of heads of state waging wars and wreaking violence, a strategically limited notion of what counts as historic that works to naturalize the ugliest aspects of humankind: "it is time that men ceased proudly unrolling the blood-stained and idiotic record of the past"; "it is high time that people gave up over-valuing figures neither more nor less noteworthy than a pugilist or a thug."[17] But vainglorious stories of force constitute the only version of history that will be acceptable to political power as it embarks upon another war that Lewis's hero

believes has been engineered to serve its own interests. The historian in his current form is merely "the servant of the ruling class."[18]

Perhaps needless to say, Kingsley Amis's exactly contemporary *Lucky Jim* (1954) is a far cry from anything Lewis would have written, but Amis's protagonist is also an English historian, and, again, this choice of situation allows the author to foreground problems of truthfulness and good faith in relation to institutional authority. If the comic *Lucky Jim* is ostensibly more concerned with academic than with real-world politics—Jim Dixon must appease ludicrous Professor Welch to have his probationary lectureship confirmed—it is also a denunciation of how the academic production of knowledge is entangled with more loosely configured but also more influential kinds of cultural power. Most of the tests to which Professor Welch puts Jim are observably more to do with social than academic credentials; or, as Jim explains:

> "I can't sing, I can't act, I can hardly read, and thank God I can't read music. No, I know what it is. Good sign in a way. He wants to test my reactions to culture, see whether I'm a fit person to teach in a university, see? Nobody who can't tell a flute from a recorder can be worth hearing on the price of bloody cows under Edward the Third."[19]

Of course, there is plenty to be said (and it has been said ever since the novel's first appearance) against Jim's apparent philistinism, crystallized in his loathing for "Welch's sons, the effeminate writing Michel and the bearded pacifist painting Bertrand" (*LJ*, 13).[20] However, the Welch offspring are not the countercultural bohemians these descriptions suggest, but the people who bring metropolitan businessman and "rich devotee of the arts" (*LJ*, 47) Julius Gore-Urquhart into Jim's otherwise unglamorous life.

On the one hand, readers are made to share the hero's sense that the pretentious Welches are completely bogus; on the other hand, "a chap from the [BBC's] Third Programme" (*LJ*, 23) is nonetheless expected to show up to their joyless cultural weekends, while the social life of Bertrand's girlfriend Christine consists mainly of parties where there are "a lot of artist kind of people . . . and one or two from the B.B.C." (*LJ*, 138).

But if the novel seems to be objecting, via the undeluded everyman Jim, to such potentially corrupting, and certainly smug and self-sustaining, intersections of elites, Jim's own rescue from his provincial predicament inevitably complicates the issue. After all, there is nothing meritocratic about the novel's triumphant ending: no one as shrewd as the novel requires Gore-Urquhart to be could employ a liability like Jim after the drunken Merrie England lecture; and, instructively, the spectacularly public nature of Jim's disgrace manages to distract real-world readers as well as his fictional audience from the fact that the lecture was almost entirely fraudulent all along, a cynical last-minute assemblage of what would now be called copy-and-paste plagiarism. Unrelated to any ordinary notion of merit, Jim's new patronage position with Gore-Urquhart makes him the ironic beneficiary of precisely the who-you-know mentality that Fairlie had diagnosed as the most significant and corrosive aspect of the English cultural order. As Fairlie put it, "[t]he exercise of power in Britain (more specifically, in England) cannot be understood unless it is recognised that it is exercised socially."[21] Unlike *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, *Self Condemned* and *Lucky Jim* are not direct responses to Piltdown, but, already explicitly foregrounding the extent to which historical knowledge is implicated in spurious and often cliquish forms of cultural authority, they give some sense of how receptive was the context into which news of the Piltdown hoax broke.

"History, To-day"

Considering how 1950s novelists used historians as protagonists, it may be important that the early postwar period was a golden age for popular history in Britain, covering events far beyond the familiar national triumphs ("Sir Francis Drake and his bloody bowls," as a character in *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* recalls school history [*ASA*, 82]). For instance, there was evidently enough potential interest even in what used to be called the Dark Ages—the historical context for the hoax in Wilson's novel—for the BBC to justify a lengthy radio series in 1950 on "The Heritage of Early Britain," covering the period between the departure of the Romans in the fifth century and the arrival of the conquering Normans in the eleventh. The start of 1951 saw the emergence of the popularizing monthly *History Today*, which launched in January at an affordable half-crown an issue. This generalist magazine was founded by Irish publisher and politician Brendan Bracken and began under the editorship of Peter Quennell and Alan Hodge, not themselves academic historians. Their opening editorial hails "a particularly appropriate moment to launch a new historical magazine. Every adult alive today—more especially those of us whose memories reach back to the period before 1914—can claim to have lived through one of the most astonishing phases of recorded history."[22] Events of the past forty years "have sharpened our sense of historical perspective and heightened our appreciation of the national heritage that we still preserve."[23] In a letter of support published in this first issue, G.M. Trevelyan, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, probably the most widely-known academic historian of the day, proclaims that "History, to-day, has a very large

popular audience, eager for serious, scholarly exposition of the past, provided it is so written that he [*sic*] who is not a professional historian may read it."[24]

Here, we might think also of the mid-century popularity of the work of historians such as C.V. Wedgwood (later Dame Veronica Wedgwood, in recognition of her service to the discipline) and E.H. Carr, both serious historians of only intermittent academic-institutional commitments. Meanwhile at the ultra-Establishment end of the profession, All Souls historian A.L. Rowse's 1946 general preface to the "Teach Yourself History" series of books notes "the immense increase in the interest of the reading public in history" (and "a very wide public" too).[25] He concludes his introduction: "I need hardly say that I am a strong believer in people with good academic standards writing once more for the general reading public, and of the public being given the best that the universities can provide. From this point of view this series is intended to bring the university into the homes of the people."[26] The unstoppable uptake of the domestic television set through the 1950s, advanced by the unprecedented televising of Elizabeth II's coronation, was also bringing history literally into "the homes of the people," making household names of historical experts such as Sir Mortimer Wheeler. An influential archaeologist, Wheeler was a celebrity presenter on canonically historical as well as more technical, strictly archaeological subjects; his engaging 1960 BBC series *The Grandeur That Was Rome*, for example, opens with a mischievously topical extended joke about the decrepitude of an empire on its last legs: it is still winning wars but now always loses the peace; its colonies are peeling away one after the other; it has very high taxes and a bloated civil service. "I've been talking about an empire," is his deadpan conclusion, "but I wonder if you and I have the same empire in mind."

So given the extraordinary historical events witnessed by anyone then in middle age (Quennell's and Hodge's point) and the apparent popularity of reading history as a pastime (as Trevelyan and Rowse propose), it is perhaps not surprising to find so many historians in 1950s fiction asking explicitly about the significance and scope of historical inquiry. Thus, Amis's Jim Dixon supplies his unimprovable account of scholarly inconsequentiality when he contemplates his own article on late-medieval shipbuilding, with its "niggling mindlessness, its funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it threw upon non-problems" (*LJ*, 14). Warning Jim that he needs the article published to keep his job, Professor Welch reminds him that he doesn't know "what it's worth" until he has it accepted for publication: "Dixon felt that, on the contrary, he had a good idea of what his article was worth from several points of view. From one of these, the thing's worth could be expressed in one short hyphenated indecency" (*LJ*, 15). This is the kind of history that *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* also identifies critically, a tunnel-vision pedantry associated with the socially deficient but hyper-professionalized Professor Clun (with his "insufficient, disreputable, crossword-puzzle work" [*ASA*, 15]); Clun is at one end of a spectrum that runs all the way through to the "equally disreputable pseudo-philosophic moralizing" (*ASA*, 15) of the late Professor Stokesay, whose work proves to be more importantly and more variously fraudulent, as I shall describe, than Jim Dixon's strategic impersonations of professional historical scholarship.

"Our own familiar island"

Notwithstanding Wilson's replacing of prehistory with early medieval history as the context for the novel's hoax, reviewers of *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* spotted the echoes of

Piltdown immediately. For Maurice Cranston in *The Manchester Guardian* this was "a long but continuously entertaining novel on the Piltdown theme," while Kingsley Amis summarized it for *Spectator* readers as a novel about an "archaeological Piltdown."[27] Looking back on the novel's genesis, Wilson attributed his inspiration to "the giant hoax of Piltdown"—"this giant fraud of prehistory"—as well the excavation of the Anglo-Saxon ship burial at Sutton Hoo in 1939, followed by the 1942 discovery, also in Suffolk, of the Mildenhall Treasure, a buried hoard of Romano-British silverware (Wilson's fictional Melpham is in the adjacent county of Norfolk).[28] Wilson had worked at the British Museum after his B.A. in history at Oxford, and so would have been on much more familiar ground with medieval history than paleoanthropology, hence perhaps the substitution. Importantly, though, and in contrast to a legitimate major dig like Sutton Hoo, the Piltdown resonances of *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* mean that the questions Wilson asks there about the significance of historical knowledge are situated explicitly in the context not only of the national heritage but also of the trust placed in its public custodians.[29] That this is a novel about nationality and its mannered if not downright phony self-representations is clear from the start, in the title and epigraph from *Through the Looking-Glass*: "He's an Anglo-Saxon Messenger—and those are Anglo-Saxon attitudes. He only does them when he's happy" (*ASA*, unpaginated). English postures and impostures, attitudes as public attitudinizing, are among the novel's main themes.

The protagonist of *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* is a sixty-four-year-old historian of early medieval England. Although admired by his peers, Gerald Middleton is considered never to have fulfilled the promise of an important early book on Cnut/Canute, eleventh-century king of England, Denmark, and Norway. It now looks as though he will never

finish his book about Edward the Confessor—perhaps punning on the novel's concern with divulgence, or confession in the secular sense, although with the ironic complication that divulgence might itself be a deliberate pose (Edward was a "Confessor" in the sense that he practiced his Christian piety in public). Middleton considers himself a fraud for two important failures to speak out. First, he has never confronted his estranged Danish wife Inge about the failure of their family life (for instance, he has always suspected that their daughter's disability—a hand left unusable by a terrible childhood burn—was caused by his emotionally fragile wife accidentally pushing her into the hearth). Second, and more importantly for the novel's main plot, he has never allowed himself seriously to contemplate, let alone investigate, his longstanding suspicion that his dead friend Gilbert Stokesay—a right-wing modernist killed in the First World War—hoaxed the Melpham excavators, intending to humiliate his distinguished historian father Professor Sir Lionel Stokesay with this future disclosure. (One of many theories about the Piltdown hoax holds that it was a set-up, motivated by a grudge against its innocent discoverers.) By the end of the novel, it is likely that Gilbert Stokesay removed a priapic pre-Christian fertility idol from a known Anglo-Saxon burial ground nearby and placed it in the newly discovered tomb of the seventh-century Bishop Eorpwald, although all the people who could substantiate this hypothetical conclusion are now dead. Among them, both Professor Stokesay and the antiquarian and local historian Canon Portway, the owner of Melpham and a celebrated Edwardian churchman, appear to have known of the hoax since Gilbert's death and never spoke out. But in the early-1950s of the novel, an ongoing archaeological excavation on Heligoland—now German, at other times Danish or British, in keeping with the novel's literally Anglo-Saxon, pan-archipelagic theme—has made

Melpham newly meaningful. The German discovery of what might be a fragmentary pre-Christian figure in the tomb of an eighth-century missionary to Heligoland seems to confirm that the Melpham burial, with its suggestion of the incompleteness of the English conversion, may be less anomalous than previously thought, no longer what the novel's historian characters have come to see as merely a "nonesuch" (*ASA*, 30), a "fascinating oddity" (*ASA*, 224), or a "freak" (*ASA*, 318). Here, again, Wilson recalls Piltdown Man, who, in Weiner's words, had been "completely isolated" by interwar fossil finds.[30]

Middleton's dilemma is whether he should voice his doubts about the authenticity of Melpham after forty years of silence, at the risk of destroying the reputations of the distinguished dead, or, alternatively, allow the otherwise inconclusive Heligoland findings to compound the historical inaccuracies that Melpham put into circulation. Among Wilson's Dickensian minor characters is the autodidact Harold Cressett, an indiscriminating collector of general knowledge, who, suffering a comic bout of automatic memory, recites on television an obsolete encyclopedia entry on archaeology: "It was archaeology, too . . . that revealed to us that one of the earliest ancestors of man once trod our own familiar island. Piltdown Man . . ." (*ASA*, 255). Among all the characters, it is ironically the miseducated Harold who articulates most decisively what is at stake in the Melpham hoax: "There'd be no believing what you read" (*ASA*, 309).

Anglo-Saxon Attitudes begins as an academic novel. Its opening scenes focus on factional dissent among the fictional Historical Association of Medievalists (recalling the real-life Historical Association, founded in 1906), about the contested editorship of an authoritative, once-in-a-generation, multi-volume history of medieval England. Wilson had never taught at a university when he wrote the novel, although the critic Ian Watt,

Dean of English Studies at the University of East Anglia, would appoint Wilson to a senior lectureship there in the early 1960s. Increasingly, though, the novel resembles a detective story, down to the all-important discovery of the corpse, with the twist that the corpse has been dead for over a millennium and the crime that needs to be investigated is not its demise but its 1912 discovery.

Aptly, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has always been the highest-profile suspect for the Piltdown hoax on the basis that he visited the excavation site, not far from his East Sussex home, in the year he published *The Lost World* (1912). In this disarmingly daft comic adventure specifically about hoax paleontology, and incorporating along the way the discovery of a species of "ape man," journalist Ned Malone joins an expedition to a remote South American plateau to investigate Professor Challenger's much-derided claims, backed up only by blurry photographs and an obviously fakable bone remnant, about the local survival of Jurassic megafauna after a freak geological event.[31] No less aptly, Weiner's summary of the Piltdown investigation quotes the famous advice of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes that "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth."[32] Marking the centenary of the hoax in the journal *Nature*, paleoanthropologist Chris Stringer contended that Piltdown "as a 'real-life' whodunit . . . is hard to beat."[33] In Wilson's novel, the elderly president of the Historical Association, Sir Edgar Iffley, laments that investigating the Melpham hoax is "like some detective's job" (*ASA*, 232), but the parallel between the detective and the historian was already familiar in Wilson's time.[34]

For example, in his pamphlet *What is History?* (1949), the prolific mid-century historian and popularizer J Hampden Jackson spelled out the comparison. The detective

sets about the task of solving the crime "exactly as an historian sets about the solution of any historical problem":

> The aim is the same: to reconstruct what happened in the past. The method is the same: to test every conclusion by evidence, to accept nothing for which the evidence is not adequate, and to make from a selection of the evidence a story which common sense will accept as true.[35]

Crucially, no claim is made for either criminal or historical reconstruction as conclusively recovered fact. History, rather, is "a selection of the evidence" to assemble "a story" that will persuade others, at a point somewhere on the evidentiary scale between (to borrow the language of English civil and criminal law respectively) the balance of probabilities and what is beyond reasonable doubt. If the parallel with criminal detection arguably glamorizes the historian's work, in this instance it also demystifies it by insisting on narrative plausibility over definitive truth. In evidence here is one potentially important feature of the mid-century popular history boom: that it required historians to say outright what historians do. What emerges is some degree of unmasking of "the fragile epistemic grounds of historical interpretation," to borrow a phrase from historian Carolyn Dean's recent reappraisal of Hayden White's classic *Metahistory* (1973).[36] We might even see in this new mid-century element of disclosure, or the public articulation of what institutional historians would otherwise take for granted amongst themselves, an early move towards the more reflexive style of historiography offered in the later twentieth century, the historiography usually associated with White—who, by pleasing coincidence, began his career in the 1950s as a specialist in medieval ecclesiastical history. Raising the commonalities between history and detection so explicitly in a novel gives *Anglo-Saxon*

Attitudes, too, a somewhat self-reflexive quality, since Hampden Jackson's final line works not just for the historian's and the detective's investigations but for realist form itself: the production of "a story which common sense will accept as true."

"Specialists in epistemology"

In his almost contemporary *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), for instance, Wilson's future colleague Watt used a juridical analogy to present what would become his canonical account of realism in the novel:

> The novel's mode of imitating reality may therefore be equally well summarised in terms of the procedures of another group of specialists in epistemology, the jury in a court of law. Their expectations, and those of the novel reader coincide in many ways: both want to know "all the particulars" of a given case—the time and place of the occurrence; both must be satisfied as to the identities of the parties concerned [. . .] The jury, in fact, takes the "circumstantial view of life".[37]

The implications of this parallel between juridical and novelistic modes are taken still further when Watt insists that formal realism can never be taken at face value; it is, "like the rules of evidence, only a convention."[38] In the end, the illusion of transparency is mainly shored up by its conventionality, the point White would later make about realist historiography habitually suppressing its own status as a rhetorical performance.

A problem foregrounded in *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* is the establishing of "evidence" that can be interpreted in only one way. We learn that Gilbert Stokesay once confessed the hoax to Gerald Middleton on a drunken spree around the start of the First World War—but Gerald knows that the confession could equally have been the hoax

because Gilbert is amused that Gerald so readily believes the confession—and we learn also that a letter survives from Canon Portway to the elder Stokesay that refers to Gilbert's "dreadful joke," but, again, there is no way of ruling out that this later quasi-confession was itself the "dreadful joke" (*ASA*, 318). Thinking back to the night when Gilbert confessed, Gerald realizes that his "moment of truth" could be "a moment of untruth, or a moment of untruth that looks like truth" (*ASA*, 144)—when he recalls that within minutes of having ostensibly confessed Gilbert roars with laughter because his supposedly expert friend is as ready to believe the confession as he was to believe in the authenticity of the Melpham finds. For a work of realist fiction, *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* has a surprisingly pervious and (to recall Watt's terminology) "circumstantial" plot. To establish from the textual evidence what Hampden Jackson calls "a story which common sense will accept as true," the reader must evidently look beyond the action toward character and motive. And yet Wilson's novel also insists that the reliable interpretation of either is always jeopardized by its reliance on predictable kinds of in-group prejudice: for one of Gerald's interlocutors, much too young to have known any of the people involved, the long-dead Gilbert Stokesay's "alignment to the Wyndham Lewis anti-Bloomsbury group was quite enough to mark him down as a probable culprit" (*ASA*, 230).

With these epistemological problems in mind, it is striking that Wilson's contemporary C.P. Snow, the most vocal mid-century defender of the continuing relevance of realist fiction, also authored an unnecessarily inconclusive academic fraud novel only a few years after Wilson's. Even more so than *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, Snow's *The Affair* (1960) is concerned less with the forgery itself but with what happens,

institutionally, in the face of the scandal likely to follow its exposure. In this eighth instalment of Snow's eleven-volume "Strangers and Brothers" series, narrator Lewis Eliot, a lawyer by training, returns to Cambridge to reopen a disputed case of research misconduct in the College where Snow set his better-known academic-politics novel *The Masters* (1951). Physicist Dr Donald Howard, a universally disliked Communist fellow-traveler (and "an unmitigated swine," according to the Senior Tutor), has been stripped of his College fellowship because a photograph in his thesis has been exposed as a deliberate fake.[39] In his defense, Howard claims to have been given the photograph by his distinguished mentor, the late Professor Palairet, who, importantly from the novel's internal politics angle, is among the College's benefactors. Has "a distinguished old man . . . gone in for a bit of scientific forgery," as Eliot seems to be proposing in Howard's defense? (*TA*, 247). What may be the photograph that would support Howard's claims has disappeared from Palairet's notebooks. It could have been removed by Howard's primary accuser, a College Fellow named Alec Nightingale who had first access to the notebooks when he received them on the College's behalf as Bursar and who, as a scientist, would have recognized the photograph's importance—in which case the initial forgery is now compounded by dishonesty from those who would cover up the late Palairet's possible part in it. What is arresting about Snow's handling of the fraud plot is that the narrator Eliot—and thus the reader—never conclusively finds out who was responsible for the forgery, and the bare "facts" are left so disputably open that they suggest to the reader possibilities that no one in the novel raises: for example, that the conservative Palairet gave the fellow-traveling Howard the photograph with the active

intention of fitting him up. True to form, what Snow attends to instead by using the fraud plot is the mechanisms of power within and surrounding established institutions.

And so, reluctant to reopen the case, the College prides itself on having kept out of the public domain both Howard's apparent fraud and the dismissal that followed its discovery. When Senior Tutor Arthur Brown relates the story to his old friend Eliot, the justice or otherwise of the case against a former colleague completely disappears under its potential political ramifications:

> "The whole college was absolutely solid about it. I don't need to tell you that that's not exactly common form. But if the college hadn't been solid for once, it would have made things difficult. The place wouldn't have been any too comfortable to live in. And I don't want to exaggerate, but we might have walked straight into trouble outside. This is just the kind of thing that could have got us into the papers, and if that had happened, it would have done us more harm than I like to think about." (*TA*, 22)

Faintly discreditable as all this hard-nosed political realism sounds, Brown is, tellingly, one of Snow's essentially decent characters across the series. And, in turn, Eliot is also primarily concerned with the political implications of what has happened, for, as he justifiably points out, "[t]he trouble is . . . keeping it a secret as you have done—if ever the story breaks, you're in a worse mess than ever" (*TA*, 31). Against the wishes of even the College's Master, for whom "scientific fraud is of course unforgivable" but "any unnecessary publicity about it . . . is as near unforgivable as makes no matter" (*TA*, 89) Howard's case is reopened. More unexpectedly, the reason Howard gives for having made no legal moves against what he alleges to be unfair dismissal is that he "wasn't

keen on washing this kind of dirty linen in public" (*TA*, 119), and "didn't want to drag the college through the courts" (*TA*, 259).

Almost inevitably, a compromise is quietly struck, in keeping with the institutional will to ensure its own cohesion and to protect itself from external scrutiny. To the extent that the fraud could plausibly be explained at all, it could be explained only with recourse to individual judgments of personality and character. In the most extreme, untrustworthy version of this *ad hominem* style of evaluation, Snow (of the center-left, and soon to be ennobled as a Labour peer), creates a conservative Anglo-Catholic colleague for Howard who has no doubt whatsoever about the latter's guilt on the grounds that someone with Howard's politics is probably capable of anything.

Rowse's mid-century *The Use of History* described academic history as "a science of judgment . . . judgment of human conduct."[40] In Wilson's novel, as later in Snow's, knowledge depends upon understanding the "attitudes" to which Wilson's title alludes, whether we take attitudes to mean sincerely held views or mere public poses. Probable hoaxer Gilbert Stokesay was just "a particular kind of man at a particular time," for example, as Gerald tries flailingly to explain to another historian what he believes must have happened in 1912 (*ASA*, 231). In the end, of course, the "Anglo-Saxon attitudes" of the title are nothing to do with early medieval beliefs, or what Melpham reveals about religious recidivism among Bede's *gens Anglorum*, but the intellectual orientations and climates of Gerald's own lifetime: the complacency and vanity of the famous public historian Professor Sir Lionel Stokesay and the nihilism of his modernist artist son. As contemporary historian E.H. Carr argued in the famous Trevelyan Lectures published as *What is History?* (1961), "History cannot be written unless the historian can achieve

some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing."[41] Damningly, the decisive feature of Stokesay's late career in public life is that he becomes one of the Men of Munich, an appeaser of Nazi Germany, not because there is anything remotely fascist about his political sympathies, but because he believes and hopes that another world war can be avoided. This is implicitly continuous with his inability to manage, or even to comprehend adequately, the havoc created by his violent and implicitly proto-fascist son. The reader is helped from the outset in the work of culturally placing, too, the attitudes of the son, "with his *avant-garde* poems and his contributions to *Blast*, his talk of Nietzsche and Marinetti" (*ASA*, 146). We know from the opening pages that Gilbert Stokesay is to be viewed as an emblematic figure of an extremely rightwing modernism when an American graduate student undertaking doctoral research on figures such as Wyndham Lewis and T.E. Hulme approaches Gerald for information about Melpham because Gilbert's involvement with the excavation might, he ingenuously writes, "throw valuable light on his aesthetic themes" (*ASA*, 14).

What the Melpham hoax ultimately throws light on is not a 1914 modernist aesthetic but the realist aesthetics of the 1950s novel, with its acute sense of a seemingly homogeneous culture's diverse sociolects and microcultures and its capacity to mimic them. Whereas Gilbert's placing of a phallic idol in the tomb of an ancient churchman is a modernist's one-off satirical gesture—"a genius's joke on the dead world of scholarship," from what Gerald imagines could have been Gilbert's point of view, or "egoistic mockery" from Gerald's own (*ASA*, 244)—the actual logic of hoaxing is worked out at the fullest length in this novel's own works of mimicry, where hyper-realism turns quite paradoxically into something epistemologically more destabilizing.

Thus, the novel begins and ends with a whole range of faked historical documentation. Prior to the novel's opening, we find a document headed "Column in *The Times*, November 1912" offering "a tentative statement about the extensive archaeological excavations undertaken this summer in the former kingdom of the East Folk," and describing the significance of the figure found in Eorpwald's coffin (*ASA*, 9). The novel closes with a long catalogue, so accomplished as to be almost ontologically unsettling, of narrative forgeries on Wilson's part, starting with a fictional excerpt about Eorpwald's mission to East Anglia from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (the historical Eorpwald in the real Bede was not a missionary but an East Anglian king now among the contenders for the Sutton Hoo burial). Following the faked passage of Bede there are: an excerpt from *Anonymi Episcopi Vita Eorpwaldi*, a fictional thirteenth-century hagiography of Eorpwald; a fabricated fragment on the fictional Eorpwald by the (real) eminent Victorian historian J.R. Green; a fictional extract from the *Bulletin of the Historical Association* from 1913 outlining the implications of the Melpham burial; an excerpt from Stokesay's monograph *The Making of England*; an excerpt from a monograph by another of the novel's historian characters, Dr Rose Lorimer, a formerly world-class medievalist with increasingly crank views, attacking the orthodox view of the conversion of England; an excerpt from the abrasive Clun's review of Rose Lorimer's book. The novel closes as it begins, with a fictional extract from *The Times*. The novel's German historian, Professor Pforzheim of the Piltdown-quips, remarks with unintended irony that "the accuracy of *The Times* is proverbial" (*ASA*, 40), and the novel's final fictional *Times* impersonation reports on the outcome of Gerald's investigations into "this lamentable affair" of Melpham (*ASA*, 346). Recalling the boosterish uplift with which the

real-world *Times* had initially reported the Piltdown exposure, Wilson's fictional *Times* is pleased to note that contemporary historians have now "vindicated [Eorpwald] from all charges of backsliding" (*ASA*, 346).

"It now seems clear beyond doubt that the heathen idol found in the coffin of Bishop Eorpwald in 1912 was placed there as a practical joke by Gilbert Stokesay," writes Wilson's fictional *Times* reporter (*ASA*, 346). But, on the contrary, this is a novel that foregrounds the inevitability of evidentiary gaps: there is no smoking gun. All that remains as evidence is the letter from Portway to Stokesay, in response to a now-missing letter from Stokesay about a now-destroyed letter from Gilbert—for what that Portway letter is worth in a novel full of tendentious, misleading, or simply misinformed documents, and in a novel that, perhaps in accordance with its focus on historians and their practices, insists that no document could ever speak for itself. Providing the usual readerly pleasure of showing what really happened in a detective plot is subordinated to the dramatization of the difficulty of ascertaining what only probably happened: Gilbert perpetrated the hoax, Stokesay and Portway discovered it, and Portway was blackmailed by the servants Gilbert bribed. "Well," Gilbert's widow comments of Gerald's and the novel's proposed solution, "it all sounds very likely" (*ASA*, 313).

Wilson's realist credentials were much stressed by his contemporaries, along with the apparent oddity of using traditional styles for such contemporary material as his. He is "an 'old bottle' novelist," Anthony Burgess wrote in his 1963 British Council pamphlet on contemporary fiction in England, describing significantly modern themes in Wilson's work, such as "the homosexual sensibility" (Wilson was gay), but "he has looked back deliberately to the technique of the Victorians . . . *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* has Dickensian

comic characters and a Dickensian scope (big cast; complex plot)."[42] Similarly equivocally, contemporary experimental novelist B.S. Johnson described Wilson as "a marvellous observer of twentieth century *mores*, and I'm sure social historians in the future will look to Angus Wilson and say, 'Yes, that's what it must have been like to live then'. But the actual methods he uses are those of Dickens, which seem to me to conflict with what he's writing about."[43]

Wilson later wrote a book about Dickens, *The World of Charles Dickens* (1970), and, as Burgess noted, *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* is his most obviously Dickensian work, with its vast range of characters (the narrative is preceded by a *dramatis personae* of "Characters in Order of Appearance"), and the uses of numerous subplots that converge through coincidences to perhaps a literally incredible extent. These coincidences, though, can be read as something other than Dickensian social panorama. Of course, it is true that in the style of, say, *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* unexpected interconnections among working-class, middle-class, and upper-class characters unfold at the level of plot. For example, the Melpham hoax may have been facilitated by Gilbert's bribing of Canon Portway's chauffeur to corrupt the dig (a "joke on the gentry paid for by the gentry" [*ASA*, 270]); the chauffeur's daughter, whom Gerald believes may have blackmailed Canon Portway along with her father with their knowledge of the hoax, is suddenly in the news forty years later thanks to Gerald's own son John. A former Labour MP turned celebrity campaigning journalist and television presenter, John Middleton is making her husband, the hapless Harold Cressett, one of his causes against—an easy target for any early postwar populist—what one of his middlebrow newspaper columns calls "this overgoverned England of ours" (*ASA*, 11). Meanwhile, and in what for a 1950s novel is a

much edgier connection between high and low society, John is in a relationship with a former rent boy and petty criminal called Larrie O'Rourke ("John's famous gift for bridging social gulfs is not unsung," his brother Robin comments pointedly when John's social-democratic politics are praised [*ASA*, 109]). But what also helps to account for the novel's endless coincidences is the narrow metropolitan upper-class basis of influential English society. John's personal assistant Elvira—who is also the lover of his married brother Robin—is the grandniece of Canon Portway and granddaughter of the famous Edwardian stage actress who welcomed Gerald to Melpham in 1912. By way of comparison, we might think of Anthony Powell's uses of coincidence in his serial novel *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1951-75), in part another product of the 1950s. If it is difficult to imagine a time when Powell's once deservedly admired *roman fleuve* becomes fashionable again, the sticking point is probably not the plot artifice that brings characters repeatedly in and out of each other's lives across many decades but the restricted social contexts, often upper-class or otherwise culturally elite, that make characters' reappearances feel quite plausible. *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* is identifying a similar feature of the mid-century national culture. As with the Welches' house parties in *Lucky Jim*, the cultural soirées of Gerald's aspirational daughter-in-law are given as proof positive of her insufferable affectation, but as with the promised appearance of the Third Programme man at the Welches' awful cultural weekend, her guests nonetheless include "the representatives of British Council and Arts Council and Institut Français and a hundred other councils and institutes" and "B.B.C. officials—programme-planners, features-producers, poetry readers—and an odd publisher or two" (*ASA*, 288).

Toward the end of the novel, John Middleton flees the country with his boyfriend, who is in trouble again with the law, and "thanks to the tireless efforts" of his father and brother, "the authorities had agreed that there should be no prosecution for John's assistance to Larrie in his escape. The full scandal had not got into the papers, but one way and another his career was at an end" (*ASA*, 307). The "full scandal" would presumably emphasize his proscribed sexuality—"There's a war on in our world," another character reflects of the decade's notorious persecution of gay men like himself (*ASA*, 54)—and Wilson underscores the point about insiders and outsiders by having the socially grand Sir Edgar Iffley know something of the fuller story (he has "heard one or two more sophisticated rumours" [*ASA*, 320]) when others do not (his less worldly colleague Clun is "astonished at the tone of the ill-natured remarks made in the papers" [*ASA*, 320]). Protecting reputations has been at the heart of the novel all along: when the letter from Canon Portway to Professor Stokesay emerges, Sir Edgar regrets that "it means we can't save their reputations" (*ASA*, 319), whereas an English historian who is also a Roman Catholic priest is consoled that "Eorpwald, that saintly man, had been cleared of this absurd slur on his faith" (*ASA*, 322). Finally, in Clun's review of the unbalanced Rose Lorimer's conspiratorial monograph—for, in a closing twist that speaks to the other uncertainties of the novel's plot, Rose believes that the real hoax is the apparent exposure of the hoax—we are told that "the reputation of historical scholarship must be dear to all who profess it" (*ASA*, 345).

And this takes us back to the question that *The Times* asked about the "moral" of Piltdown. Amis disliked what he saw as its "fug of judicial self-righteousness," and *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* ultimately affirms the private and professional conscience when

what we might think of as institutional fundamentals such as historical integrity are suddenly in conflict with a society of historians' more pragmatic interests.[44] Gerald Middleton's troubled conscience about Melpham represents what he calls "the good faith of a humane study in a world rapidly losing its humanity" (*ASA*, 244), but with their implied wish that Middleton "should have acted on his suspicions earlier" the other members of the novel's Historical Association "revealed their secret wish that he had never acted at all" (*ASA*, 323). Possible failures of professional responsibility are less grievous than the possibility of a profession losing face. Thus, Wilson's historians all dutifully attend the annual Stokesay Lecture, but decorum requires that no one there alludes to what, even in the absolute privacy of his own unspoken thoughts, a character euphemizes as "the founder's unfortunate last years" (*ASA*, 30). The dissenters from this conspiratorial silence about Stokesay's presumed greatness are necessarily marginal figures. "Stokesay was always a charlatan" (*ASA*, 321), according to Clun at the end of the novel; Stokesay was "the most awful old fraud," according to his daughter-in-law (*ASA*, 313). Finally saying out loud what the novel has been suggesting all along about protected frauds, these characters are permitted their candor only because they have no institutional authority whatsoever.

"The dim racial remembrance of such gorilla-like monsters"

This phrase comes from the epigraph to another Piltdown-era novel about how historical misrepresentation can serve in-group interests—but this time a novel dealing directly with early humanity. I turn briefly in closing to William Golding's *The Inheritors*, which was published in 1955, two years after the Piltdown exposure and a year before *Anglo-*

Saxon Attitudes. The anachronistic-sounding words are not Golding's own, of course, but a quotation from British explorer Sir Henry Hamilton ("Harry") Johnston that H.G. Wells used in his account of the Neanderthals in his bestselling *Outline of History* (1919-20). For Johnston, the grotesque Neanderthals, "gorilla-like monsters, with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic tendencies, may be the germ of the ogre in folklore."[45] Golding's novel is an extended fictional correction to this pseudo-historical representation. His imagined Neanderthals are naturally communitarian, for "the strings that bound him [Lok, the protagonist] to Fa and Mal and Liku and the rest of the people . . .were not the ornament of life but the substance" (*TI*, 68). They are unreflectively pacific to the point that even when one of the human arrivals, or what the novel calls the New People, fires an arrow in the hope of killing Lok, Lok thinks "that someone was trying to give him a present" (*TI*, 101). It is suggested that cannibalism exists only as a funeral rite among the Neanderthals—Mal, dying of old age, asks the family group not to "open my head and my bones" for they "would only taste weakness" (*TI*, 77)—whereas it is also strongly suggested that during a nightmarish feast the New People have cannibalized Lok's and Fa's little daughter Liku (albeit to the lasting horror of the New People: in a characteristic Golding development, what they have done is literally unspeakable even to themselves). The innocent Neanderthals are annihilated by the encounter with this newly arrived group that only slowly does Golding make evident are modern *homo sapiens*.

These incomers are both naturally violent and technologically superior to the Neanderthals, whom they exterminate but also, ironically, fear. A wrong-footingly abrupt and transformative change of narrative perspective near the end of the novel reveals that

the New People are in flight from their own tribe after the characteristically human kind of schism that would be unrecognizable to Golding's empathic and cooperative Neanderthals, which is how these pioneers have found themselves among "the forest devils" (*TI*, 214) in what they call "the devil's country" (*TI*, 216). So far, so imperial in their orientation; some of Golding's first readers in the era of decolonization might have recalled that the same Harry Johnston approvingly quoted by Wells on the monstrosity of the Neanderthals was a colonial administrator as well as a famous explorer and natural historian.

The Inheritors responds directly to Wells's story "The Grisly Folk" (1921), which rests on the straightforwardly prejudicial distinction between "these grisly men and the true men"—even before we get to the Neanderthals snacking on human children as a welcome occasional treat, the quasi-blood-libel that Golding reverses when the Neanderthal girl Liku is taken.[46] Wells's perspective, in the moral as well as technical sense, follows the humans who watch the Neanderthals with horror and disgust, whereas until almost the end of Golding's novel, it is the Neanderthals who watch the humans, with fascination as well as fear. Self-reflexive rewritings of familiar earlier stories and story-types would become commonplace in fiction in Britain, as elsewhere, soon afterward: canonical examples include Muriel Spark's version of the school story in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), Jean Rhys's commentary on *Jane Eyre* in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), and John Fowles's revision of the Victorian novel for the age of sexual revolution in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). Golding's ahistorical moral universalism tends to obscure the wider contexts of his fiction.

This is important, finally, given that it might be especially difficult to identify immediately the national resonances of a novel like *The Inheritors*, which appears to go so far beyond the characteristic preoccupations of English literary fiction in the 1950s. The intricately detailed attention that contemporaries such as Wilson paid to everyday customs and habits has long been viewed as the most obvious limitation of the mid-century English novel, rather than the distinctive point of interest that it might now, almost a century later, also be considered. With the eyewitness authority of an experienced book reviewer of the period, Bernard Bergonzi understood regretfully at the time why early postwar British fiction was "dismissed as academic, parochial, small-scale, and, inevitably, unexciting."[47] In contrast to the hoax exposed in *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, the once-commonplace view of the Neanderthals that *The Inheritors* seeks to overturn is a historical fraud on no less than the Anthropocene scale. Yet knowing that the novel is set in what is now the affluent southern English county of Wiltshire provides a jolt of perspective almost as sharp as Golding's turn from the Neanderthals to the New People in the novel's final section.[48] Unlike Piltdown Man, with his beefy head and his cricket bat, Golding's first Englishmen are lanky chaps of "fungoid whiteness" (*TI*, 172); but, as much topically as portentously, Golding arms these insubstantial figures with real weapons and an instinctive dread of both their own kind and all others.

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[1] "Completing the Hoax," *The Times*, 1 July 1954, 9.

[2] N.E. Buxton, "Letters to the Editor: The Piltdown Forgery," *The Spectator*, 191 (4 December 1953), 661.

[3] Buxton was a decorated veteran when he returned to Oxford after the war to take his degree; in later life he was a travel writer, wine critic, and a minor celebrity in the 1990s as the "Baaadad"—Bad Dad—of Channel

4 comedy series *The Adam and Joe Show*. Grateful thanks for this information to Emma Goodrum, archivist of Worcester College, Oxford.

[4] Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2005), 31, 321. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically as *ASA*.

[5] "Completing the Hoax," 9.

[6] "Early Man," *The Times*, 24 November 1953, 9.

[7] "1953—Portrait of a Year," *The Times*, 1 January 1954, 5.

[8] J. S. Weiner, *The Piltdown Forgery: The Classic Account of the Most Famous and Successful Hoax in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 105.

[9] Weiner, *The Piltdown Forgery*, 105.

[10] Jacquetta Hawkes, "The Piltdown Forgery", *The Spectator*, 191 (27 November 1953), 636. Something of Hawkes's skepticism about Piltdown Man can also be gathered from her near-total avoidance of the topic in *Early Britain* (London: Collins, 1945); he would have been a trump card in an illustrated work on British prehistory addressed to a popular audience.

[11] "The Comedy of Piltdown," *Country Life*, 114 (3 December 1953), 1818. "Business of the House," *Hansard*, 26 November 1953.

[12] "The Piltdown Man Sets the House Laughing," *The Daily Mail*, 27 November 1953, 5; J Stubbs Walker, "Who Made a Monkey Out of the Piltdown Man?" *The Daily Mail*, 23 November 1953, 4.

[13] Henry Fairlie, "Political Commentary," *The Spectator*, 23 September 1955, 380.

[14] Weiner, *The Piltdown Forgery*, 150.

[15] Sanford Pinsker, "Saul Bellow's Cranky Historians," *Historical Reflections* 3, 2 (Winter 1976), 35-47.

[16] Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (New York: Viking, 1965), 49.

[17] Wyndham Lewis, *Self Condemned* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), 123, 131.

[18] Lewis, *Self Condemned*, 83.

[19] Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (London: Penguin, 1992), 24. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically as *LJ*.

[20] I say "apparent philistinism" in agreement with Gavin Keulks's view that these are "philistine poses"; that Amis's target was never high culture as such but "the way culture is misused by self-inflated people."

Gavin Keulks, *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, and the British Novel Since 1950* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 110.

[21] Fairlie, "Political Commentary," 380.

[22] Foreword, *History Today* (January 1951), 9.

[23] Foreword, *History Today*, 9.

[24] G.M. Trevelyan, "A Message to *History Today* from G.M. Trevelyan, O.M.," *History Today* (January 1951), 10.

[25] A.L. Rowse, "A General Introduction to the Series," *The Use of History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton for The English Universities Press, 1946), vi.

[26] Rowse, "A General Introduction," vii.

[27] Maurice Cranston, "Mr Wilson's Comic Saga," *The Manchester Guardian* (15 May 1956), 4; Kingsley Amis, "Dodos Less Darling," *The Spectator*, 196 (1 June 1956), 764.

[28] Angus Wilson, "The Genesis of *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*," *Books at Iowa* 34 (1981), 6 (3-8).

[29] That said, the makers of the award-winning historical drama *The Dig* (2021) also managed to derive an anti-institutional point from Sutton Hoo, where national public bodies try to elbow the self-taught local archaeologist Basil Brown out of his own major work of discovery and excavation.

[30] Weiner, *The Piltdown Forgery*, 17.

[31] Ned Malone discovers that Professor Challenger's claims are true. Aside from the suspected hoax element, the only other textual connection with Piltdown is the Professor's view that the ape man whom they discover "may well approximate to what the vulgar have called the 'missing link'." Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World* (New York: A.L Burt, 1912), 194. Chemistry professor emeritus James O'Brien reviews the charges against Conan Doyle, such as they are, and their appeal to conspiracy theorists, in the appendix to his *The Scientific Sherlock Holmes: Cracking the Case with Science and Forensics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 157-9.

[32] Weiner, *The Piltdown Forgery*, 32. Emphasis in original.

[33] Chris Stringer, "The 100-Year Mystery of Piltdown Man," *Nature*, 492 (13 December 2012), 197.

[34] With its suggestion of non-committal dithering, "Iffley" is an almost Dickensian speaking name for this increasingly disengaged elderly academic, but it is also an academic in-joke, since Iffley is a quiet, picturesque village on the edge of central Oxford.

[35] J Hampden Jackson, *What is History?* (London: The Bureau of Current Affairs, 1949), 8.

[36] Carolyn J Dean, "*Metahistory* and the Resistance to Theory," *The American Historical Review*, 124, 4 (2019), 1340.

[37] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Fielding and Richardson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 31.

[38] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 32.

[39] C.P. Snow, *The Affair* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 21. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically as *TA*.

[40] Rowse, *The Use of History*, 183.

[41] E.H. Carr, *What is History?* Second edition, ed. R.W. Davies (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 24.

[42] Anthony Burgess, *The Novel To-day* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co for The British Council and the National Book League, 1963), 34-5.

[43] Quoted. in Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 152.

[44] Amis, "Dodos Less Darling," 764.

[45] William Golding, *The Inheritors* (London: Faber, 2015), unpaginated. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically as *TI*.

[46] H.G. Wells, "The Grisly Folk," *The Short Stories of H.G. Wells* (London: E. Benn, 1927), 610.

[47] Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel*, 65.

[48] His biographer describes Golding's intention to confirm the plausibility of this setting with a geographer colleague: "Golding had based his description of the forest on memories of Savernake Forest near Marlborough, where his parents took him for walks as a child—hence his need to check that his geography was compatible with prehistoric southern England." John Carey, "Introduction," *TI*, vii.