INTERNATIONAL NATIONALISMS: NATION, WORLD, EVENT IN POSTCOLONIAL
ANGLOPHONE AND POSTIMPERIAL BRITISH LITERATURES

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ABSTRACT

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International Nationalisms explores the literary and critical discourses surrounding the concepts of the nation and nationalism in the postcolonial, global conjuncture through a particularly comparativist—or what Edward Said calls a contrapuntal—approach. Therefore, as opposed to theorizing a particular nationalist genre, the nationalist *Bildungsroman* (after Pheng Cheah) or all of "third world" literature (after Fredric Jameson), the project instead focuses on nationalism as an ideologeme, or an integral ideological structuring unit that runs across the literatures of the decolonizing period. In doing so, the project is especially invested in the way that different textual representations of nationalism expose and explore the ramifications and disputations over the content of the nation and the national, and, in the process, produce a series of overlapping and inter-related nationalisms not just in the decolonizing nations, but in the former metropole as well. As such, the dissertation is comprised of a series of comparative readings across Anglophone postcolonial and postimperial British literatures that uncover possibilities for engaging with discourses of the nation and nationalism as a series of overlapping utopian and limiting imaginings in the period between decolonization and globalization. Without endorsing or rejecting the concept of nationalism as such, this project instead seeks to understand how nationalism, far from disappearing during the period of global capitalism, continues to find expression and assume new forms in contemporary literature under the pressures of globalization.

The dissertation thus begins by tracking the development of the postcolonial nationalist project in the decolonizing states through a consideration of postcolonial nationalist *Bildungsromane* such as Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and their development of a postcolonial nationalism that privileges difference and becoming, thus providing a critical reinterpretation of Frantz Fanon's call for a "national consciousness that is not nationalism [which] is alone capable of giving us an international dimension." The chapter ends with a consideration of its adaptation by metropolitan literature, as in David Caute's post-imperial novel, *The Decline of the West*, and emphasizes the ideological role that decolonization has played in the UK's own concerns over postimperial national identity. The second chapter takes up the issue of postcolonial immigration to the UK and the development of a postimperial British bureaucratic nationalism. This chapter explores the spaces of the welfare-state in relation to postcolonial immigrant fiction, arguing that these spaces formed a begrudging, agonistic space of postcolonial recognition that is counter-balanced and delegitimized by a rising English cultural nationalism. From here, the project turns to contemporary Anglo-British fiction in the third chapter and the development of exclusionary forms of English and British nationalisms that seek to redefine national prestige in the face of immigration and globalization. Finally, the project culminates with the consideration of postcolonial and postimperial science fiction and its development of a radical utopian project of postnationalism that attempts to transcend the ideological terrain of the global late capitalist conjuncture as a world system. This larger comparative framework allows both for a more nuanced consideration of the social-cultural relationship as well as the formal literary developments of what are often thought of as disparate genres and traditions.

To Sarah Hamblin

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Introduction: Nationalist Disputations

The novel is the private history of nations.

– Henri Balzac (qtd. in Brennan "National" 64)

The work of art, in its ludic, pointless, gratuitous, self-grounding, autotelic, self-

determining way, offers us a foretaste of how many men and women might

themselves exist under transformed political conditions. Where art was, there

shall humanity be.

 – Terry Eagleton ("Communism" 104).

I begin with these quotes from Balzac and Eagleton concerning the role of the novel in

political life since they bring to light a tension that pervades this project. On the one hand the

novel is seen as a national compendium; it encompasses the disparate experiences, subjectivities,

and discourses that comprise nation-ness (the nation, nationalism, the national), solidifying them

into something that approaches the objectification of the nation as it is bounded in the form of

the closed world of the novel. As such, it is history not as empirical or neutral process, but as

narrative, as a politicization of the past as a "useable past," to think in Terrance Ranger's terms.

In this sense, the novel serves as both grounds for and proof of a substantive national culture.

But, on the other hand, Balzac reminds us that it is a *private* history. As such, there is a sense that

the novel is then confiding something to its reader, and perhaps the most powerful secret that it

confides is exactly this composite nature of the nation. Thus it highlights how easily the

supposedly empirically or naturalized nation devolves into so many disparate entities, tentatively

held together by the narrative. This revelation is coupled with the fact that every history as such, also stands as an oblique record of omission, as a reminder of what has not been included. In this sense, then, forms of nation-ness can only be grasped through narrative and recourse to the past in which the materials of the past are instrumentalized into a coherent identity form, but one which is always imagined and thus reveals at the same time the composite nature of the form itself.

Given the conventions of the novel as a bearer of a particular "political unconscious" and a "strategy of containment" that brings various discourses together into a textual unity, this pastness is consolidated as the conceptual grounding of a particular present that is then projected towards the future as the living nation. In this way the novel, as the secret history of the nation, accords with Tom Nairn's conception of nationalism's operation:

> […] through nationalism the dead are awakened, this is the point – seriously awakened for the first time. All cultures have been obsessed by the dead and placed them in another world. Nationalism rehouses them in this world. Through its agency the past ceases being 'immemorial': it gets memorialised into time present, and so acquires a future. For the first time it is meaningfully projected on to the screen of futurity. (*Faces* 4)

Nairn, then, gestures towards the second quote in my epigram in which Eagleton notes that literature is not only a repository of the past endlessly and ideologically projected in the form of futurity as constancy. Instead, as captured in the original context of Nairn's quote, the nation-state can also function as a sign of radical break, whether from the vestiges of absolutism, from imperial rule, or from the impositions of globalization. In this sense, futurity has little to do with constancy and instead functions as a form of utopianism. Within this utopian register, futurity is

related to futuricity through the promise of futurity not in a temporal or teleological register (tomorrow, or the necessarily coming), but rather as the possibility of difference, and in the contemporary moment as a radical break from the strictures of the universalization of late global capitalism through a neo-imperial world-system: in other words, as Event in which the "inexsistent," in Badiou's terms, are made to enter history and politics.

This split between pastness revivified and futuricity as departure, as a coming into being of radical newness, forms the crux of the contradiction at work in many discussions – whether literary, political or theoretical – concerning the nation. In *Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism and the Nation*, Imre Szeman explores this dynamic as an inherent structural problem of the nation itself:

> The promise of the nation in the decolonizing world was not only located in its brute assertion of political independence, but in the possibility of introducing ways of organizing social existence different from those assumed or imposed by the West. If this is a promise that has remained tragically unfulfilled, it is, at least in part, because the nation is a political form that […] denies possibilities as much as it actualizes them; this in turn means that the relationship between literature and the nation celebrated by Martí must itself be seen as complex and problematic, fraught with dangers as much as it is filled with possibilities. For as much as literature would like to produce the unique collective cultural identity that forms the basis of the nation, it is not at all clear whether the nation is a suitable form "within" which such an identity can best be fostered and expressed. (2-3)

And herein lies the double-bind whereby the nation is simultaneously seen as a necessary and yet always insufficient concept through which to realize a particular collective identity as a form of (postcolonial) emancipation. That is, the nation is utilized as both a conceptual and material site for advancing freedom, autonomy and self-determination, but given the nation's status as a form determined by the vicissitudes of modernity, which despite any other advances this term signifies, "also names a cultural system that places economic practices at the center of social existence," thus opens the door to forms of cultural and economic imperialism that undermine the promise of postcolonial self-realization (Szeman 2). As a result, the form and the concept of the nation which have been hailed as vehicles of emancipation seem instead to reveal the darker side of Arif Dirlik's claim that "the universalization of the nation-form is itself a sign of the colonial restructuring of the globe" (109).

Postcolonial Theory and the Problem of Nationalism and the Nation-State

Dirlik's critique of the nation-state can be traced back to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, perhaps the most influential study of nationalism in literary conversations since its rebirth as a major academic discourse in the late 1960s. Two of Anderson's key ideas – the nation as an imagined community and nationalism as a modular concept – caught the attention of many poststructuralist and postcolonial critics. The former opened the door for cultural critics to explore the constitutive narratives and discourses that circumscribed the nation in its imagined unity. The latter provided the grounds for a critique of the way that, even though represented through a lens that took account of colonial and postcolonial contexts, Anderson's "modular nationalism" was still constituted by and thus a carrier of Eurocentric ideals. The two keys ideas taken together formed the basis of a number of postcolonial critiques including Partha

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Chatterjee's influential *The Nation and its Fragments*, in which he grounds his argument for a postcolonial nationalism in a rigorous rebuke to Anderson:

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploration, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. (5)

He then turns to an examination of the way particular Indian peasant groups have imagined a communal identity that is distinct from a western conception of national identity, and which therefore forms the basis for a critique of the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie who fall in lockstep with western bourgeois modular nationalism.

Chatterjee's argument reflects the critical investments of the Subaltern Studies Group whose research has influenced the broader field of postcolonial studies, particularly for its focus on communities and identity groups that fell not only out of the imperial narratives, but also out of the official nationalist discourses of the emerging postcolonial nation-states (for example, Gayatri Spivak's work on Mahaswetin Devi and the Dalit populations in India or Anne McClintock's critique of the legal, cultural and social instantiation of gender difference and masculine privilege in nationalist discourses, which are subsequently codified in the legal structures of the nation-state itself). What emerges, then, is a multipronged critique of the given and reified aspects of nationalism and the nation-state, where the critiques of their supposed self-

evident qualities in the form of nationalist prerequisites reveal the imagining of the nation to always already have happened, often preserving the vestiges of a western phallocentric, hierarchical imperialism. This postcolonial work on nationalism and nation-state formation lays bare the social, cultural, political, economic and gendered power relations and critiques the essentialist foundations that underwrite the imagined nation. Such arguments give rise to critiques of nationalism like Étienne Balibar's assertion that "every modern nation is a product of colonization: it has always been to some degree colonized or colonizing, and sometimes both at the same time" (Balibar and Wallerstein 89).

The very multiplicity of critiques on the concept and project of nationalism from the Subaltern Studies Group and feminist critics, as well as metropolitan critics studying the effect of colonial and postcolonial migration from the former colonies, reveal an underlying chasm that threatens to engulf all these writings, which is related to what Gikandi refers to in the literary context as "the emptiness that lies at the heart of national allegories and metropolitan identities" (221). Instead of uncovering a unified subject of the nation forged within the framework of the state, the proliferation of theories and case-studies discloses an uncertainty, an illegibility and a heteronomy concerning the nation-state that precedes and exceeds (after Adorno) the very concept. In other words, these works reveal a proliferation of non-identity between the objects (the nation-peoples as the living embodiment of the nation) and the hyphenated, amalgamated form of the "nation-state" as a finished and fully present concept, a supposedly timeless universal. The nation-state, in Volosinov's terms, becomes a sign under severe and growing contestation, and this contestation is increasingly evident in literature, despite, or perhaps as Nairn argues, because of the increasing pressures of globalization.

The Problem of Postnationalism, or, Why the (Inter)National Still Matters

  If nationalism, states, and the resulting hyphenated amalgamation of the two once seemed self-evident concepts made obvious by their very existence, their global dominance and the political constitutions that inaugurated them, then the period of decolonization and postcolonialism and the overlapping theoretical practices of postcolonial, postmodern and globalization theory not only thoroughly deconstructed these concepts, but ultimately called their continuing existence into question. As a result, it has become a common sense narrative amongst many contemporary left projects to pronounce the era of the nation-state as a failed venture, with two generally polarized positions establishing themselves in and promulgating the discourse of the dissolution of the nation-state. The first position often looks backwards to a time before the world-historical establishment of the nation-state in favor of the (re)proliferation of micro-entities. In this vein, Noam Chomsky has argued that the unraveling of nation-states through devolution and separatist movements is a "natural development back toward forms of social organization more related to real human interests and needs." The second position looks towards the future and the dialectical surpassing of the nation-state in large-scale, post-national cosmopolitanism, or what Malini Johar Schueller has critiqued as the "new ontologies" of "global theory that are based on the assumptions that the contemporary moment calls for a resurgency of some form of universal theorizing" (236). Here lies the global, decentered world of the multitudes, whose existence is predicated on universal global citizenship and the universal right to "a social wage and guaranteed income for all" (Hardt and Negri 403) which would

ultimately necessitate some form of global governance through which to base and actualize those

rights.[1]

Such attempts to decenter the primacy of the nation-state are undertaken with good

reason as the privileged central terms of these discourses –the migrant and diaspora – represent

those who have been oppressed and victimized by authoritarian regimes both at home and

abroad. Moreover, given their global scope, concepts like "migrant" and "diaspora" have become

links in the forging of new international movements of political solidarity. As such, anti-

nationalist strategies have largely been aligned with a revived cosmopolitanism, sometimes

cosmo-politicism, or a form of post-Marxism, that posit a general theory of postnationalism that

arises out of the contemporary moments of postcolonialism and globalization.

One of the most influential of these postnationalist positions is certainly Michael Hardt

and Antonio Negri's *Empire*. Building upon the critiques that reveal the exclusionary practices

concealed under the sign of the nation, they argue that although nation-states may "appear

progressive in their protective function against external domination, [… t]he flip side of the

structure that resists foreign powers is itself a dominating power that exerts an equal and

opposite internal oppression […] in the name of national identity, unity, and security" (106).

Immediately following this passage, they connect the repressive force of the nation-state to the

growth of global late capitalism: "The final link that explains the necessary subordination of the

postcolonial nation-state, however, is the global order of capital" (134).

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[1] See Michaelsen and Shershow for a critique of this schedule of rights and the problem of global citizenship as presented in *Empire*: "citizenship – even an allegedly global or universal citizenship – will always be an exclusive formulation, open to judgment and determination of who is in and who is out" (para. 23).

Hardt and Negri have succeeded in generating an impressive and influential genealogy of the nation-state based upon a series of restrictive and repressive mediations: "the people representing the multitude, the nation representing the people, and the state representing the nation. Each link is an attempt to hold in suspension the crisis of modernity. Representation in each case means a further step of abstraction and control. From India to Algeria and Cuba to Vietnam, *the state is the poisoned gift of national liberation*" (134). By focusing so squarely on the immanent Romantic Idealist forms of nationalism and the machinations of a global, information-driven postindustrial capitalism, Hardt and Negri render any form of nationalist politics as an always already lost cause. However, in doing so, they cede the political ground automatically, forgetting as so many commentators have already countered, that global capitalism is developed and promulgated by nation-states alongside corporations; that is, the nation-state is still a principal actor in terms of the political development and spread of global capitalism, and that global late capitalism is not a universal or concrete phenomenon, but instead prevails through ever greater processes of uneven development. Or, as Timothy Brennan put it in the mid-1990s, "Even at this late date – as an emergent wing of the Republican Party fully understands – any meaningful politics is still about the control of states. The less cultural theory reflects that understanding, the less it can be called political, in my opinion" (*Home* 316-17).

In this narrative, as well as with other postnationalist narratives, the site of the nation-state and the terms of the nation and nationalism are superseded by the non-fixable global and the accompanying rhetorics of diaspora and migration in the dialectical transformation from modernity to postmodernity and the passage from imperialism to Empire. Gautam Premnath sketches the implications of this intellectual trajectory from the nation-state to diasporic

postnationalism for postcolonial studies in a recent article in Amitava Kumar's provocative collection *World Bank Literature* that is worth quoting at length:

> Thus postcolonialism has found a way to write its own obituary, and to answer the question of "what comes after" it. The answer it tends to proffer with increasing regularity and conviction is "diaspora." The story goes something like this: The postcolonial state is morally and politically bankrupt, no longer possessed of the authority to convene its various constituencies into a unified national whole under it aegis. Meanwhile, the western state stands revealed in its incapacity to abolish the pasts of its raced immigrants and thus to transform them into full citizens. Out of the space in between these two superseded state projects, and in contradistinction to each of their conflicting pulls, a new cultural politics is now able to emerge: a politics of diaspora, beholden neither to the postcolonial task of nation building and development into modernity nor the triumphalism that sees Western liberal democracy as the end of history. (Premnath 254)

Premnath then goes on to argue, that "between a rock and a hard place, the space of the nation continues to offer grounds from which to reassert an alternative future. It is not a space that even a renewed postcolonial studies can afford to abandon" (Premnath 261). That is, by focusing solely on postnationalism or diaspora, the Left cedes the nation-state to entities like the World Bank, which can exercise a tremendous amount of control over the economic and social structures of its lender states, or to governments in the West bent solely on dismantling the hard won welfare-state reforms as experienced in the Reagan-Thatcher administrations of the 1980s. For Premnath, the nation-state is not the ultimate horizon of contemporary politics, but it is still the site of a strategic collectivity from which to combat the neo-imperial forces of the World

Bank and parasitic multinationals and to base and assert a counter hegemonic position to that of global capital. Despite the charges of Eurocentrism against Anderson, Premnath recalls his earlier claim that, "[S]ince World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms […] and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past […] The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism,' so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (2, 3).

Premnath's political argument for the continuing viability of the nation-state does more than merely reiterate Anderson' claim or Jameson's argument that despite the recent protests against the WTO and World Bank and the new promise that they show, "[…] that the nation-state today remains the only concrete terrain and framework for political struggles" ("Globalization" 65). Premnath argues that one cannot simply return to a prior moment before the postcolonial and globalist critiques of nationalism; instead, his concept of a "weak sovereignty" navigates the complex relationship between the nation and global political actors whether they be other nations like the U.S. or supranational agents like the World Bank. Weak sovereignty is thus a way of both maintaining a limited aspect of particular national interest in the increasingly homogenizing world of global late capitalism, while also asserting the nation-state's place in the (re)construction and (re)development of the global state and economic system. Instead of retreating from the world-system behind a mask of chauvinist nationalist sentiment, "weak sovereignty," based on the political grounds of the nation, employs a utopian character of construction, difference and futurity seen through Premnath's assertions that "the space of the nation continues to offer grounds from which to reassert an alternative future." Premnath's revaluation of the nation as a political actor with its emphasis on "alternative

future[s]" allows one to re-conceptualize the supposed surpassing of the nation by positing a constructive space of the nation that is in process as opposed to purely moribund.

International Nationalisms

This utopian and constructive view of nationalism in the face of endemic global late capitalism allows us to see why the ideas captured by Premnath's "space of the nation" and "weak sovereignty" were central to decolonizing literary production and why they remain central figures in contemporary postcolonial and post-imperial literature, for good or for ill (and often as a mixture of both): they allow for a conception of collectivity, affiliation and solidarity in a world-system of extreme flux and contradiction. Moreover, they also reveal the global structures that shape and mitigate the nationalist discourses that undergird the nation-state as the location, figure and guarantor of collectivity in globalization that I refer to as an international nationalism. That is, it must be relational and flexible or it risks producing only so many sites of death rather than futurity. I stress the terminology of internationalism here over the more fashionable and practically ubiquitous "globalism" because the utopian character represented by Premnath's "space of the nation" and its capacity for creating an "alternate future" is predicated on rethinking the liberatory aspects of anti-imperial nationalisms in order to resist the universalizing and homogenizing aspects of global late capitalism as neo- and cultural imperialism, while simultaneously rethinking the legacy and deficiencies of the nation-state itself. Indeed, returning to Anderson, we can see that he locates the origins of nationalism in the Spanish colonies of North America and in so doing, decenters the oft-assumed Eurocentrism of the concept. Rather, he folds it into the contexts of colonial expansion and postcolonial nation-building so that nationalism as a concept finds it origins already in internationalism, being bound up from the

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start with international negotiation, colonial politics and economics, and thus establishing its master trope as national self-determination over and against an imperial center. Consequently, with the advent of global late capitalism, as during imperialism, the nation-state becomes a particularly weak-utopian site, as much for literature as for politics, for imagining and maintaining a sense of difference or particularity and rejecting the universal aspects of globalization that are seen as the inheritors of imperialism and colonialism.

As Fredric Jameson notes in "Periodizing the 60s," we need to remember that "decolonization historically went hand in hand with neocolonialism" (184). That is, if as Jameson contends, the political and economic roots of postmodernity begin to develop in the 1950s and the cultural roots in the 1960s, then postmodernity as global late capitalism is necessarily concomitant in its economic, political and cultural modes with neoimperialism. Moreover, explicitly tying the periodizing structure of postmodernity to Jameson's dialectic of decolonization and neocolonization necessarily brings to light the shared, yet certainly differentiated, implications for former colonies as well as for the former metropole. In particular, the concept of nationalism which is almost wholly seen as a "Third World" issue also takes on significance in the "First World." One of the central underlying claims for this project, then, is that the long period of decolonization does not result in the cultural bifurcation of Third World nationalist literature (presumably revolutionary) counterposed with a First World bourgeois individualist literature (presumably decadent)[2] as schematized by Fredric Jameson's "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism."

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[2] Here I'm following M. Keith Booker's reading of Jameson's essay as relying too heavily on Lukácsian critiques of the bourgeois novel and the slide of the bourgeoisie from a revolutionary to a counter-revolutionary and, in Lukács' parlance, a "decadent" bloc. See: Booker (241-4).

As Aijaz Ahmad contends, conceptualizing the world in such a tightly scripted form as in the "The Third Word Literature" essay, runs roughshod not only over those national, cultural and political differences among so-theorized Third World nations, but also supports a schema in which the First World is the perpetual producer of history and the Third World its object (99-100). In other words, instead of a complex inter-related capitalist world-system, Ahmad accuses Jameson of offering reductive cultural and political binaries. With these reservations in mind, I would offer instead of Jameson's more sweeping claim that "All third-world texts are necessarily […] *national allegories*" (69), that nationalism is instead *one* of the recognizable ideologemes of literary production following decolonization. Moreover, this is not limited to the literature of the Third World; rather, as postcolonialism is a global phenomenon that impacts the entire world-system, nationalism as a political category, an object of anxiety, and a discourse connected to concerns for national self-determination and emancipation therefore resonates globally as a possible horizon for literary interpretation.[3] Given my specific concentration on the former British Empire, this project focuses on the way that postcolonialism not only brought the nation back to the forefront of politics and literature in newly independent nations, but also to the metropole in the form of a British postimperial nationalism.[4] This entails the way that Britishness and various discourses of devolution, particularly those that articulate a form of

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[3] Here my project aligns with the work of Imre Szeman, Jed Esty, and M. Keith Booker, for example, who, while recognizing and registering the faults and objections raised by Ahmad, also find merit in Jameson's turn to the national as a significant category underpinning literary production and therefore literary criticism of the postcolonial period, especially for the way that nationalism was appealed to as a utopian discourse, or at least one that held out a utopian desire. I hasten to add that utopianism must not be read simply as a substitute for progressive, radical or revolutionary; for there are surely capitalist, racist, and fascist utopias just as there are Marxist or postcolonial utopias.
[4] The return of nationalism to the metropole as a central ideologeme for Late English Modernism during the period of Empire's collapse is the signal contribution of Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island*.

Englishness, are re-conceived in light of anti-imperial and postcolonial nationalisms as well as postimperial retraction. In other words, nationalism and the nation were not just on the lips and pens of those in the former colonies, but were also operant in the metropole as well as various forms of postimperial nationalism, which prompts my inclusion of British novels alongside more familiar nationalist novels from postcolonial nations.

As Ahmad suggests, this entails a periodizing structure that distances itself from the First World/Third World model employed by Jameson. This project is instead conceived under the twin and recursive processes of decolonization and globalization and thus a period which I refer to throughout more generally as global late capitalism. One of the most compelling elements of Dirlik's argument about the universalization of the nation-state as the sign of colonialism's reshaping of the world is his attendant claim that capitalist modernity, predicated on and ultimately through modes of colonialism and imperialism, has transformed and evolved into a form he terms Global Modernity (analogous to postmodernity in Jameson's terminology), which, due to the imbrication of postcolonial nation-states into the global capitalist world-system, is no longer reliant on older forms of direct colonialism or formal imperialism. While developing the fuller outline of this intervention is beyond the scopes of this particular project, I would like to sketch out the provisional parameters that this periodization entails. By beginning my analysis with the period of decolonization I wish to emphasize how the emergence of "new" nations not only redrew the lines of the globe, but also fundamentally altered the functions of the capitalist world-system: new voices at the UN, the formation of new political blocs, new objects for foreign investment helping spur and grow the transition to finance capital – or the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of capitalism – as well as new sites for the monetized form of

global governance characteristic of late global capitalism through institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank.[5]

With the beginning of formal decolonization, we can locate two particularly powerful countervailing trends that spawned much new nation-thinking in the West as well: what Jed Esty refers to as postimperial retrenchment (reconceiving the British nation on a shrinking world-historical scale) and what Jameson refers to as "the problem of demography" (the seemingly sudden political and cultural 'appearance' of new nations and new peoples that floods and expands the global world-system).[6] In both cases there is a sense of disorder, or, perhaps more accurately, a de-ordering and re-ordering which calls on both familiar roles for the nation as well as new structures of inter-relatedness that arise from Cold War alignments and global financial and political regimes that already inculcate the new nation-states within their world-system. If the previously hegemonic understanding of the nation-state was predicated on the ideals enshrined in the Treaty of Westphalia and therefore erected along the useful fiction of the nation-state as the fully sovereign state encapsulated by its internationally recognized borders, then the postcolonial and postimperial nation-state are always already semi-permeable forms as the

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[5] This list could of course be expanded to include the preponderance of NGOs, non-profits and charitable organizations, the development and growth of multinational and global corporations, the sudden availability of new sites for outsourcing labor, as well the expansion of military bases and the function of tied economic aid packages. The point here is that the creation and arrival of new nation-states out of the formerly colonized world drastically changed the economic and political landscape to a degree that many accounts of the transition from Fordist to Post-Fordist capitalism and the postmodern political order often fail to fully consider or account for.

[6] Jameson describes the process of decolonization and the "problem of demography" as causing an epistemological and phenomenological shock for the west, whereby, "The West thus has the impression that without much warning and unexpectedly it now confronts a range of genuine individual and collective subjects who were not there before, or not visible, or – using Kant's great concept – were still *minor* and under tutelage" (*Postmodernism* 356).

world-system shifts to the more integrated form generally suggested by the shift towards globalization.

The cultural, political and thus ideological registers of this state of international and global flux are correspondingly multivalent and productive of new sets of contradictions for the discourses of nation-ness. The push towards integrated, international blocs, for example, could be seen as positive in the decolonizing nations as in the development of a particular Third World political alliance as a counter balance to Western global hegemony or as stultifying given the pressures towards Cold War alignment.[7] In this sense, I take the title for my dissertation, *International Nationalisms*, as a shorthand for Frantz Fanon's call for a "national consciousness that is not nationalism [which] is alone capable of giving us an international dimension" (179). For Fanon, nationalism could not be thought as a purely insular project whereby the actualization of freedom could be achieved as if by an act of pure self-directed will, but instead would depend on a radical restructuring of the world-system. The strongest statement of the latter comes in the form of the new international relations that Fanon argues for towards the end of "On Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth* wherein Fanon argues for an end to the Cold War structures of alignment and for the West to "stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty" (62). The role of the newly formed ex-colonial nation-states is to "refuse outright the situation to which the West wants to condemn us" (57) and instead to demand a system of rights, analogous to post-World War II reparations, that would transform international relations away from a system of tied-aid and so-called charity and instead undertake the "colossal task [… of] reintroducing man into the world" (62).

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  Both are explored in Vijay Prashad's *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*.

What I'm referring to as an international nationalism is thus predicated on a utopian

vocation in as much as it is a radical desire for a sense of a future that is not structured by the

limits of imperialism or capitalist neo-imperialism. As such, the nation takes a powerful hold of

the imagination by becoming a site for imagining local and global difference, which in the period

of anti-imperial nationalism and decolonization can be figured locally in the rhetoric of national

self-determination as the end to imposed colonial rule and globally as a rebuke to neo-imperial

forms of continuing Western dominance via the control and regulation of development aid and

the global markets for natural resources. However, we can also posit this as a rebuke to

identitarian forms of nationalism in which the nation-peoples (legal nationals) are conceived of

in terms of a mythical Ur-ground of racial or ethnic purity (what I take to be one of the central

differences between a national consciousness and cultural nationalism). In this sense,

international nationalism responds to the conditions where decolonizing nations worked to forge

new identities from the colonial legacy in geographical spaces that were, more often than not,

dreamed up and propagated by the whims of imperial powers. Linked to this, then, is also the

necessary internationalism of colonialism itself and its transformation of the metropole through

contact, diaspora and immigration. Conversely, there is a less progressive pull to my appellation

of international nationalisms, which is predicated on the fact that the rhetoric of nationalism is

continually employed in the service of neo-imperial goals where national interest forms the

pretext for the subjugation of other nationalities or nation-states (returning to Fanon's famous

formulation, we could call this a national consciousness which *is* nationalism). Above all else,

then, international nationalisms refers to the way that the nation-state is not only a nation among

nations (as was generally understood by the ideals of the Treaty of Westphalia), but is also

always already written through other nations whether in the form of international trade,

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international legal systems, the social, cultural, structural legacies of imperialism, or the ever-growing movement of peoples.

      As Fanon makes clear, nationalism in the period between decolonization and globalization becomes necessarily tied to both the construction of the local and the imagination of the world through the attempt to conceive the nation's place within it. Hence when Fanon speaks of "reintroducing man into the world" his call has a particularly Marxist ring to it, echoing as it does Marx's most profoundly utopian dream of humanity grasping and directing its own history; in other words, Fanon can be seen as marking the postcolonial conditions necessary for the transition from prehistory to history itself, in Marx's terms. Correspondingly, what Pheng Cheah refers to as the novels of postcolonial nationalist *Bildung* must in essence contain an internationalist kernel as well. That is to say, writing the nation becomes an act of worlding, of imagining the nation amongst and through other nations. To be clear, with this latter idea of worlding I have something in mind that is more in league with Fredric Jameson's idea of cognitive mapping and the attempt to imagine and thus imaginatively portray the seemingly unmapped and unmappable lines of global power rather than Gayatri Spivak's well-known use of the term.[8] In this sense I do not mean to argue that the novel, nationalist or otherwise, offers an

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[8] However, it might be productive to think through international nationalisms with Spivak's critique of the process of worlding undertaken through the study of literature. In this sense, the role of primarily Western academics and book markets dictates the ideological image of the world that is made hegemonic. As Spivak contends, "If these 'facts' [imperialism's role in the representation of England to the English and the role of literature in cultural representation] were remembered, not only in the study of British literature but in the study of the literatures of the European colonizing cultures of the great age of imperialism, we would produce a narrative in literary history, of the 'worlding' of what is now called 'the Third World.' To consider the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation fosters the emergence of 'the Third World' as a signifier that allows us to forget that 'worlding,' even as it expands the empire of the literary discipline" (243).

empirical index of the world as such, but instead that to imagine a concept of the nation in Fanon's sense necessarily entails imagining, however obliquely, the world-system into which it is ultimately placed, regardless of whether this is meant to portray things as they actually are, or how they could be in the sense of an "if only," or in the sense of the radically other as in far future science fiction space operas.

This project of worlding, or what could be thought of as the novel's global or even cosmopolitan horizon, begins to set various ideological, structural and narratological limits, as well as possibilities, for the nation under construction. Dependant as it is on a particular novel's projection of the world, then, the idea of the nation becomes both a site of renewal and of death. These two views are not necessarily independent nor exclusive of one another, as Szeman contends, nor are they neatly contained within a tight progressive/conservative or Left/Right political binary. Instead, in the utopian register, the nation is developed to resolve certain structural problems, and, as I argue throughout the following chapters, the nation is utilized in the literature of this period as a site of both closure and possibility.

A Negative Dialectics of International Nationalism

Since negative dialectics becomes an increasingly important concept in this project for discerning both the problems and possibilities of the utopian within nationalism and the nation-state while also underpinning my critique of Jameson's dialectically stagist schema in his "Third World Literature" essay, it is worth developing the spirit of negative dialectics that I am building upon. Principally, negative dialectics confronts what might be termed the inexorable march of the dialectic through negation and synthesis and instead begins at a position of "the divergence of concept and thing, subject and object, and their unreconciled state" (*Lectures* 6). Indeed, one

way of isolating this, as Adorno himself develops, is through a rigorous analysis of the supposed

empiricism of the "concept." For Adorno, the concept is always both less and more than what it

subsumes. This is the first order of contradiction, or of non-identity[9] that an approach to negative

dialectics takes as its starting point. A second order of contradiction comes into play in the

interrelationships of concepts in constellations where meanings can shift and take on new and

different registers, which then works against the idea of a determinate content. This dual

structure of contradiction can be seen, for example, in Adorno's discussion with Ernst Bloch of

freedom in relation to Utopia. Adorno posits that there is a difference between freedom from

need and freedom from anxiety; either, in a purely hypothetical sense, could be resolved in

isolation from the other, but doing so would not exhaust the concept of freedom itself. As the

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[9] "To the consciousness of the phenomenal appearance [Scheinhaftigkeit] of the conceptual totality there remains nothing left but to break through the appearance [Schein] of total identity: in keeping with its own measure. Since however this totality is formed according to logic, whose core is constructed from the proposition of the excluded third, everything which does not conform to such, everything qualitatively divergent assumes the signature of the contradiction. The contradiction is the non-identical under the aspect of identity; the primacy of the principle of contradiction in dialectics measures what is heterogenous in unitary thinking. By colliding against its own borders, it reaches beyond itself. Dialectics is the consistent consciousness of non-identity. It is not related in advance to a standpoint. Thought is driven, out of its unavoidable insufficiency, its guilt for what it thinks, towards it. If one objected, as has been repeated ever since by the Aristotelian critics of Hegel, that dialectics for its part grinds everything indiscriminately in its mill down into the mere logical form of the contradiction, overlooking – even Croce argued this – the true polyvalence of that which is not contradictory, of the simply different, one is only displacing the blame for the thing onto the method. That which is differentiated appears as divergent, dissonant, negative, so long as consciousness must push towards unity according to its own formation: so long as it measures that which is not identical with itself, with its claim to the totality. This is what dialectics holds up to the consciousness as the contradiction" (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* "Introduction" 4).

realm of freedom pushes always towards the dialectically irreconcilable and the infinite, so to does Utopia.[10]

It may then be beneficial or at least practical to think of what is more and what is less in terms of remainders – those elements left out of concepts and that emerge due to conceptualization and through constellation and modeling – in order to emphasize the temporal potentialities in his description, that is, those aspects the concept cannot contain and negotiate in its hypostasized specificity as a concept of identity between object and concept, or in the particular constellation that is being employed. Hence negative dialectic's emphasis on non-identity: just as the experience of Freedom is never identical with the concept of Freedom in this same sense, Utopia could therefore never have a determinate concept or content. This has a particular bearing, in line with the postcolonial critique, for the concept of the nation-state. However, instead of taking the non-identity between nation-peoples and the nation-state as the endpoint of its critique, this form of non-identity would be the foundation of such a critique. It is these often under-acknowledged qualities of the inexhaustible, the unknowable, and thus the near endlessly possible that characterize Adorno's emphasis on non-identity that I bring to bear on the following discussions of utopianism and nationalism, which are articulated not as a "logic of

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[10] These ideas are worked out in a rather fascinating, and in some ways uncharacteristic passage that follows: "[…] there is nothing like a single, fixable utopian content. When I talked about the 'totality,' I did not at all limit my thinking to the system of human relations, but I thought more about the fact that *all* categories can change themselves according to their own constituency. Thus I would say that what is essential about the concept of utopia is that it does not consist of a certain, single selected category that changes itself and from which everything constitutes itself, for example, in that one assumes that the category of happiness alone is the key to utopia. […] Not even the concept of freedom can be isolated. If it all depended on viewing the category of freedom *alone* as the key to utopia, then the content of idealism would really mean the same as utopia, for idealism seeks nothing else but the realization of freedom without actually including the realization of happiness in the process. It is thus within a context that *all these* categories appear and are connected" (Bloch 7).

disintegration" but instead as a driving force for renegotiation, possibility and interconnection without sublation. The nation and discourses of nationalism can be seen as signs of contradiction or non-identity as in the postcolonial critiques of the failures of nationalism, but conversely, it is the contradiction and non-identity that offer possibility and renewed weak-utopian content. Moreover, as the discussion between Benedict Anderson and Partha Chatterjee as well as Premnath's utopian possibilities for the nation-state attest, concepts of nationalism are always taking place in international contexts bringing different constellations to bear.

Another way of saying this is that far from being a resolved dialectic of historical progress where the development of nationalism reaches its highest stage of internationalism in modernity and is thus ultimately resolved and sublated in globalism, nationalisms and contestations over national identity and the space of the nation have shaped and continue to shape literary production, as well as be shaped by literary production. It is towards this differing trajectory of nationalism, what I am calling a negative dialectics of international nationalisms predicated on a particularly weak utopian national consciousness, that I turn to in the following chapters. I argue that such a form of the nation offers a negative dialectical relationship, in which the nation is both a "gestative" and degenerative form; one which is constantly being made and remade by both internal (national) discourses and external (international or global) discourses. This instability in postcolonial and postimperial nationalisms is both a liability and a site of possibility that renders anti-imperial nationalism both a failure and yet a continual necessity.

Description of the Chapters

In order to track the circuitous paths through which contemporary versions of nationalism take shape, the project maps this impulse across a wide range of twentieth-century narratives and

genres. The first chapter begins with a discussion of postcolonial nationalist *Bildungsromane* with Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and ends with a consideration of David Caute's postimperial engagement with the postcolonial nationalist *Bildungsroman*. With this chapter, I turn to what is often thought of as an earlier moment in postcolonial literary studies via an emphasis on the explicitly nation-building text in order to rethink the role of postcolonial nationalist *Bildungsromane* in terms that focus not on the nation or state that is, but on the possibility of those to-come.

The emphasis on what I've been calling worlding in this introduction comes into sharp relief when comparing Armah's novel with Ngũgĩ's. On the one hand, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* presents its contemporary Ghana as a closed system and brackets off any questions about Ghana's place within a larger global world-system. As such, the problems of state-sponsored corruption that Armah's novel presents as inherent to the nation come to define the legacy of postcolonial nationalism *tout court*. While a weak-utopian desire for futurity in the form of the possible nation to-come is longed for in the text, the novel's closed nationalist form – that is, its lack of engagement with the international politics of global late capitalism – foregrounds a resolute pessimism that undercuts this weak-utopian drive. As such, it is the postcolonial form of the nation and nationalism itself, rather than their modern capitalist underpinning as Szeman elucidates, that prevent the postcolonial Ghanaian nation from fulfilling the promise of anti-imperial nationalism. Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood*, on the other hand, posits the state's use of a contrived cultural nationalism as a counter-revolutionary force to anti-imperial and postcolonial nationalism. Here, the corruption of the postcolonial Kenyan nation-state is explicitly linked to the influence of international development interests and contrasted with the spirit of anti-imperial and postcolonial nationalism located in the fictional space of Illmorog. By

representing the struggles of the peoples of Illmorog as a response to the intrusion of foreign investment and connecting them to anti-imperial nationalism, pan-African liberation movements and internationalist Marxism, Ngũgĩ's novel illustrates not only multiple visions of nationalisms with their various pitfalls and promises, but also the relationship of any nationalism to a larger global structure.

Towards the end of the chapter the international emphasis shifts to consider the relationship between postcolonial and British postimperial nationalism with David Caute's *The Decline of the West*. In line with Fanon's critique of postcolonial international relationships, Caute's novel suggests that "reintroducing man into the world" requires not only decolonization through the formal withdrawal of Western governments and troops, but also an end to neoimperial economic policies that subvert supposedly nationalist governments to the interests of international capital. The "decline" of the title, then, can be understood as a decentered form of postimperial retrenchment leading to a global reordering so that the novel is ultimately about possibility and futurity; or, conversely, it could refer to the decline of civilization and humanity, as Aimé Césaire argues, propagated by the subjugation of foreign peoples through neo-imperialism. For Caute, the success of anti-imperial and postcolonial nationalisms is a global affair and a necessity for imagining new avenues for national identities in the West, and particularly in his native United Kingdom, and that could replace imperial missionary nationalisms.

Continuing this dialectical play between the decolonizing nation and the former metropole, the second chapter explores how novels centered on postcolonial diaspora construct an image of the post-imperial British nation alongside and against images of the "home" nation. Historically, these novels take place against the backdrop of British postimperial retrenchment

with the changing conceptions of British legal national identity that this entails and the

development of the UK's massive nation-building project in the form of the welfare-state. In an

attempt to isolate the specificity of this period, I posit a form of bureaucratic nationalism,

premised on the construction of the postwar welfare-state. This bureaucratic nationalism

intervenes in conceptions of British nationalism based on what Ian Baucom posits as the *ius soli*

of common law and is ultimately replaced with a racial British nationalism tied to Margaret

Thatcher's 1981 British Nationality Act and the dismantling of the welfare-state. Moreover, as

the development of the welfare-state was concomitant with the 1948 British Nationality Act,

which extended the full right of abode to former colonial and Commonwealth citizens, I argue

that this bureaucratic nationalism represents a turn towards a postimperial nationalism which

both recognizes the legacies of imperialism while also attempting to formulate a national identity

that accounts for this legacy. Bureaucratic nationalism is thus presented as a potential contrast to

the imperial missionary nationalism underwriting the consolidation of the United Kingdom and

its sense of national identity as formed through external imperial and colonial development.

With this in mind, I read Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Buchi Emecheta's

Adah's Story as novels that explore the possibility of this bureaucratic nationalism to provide a

site of recognition for postcolonial British subjects. Significantly, the spaces of the British

welfare-state (dole offices, housing estates, schools, etc.) provide spaces of legal recognition

while simultaneously encoding postcolonial immigrants in Emecheta's terms as "problem

people." As "problem people," their status as immigrants is reaffirmed so that although British,

they remain outside of the bounds of a rising English cultural nationalism. Moreover, with the

rise of Thatcherism and the new Right in the UK, even this begrudging postimperial recognition

is undercut by the dismantling of the welfare-state and the 1981 Nationality Act, which restricted

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the right of abode and instantiated a biological basis for citizenship. Turning to the literature of

this later period, we see the hypostatization of perpetual colonial difference with the "second-

generation immigrants" of Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* and the deterioration of spaces of

any sort of recognition or belonging for postcolonial citizens in the UK.

Kureishi's *The Black Album* serves as a hinge between the second and third chapters by

expressing both the decline of bureaucratic nationalism as discussed above and the development

of a post-Thatcher national identity that vacillates between Englishness and Britishness in the

period roughly between the events of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Twin Towers, generally

referred to as the long 1990s, which is the focus of the third chapter. Here the project turns

principally to considerations of contemporary Anglo-British fiction with Julian Barnes's

England, England and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and their constructions of nationalist structures

of feeling, to borrow a term from Raymond Williams, formed in the wake of postcolonial

migration and globalization in the late 1990s. Similar to the Merchant Ivory heritage films or Raj

revivalism, these novels seek to reinvigorate a national identity based on ideals of pastness that

are complexly interrelated with forms of imperial prestige. However, instead of presenting a

romanticized ideal of *Pax Britannia* as an unachievable past, they instead seek to posit British

and English national identities that capture the global prominence and sense of national prestige

of Britain's imperial past, while simultaneously seeking to disavow the embarrassing legacy of

colonial brutality this national identity was founded upon.

In the two "Englands" of *England, England*, for example, the reader is presented with

two options for a future English nation that persists despite the UK's loss of world standing

between the decline of its empire and the rise of new centers of power in global late capitalism.

England, England is thus presented as a return to the grandeur of an imperial Englishness, while

Anglia is presented as the authentic "spirit" of the English that had been corrupted by imperialism and global overreach. Both presentations necessitate expunging any reference to the imperial and colonial legacies that the purported greatness of Great Britain was built upon. Alternately, *Saturday* presents a besieged London, menaced internally and externally by unwashed and uncivilized hordes that threaten the Western bourgeois comforts indentified with Englishness/Britishness as embodied by the Perowne family and encapsulated in the private space of their opulent home. Interestingly, in relation to the previous chapter, public places are presented as spaces of potential threat through the altercation between Henry Perowne and Baxter or in the form of the anti-war demonstrations which Perowne ultimately looks down on, believing that despite their good intentions, the protestors end up potentially inviting their own enemies to do them harm. As such, *Saturday* blurs the lines between a commonsense liberal cosmopolitanism and the rhetoric of humanitarian intervention, thus re-producing what Krishan Kumar condemns as the missionary sense of nationalism as a civilizing force. This is made all the more evident as the novel supplements its historical backdrop of the impending invasion of Iraq with fears centered on home invasion. In both *England, England* and *Saturday*, the nation is evoked as a bulwark against the various threats unleashed by globalization, while also pining for the lost prestige associated with the nation's imperial past. Responding to critical work on contemporary British and English nationalism by critics such as Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, Linda Colley, Paul Gilroy, and Krishan Kumar who argue for an understanding of British national identity as forged through the building of the nation's empire, ultimately I argue that these texts seek to reassert a British identity following the dismantling of the British Empire and the internal projects of nation-building through the welfare-state that I discuss in chapter two, by solidifying the necessary role of England as principal actor in global politics and economics.

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The project closes on an examination of contemporary postcolonial science fiction (sf) with considerations of Ian McDonald's *Chaga* series and Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Building on Philip Wegner's contention that modernist sf Utopias set the ideological parameters for the development of the modern nation-state, [11] I examine the ways that contemporary sf explores the utopian parameters for collectivities that attempt to surpass the limitations of the modern nation-state. In doing so, each author's work endeavors to imagine ways of being that move beyond the bounds of space and time and thus develops a postcolonial, postimperial, and, indeed, a postnational global world-system by attempting to resolve the imperial legacies that undergird the global late capitalist world-system. In this manner, these novels ultimately attempt to decenter and delimit conceptions of futuricity from the confines of Western hegemony by invoking the singularity's arrival as within and due to a particular postcolonial locale, culture and heritage.

On the one hand, *The Calcutta Chromosome* asks: What if we could decouple the practice of science and the uses of knowledge from capitalist-imperialist forms of instrumentality? Answering this question provides the novel with the grounds for a new postcolonial utopian vision of the singularity, combining the universality of knowledge with posthuman and post-individual forms of collective identity. McDonald's *Chaga* series, on the other hand, posits an end to the confines of the contemporary global late capitalist world-system by imagining the end of economic dependency and under-development in the Global South. The introduction of the alien lifeform of the Chaga, first to Africa and then to all other regions of the southern hemisphere, frees the entire region from the dictates of scarcity and capitalist forms of

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[11] Wegner's central claim is that "The utopia's imaginary community is thus not only a way of imagining subjectivity, but also a way of imagining space, thereby helping the nation-state to become both the agent and locus of much of modernity's histories" (*Imaginary* xvii).

labor and production. Moreover, as the Chaga enters into an evolutionary relationship of symbiogenesis with all the lifeforms that it encounters, the series gestures towards a form of the posthuman singularity in which all lifeforms are complexly inter-related. Both novels, then, present a utopian desire for transcending the limits of the contemporary moment, refiguring the lineages of the future from a postcolonial vantage point.

International Nationalisms thus moves from the development of the postcolonial nationalist project in the decolonizing states, to the effect that this has on the former colonizing state, to the rise of a reciprocal nationalist project in the metropole, and finally the culmination in a radical utopian project that attempts to encompass and surpass the ideological terrain of the global late capitalist conjuncture as a world system. This comparative —or what Edward Said calls a contrapuntal—framework brings what are often thought of as disparate genres and traditions – the diasporic novel, the nationalist *Bildungsroman*, the postmodern novel, sf genre fiction – into conversation with one another. Focusing on nationalism as an ideologeme, or an integral ideological structuring unit that runs across the literatures of the decolonizing period, allows for a more nuanced consideration of the social-cultural relationship between nationalist *Bildungsromane* and diasporic novels, for example, while also highlighting the way that aspects of nation-ness continue to organize literary production across a range of genres, locales and time periods. Moreover, the resulting kaleidoscopic overlay of texts reveals that the nation, although often confined to the dustbins of history or the exclusive domain of Third World literary production, serves as a powerful pull on the imagination of authors across a wide spectrum of genres, national affiliation and political standpoints. As such, a comparative reading across Anglophone postcolonial and postimperial British literatures fosters possibilities for engaging with discourses of the nation and nationalism as limit discourses whose goals are yet to be

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obtained, or, alternately, whose goals are to be contested or transcended, and finally as necessary yet insufficient concepts. Such a comparative reading reveals that at best, postcolonial and postimperial nationalisms remain critically utopian concepts—or what I theorize as a form of "weak-utopianism"—in that they imagine the nation as neither fully immanent and attainable nor moribund, but a site for ongoing political struggle, while at their worst they recapitulate both the means and ends of capitalist and imperialist ideology. In either case, and despite many of our most utopian postnational desires or our most pressing nightmares of Empire, the nation-state continues to persist as an integral, if no longer *the* integral component in modernity's transition to a global late capitalist world-system. As such, it holds a persistent place in the imagined worlds of our literary production.

Chapter One: "National Consciousness which is not Nationalism": Nationalist Ideologemes and Postimperial Literary Possibilities

In a recent article on the notion of "failed" postcolonial states, Peter Hitchcock offers the following provocative statement: "I am more interested in the political possibilities of disastrous statehood […] than [in] the consummate ease with which an aspiring and/or flailing hegemon writes off whole chunks of human community around the world" (729). In a related fashion, this chapter explores the weakly utopian possibilities that arise from a negative dialectical reading of nationalism. That is, it is my contention that such a reading reveals a weak-utopian nationalism that underscores the postcolonial literature accompanying failed post-independence nationalist movements in the wake of decolonization. As an interpretative and methodological apparatus, negative dialectics, here, serves as a means to critique the reifying and reductive aspects of nationalist discourse, while privileging the openness and possibility of what Adorno theorizes as non-identity as a mode of recognition and articulation. Given these concerns, I return to what is often thought of as an earlier moment in postcolonial literary studies via an emphasis on the nation-building text, or what Pheng Cheah refers to throughout the latter half of his *Spectral Nationalism* as "the national *Bildung*", in order to rethink the role of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in terms that focus not on the nation or state that is, but on the possibility of those to-come. This shift in focus allows one to challenge the canonical narrative of anti-colonial nationalism, which posits a frenzy of Utopian nation-building texts in the 1960s that eventually turn dyspeptic and critical due to the failure of postcolonial states in the 1970s. It is this teleological trajectory that provides the impetus for much of the contemporary emphasis on ironic and ambivalent diasporic texts that privilege postnational, indeed, global identities as

being the only historically and politically available figure for postcolonial and postimperial

subjectivity in the wake of failed states and failed nationalisms.

Throughout this chapter, I distinguish between: [1] *U*topianism as the definitive project

that calls forth the full presence of Utopia as the end of difference and the end of history, and [2]

*u*topianism as a "weak-utopianism" that privileges moments of possibility and futurity that are

neither bound to the conditions of the present nor the fully redemptive aspects of the *eschaton*.

The gambit here is that if nationalism has often been understood as a Western-derived Utopian

discourse in terms of the full presence of the nation and its immanent nation-peoples experienced

through the development of the modern capitalist form of the nation-state,[12] then Ghanaian

author Ayi Kwei Armah's 1968 novel, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born,* provides not only a

critique of this from the postcolonial position, but also an impetus for rethinking the concept of

nationalism from a weak-utopian point of view. Therefore, the discussion of this novel focuses

on the residual weak-utopian impulse inextinguishable in even the most pessimistic accounts of

the failures of anti-colonial nationalism. Following the discussion of Armah's *The Beautyful*

Ones Are Not Yet Born, I turn to considerations of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and

Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden* in order to further refine this form of a weak-utopian

nationalism recovered from Armah's novel. Reading Armah's novel alongside these more

theoretical and historical-political texts, I argue that it is possible to re-conceive a particularly

negatively dialectical form of postcolonial nationalist *Bildung* influenced by Adorno's concept of

negative dialectics with its disavowal of the Hegelian push towards identity as the sign of

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[12] In Hegelian terms, this would be presented as the postcolonial nations either catching up with or entering into History (i.e. the West). This is of course most currently presented through neo-liberal pronouncements of capitalism itself as the end of history, as the final most advanced form of social development, following the fall of the Soviet bloc.

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equivalence that drives reification and capitalist exchange, but that is ultimately driven by what I am calling Fanon's internationalist nationalism. Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* and Caute's *The Decline of the West* then take center stage as novels that work within this paradigm of postcolonial and postimperial *Bildung*. On the one hand, this re-reading calls for a renewed commitment to the particular problems and legacies of postcolonial nationalism, while on the other hand it proffers new avenues for postcolonial interventions in the present.

Towards a weak-utopian National *Bildung*

> [W]hile the project of nationalist retour has been questioned rigorously in postcolonial theory, the desire for a national space outside the culture of colonialism often resulted in a radical transformation of the idea of home and related spaces of emplacement.
>
> – Simon Gikandi (194).

A reading of the Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) helps to develop the issues that are at stake in recovering a weak utopian impulse at work in postcolonial nationalist texts. Briefly, Armah's novel concerns an unnamed Ghanaian man who works as a clerk for the national railroad, post-independence. The principal conflict in the novel revolves around his refusal to take a bribe. By refusing the bribe, he puts himself at odds with the widespread corruption that marks the postcolonial state of Ghana, and this further marks him as out of step with the rampant kleptocratic principles of the nation-state. The deliberate atmosphere of alienation from the national structure of feeling is further highlighted by his anonymity, which constantly situates him as being adrift from contemporary Ghana.

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Moreover, this simple act of refusal places him at odds with his wife and family. From his wife's vantage point, he is seen as failing to take advantage of the opportunities presented to him to do everything he can to make money and climb ahead, unlike his friend Koomson, who has cheated his way into an influential position in Nkrumah's government, from where he steals from the Ghanaian people under the purported guise of nationalization. As the novel comes to a head, the Nkrumah regime is overthrown in a coup and the unnamed narrator must help his former friend escape capture by the new regime.

Armah's novel is often taken as a paradigmatic example of the ambivalence towards nationalism or even its rejection as a failed project post-independence due to the corruption of the state by the neocolonial nationalist bourgeoisie. Indeed, even such a proponent of anti-colonial and postcolonial nationalitarianism as Neil Lazarus states that he reads Armah's novel as just the sort of text that illustrates Spivak's dictum about Mahasweta Devi's "Douloti the Bountiful" as "a story that 'invites [the reader] to realize that … 'Empire' and 'Nation' are interchangeable names, however hard it might be … to imagine it'" ("Disavowing" 71).[13] We can locate the foundations of this sort of anti-nationalist sentiment early on in the novel in a beautifully wrought description of a banister that closes the first chapter.

In this passage, the unnamed protagonist is heading to work at the "Railway and Harbour Administration Block." By placing him in the employ of the national train company, Armah highlights the connection between the railway as the overdetermined signifier of colonial conquest and its continuing resonance as a symbol of the reconquest of the postcolonial nation-state by the nationalist bourgeoisie who use the rhetoric of nationalism and nationalization as a

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[13] Elsewhere, Lazarus describes Armah's postcolonial writings generally as being, "for all their militancy, among the bleakest and most disenabling texts to be produced during the first decade of independence in Africa" ("(Re)turn"14).

mere means of neocolonial control. In the passage in question, as the narrator is walking up the stairs, Armah writes:

> By its light it was barely possible to see the banister, and the sight was like that of a very long piece of diseased skin. The banister had originally been a wooden one, and to this time it was still possible to see, in the deepest of the cracks between the swellings of other matter, a dubious piece of deeply aged brown wood. They were no longer sharp, the cracks, but all rounded out and smoothed, consumed by some soft, gentle process of decay. In places the wood seemed to have been painted over, but that must have been long ago indeed. […] What had been going on there and was going on now and would go on and on through all the years ahead was a species of war carried on in the silence of long ages, a struggle in which only the keen, uncanny eyes and ears of lunatic seers could detect the deceiving, easy breathing of the strugglers. (12)

He adds to this already despairing description that, "The wood underneath would win and win till the end of time. Of that there was no doubt possible, only the pain of hope perennially doomed to disappointment. […] The polish, it was supposed, would catch the rot. But of course in the end it was the rot which imprisoned everything in its effortless embrace" (12). He then briefly shifts the emphasis from the rotting wood to the rotting human hands that attend to the wood and eventually concludes the chapter with the assertion that, "The wood would always win" (13).

We can read the banister here as the allegorical figuration of the colonial turned postcolonial nation-state; although it has been painted over, through the cracks the colonial legacy pierces through and reveals itself as the dominant legacy of the postcolonial nation. The emblematic expression of colonial and neo-colonial discourse is apparent through the constant

recourse to tropes of consumption that underwrite this process of decay as it proceeds from the decrepit institutions of the state through to the nation itself in the figure of the rotting hands belonging to those who attend to and are ensnared by the state. Moreover there is a seeming acceptance of permanence, of the inevitable and inexorable processes of colonialism-*cum*-neo-imperialism, which can no longer be proffered as a state of decline, or a state of imprisonment to be overcome (i.e. temporal and transient conditions); instead, as a state of permanence, it is presented as the ontological state of Being that is the postcolonial state itself. This sense of endless struggle captured in the appearance of the banister – "What had been going on there and was going on now and would go on and on through all the years ahead" – evokes Pheng Cheah's problem of the haunting of the state, what Cheah refers to as the nation's "risk of being infected from the start by [the] instrumentality" of the modern, Western imperial *techne* of the state-form (303), and ultimately comes to stand for the impossibility of transcending what Hardt and Negri theorize as the inherently oppressive nature of the nation-state through anti-imperial or subaltern nationalist struggle. Instead of nationalism transforming the oppressive bourgeois colonial state, "the rot" of the state imprisons the nationalist movement in its "effortless embrace" in which "the wood would always win."

The mood of this early passage in the novel is juxtaposed with passages towards the middle that provide flashbacks to the euphoric moments of the burgeoning anticolonial nationalist movement. The latter are marked by adolescent longing, both sexual and social, and the smoking of *wee* (marijuana). These desires for freedom of the body, of the mind and of the people are intermixed with and enervated by the early speeches by Nkrumah, who, we learn, is not just another "new old lawyer wanting to be white" but is instead authentically "young" and "new" (84). It is these passions – those of Nkrumah and his followers – that we are meant to read

as having already been engulfed and smothered by the rot of the wood. Although the latter

passage of youthful idealism chronologically precedes the scene of the narrator walking up the

stairs, by its very positioning later in the textual narrative, it signifies the ephemeral quality and

ultimate demise of this anti-colonial fervor: the "young" has indeed turned old and the "new" is

just more of the same. The structure of the narrative disallows any identification with this

anticolonial optimism by foregrounding the dismay that precedes it in the narrative's

development.

This pessimism is then redoubled at the end of the novel, by which time there has been a

coup resulting in the overthrow of Nkrumah's government by a new regime. Armah, through his

protagonist, distinguishes the coup by its lack of effect on the lives of the ordinary people of the

nation: "there would only be a change of embezzlers and a change of the hunters and hunted"

(162), with the hunters in this context being the new political elite hunting down and disposing

of the previous regime's members. The nationalist zeal that once accompanied Nkrumah's

overthrowing of the colonial state power has been reduced in the minds of the people to "A

pitiful shrinking of the world from […] when the single mind was filled with the hopes of a

whole people […], to days when all the powerful could think of was to use the power of a whole

people to fill their own paunches" (162). What seems immediately apparent in this presentation

is what Fredric Jameson has referred to in a different context as the structural weakening of the

Marcusian utopian impulse in contemporary cultural production.[14]   The seemingly ironclad

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[14]   See Jameson's "Progress Versus Utopia" in *Archaeologies of the Future* (288-89) as well as
Marcuse's *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Although
Jameson is specifically referring to contemporary science fiction in this particular instance, the
importance of the utopian impulse, as well as its waning, is a hallmark of his work on culture and
politics of the late capitalist period in general. Short of any precise definition, the Marcusian
utopian impulse can best be summed up by the following, "[…] a work of art can be called

mechanisms of the contemporary systems of power suture the individual/artwork/artist into a

position where only the inherent inevitability and inescapability of these very systems of power

seem possible. The idea of possibility or difference of any kind seems immanently foreclosed by

this neo-imperial *Weltanschauung* as total system. *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

exemplifies this by immediately following the passage quoted above with the laconic

pronouncement of the "Endless days, same days, stretching into the future with no end anywhere

in sight" (162). Taken in its entirety, the description of the lack of eventfulness that characterizes

the coup contains more than a passing resemblance to the prior passage concerning the banister:

"the wood would always win."

However, what is perhaps most striking about this novel is its refusal to withdraw entirely

from life and possibility, to accept the limitations of the postcolonial state as inherent or

inevitable, or finally to allow the "rot" of the state to fully "imprison" the nation as personified

by the anonymous protagonist. Indeed, the persistent questioning of the seemingly inevitable

teleology of the oppression/struggle/freedom/oppression narrative of postcolonial nationalism

destabilizes the very naturalization of this narrative by instead highlighting the particular

contingencies and historical effects of imperialism and neo-imperialism that produce it. That is,

the very ideology of this narrative of the oppressive nature of postcolonial nationalism, in the

deepest Gramscian understanding of ideology as common sense,[15] is adamantly challenged by

an (admittedly) fleeting hope and optimism. This ephemeral quality of hope that pervades the

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revolutionary if, by virtue of the aesthetic transformation, it represents, in the exemplary fate of
individuals, the prevailing unfreedom and the rebelling forces, thus breaking through the
mystified (and petrified) social reality, and opening the horizon of change (liberation)" (Marcuse
xi).

[15] For Gramsci's critique of common sense, see "The Philosophy of Praxis" section in *Selections
from the Prison Notebooks*. (1971) New York: International Publishers, 2005.

text provides the substance of what I term a *weak-utopian impulse*[16] – a *weak* utopianism in that it represents a desire for difference that is not immediately calculable, definitive nor eschatological in the fullest sense, as are the traditional ideals associated with Utopianism.

We can track the persistence of this weak-utopian impulse more fully by examining the protagonist's initial reaction to the coup. After first hearing about it, he thinks that: "He would like to know about it, but there would be plenty of time for it, and he was not burdened with any hopes that new things, really new things, were as yet ready to come out" (159). Already we can see the play of ambivalence between the lack of "new things" of the present moment and the submerged hope indicated by the doggedly insistent, "were as yet." This most reluctant and repressed optimism is compounded by the following statement, "Someday in the long future a new life would maybe flower in the country, but when it came, it would not choose as its instruments the same people who had made a habit of killing new flowers. The future goodness may come eventually, but before then where were the things in the present which would prepare the way for it?" (159-60). While the passage ends on the negative assessment cited above – "Endless days, same days, stretching into the future with no end anywhere in sight" – it also illustrates the continuing weak utopian impulse that the novel cannot fully circumscribe, even though it starts off by attempting to do so with the banister scene.

The parameters of this weak-utopian impulse can be even more fully grasped by the resolutions that the novel provides for the protagonist's internal conflict concerning the untaken bribe, as well as by the concluding passage from which the novel receives its name. When taken

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[16] I fully intend this use of "weak utopian impulse" to have a family resemblance with Premnath's "weak sovereignty" – with both, then, drawing implicitly on Benjamin's "weak messianism" from "On the Concept of History" (or what in an earlier English translation is entitled, "Theses on History").

together, these two passages continue the oscillation between pessimism and optimism, similar to that of Gramsci's famous phrase "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of will" often quoted by Edward Said. On returning home amidst the chaos of the coup, Oyo, the protagonist's wife, whispers to him, "'I am glad that you never became like him [Koomson]'" (165). For the protagonist, the act of not taking the bribe earlier in the text separates him from the corruption of the state and the cooptation of the nationalist movement and therefore reconnects him to the earlier dreams of freedom. However, this refusal to take the bribe had also estranged him from his family as he refused to take part in the postcolonial grab for wealth and power like his childhood friend, Koomson. It is only now that the corrupt regime is falling and Koomson needs his help escaping that he is reconciled with his wife and family. Consequently, he feels that "In Oyo's eyes there was now real gratitude. Perhaps for the first time in their married life the man could believe that she was glad to have him the way he was" (165). Significantly, this passage realigns the values of the family with those of the protagonist and the earlier hopes for the post-independence nation. This reunification provides for a counter-national structure of feeling with which to rival the contemporary moment, and as such it is housed not in the state apparatus but instead in "the people" as figured by the (problematic) term of the family, which serves, then, as a synecdoche of the nation.

Furthermore, the passage that closes the novel, which echoes the above section describing the protagonist's initial reaction to the coup, connects the resolution of the protagonist's personal conflict with the possibility of a future Ghanaian nation that is more in tune with the earlier anticolonial desires for independence. After witnessing a policeman demand a bribe from a bus driver, exemplifying the lack of change wrought by the coup on the everyday life of the nation, the protagonist notices a piece of street art: "the green paint was brightened with an inscription

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carefully lettered to form an oval shape: The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born. In the center of the oval was a single flower, solitary unexplainable and very beautiful" (183). The image stays with him, lifting his mood after it had been darkened by the political futility of the coup. Even as his mind shifts to the more quotidian and spirit-dampening – "Oyo, the eyes of the children after six o'clock, the office and every day, and above all the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his life could offer him" (183) – the problems surrounding his work and home life have been resolved and the corruption that taints the postcolonial state has not marked him. So finally, as readers, we are left with "the future goodness that may eventually come" and the suggestion that the "things in the present which [could] prepare the way for it" as still existing in the everyday life of the people of Ghana, with the people represented, then, by the anonymous protagonist and unseen figure that painted the art work. Thus the resolution of the novel holds out the promise of a residual, yet weakened, utopian impulse undergirding the possibilities for a future Ghanaian nation-state in this perpetually pessimistic novel.

Pheng Cheah argues that *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is one of those postcolonial texts "marked by despair or at least a greater awareness of the vicissitudes of the protagonist's *Bildung*, which often ends tragically. Yet, they remain novels of nationalist *Bildung*, where their protagonists' lives parallel the history of their respective nations" (240). Instead of the allegorical identification between the protagonist and the nation-state, it seems more feasible that it is precisely the alienation of the protagonist from the neo-imperial nation-state and his negation of the prevailing bourgeois nationalist sentiment that marks this text as an example of anti-imperial nationalist *Bildung*. In as much as the protagonist's life does not "parallel the history" of his "respective nation" as he is neither the hunter nor the hunted, he is

instead alternately identified with both the "ones" and the nation that have *yet to be born*.
Hence, while agreeing that the text is an example of nationalist *Bildung*, I would disagree about
the nation-state under development. While Cheah views the protagonist as an allegorical
representation of the existing Ghanaian nation-state, it may be more profitable to see him as the
harbinger of its death and as the possibility of something other to come in its place – something,
that, like the narrator, cannot be named by the text.

Such an interpretation of *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* gestures towards the
larger question: How do we characterize this weak-utopian impulse in terms of the postcolonial
nationalist *Bildung* in general? First we must note the family resemblance of this weak-
utopianism to Benjamin's "weak messianism." The necessity of a revised and recontextualized
weak messianism as an intrinsic component for any contemporary politics of difference has been
most powerfully expressed by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (210-15) and the related
essay replying to his interlocutors, "Marx and Sons." Replying to Fredric Jameson's reading of
"messianicity without messianism" as an essentially utopian principle, Derrida replies:

> Messianicity […] is anything but Utopian: it refers, in every here-now, to the
> coming of an eminently real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducibly
> heterogeneous otherness. Nothing is more 'realistic' or 'immediate' than this
> messianistic apprehension, straining forward toward the event of him who/that
> which is coming. I say 'apprehension', because this experience, strained forward
> toward the event, is at the same time a waiting without expectation […] (an active
> preparation, anticipation against the backdrop of a horizon, but also exposure
> without horizon, and therefore an irreducible amalgam of desire and anguish,
> affirmation and fear, promise and threat). ("Marx" 248-49)

What principally seems to separate "messianicity without messianism" from the Utopian for

Derrida, then, is first of all its lack of program. For Derrida, this is marked by the anguish and

despair over the unknowability of that which is to-come and the lack of any teleological

necessity governing the flow of history or politics or the calculability of the results of any

decision to act. As he states more clearly in *Specters*, "without this latter despair and if one could

count on what is coming, hope would be but the calculation of a program" (212). The lack of

program allows one an indefinable and indefensible openness to that which is utterly different as

the incalculability of the future stands against the calculability of teleologies of any kind. That is

to say, no political program that plans its final goals from the outset – which sees the full

presence of the future here and now in the present – can ever perform a radical break from that

present; with such a program, difference is denied as such. What is "weak," then, is the sense of

religious dogmatic certainty or political *doxa*.

The second principal difference can be identified through the negative characteristics

invoked by the "anguish," "fear" and "threat" which are coterminous with and inseparable from

the "desire," "affirmation" and "promise." To be sure, these conceptual pairs form no mere

dichotomy, nor binary privileging schematic; instead they cohere, incommensurable, as the

condition of possibility itself, and therefore without recourse to one side cancelling out the other.

We can infer from the above passage that Derrida sees these latter positive attributes as being the

only effective, as well as affective, aspects of Utopia. However, it is hard to imagine any

contemporary Utopianism that has not been met with anguish or fear. Indeed, it is in this sense

that dystopia is the flipside of the same coin as utopianism and not its formal or epistemological

opposite in the sense of an anti-utopia, an argument which Tom Moylan drives home so

pointedly in his *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*. Moreover, given the far ranging critiques of

Utopian thought on both the Left and Right that equate Utopianism with absolutism and hostility to difference and which locate the ultimate practical horizon of Utopianist ideals in the outcomes of Stalin's gulags and Hitler's concentration camps, Utopianism has often been seen as wielding a very real threat within its Idealist promise.

In light of these concerns, much contemporary work on the utopian has indeed shunned the concept of Utopia as a realizable endpoint or totalizable project in favor of the utopian as a desire for difference. Instead, utopia can be thought as a point of departure that directs one's consciousness towards a sense of futurity that runs counter to neoliberal pronouncements of the end of history.[17] Here, then, is where a recontextualization of Derrida's statement that "*Anything but Utopian*, messianicity mandates that we interrupt the ordinary course of things, time and history *here-now*; it is inseparable from an affirmation of otherness and justice" (249) comes into contact with the sense of *u*topia as that ineluctable placeholder for that which is the not here and not now. Both represent the desire to act in the name of a radically different future, and as such both keep faith with Derrida's conclusion that "one could not so much as account for the possibility of Utopia in general without reference to what I call messianicity" (249). However, I would wish to replace "Utopia in general" in the prior instance with "the utopian" which is always open to the possibility of difference and the impossibility of the end of ideology as such, in the Althusserian sense. Yet what is eminently clear from Derrida's invocation of a New International and from his ten plagues, from Jameson's writing on late capitalist globalization as well as from Armah's text, is that a different future *is* desirable but is not inevitable nor without risk, and utopia serves as the placeholder for this difference.

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[17] We can find one of the most recent and well-known examples in the anti-systemic, anti-global capital rallying cry of the first World Social Forum slogan: "Another World is Possible."

At any rate, what is most important in this discussion of the utopian and its relationship to messianicity in terms of a critique of postcolonial and postimperial nationalisms is the impossibility of closure, of the impossibility of the full presence of the utopian in either the present or the future. Yet, alongside this recognition of the impossibility of closure, it is also equally important to retain Derrida's demand for a "promise and an injunction that call for commitment without delay" ("Marx" 249).[18] To be sure, it is the fully Utopian characteristics that Derrida seeks to distance himself from, and it is these same Utopian characteristics that can be seen as afflicting Armah's novel. In other words, we can juxtapose the so-called Utopian underpinnings of the bourgeois postcolonial nationalists that transformed decolonizing nations through rhetorics of development and modernization into neo-imperial states, with the weak-utopianism outlined above. This is, perhaps, why it becomes so easy to identify *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, as well as other postcolonial texts, as ambivalent concerning nationalism and the nation-state, because most substantive accounts of the postcolonial nation handcuff them to the prevailing whims of history as located and aligned with the bourgeois nationalists. Such readings make nationalism constitutive of bourgeois nationalism and of a Utopian teleology of Western capitalist modernization, and thus relegate any undercurrents of what I am calling a weak-utopianism to a mere further instantiation of the former. Or, as Neil Lazarus writes in a slightly different context, "Anticolonial nationalist discourse is disparaged for precisely the same reasons as metropolitan nationalist discourse, and for one additional and paramount reason besides: it is held to amount to a replication, a reiteration, of the terms of colonial discourse itself" ("Disavowing" 71).

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[18] One should also see Derrida's work on the concept of democracy-to-come in the *Rogues* and *The Other Heading* for related discussions about futurity and the importance of and commitment to working in the name of that which may never arrive.

Moreover, identifying these texts squarely with the history of neo-imperial bourgeois nationalism marks the novels as little more than history texts that can only give voice to the construction and location of the present. Such purely historicist, presentist readings render postcolonial novels inert, and as Rey Chow asserts, "condemn 'third world' cultural production in the age of postmodernism to a kind of realism with functions of authenticity, didacticism, and deep meaning" (56). Consequently, what *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* gives voice to, in both its title and narrative, is the not-yet, to that which is other to the present and thus unknowable to the teleological, Western developmental discourse of history wrapped in the promise of the bourgeois nationalists. In this sense, the weak-utopianism of the novel registers a continuation of the anticolonial, nationalist sentiment that has yet to be fully extinguished although it has been transformed and continues to take on new meanings.

However, there is another sense in which the "weak" of this weakly utopian novel must be interrogated and ultimately critiqued that is principally attached to its individualism and isolation. As Jameson argues in *The Political Unconscious*, for utopianism to have any political efficacy it must provide for figures of collectivity (which, following Adorno, I will insist is not the same as identity as the dialectical sublation of difference). Gautam Premnath argues, in his work on "weak sovereignty" that the nation-state remains a principal utopian site for political action in the era of global late capitalism figured by multinational corporations, the WTO, GATT, the World Bank, and the IMF. In this manner, the nation retains a troubled figure of collectivity against the fragmentation and depoliticization, often expressed as a waning of affect,

of global late capitalist experience.[19] Such a claim for the weak-utopian aspects of the nation as collectivity in the face of globalization certainly stands against the tide of much contemporary political and cultural theory from Hardt and Negri's "multitudes," to the positive aspects of cultural decentering and entanglement furthered by the culturalist cosmopolitan theories of globalization by Fredrick Buell or Kwame Anthony Appiah, to the formation of the non-hierarchical, non-representative World Social Forum (WSF). However, as a number of recent critiques have illustrated, these positions are often complicit with the logic of late capitalism and, furthermore, are in danger of supplying a neo-imperial late capitalist universalism that runs roughshod over the concerns of the chronically underdeveloped and politically less stable areas of the world-system. As Malini Johar Schueller's recent essay "Decolonizing Global Theories Today" avers, such well-meaning but ultimately Western-derived discourses can inadvertently lead to, at worst, a global paternalism or, at best, ineffectuality. Here, then, the nation as the figure of solidarity and a renewed sense of futurity, confronts the neo-liberal "I" as a pseudo-empowered global consumer "free" to fashion oneself from the inexorable swirl of global products (while one's rights to clean water are sold to Coca Cola). That is, it becomes the space for contestations over one's locally and globally derived rights – a position that has much in common with Fanon's idea of an international nationalism, as well as a site for thinking through a politics inspired by the incommensurability of negative dialectics.

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[19] See Jameson's post *Postmodernism* writings on globalization including "Globalization and Political Strategy" and "Globalization as a Philosophical Issue" among others, all recently expanded and reprinted in the "Politics" section of *Valences of the Dialectic*.

The particular weaknesses of the Armah example, then, stem from the reliance on the figure of the individual.[20] As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues, "the writer in this period [of the failures of postcolonial nationalism] often retreated into individualism, cynicism, or into empty moral appeals for a change of heart" ("Writing" 11). It could be argued that Armah's text attempts to resolve this problem through the anonymity of the protagonist, and indeed, one may wish to privilege this anonymity exactly for its emptying of the determinant content or full-presence of the national figure. That is, Armah's protagonist escapes the strictures of becoming the representative embodiment of the postcolonial nationalist figure as the true agent of history. However, this lone, anonymous protagonist offers no figuration of collectivity. Instead, the promise of a future collectivity is prefigured by and thus reduced to the role of the protagonist. The emphasis on the lone protagonist allows for a solipsistic reading whereby his particular singularity becomes the pluralized "one*s*" of the title and street art. This collapsing of the narrator and the future "ones" seems to perform an operation of identity that dialectically bonds and synthesizes the individual's consciousness to the (coming) nation. Although it is a removed nation to come, it still performs the operation of a traditional *Bildungsroman* in this sense, and as such potentially undercuts the weak-utopianism of the novel. Furthermore, there is no sense, really, of the global context of the neo-imperial world-system from which to link the national struggle to international struggles, from anti-colonial nationalism to liberation in Edward Said's terms (Said 210ff). This is particularly striking in the novel's critique of nationalization as an internal neo-colonial tool of oppression by the nationalist bourgeoisie, through which the critiques of the nationalist government become a critique of anticolonial nationalism itself. The

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[20] See Booker for a different interpretation of the Utopian character and possibility for Armah's work in general.

history of colonialism, the realities of Cold War pressures of alignment and encroaching neo-colonial economic development are absent from the text such that nationalism and corruption seem coterminous, immanent aspects of Ghana as a postcolonial nation-state itself. In that the novel desires to create a truly self-actualized nation of immanence and pure self-being, all problems and failures associated with that project are thus seen as internal, impure deformities in the process of identity, of the self *qua* nation. In this sense, the weakness of the utopian impulse is neither strategic nor progressive and instead more in line with that waning of the Marcusian utopian impulse as mentioned above.

By way of conclusion and transition, this re-reading of a supposedly ambivalent or indeed pessimistic text concerning the possibilities and fulfillment of anti-colonial or postcolonial nationalism reveals a residual, yet weakened, sense of the utopian impulse. This weak-utopianism provides new horizons and possibilities for rethinking and reinvigorating anti-imperial movements from a present standpoint, particularly in the privileging of the anonymity of the national collectivity and the openness and incompletability of the nation. Moreover, it suggests the need for an interruption in the forms of nationalist *Bildung* that seek a pure identity between citizen, nation and state. In his excellent *Human Rights, INC*, Joseph Slaughter asserts that the classical *Bildungsroman* creates a dialectical link between citizen/subject and the state. The dialectical link allows for a coeval development whereupon the identity between the citizen/subject and state are developed in terms of one another, thus producing a reciprocal identity which can be posited in terms of the development of the nation. By way of contrast, he then explores the way that the Kenyan author Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, *Coming to Birth*, presents an allegorical link between citizen/subject and the state that finds its expression in assimilation. Assimilation, in this context, molds the

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citizen/subject to the state whereby in the postcolonial context "modernity's statist structures all preexist Paulina and remain largely unaffected by her presence within them" (126). I want to close this reading by suggesting that *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* suggests the need for something different to both the dialectical and allegorical models of *Bildungsromane*, which can be thought of as a negative dialectical *Bildungsroman* where:

> […] an achieved identity, in other words, the elimination of conflict, the reconciliation of all those who are opposed to one another because their interests are irreconcilable, an achieved identity does not mean the identity of all as subsumed beneath a totality, a concept, an integrated society. A truly achieved identity would have to be the consciousness of *non-identity*, or, more accurately perhaps, it would have to be the creation of a reconciled non-identity, much as we find in the utopia conceived by Hölderlin […]. (Adorno 55)

A nationalist *Bildung* of non-identity would seek neither to create the ideal nation-peoples internally through a return of cultural nationalism, nor externally by adopting the dictates of capitalist modernity and its political formalization in the Western bourgeois nation-state – the modular form of Chatterjee's critique as the teleological. Consequently, the following sections of this chapter will provide a rethinking of anti-imperial nationalist *Bildung* from the weak-utopian perspective developed above and its relation to the development of postimperial British national structure of feeling. It affords particular attention to the role of building a weak-utopian anti-imperial nationalist culture or what I am calling an international nationalism. In order to provide a grounding and framework for this weak-utopian *Bildung* in the postcolonial and postimperial novel, I provide a reading of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* that works to uncover a relationship of affinity between this weak-utopianism and the international nationalist

dimensions of his work. This is then followed by an extended interpretation of this sort of

cultural project through the literary works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and David Caute, two authors

overtly influenced by Fanon's thinking.

Weak Utopianism, Negative Dialectics and International Nationalisms

From the outside, Frantz Fanon may seem a curious lynchpin for connecting the

postcolonial concerns of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o with the postimperial concerns of David Caute,

especially given Sartre's famous injunction in his Preface to the western reader that, "Fanon has

got nothing 'in for you' at all; his book, which is such a hot issue for others, leaves you out in the

cold. It often talks *about* you, but never *to* you" (xlv). Despite Fanon's, or Sartre's interpretation

of Fanon's disinterest in the Western reader, Fanon's mixture of psychoanalysis, Marxism and

anti-imperial nationalist politics has been a mainstay of western academic concerns since the

1960s. Indeed, Caute's *Frantz Fanon* (1970) was among the earliest book-length studies of

Fanon in the West, and as M. Keith Booker suggests, Caute "[…]may in fact have derived some

of his insights from Fanon" for his novel 1965 novel of decolonization, *The Decline of the West*.

While Booker is cautious here in his language, the most cursory of readings reveals that Caute

was undoubtedly drawing heavily on Fanon. Moreover, in an example of the curious trajectories

of imperial geography, it was not at Makerere but at Leeds University where Ngũgĩ was first

introduced to the works of Fanon, as well as Marxism, by the Marxist English professor Arnold

Kettle.[21] It was his novel *Petals of Blood* (1977), based on an idea he had contrasting the remote

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[21] "Makerere graduates like Nazareth, Ngũgĩ, Grant Kamenju, and Pio Zirimu ultimately
benefited from their Leeds experience. Their socialist faith, growing organically out of their East
African experiences, was fertilized at Leeds by a rich mix of extracurricular intellectual activity
and nurtured in Arnold Kettle's courses in the English novel. Steeped in Kettle's humane

Scottish countryside with industrial Leeds,[22] written in a variety of locations including the US,

Kenya and ultimately finished at the Soviet Writers Union house in Yalta, that embodied the

more utopian aspects of Fanon and the Marxists that he studied during his aborted M.A. at

Leeds. What I am most interested in with what follows is the way an anti-imperial nationalism

that engages with Fanonian concepts becomes the catalyst for both a Kenyan and British author

to reevaluate the ideological contours of nationalist discourses in a postcolonial and postimperial

moment of decolonization. In this way, both texts can be seen as wrestling with the kind of

pessimism that is seen as the hallmark of a novel like *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and

presenting a fuller instantiation of the weak-utopian impulse analyzed above.

Few works have been as important to the study of postcolonial nationalism as the

collection of essays and papers collected in *The Wretched of the Earth*. As Homi Bhabha's recent

introduction to the newly retranslated text, as well as newer interventions by Imre Szeman and

Pheng Cheah in terms of the continuing relevance of postcolonial nationalism in global late

capitalism suggest, the time is ripe for a renewed engagement with Fanon. My intervention

revolves around competing senses of Utopianism and weak-utopianism that pervade Fanon's

writings on violence and national culture, and ultimately takes the form of a critique of

dialectical identity and a recovery of the possibility of a negative dialectical non-identity that lies

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socialism and imbued with Marx and Fanon, they returned from Leeds ready to revolutionize the English Departments of the University of East Africa" (Sicherman 42-43).

[22] Discussing the genesis of the novel, Ngũgĩ writes that the inspiration for the novel came from thinking about the differences between the remote regions of Scotland the industrialized areas of England: "Travelling between Leeds, that vast industrial conglomerate with its pollution and wintry fogs and the soot on all buildings, and Inverness way up in Scotland, I used to play with the idea of what would happen if some capital fled from say Leeds or London to one of the beautiful fishing villages to the West of Inverness? […] What if some strong characters found themselves forced to retreat into such places by private griefs or secrets and they made a difference to the villages, awakened them to a capitalist modernity?" ("Novel" 86).

in this text. As such, it is my contention that the work on weak-utopianism developed from the reading of Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* offers the ability for a productive critique and rethinking of Fanon, particularly in terms of the later chapters on national consciousness and national culture, although I will also briefly address the issue of violence that is so central to the opening of the text. Indeed, few texts dealing with postcolonial nationalism have had such a manifestly utopian character as Fanon's. Here, the strong Utopian character concerning the role of violence is invoked as the very sort of Utopianism that Derrida had reason to spur above as "what the word literally signifies or is ordinarily taken to mean;" what could be referred to as the calculable and finished, the promise without threat, the self-evident program, the no place and simultaneously good place that ends all history and difference (249). While it is admittedly not common to refer to Fanon's project for a revolutionary postcolonial nationalism in this way, it is near impossible to think of the absolute horizon of the postcolonial nation-state cleared by an all-encompassing violence in any practical terms other than the Utopian, even as Fanon undercuts that position with call for a reformulated international nationalism.

Turning to the opening of "On Violence" we see the terms that underwrite any program of postcolonial nationalist liberation laid out starkly, "[…] decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one 'species' of mankind by another. The substitution is unconditional, absolute, total, and seamless" (1). Although the emphasis on the necessity and inevitability of violence is most likely a result of Fanon's personal involvement with the FLN, decolonization in *The Wretched of the Earth* is dehistoricized and decontextualized and ultimately universalized by the annunciation of its irreducible characteristics.[23] It is this latter series of characteristics –

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[23] David Caute describes this with the following: "The Algerian revolution is implicitly treated as a model for all of Africa; a set of unitary ideals and categories is imposed on a continent

absolute, total, seamless – that critics on both the left and right have catalogued in different

political contexts, as the totalizing tendencies of Utopian thought; moreover, it is the absolute or

indeed Utopian characteristics of the capitalist, imperial project that Fanon will eventually

counter with his weak-utopian international nationalism. However, for Fanon, first absolute must

be met with absolute in the form of anti-colonial violence, and as many commentators have

noted, violence in this text is not merely the force that frees the machinery of the state from the

colonizers, but it is instead the force necessary to create a new postcolonial subjectivity freed

from the Manichean binary of colonizer/colonized.[24] Fanon has written at length of the problems

associated with the colonizer simply being substituted by the neoimperial bourgeois nationalist

class[25] thereby continuing the ends of the colonizer/colonized binary, and violence is thus the

necessary pretext for subverting this. "Violence," Fanon avers, "can thus be understood to be the

perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. The praxis

enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end" (44).

In Cheah's terms, Fanon's violence is theorized as "recursive cultural organicism;" that

is, as the nation-people's purposeful and directed actualization of their freedom as a cultural-

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outstanding for its size and diversity. And yet *The Wretched of the Earth* is one of the great
political documents of our time" (74).

[24] Basil Davidson contends that the absolute violence that underwrites a Fanonian concept of
decolonization ends up destabilizing the very mission of decolonization. Instead, he argues that
Cabral's distrust of absolute violence paved the way for more successful decolonizing
movements: "Knowing the unbridled violence of the colonial dictatorship and its armies, they
held that if this morbid violence were to be allowed to govern their own projects, they would end
in misery no better than the one they were pledged to defeat" (301).

[25] We can take the following as a paradigmatic statement on this issue: "As we have seen, [the
nationalist bourgeoisie's] vocation is not to transform the nation but prosaically serve as a
conveyor belt for capitalism, forced to camouflage itself behind the mask of neocolonialism"
(Fanon, *Wretched* 100-01).

political project. In other words, violence carries out a cultural vocation, or to be even more precise, violence is an indissoluble mixture of culture and politics in which the two are necessarily inseparable from postcolonial nationalist *Bildung*. This is evinced in Fanon's assertion of violence as the "perfect mediation," whereby mediation takes on the connotation of cultivation and transformation: violence becomes the only formal medium capable of revealing and transcending the vicissitudes of the colonizer/colonized binary. This cultural-political program is clearly aligned with the goals of the liberation of the state most fervently in Fanon's later address on the dialectical relationship between culture, nationalism and the nation-state, whereby national culture paves the way for the collective desire for independence, which can only be achieved through the freedom and self-determination of the nation-state, but only the liberation and self-determination of the nation-state can protect, prolong and ultimately guarantee the free and continual development of a national culture. Thus, the Utopian vocation of violence is most staunchly expressed by Fanon's declaration of the "new humanism" that proceeds the purifying and cultivating aspects of liberatory violence, best articulated by the statement that, "After the struggle is over, there is not only the demise of colonialism, but also the demise of the colonized" (178). As will be seen later in the context of Caute's novel, this emphasis on the dual nature of the demise provides the weak-utopian aspect of possibility and links Fanon's concerns for a postcolonial world to a postimperial world, thereby having an effect on the former colonizers' conceptions of national identity as well (even thought the text is "not for the west," according to Sartre). That is, the absolute or Utopian aspect of violence gives way in Fanon's work to the weak-utopian dimension of a future possibility that is no longer structured by the colonizer/colonized binary.

The absolute horizon of violence points towards the conceptual limits of Fanon's work

for contemporary theorizations of a postcolonial nationalism in global late capitalism. For we

must take seriously the importance of the irreducibility of violence for Fanon's conception of

liberation in "On Violence" in the sense that it is no mere metaphor that can be seamlessly

substituted by an epistemological or discourse-based politics of subjectivity without utterly

erasing the Utopian horizon of the "demise of the colonizer, [and] also the demise of the

colonized." The "new humanism" that arises out this co-terminal demise could, in a rather

troubling sense, be read as a desire for purification – an absolute humanity worthy of that name.

The body count, by necessity, would be high: the colonizers, the metropolitan institutions and

their practitioners that buoy the imperial process from abroad, the comprador bourgeois

nationalist class, and those budding neoimperialists that wait in the historical anteroom of the

slash that coheres in the dialectic of decolonization/neocolonization that Jameson maps in

"Periodizing the 60s." As a consequence, what is potentially called forth by Fanon in the late

1950s is the full presence of Utopia with no outside of itself, no difference and thus the end of

history in its purest evocation as it is a promise of fulfillment: "The praxis enlightens the militant

because it shows him the means and the end" (44). It is what I, by way of the weak utopian

impulse's relation to messianicity without messianism, had reason to critique above as a full

program, calculable and without difference.[26]

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[26]
   Although delivered in a different terminology, we can see affinities here with Eagleton's
critique of Fanon's adoption of a stance that is similar to the Universalist aspects that underwrite
Western Enlightenment ideology, which was then of course used to prop up imperialism itself.
For Eagleton, this is best seen through Fanon's adoption of a Hegelian discourse that privileges
"universalism" and the entry to the "world stage of history" as political goals in "On National
Culture."

The impossibility of this Utopia predicated on the purity of violence is firmly realized by

Fanon at the end of the section of "On Violence" where he calls for a model of reparations

similar to those paid to Europe by Germany whom had "transformed the whole of Europe into a

genuine colony" (57). As such he calls for a form of aid that is not charity. Instead, he argues,

"Such aid must be considered the final stage of a dual consciousness – the consciousness of the

colonized that *it is their due* and the consciousness of the capitalist powers that effectively *they*

must pay up" (59). It is this indissoluble link founded on concepts of right and justice that enjoins

the people of the West with the people of the decolonizing world and illustrates the movement

away from the Manichean structure of the colonizer/colonized to a dialectics of negativity, as

suggested by Nigel Gibson. In this sense, there is no final moment of sublation: the colonized are

not assimilated into the West, nor is the West eradicated by the formerly colonized. Instead the

difference between the two is kept in tension resulting in an inter-relationship; the absolute other

of the Manichean which constantly pushes towards the eradication of its opposite is surpassed in

a form of non-identity. As Gibson notes, it becomes a dialectic without an end (*Fanon* 72-5).[27]

However, the movement from Manichean relations of absolute violence to negative dialectical

negotiation can only be accomplished by a further stage of the development of "national

conscious which is not nationalism" as discussed in the following.

Alongside this more theoretical critique of the Utopian role of violence in Fanon's

program for postcolonial nationalism, lies the more conventional historical-political reality of

neoimperialism's ascendency. Today, any consideration of nationalism must also take into

account the failures of postcolonial nationalism as prefigured by Fanon's warnings against the

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[27] The relationship between Fanon's thought and negative dialectics is developed in even more
detail in Gibson's "Radical Mutations: Fanon's Untidy Dialectic of History."

nationalist bourgeoisie as well as the imposition of Cold War politics and the economic strictures

of neo-imperial global capitalism. Just as a recovery of the suppressed weak-utopian impulse was

utilized above in the reading of Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to mitigate

against the pessimistic narrative of continual failure and the inevitability of neoimperialism as

the ultimate horizon of postcolonial reality, a weak-utopian nationalism will be developed within

the text that undercuts the reliance on an absolutist Utopian violence and which carries purchase

for the contemporary late capitalist moment. In doing so, I will be following, to some degree,

Bhabha's assertion in "DissemiNation" that Fanon's writing on nation-people "liberat[es] a

certain, uncertain time of the people" (218). For Bhabha, this "certain uncertainty" arises from

the fact that Fanon "explores the space of the nation without immediately identifying it with the

historical institution of the State" (218). However, here one has to disagree with Bhabha as he

seeks to transform Fanon's conception of a nationalist culture into something akin to a politics of

performativity[28] which lacks a productive, collective element and that, in Ian Baucom's words,

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[28]
   Most notable is Bhabha's unannounced slipping of Fanon's language into that of J. F. Lyotard's, where in a paragraph concentrating on the language that Fanon uses to describe the coming into being of national culture as something that shuns the past and is instead born entirely out of its own revolutionary moment, that is creating the present that prefigures the future, he ends the paragraph with the following unattributed quote by Lyotard, "it is always contemporaneous with the act of recitation. It is the present act that on each of its occurrences marshals in the ephemeral temporality inhabiting the space between the 'I have heard' and 'you will hear'" (219). The overall effect is to make the latter seem like a continuation of Fanon's text quoted and attributed earlier in the paragraph, thereby creating a more natural linking of Bhabha's preference for a performative, linguistic, discourse based politics of subjectivity over Fanon's more militaristic revolutionary politics of nationalism. While I certainly do not advocate a primacy of intention, an immediacy of "meaning," nor the revocation of the right to re-read and re-interpret (operations that I perform often in this chapter), Bhabha's delinking of national culture from the development of the state accompanied by his move from nationalist revolution to performative subjectivity seems purposefully misleading and in need of greater care and handling. For a more thorough critique of the "annexation of Fanon to Bhabha's own theory" (31), see: Parry, Benita. "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse" *Oxford Literary Review*. 9.1-2 (1987): 27-58. Also see: Lazarus, Neil. "Disavowing Decolonization."

"gestures to nothing but itself" (199). Instead, as seen above, Fanon's concept of national culture has the creation/transformation of the nation-state very much as its goal, and where the very vitality and continuance (the triumph over finitude, in Cheah's terms) of national culture is only safeguarded within the newly created postcolonial nation-state: "To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow" (Fanon 168). By way of contrast, I will concentrate on a "certain uncertainty" that underscores a weak-utopian nationalism based on possibility, "dynamism" (a privileged term in Fanon's essay on national culture) and internationalism that undercuts and destabilizes the full-presence of the Utopian "new humanity" as an absolute identity born of and through anti-colonial violence.

Fanon's "On National Culture" represents the best site for recovering a weak-utopian nationalism and from which to critique and move beyond the problematic Utopianism gestured towards in "On Violence." In the former essay one finds not the cold imperialistic logic turned on its head in the form of a nationalist militancy that declares that we must destroy all vestiges of the past to prepare the ground in which civilization can arise, thus an iteration of the colonial logic that destroyed non-western cultures in the name of the western civilizing mission. Instead, with "On National Culture," there is a renewed belief in possibility, renewal, and continual struggle. To be sure, vestiges of the former attitude exist as well, but they are severely undercut and this allows for a different possibility than the absolute violence of the opening essay. The article, originally an address before the Second Congress of Black Artists in Rome in 1959 and later published in *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1963, addresses the role of the intellectual and the artist in national revolution. At stake, for Fanon, is to turn the tide of cultural production

away from a Universalist negritude and towards the development of particular nationalist cultures.

Negritude fails, in Fanon's eyes, because it willfully avoids historical contingency and difference, what Fanon calls "the historicizing of men" (154). By asserting a universal Black African culture, negritude unintentionally plays into the racial logic of colonialism, which as Fanon asserts is "continental in scale," and thus "When the black man, who has never felt as much a 'Negro' as he has under white domination, decides to prove his culture and act as a cultivated person, he realizes that history imposes on him a terrain already mapped out, that history sets him along a very precise path and that he is expected to demonstrate the existence of a 'Negro' culture" (150). To this he adds, "to believe one can create a black culture is to forget oddly enough that 'Negroes' are in the process of disappearing, since those who create them are witnessing the demise of their economic and cultural supremacy" (169); for Fanon, a national culture, then, participates in this conterminal demise.[29] Moreover, he argues that the uncritical recovery of a past culture is essentially atavistic as colonialism has killed any properly nationalist culture and sundered the relationship between the older cultural forms and the current colonized peoples. As Imre Szeman asserts, "In contrast to various forms of nativism, Fanon emphasizes the continual transformation of culture: the shifting modalities of present reality that form 'the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will be formed'" (Szeman 35). The cultivation of a properly nationalist culture, then, is predicated on its relevance to the present

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[29] It is important to emphasize the prevalence of struggle over violence here, but it is also ambiguous as the essay predates "On Violence" in composition but comes after it in the text. My presentation here, therefore, is not arguing for the primacy of one over the other or indeed a purposeful development and the eventual culmination in the form of some sort of ultimate *aufhebung*. Instead it is to realize two countervailing tendencies in Fanon's work that can be productively thought together. While I am privileging the latter, it is certainly not in an argument that posits this sort of reading as the ultimate horizon of Fanon's work.

moment of struggle, and not some intrinsic bio-racial inheritance of an autochthonous Africanist primordialism; it is concerned with futurity and is in a state of constant invention and renewal – "continual transformation" as Szeman notes.[30]

With the above in mind, it is easier to get a sense of what Fanon means when he advocates in the oft quoted passage for a "national consciousness which is not nationalism" (179), where nationalism, in this sense, seems to be more aligned with a reified ideological construction involved with the uncovering of a past culture that is spuriously summoned forth as the eternal, irreducible cultural being of the nation-peoples:

> This reification which seems all to obvious and characteristic of the people is in
>
> fact but the inert, already invalidated outcome of the many, and not always
>
> coherent, adaptations of a more fundamental substance beset with radical changes.
>
> Instead of seeking out this substance, the intellectual lets himself be mesmerized
>
> by these mummified fragments which, now consolidated, signify, on the contrary,
>
> negation, obsolescence, and fabrication. Culture never has the translucency of
>
> custom. Culture eminently eludes any form of simplification. In its essence it is
>
> the very opposite of custom, which is always a deterioration of culture. Seeking to

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[30]
    The rejection of the archaeological unearthing of past African cultures in favor of developing a new nationalist culture has led to accusations of Fanon as reproducing a sordid Hegelianism that presents precolonial Africans as outside of history and without culture. It is an argument that any careful reading of Fanon's work reveals as inaccurate and without merit. For Fanon, it is not a question of the existence of past African cultures or their particular histories, but it is instead a concern for their utility to a contemporary national culture or their cooptation by the nationalist bourgeoisie (indeed, he examines many renewals of past cultural traditions in the anti-colonial struggle that take on new and significant meaning for contemporary African nationalist cultures). For a strong example of the former reading of Fanon see especially: Miller, Christopher. *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. Or, to a much lesser degree, see: Eagleton, Terry."Nationalism: Irony and Commitment." *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. Ed. Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. 23-39.

stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history, but against one's people. When a people support an armed or even political struggle against a merciless colonialism, tradition changes meaning. (160)

Custom, "mummified fragments" and stolid tradition are positioned as anathema to national culture. For Fanon, they more often than not become the figures of a repressive official nationalism, in Benedict Anderson's terms, which is utilized by the nationalist bourgeoisie to provide an ideological screen that conceals the neoimperial continuity with colonial regimes that is the truth of their ascension to the control of the state apparatus (as is presented below in *Petals of Blood*). As opposed to this counter-revolutionary nationalism, national culture operates similarly to the Marcusian utopian impulse by breaking through reified social structures: the colonizer/colonized binary, the inert dead culture of nationalism, the falsely universal negritude. As such, it is marked by dynamism, by "work and struggle," as it "shape[s] the future and prepare[s] the ground" for the coming of the postcolonial nation (168). It takes the form of a "combat literature" that "informs the national consciousness gives it shape and contours and *opens up new, unlimited horizons*" (173, my emphasis). These aspects of the work of national culture differ from the earlier presentation of absolute violence in that "[t]he present is no longer turned inward but channeled in *every direction*" (174, my emphasis). Moreover, independence does not bring forth the fully Utopian horizon of a national culture born of absolute violence. Warning against the emergence of the full-presence of a reified nationalism, Fanon argues "After independence [the artist's] desire to reunite with the people confines him to a point by point representation of national reality which is flat, untroubled, motionless, reminiscent of death rather than life" (161). In other words, national culture is never a finished project, a purely mimetic, reflective exercise, but instead it only exists in continual struggle and negotiation. It is

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similar, then, to Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat ideas of culture defined "not as the primordial home but rather as a *conjunctural* alignment of needs and claims, forged in an inclusionary history of oppositional struggles" (6).

Moreover, national consciousness cannot confine itself to the purely local as doing so also contributes to this "representation of national reality which is flat, untroubled, motionless, reminiscent of death rather than life." It is in this sense that national culture jumps the turnstiles of the nation into the international realm of global struggle with other anti-imperial and liberation movements: "It is the national character that makes culture permeable to other cultures and enables it to influence and penetrate them" (177). Indeed, national culture becomes the means to combat cultural neoimperialism and allow for reciprocity in global cultural exchange, "that which does not exist can hardly have an effect on reality or even influence it" (177). So while a certain retinue of global culturalists argue for the liberatory effects of global exchange and deny any sense of an already-existing cultural imperialism,[31] Fanon offers us a useful reminder that the flow of cultural is never neutral and even in globalization carries certain national values and force. Indeed, for Fanon, it is only a full-fledged national consciousness that can demand and implement reparations from Europe, while simultaneously opposing neoimperial advances.

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[31] Timothy Brennan defines the culturalist position as pertaining to three axioms: "These are (1) that the primary impediment to understanding culture has been the 'base-superstructure' model of Marxism; (2) that attempts to give economics or material interests priority in matters of culture are always a form of 'economism' in which (as Rich Johnson puts it) the effort to go for the 'brutally obvious determinations' fails to give adequate weight to the 'social life of subjective forms'; and finally, and most important, (3) that culture is the arena in which the most important political battles today take place" (*Home* 104). Significantly, the culturalist position almost always begins with a direct attack on any concept of cultural imperialism. The introduction to Frederick Buell's *National Culture and the New Global System* provides a textbook example (as well as summary of) the culturalist position (which could also include such notable figures as Kwame Anthony Appiah and John Tomlinson). Fredric Jameson's "Globalization as a Philosophical Issue" provides a direct riposte to this culturalist position and its rejection of cultural imperialism.

The weak-utopian impulse of national culture that I am reading for here, then, works towards overcoming the conditions of colonization and neoimperialism that Fanon presents with "On Violence," yet with the implication that this horizon is always at an impossible remove as that would be the ossification of national culture in nationalism – resulting in his famous phrase of "zones of instability." Moreover, national culture is necessarily responsive to the agonistic political and cultural structures that the emerging postcolonial state emerges into and as such recognizes the impossibility of the absolutism of the postcolonial state founded only on Manichean violence and thus underscores the call towards new international structures of aid. It is this internationalist vocation of nationalism that Said privileges in *Culture and Imperialism* when he states that, "Resistance and decolonization as I talk about them here persist well after successful nationalism has come to a stop" (213). Said thus argues for a tripartite understanding of cultural resistance that arises from national culture, the first being the right toward self-determination outside of imperial and neo-imperial confines. The "[s]econd is the idea that resistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history. It is particularly important to see how much this alternative conception is based on breaking down the barrier between cultures" (216). Breaking down barriers here should be understood not as in favor of universal identity, but instead of unequal interconnections, shared histories of imperialism and resistance that he frames as part of the contrapuntal strategy. Finally, the "Third is a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation" (216).

While the progressively utopian elements of Said's cultural-political program here is quite clear, it is the second aspect of this tripartite schema that I would like to highlight where cultural resistance exists as an "alternative way of conceiving human history […] based on

breaking down the barrier between cultures" (216). It is often held that anti-imperial and postcolonial nationalisms are too heavily reliant on Eurocentric conceptions of nationalism, hostage to the lineaments of Enlightenment universalism and therefore reproduce the same oppressive conditions. Variations of this argument can be found in the work of vastly different theorists and scholars from Hardt and Negri to Anne McClintock to Arif Dirlik, for just a small sampling. Indeed, it can even be found to be implicit in the work of Pheng Cheah whose goal is a redemptive critique of postcolonial nationalism. In the introduction to his *Spectral Nationality*, he avers that "The fact that these ideas received their first elaborate formalization in German philosophy does not make decolonization and postcolonial nationalisms derivative of a European model" (6). Yet by the end of the text, where he examines particular anti-imperialist cultural projects, particularly that of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, he argues that "the continuity between [Ngũgĩ's] idea of revolutionary national culture and German idealism's organismic ontology is more direct. Ngũgĩ explicitly acknowledges this by marking his filiation to Marx and Fanon" (352-3). A direct line is drawn from Hegel through Marx to Fanon and then to Ngũgĩ. What is missed in account is exactly what is found in Said's comment above; the national culture of Fanon's project does not runs counter to western discourses of liberation, but to the neo-imperial forms of statism imposed upon decolonizing nations under the guise of nationalism. Indeed the utopian thrust of Fanon's writing performs the critique of nationalism put forth by Chatterjee and referenced in the introduction to this dissertation, where the paucity of nationalism as a "modular nationalism" directly imported from Europe via imperial conquest is rethought through an anti-imperial national culture.

While Fanon makes the questionable reference to entering the world "stage of history" with all its necessarily Hegelian overtones, if we take Fanon's goal of the demise of the

colonized and the colonizer seriously then this new stage of world history is emptied of the

Idealist Hegelian imperialist logic that supposedly prefigures it. Instead of the inexorable

annexation preformed by *aufhebung*, "the national character of culture [is made] permeable to

other cultures and enables it to influence and penetrate them" (Fanon 177). Far from positing a

Universalism or Idealism, as this reading illustrates, Fanon's "On Culture" foregrounds a realm

where the proliferation of non-identity, in Adorno's sense of remainders, can confront and

recognize each other. Indeed, he is arguing against the universalization of western imperialism in

the form of the western nation-state apparatus as the continuation and carrier of imperialism. It is

in this sense that Said argues for "breaking down the barriers between cultures" as the stage of

liberation, not in a sense of a universal idealist singular human culture but instead where

reciprocity and difference comingle. The weak-utopianism of national culture that I seek to tease

from Fanon's work, then, is based upon the concept of possibility for difference that is expressed

in Fanon's paradoxical rephrasing of Hegel by way of his conception of the new humanity that is

"for itself and *for others*" (178 my emphasis). The rejection of the in-itself allows for a constant

destabilization brought on by the openness to the other: a weak-utopianism that finds its utopia

always situated at the vanishing point of the horizon. Thus, what is found in Fanon's formulation

of the "for itself and for others" is an implicit rejection of the, so-called, Hegelian dialectic of

identity in favor of an expression that resembles more closely an Adornian negative dialectic, or

what Jameson might call a dialectic to incommensurability.[32] I would then insist on the

applicability of this at both the national as well as the international level such that the in-itself is

held in abeyance by the "for others" such that that "for itself and for others" is kept in tension

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[32]
  In a similar vein, Nigel Gibson, in his book *Fanon*, argues that Fanon's engagement with
Hegel in *Black Skins, White Masks* takes the form of a negative dialectic.

without identity, synthesis, resolution or *aufhebung* in the same spirit in which Adorno once famously asserted: "The whole is the false" (50).[33]

By way of summation, the re-reading of Fanon on the issues of nationalism and liberation produced two possible horizons. The first, based primarily on an analysis of the essay on the trope of absolute violence in "On Violence," points towards a Hegelian dialectic of identity whereby the passage from colonialism to postcolonialism would be premised through the old Shibboleth of a thesis-antithesis-sublation. Here the structure would take the form of colonial violence which finds its antithesis in anti-colonial violence in which the *aufhebung* (sublation, resolution, suppression and transcendence all in one) of this system finds its apogee in the wholly original, yet utterly dependent upon the constitutive former qualities, of postcolonialism. This is a fundamentally *U*topian vision predicated on the full presence of freedom, the complete identity of that which is anti-imperial, realizing its end goal of complete self-determination (or what Cheah would term the infinite self-actualization of freedom). Moreover, this is an impossible limit which erases, by way of violence, any notion of an outside or other, and that it would therefore necessarily be a total system in its conception and ends and ultimately one that is both undesirable as well as impossible.

Instead, a second possibility has been sought, predicated on a weak-utopian impulse found in Fanon's presentation of a "national consciousness which is not nationalism." Building from the impossibility of the absolutism of violence, I've argued that the essay "On National Culture" reveals an unresolving negative dialectic between the national consciousness that is

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[33] The formulation is a purposeful inversion of Hegel's "The whole is the true." In this particular case the former can be related to the role of national culture and the latter to nationalism as Fanon distinguishes between them with the phrase "National consciousness which is not nationalism is alone capable of giving us an international dimension" discussed above (179).

necessary to liberate the nation-state from imperial oppressive structures, and the formation of a

nation-state that is necessary to guarantee the free and continual development of a national

culture and consciousness; the contemporary currency of which can be found in regard to

Premnath's theorization of the weak sovereignty of the nation-state in global late capitalism.

Each is dependent upon the other for a continual process of development and renewal and here

the emphasis is switched from an absolute and purifying violence to a notion of struggle.

Moreover, both are necessary for creating political bodies that can act in the global world as it is

the development of the national that allows for international reciprocity. It is this notion of

continual struggle and coeval processional development and interdependence that is then

incommensurate with any notion of *aufhebung* or identity as the resolution of the dialectic, and

as such, structured as a negative dialectic. To be clear, I make no claims that this was Fanon's

original intention. Instead, it is argued that this conception of a weak-utopian impulse at work in

the discourse on national consciousness provides the groundwork and possibility for what I am

calling an international nationalism, one predicated, as Said would contend, on the ongoing

struggle for liberation both within and without the state. Moreover, with the expansion of the

capitalist world-system following the period of decolonization and the fall of the Soviet bloc, any

sense of liberation within the state structure is also going to depend on the ability of that state to

operate within the global economic system in order to both stem the tide of negative foreign

influence (be they national or transnational)[34] as well as to link with other progressive liberatory

elements within other states in order to transform the global world-system.

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[34] While most accounts of global resistance follow Masao Miyoshi's influential position that the
state has been entirely superseded by transnational corporations and therefore concentrate their
energies on combating global entities like the World Bank or the IMF, Bret Benjamin's analysis
of the World Bank illustrates that there are still considerable national concerns that at various

Postcolonial Nationalism: From Promise to Failure to Possibility

Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, a sweeping history of the development of the concept of nationalism as the rallying cry for anti-imperial struggle and its subsequent encasing in the form of Western bourgeois nation-states in the colonized world, makes it all too clear that Fanon's worst fears about the problems of an ascendant bourgeois, comprador nationalist class came to fruition. Serving as the summation of over forty years of scholarship on postcolonial African history, *The Black Man's Burden* highlights the initial promise of nationalism, particularly in terms of its emphasis on social reform as opposed to state power. Dismissing the links to a Herderian Romantic, Idealist nationalism, Davidson instead argues that African nationalisms grew out of an internal desire and subsequent struggle for social reforms whose founding context was the imposition of the slave state and imperial oppression. Moreover, he argues that the early forms of African anti-imperial nationalism often took the form of international federations that broke with the impositions of arbitrary and colonially enforced boundaries thereby disengaging with the closed modular form of the nation-state and the nation-peoples as exemplified by Romantic, Western nationalism.[35]

Davidson contends that it was not so much a matter of a failure of anti-imperial struggles to imagine a different form for the postcolonial nation, as Chatterjee sardonically laments, but instead that it was the quashing of alternative nationalisms by imperial *cum* neo-imperial

times have manage to direct such global institutions in terms of their national interests. Moreover, NGO's with roots in particular political parties, programs of tied aid, military aid and the expansion of overseas military bases continue to direct considerable national interests on foreign shores.

[35] Imre Szeman explores the legacy of postcolonial federalism, its fall to bourgeois nationalism and literature's place in this in his *Zones of Instability*.

interests through the shackling of decolonization to the modular bourgeois Western nation-state

form that led to the failure of so many postcolonial nationalisms. He states that sensing the

danger of a Western style nationalism, many anti-imperial nationalists instead

> argued and pressed for interterritorial movements – for example, the
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> multiterritorial Rassemblement Démocratique Africain in the French West and
>
> Equatorial territories, the Pan-African freedom Movement in the British east and
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> Central territories – but they formed them in vain. Neither the imperial powers nor
>
> ambitions unleashed among the new nationalists themselves were ready for such
>
> visionary initiatives, while the imperial powers, just in case the vision might
>
> become real, positively worked for their destruction. (106)

He later concludes that this led to an alignment against the anti-imperial nationalism of the

masses by the bourgeois comprador nationalist class and the imperial powers whereby the British

and French governments worked to "[…] spot and promote candidates for suitably convenient

African nation-statist leadership [, while] American policy in Africa would in due course follow

the same approach" (172).

The enforcement of the Western bourgeois nation-state form on African colonies

perpetuated colonial divisions and boundaries and furthered neo-imperial economic control

through the rhetorics of economic modernization and development. Nationalism was transformed

from a discourse of anti-imperial social transformation into a neo-imperial economic capitalist

development schema that ended up, in Davidson's words, alienating the masses from the nation-

state and driving towards the latter's delegitimization in the former's eyes. This process of

alienation and delegitimization culminated in the political chaos of contemporary African

politics through the splintering and fragmenting of the nation into multifarious clientelisms.[36]

However, as the postcolonial nationalisms turned corrosive in the neo-imperial nation-states with

the widening gap between the ruling classes and the mass population thereby creating a

fundamental alienation between the people and the state (a process evident in Armah's novel),

the weak-utopian national consciousness registered in Fanon's "On National Culture," did not,

however, disappear along the vicissitudes of history. Instead, it took root in the cultural

production of the postcolonial and postimperial novels of national *Bildung*.

Unwriting and Rewriting the Nation: Postcolonial *Bildungsroman*

The Cuban author Guillermo Cabrera Infante once quipped that "nations are notions." Notions,

in this context, is a particularly slippery term. Whose notion? How does one locate a "notion?"

How do notions translate into material effects or places – such as, the very nations that they

authorize? Moreover, that nations, the first term, are notions, could be seen as reversing the

commonplace trajectory: it is the nation that becomes the notion and not the other way around.

This latter proposition is reminiscent of Partha Chatterjee's critique of Benedict Anderson's

"modular" nationalism and Dirlik's announcement that the proliferation of nation-states in the

formerly colonized territories actually represents the fulfillment of the Western imperial project

in *Global Modernity*. The nation is merely an ideological tool that is grafted onto the colonial

territory keeping it in perpetual reliance on the constraints of imperial Western logic. Even if we

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[36] He argues that this process of clientelism is coded as atavistic precolonial tribalisms in Western political discourse when in actuality the so-called reversion to "tribalism" is itself the imprint of the imperialist's creation of slave states and the outcome of their colonial taxonomy. For the colonial imposition of tribalism see Terence Ranger's "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa" in *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. 211-262.

recognize the "are" in the statement as simply performing the function of an "equals" sign, that is, without suggesting a temporal-relational arc, the relationship between the two terms still weighs on the mind. It is particularly for these reasons that the act of writing the nation becomes so significant.

The creation of a postcolonial national discourse begins to reveal the dialectical push and pull between the notion and the nation and vice versa. Timothy Brennan unpacks this relationship in his "The National Longing for Form," in which he states, "The 'nation' is precisely what Foucault has called a 'discursive formation' – not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of" (46-47). What is perhaps most striking in this formation is the way that "suffering the lack of" often becomes during the postcolonial conjuncture a suffering *from* the nation-state, which can be illustrated by repeating here Spivak's dictum that "[…] 'Empire' and 'Nation' are interchangeable names, however hard it might be […] to imagine it'" (qtd. in Lazarus "Disavowing" 71). To put it more concisely, the nation, then, becomes something that the postcolonial artist builds, suffers the lack of, and suffers from: one creates a notion of the nation because they suffer its lack, or conversely, one suffers from the notion of the nation so the artist attempts to authorize a new notion and a new nation. By way of an adaptation from Derrida's position on the vexed nature of Human Rights,[37] we can argue that the nation in postcolonial writing becomes both insufficient and necessary. This tri-partite relationship of building, suffering the lack of and suffering from is made all the more clear in the later post-

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[37] "We must more than ever stand on the side of human rights. We need human rights. We are in need of them and they are in need, for there is always a lack, a shortfall, an insufficiency; human rights are never sufficient" (*Philosophy in a Time of Terror*).

independence writings of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, from *Petals of Blood* (1977) to his return to fiction

with *The Wizard of the Crow* (2006).

While most presentations of Ngũgĩ's work concentrate on a well-worn set of issues (most

prominent being his decision to write only in Gikuyu after years of writing in English, or the

trajectory that his work takes from nationalism to Marxism to globalization/neo-imperialism), the

focus, here, is on his movement from realist depictions of Kenyan social life to the increasing

abstraction that dominates his work and their relation to his project of nationalist *Bildung*.

However, even within this move away from what is often seen as a particular kind of European

realism to a more polyglot, abstract form, there is still a continued emphasis on nationalism and

the nation in the postnational, Marxist or neo-imperial global phases of his work. As such, I am

interested in the way that Ngũgĩ's later novels straddle the theory and utopianism of Fanon with

the history and failure of nationalism presented by Davidson through a particularly literary lens

as a kind of postcolonial nationalist *Bildungsroman*.

By focusing on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as a postcolonial, or perhaps more accurately an anti-

imperial nationalist novelist, I am by no means attempting to give an exhaustive or authoritative

account of his relationship to a specifically Kenyan form of nationalist *Bildungsroman*, nor most

broadly and most far from the mark here, as a theoretician of (pan)African *Bildung*. Instead, I am

most interested in the way that Ngũgĩ's work is exemplary of a particular kind of nationalist

narration, which can be seen as a process of a double-writing: a writing of the (neo)colonial state

that *is*, as well as the postcolonial state that *is not*, or, in the terms of weak-utopianism, that is yet

to-come. This double-writing destabilizes the logical self-being of the neoimperial state and

constantly re-avows the possibility and necessity of something other in its stead. What this

something *other* is, is often left vague as it could only exist via the negation of the neo-imperial

nation-state that currently coheres. Its future coming into being is therefore reliant on a possibility of difference. Consequently, Ngũgĩ's fictional corpus constitutes a continual unwriting and rewriting of the nation (the nation, here, could be read as either real or imagined – the difference is hard to discern and is purposefully kept ambiguous by the later novels). Moreover, as most of his interlocutors attest to the strictly Kenyan or even Gikuyu nationalist politics of his writings, often with good reason, I am instead interested in the way that the particular form of his nationalist narration constantly shifts to a presentation of an internationalism explored by Fanon in his essay "On National Culture" whereby any presentation of the concept of a fully present or self-identical "national" is constantly overdetermined by the conditions of (neo)imperialism and the global late capitalist world-system (which is in turn predicated on a particular model and organization of the nation-state).

Of primary importance, then, is the way that Ngũgĩ presents the concept of cultural nationalism as a means of continuing not only the hegemonic class privileges of what Fanon calls the nationalist bourgeoisie, but also the maintenance of neo-imperial conditions such that the post independent state continues to operate in much the same way as the colonial state that it has supposedly replaced. As a consequence, I concentrate on those moments where *Petals of Blood* seems to offer a counter formation of national struggle, one that privileges difference and non-identity (as opposed to the cultural nationalism of the KCO), at the local level as well as at the international and global levels.

Briefly, the plot of *Petals of Blood* follows something of the conventions of a murder mystery. The novel begins with the rounding up of the suspects by the police. The suspects consist of the four principal characters of the text: Munira, a conflicted product of the imperial cultural institutions and, as a schoolteacher and religious man, a figure of their lingering power

and resilience in the neo-imperial, post-independent Kenya. The second suspect, Karega, was Munira's one time assistant teacher and at present, the union president for Theng'eta Brewery. He's a sort of Gramscian "organic intellectual" and the inheritor of anti-imperial revolution and thus the voice of anti-neoimperial revolution. Next, there's Abdulla, a former Mau-Mau revolutionary who finds postcolonial independence to be a brutal betrayal of the ideals for which he had fought. Finally, the last suspect is Wanja, the female love interest, one time barmaid, the original co-brewer along with Abdulla of Thenga, and finally at the present moment of the novel, the proprietor of a brothel. They all know each other, intimately, and they all, with the exception of Munira, who it turns out is primarily culpable, had cause to murder the victims.

Much of the novel's narrative is based on Munira's prison-based recounting of the events that led to the international development of their village, Illmorog, and how these events ultimately led to the conterminous deaths of the three principal "modernizers" and developers of the village, who are also the proprietors of the Theng'eta Brewery. They include Chui, a former headmaster of the prestigious private school that both Munira and Karega attended; Nderi, the thoroughly corrupt government representative of Illmorog in the National Assembly in Nairobi and leader of the cultural-nationalist KCO; and Mzigo, who is akin to a superintendent for the area's schools and thus Munira's immediate superior. The novel is structured around the polarized portrayals of the hyper-modern Nairobi which is presented as the seat of neo-imperial elites, and the rural village of Illmorog which becomes a kind of haven for those who have been displaced by the modern Kenya. Through flashbacks we learn how Illmorog is turned from a remote isolated village into a modern industrial town and a premiere tourist destination for those interested in the culturally "authentic" Kenya (which the novel translates largely into those interested in neoimperial development schemes and sex tourism). In other words, it is the story

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of how Illmorog is transformed from an independent postcolonial community into part of the modern nation-state of Kenya.

As many commentators note, *Petals of Blood* represents a change in Ngũgĩ's own political and literary stance. For example, F. Odun Balogun argues that *Petals of Blood* marks a change from the earlier nationalist texts to a Marxist worldview:

> By the time Ngũgĩ was at Leeds, where he wrote *A Grain of Wheat*, he was already experiencing a crisis of ideological reappraisal. The publication in 1972 of *Homecoming* signaled the abandonment of nationalist ideology and the commencement of the journey toward Marxism. The break with nationalism was total, and a crusading Marxism had completely taken over by the time *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) […] and *Petals of Blood* (1977) appeared. (21)[38]

Kathleen Greenfield describes this as a "shift in the center of moral conflict correspond[ing] to a change in enterprise: from explaining the past, Ngũgĩ has shifted to justifying the demand for social change and creating models for taking the first steps towards it" (28). Countless critics including Balogun, as well as Simon Gikandi and Homi Bhabha among the more notable, tie this shift in politics to a stylistic change in which Ngũgĩ is said to take up the mantle of socialist realism which is then often seen, although not in Balogun's case, as lesser and wanting in comparison to the ambivalent modernism of his previous novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). Due to its overt political message and flat, two-dimensional portrayal of the novel's national and international neoimperial antagonists, the novel is seen as being enfeebled by Ngũgĩ's Marxism and as being less complex than its predecessor. However, these accusations often ignore the

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[38] For similar arguments see also: Gugler, Josef. "How Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o Shifted from Class Analysis to a Neo-Colonialist Perspective" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 32.2 (1994): 329-39.

increasing abstraction and mediation that distance Ngũgĩ's later novels from the historical-material subject matter of Kenya in favor of meditations on the conflicting roles of nationalism in general in the postcolonial world.

Beginning as early as the introduction to *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ notes his growing dissatisfaction with the groundwork of "factual" history in literature: "Although set in contemporary Kenya, all the characters in this book are fictitious. Names like that of Jomo Kenyatta and Waiyaki are *unavoidably* mentioned as part of the history and institutions of this country" (ix, my emphasis). What is unavoidable in 1967 becomes avoidable by 1977. Not only does *Petals of Blood* largely stray from naming names, so to speak, it also creates its own village (Illmorog) and politicians (Nderi). By the time of his sixth novel, *Matigari* (1987) even Kenya is displaced: "This story is imaginary. The actions are imaginary. The characters are imaginary. The country is imaginary – it has no name even. Reader/listener: may the story take place in the country of your choice!" (ix). These abstractions and mediations from the historical Kenya, to the fictional Illmorog of *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, to the unnamed country of the later novels takes place alongside an increasingly non-realist approach to plotting and storytelling in Ngũgĩ's novels. Far from a formal social realism, the novels become increasingly *fictional* (as opposed to historical), fantastic and even magical with the most recent *Wizard of the Crow*. More often than not, social realism, in the realm of criticism, seems more of a shorthand castigation for Marxist ideology than literary form.

This move towards abstraction and greater mediation from the historical material context in *Petals of Blood* is also related to the two-dimensional aspects of Ngũgĩ's portrayal of the novel's antagonists and Nairobi. This flattened depiction is counterpoised by the more fully drawn portraits of the protagonists and Illmorog. Instead of providing a romanticized, somehow

precolonial enclave amidst the neoimperial Kenya, Illmorog, the fictional village that also appears in *Devil on the Cross*, is presented as a complex social, cultural and political environment. Significantly, the three male protagonists of *Petals of Blood* are not originally from Illmorog, and Wanja has only returned after a long and painful absence. As Kathleen Greenfield notes, all the main characters "have come to Illmorog with identities formed in the modern neo-colonial Kenya, and have rejected that world for one reason or another" (33). Unable to fully adapt to the new Kenyan national form, which the novel depicts in a similarly negative mode as was seen with Armah's *The Beautyful Ones*, the characters come together to form an alternative national body in a space not overdetermined by global finance and development. However, far from becoming a passive receptacle for a timeless, traditional, mythical Gikuyu culture, the dynamics and communal structures of the village adapt to and are transformed by the addition of each new member.

The dynamism of Illmorog and its inhabitants is then contrasted with flatness of Nairobi and the figures of global capitalist development. As Gikandi's asserts, the splitting of the narrative amongst the four principal characters as well as the collective "we" that steps in when the narration is taken out of the characters' perspective represents a dismissal of the Western bourgeois conventions of novelistic individualism in favor of an anti-colonial collectivity of difference. With this in mind, the motivation for the flat portrayal of Nairobi, the nationalist bourgeois elites and the neo-imperial foreigners reveals itself in comparison. By the novel's logic, the latter are combined under the reified identity-form (in Adorno's pejorative sense) of capitalist modernity. Thus the Kenyan post-independence elites, the neoimperial foreigners and their primary spatial representation (Nairobi) are all interchangeable ciphers for the totalizing drive of global late capitalism. This has particular resonance with Adorno's charge that identity

and capitalist exchange have become commensurate, in which identity is posited as the eradication of difference and thus the sign of equivalence under the capitalist system of exchange.

Conversely, as a purely fictional space confronted by the confines of the neo-colonial Kenya, Illmorog fulfills Cheah's assertion that:

> a home that is an antidote has to be conjured up or created anew. But this home –
> the nation – cannot just be a revival of precolonial indigenous traditions, even
> though it may draw on progressive elements from such traditions […] as
> resources for sustenance. […They] could not espouse a quietistic accommodation
> to existing society. They were not ideological means of socialization, but called
> for the radical transformation of society. (Cheah 243)

The main difference here is that the imagined nation called into being finds itself already within a nation-state and thus seeks the "radical transformation" of the very state that surrounds it.

Illmorog, which started out as a remote Scottish seaside town compared to the industrial Leeds, was then transposed onto Kenya and became Ngũgĩ's symbol for the generalized imperial aspects of capitalism: "The rural areas of Africa were to the big cities what African countries were to the metropolis and the countries of the West. The urban rested on the rural just as the West as a whole rested on Africa" ("Novel" 84). That is, in contrast to Nairobi, the space of neo-liberal and neo-imperial influence, Illmorog operates as a weak-utopian space of possibility and non-identity, where those who are non-aligned, non-identical with the neoimperial post-independence state of Kenya can seek refuge and attempt to forge a future outside of external economic neoimperialism and internal cultural nationalism, which ends up being merely a masked form of the former. Significantly, Illmorog is not allowed by the context of the novel to

develop into some sort of secret enclave outside of the bounds imposed by the neoimperial conditions of the rest of the present day Kenya. Instead, the world intrudes on Illmorog in the form of international development directed through Illmorog's representative in the National Assembly. As such, the novel reiterates Fanon's assertion that any postcolonial nationalist politics must contend with and aim towards the transformation of the larger world-system. Herein lies the Marxism of Ngũgĩ's novel as it closes on a call for international solidarity against global capitalism; hence Ngũgĩ's turn to Marxism does not mark an abandonment of his nationalist politics so much as a reformulation of them in reference to a larger global scale.

Turning to the indictment of cultural nationalism in *Petals of Blood* one sees that the novel links it to the two dimensional reduction of its antagonists. Throughout the novel, cultural nationalism is presented as a mechanism that reduces individuals to a cog in the neoimperial machinery of the state and as another aspect of the reductive aspects of identity spurned by Adorno. As such, the novel becomes a site for exploring Dirlik's later claim that:

> decolonization in either a political or ideological sense carries little meaning when the nation-state is recognized as colonial institution. To be thorough, in other words, decolonization cannot be limited merely to an escape from Euro-American colonialism into some imagined national culture, but it must go further to question the colonizing implications of the idea of a national culture backed up by the power of the nation-state. (123)

For Ngũgĩ, the "idea of a national culture backed up by the power of the nation-state" is of signal importance. *Petals of Blood* asserts a strong and bitter indictment of the hijacking of anti-imperial struggle by elites – in this case those who did not fight with the Mau Mau for independence – and their subsequent substitution of anti-imperial nationalism for an oppressive

cultural nationalism. The novel presents this as a sort of statist fashioning of identity similar to Anderson's conception of top-down official nationalism promulgated by European dynastic governments. Particularly at issue is the way that cultural nationalism, represented in the text by the KCO,[39] is presented as an ideological straitjacket on the villagers and farmers by the elite class in order to mask the subjugation of the nation's people to the economic strictures of neo-imperialist late capitalism. The KCO initially begins as a forced loyalty program among the peasants, rural villagers and farmers[40] known as "Tea Parties." However the KCO, in terms of the text and its particular moment, as Craig V. Smith notes, "appropriates storied aspects of Mau Mau [most particularly here being the taking of an oath] for antagonistic purposes" (104). With the KCO the thrust of the earlier anti-colonial nationalism is reversed and translated into a program of cultural nationalism in order to subdue potentially revolutionary movements within the independent Kenya, thereby securing the interests of the new postcolonial governmental and economic elites.

Although the KCO is initially intended as a way of bringing the masses together under one spurious cultural identity, it is soon transformed into something bigger by Nderi: "KCO had originally been a vague thing in his mind. It had grown out of his belief in cultural authenticity which he had used with positive results in his business partnership with foreigners and foreign companies. Why not use culture as a basis of ethnic unity?" (186). Quickly, the terms change from ethnic unity to capital accruement as he imagines how to explain to the foreign press "that

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[39]
 Kwamene Cultural Organization
[40]
 Here we can see Chatterjee's assertion that the bourgeois nationalist elite often operate in fear of the peasant class and their communities: "To push the point a little further, we could argue that it is always the specter of an open rebellion by the peasantry which haunts the consciousness of the dominant classes in agrarian societies and shapes and modifies their forms of exercise of domination" (171).

it was not against progressive cooperation and active economic partnership with imperialism. […Instead,] KCO would serve the interests of the wealthy locals and their foreign partners to create similar economic giants!" with his example being the Rockefellers (186). Consequently, there is no difference between foreign neoimperialism and statist cultural nationalism. Nderi uses the tools of KCO to overtake and completely transform the rural village that he represents in the National Assembly into a new international investment zone, destroying the communal economic, political and life patterns of that village and thus, as the text presents it, the only refuge for the outcasts from modern independent, neoimperial Kenya. By developing and modernizing Illmorog along the lines of Nairobi, or any other major westernized city, the KCO destroys any possibility of an *other* Kenya – another turn in the destructive operations of capitalist identity.

However, the text has larger things in mind than just documenting exploitation; *Petals of Blood* also can be seen as an intervention in the literary national *Bildung* itself. Indeed, at one point in the text Karega, one of the revolutionary characters, thinks:

> Imaginative literature was not much different [than histories of decolonization]: the authors described the conditions correctly: they seemed able to reflect accurately the contemporary situation of fear, oppressions and deprivation: but thereafter they led him down the paths of pessimism, obscurity and mysticism: was there no way out except cynicism? Were people helpless victims? (200)

This inward looking critique of the postcolonial nation-building texts structures the utopian impulse of the novel. Whereas *The Beautyful Ones'* critique of the neoimperial auspices of its government concentrated only on an internal examination that led its critique into a pessimistic dismissal of anti-imperial politics, *Petals of Blood* ties the corruption of the state to the

contemporary international aspects of neoimperial economic and development policies. While the narrator of *The Beautyful Ones* turns to the past to find where they, the Ghanaian people, had gone wrong and finds only frustrated desires, Karega seeks to break with this backwards turn, critiquing it for both its culturally nationalist shades of nativism as well as for how easily its idealism turns to cynicism: "I mean we must not preserve our past as a museum: rather we must study it critically, without illusions, and see what lessons we can draw from it in today's battle-field of the future and present. But to worship it – no" (323). Even as the postcolonial dream of Illmorog as a refuge from the forces of neoimperialism fades, Karega sees possibility in struggle by rejecting the romantic pull of the past and instead continues to think about how the experience of Illmorog can plant the seeds, even in its failure, "for the radical transformation of society" as Cheah argues (243).

Compared to the general resignation of Armah's narrator, Keraga's desires are given a direct outlet: "Kenya, the soil, was the people's common shamba, and there was no way it could be right for a few, or a section, or a single nationality, to inherit for their sole use what was communal" (302). With this, the problems of nationalism are not rooted in the land or the nation itself, as it seems with Armah's text, instead it is a question of politics. The novel ends with a repudiation of international capitalism and a blistering call to action:

> These few who had prostituted the whole land turning it over to foreigners for thorough exploitation, would drink people's blood and say hypocritical prayers of devotion to skin oneness and to nationalism even as skeletons of bones walked to lonely graves. The system and its gods and its angels had to be fought consciously, consistently and resolutely by all the working people! (344)

However, more than just the promise of action is given as this is followed by the news of the death in Nairobi of the "very important person of authority" who was killed by "Wakombozi – or the society of one world liberation" and the return of Stanley Mathenes from Ethiopia "to compete the war he and Kimathi started" (343-44). Finally, the closing the sentence of the novel presents the utopian note of "Tomorrow … and he knows he was no longer alone" (345). While the text pulls no punches documenting the misery and deprivation of neoimperialism, it refuses to fall into a passive cynicism or despair, instead the text reveals that these conditions are an enforced part of a system and as such they can be resisted: there is the possibility of a future outside of and beyond neo-imperialism and the strictures of national consciousness that is not cultural nationalism.

I've turned to this earlier moment in Ngũgĩ's oeuvre because it supposedly marks the end of his nationalist phase. Also, in terms of larger cultural and academic trends, the novel coincides with the beginning of the postnational phase, as the 1970s are often considered to be the highwater mark for the turn against the failures of the nation in postcolonial fiction. What is considerable here, then, is the way that *Petals of Blood*, as well as the novels that follow it, still consider the nation-state as a recuperable battleground. However, in doing so, it breaks with the Western and subsequently, even determinably neoimperial logic of a nationalism that is based upon identity between the nationalist bourgeois, the inherited nation-state form and the global structures of late capitalism. *Petals of Blood*, instead, advocates something closer to Fanon's famous statement of the "National consciousness, which is not nationalism, [that] is alone capable of giving us an international dimension" drawn on previously (179). The nation-state becomes not a site in which to maximize one's freedom or internationally recognized Human Rights through an identification of a singular people to the state, but instead is recognized in its

current neoimperial form as block to such a program from both internal and external forces. Only through a radical transformation of the world state-system could such an enviable task even be imagined as possible.

As such, *Petals of Blood* represents a different kind of nationalist *Bildung*, one that bridges the eras of the hopeful anti-colonial nation-building texts of the early 1950s and 60s and the pessimistic anti-nationalist texts of the 1970s and 80s and posits something *other* to them both. In reference to Slaughter's assertion that the classical *Bildungsroman* creates a dialectical link between citizen/subject and the state, or Macgoye's pessimistic postcolonial *Bildungsroman* that instead posits the relationship as the postcolonial subject's assimilation to capitalist modernity's state structures, I want to close this section by suggesting that *Petals of Blood* offers something different to both the dialectical and allegorical models of *Bildungsroman*, in that it can be thought of as a negative dialectical *Bildungsroman*. Rejecting the spurious identity offered by neoimperial state and its confluence with the logic of global late capitalism, the novel presents a postcolonial international nationalism that ultimately seeks to transform the contemporary world-system in the model proposed by Fanon. A nationalism of non-identity would seek neither to create the ideal nation-peoples through a return of cultural nationalism as promoted by the KCO, nor the adoption of western capitalist nation-statism as a universal or teleological product of progressive history and civilization marked by the economic modernization and development of both the nation and the state. Instead it resists those internal and external neo-imperial forces that attempt to recreate the world – and thus the nation, the state, and the concept of freedom – in their own monolithic image.

The consequences of the weak-utopianism of a negative dialectic of nationalism that I'm pointing towards are fairly clear. First, they suggest that the nation could never be posited in the

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fullest sense as an "achieved identity" in Adorno's sense, one that is static, monolithic

hypostasized – without difference. While Ngũgĩ calls for "all the working people" to resist the

machinations of neoimperialism, these working people are not presented as a singular, uniform

entity in the text. They have diverse backgrounds, nationalities, interests and worldviews; hence

the fragmented narration of the text as detailed by Gikandi and the dismissal of the bourgeois

convention of individual narrative consciousness as universal consciousness.[41] This, therefore,

renders identity between the nation and the state possible only, as Adorno argues, through the

recognition or "consciousness of non-identity […] the creation of a reconciled non-identity"

(55). "Reconciled," here, would have to connote work and, moreover, continual work as the non-

identity and the negative dialectic itself are always pushing away from reconciliation, sublation

and resolution. The state would have to be the place in which to reconcile the recognition of non-

identity as opposed to achieve identity even as that means conterminously confronting the

pressures of an international system. The contrary situation is made clear in *Petals of Blood* with

the identity between the state, the nationalist bourgeoisie, neoimperial global capital and the

attempt to achieve national identity through the KCO.

Postimperial Nationalist *Bildung*? Or, *The Decline of the West*

In this last section, I turn to something of an anomaly in British literature, a postcolonial

nationalist *Bildungsroman* written by a British author. There is precious little in the way of

academic attention paid to David Caute's work overall, let alone his most ambitious and

expansive novel, *The Decline of the West*. For an author whose fiction has extensively covered

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[41] This then stands in contradistinction to the individualism presented in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. See Gikandi, Simon. *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Especially pages 128-59.

issues of colonialism, decolonization, the relationship between writing, academia and politics as well as the political climate of Thatcherism and the transformation of the UK in the 1980s, Caute remains strangely outside of the canon on both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, when one considers his extensive body of non-fiction, examining the need for and development of postmodern writing styles, monographs on Fanon, overviews of the French communist intellectual history of the twentieth century, among many others, his absence in the canon appears all the more unusual.[42] Given the overwhelming dearth of material on Caute's work, there are many fruitful avenues worth pursuing; however, here I will limit myself to analyzing *The Decline of the West* in terms of the Fanonian readings proffered above and in terms of its presentation of a desire for a postimperial national identity that is particularly tied to the rise of postcolonial nationalism. It is my contention that the novel can be seen as an intervention in the postcolonial national *Bildung* in that it seeks to rethink the Fanonian project of decolonization and nationalism through violence, while also attempting to use the postcolonial conjuncture of decolonization and neo-imperialism to imagine the possibility for a new British national identity in response to the recognition of postcolonial nation identities.

At over 600 pages, *The Decline of the West* is a sprawling novel whose narrative structure prefigures the global scope of Jameson's cognitive mapping and call for a new literary form that can grasp the overlapping, overdetermined global determinants of experience in the latter half of

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[42] Nicolas Tredell suggests that the lack of critical receptiveness to Caute's novels is, in part, due to the fact that, "In their challenge to realism, they can be seen as postmodernist; in their political and ethical engagements, they subvert postmodernist playfulness. But it is precisely in this confrontation—between postmodernism and realism, politics and play, commitment and critical detachment—that their power and pleasure lies."

the twentieth century.[43]   The action hop-scotches across London, Paris, Washington D.C., the

southern U.S., as well the capital city, Thiersville, and jungle countryside of the fictional African

nation of Coppernica. Ostensibly, the narrative is about a combined U.S., British, and French

coup in the seventh week of the "Year One" of the newly independent former French colony of

Coppernica. To this end, the narrative is structured around a coordinated effort among British

industrialists and intellectuals, American diplomats and intellectuals, ex-French military

personnel who lost the initial war for independence, as well as French industrialists to insert a

puppet bourgeois nationalist regime to replace the new nationalist government of Raymond

Tukhomada. If Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* is a novel of contraction, whereby the non-Kenyan actors

are reduced to a mere flattened *watallii* (literally tourist, but also used to describe developers,

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[43]
     The novel is much more of a novel of ideas than a realistic or psychological portrayal of the
complicated relationship of the decolonization/neo-colonial dialectic that Jameson describes in
"Periodizing the 60s." As such characters tend to be allegorical types. Given the large number of
principle characters, a brief character map of the principle actors that populate my discussion of
the novel follows: Raymond Tukhomada is the president of independent Coppernica – a former
évolués turned nationalist. Amah Odouma is Tukhomada's right-hand man, Minister of the
Interior and a former poet-philosopher turned revolutionary in Paris. Soames Tufton is the owner
of the Amcol mining company in Coppernica, and James Caffrey is his young protégé. Taken
together, they represent the sense of moral and civilizational superiority that underwrite the
British "Whiteman's Burden." Aristide Plon is a French greedy neo-imperial capitalist who has
no grand visions for civilization, but merely wants to profit and thus backs whoever is in charge
as long as it means deregulation and privatization (in this sense he represents a break between
erstwhile imperialism and the rising neoimperialism). He is in control of the Union de
Coppernica mining company and a direct economic rival to Soames. General Cartier was a
French General in charge of the forces that lost the war of independence and is now installed as
head of the Coppernican military in order to maintain good diplomatic and political ties with
France; he is in league with Plon. Fernand Ybele is the leader of the Alliance Party which is a
bourgeois nationalist party in the full pejorative sense developed by Fanon (he is in league with
Plon and thus Cartier, and it is Ybele that "leads" the coup against Tukhomada). Laval is a
"retired" French military officer, fascist and sadist and the leader of Plon's private military.
Chester Silk is the American Ambassador to Coppernica, Soames' brother-in-law and part owner
of Amcol. Powell Bailey is an African-American advisor to Chester Silk. He represents a
Dubois-like ideal of racial uplift that is carried on through his son Jason but contrasted by the
black radicalism of his son Haydon.

bankers, foreign experts, etc.) in which Germans, Japanese, Americans, and British are indistinguishable, although pervasive, then *Decline* is a novel of expansion where competition, motivation and methods among the competing powers are complex and often times at odds in the chaotic atmosphere of the decolonizing, postcolonial conjuncture. This difference in perspective and scope helps to illustrate the shift in emphasis from the international effects of Western capitalist neo-imperialism on nationalist *Bildung* in Ngũgĩ's work, to the emphasis of postcolonial nationalist *Bildung* for the a postimperial British perspective for Caute.

In his reading of *Decline*, M. Keith Booker argues that it "lacks any significant utopian dimension" due to the degenerate turn of the bourgeoisie, like Soames, which results in their inability to truly connect with the social world (244). However, this is a particularly odd assertion for a novel that ends with the restoration of a nationalist regime after having been faced with an international neo-imperial coupe, and even more so when one considers that the resistance leader refuses to kill the followers of the pro-western neo-imperial powers that personally held him captive and killed the President, in favor of an appeal to their right to justice. Booker bases this assertion on the terms developed in Jameson's "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" which aligns utopianism with the degree of a vision of social totality and nationalism. As such, the best way to understand Booker's claim is through his earlier statement that "Most of Caute's characters, especially the American and European ones, are radically alienated from the social world around them. As a result, despite their ability to represent typical positions within society, they lack the kind of connection to the social totality" (240). However, this says little about the African characters. Booker's reading thus not only elides the presentation of African anti-imperial nationalism that reconsiders the role of Fanonian violence, but also the possibilities for a different British identity fostered not on imperial mastery

but postimperial inter-relationships in relation to the call for justice between former colonizers and colonized that the text ends with.

In *Decline*, the development of postimperial British identity is purely a desire that is as of yet blocked by the continuing emphasis of English identity on imperial mastery, as Krishan Kumar argues persuasively in *The Makings of English National Identity*. The character of Soames stands as this quintessential English imperial figure, motivated by the discourse of adventure and righteousness that propped up the English imperial mission from the consolidation of the United Kingdom on English aegis through the development of the British Empire. He is presented as an aging patriarch, and as the arbiter of cultural and familial authority, the younger generation, including his daughter Sarah and half-American niece Zoe, vie for his attention and approval, while Jason, his British protégé plucked from post-graduate work in political-philosophy, dutifully parrots his worldview. A perplexing mixture of individualism, social, cultural and spiritual authority mixed with a missionary zeal, Soames' worldview is comprised of a quasi, right-Hegelianism with an even greater penchant for a jaded, specious Nietzscheanism, which, after *The Birth of Tragedy*, he describes as if it were his own appellation, as the "Apollonian style": a belief in "whole men, unified and balanced, not torn apart, schizophrenic and confused" where a peoples' "words their life and art, their thought and action, their pleasure and necessities were approached within the framework of a single, coherent, all-embracing philosophy" (43). The end of formal colonialism and the rise of newly independent nation-states, national cultures and the decentering of Europe – Jameson's "problem of demography" – at once threatens Soames' worldview, while also providing the impetus for his "new renaissance" and his "hopes of reviving the [Apollonian] form, the style, while infusing it with a content relevant to and consistent with what one might call the realities of the modern world" (51, 43).Yet the

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novel pits both time and geography against Soames: "Having reached the age when a man, proceeding form the particular to the universal, from his own experience to all mankind's, is tempted to explain human behaviour in terms of food, climate, viruses and drink, Soames now believed himself to be in danger of imminent physical and moral disintegration unless he could get away from the southern hemisphere" (51). Soames' physical and mental inability to reconcile himself to the land that houses the source of his wealth – the Amcol copper mines – stands in for Caute's own belief in the necessity of the expulsion of the European bourgeoisie from Africa and also seems to underwrites Booker's argument for the lack of a utopian sentiment in the novel. However, in comparing the novel to Caute's later work on Fanon, the weak-utopian aspects of the novel come into sharper relief.

Following from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and providing a statement that is at the center of much of Ngũgĩ's nationalist work, Caute argues that the bourgeois segments of the colonized people "never broke off the dialogue with colonialism. They might cash in on the results of armed rebellion, but they never organized it. Not a single well-known Nationalist in Kenya had claimed membership of the Mau Mau or openly defended it" (*Frantz* 75). For Caute, a staunch Marxist in the English post-1956 tradition, this was one the greatest faults of decolonization and led to one of the most original contributions of Fanon's reworking of Marxist concepts of revolution. In this vein, Caute asserts that:

> Neither Trotskyists, Stalinists, nor Maoists have ever departed *in theory* from this concept of the proletarian vanguard; they have never admitted the possibility of a viable peasant revolution. Nor have they abandoned *in theory* the thesis of a fundamental sympathy and identity of interests between the Western proletariat and the colonial peoples. [. . .] Therefore Fanon was not a Marxist in any

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traditional sense. He regarded the western proletariat as neither revolutionary nor

sympathetic to the colonial peoples. (76)

He goes on to argue that, due to their reciprocal worldview, Fanon never considered the colonial

bourgeoisie to be revolutionary either. In a rather typical view for Marxists of the late 1960s and

1970s, Caute goes on to argue via Fanon, that the peasant class is the most revolutionary because

the proletariat and bourgeoisie, whether Western or colonial, benefitted, albeit to radically

different extents, from imperialist modern capitalism.

Although the book on Fanon was published after *The Decline of the West*, these ideas are

central to the latter's narrative development and resolution. The novel's nationalist leader prior to

the coup, Raymond Tukhomada – a kind of composite of Fanon and Césaire – ascends from a

farmer's son to being a member of the *évolués* who prides himself on his French cultural

assimilation, often rebuking the other *évolués* for their anti-French politics. He leaves

Coppernica for France to work as a post office clerk and prepare for the *carte d'immatriculation*.

Even in the face of racial discrimination in the French shops, Raymond extols that "France,

Monsieur, is the most civilized country in the world" to an American who attempts to intercede

on his behalf. It is not until he fails the *carte d'immatriculation* examination that he begins to

realize the colonial rule of difference, in Chatterjee's terms, that holds him back from ever being

considered truly French and thus a political and social equal. Following this racialized political

awakening, he founds and leads an anti-colonial movement, for which he is later imprisoned. It is

while he is imprisoned that a liberation army composed primarily of peasants and led by Maya,

himself a peasant, wages and wins a war for independence. After the liberation army achieves

independence, Tukhomada becomes the first elected leader of Coppernica, having campaigned

on a rather modest nationalist agenda.[44]   Yet it is not Tukhomada who figuratively inherits the

nation at the end of the novel after the failed coup, instead it is a member of the peasant militia,

Odouma Amah.

The end of the novel is practically Shakespearean in the scale of bloodshed and righteous

deposing of the once powerful (however, it results in new alignments of power that are, perforce,

representatives of new future possibilities as opposed to the usual return to the 'natural' order as

is so often the case in Shakespeare's tragedies). The alignment of the old colonial forces, the

British and French, along with neo-colonial forces represented by the American Ambassador

working with the Coppernican bourgeois nationalist Ybel have to flee the American Embassy by

helicopter as masses of Coppernicans loyal to the nationalist party close in on them. The scene is

rather comic, in an otherwise decidedly non-comic novel, as they clamor over one another

struggling to find a place in the helicopter. It at once replicates the infighting and jockeying for

position that took place as the various factions attempted to push the other out, while also

foreshadowing images of Americans being lifted from the rooftops of the embassy in Vietnam

(itself a pernicious mixture of French, American and, to a limited extent, British forces that

united the moments of colonialism/decolonization/neo-colonialism). Having emptied the capital

of both foreign and internal threats, the streets are turned over to the supporters of the previously

unseated nationalist government; the country becomes, once again, theirs.

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[44]
    The army remains under the command of a former French General and contains a number of
French officers to help "professionalize" it. Added to this, "Coppernica needed French aid and
French technicians, [and] by retaining a number of French officers Tukhomada had hoped to
reconcile Paris to his government and to begin the Year One on a note of conciliation" (61). For
this same line of reasoning, Tukhomada's negotiations over economic powers were also modest:
"he asked only that the government of an independent Coppernica be granted the same economic
powers as the government of French Coppernica – principally, the right to appoint 55 per cent of
the members of the boards of the Union de Coppernica and its subsidiary companies" (62).

Following their expulsion, the action then turns to the countryside and jungle, where the Alliance militia under the control of the ex-French military sadist Laval, and Soames' protégé James, are holding Tukhomada and Amah captive. Following a similar dichotomy as appears in *Petals of Blood*, it is the countryside and the spaces outside of the administrative capital that come to stand for the "gestative" utopian space of the nation and the capacity for generating new possibilities. Accordingly, it is here, then, that James begins to turn away from Soames' tutelage as the atrocities of the war for Coppernica unfold: "Abruptly the taut elastic snapped inside James. He lay back in the long grass and closed his eyes, pushing away the oncoming memories, the yardsticks by which he had measured his own achievements, his own intrinsic values. Everything was sham and illusion. An immense weariness enveloped him. […] He fell asleep with a single word perched on his nose: regret" (562-3). Pressed by Amah, James offers up one last heroic statement of "Apollonian" Western triumphalism:

> We have never been slaves to the law of numbers. The highest cultural values have always been upheld by élites. A hundred thousand villagers will never paint the roof of the Sistine Chapel nor invent the internal-combustion engine. The battle of the élite against the hordes is at this moment a global one. Once I have perceived this, I have no alternative but to assume the legionary's armour and to accept the logic of my beliefs. (580)

However, before he can even issue this paean to western civilizational mastery he realizes that it is now only a:

> last, automatic response, half genuine, half retrospective, a final, abortive charge from the lists accompanied by the residual sense of having once been sincerely committed to a highly structured ideal. Even so, the voice was barely his own; as

the familiar phrases, the coinage constantly debased by Soames and Laval, issued

from his throat, he witnessed with a curious detachment each of them totter and

fall, like toy soldiers in an animated cartoon. (580)

After the words "totter and fall," losing their ability to prop up and supply him with moral

principle and authority, James is thus emptied of the purpose that girds his identity as part of the

civilized and civilizing "élite." He thus becomes dislocated and unmoored from the world; its

ideologically emplaced contours fade and what once rightfully seemed his to trample upon and

annex as an extension of his Western élite privilege becomes hostile, alien and dehumanizing:

"His deepest urge now was to withdraw completely, to wash his hands of the whole episode, to

return to England and the safe world which alone promised him comfort and security. […]

Trapped in hostile jungle five hundred miles from help, joined to a demon [Laval], he found

himself face to face with total alienation" (582).

The civilizing mission, which for James has meant upholding the values of the élite, and

which had been James' guiding light towards instantiating the "New Renaissance" reveals its

cold inhumanity on the battlefield in the form of brutal mass slaughter, torture and rape. So, in

contrast to Booker's argument, it is not that James and the other western characters are "radically

alienated from the social world around them," at the outset as a condition of their status as first

world decadent bourgeoisie.[45] Instead the novel's political drive – the weak-utopian drive –

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[45]
    Booker correctly diagnoses the Lukácsian strains that underpin Jameson's historical-spatial
schematic of the first world decadent bourgeoisie and the third world revolutionary non-
bourgeois peasants in the "Third World" essay, whereby the decadence, the Lukácsian term that
Booker also privileges, is due to the unfinished revolution of the bourgeoisie and their resultant
inability to remain revolutionary world actors due to their social fragmentation and alienation.
Certainly, then, this fragmentation and alienation must be related to Jameson's claim that
"Starting with the monopoly stage of capitalism (that is, imperialism) there is a registered
"growing contradiction between lived experience and structure" (*Postmodernity* 410). Where
there used to be the ideological projection and perception of the unified self, this becomes

works to radically alienate them by disrupting the globe-spanning network that connects them to the US diplomatic corps, the British mining industry, British nobility, and the Ivy League and Oxbridge systems. In doing so, it radically reveals and undermines the ideology prompted by this network that seeks to unite their "words their life and art, their thought and action, their pleasure and necessities […] within the framework of a single, coherent, all-embracing philosophy" of a civilizational and neoimperial right to the world (43). In the context of the novel, it is violence that destroys the certainty of this fixed neocolonial ideology; however, it is not the anti-imperial violence advocated by Fanon, but instead the degenerative, dehumanizing aspect of colonial violence predicated by Césaire in *A Discourse on Colonialism* that reveals the inhumanity of the imperial worldview.

There may also be an autobiographical nod at work here as well, Caute never believed in the British imperial mission, but he did serve a year and half of national military service stationed in Ghana (his earliest novel deals with the negative psychological effects of military colonial service on soldiers). However, while his work on Fanon is largely laudatory, the irreducible necessity of violence is one place where he departs at length with Fanon's politics of decolonization and nationalism. Instead, he argues for a difference between revolutionary violence and Fanon's anti-imperial violence, "Fanon sees the colonial world as not only

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untenable as capitalism spreads globally through imperialism and neo-imperialism: "The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life. Yet those structural coordinates are no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people"(*Postmodernity* 411). What Booker's analysis misses, then, is that the novel is not presenting this already "radically alienated" bourgeoisie; instead, the coordinates are visible and indeed all too easily conceptualizable for this well-heeled international grouping of diplomats, industrialists, nobility, militarists, etc. and consequently the novel is trying to break up these coordinated vectors of neo-imperialism through a process of alienation underwritten by the full experience of these vectors in the abject neocolonial violence that they authorize.

oppressive but static, locked, petrified: it had to be burst asunder. Marx and Engels and Lenin had not regarded social violence in this light. The worker's violence was pragmatic, not existential; it was structural, not a psychic, necessity" (93). For Caute, this existential turn regarding violence has the potential to work against the revolutionary goals towards which it is employed: the destruction of the colonizer/colonized Manichean system and the birth of the "new humanity." Building on critiques by Nguyen Nghe, as well as Fanon's own clinical work with African anti-imperial fighters, Caute stresses that, "No man, no peasant, is purely a social being, a member of a particular class or race. When he kills a class enemy or an oppressor, he also kills *another man*. All killing is by definition dehumanizing. The peasant wins his war, but he loses a particular battle. The curious thing is that we have only to turn to Fanon himself to find evidence of this" (*Frantz* 95). Following this line of argument, it is not anti-imperial violence that eradicates the neo-imperial thrust of James' worldview, but instead it is the revelation of the dehumanizing violence that his own beliefs and corresponding actions authorize.

However, this view is no mere self-revelation, which would perversely justify the violence that precedes and prompts it. Indeed, James does not come to this view of the dehumanizing aspect of colonial violence on his own; instead he is pushed there by one of the former leaders of the anti-imperial armed struggle, Amah Odouma. After Odouma delivers a rather Césaire-inspired speech on the internal barbarisms of the civilizing mission, James asks Odouma why he continues to lecture him this way to which Odouma replies, "Because I hope to shame you. And shame is a revolutionary sentiment" (585). For Caute, via Odouma, it is not violence that will bring forth the colonized's humanity as with Fanon, but instead the recognition of suffering through a sense of one's own debasement by inflicting suffering. Certainly, this not

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an abrogation of anti-imperial struggle, including wars for independence, but instead it serves as an extension of Caute's critique of the difference between revolutionary and existential violence. Moreover, it is but an echo of a longer philosophical exchange on the relationship between violence, revolution and humanity that takes place between Odouma and Tukhomada. Odouma lectures Tukhomada that:

> […] individual acts of violence can be solitary, whereas political or collective violence is continuous. Once set in motion, it cannot be broken off. [… W]hen we have driven the French from our soil, we assume power and thereby threaten with continual violence all those who challenge our independence. […] Once this is proven to be a historical law, a law of progress if you like, it may be futile to shudder or complain. (482)

He follows this up with a statement that then explicitly counters the "Apollonian" ideology proffered by Soames and parroted by James, as well as the necessity that underwrites Fanon's absolute violence, "Yet almost all our moral categories must shudder – unless we are to become unbearably schizophrenic" (482). There cannot be a unity between ideals, thought and action here for Amah if they are predicated on and through violence; indeed, philosophy, at least in the sense of the ability to judge morality, must remain apart from the violence of revolution for the revolutionaries to maintain their humanity.

Indeed, the weak-utopian ending of the novel is predicated on the application of these principles. With the neoimperial and bourgeois-nationalist leaders of the coup ejected, Tukhomada killed by Laval, and Laval in turn killed by James, Odouma and James are the only two principal actors left. After having his life saved by James, Odouma commands that the nationalist militia must not kill James for his role in the coup. Instead, he must be offered justice

that originates outside of the relationship of violence that connects the two men; as Odouma contends, "It's not for us to judge these things. The nation will judge him. Nothing is simple in this world" (616). The defeat of the neoimperial coup and the restoration of the fledgling Coppernican nation-state becomes, then, the site of the possibility of justice, and, as such, the site of the possibility of the recognition of a difficult, imperiled, yet common responsibility towards each others' humanity. It is left undetermined whether this justice can or will be achieved as Amah's above words are the last of the novel.

However, before I hang my conclusion on this pleasantly utopian horizon, the earlier discussion of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and the role of the literary in nationalist *Bildung* raises a significant problem for *The Decline of the West*. Put simply, there is no plausible way to consider this text as part of a nation's *Bildung* in the way that *Petals of Blood* or even *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* were considered earlier, and this is not only due to Coppernica's fictional status. As Cheah reminds us, novels of nationalist *Bildung* "[…] not only reflect or thematize the nation's *Bildung*. They are themselves intended to be part of it. They are meant to have an active causal role in the nation's genesis insofar as they supply the occasion and catalyst for their implied reader's *Bildung* as a patriotic subject" (240). The problem as it arises from Cheah's analysis is one of intention, and thus strictly-speaking extra-textual, and resides in the corollary of the nation, the national, the citizen or the one who desires citizenship, and the fact that Caute, although born in Egypt is thoroughly British. By Jameson's logic in the "Third World" essay, or more generally in the logic of nationalism studies, Caute has no nation to build, or in Brennan's words, to suffer the lack of. What Caute's novel helps to reveal is precisely this dialectical logic of identity via the *aufhebung* that underwrites the temporal and hierarchical assertions of a nationalizing Third World and an already nationalized, or in some cases postnational, first world.

Instead, *Decline* reveals the negative dialectic of the nation-state, its lack of finality, resolution or synthesis and its constant renegotiation.

Which is to say, Caute cannot participate in the postcolonial *Bildung*, but instead illustrate the way that postcolonial *Bildung* puts pressures on British national identity and posits the possibility for a postimperial national identity through a non-instrumentalizing recognition of the postcolonial nation. The novel offers a twist on Jameson's presentation of the problem of demography, whereby it is only the recognition of the postcolonial nation-state that could allow for the creation of something that we could term a postimperial British national identity. That is, it takes something like the arising of "collective subjects who were not there before, or not visible" (*Postmodernism* 386) and their recognition to put the deathknell in Soames' concept of Englishness promulgated on the remaking of the world in its own image, and thus the continuation of British imperial, missionary nationalism. The problem of demography, then, has a resemblance to Fanon's argument that "National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is alone capable of giving us an international dimension" (179). The space of the independent postcolonial nation-state as a trope or actant in the novel necessitates a re-examination of Englishness and Britishness bound not only on the past projects of empire building, as Kumar argues, but on the possibility and the futurity of a postcolonial and postimperial conjuncture. Ultimately it provides the opportunity for a different model of Britishness whose premise is more in line with embracing the indeterminacy and inter-relatedness of the "problem of demography" rather than the purely instrumentalizing mastery of the Apollonian "new Renaissance" which seeks to annul these new global realities.

As Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein[46] point out, the bourgeois nation-state was only one of many competing forms for internal political organization and its structure is not necessarily inherent in some supposed progressive tide of history, nor an absolute self-evident concept. Besides trafficking in the imminently eschatological fervor of the most politically pressing moments of Marx's corpus with its enviable hope for the arrival of a more humane global world, postnational works like *Empire* assume that there always has been, is and will be one kind of nation-state. This is a proposition that is static, monolithic and reductive. Instead as Dirlik suggests, the nation is certainly undergoing a transformation. One way to theorize this change, then, is through the projection of the nation-state in postcolonial *Bildungsromane* which, in some instances, illustrates a move away from identity and towards a process of the recognition of non-identity, negotiation and irresolvable tension in the nodal global system. The nation-state exists neither as a concept of pure oppression nor as the enabler of the fullest freedom and realization of human rights (as Slaughter reminds us). Instead, it is a medium that is constantly being written, it is always under construction, and that is receding infinitely into the horizon.

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[46] See particularly Balibar in *Race, Nation, and Class* 88-90.

Chapter Two: The British are Coming! Postimperial Retrenchment and Postcolonial Immigration

in (ex-) Colonial Literature

> Britishness is the sum total of the culture created in the colonial encounter, and it
> seems to have survived empire in the name of modernity.
> – Simon Gikandi (203)

> If the third world's vision of the future is handicapped by its experience of man-
> made suffering, the first world's future, too, is shaped by the same record.
> – Ashis Nandy (53)

> "Of course the tendency had been to say, 'let's adopt the multicultural concept and
> live happily side by side, and be happy to be living with each other'. But this
> concept has failed, and failed utterly"
> – Angela Merkel

This chapter continues to focus on the relation between the decolonizing nation and the former metropole of the first chapter by exploring how diasporic novels like Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Buchi Emecheta's *Adah's Story* posit the construction of the post-war United Kingdom through the logic of a postimperial Britishness. Whereas the postcolonial nation is figured alongside a weak-utopian longing for form as the promise of a to-come in the first chapter, the postimperial British nation ultimately suffers from a deficit of this sort of weak-utopianism. Even as the United Kingdom attempts to forge a postimperial identity free from the

constraints of missionary imperial nationalism with the production of quasi-Socialist welfare-

state, the national imagination remains captive to the longing for empire as a point of national

prestige as well as the symbolic order that gives Britishness its meaning. Building on the work of

Linda Colley and Krishan Kumar on the making and unmaking of British national identity

through distant imperialist projects, I argue that, concomitant with the move towards what Jed

Esty refers to as postimperial retrenchment, the building of the welfare-state provided the last

vestige of a project-based British identity. In this case, instead of being developed through the

external state building projects of empire, the emphasis on state and nation building (as

nationalist *Bildung*) has returned home in the decolonizing moment. The burgeoning spaces of

the welfare-state (housing estates, schools, welfare offices, etc.) provided a crucial point of

national connection for (ex-) colonial immigrants as they drew on the British constitutional law's

concept of the *ius soli* (from the land). The concept of *ius soli* bestowed subjecthood on

colonized populations and was later re-guaranteed as British nationality through the British

Nationality and Immigration Act of 1948. Often unremarked upon,[47] these sites of the British

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[47] In a British literary context, the signal exception to this critical silence is Bruce Robbins'
landmark study, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good* (2007), in which Robbins develops a
poetics of the class-climbing, upward mobility narrative and its connection to the development of
the welfare-state in the US and UK. Describing his reticence to defend such a compromised and
staunchly statist system as the welfare-state, particularly for its upholding of the dominant
capitalist values of society, he argues that its benefits outweigh its faults and that analyzing these
faults can help to redress them while also protecting the important social and democratic values
that underwrite the welfare-state in the first place (that is, until something better can be
instituted). I'm particularly interested in his statement that "The best arguments for nationalism
are those that appeal to the solidarity embodied, at its best, in the welfare-state" (10). Indeed, for
Robbins, nationalism like the welfare-state is difficult to cheer, and here I share his position. My
focus throughout this chapter, and what ultimately sets my analysis apart from that of Robbins, is
this relationship between the welfare-state, nationalism, national *Bildung* and the role of the
postcolonial immigrant. For the most part, Robbins does not engage with the welfare-state as a
particularly nation-building exercise and instead concentrates on the development of the social,

welfare-state form an important contact zone in the metropole for postcolonial immigrants coming to the 'motherland.' They simultaneously serve to remind colonial and postcolonial immigrants of their status as colonial others or what Buchi Emecheta will refer to as "problem people," while at the same time serving to support their legal right as citizens in the UK. This latter feature becomes increasingly prominent as the sense of a cultural English nationalism, which disavows the legacies and responsibilities of the former Empire, is on the rise.

Interjecting in Ian Baucom's arguments about the priority of space for reproducing a sense of Englishness in *Out of Place*, I refer to the development of the welfare-state as providing the locus for a bureaucratic nationalism, that although founded on the right of the *ius soli*, opens up a middle ground between the decline of the national British citizenship based on the *ius soli* and its replacement by the racial determination of Britishness as mandated by Thatcher's Nationality Act of 1981. That is, between the *ius soli* used as the legal justification for bestowing subjecthood upon colonial populations and the eradication of that principle in the 1981 Nationality Act, there's an intermediate period characterized by an internal project of bureaucratic nationalism – a project of British national *Bildung* whose spaces are principally the housing estates, schools and labour and welfare offices. Whereas Baucom sees the *ius soli* principally as providing spaces of Englishness built at home and then transported to the far-flung corners of the Empire, I turn to diasporic (ex-) colonial literature, principally Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Buchi Emecheta's *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second-Class Citizen* (1974) to examine these spaces of Britishness and the ambivalent political purchase they hold for (ex-) colonial British subjects.

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cultural and political discourses of mobility and welfare related to class dynamics (this is not so much to register a fault as merely a difference between our respective emphases).

In order to set up the conceptual importance of these spaces of the welfare-state as a bureaucratic British nationalist project, I offer a reading of the theoretical and cultural literature that accompanies the problematic and turbulent shifts between Britishness and Englishness in the twentieth century, figured along the central problematic of the decline of imperialism as the active site for national identity. As such, I draw on the work of Linda Colley, Krishan Kumar, Tom Nairn, Perry Anderson, Ian Baucom, Jed Esty and Simon Gikandi, among others, arguing that instead of privileging a decisive shift or break between Britishness and Englishness, there is instead a complicated negotiation between cultural and political ideals of nationalism. It is this flux between a rising cultural Englishness against the backdrop of political Britishness that serves as something of a "political unconscious" in the (ex-) colonial immigrant novels of Selvon and Emecheta. Indeed, the focus on the postimperial decline of Britishness in favor of an emphasis on a rising sense of an English cultural nationalism has left these spaces of the welfare-state relatively unnoticed by many commentators.

Bookending this discussion of a postimperial Britishness as developed through the spaces of the welfare-state are two discussions on the death of multiculturalism. The first, which opens this chapter, is a discussion of Angela Merkel's recent speech denouncing multiculturalism's effect on the national home of Germans, while the latter is a discussion of the dismantling of the British bureaucratic nationalist project through Thatcher's programmatic attack on the welfare-state coupled with her 1981 Nationality Act as can be seen in the inoperative spaces of the welfare-state in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*. Curiously, Merkel's comments have been largely accepted as a brave and timely intervention on the impossibility of multiculturalism. However, as they draw on a rhetoric similar to the anti-immigration speeches of Enoch Powell, which sought to preserve the space of the national home from outside cultural invasion (as was

Thatcher's intent with the 1981Nationality Act), Merkel's speech instead seems to repeat a prior English moment, except now it is broadcast on a more global scale in order to rewrite the history of immigration and globalization through the familiar disavowal of colonialism and imperialism. In this sense, they continue to raise the specter of nationalism and the defense of the *Heimat* in a strikingly familiar register.

While it may seem strange to begin a chapter focused on post-war Britishness with a contemporary speech by a German politician, the speech serves to illustrate a number of pivotal points, not only for this chapter, but the project as a whole. For instance, it highlights the shared rhetoric that connects postcolonial immigration to contemporary fears and preoccupations of globalization and immigration. Only a few weeks after Merkel's speech, the British government announced their own restrictions to immigration with the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) Report, which proposes a plan to cut net immigration numbers from approximately 200,000 in 2009 to the tens of thousands by 2015. Given the restrictions on immigration placed on the UK's by its membership in the EU, the reductions are largely being sought in the immigrants from (ex-) colonial nations and students on visas from non-EU countries. Many who support this decision in the form of Op Eds, letters to the editor, comments sections on websites, etc., cite Merkel's speech, including specific lines, as factual support for their position. It has been up to those on Left to point out how this policy is being deliberately used as a convenient excuse to continue policies in place since the Thatcher government to reduce non-white immigration. This argument has been bolstered by the widely disseminated and debated announcement by Professor David Coleman, the Oxford University migration officer, that as of 2066 white Britons will be a minority in the UK, which in his words will "represent an enormous change to national identity" (Sohi). As the author, Amardeep Sohi, of the article, "My Britishness is more than Skin-Deep,"

laments, this makes her "feel like a permanent immigrant" even though she is a British citizen (her parents are of Indian descent). It is this last point that is the most resonate with this and the next chapter. Merkel's speech, which made headlines around the world, seems to give credence to the sentiment that immigrants always remain apart from the national body; all are, in the parlance of Kureshi's *The Black Album*, second- third- fourth- generation immigrants, and thus not *truly* British. As such, I draw on Merkel's speech, and the reaction that it received, in order to highlight the significance of the issues in the novels, while also presenting the contemporaneity of the issues.

The Death of Multiculturalism (Again)

In early October 2010, addressing the youth wing of her own Christian Democratic Union party, German Chancellor Angela Merkel officially announced the end of multiculturalism in Germany, which has since been extrapolated and repeated as a call for its death *tout court*. According to Merkel, not only has it failed, but it has "utterly failed" leaving behind no legacy of redeemable qualities or aspects for the political organization of contemporary society. For Merkel, like Enoch Powell decades before her,[48] the problem is one of shared space, proximity and the reproduction of one's quality of life in the national space: "Of course the tendency had been to say, 'let's adopt the multicultural concept and live happily side by side, and be happy to be living with each other.' But this concept has failed, and failed utterly." The speech was quickly picked up by all major news outlets and made headlines around the world.

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[48] Ian Baucom has argued that Enoch Powell's disputations concerning racial integration need to be better understood in terms of spatial categories rather than purely biological, racial categories.

Across the European and US Right, the pronouncement was treated, paradoxically, as both common sense and profound, indeed gutsy, revelation. In his widely syndicated column "The Multicultural Cult," the noted free-market evangelist and Senior Rose and Milton Friedman Hoover Institute Fellow, Thomas Sowell began by stating, "Somebody eventually had to say it – and German chancellor Angela Merkel deserves credit for being the one who had the courage to say it out loud," thus simultaneously heralding its bravery, novelty and status as non-negotiable, empirical fact. Notable in Sowell's column is how quickly Merkel's comments about German immigration policy were generalized into a universal condition plaguing the nature of contemporary Western life: "In Germany, as in other countries in Europe, welcoming millions of foreign workers who insist on remaining foreign has created problems so obvious that only the intelligentsia could fail to see them." (And here we should keep in mind that many of the earliest waves of immigrants from England's colonies followed this path of being bought in to work, to rebuild the mother country). In order to ward off claims of Eurocentrism by the very intelligentsia that he scorns, he makes brief references to the Balkans and Rwanda (although unlike Germany, the USA or more generally Europe, the Balkans and Rwanda are awarded the appellation of "racist countries"), before returning squarely to the West as the true ground source for his anxiety, which he expresses via the familiar transcoding of cultural difference as criminality:

> Expecting any group to adapt their lifestyles to the cultural values of the larger
> society around them is 'cultural imperialism,' according to the multicultural cult.
> [… Moreover, m]ulticulturalists condemn people's objections to transplanting
> hoodlums, criminals and dysfunctional families into the midst of people who may

have sacrificed for years to be able to escape from living among hoodlums,

criminals and dysfunctional families.

While her ideas of multicultural failure from the Right are neither novel nor brave, her

institutional credibility as the German Chancellor has allowed pundits a freedom to run with and

expound upon Merkel's statements in a way that they could not with similar statements by more

notorious nationalist racists like representatives from the BNP, for example, while

simultaneously passing off their remarks as a mixture of commentary on and reporting of the

news and, thus, seemingly, facts.

Yet despite the claims of bravery and novelty that greeted Merkel's sounding of the death

knell for multiculturalism, her remarks echo if not the vitriol then at least the tenor of Enoch

Powell's earlier speeches sounding the threat of colonial immigration. Indeed, it has been more

the task of Merkel's interlocutors, as with Sowell above, to translate the matter-of-factness of

Merkel's remarks into the rhetorical excess of Powell. As such, the fears of criminality, the

destruction of the national space, and the victimization of those who dispel the illusions of

multiculturalism bear a striking resemblance to the early speeches by Enoch Powell condemning

the growth of multicultural society in the United Kingdom. In his infamous "Rivers of Blood"

speech in Birmingham on April 20th, 1968, Powell cited a purported letter from one of his

constituents: "She is becoming afraid to go out. Windows are broken. She finds excreta pushed

through her letterbox. When she goes to the shops she is followed by children, charming, wide-

grinning piccaninnies. They cannot speak English, but one word they know. 'Racialist', they

chant" (quoted in Baucom 15). As Baucom astutely notes, for Powell, what is threatened "is less

the white body than the metropolitan landscape – which immigrants remake, as they have

remade the 'once quiet' street. And in remaking that street, in transforming it into a place of

'noise and confusion,' the island's immigrants, [Powell] bitterly admits, remake England and Englishness" (23, internal quotes are from Powell). As with Sowell's argument, it is not miscegenation or racial mixing that is necessarily at issue here, but the reconstitution of the national character through the transformation, as a sullying, of the national space by immigrants. The trouble is the immigrants' making of a home in a space that is meant to be their own exclusive *Heimat*. The rhetorical differences between Powell's and Merkel's speeches finds its source in temporality; for Powell, speaking in 1968, the excess of fear is an analogue of the anxiety for the unknown, for what is to come, while for Merkel, in 2010, the calm assurance that undergirds her statements is a product of calling something not to indeterminate fruition, but to determinate end.

Finally, the last point that I wish to draw upon here as I sketch out the periodization of postcolonial immigration and postimperial Britishness and the resulting social policies of multiculturalism, is the elusive relationship between migrancy and immigration, foreigner and citizen, that Merkel surprisingly evokes in her speech. Although Sowell doesn't comment on it, the most remarkable quality of Merkel's speech wasn't its bravery or timeliness, but surely its ideological honesty as she states, "We kidded ourselves for a while that they wouldn't stay, but that's not the reality." It is this admission, grounded in the specificity of Merkel's topic – Germany's *Gastarbeiter* program, but which also rebounds in the British context – that is then recast as immigration in general by conservative pundits that undergirds the slippery cognitive slope where the migrant-worker as the unseen, the transient, the unacknowledged and therefore without national recognition becomes the hyper-visible immigrant infringing on the rights of citizenship and nationality by attempting to make a permanent home inside of "our" home. This transformation of the migrant into the immigrant and the latter's intrusion into the *Heimat* recasts

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the cultural home's traditional grounding in ethnic and cultural nationalism, thus particularity, specificity and identity, as instead being fearfully mutable and contingent.

These issues of the national space and its relation to tradition, cultural and ethnic permanence, to production, mutability and contingency, are at the heart of British immigration law, British national culture, immigration and English nationalism, which mark the postcolonial and postimperial conjuncture. While these issues have been expounded upon by numerous critics, I intend to introduce the concept of a postwar, postimperial bureaucratic nationalism that came into existence with the welfare-state in the 1950s and has been dying a prolonged death since Thatcher's 1981 Nationality Act. This bureaucratic nationalism comes into fruition between the 1948 British Nationality Act based on the *ius soli* and the racialized Nationality Act of 1981 by emphasizing a form of national citizenship born not in the spaces of England, but instead produced through the national institutions that were consolidated and instantiated by the welfare-state. As such, it retains the imprint of the imperial legacy in its inclusion of the (ex-) colonials and commonwealth citizens,[49] as well preserves a politically productive mode of national identity reminiscent of the external nation-building project of Empire in that it based on an internal constructive project-oriented mode of nation-building.

British or English? Mapping the Fault Lines of Postimperial National Identity

The years that separate Powell's speech from Merkel's with their shared fears over the imposition of sharing their national space with others who may wish to make it a home as well have thus also given rise to a great deal of writings – academic, literary, journalistic,

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[49] An inclusion that, as Baucom reminds us, was forced upon the (ex-) colonial and commonwealth populations, and thus ultimately maintained a form of British imperial dominance.

governmental and so on – concerning this same relationship between culture, space and nationality. In the postimperial British context that I am addressing here, this has taken the most obvious shape in works that address the processes and structures of national identity. At least since the UK's formation in 1707, national identity has been a vexed and perplexing issue as British national identity has been forged in wake of English imperial expansion, resulting in a split between cultural and political national identities. As Tom Nairn notes, the formal, legal instantiation of what we now most often refer to under the rubric of "civil society" was itself an ambiguous compromise, formally imbricating English and Scottish national identities under one common political state, while allowing each to maintain separate control over the centers of cultural development, thus leading to the development of civil society as quasi-distinct from the political sphere (*Faces* 73-89). Henceforth, whether one was Scottish, English or British (not to mention Welsh or Irish) has been a complicated and occasionally conflagratory issue, while the issue of a British national culture has often been (m)aligned with subjugation and the dominance of an imperial England.

It is this split between a composite or assimilating British identity or the dismantling and devolution of it into its core constituents that provide the focus for two of the most influential texts, Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977) and Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1988) in literary and cultural analyses of contemporary Britishness and Englishness and their relation to imperialism.[50] For Nairn, Britishness is not just an antiquated

[50] Many related texts fill the gap between Nairn's and Colley's texts, but like Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which is certainly more influential than either, they have been more focused on nationalism in general as a theoretical or political discourse. One notable exception might be Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), but even this text with its essays' grounded in specific historical, geographical and national traditions is most often cited for its general findings about the processes and structures for nationalism, and thus

myth whose ability to bind the popular will has lost effectiveness with time; rather, its roots were

nourished in English imperialism – first by the political and economic subjugation of its island

co-inhabitants and neighbors, then later by its overseas empire and finally by the "New

Imperialism" of finance capital seated firmly in London and overdeveloped to the detriment of

the larger British economy. The resulting push for devolution carried by a wave of renewed

Scottish, Welsh and Irish nationalism in the contemporary moment is, then, not an atavistic claim

towards nativism and national chauvinism; instead, he relates it directly to anti-colonial

nationalist movements that have worked to free themselves from the overseas empire.

While Nairn provides a structural and theoretical analysis of the construction and

implosion of British national identity, Colley paints a decidedly different picture of the

development of Britishness, focusing less on internal subjugation and more on the compensatory

mechanisms of Britishness for the lives of its subjects:

> Post-1707 Britain cohered and grew powerful by way of varieties of internal and
>
> external violence. But it also worked and prospered because for a long while it
>
> was able to convince many (never remotely all) within its boundaries that it
>
> offered ways for them to get ahead, whether in terms of commercial opportunity,
>
> enhanced religious security and constitutional freedoms, or greater domestic
>
> stability and safety from invasion, or access to improved job opportunities at
>
> home and abroad, or less tangible forms of betterment. (xv)

While Colley is certainly not sympathetic towards imperialism, nor is the overall tenor of her

work (although Gilroy finds certain imperial equivocations in her work), she, like Nairn as an

ardent Scottish nationalist, is driven by her own personal development: "Like many others born

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finds little in the way of influence in the major literary studies of contemporary English or
British nationalism like Baucom's *Out of Place* or Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness*.

in Britain I am a mongrel (part Welsh, part Irish and part English), and my education crossed borders. Consequently, I have never found resolutely single-stranded histories of my birthplace all that convincing or resonant with my birthplace" (xii). However, given her own focus on the internal hegemonic payoffs of British identity as listed above, her work gives a greater emphasis than Nairn's to the formative and internally politically stabilizing aspects of the overseas empire: "Britishness was constructed and contested after 1707 in response to overseas developments. […] The commercial investment and employment opportunities [that the overseas empire] afforded helped reconcile previously refractory individuals, lobbies and regions to British union, most conspicuously […] in Scotland" (xv).

When considered separately, Nairn's and Colley's work can be seen as illustrating the two dominant poles of thought concerning contemporary politics in the UK – devolutionists versus Unionists – with nationalist devolutionists anxious to break the yoke of English domination cloaked by a token rhetoric of British nationality, and Unionists seeking to maintain the complicated but ultimately shared cultural, social and political ties that bring the separate nations together under the banner of Britishness. Politically speaking, both major UK political parties have at one time or another been seen as the champion of a particular side. On the one hand, as decolonization began in earnest and colonial and former colonial immigrants began to flock to the industrial centers of the UK, it was mostly Tory politicians that struck the chord of the little Englander in the face of a seemingly broken Britishness – a Britishness that had lost it *raison d'être* with the end of empire, and which even more frightfully for many Tories, was an identity that was being invoked on common ground by colonial and former colonials as common subjects of the crown and the *ius soli*. On the other hand, Britishness as a collective national

identity was most effectively kept alive by the Labour Party[51] through the instituting of the

welfare-state, the failure to restructure lagging British industry and capitalism, and the party's

opposition to joining the European Economic Community (EEC). While the Labour Party

managed to extend the resources of the British state in many effective and progressive ways –

particularly in housing, education and healthcare – it failed to redress the underlying, regressive

and imperialistic logic of the British Constitution itself. Since the end of the century, there has

been a perceived reversal of roles, particularly in relation to the issue of devolution, with New

Labour championing a right to local self determination and the Tories taking the side of the

Unionists. Of course any such neat comparison is overly broad and many contradictory examples

can easily be found,[52] however what it does serve to illustrate is the continual, despite Nairn's

claims to the contrary, and unresolved arc of unionism versus devolution from the postwar

period through to the late 1990s and the shifts between a political British nationalism and an

English cultural nationalism, while also illustrating the complex social and cultural forces that

can swing alignment to and fro between either national identity.

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  On the weak nature of the Labour Party, I follow closely the work of Perry Anderson and
Tom Nairn. For the particulars of their coincident arguments, see Perry Anderson's "Figures of
Dissent" in *English Questions*, where he responds to critiques of the "Nairn-Anderson Thesis"
and revisits and rearticulates their central claims. Also see Nairn's chapter, "Twilight of the
British State" in *Break-Up*, especially pages 36-41. Krishan Kumar would agree with the general
sentiment of Labour as British, although his assessment of their political/radical weakness is not
in accord with either Anderson or Nairn. Kumar asserts that the Labour party was British in
character – not English parochial – and the creation of the welfare-state, which went virtually
unchallenged by the Tories until the late 1970s and really only significantly in the 1980s, worked
to solidify a sense of Britishness, as did extending the vote (237). Kumar presents this as one of
the main reasons that Labour only nominally supported devolution before the Blairite New
Labour of the 1990s: "If Britishness and British identity held their own in the twentieth century,
much of this must be attributed to the power and influence of labour," with labour here carrying
duel sense of the laboring class as well as the political party (237).
[52]
  For Example, see the last chapter of Krishan Kumar's *The Making of English National
Identity*

Spatial Dialectics and National Production

Yet, for all their differences, it is when taken together that Nairn and Colley's work provides two

significant touchstones for those critics that follow them: first, that the internal domination of the

UK's national territories by the English paved the way for an inherently imperial British

nationalism, which nonetheless lacked a recognizable cultural element; and secondly, that the

formation and regulation of the United Kingdom's external empire benefitted all of the internal

member-nations, albeit not equally, and helped to mitigate internal fissures that otherwise would

have torn the United Kingdom asunder through recourse to cultural differences expressed

through popular nationalism. That is to say, Nairn and Colley reveal in their analyses of the

political and cultural constructions of Britishness and Englishness not just a need to reconcile

with the historical and political legacies of imperialism, but also the displacedness of these

identities that is consummate with Gibreel's statement in *The Satanic Verses* that "The trouble

with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know

what it means" (354).

Fredric Jameson casts a similar problematic to Gibreel in a way that unites Englishness

and Britishness through the shared British political/financial and English cultural capital of

London:

> The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India or
>
> Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the whole colonial system of the
>
> British Empire that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life.
>
> Yet those structural coordinates are no longer accessible to immediate lived
>
> experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people. There comes

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into being, then, a situation in which we can say that if individual experience is authentic, then it cannot be true; and that if a scientific or cognitive model of the same content is true, then it escapes individual experience. (*Postmodernism* 411)

This problem of conceptualization, caused by the geographical dislocation of experience through imperialism, which is then further heightened through the machinations of global late capitalism, calls forth the need for a form of spatial dialectics, in Jameson's terms, that can begin to assess and map the cross-cultural and cross-national aspects of contemporary identity production. As such, Kumar's, Gikandi's, Esty's and Baucom's work all share, although each with its own unique perspective, a central preoccupation with what can be called the spatial dialectics of postimperial Britishness and Englishness.

It is with this in mind, then, that Krishan Kumar puts forth the claim that neither Britishness nor Englishness can be thought of in the terms of an internal, or inward-gazing nationalist project. The English, Kumar argues, disavowed nationalism and sublimated it through the production and projection of Britishness, which was itself constituted and shaped through the expansive political, social and cultural programs of imperialism. He terms this alternately "missionary" or "imperial nationalism" and avers that it "differed from classic nationalism in shifting the emphasis from the creators to their creations" (x). That is, instead of looking to a remote cultural or ethnic past, "English national identity, more even than in the case of other nations, cannot be seen in isolation. It cannot be understood from the inside out but more from the outside in" (xii). For Kumar, this essentially means that an anthropology of Englishness, or Britishness for that matter, cannot be concentrated on the recovery of an internal pre-imperial national essence in the form of cultural, Romantic nationalism – an English essence that had somehow been lost or perverted through the consolidation of it empire. Instead, to understand

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Englishness is to understand its relationship to the construction of its empire: the contradictions of the so-called civilizing mission with the economic imperative, the disjointedness between everyday life in the metropole and its material reproduction elsewhere, the creation of a vast imperial civil service, the positing of a history and culture of progress against supposedly ahistorical or outmoded cultures, etc. Consequently, his work can be seen as bringing together the complex dialectical interplay of uneven development discussed by Nairn as well as the emphasis on outward events for forming the conceptual parameters of British national identity discussed by Colley, particularly the missionary, universalizing exportation of English culture through Britishness imperial nation-building.

Although strictly speaking a sociologist, Kumar's work has much in common with the cultural and literary approach to postcolonial and postimperial national identity. By turning to the inter-related study of diaspora and England's disavowal of its national identity in the construction of Great Britain as well as the displacement of Britain's history in the construction of its overseas empire, Kumar attempts to address one of the major conceptual antimonies that continues to plague twentieth century British cultural studies via the relationship of Englishness to Britishness: "What stands out in all these [historical] studies [attempting to rethink the relationship between British, English and Imperial nationalisms] is the impossibility of considering 'England' or even 'Britain' as independent or intelligible units of study. Both are fragments of a larger whole whose boundaries extend to the very limits of the globe" (15). Instead of positing a reductive binary relationship between British universalism and English particularism or the conceptual conflation, purposeful or otherwise, of Englishness as Britishness (and vice versa), Kumar argues that both are founded in moments of imperial conquest and continue to be shaped by postimperial contraction and as such both, as national identities, are

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circumscribed by discourses of particularism and universalism. However, while their relationship

to the outward movement of imperialism may not go a long way towards setting them apart, the

inward movement of postcolonial immigration may: "This coldness towards the term 'British' is

nowadays highly problematic. With the revival of nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and

Northern Ireland, and the influx of many hundreds of thousands of immigrants who do not see

themselves as English, Scottish, etc., never can the appellation 'British' appear more necessary"

which is appended with the significant caveat, "at least if the political and social unity of the

United Kingdom is to be preserved" (Kumar 6). Kumar's work provides the most significant

break with the binary structure of imperial universal Britishness and postimperial particular

Englishness. It was often times the idea of an enlightened English culture that was championed

by the missionary imperial project, but as Macaulay has it, it was "English in taste" only. That

is, colonial subjects were politically subjects of and to the British crown; their passports

designated them as "British" and therefore as British subjects.

However, as Ian Baucom reminds us, it was not by any degree of Englishness in the

cultural sense that colonial subjects or citizens of the United Kingdom itself were made into

citizens. Instead, it was the *ius soli* (law of the soil); consequently, British law based subjecthood

on being born in a British territory. Moreover, the bestowing of British subjecthood in no way

guaranteed full legal or cultural parity as "British subjectivity conferred [only] obligations on the

subject (primarily the obligation of loyalty), it did not confer any intrinsic rights" (8). In other

words, Englishness exemplified the cultural rule of difference, what a colonial subject should

and thus could never be – the first sign of the colonial rule of difference in Partha Chatterjee's

parlance – while Britishness was reserved for one's political obligations and (lack of) rights.

Indeed, even if one were ever to completely fulfill Macaulay's desires of attaining a place in that

"class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect," it would have no effect on one's political and national status. Yet it was this cleavage, in both senses of the word, in Britishness and Englishness that underscores postcolonial and postimperial identity for (ex-) colonial subjects that emigrated to the UK. Once allowed in to the mother country due to their political status as British subjects, colonial and former colonial subjects were denied a place or a home due to their perceived cultural difference, which was then re-read through the lens of postimperial retrenchment and the rise of English cultural nationalism as a national difference and thus a reason to preclude citizenship from these immigrants as seen in Margaret Thatcher's defense of her 1981 Nationality Act, which she defended a bulwark against the swamping of Britishness and its cultural home in UK. It is this experience that weds Merkel's comment that "We kidded ourselves for a while that they wouldn't stay, but that's not the reality" so powerfully to the postcolonial immigrant's situation in the United Kingdom; the entire process of imperial subjugation and subjection was not only, as Simon Gikandi's attests, an unfinished project but an unfinishable project by design – they can be subjects, but they can't be us, which is ultimately to say that they can be British, but they can't be English (or Scottish, or Welsh, or Northern Irish, for that matter) and as such, there is no place for them in the *Heimat*.

This is perhaps why Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island*,[53] which generally succeeds so powerfully in its logic of uncovering the return of imperial and colonial codes to the metropole through the development of the anthropological turn in late modernist English literary, cultural

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[53] Although I ultimately disagree with Esty's readings of colonial and postcolonial novels in regards to their place in fashioning a postimperial Englishness that transcends an imperial Britishness, this disagreement should not be read as impugning the entirety of Esty's argument. Indeed, his work is essential reading for gaining a better understanding of the relationship between English modernism's formative entanglement with the waxing and waning of imperialism, and in this capacity its successes far outweigh what I see as this one particular misstep.

and academic studies, presented as a product of the constitutive relationship between late

modernism, imperialism and retrenchment, also unfortunately fails to adequately address the

problematic of postimperial national identity fully when it turns away from late Anglo-

modernists texts to postcolonial diasporic novels of the late 1950s. For the version of retraction

that Esty presents as a limited or at least somewhat potentially progressive force for cultural and

national renewal emphasizes the formation of a newly particularistic Englishness, one nation

among many, that replaces the universal imperial nationalism of Britishness. By putting so much

emphasis on a structural break, Esty highlights the developmental and exclusionary binary

between Britishness and Englishness as "a dying universalism and a rising particularism"

furthered by late English modernism's turn to home anthropology that Kumar's work seeks to

reproach (Esty 200). As such, the practices of a late English modernism can be seen as

inadvertently leading to a disinvestment from the structural legacies of imperialism that

undergird Englishness; once displaced by imperial history overseas, Englishness can now return

to a prior imperial moment and develop in the proper space of the homeland via the retreat of its

imperial borders.[54] While Esty is certainly correct, in my estimation, that English culture,

through its anthropological turn, attempted such a process of non- or pre-imperial English

recovery, the same cannot be said for the first generation of (ex-) or postcolonial writers.

These themes are prevalent in the majority of statements where Esty lays out his claims

and methods. For example, "If we set this model into the case of late modernism's

anthropological turn – undertaken precisely at the point when Englishness can no longer be

defined against its imperial Outside – we can see it gain historical flesh and dialectical motion.

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[54]
   "If the primary universalism of the metropolitan era turned on the sovereign subject of a
border-crossing, myth-making imperial humanism, then this new secondary universalism ['based
on English cultural integrity'] turns on the representative status of a bounded culture" (Esty 14).

The attempt on the part of the English writers to reinscribe universal status into the particularist language of home anthropology defines the transition from imperial to postimperial Englishness" (15). The over-emphasis on retraction, on the recovery of the particular space of the *Heimat* as the true cultural home, a place of uniqueness, the quintessential English space that provides the ground from which to cultivate the true or authentic Englishness via the return of colonial logic instantiated through "home anthropology," also performs a disavowal of the UK's imperial 'outside,' which continues to exist during this time period, despite the inward cultural turn of the late modernists' works under examination. There is a danger, then, that "the transition from imperial to postimperial Englishness" is read as the completion of the spatial contraction and the resolution of the spatial dialectic (history no longer happens overseas). As such, it overstates the process of cultural retrenchment for actual political retrenchment, forgetting the hard fought wars that continued to accompany decolonization past 1960, as well as the construction of the Commonwealth to maintain metropolitan imperial economic benefit, the Labour Party's formative role in NATO, Keynes' role in the Bretton Woods agreements and the creation of the IMF as well as Labour's general acquiescence in helping to prop up US global interests – a set of events that Perry Anderson neatly summarizes as Labour's capitulation to the role of "imperial subcontractor" (165). So while I agree with Esty in the trending towards "the attempt on the part of the English writers to reinscribe universal status into the particularist language of home anthropology," I would argue that this is only one aspect of the transition (15). And more to the point, that what it illustrates is a split between cultural English nationalism and Britishness political nationalism that continues to define the problematic of postimperial identity in the United Kingdom.

Esty thus rightly notes a sense of retrenchment, but by positing it as a move from universal imperial Britishness (or Englishness as he sometimes call it, the inconsistency is introduced by and thus part and parcel of the problematic he is analyzing itself) to a particularistic Englishness he neglects that this "moment of Englishness" in the early part of the century, to use Kumar's phrase,[55] is accompanied by an even greater moment of Britishness consolidated by the rise of Labour and the building up of the welfare-state infrastructure with its political, cultural and national overtones. In other words, the logic of empire that returned home was not just expressed culturally through the rise of a new culturalist preoccupation premised on an inward anthropological turn via the study and recovery of English particularity, but was also accompanied by a mammoth nation-building project throughout the UK by the creation of the welfare-state, as well as by the many immigrants making a purchase on their right of Britishness. If Macaulay's imperial dream was to create a vast array of British subjects, English in taste, culture and habit, then as Osbourne's Jimmy Porter exemplifies, the postwar Labour mandates for universal education as part of the new national welfare-state project within the UK were fulfilling a similar desire with similarly mixed results in the accentuation of ineradicable social and cultural difference (although obviously predicated, in this instance, on class hierarchies rather than racial or ethnic hierarchies), as well as the gender and racial discrimination that continued unabated with rise of the welfare-state, as will be seen below in the discussions of *The Lonely Londoners* and *Adah's Story*.

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[55] "If the 'moment of Englishness' at the end of the nineteenth century represented some sort of catching up with continental nationalism, the English now [in the interwar period] hastened to disavow it. The Englishness that was defined in the interwar period was almost wholly indebted to that earlier moment, but it saw itself in a quieter, more introspective mode. There might be some complacency, and an air of self-congratulation at their good fortune, but there was no beating of the national drum" (Kumar 233).

Consequently, the rise of cultural Englishness that Esty presents through his analysis of late English modernism is held at bay, politically, by the rise of the welfare-state, thereby continuing the negative dialectic between cultural and political nationalism engendered by the pluralism of the imperial ambitions initially enshrined in the Union of parliament and foundations of Britishness as a (multi-) national identity of political subjecthood. Henceforth, Englishness becomes not merely one national identity amongst others but instead the proving ground for the turn towards what Paul Gilroy and Étienne Balibar, among others, have theorized as cultural racism with the consequence that being a political citizen by way of being born in a British territory, and thus following the law of the *ius soli*, is no longer a viable means of gaining reciprocal recognition. Instead, one's Britishness becomes a sign or marker of one's lack of Englishness and thus one's unhomeliness in the metropole. This dualism is a constitutive narratorial organizing principle of diasporic, postcolonial "immigrant" fiction. Paradoxically, as Kumar notes above, it is Britishness, then, that provides the ambivalent modes and spaces of recognition for postcolonial immigrants in the metropole and provides the opportunities for a postimperial national identity as hoped for by the resolution of Caute's *The Decline of the West* at the end of the first chapter.

Lonely Londoners: From an Anthropological to a Sociological Gaze

For Esty, the early (ex-) colonial immigrant fiction of the late 1950s serves as an analogue of the anthropological turn [56] that accompanies imperial retrenchment and which is the principal

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[56] Esty elaborates on the concept throughout his book, however in its most broad operative sense he describes it as a "discursive process by which English intellectuals translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture – one whose insular integrity seemed to mitigate some of modernism's characteristic social agonies while rendering obsolete some of

determinate stylistic trope of a late English modernism. This anthropological turn was employed

by late English modernists as a way to resolve national identity during postimperial contraction.

As such, the widespread practice of "home anthropology" was essentially a redeployment of the

outward gaze of the colonial roots of anthropology to the cultural home of England: England

becomes its own other, and the outward is replaced by the inward gaze. Anthropology was thus

introduced into the homeland as a way to rediscover the cultural particularity of Englishness that

had been lost in the universalizing over-reach of British colonialism. This recourse to the

anthropological turn provides Esty with a powerful lens through which to rethink the late

modernist texts of Woolf, Eliot and Forrester, according to the common tropes of anthropology

as practiced in the colonial sphere, including the emphasis on past cultural development, the

assigning of a place for that particular culture in the long *durée* of humankind and human

cultural development, as well as the recovery of a usable past that functions to explain how and

why certain cultures are determinable from others in the present. However, this emphasis on

anthropological tropes loses some of its conceptual usefulness in its application to postcolonial

immigrant writing. Whereas the texts of English modernism that Esty examines are certainly

shown to be implicated in the revival and recovery of a purportedly lost Englishness –

performing something like an anthropological exhumation of the English –, the postcolonial

texts, particularly Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, reveal more of a sociological turn.

That is to say, (ex-) colonial texts are much more concerned with the functioning of

British society as it is, at the moment, rather than sifting through the cultural sediment of an

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modernism's defining aesthetic techniques" (2). Later he adds, "The anthropological turn allows
English modernists to imagine the rescue of socially marginalized art within a whole culture
sponsored by the ascendant corporate nationalism of the welfare-state" (12). This made the
nation and metropole into a "knowable unit of cultural and social relations rather than a fractured
metropole" (17).

English or British cultural past. In this, they can be seen as attempting to unpack the complex relationship between the postimperial rise of Englishness, as found in the late English modernist works, and the development of a postimperial Britishness propagated on the widening of this identity through postcolonial immigration and citizenship. In an essay entitled the "Components of National Culture" from 1968,[57] Perry Anderson laments that unlike Europe or the Americas, the UK lacks a tradition of sociology as an academic discipline (a situation that would change greatly in the proceeding decades). For Anderson, this reveals the backwardness of British academic as well as national culture. The lack of a tradition, corresponding to the time of the novels I'm discussing, makes performing an in-depth taxonomy of sociology as a British tradition or literary organizing principle a difficult task to the degree that Esty and others have made the case for the importance of anthropology to British literary and cultural studies. Indeed, it will have to suffice to say for now, that outside of a particularly English or British tradition of sociology, it may be exactly this lack that makes its relative appearance in postcolonial immigrant novels so compelling and why postcolonial British academics like Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy would turn to developing a British sociology. Here the vicissitudes between a culturally dominant Englishness and an embattled postimperial Britishness make themselves visible through the academic and cultural institutionalization of anthropology and its concomitant search for the elusive cultural English core and the relative lack of sociology as the study of a postcolonial, postimperial British present. The connections between what I'm tentatively developing as a sociological gaze and a bureaucratic nationalism brokered by the development of the welfare-state are further evinced by Anderson's statement that, "To this day, despite the recent growth of sociology as a formal discipline in England, the record of listless

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[57] Reprinted in *English Questions*

mediocrity and wizened provincialism is unrelieved. The subject is still largely a poor cousin of 'social work' and 'social administration', the dispirited descendents of Victorian charity" (53). As I argue with *Lonely Londoners* and *Adah's Story*, the spaces of the welfare-state provide for a particularly political form of postimperial British identity for postcolonial immigrants that is mitigated and delegitimatized by the rise of English cultural nationalism. Hence this confluence between sociology and social work would hold a particular place of interest for (ex-) colonial immigrants that it would not for artists attempting to reconstruct a newly romanticized Englishness outside the contours of the UK's ignominious imperial history. This sociological emphasis on present interactions in shared national spaces reveals the interconnections between the cultural nationalism of a deep past bound to the space of England and a political nationalism fostered in the space of the United Kingdom's sprawling empire that has far from resolved itself in the spaces and time of postimperial retrenchment.

This becomes particularly clear in Esty's presentation of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. Because of his positing of Englishness as the dialectical resolution of postimperial retrenchment and contraction, Esty reads the text primarily as a negotiation of Englishness itself. He argues that the "'home anthropology' of English cultural studies" is juxtaposed "to the 'reverse ethnography' of colonial writers," yet this juxtaposition loses its differentiation as the colonial texts rebound as part of the same overall goal in that "both projects aim to objectify Englishness, to consolidate and identify its sources of integrity and rediscover its local color" (21). Therefore, when introducing the novel as part of his argument, Esty writes, "In Samuel Selvon's 1956 novel *Lonely Londoners*, for example, the central character, Moses, has thoroughly demystified immigrant life in the metropolis, yet continues to imagine England as the source of his future and his fate" (201). It is important to take note, however, that in the language of the novel, it is not to

England that Moses has come to seek his future: "Because it look to Moses that he hardly have time to *settle in the old Brit'n* before all sorts of fellars start coming straight to his room in the Water when they land up in London from the West Indies" (23, my emphasis). While this may seem like splitting hairs, the use of English and British and their various formations begins to illustrate a patterning of cultural and political difference. Hence, it is the "*English people* [who are] starting to make rab about how too much West Indians coming to the country," while it is "*old Brit'n* [that is] too diplomatic to clamp down on the boys for to do anything like stop them from coming to the Mother Country" (24, my emphasis). The old Brit'n becomes a space inhabited by the English and the British alike, for make no mistake, the West Indian immigrants like Moses came bearing British passports and by law were British citizens.

Examining the national standing of colonial subjects as originally based on the English constitutional principle of the *ius soli* and then slowly amended through particular nationality and immigration acts of the twentieth-century in the UK, Ian R. G. Spencer writes:

> During the centuries of imperial growth and power Britain had never introduced or accepted a distinction either between the citizenship and nationality of the monarch's subjects resident in different parts of the Empire or between the monarch's citizens and the monarch's subjects. [… A]ny and every British subject has the right to enter Britain, vote, stand for Parliament and join the armed forces. (53)

These longstanding policies, generally expressed under the rule of the *ius soli*, were all reaffirmed by the British Nationality Act of 1948 which re-confirmed them for all the British colonies and members of the Commonwealth. These rights were not officially circumvented until the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, which stipulated that "those seeking to enter the

United Kingdom for settlement from the Commonwealth and colonies after 1 July 1962 [...

were] required to have been issued with a job voucher in one of the three categories [. ...1] They

could have a job to come to [2] possess special skills which were in short supply or [3] be part

of a large undifferentiated group whose numbers would be set according to the labour needs of

the United Kingdom Economy" (129). Since the novel was originally published in 1956,

Selvon's lonely London immigrants would thus, historically, fall into the category of unmitigated

British national citizens, although labor still acts as a particular point of contention for *The

Lonely Londoners*.

In this sense, then, it can be seen that it is the recourse to English cultural identity that

disavows the imperial history of Britishness as in the scene of the novel where Moses is

interviewed by the newspaper reporter while he is waiting to meet Sir Galahad (aka Henry

Oliver). Mistaking Moses for a Jamaican because "the English people believe that everybody

who come from the West Indies come from Jamaica," the newspaper man asks him, "'Excuse me

sir, have you just arrived from Jamaica? [...] Would you like to tell me what conditions there are

like'" (28). Moses seizes the opportunity to have some fun with the interviewer and begins to tell

him about his experiences in the recent hurricane, "'The situation is desperate. [...] You know

the big hurricane it had two weeks ago? [...] Well I was in that hurricane. [...] Plenty people get

kill. I was sitting down in my house and suddenly when I look up I see the sky. What you think

happen? [...] The hurricane blow the roof off!'" (28). After hearing Moses tell his story about

the hurricane, the interviewer can only think to ask him one question, "'But tell me, sir, why are

so many Jamaicans immigrating to England?'" (28). The passage serves to further highlight the

split between the state of Brit'n and the English people that Moses begins with. However, here

the emphasis is on the view of the English people themselves for whom Moses and his 'fellow'

Jamaicans are immigrants to their England not the old Brit'n. As such, what is at issue is a

question of space: Where has one arrived? Is it old Brit'n as Moses sees it, or England as the

English newspaper man sees it? Is it the imperial metropole and mother country, or the

supposedly postimperial demetropolitanized[58] England?

This concern over space is further compounded by Moses' purposeful placement of

newly arrived black immigrants. Throughout the novel, Moses internalizes the critiques of the

English over their cultural home being polluted by the influx of immigrants with his constant

worries about those "parasites [who] muddy the water for the boys" (25). Later he gives the

example of the chronically scheming and unemployed Cap, when he states, "is fellars like that

who muddy the waters for a lot us" (35). This figurative muddying with its racial overtones of

blood purity, miscegenation and the dilution of national purity takes on a spatial register in the

novel. Internalizing the discourse of English racism, Moses undertakes a quasi-policing of his

fellow immigrants, coming to see himself in the role of a welfare officer. Through this adopted

role, he recreates and protects the culturally nationalist view that has come to color his own

conception of the British space: "Moses send the boys to different addresses. 'Too much spades

in the Water now,' he tell them. […] And so like a welfare officer Moses scattering the boys

around London, for he don't want no concentrated area in the Water" (25). Here both references

to "the Water" move from figurative expressions of a biological blood racism to concrete

geographical references in that they actually refer to the Bayswater neighborhood in West

London.

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[58] Throughout *A Shrinking Island*, Esty views London as "demetropolitanized" due to postimperial retrenchment.

Due to their cultural difference, the immigrants are figuratively insoluble and will thus saturate any neighborhood where they become too prominent in number. Moses thus spreads the newcomers throughout London not only hiding them from the English, but also from one another. As Moses tells Sir Galahad at one point, "'Boy, you lucky I have soft heart, else you never see me again as long as you stay in London. You don't know that does happen? Fellars don't see one another for years here'" (43). Ideologically, if not historically, this attempt at the policing of the newly arrived therefore serves to protect the spaces of English culture by theoretically keeping the immigrant numbers low in particular white neighborhoods, while also serving to break up the possibility of cultural ties forming among the immigrants, disallowing any cultural competition in these spaces (i.e. the disturbance of the home). Moses' actions here correspond with Baucom's argument that English racism was less about biology and more about space and particularly the home, which is captured so concisely in Merkel's comment about the immigrants who came, unbeknownst to and against the deepest desires of German nationals, to stay. Although sex and particularly interracial sex is the dominant theme of a long, beautiful prose-poem-like section of the novel, reminiscent of *Ulysses* with its stream-of-consciousness narration and lack of punctuation, even here the spaces and locations where the acts take place (a wealthy home, the public Hyde park, immigrant lodgings) provide more clues to the various levels of social acceptance and cultural coding that give or detract from the acts' meaning.

The frustration over space, nationality, belonging and self-policing eventually gives way to Moses' most strident outbursts concerning his right to a place in the "mother country." From Moses' point of view, backed up by the legal proclamation of the 1948 Immigrant and Nationality Act, he himself is a national citizen both by way of the colonial implementation of the right of *ius soli* as well as by his participation in the national *Bildung*. However, racial

distinction continues to trump his claim to citizenship in everyday experience. This is born out when a Polish immigrant refuses to serve black immigrants in his restaurant in Ipswich: "And you know the hurtful part of it? The Pole who have that restaurant, he ain't have no more right in this country than we. In fact, we is British subjects and he is only a foreigner, we have more right than any people from the damn continent to live and work in this country, and enjoy what this country have, because is we who bleed to make this country prosperous" (40). The civilizational talisman of Britishness, the promise of imperialism's cultural mission to 'modernize' its colonial subjects, is revealed here at the informal level of everyday interaction to be without the promised power that the civilizing mission bestowed upon it.

The outright discrimination facing colonial immigrants in the public sphere is mitigated and made more ambiguous in the political sphere of the welfare-state office. Here, discrimination is reserved for what effectively emerges as the privilege of work versus the right of welfare assistance. This difference is formalized by the filing system used to discriminate against black, immigrant workers by the Ministry of Labour where one registers both for work and for the dole, each task provided for by its own building and its own set of government employees. When registering for work, a prerequisite for registering for the dole, Sir Galahad, from Moses, discovers that their files bear "a mark on the top in red ink. J—A, Col. That mean you from Jamaica and black" (46). Appending this colonial signifier to their forms allows the companies that file with the Labour Exchange to clear black applicants automatically and not have to go through the embarrassing hassle of telling black applicants to their faces that the vacancy has already been filled or was only mistakenly posted. While this does not necessarily preclude the immigrants from obtaining work, it creates a situation where the government office colludes with private employers to preserve labor and better paying jobs as a cultural privilege regardless of

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(ex-) colonials' established national right, thus permanently marking them as colonial, as immigrants contrasted to citizens, presaging later changes to immigration law.[59]

If the privilege of work proves the difference between British immigrants and English natives, then perhaps the only place where both the English and the British come together is the dole queue in the Welfare Office. While work can be unofficially denied on the basis of color and race, drawing the dole is the right of any British citizen regardless of their origin. In this sense, the welfare office becomes an unequivocal space of Britishness where all members of the United Kingdom, Commonwealth and Colonies find themselves recognized as citizens by drawing on the collective resources of the state. Unsurprisingly, the Welfare Office is presented as oppressive and despairing: "It is a place where hate and disgust and avarice and malice and sympathy and sorrow and pity all mix up. It is a kind of place where everyone is your enemy and your friend" (45). The unstable juxtaposition between affinity and enmity, between empathy and antipathy, presented as a bewildering overflow of feeling by the multitudinous "ands" suggests that the only place that there is parity is in the collective spaces that house desperation and destitution, where the lumpen and the outcasts of all stripes congregate together under the political right of Britishness (a point further substantiated in the descriptions of the housing estates that are the prominent setting for Emecheta's *In the Ditch*). Yet, clearly, the political collectivity of Britishness, then, takes a secondary position to the culturally nationalist "English," driving a further wedge through the categories of postimperial nationalism. Although, as Moses remarks, the wealth of the nation is derived from the (ex-) colonial immigrants "who bleed to

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[59] Unfortunately this sort of weak capitulation to the rising tides of racism continues unabated as witnessed by the much more recent case of the NHS and its "meek bureaucratic deferral to the racist wishes of donors who had been allowed to specify the racial types to which their organs could be given" as reported by Gilroy (xiv).

make this country prosperous," (40) he too regards the development of the welfare-state as similarly detracting from the integrity of the nation. He thus further imbibes the cultural racism that has him playing welfare officer and scattering immigrants all across London, as any space that contains too many immigrants, whether it be the "water" or the dole office, becomes suspect and a potential site of the *Heimat's* vulnerability. Postimperial Britishness becomes a site of desperation, not quite liminal, but on the margins of respectability. As Selvon presents it, to be without work and thus on the dole is practically to be without a sense of selfhood: "But in the world today, a job is all the security a man have. […] And even though it have the Welfare-state in the background, when a man out of work he like a fish out of water gasping for breath. It have some men, if they lose their job it like the world end […]" (45). The overwhelming sense is that one is no longer a full person if they are out of work; they've been degraded and downgraded.

To further illustrate his argument, Moses points out an Englishman who, due to the mitigating circumstances of the scene, is presented as someone to be both pitied for not having job, but also despised for the very same reason. The achieved parity of citizens under the same state office thus functions as more of a downgrading of the English to the level of the immigrants than an upgrading of the British immigrants to the level of a shared civilization. As such, the ability to draw the dole, then, reads back into Moses' worries about those who muddy the waters; they are a warning of what happens when self-policing fails and saturation sets in, thus serving as the difference that underwrites British citizenship and political nationalism from English nationality and cultural nationalism. Moreover, the enmity experienced within the dole office becomes another way of keeping the immigrants socially apart from one another by fostering an attitude of competition for the few jobs available – for English respectability – as seen in Moses' earlier to reference to Cap as *one of those immigrants*, the "parasites [who] muddy the water for

the boys" because of his lack of employment (25). This fear is echoed not only in Merkel's condemnation of the failures of multiculturalism, but also in Margaret Thatcher's 1981 Nationality Act which effectively defined citizenship as a past inheritance of the blood, which also drew on similar rhetorical references to the "swamping" caused by immigration. As such, it thus attempts to fix this confusing (dis)parity once and for all in the name of the rightful heirs of the national space.

With its emphasis on the spaces of the welfare-state, the sociological gaze that emerges from Selvon's novel reveals the structural disjuncture that underlies the contemporary postimperial nation-state. In this sense, the *The Lonely Londoner's* sociological gaze does not work to recover the English nation as with the texts of late English modernism, or transform concepts of the nation or the state as the postcolonial *Bildungromane* discussed in the first chapter. Instead of the resolution through retrenchment of the problematic of national identity founded on the spatial dialectics of imperialism, the novel illustrates the non-resolving dialectic of Britishness and Englishness, as Kumar announces it, that persists through the spatial contraction with its emphasis on the (dis)parity of national relationships in the shared spaces of the home country. Hence, we return to the very questions that began my analysis of *The Lonely Londoners*: Where has one arrived? Is it old Brit'n or England? As seen below, Emecheta, a sociologist herself, combines the sociological gaze of (ex-) colonial British fiction with the *Bildungsroman* in an attempt to provide a resolution to this problem by presenting the spaces of the welfare-state as spaces of national *Bildung* that forge postimperial citizens. Ultimately, this attempted resolution reveals the cultural prerogatives that attend to the political nationalism of the postimperial British welfare-state.

The Sociological Gaze and the Production of British Space

In literary studies, Ian Baucom's *Out of Place* (1999) has turned critical attention to the importance of the cultural and social vicissitudes of national spaces in the English context. Baucom argues that:

> […] Englishness has consistently been defined through appeals to the identity-endowing properties of place [… and] that these material spaces have been understood to literally shape the identities of the subjects inhabiting or passing through them. […] Over the past 150 years the struggles to define, defend, or reform Englishness have, consequently, been understood as struggles to control, possess , order, and dis-order the nation's and the empire's spaces. (4)

Significantly, for Baucom, those who populate that space enter into a dialectical relationship with it as they leave their mark upon the national cultural memory associated with that space, just as that space leaves its imprint upon them. As such, his description of this process has more than a passing resemblance to the dialectical *Bildungsromane* that Slaughter discusses and which I reference in chapter one. However, Baucom unsettles any easy notion of resolution in this dialectical synthesis by emphasizing the contingency of such national spaces through recourse to its status as a repetition with a difference. The repetition, then, disturbs the ideological stability thought to be inherent in the concrete space itself: "the locale also serves as the site in which the present re-creates the past, as a 'contact zone' in which succeeding generations serially destabilize the nation's acts of collective remembrance, and in so doing reveal England as continuously discontinuous with itself, as that which may repeat itself but always repeats with a difference" (5). Rather than the imagined stability and cultural unity sought by artists of English late modernism's anthropological turn, Baucom presents a disunified geography of loosely,

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conceptually bound spaces, whose bonding conceptual narrative, however, is in flux.[60] That is,

by shifting the terms from a relationship of identity as with the dialectical *Bildungsroman* to a

relationship that is "continuously discontinuous with itself" and is thus a cycle of repetition "with

a difference," Baucom's concepts of the relationship of subjectivity to space to nationality has

much more in common with the weak-utopianism and negative dialectical *Bildung* that was

developed in chapter one in relation to Fanon and the postcolonial nationalist *Bildungsroman*.

The spaces of the nation become, in Fanon's words and echoed by Imre Szeman in his work on

postcolonial nationalist texts, "zones of instability" where national identities are constantly under

reconstitution due to their development within and against the context of imperialism and

colonialism, as well as within a larger global late capitalist world-system.

What I want to focus on for the rest of this chapter, then, is the way that retrenchment and

spatial contraction cannot be understood merely in the relationship of a shrinking from a

universal Britishness to a particular Englishness, but instead that the relationship between

Britishness and Englishness in terms of national identity undergoes a contraction rather than a

transformation or dialectical resolution in that it becomes an issue of the home, of two nations

occupying the same territory. I've already begun to parse this out in the general terms through

my reading of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and the emphasis that the novel places on the

difference between English and British. Following Baucom,[61] although by way of presenting the

obverse to his argument, I want to focus on an essential number of those spaces whereby

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[60] Not to mention that these fluctuating English spaces are bound by the British space, (the *ius soli*), of the Empire's geographical reach and boundedness.

[61] Baucom addresses "Gothic architecture, the Victoria Terminus in Bombay, the Anglo-Indian Mutiny pilgrimage, the cricket field, the country house, and the zone of urban riot" as particular sites that have "housed the disciplinary projects of imperialism *and* the imperial destabilizations and re-formations of English identity" (4).

Britishness is (re)confirmed via the internal nation-building project of the welfare-state.

Following a dual emphasis that juxtaposes legal proclamations against cultural practices,

Baucom isolates a split between an English cultural nationalism and a British political

nationalism as rendered above in Selvon's novel. He argues that the British Nationality Act of

1948, bestowing the rights of British citizenship to all members of the UK, the Commonwealth

and the colonies, continued the British idea of nationality as:

> a global system that could incorporate local differences but would not define itself
>
> by local difference. 'British' space was thus read as homogenous,
>
> interchangeable, everywhere alike, while 'English' space remained unique, local,
>
> differentiated: a formula which permitted the empire to be that which was
>
> simultaneously within the boundaries of Britishness and *outside* the territory of
>
> Englishness, that which, relative to the sovereign nation, was at once identical and
>
> different. Largely devoid of any particular meaning, Britishness was a product of
>
> its form of reproduction. (10)

While Baucom's analysis is in accord with Kumar's in that he locates British nationalism as a

missionary and imperial nationalism, predicated on the outward construction of its products

rather than the inward *Bildung* of the producers, he seems to leapfrog over the high period of the

British welfare-state from its inception in 1945 to its incremental dismantling begun by

Thatcher's government in the late 1970s and continued through the 1980s. When one considers

this alongside the removal of "British" from the official designation of the Commonwealth in

April 1949 following the London Declaration, with the Commonwealth itself representing a

political contraction by the formation of an inter-governmental organization instead of the direct

rule of imperialism and colonization, the primary spaces impacted by welfare-state legislation

(schools, hospitals, housing estates) become the markers and makers of Britishness within the United Kingdom itself.

Due to their designation as British subjects, it is the spaces of the welfare-state that therefore have the most purchase for (ex-) colonial immigrants and their sense of national development and postimperial British *Bildung*: schools, welfare-offices and housing estates. This function is implicit in early novels like Selvon's, but becomes more explicit in Emecheta's before finally becoming inoperable in Kureishi's post-Thatcherite *The Black Album*. The spaces of the welfare-state have an explicit relationship to the sociological emphasis found in Selvon's text and continued in much postcolonial immigrant writing as they augur the direct transformation of the national space in hitherto unforeseen ways with a demonstrable impact.

"Ditch-Dwellers": Buchi Emecheta's Postimperial *Bildungsroman*

Buchi Emecheta's *Adah*'s *Story* (1983) is comprised of her first two novels *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second-Class Citizen* (1974). Presented as a singular two part novel, it corrects the temporal trajectory of Adah's self-development (*In the Ditch*, Emecheta's first published novel, actually presents the latter half of Adah's life, while the second published novel *Second-Class Citizen* provides the story of Adah's early life); as such, the combined and temporally corrected *Adah's Story* allows for the full narrative arc of a classical *Bildungsroman*.[62] Moreover, the novel

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[62] Indeed, when taken separately, especially with the case of *Second-Class Citizen*, the process of *Bildung* can be seen as a particularly pessimistic affair or even as as utter failure, as with Joya Uraizee's argument about the construction of womanhood in *Second-Class Citizen*: "And this concept that [womanhood is necessarily victimhood in Emecheta's writings] is further complicated by the fact that Emecheta frequently invokes the West as a haven of freedom for women, while suggesting that Africa is a continuous grind of oppression. Therefore, despite her best efforts, Adah is always defined in terms of the exploitation that she experiences and not on her own terms" (*No Place* 106).

continues the sociological mode[63] encountered above with *The Lonely Londoners*; it documents not only the ethnic and cultural differences between the Nigerian immigrants and English inhabitants of the UK, but also turns an eye toward the differences within each group, thereby dissecting its supposed integral unity and illustrating the fault lines and separations that persist in any "imagined community" due to race, gender, sexuality, class, and spatial differences. Given the sociological emphasis of the narration and Emecheta's own often referenced status as a trained sociologist, the novel is generally read and presented as a semi- or even primarily autobiographical text due to the events of Adah's life closely resembling Emecheta's own. In this vein, Romanus Muoneke reads Emecheta's narrative as the author's own redemptive exercise in personal identity construction: "By using fictitious characters to reenact her experience (including invented additions here and there), Emecheta is able to objectify events, evaluate her actions, and reconstruct or reconnect or renegotiate or *define her true identity*" (55 my emphasis). While there is certainly some truth to this as Emecheta reveals many of the experiences that she drew on for the novels in her actual autobiography *Head Above Water* (1986), this privatizes the experience of narrativization, making it the exclusive enclave of the author, and limits the impact of the sociological gaze that the novel partakes in – not to mention the problematic slippage between a constructed social identity and a "true identity" presented by this reading.[64] Consequently, such an over-emphasis on the biographical can be limiting.

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[63] The sociological aspect of the novel is also prevalent in many of the chapter titles which seem to practically echo a sociological primer on immigrant life: "Childhood," "Escape into Elitism," "The Daily Minders," "The Ghetto," "Role Acceptance," "Learning the Rules," Applying the Rules," "Population Control," "Qualifying for the Mansions," "Baptism by Socialisation," "Down to the Dole House," "The Ditch-Dwellers," and "It's Dole Day," for example.

[64] On the relationship between autobiographical fiction and Emecheta's fashioning of her own self in her work see also Omar Sougou.

An emphasis on the sociological observations and juxtapositions of a postcolonial

Nigeria and a postimperial Britain presented through the protagonist's development, therefore,

provides a different lens for investigating the blurring of the boundaries between a postcolonial

and postimperial *Bildungsroman* and as such it bears a resemblance to the entangled

postcolonial/postimperial nationalist *Bildung* found in Caute's *The Decline of the West*.

Although Walter Collins follows a similar path in analyzing Emecheta's early novels as principal

instances of African women's *Bildungsromane*, he too blurs the line between autobiographical

writing as a personal redemptive act and *Bildungsroman* as the development of a fictional

character: "It is from the 'kaleidoscope view of life' [provided by autobiographical writing] that

details spring regarding not only the development and self-culture of a fictional character, but

also the development of the author – Emecheta herself" (43). By following the critically

established autobiographical path too closely, Collins only assesses her work in terms of

postcolonial *Bildung* through recourse to authorial intention, as this is how Emecheta views

herself: a fundamentally Nigerian writer who happens to live in England. As an integral or even

biological truth, echoes of the "true identity" seen above thus reverberate through such analyses.

But by following the sociological emphasis that is laid out above, coupled with its emphasis on

cross-cultural interactions in particular British spaces, what is revealed is the inter-relationship

between postcolonial and postimperial identities. The process of diaspora, of dual national

citizenship – Nigerian and British – emphasizes the persistence of the imperial legacy in

determining and forging both identities, and thus their incommensurate dialectical tension.[65]

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[65] Maria Vidal Grau's *Buchi Emecheta's Double-Voiced Discourse*, provides a similar emphasis
on the dual relationships, while also retaining some of the autobiographical emphasis, leading to
a slightly hagiographic tone: "This bi-cultural condition [of being a Nigerian woman living and
writing in England] leads to a double-voiced discourse with a deep-rooted ambivalence. The

Schematically, the novel's two sections can be seen as providing two distinct *Bildungsromane*: the first predicated on postcolonial *Bildung*, and the second on postimperial *Bildung*. Of course, such a structural pairing is rife with opportunity for complication, where the first is interrupted by aspects of the latter and vice versa. However, I am more interested in plotting dominant aspects rather than marking any absolute division, and, moreover, their pairing as part of one protagonist's overall *Bildung* serves to highlight their lack of particular integrity and thus their necessary inter-relationship. As a postcolonial *Bildungsroman* the first part revolves around Adah's desire to overcome the strictures of colonial rule and the stigmatized identity of a colonial subject. Ironically, her way of doing so highlights the cultural imperatives introduced by colonial rule as she desires an English education so that she can join the incipient Nigerian middle-class and realize her dream of going to the United Kingdom. It is not until she arrives in the United Kingdom that her status as a colonial "second-class citizen" is made clear to her, thus revealing the rule of colonial difference that she has unknowingly been operating under, subsequently providing the grounds for a critique of the colonial institutions through which she has emerged and that have betrayed her. The second part of the novel, then, performs something akin to a second nationalization and second process of *Bildung* through the auspices of the welfare-state. Her postcolonial identity literally goes up in flames by the end of the first section as her husband has burned her passport, birth certificate and marriage license, leaving her to be born anew in the second half of *Adah's Story* in the housing estates and cared for by social workers until she can learn to take care of herself.

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tensions deriving from the English influence on this proud Igbo woman rise without control to the surface of her creative writing and gives to her narrative a powerful sense of vitality and polemic, so that her prose retains a pseudo-colonial or neo-colonial feel about it" (93).

Initially, the novel's spatial demarcations revolve around the binary difference between the metropole and periphery as the northern and southern protectorates that will become the federated Nigerian nation are still jointly, but unevenly, administered colonies. The novel begins with the a dream of the metropole as home and as fulfillment of selfhood; it is presented as an inherent dream of personal fulfillment that is part of Adah's absolute being and lurking beneath her consciousness, directing her in her development and destiny. The opening sentences are presented in the language of a foundational myth: "It all began like a dream. You know, the sort of dream which seems to have originated from nowhere, yet one was always aware of its existence. One could feel it, once could be directed by it; unconsciously at first, until it became a reality, a Presence" (9). From the beginning, then, the ideologically operative force of the colonial discourse drives Adah's development: her maturation from child to adult will move her from periphery to core, from colonial difference to civilized parity. Over time the inchoate dream reveals itself openly to be the dream of the UK: "Her arrival there would be the pinnacle of her ambition" (16). As the endpoint of a dream, the fulfillment of a wish and driving ambition, the UK is presented in reverential tones invoking both trepidation and excitement: "The title 'United Kingdom' when pronounced by Adah's father sounded so heavy, like the type of noise one associated with bombs. It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah's father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God's Holiest of Holies" (9).

In order to appease this Presence, to achieve her goal, Adah puts her faith in education.[66] Schools become more of a home to her than that provided by her parents and, overtaking the

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[66] If education is revered as means of self improvement and postcolonial *Bildung* – "one's savior from poverty and disease was education" (10) – then it is also pilloried as the training of the

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space of the home, they become the space where she is matured into a postcolonial subject. To become educated, Adah first has to sneak away from her parents and join the school surreptitiously as only her younger brother, Boy, is sent to school, because, for her traditional parents, it is seen as a waste of money to educate girls. Already, the traditional space of the home is being conjured as a space of negativity and limited horizons that can only be eclipsed by education. Indeed, her gender is invoked here to illustrate the difference between Adah and her mother's generations and the issue of education becomes a mode for publicly embarrassing her mother and the ideals associated with the home provided by Adah's parents. Because she had snuck off to school, Adah was declared missing; once she was found the colonial policemen humiliate her mother in front of Adah and her father by forcing her to drink a large portion of uncooked *gari*, which is described as "torture, purgatorial in fact" (13). She is then told by the police that she has to "sell off one of her colourful *lappas* and send Adah to school [. …] At this point Ma gave Adah a queer look – a look that contained a mixture of fear, love and wonder. Adah shrank back, still clutching [her teacher] Mr Cole" (13). In effect, the scene establishes both the enlightened right and the sheer power of colonial rule by relegating her mother to the role of a traditional, unenlightened hindrance to Adah's development that needs to be forced into

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neocolonial bourgeois nationalists in English schools abroad. Years later, the returned Lawyer, who the people had hoped would become a champion for his people, is instead seen as fulfilling the role of bourgeois elite and thus not the role of the protector of the Ibo in Lagos: "That lawyer was a funny man, Adah thought. He did not come to the South, to Ibuza, to give the people of the town electricity, nor did he come to worship the river Oboshi. He just stayed put in the North, making barrels and barrels of money" as a governmental Minister (24). The references to "barrels" here also figuratively connects the lawyer to the discovery of oil that will reconnect the bourgeois elites to foreign neo-imperial capitalist concerns, while also fueling the internecine strife that continues to plague Nigeria.

compliance by the social powers of the police.[67] It also serves as what Bruce Robbins refers to

as the formal primal moment for narratives of the upward mobility genre: "the protagonist's

upward mobility is offered legitimation by means of a primal hurt, a set of initial circumstances

so grossly oppressive and unfair that revolt against them immediately seems natural, inevitable,

fully justified" (159). In *Adah's Story*, the primal moment is compounded, reflected through

gender with her parents and class discrimination with the police in Nigeria and then reaffirmed

through the addition of race once in the UK. The Inclusion of this primal scene is necessary,

Robbins concludes, so as not to make the protagonist a mere social climber and with their rise

being nothing more than a betrayal of those they leave behind.

Her school is considered a modern school for following an English model of education,

where "Children were not taught Yoruba or any African language. This was why it was such an

expensive school. The proprietress was trained in the United Kingdom" (10). Her post-school

dreams follow, also, a particularly imperial path: "she was going to go to Ibadan University to

read Classics and she was going to teach at the end of it all" (22). Not only, then, is she educated

and molded into a "modern" woman,[68] but she will also be enfolded into the very system,

reproducing its ends herself as a teacher of Classics – a subject that ideologically serves to

reinforce the long heritage of Western history and progress over the non-historical, non-civilized

Africans. Education serves as a disruption and disjunction with what the text presents as

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[67] As Uraizee comments, "Studies become both a substitute for her absent home/family and a means for her to survive as an independent woman" (102).

[68] Describing the difference between Adah and her mother's generation, Emecheta writes, that the older generation's "wants were simple and easily met. Not like those of their children who later got caught up in the entangled web of industrialisation. Adah's Ma had no experience of having to keep up mortgage payments: she never knew what it was to have a family car, or worry about its innards; she had no worries about pollution, the population explosion or race. Was it surprising, therefore, that she was happy, being unaware of the so-called joys of civilization and all its pitfalls?" (15).

traditional Nigerian values through Adah's open rejection of her parents' customs, and therefore

serves the imperial modernization discourse as her education moves her into the elite circles of

Nigeria through the job she is able to obtain in the postcolonial state at the American embassy.

Curiously, in that it goes uncommented on by the novel, she ends up following the path of the

England-educated lawyer: both purportedly sought out education as means to help their people,

but like the lawyer who seeks only his own advantage through government (mis)dealings, Adah

gives up her desire to educate other Nigerians in order to obtain a high paying job serving

American diplomats. Through her job, Adah earns much more than the average Nigerian citizen

and spends her income obtaining servants, expensive furnishings for her house and other

entrapments of a civilized bourgeois ideal.

However, Adah's self-development from colonial Ibo girl to postcolonial middle-class

elite is brought into sharp relief when this latter identity is transposed from Lagos to London.

Her power and status is revealed as inoperative in the UK; the difference that she had cultivated

in her studied pursuit of a British education and lifestyle is utterly unacknowledged by both the

Anglo-British and her fellow Nigerians. It is particularly the social-leveling amongst her fellow

immigrants that causes her the most angst: "to her horror, she saw that she had to share the house

with such Nigerians who called her madam at home; some of them were of the same educational

background as her paid servants. She knew she had had a terrible childhood, but still, in Nigeria,

class distinctions were beginning to be established" (34). Declassed in London, she shifts from

the use of tribal and ethnic assignations that she used in Nigeria to the national collective term of

"Nigerian" when describing her fellow country folk in the UK. This shift in terminology

ultimately emphasizes her relative position amongst them: one immigrant amongst many.

Indeed it is the appellation here of postcolonial immigrant over and above Nigerian which then

lumps her among the nameless, culturally indistinct "Second-Class citizens." Although the text itself does not openly resort to a British/English split like that of *The Lonely Londoners*, just such a split is reinforced by her othering and cultural-social reduction at the hands of the English; the untranslatability, the non-universalizing aspect that separates her postcolonial inheritance of Britishness and British citizenship from a cultural Englishness is repeatedly brought into focus.

This culturally enforced separation between her Nigerian immigrant Britishness and a dominant cultural Englishness in the metropole is largely represented through the spaces that she is allowed and disallowed to occupy. As with *The Lonely Londoners* there is an unofficial but strictly policed sense of where she is able to reside in the city. Sensing the rejection that awaits her while house-hunting, Adah thinks,

> Now the day of reckoning had arrived […]. The lights would certainly show them up for what they were. Niggers. […] Adah had never faced rejection in this manner. Not like this, directly. Rejection by this shrunken piece of humanity, with a shaky body and moppy hair, loose, dirty and unkempt, who tried to tell them that they were unsuitable for a half derelict and probably condemned house with creaky stairs. (66)

After losing flats in good neighborhoods upon the revelation of her skin color, Adah learns of the existence of a black "ghetto" where Nigerian and other immigrant landlords rent dilapidated properties to the incoming immigrants. This black "ghetto" serves as a line of demarcation separating the multicultural British from the English, thus preserving the sense of the cultural *Heimat*:

> Those houses, the clean, beautiful ones, seemed to belong to a different neighbourhood; in fact, a different world. […] there was a mighty building

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curving right into the middle of the street, shutting away the cheerful side from

the gloomy one, as if it were determined to divide the poor from the rich; the

houses from the ghetto, the whites from the blacks. The jutting end of this

building was just like a social divide; solid, visible and unmovable. (74)

For Adah, this "solid, visible and unmovable" social boundary establishes the fixedness and

rigidity of her position as a postcolonial British citizen; whatever social and cultural mission that

underwrote her colonial education and maturation into a postcolonial subject was, in the end,

non-transferable to the metropole, and this is most effectively communicated to her by where and

among whom she is allowed to make her home. However, it is also this issue of a "home" that

isolates her from the Anglo-British inhabiting London. Like the majority of the characters in *The

Lonely Londoners*, it is assumed amongst both the English and Adah herself that her stay in

London is temporary, that although "British" in a strictly legal sense, her home is in Nigeria.

As the first half of *Adah's Story* comes to an end, the complex postcolonial and

postimperial negotiations between home and nationality, Nigerian and British, are thrown into

further complication as Adah leaves her abusive husband and attempts to sue him in a British

court for divorce. In his anger at Adah, her husband burns up her passport, birth certificate and

marriage license. This act is coupled by his burning of the manuscript of her first novel – what

she refers to as her "brainchild" and thus a significant manifestation of her sense of selfhood.

Consequently, the first half of her *Bildungsroman* ends with the figurative destruction of both the

legal and cultural aspects of the development of her identity. Adah is left in a legal and cultural

limbo, unsure of how to proceed; she and her children become, for all intents and purposes,

wards of the British state, although it is not explicitly presented in these terms in the novel.

The second half of *Adah's Story*, comprised of *In the Ditch*, begins, then, a whole new

process of *Bildung*, but this time under the auspices of the British welfare-state as opposed to the

imperial space of the colonial school. Separated from her last ties to Nigeria by the divorce with

her husband, Adah resolves to make a new home for herself permanently in London. Basically,

she has been torn apart to be rebuilt through a second process of socialization and assimilation

after her initial colonial socialization in Lagos. Once removed from the itinerant immigrant

ghetto, Adah's new socialization as not only a British citizen but as someone who's making their

home in the UK is reduced to three principle locations: the housing estate, the welfare office and

the university. Of these, it is the housing estate that the novel concentrates on the most for the

way that is socializes Adah, not as a Nigerian immigrant, but as a British citizen.

The housing estate serves as the location for socializing the unclassed and lumpen of all

stripes, resembling the description of the welfare office in *The Lonely Londoners*, and as such its

inhabitants include the poorest strata, drawing upon London's multiethnic and multiracial

population including the Irish, West Indian, English, Nigerian, etc. In this sense, it is a truly

British space as the repository for people from every corner of the former empire and

commonwealth. As with welfare assistance in *The Lonely Londoners*, the qualifications are based

purely on a British national scale which includes all citizens bound by the rule of the *ius soli*.

Whereas the first half of *Adah's Story* presents something along the lines of a neo-imperial

blurring of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in Cheah's terms,[69] turning the sociological gaze

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[69] It blurs the boundaries of Cheah's concept of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* due to its
generally pro-Western sense of individualist development, presented largely in capitalist terms in
the first half of the novel, yet also critiques this development from a postcolonial point of view in
the second half after Adah arrives in England and is subsequently declassed. However, the object
of the latter critique can be read as concerning Adah's inability to fully achieve her desired class
status, not the system that produces such a desire.

towards the development of a colonial-*cum*-postcolonial immigrant in the imperial periphery and

the eventual tear-down of a postcolonial immigrant in the spaces of the English *Heimat*, the

second presents a postimperial process of *Bildung* whereby the postcolonial immigrant/British

citizen is assimilated into the spaces of the metropole. Here, then, the offices and spaces of the

welfare-state sit uncomfortably close to the spaces of imperial administration in creating and

reconstituting British citizens fit to live within the metropole.

      After Adah is assigned her first temporary council home at Pussy Cat Mansions, the

novel emphasizes the difference between the people and spaces that comprise the housing estate.

In contrast to Adah and the other inhabitants of the Mansions, the estate agent is described as

upper-class, wearing a crisp white shirt, gold cufflinks and watch. Moreover, the physical layout

of the estate itself is remarkable for what one assumes is its purposeful similarity, but ultimate

difference to the affluent garden squares, like Grosvenor Square or Bloomsbury Square, that dot

metropolitan London. Adah's first impression notes that:

> The outside looked like a prison, red bricks with tiny yellow windows. The shape
>
> of the whole block was square, with those tiny windows peeping into the streets.
>
> The block looked dependable, solid. The outside look was not too encouraging,
>
> but she must not despair. She went round in circles looking for an opening into
>
> the block, found one eventually, but it was so dark that she was not at first sure
>
> that she was not walking into a cave. She emerged into an open space, with a
>
> crowd of children playing. (155)

The mix of institutional, dependable and public descriptors – from the prison-like, but solid

construction to the "crowd of children playing" – creates an ambiguous atmosphere that is at

once de-personalizing, public and open to scrutiny. If the private, exclusive, well-maintained and

manicured parks of Bloomsbury and Grosvenor Squares can be seen as representing the

privileged, cultured homes of Englishness – in the sense of English spaces that Baucom

discusses – then the council estates represent the unruly, unclassifiable, null-cultural homes of

Britishness: lacking a common culture, the inhabitants and their spaces may as well have none.

This cultural hodge-podge housed in institutional anonymity is further emphasized by the

sheer multiplicity of descriptors employed to describe the scene of the courtyard contained by the

estate as a destabilized intercultural pastiche: the dilapidated sheds in the middle of the

"courtyard" (English) or "compound" (African) look alternately, depending on the viewer, like

"Juju man's house," "monastery" (vicar's wife), or "mortuary" (deaconess). Although they were

originally intended to be sheds for bicycles and prams, they now lack any determinate meaning.

The mansion kids fill them with odd bits of broken furniture, old clothes and "any type of article

which they fancied from the rubbish dumps" such that they end up resembling "a hippy shrine

more than anything" (156). Different floors of the estates are then also demarcated for different

members of the population; for example, ground floor flats for old age pensioners resemble a

death row, and give the impression of "condemnation, unwantedness and death" (157).

Ultimately, the mansions are described as "a unique place, a separate place individualised for

'problem families'. Problem families with real problems were placed in a problem place. So even

if one lived at the Mansions and had no problem the set-up would create problems – in plenty"

(157). The mansions and the "problem families" that occupy them become the physical symbols

of a postimperial Britishness as the repository for the detritus of an empire in retrenchment.

Reversing Baucom's presentation of enclaves of Englishness that dot the British space of the

Empire, both the immigrant ghettos and council estates figure as enclaves of a postimperial

Britishness within the encompassing space of the seemingly, increasingly ideological English capital.

If Adah's socialization upon arriving in London in *Second-Class Citizen* is to her role as immigrant, here it is from immigrant to "ditch-dweller," completing the devolution of her status and identity begun in the colonial schools of Lagos: "her socialisation was complete. She, an African woman with five children and no husband, no job, and no future, was just like most of her neighbours – shiftless, rootless, with no rightful claim to anything. Just cut off… none of them knew the beginning of their existence, the reason for their hand-to-mouth existence, or the result or future of that existence" (166). The end result is a feeling of the complete and utter lack of agency, "All would stay in the ditch until somebody pulled them out or they sank under (166).[70]

Romanus Muoneke reads this mixture of co-socialization and the shared gendered constraints as coming together to form a sense of empowered belongingness that is garnered in the Mansion, stating that "This integration with the interracial community, and in particular with the women, the oppressed victims of society, helps Adah's transformation from a state of aloneness and helplessness to a state of belonging" (58). This assessment over-romanticizes the infighting and bickering that characterizes much of the women's interactions, but more importantly it ignores the internal, narrative drive of the *Bildungsroman*. Following the same trajectory as her initial colonial schooling, the narrative impetus is to overcome this shared

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[70] As Susan Yearwood notes, this is a particularly feminized space – from the inhabitants themselves to Carol, the social worker who oversees the Mansion. Yearwood argues that "Their discontent is associated with their sex; Adah and the white women 'in the ditch' battle within similar constraints (which are in the main patriarchical) and encounter parallel discourtesies that inform their dialectic as women" (117). She goes on to argue that this is symbolic of the British state having rendered the institutional space as the appropriate space for black immigrant women, enclosing them and making them purely dependent.

lumpen existence in order to become productive private citizens. Indeed, rather than a place of communal sharing, the housing estates instead represent an agonistic space of national *Bildung*. Adah, instead of coming together in a form of multicultural or feminist cultural identity with the other inhabitants, learns to assert herself independently of them.

Indeed, Adah grows to resent the welfare protections that she has been granted, going so far as to argue that its operations are self-serving and immoral because they've been used to prove her alterity and dependence instead of being administered as rights and entitlements of British citizens.[71] As Carol, her social worker, is revealed as both an enabler as well as hindrance to Adah's development in that she enjoys her cases' dependence on her and is seen as making sure that they remain dependent on her, she both alters the tradition of the "Fairy Godmother" benefactor role as described by Robbins in the upward mobility genre while also confirming Robbins' assertion that "the credentialed carer or rescuer thereby preserves and legitimates a social advantage over the one who is rescued – an allegory of the distance between welfare-state capitalism and any socialism that would deserve the name" (8). The result of Adah's new insights provide for a resolution redolent of Lukács' conceptions of the *Bildungsroman* stressing her individuality and reconciling her to the society from which she had been alienated:

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[71] As such, Adah's views accord with more contemporary critiques of the unintentional policing aspects of social work, including, for example, Beth Humphries' work examining the intersections of welfare and immigration policy, particularly in how they've been brought together in order to discriminate against immigrants. Humphries argues that, "Immigration policy is a particularly fruitful area for illustrating the ways in which health, education, housing, social services and the whole gamut of benefits related to income support, have been used to define the boundaries of nation, and for purposes of inclusion and exclusion." And moreover, that "social work, an activity that in the recent past has been extraordinarily explicit in its stand on anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, but which has been at times rather naïve about its contradictory positioning, […] has been increasingly drawn into a disciplinary and surveillance role in policing the poor, to the extent of having now been 'tamed'" (126).

I suppose I have to go. I have to be out of the ditch sometime, I have to learn to make my own decisions without running to Carol. I may or may not have any social officer anymore. When I'm in need, I can always write to them. […] A week later, she moved out of the Mansions, away from the ditch, to face the world alone, without the cushioning comfort of Mrs Cox, without the master-minding of Carol. It was time she became an individual. (230)

Adah then moves from the economically downcast area of Kentish Town, where the Pussy Cat Mansions are located, to central London, just across from Regents Street in a mixed (working, middle and upper class) area of London. Instead of the public space of the Mansions, everything in the new "match-boxes" evokes privacy (232). Ultimately, Adah's stay in the housing estate has prepared her for independent life in a council flat (as opposed to taking up residence in Bloomsbury Square); that is, Adah has not been acculturated or assimilated to Englishness, but instead to a postimperial Britishness where the State she finds herself in resembles more Moses' ideal of "Old Brit'n" as her mother country than an English cultural homeland.

As such, the novel participates in creating a safe, sanitized British identity for Adah that is predicated on western bourgeois ideals, but which also critiques this process. As with *The Lonely Londoners*, the principal narrator of Emecheta's text fears being classified as part of those postcolonial elements that "muddy the water." As such, its spaces of Britishness are reserved for "problem people" whose cultural difference mark them as incompatible with English society, but ultimately with the design to transform them into fitful productive postimperial British citizens. The productiveness of these spaces, then, serves to reactivate the universal dimension of citizenship and subjecthood bestowed by the *ius soli* with all the problematic aspects of its imperial baggage in tow. Operating under the logic of a political nationalism, they ostensibly do

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not purposefully seek to instill a particular cultural logic of Englishness upon their (ex-) colonial subjects, but by reducing them to "problem people" they remind us that every political nationalism also smuggles in the cultural prerogatives of its hegemonic population.[72] Instead of seeking to produce new utopian spaces of the nation to-come, these spaces form a tacit recognition of the United Kingdom's imperial heritage, while it is left to a text like Emecheta's to attempt to resolve their underlying reductionist tendencies by symbolically dissolving the collective space of the Pussy Cat Mansions and (re)distributing its inhabitants across the entire metropolitan landscape – in effect, producing postimperial British citizens who are neither English nor problem people. Ulitmately, this resolution may be of little comfort as it serves to reproduce the very sense of English normalcy that it begins by critiquing, in a sense hiding Adah in plain site as Moses does in his impromptu role as welfare officer. We are thus left in the undesirable position that Bruce Robbins articulates of having to defend a compromised system that upholds the hegemonic values of society, while all the while, "look[ing] forward to the day when a better one will have replaced it" (10).

Postscript: The Beginning of the Postimperial Retreat

If the space of the British welfare-state offered an internal project of British nationalist *Bildung* and gave limited recognition to (ex-) colonials' rights as citizens of the British state – as British nationals under the 1948 Immigration and Nationality Act – then the decline of the welfare-state can also be seen as a marker for the decline of this, at best, begrudging acknowledgement of an

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[72] As Chatterjee reminds us, "The charge that is made against universal citizenship is not merely that it forces everyone into a single homogenous cultural mould, thus threatening the distinct identities of minority groups; but that the homogenous mould itself is by no means a neutral one, being invariably the culture of the dominant group, so that it is not everybody but only the minorities and the disadvantaged who are forced to forego their cultural identities" (*Empire* 226).

inclusive national identity. As Andrew Marr, notes: "Because 'British' was so associated after 1945 with the power and achievement of the state [...] the retreat of the state has also meant a retreat of Britishness. Indeed there is a case for saying that Margaret Thatcher, by privatizing, deregulating and demolishing much of the old state apparatus, helped to undermine key aspects of British identity" (Marr 30). This, of course, rings true with much of Thatcher's neoliberal political program, best announced under her oft quoted statement that "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families."[73] The quote is often reduced to what is thought to be its elemental ideological gist as "There is no society, only individuals." However, the inclusion of the family in the original utterance carries a particular weight when looked at in relation to Thatcher's 1981 British Nationality Act, which was officially enacted in 1983. The 1981 Act further limited the category of British citizen, reducing it entirely to a racial inheritance and as such, it built upon the Heath Immigration Act of 1971 which created the split between British subject and alien along the lines of the patrial and non-patrial. Patrials "were defined as British or commonwealth citizens who were born or naturalised in the United Kingdom or who had a parent (or grandparent in the case of British citizens) who had been born or naturalised in the United Kingdom [, or] British and Commonwealth citizens who had been settled in the United Kingdom for five years and had registered or had applied to register as a British citizen" (Spenser 143). The 1981 Act had two primary goals in relation to the family; the first was to limit the right of British citizenship in regards to foreign born dependents of current British citizens, and the second was to introduce and fix the biological and thus racially determined cultural definition of Britishness passed through the grandparents, thus fully replacing the spatially oriented, imperialist political nationalism of the *ius soli*. As Ian Baucom

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[73] *Women's Own Magazine*, October 31st, 1987.

succinctly puts it, "[…] the 1981 British Nationality Act codified a theory of identity that sought to defend the 'native' inhabitants of the island against the claims of their former subjects by defining Britishness as an inheritance of race" (8). The emphasis on "native inhabitants" provides a prescient precursor to Merkel's later statements that the real problem with immigrants is that they don't leave. This last is encapsulated in the "Primary Purpose Rule" of the 1981 Immigration Act "which forbade the entry of affianced or spouses unless the British citizen partner could show that the primary purpose of marriage was not settlement" (Spenser 147). Ultimately, if the Heath Act countered the right of immigration, then the 1981 Act reserved British nationality as a racial category, exclusive to those with ancestors born in the United Kingdom.

In terms of the diasporic and postcolonial immigrant fiction that I've been discussing in this chapter, this becomes apparent in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*, which, among other things, documents the deterioration of the spaces of the welfare-state as the bearers of Britishness. In the novel, the umbrella-like expansiveness of Britishness is already dead and gone, revealing a fractured populous, teeming with unchecked hostility. Indeed the very appellation of "second-generation immigrant" writing bestowed upon the novel indicates just how clearly the concept of Britishness had been removed from its imperial legacy and reduced to a racialized logic by its utter separation from postcolonial immigrants. If there is something like a "romance of arrival" operating in Selvon and Emecheta's texts, then its memory is lacking from *The Black Album*. This leads to a situation where if the earlier texts discussed above illustrate the problem of colonial immigration and nationalism through spatial categories – had one arrived in England or old Brit'n? – then the new emphasis is no longer on the productive

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spaces of Britishness, but instead on who by racial right is a British citizen as these spaces are no

longer capable of producing citizens.

In other words, following the logic of "second generation immigrants" the situation is one

in which all immigrants are now aliens. The imperial political spaces of Britishness have been

replaced by an emphasis on the individual and their familial, racial inheritance and the *Heimat*.

By moving the emphasis from a political to an ethnic cultural nationalism, the specter of race

rises to the surface more clearly, forming the base of an impenetrable difference as such. Étienne

Balibar argues that it is this function of race as absolute difference that serves as nationalism's

operative excess or supplement: that sense of absolute difference or other by which the national

can be defined as particularly bounded and paradoxically universal.[74] It is in this sense that

Enoch Powell argued against the logic of the *ius soli*, stating that there is no magical, elemental

aspect to England's spaces that will transform immigrants into fellow Englishman, or which

underwrites Thatcher's fears of the "swamping" of England by postcolonial immigrants, or

Merkel's resentment that the immigrants won't leave. Culture, race and national spaces become

hypostasized analogues of one another: absolute and impregnable if they are to remain pure. In

this sense, they replay the logic of closure, constituent of Utopia, for the Right.

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[74] Fleshing this out, Balibar writes, "It seems to me that racism, in spite of all its historical differences, is unified by the fact that it simply *is* this supplement, or works as this supplement and excess [to nationalism]. Now if you only think of the most obvious cases, not excluding the case of Nazism, you will discover a strange thing: in order to work as a supplement of nationalism within nationalism, racism has to take at the same time very contradictory forms or directions. It has to work and build itself as a *supranationalism*, that is, to define along lines of racial or cultural 'purity' what the imaginary core of the nation is (the true English, the true German, the true French race, *la Hispanidad*) in order to impose its domination and preserve it form contacts and miscegenation with alien elements. This obviously reinforces the side of particularism. But it *also* has to symbolically inscribe the national character, the alleged destiny of the nation within the broader framework, potentially universal or universalistic, of some *ideal entity* which come long before the nation and goes far beyond it in space and time" to which he gives the examples of western civilization, or the Aryan race, or the white man, etc. (203-4).

The council estates which in *Adah's Story* had provided the agonistic, socializing spaces of Britishness in *The Black Album* have become spaces of pure alterity. If multiculturalism and multi-ethnic groupings were a hallmark of the legacy of imperialism and its enforced bestowing of British subjecthood via the extension of the *ius soli* through its empire which then coalesced through the postimperial retrenchment into the British socializing spaces of the welfare housing estate, then these same spaces, post-Thatcher, have become sites of English versus immigrant violence. Describing the relations between a Bengali family and their English neighbors in the estate, Kureishi writes, "The family had been harried – stared at, spat on, called 'Paki scum' – for months, and finally attacked" (96). The father has a bottle broken over his head, the mother has been punched, lit matches are shoved through their door's mail slot. "At all hours the bell has been rung and the culprits said they would return to slaughter the children" (96). What makes the violence so pernicious is that it's not presented as a purposeful politicized racism, but as ideological common sense, a cultural logic, as the perpetrators are merely children: "the aggressors weren't neofascist skinheads. It was beneath the strutting lads to get involved in lowly harassment. These hooligans were twelve and thirteen years old" (96). Instead of actively promoting a particular political standpoint, these "strutting lads" have internalized the general landscape of racial prejudice and violence as the natural order of things. The Bengali family, more than just having the racist epithet of "Paki" hurled at them by openly racist thugs, are presented as purely other to their English, Anglo-British tormenters.

As seen through the eyes of Dr. Brownlow, the begrudging figure of Englishness, it is the "ghastly […] wastelands" of the council estates themselves that breed this violence and hatred (99). As such, he invokes the underfunding and criminalization of these spaces that was paramount during the Thatcherite years. He argues that it is not a biological ignorance that feeds

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white Anglo-racism, but the deterioration of the space of Britain: "Not surprising they're violent.

[…] This place. Living in ugliness. I've been wading around, you know, an hour or two in

Hades, lost in the foul damp. I have seen giant dogs, sheer mournful walls, silos of misery. Sties.

Breeding grounds of stink, these projects, for children. Ha! And race antipathy infecting

everyone, passed on like AIDS" (100).[75] The estates, which had once been the embodiment of a

particular Left British nation-building project by the postwar Labour Party, have become objects

of resentment through political and economic neglect. Given this neglect and the ideological

retraction from a postimperial Britishness, they function as sites of what Paul Gilroy terms a

particularly British "postcolonial melancholia"[76] where the appearance of foreigners, immigrants

and aliens, following the Nationality Act of 1981, are reminders of both imperial privilege as

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[75] As such his critique bears more than a passing resemblance to Paul Gilroy's critique of the causes of the death of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom: "The murderous culprits responsible for its demise are institutional indifference and political resentment. They have been fed by the destruction of welfare-states and the evacuation of public good, by privatization and marketization" (1).

[76] Gilroy's use of the term tracks the shift from the "dignified sadness" of nineteenth century melancholy to a "postcolonial melancholia" that he presents as a cultural and national pathology. According to Gilroy, postcolonial melancholia manifests itself as a "guilt ridden loathing and depression that have come to characterize Britain's xenophobic responses to the strangers who intruded upon it recently [, … taking hold] as soon as the natives and savages began to appear and make demands for recognition in the empire's metropolitan core" (90, 91). In this sense, melancholy, for Gilroy can be at least somewhat productive, while melancholia leads to a disavowal of the imperial legacy: "Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten" (90). While it is far beyond my ability or the scope of this dissertation to debate the finer points of melancholy versus melancholia and their inherent productive or regressive drives in terms of politics, I am more interested in the latter idea of the disavowal that attends this structure; while on the one hand English cultural nationalism is seen as desiring a return to the nation's past position of global supremacy, on the other hand, it disavows the imperial legacy on which this global position was predicated do to the embarrassing disclosures of colonial atrocity and brutality. This disavowal leads then to "the error of imagining that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects" (90). While Gilroy diagnoses this as a form of melancholia, given the productive and political necessity that Jacques Derrida has theorized for melancholy and the work of mourning, I will prefer to work within the framework of disavowal throughout this project.

well as decline, which, consequently, can only manifest themselves through a culturally based racial violence.

It is in this landscape that Shahid's secret, shameful desire makes sense: "I wanted to be a racist. […] My mind was invaded by killing-nigger fantasies. […] Of going around abusing Pakis, niggers, Chinks, Irish, any foreign scum. I slagged them under my breath whenever I saw them. I wanted to kick them up the arse. The thought of sleeping with Asian girls made me sick. I'm being very honest with you now –" (14-15). For Shahid, a "second-generation immigrant," this is the privilege of being born British in the post-Thatcher United Kingdom: protecting that home from the "swamping" effect of foreign immigration that just happens to include himself. Indeed, as a British citizen of Pakistani descent born in England, it is only after the complete eradication of the 1948 Immigration and Nationality Act by the 1981 Nationality Act that such a designation as "second-generation immigrant" makes sense – one can no longer appeal to a common political Britishness, one is always immigrant, or other regardless of birthplace or the legacy of the imperial subjugation and subjection of Britishness upon its colonial territories. The disinvestment from the spaces of the welfare-state mark, then, a disavowal of the colonial legacies of Britishness in favor of an imagined Englishness inexplicably under threat by hordes of immigrants.

Conclusion

As with most projects of nationalist *Bildung*, the welfare-state has an ambivalent history that is both noble and ignoble. Figured as a particularly British nationalist project, it cannot escape the features that, as Tom Nairn would attest, bind it to British nationalism's *raison d'être* in imperialism. Even as the project of Britishness nationalism retracted from being built through

imperial conquests to building up the United Kingdom, as the 1948 British Immigration and Nationality Act reminds us, the national coding of Britishness was still based on this outward universalizing logic of imperial conquest: that is one was British by virtue of colonial conquest. Political nationalist projects of this sort depend on a certain amount of coercion and socialization – assimilation to political domination that as Chatterjee reminds us masks a culturally dominant force – as witnessed through the self-policing of immigrant residences in *The Lonely Londoners*, or the subjection of the self under the aegis of social welfare offices as "problems" to be solved in *Adah's Story*.

However, in the diasporic and immigrant and fiction of (ex-) colonial writers, the welfare-state, figured primarily through welfare offices and government housing in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Adah's Story*, respectively, can also serve as material spaces for producing and acknowledging a certain form of postimperial Britishness, and thus as an aspect of a postimperial British national and political development that takes some form of recognition of its imperial legacy into account. The housing estates, particularly, are presented as sites of coincident and coeval *Bildung* for a postimperial British nationality between the former bifurcations of colonizer and colonized. This is presented in stark contrast to the ethnic, cultural and racial balkanization and separation of the ghetto. This is not to say that the housing estates represent a purely harmonious or unproblematic cultural *Bildung*, but that they indeed stress an agonistic relationship built upon common political rights of belonging – of the sharing of national spaces and resources in common. However, by *The Black Album* these spaces shift from agonistic

spaces to spaces of purely balkanized cultural antimonies;[77] only the promise of absolute violence and the destruction of the other can overcome these problems.

As the postimperial political identification of Britishness retreats in the face of devolution, the disavowal of Britain's imperial legacy and a rising tide of English nationalism, the spaces of a British multiculturalism forged through the agonies of colonization and decolonization transform into spaces of seeming alterity, cultural rigidity and social irreconcilability. In this sense, the words of Ashis Nandy can be taken as both an historical assessment and a future warning, "If the third world's vision of the future is handicapped by its experience of man-made suffering, the first world's future, too, is shaped by the same record" (53). The retreat into a cultural and political English nationalism as the disavowal of its imperial legacy, on the Left or the Right, only serves to prolong this record of suffering.

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[77] Following Jameson's distinction *The Seeds of Time* between contradiction as something that is potentially constructive of change and antimony as pure irreconcilability.

Chapter Three: Staking a Place for the Nation: Post-Thatcherism, Globalization and

Post-9/11 Cosmopolitanism

Introduction

This chapter traverses a series of related issues that structure British fiction of the 1990s – the

legacy of the Thatcher nationality Act for postcolonial immigrant fiction, the rise of Englishness

as both a historically necessary national identity given the political process of devolution but also

as a racially charged abreaction to (ex-) colonial immigrants and the multicultural make-up of

Britishness, and the complicated persistence of Britishness even in the face of its perpetually

perceived imminent demise. Indeed, it is my contention that reading them alongside one another

allows the issues to take on a particularity that might otherwise be obscured. As British fiction of

the 1990s becomes increasingly compartmentalized with the category of "Black British Writing"

representing postcolonial immigrant literatures of various backgrounds and concerns, the

putatively normative category of British literature begins showing cracks and divisions along the

nationalist lines of Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and English literature. Consequently, as the

national identity category "British" loses its sway over the Anglo-British population of the

United Kingdom, the space for postcolonial citizens becomes ever more fraught. This is

particularly resonant in Kureishi's *The Black Album* where the idea of the struggle for national

recognition is largely abandoned in favor of a more generally cosmopolitan cultural hybridity as

an abandonment of the defense of one's national rights and ultimately, in the novel, as a

privileged form of escapism that leaves out many. Relatedly, as Britishness seems to have lost its

historical utility, Julian Barnes' *England, England* imagines a series of futures for a newly

independent England. However, the resulting Englishness that is proffered is largely shaped by a

profound disavowal of the imperial legacy of Britishness in search of a pre-colonial 'true' English national spirit. Finally, as the long 1990s give away to a post-9/11 cultural and political *Weltanschauung*, Ian McEwan's *Saturday* reflects this change through a renewed British imperial missionary nationalism thinly veiled in the terms of cosmopolitan humanitarian intervention.

Periodizing the 1990s

Toward the close of the previous chapter, I briefly turned to Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* as a novel that marks the end of this postimperial British identity for (ex-) colonials, instead placing them in the permanently interstitial register of the immigrant or even "second generation immigrant" as the book jacket advertises. As such, the novel augurs not only the disappearance of the weak-utopian form of nationalist thought proffered by the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* and adopted by Caute, but also the rise of cultural racism and the deep structural disavowal of imperialism that undermines any concept of a postimperial Britishness. Yet, as with most endings, *The Black Album* also marks a beginning, and it is to this beginning that I now turn. In moving away from the welfare-state and its spaces, Kureishi's novel not only serves as a particular analogue of Thatcherite policies – as the deathknell of a particular idea of British postimperial nationalism predicated on a recognition of its imperial past – but also announces the conceptual parameters of a new periodization, both culturally and politically. That is, written fourteen years after the introduction of the 1981 Nationality Act with the narrative taking place eight years later, *The Black Album* does not so much present a meditation on Thatcherism as it reveals the inheritance of Thatcherism as the determinate cultural and political limits of the 1990s. Thus by the time of *The Black Album's* writing in 1995, the particular battles waged over

(ex-) colonial immigration and the Welfare-state that marked the 1980s are over and done with and as such what is truly at stake is the moment of post-Thatcherism. In theoretical and political discussions, this has often been accompanied by a general shift from the postcolonial to the global and a displacement of the postcolonial subject by the global immigrant.

With the novel's focus on the end of the Cold War as a political and cultural ideologeme and its prescient emphasis on the rise of Islamic immigrant cultural conflict as its replacement, the novel accords with what Phillip E. Wegner has recently theorized as the period of late postmodernity,[78] or alternately, the long 1990s. For Wegner, the long 1990s begin with the fall of the Berlin Wall and end with the fall of the Twin Towers. Drawing on the work of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, Wegner argues that 9/11 was not an Event, but instead should be understood as a repetition of the fall of the Berlin Wall and thus as the determinate end of the Cold War paradigm that so strongly organized political, cultural and social thought. Wegner writes, "However, to describe 9/11 as a repetition rather than an Event is not to deny its significance: for endings are not in themselves beginnings, and it is only with the fall of the twin towers that the destruction of the symbolic universe of the Cold War is finally accomplished and a true new world order put into place" (*Life* 9). Wegner's work is not the first to posit the circumstances of 9/11 in this way; indeed it is a common gesture on the Neo-Marxian left, although perhaps not always drawn as sharply or with as much attention as Wegner does here. What's most interesting about Wegner's work is his assertion, drawn from his reading of Žižek and Walter Benjamin, that "periodization emerges only in an act of repetition" (xi). However,

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[78] Contra the arc of high to low modernism that Jameson previously charted, Wegner argues that the valences concerning radicality shift from its waning or impossibility in the 1980s (high postmodernism) to the 1990s (late postmodernism): "[…] it is the late moment that witnesses the revival of a radical political energy in the abeyance in the earlier" (6).

what needs to be added to this is that it is no mere mimetic repetition, but instead repetition with

a difference. That is, as Wegner's work illustrates, the fall of the Berlin Wall was both the end

and simultaneously the triumph of Cold War logic: capitalism or the West defeats communism

and the East and the period of the long 1990s represents the justification and universalization of

the western narrative of the Cold War through the hegemonic acceptance of the triumph and

resulting "freedom" that accompanies free market ideology. What has ended is the *war*, not its

structural logic. It is only the repetition in the fall of the Twin Towers as the symbols of

American global capitalist hegemony that actually signals the end of Cold War ideology, while

simultaneously providing the ideological grounds for the US "to assume a new global mantle"

with the global war on terror (9). For Wegner, then, the long 1990s was a period categorized by

tentativeness, culturally transmitted through either conservative narratives that sought to realign

the present with past ideal of American Cold War aggressive masculinity or utopian narratives

that sought to pry open the global determinations of the present moment in order to radically

transform the entire global structure. Moreover, this split can only really be seen through

hindsight which brings into focus the repetition that marks the outer boundary of his

periodization.[79]

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[79] Part of his argument, that I will draw on more heavily in my last chapter, is that sf texts
provided just such a utopian impulse in the long 1990s by rejecting "enclave" or communitarian
postmodern politics: "I then show how both *Buffy* and Butler's fiction reject any kind of
postmodern enclave politics that would attempt to found an alternative community outside the
dominant global order: the only valid political project each maintains in its own way is one that
would take as its aim nothing less than the transformation of our global totality. […E]ven more
significant […] is the fact that the cement unifying these new collectivities takes the form of
what Badiou names the 'fidelity to an event,' a shared commitment to a horizon of possibility
that promises to transform everything" (15). This last having significant overtones with the
weak-utopianism discussed in my first chapter.

Wegner's work on "U.S. Culture in the Long Nineties" provides, then, a model for contextualizing British cultural production in this period. However, while his work is certainly provocative, due to the focus on a US-centered historicization underwriting his periodizing of a late postmodernity, it needs re-conceptualizing to make his long American 1990s into a something really akin to a late postmodernity, which would have to be global in scale and conception (hence Wegner's own admission that unlike Jameson's periodization of postmodernity which was premised on global modes of production, his own is on a much smaller scale, and based primarily on US cultural production). However, as he focuses on two, at least putatively, global moments by which to develop this late postmodernity, these moments have repercussions for contextualizing culture outside the US as well – in this case, British literature of the 1990s.

Although his work lacks the theoretical acumen of Wegner's approach, instead favoring a discursive approach based on empirical assessment of literary and thematic trends, Nick Bentley offers an insightful consideration of British fiction in the 1990s. Moreover, given the global and epochal status that has generally been attributed to the fall of the wall and 9/11, it is not surprising then that Bentley would suggest their utility for periodizing British literature of the 1990s as well. Denoting their significance, Bentley writes, "Two international events, standing at either end of the 1990s, had a crucial political and symbolic resonance for British culture. At one end was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent dismantling of the Communist regimes of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union" ("Introduction" 2). This culminated, on the Left, in a sense of loss and mourning for a particular political stance resistant to capitalism. Demarcating the outer boundary, he states, "At the other end of the 1990s, or at least close enough to represent a symbolic shift in world politics, were the events in New York and Washington on 11 September

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2001 (9/11)" ("Introduction" 3). He argues that the 1990s, bracketed between the dissolution of

Left vs. Right politics in relation to capitalism and the return of politics as the West vs. Islam,

resulted in what Charles Krauthammer termed a "holiday from history" (qtd. in "Introduction"

3). "Politics in Britain" Bentley adds, "responded to the shift in the new world order by a move

away from the entrenched left-versus-right ideological divisions of the 1980s with a gradual

return to consensus politics marked by New Labour's shift from the left to the centre"

("Introduction" 3). In terms of the literature of this period, the seeming absence of politics and

the "vacation from history" resulted in the trend of blurring the boundaries between fiction,

reality and history that Bentley generalizes as the hallmarks of a late postmodernism (distinctive

features of both *The Black Album* and *England, England* before the return of history and politics

in the form of the events of 9/11 captured so powerfully in *Saturday*).

Aside from merely transposing the reactions to the fall of the Berlin wall or the Twin

Towers from one location to another, moving the emphasis from the US to the UK allows for the

restoration of a postcolonial and postimperial view from which one can perceive the global in

terms of a repetition (with a difference) of imperialism. From this perspective, the logic of

capitalist expansion and the transformation from industrial to speculative capital underwrites

both the imperial and the postimperial, and where the global (im)migrant takes the place of the

(ex-) colonial citizen with both seen as a threat to the home. Changing the geographical and

national perspectives of Wegner's periodizing of late postmodernity brings into further relief

Timothy Brennan's arguments that cosmopolitanism, as the ethical stance that accompanies

globalization, works against its own perceived ends in what he terms "cosmo-theory" by

obscuring its own national and local determinations. In other words, it reveals the way in which

global cosmopolitanism acts as what Gramsci terms an imperial cosmopolitanism[80] and

reinforces the connections between imperialism and globalization, although the latter often

threatens to eclipse and erase imperial and postcolonial concerns from the narrative of the

contemporary post 9/11 moment.

As I will argue with my reading of the British domestication of 9/11 in *Saturday*, this

moment provides for a redefining of Britishness in what Kumar refers to as a missionary,

imperial nationalism via the promotion and spreading of western culture and values. In other

words, if loss of empire, postcolonial immigration and globalization present a threat to the

Anglo-British identity that had been forged in the projects of empire, then the renewed moment

of global intervention, in the name of humanitarianism, acts as a potential strategy for its

restoration, while negating a more weakly utopian postimperial strategy. As such, British

literature of the long 1990s is characterized by three related gestures: first, that postcolonial

British fiction, as seen in *The Black Album*, evacuates the politics of nationalism, instead moving

into the realm of postnational cosmopolitanism; secondly, that this move towards the global and

the cosmopolitan causes a problem for the UK as seen in the return to Englishness in *England*

England. Thirdly, the ideological concatenation of the event and the subsequent series of

responses that are now generally referred to and rhetorically employed under the sign "9/11"

marks the end of this period in Britain by combining these two trends. Thus *Saturday* reveals

how the appropriation of the cosmopolitanism of postcolonial British literature in the form of

global humanitarianism is, in actuality, imperial Englishness in another guise.

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[80] Cosmopolitanism's accommodations of the operative tenants of capitalism and imperialism runs throughout the entire body of Brennan's work to various degrees, however here I am drawing most heavily from his "Cosmo-Theory" and whose central arguments were subsequently elaborated on and expanded within Brennan's *Wars of Position: Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (2006).

The Black Album Redux

Returning to the discussion of Kureishi's _The Black Album_ helps to set up the parameters for late postmodernity in the UK, which can then be more thoroughly explored in relation to the contemporary "condition of England novels"[81] produced by Anglo-British authors. Reflecting on the subway bombings in London on July 7th, an event often construed in the press as the British 9/11, Sara Upstone argues that they make readers of _The Black Album_ need to return to it with eyes tempered by these events:

> The bombings of July 7th asked all who live in Britain to reappraise their sense of what being British in fact means, and drew into stark relief the exclusions clearly complicit in it. Re-reading the novel for the first time in three years, its resonance with these issues was plainly evident, only reinforced by the fact that 2005 marked the tenth anniversary of the novel's publication. Against the critical analysis of Kureishi's character development, his lack of effective comic device when compared with _The Buddha of Suburbia_, the limitations in his representation of women and the working-classes—on which I might previously have focused in my address—I found myself in the wake of July 7th instead drawn to the content of Kureishi's novel with an altered perspective. What had once been perhaps, in both my eyes and those of others, the largest flaw in Kureishi's novel, I now read as its most significant feature. The flaw referred to in

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[81] Michael Ross describes the "condition of England" genre as one that first rose to prominence as a subset of the Victorian novel, containing the following attributes: "[…] they focus on landmark movements in the society of their time [...] and their action often involves weighty public events. […] Whatever the authors' explicit political allegiances, their novels, broadly speaking, project a liberal vision manifesting a compassionate concern with the lives not only of the most privileged but also of the most oppressed members of British society" (75).

this instance is the bombastic style which Kureishi employs—a heavy-handed

points scoring which pursues its social vision without subtly [sic] or complication.

[…] But in the wake of July 7th, this flaw was now what made Kureishi's novel

so powerful; the novel's message about the dangers of British Muslim violence

demanded reconsideration. (2)

To be clear, Upstone's re-reading of the novel works to rehabilitate what she sees as its central

message, that "against the Blair government's suggestion that the events of July 7th were

disconnected from political motives or racial problems, […] Kureishi gestures towards a reality

where it is racism, cultural alienation, and political discontent that breeds fundamentalism, and

ultimately fundamentalist violence within Britain" (14). According to the Labour government, as

Upstone points out, the perpetrators of the attack were the brainwashed dupes of foreign

extremists and their actions bore no relation to the situation in the contemporary UK. Here, the

Labour Party's reaction mirrors their reaction to the October 2000 Parekh[82] report and its

findings that the symbols of Britishness code as particularly white and thus exclusionary to non-

white Britons, to which the government's immediate reaction was to utterly dismiss the findings

of the very report that they had initiated. In other words, Kureishi's novel, as Upstone argues,

serves to awaken readers to the very real social conditions that foster racial and cultural violence

in the UK by tying them to the Thatcherite retreat from society that continued unabated in the

years of Blairite New Labour.[83]

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[82] Its official name is The Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, however it has since become best known by the surname of the author of its preface and the Chair of the Commission, Bhikhu Parekh.

[83] Echoing Thatcher in a very peculiar way, one of Blair's first announcements as Prime Minister was that the "class war is over."

However, Upstone's re-reading of the novel fails to account for how the novel itself participates in the same retreat from the British society of the welfare-state and national recognition, which ultimately her own reading of the end of the novel serves to reaffirm. The secondary critical concern, as stated within her article, is to return the realm of the political to postcolonial criticism, by countering the critiques by Ahmad, Lazarus, Larsen, Parry, Shohat and others that the political and the material have been eclipsed by poststructuralist evacuations of this content in favor of an emphasis on subjectivity and existential unhomeliness. She attempts to cleave this split by arguing that hybridity has been removed from the realm of the counter-grand narrative and now instead occupies that position as a demonstrable identity category. As such, she holds that the novel "affirms the now recognised fact that hybridity is itself a new grand narrative, rather than a counter to such concepts. Rather than Poststructuralism and Postmodernism thus being a bar to fixity as critics such as Neil Larsen suggests (141), hybridity itself is paradoxically a new incarnation of fixed meaning in itself, as it is evocated to the exclusion of alternative identities" (6). The conclusion to her argument thus privileges the Bhabha-like celebration of hybridity embraced by the novel's two protagonists. Indeed her final point seems to be that this hybrid identity, once critiqued by Marxian postcolonial critics for focusing too heavily on discursive and immaterial processes that are ineffectual due to their abandonment of political recognition and equal citizenship rights, is instead now made material because the character Shahid occupies it as a counter to the fundamentalist Islamic identity that he had been flirting with.

Upstone's reconsideration of the novel, however, conflates the novel's linking of the governmental abandonment of the welfare-state and the accompanying rise of cultural and racial violence (its return to the realm of the social and material) with the novel's conclusion which

privileges a cosmopolitan culturalism and studied aloofness to national politics. Provocatively, perhaps the last gasp of Marxism is its identification of the structural causes of the current cultural conflagration between English racism and Islamic fundamentalism even as Marxism is cast to the dustbins of history by the novel's post-Cold War, post Marxist conjuncture. So while it is Brownlow's, a Marxist history professor's, diagnosis of the widespread poverty and depredation caused by the Conservative government that fuels the racism, violence and ethnic tribalism of contemporary London in terms of both the native and immigrant populations, Brownlow himself is sidelined in the novel. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the supposed end of communism his time has passed and he's presented as something resembling a cultural anachronism; where his beliefs once gave him strength and resolve, now he's merely a stuttering wreck, hardly able to finish single words let alone marshal forth a strong and convincing critique of existing society (not only is he presented as outdated and ineffectual, but his wife actually leaves him for Shahid, thus sealing the novel's conclusion on the end of materialist politics in favor of cosmopolitan culturalism). Symbolically, his worsening stutter is presented as something that trips over the events of the past and therefore cannot allows his thoughts to catch up to the future. Indeed, for Riaz and his young followers who have come of age within the period of late Thatcherism where there is no society, only individuals and families, the English racism that they face is seen as endemic – a mix of biological and cultural determinants. For the (Muslim) Brotherhood, there is no society to transform or save, only a whole way of life that systematically locks them out and that therefore must be violently opposed.

If, on the one hand, the old Marxist desires to transform society are no longer operative and, on the other hand, the Brotherhood's "Islamic fundamentalism" only leads to barbarism

(culturally, socially and politically by the logic of the text),[84] then the only resolution to this problem is found in the hero and heroine's decision to forego politics and society altogether and instead ride the wave of cultural cosmopolitanism that eschews the dourness of politics and the nation and instead lives for the now, the moment and pleasure.[85] This is the lesson that Shahid learns from his Cultural Studies professor, Deedee Osgoode (Brownlow's estranged wife) who basically wins Shahid away from Riaz. Deedee who was once an ardent Marxist leftist, now feels that those politics had made her "dour" (121). Assessing the current post-Thatcher moment, she states that "it's been hard enough admitting to defeat and then uncertainty. Now I don't even want to be certain anymore" (123). Deedee, who is sick of politics and desires only those things that are "fun" now carries Shahid, similarly disaffected by the Brotherhood, along with her and together they seek sanctuary in the liberal cosmopolitan view of a life lived through the pleasure of art and literature without boundaries, as a free-floating subjects in a cultural network independent of national determinates.

After the violent encounters at the University, the invasion of Deedee's home by the Brotherhood and the bombing of a bookstore over its selling of the *Satanic Verses* (although unnamed in the novel, the referent is more than clear), the couple find solace in each other and

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[84] While the novel is at great pains to understand the extremism of the Brotherhood as a response to the hostile conditions that postcolonial immigrants face in the UK, it simultaneously presents a rather one-sided view of Islam – that is, it exists purely as the mirror opposite of the racism of the white skinheads in that both are irrational, without intellectual curiosity and ultimately destructive. This view is put forth most succinctly in chapter nine of the novel, but also in Shahid's ultimate rejection of the Brotherhood for cosmopolitan life predicated on the consumption of literature and pop culture.

[85] One is reminded here of Gikandi's critique of Rushdie's postnational, cosmopolitan view of culture and identity: "To choose to transcend nation and patriotism, ala Rushdie, is to claim some choice in the staging of one's identity, but this choice does not implicitly negate the agency of nation and *patria*. Going away from home and the law of the father does not change the constitutive force of the nation" (199).

decide to flee London for the seaside where they can be alone and to only return to London when

it is fun; that is, to revel in cosmopolitan hybridity, best represented by the musical icon Prince,

whose 1994 album title provides the title for the novel:

> This was more than sufficient; in fact he could have cheered, particularly
>
> when she announced that she'd got tickets for the Monday Prince concert. After,
>
> there'd be a private party in a King's Cross warehouse, which someone in the
>
> record company obtained for her.
>
> She pulled a bottle of wine from her bag, opened it and took out two
>
> tumblers. She poured the wine, passed it over, and they smiled and touched
>
> glasses. She drank hers down and poured another; then he drank his and did the
>
> same.
>
> […]
>
> "Until it stops being fun," she said.
>
> "Until then," he said. (283)

These final few paragraphs encapsulate the ambiguous message of the novel quite

succinctly: although the UK is awash in racial strife with deep structural and political causes as

identified by Brownlow, confronting that reality can only lead to greater violence. Indeed, it is

best to forego the spaces and politics of the nation entirely and instead embrace individuality,

where the model for a cosmopolitan post-national identity is best represented in the global

cultural sphere by Prince.[86]   This logic is compounded throughout the novel by the portrayal of

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[86] This of course is dependent on a particular class position that is often left unaccounted for in
the global cosmopolitan views of such proponents as Salman Rushdie and K. Anthony Appiah.
Shahid has the money to just leave the turmoil of the city. He and Deedee have the clout and the
influence to be able to attend private parties that are far removed from the violent everyday racist

Brownlow as ineffectual and desperate for a cause that no longer exists; Deedee's rejection of

"dreary" politics for the joy of culture, drugs, and recapturing the excitement and experience of

radical politics that has waned since the late 1970s; and the presentation of Riaz and his

followers in the Muslim Brotherhood as overly superstitious, anti-intellectual, and violent, while

secretly, desperately longing for sources of culture (music and literature) that their politicized

form of Islam forbids them and so which they then attack and denigrate. If there is any futurity

suggested by the novel, it is only in the form of Deedee and Shahid's coupling at the end of the

novel, which is presented in the form of two leavings: Deedee leaves Brownlow and Shahid

leaves the Brotherhood.[87] Their coupling is presented as a realization of cultural hybridity that

transcends the earlier bonds of politics, nation and identity and is figuratively given meaning by

their shared enthusiasm for Prince, whose commercially unreleased *Black Album* the novel is

named for. The album was heavily bootlegged as promotional copies had been printed and

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struggles of the housing estates. That is to say that this ending partakes in one of global cosmopolitanism's most favored tropes: the recasting of exile as the transnational freedom of movement. In these instances the figure of exile has more in common with the transnational capitalist class (after Sklair and Dirlik) whose passports and business contracts propel them across borders than the stateless, rightless refugee. Such an attitude is particularly egregious in Appiah's work on cosmopolitanism and the opportunities afforded farmers whose crops fail and thus now have the opportunity to move to the city and perhaps work in the burgeoning computer or customer relation fields, but can also be found even in Hardt and Negri's romanticization of itinerant laborers.

[87] By the novel's logic, this pairing is considered to be radical, and in many ways it certainly is as their relationship is meant to transcend differences of age, culture, class and race and is not held to any restrictive social conventions such as marriage. The overall sense is that an embrace of art, of culture, allows for the messiness and contradictions of the world to be subjected to scrutiny, but also an ambiguity that does not necessarily purport to reconcile them to instrumental reason, but instead allows them to unfold in their complexity, providing for a deeper understanding of the world (thereby allowing for the anti-normative coupling of Deedee and Shahid). Art therefore stands against the rigid dogmas of Marxism or Islam; however, as I argue above, it ultimately becomes a substitution for politics whereby one's personal enjoyment is more important than collective struggle, is predicated on class hierarchies and finally re-inscribes a particularly strong current of neo-liberal individualism through consumerism.

distributed, but never officially released commercially. This status as a bootleg that is traded among fans is important for the novel because it subverts the normal capitalist commodification of culture, allowing for a deeper connection than mere mass entertainment; in other words, it sidesteps difficult questions about the commodification of culture in global late capitalism. Originally, the album was purported to be a response to negative critical reaction concerning Prince's overly pop-oriented albums that preceded it, and was actually replaced on the market with a much more pop-oriented album, *Lovesexy*, in its place. Among fans, the album therefore stands as the supposedly authentic or true spirit of Prince over and against his more pop-oriented, commercial persona and thus bestows a sort of cultural cache onto its collectors; they are in the know and part of an exclusive set. Deedee's and Shahid's connection to this album and to one another through it becomes a sign of their devotion to culture above all else, as it is the pursuit of life through culture (broadly understood as art in the novel) that matters (the album is also the object that Chaz, a member of the Brotherhood, longs for but denies himself).

Upstone argues that, "Prince's own identity, and indeed his music, is a mixture of hybrid influences, black and white, male and female, which makes him an encapsulation of Deedee and Shahid's relationship in one single individual" (19). Curiously, she presents this hybrid identity as a particularly American product:

> With an American rather than a British background, Prince suggests alternative
> modes of belonging. Against Englishness, defined by race and tradition, there is
> the possibility of a Britishness based more on American founding principles, a
> nation whose motto, *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one), at least in its origins,
> suggests belonging defined by newness, by arrival, and by what you contribute,
> rather than where you come from. (19)

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Leaving aside the violent assimilative processes of a singular identity with the making of one out of many, not to mention the long history of Native American subjugation and slaughter, institutionalized practices of slavery and racial segregation, etc., Upstone seems to unintentionally evoke what Timothy Brennan has argued as the creeping American imperialism that lies behind global cosmopolitan identities.[88] That is to say, she introduces what becomes a major theme in the Anglo-British writing of this late postmodern period, a loss of a British identity that is both highlighted and furthered by a growing sense of globalization as Americanization in the UK.

From this reading of *The Black Album* as a paradigmatic text of the late postmodernity of the 1990s in a particularly British context, then, we see a concentration on two significant themes: (1) a cultural cosmopolitanism that is both spurred on by and then reflexively perpetuates a turning away from the state, the nation and citizenship as sites for political action due to the increasing sense of violence, rigidity and chauvinisms of all kinds that attend these sites and (2) an increasing concomitant shift from the local to the global.[89] However, as both the imperial and the postimperial fade into the historical distance as the global comes ever more into

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[88] As Brennan writes on the early twentieth-century antecedents that lie behind today's contemporary evocations of cosmopolitanism: "And the cultural invention of pluralism in the Americas that flourished in the same era specifically provided both the imperatives and the imagery to allow intellectuals a space within which to dwell when espousing an imperial cosmopolitanism from within a general progressivism" ("Cosmo-Theory" 671).

[89] Also, as Bart Moore-Gilbert argues, *The Black Album*'s cosmopolitan culturalism offers a "'third way' between apoliticism and militancy" (115), thus echoing the "third way" rhetoric of the Blairite Labour period begun in 1994. Describing the "third way" approach, Robert Luckhurst writes, "At first, new Labour appeared to believe it could be post-political. The much-vaunted 'Third Way' was meant to transcend old ideological divisions of Left and Right and to marry the best practice of European social-democratic parties with neo-liberal economics" (81). In a manner that relates the "third way" to the periodizing of the 1990s presented here, Anthony Giddens, the chief intellectual proponent of the "third way" states that it responded to a "world where there are no alternatives to capitalism" (24).

view, a confluence of particularly British concerns color this transition. First, as is witnessed by *The Black Album,* globalization and its attendant cosmopolitan identities seem to carry with them a particular Americanism. This feeds into the UK's narrative of a loss of selfhood prompted by the decline of empire and the retraction of the welfare-state with the ever increasing global hegemony of Americanism. When coupled with increasing pushes for political devolution, and the xenophobic fears of postcolonial turned purely "foreign" immigration, the potential optimism read by critics like Baucom and Gikandi for a radical rethinking of Britishness or Englishness, as witnessed below with the readings of *England, England* and *Saturday*, can be seen as severely undercut by many of the Anglo-British novels that accompany this period.

If chapter two found spaces of begrudging postimperial possibility, by the period of the *Black Album* they have been foreclosed and are no longer even addressed by *England, England* and *Saturday*. In the former, Englishness as a culture without a society is postmodernized; it is put on the market as a freely traded commodity while a "true" spirit of Englishness can only exist completely outside of the confines of history and, indeed, the world. Alternately, *Saturday* seeks to remedy this by attaching the ethical component of a newly revamped cosmopolitanism to a renewed imperial missionary Britishness. Thus, opposed to a sense of national impotence with the rise of American global hegemony, Britishness domesticates the events of 9/11, thus reattaching itself to the tide of history. In this sense, the vision of English nationalism constituted by *England, England* reveals a deficit of a weak-utopian imagination: there is no futuricity or possibility, only so many returns to the past presented as Utopian closure, while *Saturday* reflects the imperial Utopianism of earlier British missionary nationalism through its defense and spread of cosmopolitan universal truths. That is, *Saturday* attaches itself to the neo-imperial, cosmopolitan rhetoric of 9/11, while also disavowing its Americaness through a recourse to its

own imperial past, however, this time updated to accommodate the turn from imperialism to globalization and the threat of the global immigrant to the national home.

England, England: Hyper-Real Presents versus Preimperial Futures

In an article published in *The Guardian* in July 2004, about one year before the subway bombing that prompted Upstone's reconsideration of *The Black Album,* the Afro-Caribbean British author Caryl Philips interrogates the relative invisibility of black characters and references to the "colour problem" in the Anglo-British fiction of the 1950s and 1960s. He argues that,

> During the 50s, Britain became a multi-racial and, to some extent, a multicultural society. In the census of 1951 there were just 15,300 Caribbean people living in Britain. Ten years later, there were 171,800 – a phenomenal wave of migration in just one decade. Such figures give an idea of how radically the country changed its racial face during the 50s. The 'colour problem' was debated in parliament, on television, in newspapers, magazines, on the radio. It was the big story of the 50s. Yet where is it represented in the literature?

For Philips, the lack of a black presence comes down to two factors. The first, and here he follows Colin McInnes whom he cites as being the exception to those who ignored race in their fiction, is that white authors were perhaps ignoring the race question in hopes that it would go away. The second factor Philips adds is that it was "difficult for white British writers to engage with black characters without rummaging through the baggage of their sexual identity" as the vast amount of portrayals of black characters in white British fiction were overtly and overly sexualized, presented "as little more than players with trousers down entering the bedroom, or pants up sprinting for the door." The situation culminated in a bifurcated British literature: there

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is a black literature, exemplified by novelists like Sam Selvon and George Lamming, in which black authors are engaged with and invested in transforming the white British world, and a white Anglo-British literature wherein Britain seems inured to a waning Britishness while simultaneously walling itself off from the increasing reality of (ex-) colonial immigration and the increasingly multicultural Britain (the latter literature exemplified by Kingsley Amis, John Braine and John Osborne).

In many ways, as Philips notes, the situation has not changed.[90] As Nick Bentley notes in his taxonomy of 1990s British literature, historical memory has been a rather prominent aspect of 1990s British fiction, including among other facets, an emphasis on colonial histories and legacies. Bentley argues that, "A focus on colonial histories was particularly important in the 1990s and continues to be one of the main trends in contemporary fiction." He continues:

> This was exemplified in several works such as Caryl Phillip's *Cambridge* (1991) and the *The Nature of Blood* (1997), Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) and *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991) and *Disappearance* (1993), Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and, again, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). ("Introduction" 12)

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[90] This can also be seen in Bentley's discussion of the presence of a distinctly Black British Literature of the 1990s: "The politics of identity was particularly influenced by a politics of difference during the 1990s. The decade saw the increasing importance of postcolonial theory, which in turn offered new ways of interpreting Britain's relationship with its colonial past, and the make-up of contemporary ethnic, racial and religious identities. This fed into a new focus on 'black' British writing as a distinct literary identity" ("Introduction" 9). He goes on to identify the negative homogenizing effect that this overly-simplified label caused, yet neglects to think through the ways that it also isolates a "black British writing" from a, putatively normative, Anglo-British writing.

However, Bentley's list participates in the same bisecting that the above emphasis on "black British writing" does. Without exception, every example of the interest in colonial history comes from an author whose ethnic or racial background marks them as formerly colonial, re-instantiating the importance of colonial history for the black British, while such a direct engagement generally is evaded by contemporary Anglo-British authors. Although several other authors, both ex-colonial and Anglo-British, are discussed under this section of "Historical Fictions," none of them are seen as participating in discussions of the effect of colonialism. The impression is such that an emphasis on the weight of colonial history is left to Britain's non-white authors as their own particular burden.

This sole authority is then reflected in much of the criticism on multicultural, postcolonial and postimperial British literature. For example, in much criticism of contemporary British and postcolonial Anglophone literatures, *The Satanic Verses* represents the pinnacle of cosmopolitan and diasporic rewritings of postcolonial and postimperial relationships paving the way for new postnational identities and cosmopolitan directions for the future.[91] Rushdie's presentation of a newly tropicalized London and his rewriting of the cross-colonial lineages of British identity have come to represent the hopes and possibilities for a multicultural, post-ethnic and postimperial Britain: one that is truly global in all dimensions. Kureishi's *The Black Album*, then, rewrites that trajectory by taking up the Rushdie Affair as a marker of the intractable cultural differences that separate the Anglo-British from postcolonial immigrants – and where politics, because of this, is ultimately eschewed by the novel's protagonists. That is, Baucom's, by way of

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[91] See Baucom's *Out of Place*, Spivak's "Outside in the Teaching Machine," for some well-heeled examples as well as Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness* for a sympathetic, yet counter reading.

Rushdie's, recovery of the politically productive space of the riot[92] in the newly tropicalized

London gives way to racial violence and enmity that far from being resolved in the riot instead

illustrates the hardening of British national identity as discrete and separate and unattainable by

postcolonial immigrant populations – as reaffirmed in the political sphere by the findings of the

Parekh report – resulting in the abandonment of that space, and politics more generally, by

Kureishi's protagonist.

　　As the responsibility for trying to reconcile the history of imperialism with the

contemporary national make-up of the UK becomes increasingly more difficult (as figured in

Kureishi's novel), it is often abandoned entirely in contemporary Anglo-British fiction which

struggles to articulate an authentic British or English identity in the face of globalization and

political devolution. As such, the question that Caryl Philips asks of the 1950s and 1960s

generation of British authors once again rears its head: Where are the Black British in the Anglo-

British novel? Reduced to second-generation immigrants, or British subjects, black British

characters fade from the foreground of the contemporary Anglo-British novel. Given its

emphasis on what it means to be a contemporary British nation (postimperialism running

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[92] Describing the effective space of the riot in terms that riff on Bhabha's assertion of the "certain uncertainty" that underpins Fanon's space of the nation, Baucom writes that Brian Massumi and Lord Scarman's "understandings of affect and rioting ignore an alternative account of how newness enters the world, an account that permits us to read riot not as the space of the asignificant but as the site of a certain uncertainty, a the expression not merely of a nomadic but of a migrant politics, as the space not only of disruption but also, potentially, of redemption" (193). He later adds to this description of a riot as a politics of diaspora, a reconsideration which makes a diasporic politics a national politics by relying on Paul Gilroy's ideas of a national community of belonging (itself a reworking of R. Williams): "Or to state the argument rather differently, if riot can be represented as a vehicle of a nomadic politics whose object is to locate the individual outside of the nation-state's operation, then it can also be read as the expression of a migrant politics whose object is to *re*position the individual within a national community of belonging" (195).

headlong into globalization) the contemporary Anglo-British novel evacuates the Black British body from the national polity as much as Thatcher's 1981 Nationality Act. In Jameson's borrowed Althusserian terms, it at most becomes the absent presence by which these novels negotiate their sense of the contemporary British national body politic.

Following Philips, we see the rise of two coterminous literatures: the diasporic postcolonial/immigrant literature which coexists alongside the contemporary British novel. They are published by the same presses, are talked about and studied in the same discussions, compete for the same Booker prize, but generally present two radically different versions of the same national space. While the classification of British citizen and Commonwealth citizen concretize two specific legal identities, they also create two less-specific cultural identities. Although certain members of the (ex-) colonial British population do receive full status as British citizens, culturally and ideologically they are treated as second-class citizens; the legal split between the officially British and the quasi-British along racial and geographic lines is thus informally employed across British society on racial grounds without regard to legal distinction. In other words, the absent presence of the black British in contemporary Anglo-British writing, instead of simply ignoring the presence of race, which would seem even more preposterous nearly five decades after *Windrush* than it did in the time of Amis, Osbourne and Braine, instead is a regressively, ideologically productive (and reductive) strategy through which to establish the authentic or legitimate national body.

Thus, as Kumar, Nairn and a host of others argue, against the backdrop of globalization and the renegotiation of the "special relationship" of Britishness alongside devolution, Englishness finds itself, perhaps for the first time according to Kumar, negotiating the parameters and meanings of English national identity distinct from a British identity. Moreover,

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as 85% of the black British and Commonwealth population resides in England, it becomes the obvious internal marker of difference to this emergent Englishness precisely because these immigrant populations have to make the claim to belong separate from the imperial legacy of Britishness (whereas internal Irish, Scottish and Welsh populations to England can claim their originary exclusivity that is then mitigated by the "special relationship" between internal UK countries as expressed in Linda Colley's work). Given the resulting bifurcation of a Black British writing over and against the putatively normative British or even English novel, one alarming strategy for negotiating a new found English identity in the novel has been to disavow the legacy of imperialism entirely as can be seen in the Utopian fantasies of *England, England*.

England; England, England; and Anglia: Recovering the True Spirit of Englishness

First published in 1998, Julian Barnes' *England, England* is one part elegy, one part postmodernist hyper-real fantasy and one part traditional pastoral recovery, with each portion afforded its own section: "England," "England, England," and "Anglia" respectively. The mood shifts decisively between a serious, reflective and philosophical tone in the first and third parts, and a ribald comical satire in the longest middle section.[93] The effect of this switch in tone caused many reviewers to view the novel as bifurcated; as Michiko Kakutani writes in her *New York Times Review*, "There are also two novels in Mr. Barnes's book *England, England*. The first is a wickedly funny satire that sends up greedy developers, pompous intellectuals and conniving business tycoons; the second is a wistful, philosophical portrait of a woman trying to make sense of her life." Generally, for both critics and academics alike, it is the seriousness of the first and

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[93] Andrew Marr writes, "The tone alters, disturbingly, from one section to the next. The central part is more cartoon-like, more Tom Sharpeish, than anything Barnes has done before. The colours are primary, the outlines crude, the jokes obvious."

third sections that takes precedence in the novel. Encapsulating the general thrust of critical interpretations of the novel, Andrew Marr writes, in a review published in *The Observer* and *The Guardian*, that,

> Barnes's deep theme is the search for authenticity. What is real? Is it what we think we know of our history, what we think we remember? A Baudrillardian world of mimicry and theme-park falsity threatens life itself, Barnes argues, because it cuts away at our capacity for seriousness. […]That's the proposition behind this book. The search for authenticity, in an increasingly unreal world, is worth it. It's the search for life itself.

It is in this "search for authenticity" that the novel resembles the English late modernist texts that Esty analyzes in his *A Shrinking Island*. Seriousness and authenticity become aligned as objects of desire to be recovered, as objects of the past that are fading with the intervention of the global present. Also connecting this novel to Esty's study is the way, although Marr does not reference this, that seriousness and authenticity are related to the exhuming of an English nationality in the shape of the Englands that are uncovered by the novel.

As such, *England, England* presents two rival images for the future of England which are balanced against the novel's own backdrop with its contemporary starting point being the historical United Kingdom of the 1990s. In what follows, then, I focus on the characteristic elements that drive each particular instantiation of England and which provide for its uniqueness from the others; following this section, I will turn to a discussion that considers the relationship between these three distinct visions of England and the formal structure of their inter-related presentation in the novel. That is, in Jamesonian terms, if the contemporary space of England, within both the United Kingdom locally and the global world-system more expansively, presents

the crisis and contradictions propelling the novel, then the two alternative Englands represent

two alternate strategies for containing and managing this crisis. Barnes' novel, then, engages in a

project of literary nationalist *Bildung* by attempting to resolve England's identity crisis by

re(de)fining Englishness for the coming Millennium. With each "new" England, then, what is

left out is just as, if not more, interesting that what remains; for example, in both instances,

Scotland, Wales and North Ireland[94] are nominally left out of the discussion, present in the

narrative only through references to the UK's Parliament or occasionally "Westminster." Also,

for a novel greatly concerned with England's history and its place in the world, empire is almost

entirely absent (as are the related issues of colonial and postcolonial immigration) except as a

category to be officially expunged from the historical record. In terms of their response to the

crisis of English identity, then, the "England, England" section represents a post-British and

postimperial solution, while the "Anglia" section represents a pre-British or pre-imperial

solution.

In terms of the plot and the setting up of the lens of nationalism and national *Bildung* that

the novel proceeds from, *England, England* begins in a flashback to the protagonist's, Martha

Cochrane's, childhood and her learning of English history through a series of games. The reader

is first introduced to a young Martha working on a Counties of England puzzle as she learns with

age to recognize the pieces and their locations. For Martha the puzzle is intertwined with mixed

feelings of loss and wholeness. Upon finding a piece of the puzzle missing, "a sense of

desolation, failure, and disappointment at the imperfection of the world would come upon her"

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[94]
   Although, as Andrew Marr points out in his review of the novel, it is the perception of these
other nations that perhaps fuels England's perception of itself, which is then reflected in the
novel itself: "That England has become a theme-park nation is a chattering-class cliché. It is also
what condescending Irishmen say. It is the common currency of newly-supercilious Scottish
Nationalists and dismissive Gauls."

(6). This sense of foreboding, of existential loss and failure is only alleviated when her father, who had playfully hidden the missing piece, returns it: "[…] because Staffordshire had been found, […] her jigsaw, her England, and her heart had been made whole again" (6). Later, in a similar manner, she partakes of a primary school game that chops the events of English history into so many pieces which are then to be arranged chronologically in a clap and response chant:

> Each day would begin with the chants of religion, falsified by Martha Cochrane.
> Later came the dry, hierarchical chants of mathematics, and the dense chants of
> poetry. Stranger and hotter than either were the chants of history. Here they were
> encouraged to an urgency of belief out of place at morning Assembly: "55BC
> (clap clap) Roman Invasion 1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings." (11)

The rest of the entries in this song are fairly typical, including the Magna Carta, Henry the VIII, the Crimean War, The Battle of Britain, and the Abdication, with one particularly surprising entry being "1973 (clap clap) Treaty of Rome"[95] (12). Notably, England's history is firmly tethered to Rome via the first and last entry, emphasizing England's relationship with the Roman Empire and the expansion of the West, while not a single imperial historical event is referenced in the song. It is exactly this sort of ideological historicism that drives the creation of the two future Englands where one can go back and pick and choose their significant moments of national formation through a process of "invented traditions." Moreover, each act is accompanied by lying – as Martha confides that the story of the puzzle is an artfully arranged and willfully deceitful "first memory" – illustrating the selective processes of memory for the

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[95] The Treaty of Rome most generally refers to the founding treaty of the European Economic Community (EEC) first established in 1957, but which the UK did not enter until 1973.

invention of national tradition. This, then, is the presentation of England from which the next two

sections, "England, England" and "Anglia" will derive their nation-building projects.[96]

After the "England" section presented through Martha's childhood memories, the long

middle section moves away from an emphasis on personal memories to the collective global

associations that underpin the construction of England, England, which is initially planned as a

luxury resort for rich tourists who want to experience the "authentic" England all in one easy,

private and exclusive location. Barnes' narrative seems to purposefully riff on postmodern texts

like Umberto Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality* with its discussion of postmodern theory and the

hiring of French intellectuals to oversee the construction of Sir Jack's new England. In order to

fulfill this vision, the planners for England, England, led by Jack Pitman, take over the Isle of

Wight and create a hyper-real England that mixes fact and fantasy in highly unequal proportions

(with the latter weighing in more heavily) based on the market research of what rich foreigners

think of when they think of England.

The list produces many of the usual suspects ("Royal Family, Big Ben," etc.) all to be

included and a secondary group that are considered by Jack to be bizarre ("breakfast, a robin in

the snow") but begrudgingly found a place for, and a final group to be expunged from his

England, England including, "imperialism, perfidy, homosexuality, whingeing, flagellation, not

washing/bad underwear" (86-88). As such, the second section echoes the first where England's

geography as well as its cultural landmarks and political institutions can be divided, reordered

and ranked in terms of importance, thus reminiscent of the selective processes and malleability

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[96] I've attempted to differentiate between the names of the novel's section titles – "England,"
"England, England" and "Anglia" – from the names of the real and fictional nations of England;
England, England; and Anglia by use of quotation marks, however there is some slippage
between the two meanings and therefore occasions when both meanings are simultaneously
invoked.

of Martha's school chants. As Nick Bentley argues, "The middle section is concerned with a theory of replicas, simulations and simulacra that form the theoretical basis for the theme park project. This section is also concerned with the way in which the nation is commodified and re-presented as a marketable, reified object and thereby converted into a series of saleable symbols" ("Rewriting" 490). However, more than just a postmodern commodity, England, England in its most ideal form is, for Sir Jack, a way of freezing and retaining a particular image of England in the global consciousness as he feels the greatness of the nation is beginning to slip away.

Eventually England, England begins to take on a life of its own, outstripping the narrow designs of its creator (indeed, after his death, Jack Pitman is enfolded into England, England's self-mythologizing narrative as another site of attraction). As England, England thrives, Old England morphs into the third section of "Anglia" which is presented as a coda to the novel. We learn that Old England had become financially destitute and politically and economically cut off from Europe: "Mass 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. […] Europe […] withdrew from the Old English the right to free movement within the Union. Greek destroyers patrolled the Sleeve [the renamed English Channel] to intercept boat people" (260). If, for Jed Esty, postcolonial retrenchment and retraction are the potentially positive undercurrents in late English Modernist texts then here postcolonial retrenchment and English anthropology reach their most negative fulfillment with the dispersal of the (ex-) colonial British from "Anglia" accompanied by the rise of Scotland and Wales as the dominant constituents of what was once the UK: "A resurgent Scotland purchased large tracts of land down to the old northern industrial cities; even Wales paid to expand into Shropshire and Herefordshire" (260). As opposed to one nation among many or the international nationalism of

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Fanon, which was the upshot for Esty of postimperial retrenchment, England barricades itself

from the world, replicating the worst aspects of an Herderian Romanticized nationalism. As this

Old England goes through its "Renewal" via retrenchment and retraction and de-links politically

and economically from the rest of the world, it closes off all immigration and tourism, and

reverts to an intra-national administration system "based upon the kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon

heptarchy" and becomes a nation of pre-industrial country villages (262). This presentation of

Anglia comes at the end of the novel as a counter to the gaudy postmodern inauthentic England,

England and serves as the presentation of the authentic spirit of the English people. With the

"invented traditions" and symbols all left behind (including immigrants), Anglia stands as the

embodiment of a romanticized nationalist sentiment grounded in the people, their land and the

rediscovery of their "authentic" traditions.

The Dialectics of England; England, England; and Anglia

As delineated above, the novel is comprised of a tripartite structure, and this structure with its

shifting tones has led critics and reviewers to comment on the fragmented and fractured nature of

the novel. While the above section is focused primarily on parsing the individual visions that

drive each successive England, here I am more interested in how the parts work together and

how one is supposed to read the structural relationship of these three Englands. For many, the

pieces never really come together as a whole, causing the novel to feel like two or even three

discrete, unartfully articulated novels. In her review, Kakutani writes,

> Mr. Barnes tries to link his two narratives by suggesting parallels between a
>
> nation's invention of its own mythology and an individual's invention of a self. He
>
> also has Martha say things like, 'An individual's loss of faith and a nation's loss of

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faith, aren't they much the same?' Such strained efforts, unfortunately, do not

succeed in welding the two narratives in *England, England* into a satisfying

whole. The result is two finely turned tales that add up to a disappointing third.

Moreover, the perceived fractured state of the novel has led to a situation where critics attempt to

define or elevate one particular part at the expense of the others.

Generally, critical assessment of the novel argues that "The central part is more cartoon-

like, [… t]he colours […] primary, the outlines crude, [and] the jokes obvious," therefore many

critics have instead focused on the supposedly more serious and philosophical first and third

sections (Marr). And indeed, the first section provides many rhapsodic and philosophically

inclined enquiries into the nature of memory, time, loss and selfhood through the recollection of

Martha Cochrane's childhood memories. Significantly, these early memories incorporate aspects

of memorization and categorization themselves, emphasizing the infinite regress and iterative

properties of the act of remembering a memory. In this vein, Martha thinks to herself, "A

memory was by definition not a thing, it was … a memory. A memory now of a memory a bit

earlier of a memory before that of a memory way back when" (3). Martha's supposedly primal

and much critically examined memory of putting together a puzzle of England's counties, in

which she constantly forgets one of the counties, becomes the jumping off point for many

ruminations on the novel as primarily being about memory and loss and the irreconcilable schism

between subject and nation.

From this vantage point, one of the most interesting critical interpretation's of the novel

belongs to Sarah Henstra. She argues convincingly that for Martha "[m]emory not only fails to

recall faithfully the past; it is also apt to distort past events for its own purposes" and that

ultimately "The rhetorical function of memory […] outranks any bid for accuracy" (97).[97] For

Henstra's psychoanalytically charged reading of the convergence between selfhood and national

belonging, this memory serves as the primal driving force of the novel as Henstra is primarily

interested in the subjective aspect of loss and its complicated relationship to mediating between

personal and collective identity. For Henstra, the novel is primarily about Martha's subjectivity,

and after describing the cartoonish aspects of Pitman, she echoes Marr's emphasis on the

seriousness of the novel when she writes, "[Martha] provides the occasion for the text's more

serious inquiry into the links between individual and collective identity, between personal loss

and national decline" (96). By discounting the "cartoonish lines" by which Pitman and the other

characters that populate the middle section of the novel are drawn, she is able to ultimately

postulate that "[r]ather than grounding identity in a historical reality, memory is discovered in

England, England to be one performative operation amongst many in the service of the ongoing

reiteration of selfhood" (97). Thus, while she argues that the novel attempts to resolve the split in

the third section – "[…] a reality has once again asserted its objective existence, or at least […] a

balance been restored between that 'reality' and the signifying systems that give it meaning"

(105) – she ultimately concludes that the "paradoxes of collective identity and collective history"

outlast the novel's attempted reconciliation and live on in the minds of its readers (105).

    While there are some persuasive elements to Henstra's interpretation, such an emphasis

squarely on Martha as the site of seriousness in the novel fails to account for the majority of the

novel's focus on the construction and running of England, England, or for the way that Martha,

in the capacity of Sir Jack's "professional cynic" for the England, England project, is ultimately

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[97] However, what is often left unaddressed is the fact that this "first" memory is a purposeful lie: "Martha Cochrane was to live a long time, and in all her years she was never to come across a first memory which was not in her opinion a lie. So she lied too" (4).

responsible for the project's success. Moreover, it is the very malleability of memory exposed through Martha's recollections in the first section that allows for the viability of England, England in the collective consciousness of Sir Jack's survey takers and the resulting image of England that he cobbles together from their impressions. Consequently, what is offered by the end of the text is not reconciliation so much as a choice where the parts work in concert to form opposing, yet structurally related images for what a viable England would be in the coming Millennium.

Subsequently, and although she does not put it in these terms herself, Henstra's reading of the novel can in some ways be seen as a counter to the critical reception of its fractured thirds. That is, in privileging the first and third parts by juxtaposing them to the middle section, Henstra unintentionally provides a dialectical reading of the structure along the line of a negation of the negation. The first section, by focusing on the concepts of memory and loss, sets up a relationship between personal experience and the concept of England – hence, the naming of "England" for the first part of the novel as the historical and material touchstone of the England that exists outside of the novel – that the other sections are going to transform and finally re-present. As noted above, the scene with the Counties of England puzzle already sets up a dialectical narrative of construction, loss and renewal – a movement from emptiness and existential despair to wholeness and integrity – that Henstra's argument replicates in its account of the novel's structure. Moreover, the novel's tripartite structure seems to be favoring just this sort of structural interpretation.

In such a dialectical reading, the England of the first section, the England of Martha's childhood, of deep-seated emotional connection, of homliness – the *Heimat* – is rendered obsolete. That is to say England is negated, by England, England, a "nation" more in line with

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the postmodern zeitgeist, or put more simply, more timely. Deep, personal connections are

replaced by reified consumer spectacle, and proving Baudrillard's assertions, the simulacrum is

preferable to the originary – England, England trumps England. However, the third section

comes in to undercut this postmodern pessimism. As Marr argues in what he sees as Barnes'

riposte to the lack of seriousness in postmodern play, a "Baudrillardian world of mimicry and

theme-park falsity threatens life itself" and it is, then, exactly that – life itself – that is restored in

the final third section. Once the vestiges and trappings of England and the weight of a history

that has outlived itself in Sir Jack's estimation are removed and confined to England, England,

authentically lived life can, supposedly, resume once more; hence the negation of the negation

and resumption, albeit newly arrived at and experienced, of the real England of the first section

of the novel.

While such a reading is powerful, and perhaps even purposefully implied by the novel, it

ultimately fails to account for the fact that such a resolution is a spurious one. Instead, "England,

England" and "Anglia" should be seen as structuring one another, or as the two faces of Tom

Nairn's Janus-faced theory of nationalism with "England, England" looking forward and

"Anglia" looking backwards.[98] Moreover, this taps into the gendered divide of the novel

between Jack Pitman and Martha Cochrane as Pitman's England, England is sandwiched

between Martha Cochrane's childhood "England" and "Anglia" as the revival of this spiritually

authentic England. Furthermore, the inevitable juxtaposition of the old fashioned Anglia with the

hyper-real England, England conforms to the paradoxical aspects of postmodern late capitalism

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[98] The "Janus face" of nationalism, importantly for Nairn, also relates to why it is too simplistic
or reductive to either fully celebrate or denigrate nationalism: "The point is that, as the most
elementary comparative analysis will show, all nationalism is both healthy and morbid. Both
progress and regress are inscribed in its genetic coded from the start. This is a structural fact
about it. And it is a fact to which there are no exceptions: in this sense, it is an exact (not a
rhetorical) statement about to say that it is by nature ambivalent" (*Break-Up* 335).

by simultaneously embracing and rejecting the global. In this light, England, England and Anglia offer dual, competing, but structurally co-dependent versions of the global and local England. Instead of resolution, sublation – *aufhebung* – the tension between the two is intractable and the two legacies of England operate as incommensurate aspects of any projection of England in the global future.

With this relationship in mind, the dual structure of the novel can be seen as the necessary outgrowth of the Thatcherite program of national revival which coupled the death of collective society through the promotion of individual enterprise with the instantiation of racial nationality through private biological inheritance rather than the political principle of the *ius soli*. In order to flesh this out, one needs to consider how the dual structure takes on aspects of the Janus-faced workings of nationalism with its competing temporalities. Here it becomes easy to map Anglia with the rhetoric of tradition, inheritance, and the spiritual ethnic, cultural particularism that the Nationality Act appeals to, while England, England appeals to the side of individualism, materialism, innovation and enterprise as Sir Jack propels the inheritance of England's past towards the future. These two faces of Englishness, then, are more complimentary than negating. As Ryan Trimm notes, the growth of the heritage industry in the UK was a direct reaction to Thatcher's emphasis (continued through New Labour) on modernizing the UK through enterprise, embracing free market ideology, and financial speculation: "In abreaction to the ahistoricizing rhetoric of 'bootstrap' enterprise then, [the] heritage [industry] held out the promise of a connection to the past, one that provided the promise of an almost familial relationship" (4). However, in *England, England* ,the complicated gender divide mentioned above undercuts Trimm's idea of the "familial relationship" in terms of temporality and inheritance. That is, the spiritual aspects of nationalism's heritage are aligned

more firmly with Martha and Anglia while Sir Jack's England, England presents a flattened ahistorical England that is devoid of the sense of spiritual, ethnic and cultural continuity as primarily figured through reproduction and family.

As Anne McClintock argues, the connections between heritage, family and nationality are further complicated when the temporality of the Janus face of nationalism is coupled with the gendering of national inheritance. In this light, she argues that the backward looking face, the emblem of the conservative "principle of continuity," is most generally figured by women and the progressive future oriented face is figured by men. This engenders an irresolvable split in the construction of nationalism which she refers to as nationalism's "principle of discontinuity" (92). This can be seen clearly in *England, England* where Jack Pitman is the spirit of postmodern English futurity and Martha Cochrane the spirit of pastoral Anglia. When viewed separately, this gendered divide helps to reinforce the dialectical reading of the novel where the Frankensteinian monstrousness of Sir Jack's assemblage of England, England out of the historically dead remnants of Englishness is tempered and overcome by the return of a wholly integrated way of life figured through Martha's return to Anglia – thus maintaining the troubling and reified national gender roles identified by McClintock. Significantly, the heritage industry of Sir Jack's England, England is a space of pure materiality, where people and cultural artifacts are fundamentally objectified and reified. As such, it is a place where characters' romantic relationships fail; there are no couples and no children as the representative of the future English, English. It is only in Anglia that we begin to see couples and children and the "promise of an almost familial relationship" is held out, thus restricting the role of the biological and the familial to the feminine while also championing and preserving it as the site of continuity and seriousness, as so many reviewers and critics intimate.

However, while the gender politics are certainly regressive and troubling, this sort of neat and tidy formal resolution that privileges the feminine sections over the masculine overlooks the irresolvable tension marked by Nairn's recourse to the Janus face of nationalism to describe its irresolvable tension. Instead it is Jack and Martha's troubling juxtaposition that presents them as the parents to both England, England and Anglia and the two of these as England's Janus-face for the contemporary moment of global late capitalism. In this light, reading Anglia as the dialectical resolution to this tripartite structure of the novel must be rejected.

From Janus Faced to the Future as Productive Death:

If the forward-looking face of nationalism following Thatcherism is aligned with enterprise and economic development – in short, global late capitalism –, then Trimm's comment above about heritage as an "abreaction" to "bootstrap enterprise" also reveals a curious temporal revisionism affecting this forward looking face. Trimm's assertion that enterprise functions as an "ahistoricizing rhetoric" is similar to Fredric Jameson's critiques of the waning of affect and the ahistorical nostalgia of late capitalism. Nick Bentley's affirms this with his reading of England, England: "The accumulation of paradigmatic images of England's past – the Royal Family, Dr Johnson, Nell Gwynn, the Battle of Britain pilots, etc. – results in the removal of any sense of a future England. The cultural space of the theme park reduces history to the immediate present, to the ephemeral, transience of the now" ("Rewriting" 491). The forward looking face, in other words, is no longer looking forward, but is instead captured in the repetitive loop of capitalism laid out by Marx in the first book of *Capital*: rather than futuricity, capitalism's progressive force is predicated precisely on the infinite return of capital itself, hence Marx's emphasis on the tropes of circulation (i.e. capital is only capital as such if it is in the process of circulation and

therefore capital is, in purely theoretical terms, locked in a process of infinite return). It is this circular process of capitalism, when stretched to the limit of a total global system that provides the depthlessness and constricting perma-present of late capitalism as postmodernity. Moreover, as Tom Moylan notes in *Demand the Impossible*, it is also this sense of capitalism as a total and closed global system that allows late capitalism to be presented as a Neo-Liberal end of history and the best of all possible worlds; that is, as Utopia itself. Fittingly, then, Sir Jack's England, England can be seen as a postmodern, hyper-real solution for the dead nation in a global postmodern era.

The project of England, England is essentially designed to reassert England's position in a global world order that seems increasingly Americentric and post-British. Indeed, it is Sir Jack's estimation that England has lost its cultural and political capital – if its greatness had been forged in an imperial context, this context has been surpassed by decolonization, devolution and globalization. England thus has no futuricity; or, as Sir Jack succinctly surmises: "Time is the problem" (38). Further elaborating on this statement, Sir Jack thinks:

> 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 had spun off and set themselves up as sovereign nations. Quite right, too. So where did that leave us now? With something called the United Kingdom which, to be honest and facing facts, didn't live up to its adjective. Its members were united in the way that tenants paying rent to the same landlord were united. (39-40)

However, Sir Jack refuses to throw his lot in with what he terms the "historical depressives" (39) and what Baucom refers to as English nationalism's nostalgic "constancy" in the form of the

English "cult of the dead" (175).[99] In order to combat the death of historical passing, Sir Jack

instead proposes a process of museumification by which Englishness is thus repackaged to the

world not as a faded historical touchstone, but instead as the inheritance of the West. Essentially,

then, he trades one form of death as passing away as the currents of history roll on for another in

the form of death as the very endpoint of history, as Utopia, as the arrival of the permanent

hypostatization of the present. England, England becomes his way to re-announce and recreate

the glory of England by equating it with History's eventual terminus: all paths lead to England,

England. This is borne out by the destination's advertising slogan, "*We are already what others*

may hope to become," which, as he tells his lawyer, "isn't self-pity, [instead] this is the strength

of our position, our glory, our product placement. We are the new pioneers. We must sell our

past to other nations as their future" (41). England, England, then, is to be seen as a sign of

maturity and historical futurity fully attained, while simultaneously a disavowal of the present

moment of a postimperial multicultural, multiracial national body politic: its past is its future,

while its present moment of postimperial uncertainty is presumably left behind in Old England.

What's of particular interest here, then, from a postimperial perspective is the way that

"England, England" advances the notion of cultural and national death without the greatness of

the British Empire in either its more local immediate or far-flung reaches; that is, as Empire has

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[99] "The modern English literature of nostalgia is vast. Melancholy and loss are among the most privileged tropes of a romantic and postromantic canon of English letters, as is the image of the backward-glancing English man or woman, domestic avatar of Walter Benjamin's Angel of History, turning a resentful back on the present and a teary eye toward the image of a dying England, whose death it has been the frequently self-appointed fate of generations of writers to contemplate. […] The very constancy of this gesture across time suggests that in some strange way to be English is, often, to be a member of a cult of the dead, or, at the very least, a member of a cult of ruin" (175). Tom Nairn has also cited the prevalence of "doom" as a constitutive part of English and British national identity (*Break-Up*, 58).

run its course, so has British *and* English greatness. Not only are the images and representations of Britishness synonymous with whiteness, as the Parekh report concluded, but the symbols of Britishness, repurposed as Englishness by Sir Jack (and many actual politicians before and after him) can only ever be so as any future cultural development has been steadfastly and purposefully foreclosed. All this is to ultimately say that there can be no such thing as a living postimperial British nation.

As "England, England" simultaneously betokens the death of Great Britain, the United Kingdom and England through its commodification and reification of the material emblems of their shared and inter-related heroic past into the postmodern end of history, then oddly, it is the face of the past, of "Anglia," that presents itself as the future cultural and national life of England. However, it is a future that lacks futuricity – a future presented as a return to the mythical past. As presented above, "Anglia" is an England shrunk to its, seemingly, natural size with parts of the north and southwest having been absorbed by Scotland and Wales, and thus a retrenchment from England's earliest stages of missionary imperial nationalism as British consolidation. This is then coupled with the already mentioned emigration of its ex-colonial immigrant population to the "lands from which their great-great-grandparents had once arrived" (260). Not so much postimperial retrenchment, then, as imperial denial predicated on turning the clock backwards to an imagined pre-imperial past, this denial is presented as necessary for the spiritual rebirth of Englishness over and against a global postmodern age. Significantly, this can only be achieved by the coterminous existence of England, England which shoulders the burden of England and the United Kingdom's imperial legacy through its hyper-real commodification of the material emblems of this past which, although unacknowledged, had been built on the back of imperial conquest. By removing the material and cultural remnants of this legacy to the Isle of

Wight, England is free to unburden itself from its imperial history and re-imagine itself as Anglia – itself also a hyper-real, simulacrum of a "remembered" cultural and national past that predates the rise of English modernity promulgated by imperial and colonial conquest. As the postimperial present is dislodged from and occluded by so many turns to the past and the future, the two faces of English nationalism turn towards one another in a shared and studied denial of imperialism, thus barring each instantiation of "England" from ever being able to imagine a postimperial future that takes account of the legacy of Empire.

Perhaps what is finally most striking, then, about this admittedly rather funny and poignant novel is its implicit admission of a postimperial guilt. As the two newly imagined Englands stare at one another across the Solent, they both admit that neither can find a way to account for Englishness's structural and historical relationship to imperialism and colonialism. As Paul Gilroy argues in *Postcolonial Melancholia*,

> In the case of Britain […] a refusal to think about racism as something that structures the life of the postimperial polity is associated with what has become a morbid fixation with the fluctuating substance of national culture and identity. In a revealing pattern established by Winston Churchill's influential triangulation of the post-1945 world, the core of British particularity is deemed to be under disastrous attack form three different directions: Americanization, Europeanization, and a nonspecific subsumption by immigrants, settlers, and invaders of both colonial and postcolonial varieties. (12)

In attempting to contain and resolve these problems of "Americanization, Europeanization, and a nonspecific subsumption by immigrants, settlers, and invaders of both colonial and postcolonial varieties," *England, England* ultimately rejects futuricity as England becomes only so many

faces of its past. In contradistinction, Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* attempts to resolve the same issues through the re-deployment of a British missionary imperialism masked in the terms of humanitarian intervention and political and ethical cosmopolitanism.

Saturday as Neo-Cosmopolitan Romance

Following on the heels of McEwan's international bestseller, *Atonement*, and attempting to address what most in the West saw as the new defining moment of global relations – the events of September 11th, 2001 – *Saturday* (2005) has garnered a rich critical and academic engagement, more so than the other two novels under discussion in this chapter. In many ways, then, Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* participates in a wave of novels that draw to a close the long 1990s that novels like *The Black Album* and *England, England* were particularly emblematic of. However, calling one particular age to a close while bringing another to fruition demands a certain amount of retrospection on the closing age. As such, McEwan's novel serves an interesting endpoint for the discussions of nationalism, Englishness and Britishness begun with the periodizing of the 1990s that this chapter starts with.

In an interview with Bloomberg News preceding *Saturday's* completion, McEwan spoke of his desire to write a novel that captures the feeling of the post-9/11 moment, arguing that the events of September 11th ushered the previous post-Berlin Wall 1990s to a conclusion:

> We don't know where it's going. I think these things are going to be with us for some time. But more crucially for the novelists, they affect the way that people feel. Twelve years ago when the Berlin Wall had come down and the Cold War was over, there was briefly a sense that – with democracy springing up in Central Europe, in South America, in South Africa – that perhaps humankind had turned a

corner and would start to address fundamental problems of poverty and the

environment. That moment has lost us now. (Caminada)

Curiously and perhaps due to his outward-looking gaze, McEwan's *Saturday*, unlike *The Black Album* or *England, England*, follows Wegner in presenting the 1990s as a utopian moment of possibility that has been foreclosed by global events.

However, this outward gaze towards the global events that bring the post-9/11 period into relief becomes, reflexively, a moment for national self-examination. Yet in one particularly powerful reading of the novel, Lawrence Driscoll suggests that the external global events that pervade *Saturday* are really nothing more than window dressing meant to distract attention from the real political concerns of the novel, which have to do with class: "In *Saturday*, the real issue then is not Iraq, or terrorism or WMDs or the lies of the British and American establishment. These are just diversions or screens, that in some way are necessary to cover over what the novel really wants to deal with which is the troubling problem of class" (Driscoll 47). However, this avoids the question of why the novel would obfuscate its investment in questions of class in these instances. What is missing here is the attention to the trope of home invasion and the fears of destabilization that mark the move towards colonial disavowal (or what Paul Gilroy has termed "postcolonial melancholia") – that is, the threat of the other as the threat to the home. As such, Michael Ross concurs that the novel has more to do with the internal problems of the nation than external world events: "Although Ian McEwan's recent best seller *Saturday* maintains throughout a conspicuous air of up-to-the-minute internationalism, that impression turns out to be somewhat misleading. In fact, in its broad outlines the book adheres to a long-familiar insular paradigm: the Condition of England novel" (75). For Ross, however, the external events are not so much red herrings for avoiding the issue of class; instead they reveal the

perceived threat of the rest of the world to the sort of insularity prized by the "Anglia" section of *England, England*:

> If the narrative unfolds within English confines, its relevance persistently
>
> overflows those limits [. …] The discursive tension between nation and globe
>
> permeates *Saturday*. […]As if taking its cue from Garton Ash, *Saturday* reflects
>
> the susceptibility of the nation to assaults by predatory forces sited both within
>
> and far removed from its increasingly porous borders. The novel becomes, so to
>
> speak, a study in homeland insecurity. (78, 82)

As such, its outlook is squarely postimperial as the trope of home invasion is recast from the anti-immigration terms of Enoch Powell through Thatcher to global terrorism.[100]

While the novel is certainly attempting to reconcile the internal national feeling with the supposedly global epoch-making events of 9/11through the revitalized postimperial trope of home invasion, *Saturday*, like *England, England*, curiously takes part in the elision of the multi-ethnic and multi-racial makeup of the contemporary UK. As Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace argues, *Saturday* fails to reflect the cosmopolitan rhythms and structures of contemporary London:

> Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) appeared within a week that saw the publication
>
> of a *Guardian* article by Leo Benedictus in which London was celebrated as 'the
>
> most cosmopolitan place on earth,' the home of 'Every race, colour, nation and
>
> religion on earth.' […]Yet *Saturday* is mostly devoid of London's vibrant
>
> multicultural scene, the ongoing legacy of an empire whose demise has been

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[100] As Robert Eaglestone observes, the home break-in is a major theme of many post 9/11 novels including those by Rushdie, Safran Foer, and McEwan thus replaying the fears of home invasion that structure Powell's and Thatcher's fears of (ex-) colonial immigration (22).

much lamented. [Consequently,] McEwan's novel continually glances at a

multicultural and cosmopolitan society with which it resists engagement.

(Wallace 465, 467)

Thus, while previous critical engagements with the novel have concentrated on arguing for its

status as a neo-Victorian novel with modernist narratological qualities (Hadley, Hillard), a post-

9/11 novel (Michakumi and McEwan), a Condition of England novel (Ross), and a novel of

"postcolonial melancholy" after Gilroy (Wallace), I want to focus on how these various

interpretations can be related to the novel's function in restoring a particular British missionary

imperial nationalism, in Kumar's terms, by implicitly forecasting a logic of cosmopolitan

humanitarian intervention.[101] By doing so, the novel ultimately reveals the slippage between a

liberal cosmopolitanism rhetoric of humanitarian intervention and the earlier civilizing rhetoric

of British imperialism. In this way it subverts the cosmopolitan outlook of *The Black Album*

while also proposing a renewal of Britishness that questions the death of the nation in *England,*

England by returning to a missionary or imperial project of British nationalism through the guise

of cosmopolitan humanitarian interventionism.[102]

Cosmopolitanism as a political and cultural term and ideal has garnered much critical

attention and acclaim from the 1990s onward as a hopeful surpassing of what had been the

intransient, bifurcating ideologies of the Cold War paradigm through the spread of neoliberal

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[101] Or as Wallace argues, *Saturday* is both cosmopolitan and not cosmopolitan: "More powerfully than any previous novel by McEwan, *Saturday* evokes an all-encompassing cosmopolitanism that it then paradoxically marginalizes" (467).

[102] Such a recent convert to a muscular, liberal cosmopolitanism as Christopher Hitchens describes the novel as offering a reaffirmation "that civilization and and culture and the life of the mind, fragile as they seemingly are, nonetheless have a resilience that can outlast barbarism" (qtd. Driscoll 46, originally in *Atlantic Monthly*).

free market ideology, as well as a panacea for the various nationalisms, statist regimes and

religious fundamentalisms that have sundered the triumphalist end of history rhetoric of

neoliberal ideologues. Conversely, cosmopolitanism has also been evoked as the ideal that best

encapsulates liberal hopes for a vaguely leftish, agnostic, tolerant pluralism accompanying global

cultural exchange.[103] While there have been many proponents of either a return to Kantian

cosmopolitanism, or a new critical cosmopolitanism, I want to concentrate, briefly, on the work

of Kwame Anthony Appiah as it is the general pull of his work that McEwan's *Saturday* accords

with the most.[104] Particularly, I draw on Appiah's "The Case for Contamination," for while

Appiah has published a considerable amount of work on cosmopolitanism, since this work was

intended for the vaguely liberal and affluent readership of the *New York Times Sunday*

Magazine, it shares a good portion of McEwan's audience. Moreover, just as Appiah's text is

presented as a sort of common sense liberal cosmopolitanism for the global world following

9/11, especially with its approbation of Islamic fundamentalism, it has a lot in common with the

sentiment expressed by Kakutani's *New York Times* review of *Saturday*; "[I]t's clear that with

this volume, Mr. McEwan has not only produced one of the most powerful pieces of post-9/11

fiction yet published," writes Kakutani, "but also fulfilled that very primal mission of the novel:

to show how we – a privileged few of us, anyway – live today." Given that both texts are

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[103]
For a more considered analysis of the contemporary revival and popularity of cosmopolitanism, see Pheng Cheah's "The Cosmopolitical—Today" in his *Inhuman Conditions* and Timothy Brennan's "Cosmo-Theory" in his *Wars of Position*.

[104]
As Paul Jay persuasively argues, Appiah would fall into the former category as his attempt to "rescue" cosmopolitanism is firmly rooted in Eurocentric traditions and as such fails to grapple with the critiques of cosmopolitanism launched by Timothy Brennan and others, nor does it fully grasp the postcolonial issues of a critical cosmopolitanism associated with Walter Mignolo and Enrique Dussel. See Jay (62-66) for a concise overview of these faults as well as the relative merits of Appiah's work.

concerned with the ethics of a post-9/11 world, particularly in terms of the defense and

enforcement of human rights, a comparison reveals useful dimensions of both.

Appiah's cosmopolitanism is most identified with the concerted effort towards the spread

of culture as a means of facilitating tolerance which then produces and maintains both a global

and local pluralism that, against Marxist critics' assertions of globalization as perpetuating a

cultural imperialism, combats homogenization, stasis and fundamentalisms of all sorts. Appiah

maintains, and he's certainly correct in doing so, that there is no such thing as a pure

uncontaminated culture – that all culture is a product[105] of interchange and contamination.

Indeed, when McEwan states in an interview about *Saturday* that, "Inseparable from the idea of

having a novel right in the present was to do London again, or to do London properly. To get the

taste and flavour of it" (qtd. in Groes 102), what he is referring to is this sort of Appiah-like

cosmopolitan London where "[t]here is no refuge and if you want to be in a city like London,

with its relatively successful racial mix, it's impossible to defend" (qtd. in Clark186). McEwan's

presentation of London in these interviews is of one that is tolerant, pluralistic, multicultural,

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[105] However, it is in this sense of culture as a product that Appiah's theorization of global culture is at its weakest. For he never posits cultural products really as products of capitalism, as commodities, or following Jameson, that postmodernity, as the period of global late capitalism's ascendency, is primarily figured by the commodification of culture. Hence, when Appiah asks: "And what can you tell about people's souls from the fact that they drink Coca-Cola?" it never dawns on him how someone from India might respond, whose access to free, communal, clean water has been sold out from under her. Or, that the resulting product that she is then *sold* is laced with so much cadmium as to be illegal in many western markets – or the reports of Coca-Cola's involvement in the suppression, kidnapping and murder of labor activists in Central and South America. Coke, in Appiah's work, is not an actual thing or product with a corporation behind it making treaties with various states; it's merely a part of some indeterminate, nebulous flow called 'culture' and therefore only the abstract representative of another choice one can make on the free market exchange of global cultural products. In this sense, similar to so many neo-liberal free market evangelists, Appiah's cosmopolitanism can be seen as putting a lot of stock in choice as the determinant quality of freedom, all the while forgetting, as Herbert Marcuse has argued, that freedom is not entirely commensurate with choice, but, in a capitalist system, can only be registered by what can be chosen and what is chosen.

multiethnic and which is generally open and hospitable to others; as such, it is rather at odds

from the London of *The Black Album*, but also, as Wallace points out, ultimately different from

the London that McEwan ends up portraying in *Saturday*.

From this quote we can see another aspect of the novel's relation to Appiah's

cosmopolitanism in the form of a defense of cosmopolitanism from its would be detractors.

These last are largely presented in the form of Islamic fundamentalists in Appiah's case, and who

also serve as the general feared "other" for Henry Perowne, the protagonist in McEwan's novel.

Although published just prior to the attacks on London's mass transport systems, *Saturday*

begins with the British domestication of 9/11. Upon waking in the middle of the night, Henry

Perowne runs through the events of the last day before turning to the window to peer out on the

world beyond his domestic home. After watching a couple for a moment, he is about to turn

away when he spots something else in the sky which he first assumes is a meteor, then after

revising his opinion, a comet before finally realizing from its proximity and sound that it is a

plane: "Horrified, he returns to his position by the window. The sound holds at a steady volume

while he revises the scale again, zooming inwards this time, from solar dust and ice back to the

local. […] The fire must be on the nearside wing where it joins the fuselage, or perhaps in one of

the engines slung below" (14). After ascertaining the identity of the object, his immediate

response is to recode it in terms of 9/11: "But the scene construed from the outside, from afar

like this, is also familiar. It's already eighteen months since half the planet watched, and watched

again the unseen captives driven through the sky to the slaughter, at which time there gathered

round the innocent silhouette of any jet plane a novel association" (16). This scene serves two

primary purposes in terms of the cosmology of the novel: first we now live in a post-9/11 world

and all events are to be coded in terms of this new reality, which is to say that it is a moment of

new periodization. If for McEwan, the post-Cold War 1990s were a moment of renewed

optimism and possibility where there were no sides any more, then this moment has decisively

ended and is perhaps best obliquely registered by his reference to the "half" that watched the

events in sympathy, which of course then necessitates the other half that did not watch.[106]

Second, and very much related to the first, we now live in a world where the ideals of the West

need to be actively and militarily protected *as well as advanced* throughout the world.

It is this domestication of the threat that is then read as providing the impetus for a new

periodizing schema for interpreting events and that subsequently allows Perowne to link it with

other issues and problems as part of a generalized cosmopolitan world view. Drawing the events

of 9/11and the renewed bifurcation of the world that they engender into a particularly British

postimperial political unconscious, Perowne recodes the threat of global terrorism into the

perception of a threat to his home which then causes him to think in global determinations for the

protection of his home and his way of life. Returning to Appiah, we can see a similar shift from

pluralism and tolerance to world policing:

> Yet tolerance by itself is not what distinguishes the cosmopolitan from the
>
> neofundamentalist. There are plenty of things that the heroes of radical Islam are
>
> happy to tolerate. […] At the same time, there are plenty of things that
>
> cosmopolitans will not tolerate. *We* will sometimes want to intervene in other
>
> places because what is going on there violates our principles so deeply. *We*, too,
>
> can see moral error. And when it is serious enough – genocide is the least –

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[106]
And this may also be related to McEwan's sense of humanity as he argued in his post 9/11 journalism published in the *Guardian* that the only reason the hijackers were able to carry out the attacks was due to their utter lack of empathy and imagination with the humans that were then their victims. Hence the half who watched, as Perowne did, and empathized with the US versus the half that did not.

controversial case – we will not stop with conversation. Toleration has its limits.

(my emphasis)

The obvious question becomes, then, who is this "we"? How does one qualify or give assent to the events that exceed conversation as part of this we? Cosmopolitanism breaks down from a studied politics of the tolerance of difference to a universal defense of its universal truths; as Appiah boldly announces, universal truths are not just for fundamentalists, but we "Cosmopolitans believe in universal truth, too," although he continues with the somewhat countering point: "though we are less certain that we already have all of it." Returning to the constitution of this "we" that carries a "universal truth," it is certain that it does not count fundamentalists (examples including Marxists and Muslims) amongst its collective. Yet there is another category which is neither cosmopolitan nor fundamentalist that arrives only at the very end of Appiah's essay:

> That's why cosmopolitans don't insist that everyone become cosmopolitan. They know they don't have all the answers. They're humble enough to think that they might learn from strangers; not too humble to think that strangers can't learn from them. Few remember what Chremes says after his 'I am human' line,[107] but it is equally suggestive: 'If you're right, I'll do what you do. If you're wrong, I'll set you straight.'

One wonders who these non-fundamentalists and non-cosmopolitans are? Where do they fall in the policing efforts of the cosmopolitans? It is hard not to be reminded of the growing numbers of the displaced due to the various wars against terrorism. Moreover, these last words from

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[107] The line quoted earlier by Appiah as the "golden rule of cosmopolitanism" is, "I am human: nothing human is alien to me" and it comes from an early Roman comedy by Terrance entitled *The Self Tormentor*.

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Terence's play are an odd place to end a conversation on the merits of cosmopolitanism versus fundamentalism, especially given Appiah's riposte to those Marxist governments that rolled out the tanks to quell ideological disagreements. For as Appiah makes clear, cosmopolitanism is explicitly linked to world-policing and the enforcement of its own ideals and the setting straight of others is not curtailed to conversation. Hence Paul Jay's assertion that Appiah's cosmopolitanism is predicated on a Eurocentric worldview is all the more significant, especially in light of Timothy Brennan's, argument, via Gramsci that cosmopolitanism is ultimately related to imperialism and as such tends to contain, although obscured, particular nationalist agendas and policies and as such can be seen as serving as a form of missionary nationalism.

If *The Black Album* illustrates the breakdown of the internal British nation-building project begun with the development of the welfare-state and *England, England* the death of Englishness through devolution and globalization, then *Saturday* finds new life for Britishness through the defense and perversion of a particular cosmopolitan politics, both in its defense from outside intruders and its employment in humanitarian intervention, as well as its supposed mitigation of sheer US bellicosity. The resolutely rightwing "apollonian" imperialist Soames from Caute's *The Decline of the West*, whom it was necessary to kill in order for the novel to make a postimperial future possible, is reconstituted as the liberal cosmopolitan interventionist Perowne, and once again, Britishness is cast as missionary nationalism predicated on the protection and advancement of civilization itself. His ambiguous feelings about the war with Iraq are solidified by his witnessing firsthand the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime in the tortured figure of one of his patients, Miri Taleb, a former historian from Baghdad who had been arrested and tortured before coming to the UK. The torture that Taleb endured, in the post-9/11 context is then conflated with Islamic fundamentalism and read by Perowne as a threat to his

way of life and ultimately to his family. Reflecting on the anti-war demonstrators, Perowne thinks, "You think you're all lovely and gentle and blameless, but the religious Nazis loathe you. What do you think the Bali bombing was about? The clubbers clubbed. Radical Islam hates your freedom" (191). Moving generally from the people of Britain to his immediate family, he thinks "[…] Perhaps a bomb in the cause of jihad will drive [us] out with all the other faint-hearts into the suburbs" (276). Hence Michael Ross's assertion that, "If the narrative unfolds within English confines, its relevance persistently overflows those limits [… and t]he discursive tension between nation and globe permeates *Saturday*" (78). Thus, the domestication of the events of 9/11serves as a new impetus for a rallying around an imperial missionary nationalism in the guise of a cosmopolitan defense of human rights and the merits of western civilization – the internal must be protected from the external lest the fear "of a bomb in the cause of jihad" become a reality.

Key to this domestication and resurgent missionary nationalism, then, are the concepts of the home and the family as the figures to be valued and that are under threat. Indeed, when Wallace argues that *Saturday* is a cosmopolitan novel that undermines its own cosmopolitanism by wallowing in what Paul Gilroy terms a "postcolonial melancholia," or what I prefer to think of as imperial disavowal, much of what she has in mind is the practical absence of London's multicultural and multiethnic inhabitants. Instead it the Fitzrovia (a generally posh area) home and the upper-class Perowne family that stand in as the emblems of contemporary Britishness and that are seemingly perpetually at risk in the new post-9/11 moment. Indeed, the Perowne family is presented as the holders of the ideals of western civilization, comprised of a surgeon father, a lawyer mother, a poet daughter and a musician son: the rule of science, law and culture – all of which Perowne finds under threat by what he terms "jihad" (although Perowne does not

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define Jihad, Appiah's presentation of "jihad, interpreted as literal warfare against the West" would be appropriate). When non-white characters are presented in the novel, they are either exactly like Perowne – including Rodney Brown "a two-year registrar [a medical intern …] from Guyana, gifted, hardworking, but still unsure of himself" (7) – or a problem to be fixed by Perowne and described in a language reminiscent of Emecheta's novels:

> Andrea Chapman was a problem patient, a problem niece. She arrived in England at the age of twelve [. …] Something in her that village life in rural north Nigeria kept buttoned down was released once she started at her local Brixton comprehensive. She took to the music, the clothes, the talk, the values – the street. [… She] took drugs, got drunk, shoplifted, bunked off school, hated authority, and 'swore like a merchant seaman.' (9-10)

Although presented as a cultural problem (running wild in Brixton, presumably, like other black "problem" youths given her adoption of "the music, the clothes, the talk, the values") the answer is surgical: she has a tumor. Henry duly operates on and thus "fixes" her; by the time we see her again at the end of the novel, not only has Henry taken care of her medical issues, but his operation on the tumor has fixed her cultural "problem" status as she is now bright and cheerful, confiding in Perowne that she too wants to be a surgeon.

While it is fair enough that brain tumors can potentially cause erratic behavior, it is odd that Andrea's particular erratic behavior connotes black street culture, underpinning racist depictions of the Nigerian immigrants and refugees that are supposedly infiltrating Britain – thereby connecting the threat of yesteryear's (ex-) colonial immigration to the threat of post-9/11 Muslim immigration and the transformation of the UK that is ostensibly the purview of this post-9/11 novel. Moreover, it is this same mixture of culture and science, of sickness and behavioral

aberration, that underwrites the central conflict of the novel in Perowne's altercation with Baxter. Indeed, for all the time that the text spends ruminating on 9/11and debating the impending Iraq war, it is the car accident between Perowne and another Englishman that introduces the spectacle of violence and home intrusion that eventually brings the text to its close. After getting into a minor scrape with a car driven by the thuggish Baxter, an accident that is indirectly blamed on the disorder that the protestors have brought to bear on London's traffic system, Perowne impossibly escapes serious harm by diagnosing Baxter on the spot with Hutchinson's disease.

Perowne's ability to detect and diagnose Baxter's ailment, a show of his superior reason and rationality in the face of malevolent violence, mentally disarms Baxter and frees Perowne from the scene and the threat of further violence (he has been punched once). However, this encounter structures the novel's dénouement, where an enraged Baxter breaks into Perowne's home with an accomplice, and again we should note the repetition of the trope of home invasion, interrupting a family reunion that is meant to serve as a reconciliation between the daughter Daisy, a newly published poet, and her famous poet Grandfather, John Grammaticus. Baxter holds Perowne's wife at knife point, while his accomplice keeps watch over Perowne and his son Theo. Together, they force Daisy to strip and attempt to humiliate her by making her read out of one her poems to them, "Let's hear your dirtiest one. Something really filthy" (220). Unable to read her own highly sexualized verse, Daisy recites Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," a poem she had memorized as a teenager to earn pocketmoney from her Grandfather. Like the diagnosis from earlier in the day, the poem immobilizes Baxter, while Henry mishears it unconsciously interpreting it in light of his post-9/11 framework: "she tells him that they must love each other and be faithful, especially now they're having a child, and when there's no peace or certainty, and when *desert* armies stand ready to fight" (211, my emphasis). As Molly Clark Hillard notes,

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Perowne's originary misprision – misreading the mechanically troubled plane in the beginning of the novel as a terrorist attack – sets the stage for the rest of his interpretation of events throughout the novel: "This originary misprision reverberates through the novel. As Perowne navigates London on Saturday, February 15, 2003, the day of the protest against the incipient Iraq war, he suffers the repercussions of his inability to read his culture" (181). And here again one sees what is not so much a misprision, per se, as much as Perowne's insistence on interpreting all events in the light of 9/11.

For a while Baxter stands transfixed by the poem's beauty, uttering over and over again, "You wrote that. You *wrote* that" (222, italic original). The poem's beauty has the power to temporarily heal or at least salve Baxter's diseased mind (while it obviously cannot heal the Hutchinson's disease that afflicts his brain and body, it has the ability to restore a sense of happiness and sanity to the enraged potential psychopath). It is not a far stretch to read Baxter as a kind of pathologically sick stand-in for the same "jihadists" that want to wreak death and destruction upon London homes because, "Radical Islam hates your freedom" (191). By the text's logic, both represent a malevolent force of violence that affronts the very ideals of reason and rationality, culture and science, both attack seemingly for no reason other than hurt pride or hatred for what the other has. They suffer from a form of pathology, and irrationality, providing an affront to "sweetness and light" resulting in their dual need to be brought into the full promise of western modernity.

After Baxter's sudden transformation his accomplice leaves and Baxter is injured when Perowne's son throws him down the stairs in an attempt to get his knife from him, and of course it falls to Perowne to repair the resulting brain injury. It is at this moment that Elaine Hadley sees McEwan fulfilling the promise of Arnold's poem, "By demonstrating his power of detachment,

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his admirable ability to distance himself from his own multiple interests [. . .] and the damage Baxter has incurred or threatened to incur and to attain a disinterested view […] and, relatedly, in the midst of injury and disease, to see 'sweetness and light' […] in the operations of the human consciousness – Perowne is both true to himself and Baxter" (93). However, while certainly agreeing with Hadley's assessment of the rejuvenation of Victorian individualism and sympathy that underwrites this text, there seems to be more at stake ideologically in what lurks in the background of this decision than just pure disinterestedness being mobilized to do the right thing. There's also Perowne's feeling that he has a responsibility toward Baxter because he can do something to help him, to fix him. It is here that the responsibility Perowne feels towards Baxter crosses with the responsibility he feels towards "liberating" Iraq and the middle-east in general – both are sick and both need to be operated on (one can hear echoes of such military terms as surgical strike, and humanitarian intervention, the spread of democracy and liberty) and while there is definitely risk in both brain surgery and tactical warfare, both, however, if performed accurately and successfully, can change the world's outlook for the best. Moreover, both are necessary to protect his home, his family and his sense of fulfillment of western civilization in general. In this sense then, 9/11 is comparable for Perowne to the attack on his home, an unexpected, unmotivated, and life and world altering event that promises further violence unless "handled" properly. As Perowne tells Daisy before the attack on their own household, "My fifty pounds says three months after the invasion there'll be a free press in Iraq, and unmonitored Internet access too. The reformers in Iran will be encouraged, those Syrian and Saudi and Libyan potentates will be getting the jitters" (192). Moreover, it restores the local, national register to this otherwise seemingly global novel: the cosmopolitan starts at home and spreads itself outwards – a citizen of the world is one that would be a rightful citizen of the UK. Here we can

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see the crossover between cosmopolitan humanitarian intervention and the missionary imperial nationalism that Kumar asserts underwrites the foundations of British nationalism – where a cosmopolitan inspired humanitarian intervention is really only a thin guise for national interest.

When one considers Paul Gilroy's reading of "Dover Beach" in *Postcolonial Melancholia* these connections are even more immediate. As such, it is worth quoting at length:

> By staging his famous poetic reflections on Britain's modern predicament at the frontier of Dover Beach, where today's asylum seekers still fear to tread, he made it clear that proximity to the alien presence of the French had helped to concentrate his mind with regard to the country's historic responsibilities as well as its relationship to the classical world that had supplied the template for its global imperium. The historic mission to civilize and uplift the world was England's unavoidable destiny, but he sensed that it would bring neither comfort nor happiness. That imperial mission recreated the national community in a modern form but then drew it immediately into a terrible web of war and suffering, polluting its beautiful dreams, confusing and destabilizing it. For Arnold, the unchanging cliffs of England were glimmering and vast when compared to an ephemeral gleam of light visible on the nearby French coast. […] With the right dosage of Hellenic inspiration, the landscape/seascape could not only produce a deep geo-piety but also speak uniquely to the country's modern predicament and, of course, to the difficult position of the poet who bore a resigned witness to it. […] The accompanying inward turn was a defensive gesture, and it was morally justifiable only when it promoted a self-conscious

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struggle with the historic sources of the tendency to become sad and pensive in

the face of the empire's demanding geopolitical responsibilities. (91)

Saturday reconstitutes Arnold's poem not as a reflection on political, cultural and

national instability and uncertainty fostered by imperialism which so marks the contemporary

moment, but instead as a reflection on the cosmopolitan character of British national culture. For

both Perowne and Appiah, doubt and skepticism are constituent parts of a Western-derived

cosmopolitan ethic that despite these qualities, still believes in the aggressive defense of its

universal truths. The skepticism and reticence of Arnold's poem, then, becomes repurpased as

another sign of what is to be defended even as it is utilized as a weapon for that cause. As Robert

Eaglestone acidly avers, in the context of *Saturday* the poem "[…] works not as a piece of

literature, as it were, but rather as a piece of propaganda: mere techne, like a good squash stroke

or deft surgical cut with nothing irreplaceable and uniquely literary about it" (Eaglestone 23). It

is mobilized to stun the invader before the surgical operation can be applied while

simultaneously bringing together and healing the divisions in the Perowne family as they stand

united against the threat of home invasion and the "clash of desert armies."

In an era most often noted for division and uncertainty – due to devolution, globalization,

and immigration as well as the global uncertainty of a supposedly new age of global terror –

Saturday marshals the ineradicable bond of the family and the home as a site of national

constancy against foreign invasion. The members of the largest protest ever held in the UK are

consigned to the background as a mere backdrop to a London that is instead presented as the

rightful home of the Perownes. Indeed, the protestors are presented as leftovers of an "English

dottiness" (62) who think that they are "lovely and gentle and blameless," but this is what marks

their outdatedness as Perowne assiduously asserts, "but the religious Nazis loathe you. […]

Radical Islam hates your freedom" (191). And because of this outdatedness, because they have

not begun to remap their world in the contours of the post-9/11 realities as Perowne has, they are

actually a potential threat to the reconstituted missionary imperial Britishness as represented by

the Perowne family, for it is their protest which ultimately sets in motion the cause and effect

events of the confrontation between Perowne and Baxter. They inadvertently – due to their

loveliness, gentleness and blamelessness – invite terror into the home.[108] It is an era where the

flag of cosmopolitan tolerance is repurposed in the name of pre-emptive strikes in the defense of

a few nations' universal truths and thus reprising Perry Anderson's prior assertion of the UK's

position in the world as the US's "imperial subcontractor" (165). With the domestication of 9/11

the UK has found another missionary foothold into a global world that during the 1990s was

threatening to dismantle any coherent sense of Britishness and consign the UK and England to

the museums of history.

Thus the long 1990s were not marked by the development of an international nationalism,

or a renaissance of hybrid postnational and cultural identities as predicted or hoped for by many

postcolonial and cosmopolitan theorists and critics. Rather, in the years following the Thatcherite

dismantling of the welfare-state and the concomitant institution of a racial definition of

Britishness, a profound sense of imperial disavowal has set in. By disavowing its imperial

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[108] In a December 11, 2006 article for the British leftist journal *The New Statesmen* entitled, "Welcome to Planet Blitcon," Ziauddin Sardar, a commissioner on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, states: "The British literary landscape is dominated by three writers: Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie and Ian McEwan. All three have considered the central dilemma of our time: terror. [. . .] In their different styles, their approach and opinions define a coherent position. They are the vanguard of British literary neoconservatives, or, if you like, the 'Blitcons.'" "Blitcon" is a fairly recent neologism coined by Sardar in the title of this article and is comprised of Blair, British, and obviously neo-con. The word itself has whipped up a bit of a fracas in the British media and blogosphere, with a quick nonscientific googling resulting in 899 hits that make reference to it.

legacy, the dominant narrative of history has been transformed from one of outward imperial conquest to a narrative of inward global immigrant siege accompanied by cultural and national decline. In terms of Anglo-British fiction, instead of presenting new contact zones and sites for hybridity and subject negotiation, Britishness is thus presented as neo-imperial cosmopolitanism that seeks to hide its national(ist) interest through rhetorics of cosmopolitan humanism and humanitarian intervention. Alternately, the devolution of an English national identity struggles to articulate an inclusive vision; the postimperial present of a multicultural and multiethnic England is instead part of the problem to be overcome by a resurgent spiritual Englishness. Thus the weak utopian desires for futuricity explored in chapter one are undercut by the search and defense of universal truths that avert "the creation of a reconciled non-identity" of a possible postimperial Britishness (Adorno 55).

Chapter Four: Alien Terraforming and Interpersonal Transference: Utopianism, Postcolonial SF

and the Postcontemporary Longing for Form

> Perhaps indeed we need to develop an anxiety about losing the future
>
> which is analogous to Orwell's anxiety about the loss of the past and
>
> of memory and childhood. This would be a good deal more intense than the usual
>
> rhetoric about 'our children' (keeping the environment clean for future
>
> generations, not burdening them with heavy debt, etc): it would be a fear that
>
> locates the loss of the future and futuricity, of historicity itself, within the
>
> existential dimension of time and indeed within ourselves.
>
> – Fredric Jameson (*Archaeologies*, 233)

> SF is as Western as Coca-Cola, big cars and computers.
>
> – Uppinder Mehan (54)

Introduction:

In this last chapter, I return to the postcolonial landscape that the dissertation began with.

However, as opposed to the texts of nationalist *Bildung* that the first chapter is concerned with, I

want to shift the emphasis towards visions of futurity that involve not so much the consolidation

of the nation, but instead sf novels that offer particular postcolonial interventions into the

projection of Westernization as the only demonstrative avenue to futuricity. As such, I have

reserved questions of the post-national and its concomitant category the posthuman – two of the

central terms in much postcolonial literary analysis – until this chapter which deals principally

with sf in order to highlight the Utopian longing that such terms ultimately carry with them. That is to say, perhaps contentiously, that the rhetorics of the posthuman and the postnational (especially the latter) are in many ways more reflective of a utopian desire to surpass the political, cultural, and social realities shaped by heteronormative, gendered and racial discourses which limit the human or the nation than they are of actual lived realities. Accordingly, speculative fiction – whether fantasy, sf, the new weird, horror, or any of the other various subgenres – has proven the most fertile grounds for exploring the possibilities of a posthuman or postnational *Weltanschauung*. This is not to denigrate or castigate such desires as only mere fictions or as a non-realistic, non-pragmatic interruption in the world of *Realpolitik*; rather, it is to explore their utopian ideals for the way that they continue to demand the impossible from the contours of the present while all the while recognizing that they are as of yet, still only ghostly figures on the horizon of possibility whose demands have yet to fully reshape the current political landscape bounded by nation-states and the global projections and determinations of national interest. In this sense, I am interested in developing a critique that emphasizes postcolonial science fiction as a form of desire for what Alain Badiou refers to as an Event in the way that it attempts to posit and map possible outlines for a world that could potentially exist beyond the co-evolving and mutually reinforcing logics of late capitalism and neo-imperialist conceptions of Empire.

Whereas in my first chapter I examined the problem of postcolonial nationalism in the *Bildungsroman* from both the point of view of the postcolonial subject writing in the former colony (Armah and Ngũgĩ) and the postimperial subject writing into the former colony from the former imperial nation (David Caute). In this final chapter there is a similar move as it charts the exploration of a truly *post* colonial state from both the perspective of the postcolonial subject

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(Amitav Ghosh) and the postimperial subject writing into the post-colonial nation space (Ian McDonald), although the latter troubles this move somewhat by likening his Northern Irish heritage to that of a Third World solidarity. Once again, then, the tension between the national and the international that began the project is reaffirmed here as we round out the trajectory of the postimperial moment. However, while in the first chapter we saw how the desire for a post-colonial nationalism took the form of a weak-utopianism as the former colonial nation struggled to assert its independence in a neo-colonial world state-system, this chapter examines the resurgence of this utopian desire in postcolonial sf where the genre becomes the site where this utopian impulse strains aggressively toward the hope and trepidation encapsulated by possibility of the coming Event.

Towards a Postcolonial SF: Full Postmodernity and Postcontemporary Interventions

Perhaps one of the most pressing questions to come out of chapter three is the problematic legacy of nationalism in the postimperial moment; despite the potential for postimperial retrenchment to lead to a new way of nation-thinking beyond imperial nationalism, why then does it lead either to a moribund nationalism (*England, England*) or a cosmo-imperial nationalism (*Saturday*)? One answer, as I have suggested, is the lack of futurity suggested by each text's narrative solution to the problem of the current state of the nation within the political bounds of neo-liberal capitalism coupled with the disavowal of the imperial legacy. With *England, England* we witness the romance of the past coupled with the end of the history, while in *Saturday* the reader is presented with a remarkable turn to a nineteenth century culturally civilizing imperial missionary nationalism for a world in which London is surrounded by non-civilized enemies at home and abroad that must be both literally and metaphorically operated upon.

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However, and perhaps as a response to the kind of moribund nationalism or the inescapability of imperial missionary nationalism witnessed above, contemporary sf has explored different utopian possibilities for surpassing the quagmire of nationalism by invoking post-national and postimperial futures. Central to this chapter, then, are three related questions: First, can we imagine a world-system that is not predicated on the logics of imperialism or colonialism? Secondly, can society be imagined as post-national? And third, what sort of post-humans would inhabit such a world? Amitav Ghosh's *The Calutta Chromosome* and Ian McDonald's *Chaga* series are both grappling with these questions, with each offering radically different visions of alternative near-future worlds as potential outgrowths and replacements for our own. Ghosh's novel revisits the history of colonial India in order explore how a subaltern class of Indians and the military-scientific arm of England's Colonial Service differ in their understandings of knowledge and science and how these differences affect their perception of malaria. With his alternate history, Ghosh does not merely flip the binary by privileging a particularly subaltern practice or knowledge over that of western science; instead he writes a conjoined history where both sides, although explicitly unacknowledged, operate according to a kind of symbiotic logic due to their mutual dependence on each other's work to achieve their goals. In other words, the official historical narrative surrounding the discovery of malarial transmission stands as an incomplete or broken narrative, throwing up clues to an occluded and secret history of a subaltern counter-science. Uniting these two strands and bringing them into resolution gives rise to the positing of a moment of posthuman and post-global singularity as Event. The achieved point of unity represents the full disclosure of the clandestine work of counter-science only possible as a supra-global realm of complete "knowledge" that supersedes

current globalizing practices predicated on the economic imbrications and resulting transcendence of discrete of national economies.

In this sense, the utopian Event of *The Calcutta Chromosome* is quite similar to what McDonald refers to as the "post-social singularity" of "Toatéu" in his *Kirinya* (the second book in the Chaga series), which is centered on the possibility of re-configuring reality as pure, manipulable information. However, unlike *The Calcutta Chromosome,* which resolves the separate strands of the colonial/colonized narrative of history in order to imagine a different form that their unity could take, the Chaga series works to decenter the global political and economic dominance of the North and writes the future from a borrowed Afro-centric point of view. Building on the idea of Africa as the birthplace of humanity, McDonald presents Africa as the site of humanity's subsequent death and thus the birthplace of posthumanity. However McDonald's Chaga series cannot shake the pull of nations and human history by resolving the political divide between the north and south, or colonial and postcolonialism as the *Calcutta Chromosome* attempts. Indeed, Ghosh's novel implies an end of history, where humanity has achieved the status of the Godhead in posthumanism. *The Calcutta Chromosome's* narrative resolution, if it follows through on its own logic, ultimately presents the end of contradiction, alienation and ideology and thus is Utopian in the strongest sense, compared to the weak-utopianism of the Chaga series with its insistence on the persistence of politics and new directions and determinations for human and posthuman history.

To borrow a phrase from the ongoing Duke University Press series, I am interested here in the way that sf generally, and these novels specifically, can be seen as a particularly utopian form of "postcontemporary intervention," which involves mapping out the relationship between utopianism to the periodization of the "post-contemporary." From the Marxist critical

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perspective, sf and utopianism have been formally and critically linked at least since Darko

Suvin's attempt at formulating an sf poetics in which he posited the utopian genre as the

economic subset of sf (Suvin 61). More recently, Tom Moylan has attempted to re-substantiate

the role of sf as an engine of political and social critique, using similarly negative critical and yet

socially inclined terms as Suvin: "[a]t its most significant, sf can be a part of the larger process of

mobilizing the cultural imagination. It can be part of the process of making the world critically

'legible' in a way that not only delivers pleasure and knowledge but also the joys of joining in

the collective, historical work of bringing a more just and free society into being" (*Scraps*

28).[109]   This attempt to breathe new life into the utopian role of sf is especially important given

what Mathias Nilges refers to as the lack of futurity in contemporary political movements and

the conditions of everyday life, which is then pervasive throughout literature and literary

criticism:

> Clearly present in [the] anxious contemporaneity [of] current critical discourse is
>
> a historically and materially specific crisis of futurity that is tied to a distinct sense
>
> of urgency on the level of disciplinarity. Rather than actually examining how
>
> form, genre, literature, and interpretation function in the now, however, critical
>
> output frequently remains preoccupied with discussions of why such analysis is
>
> (supposedly no longer) done, who or what has to be blamed for this trend, what
>
> the negative consequences for our discipline are, and which lost critical and
>
> literary virtues we should return to. ("Marxism" 68)

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[109]
    Moylan's definition is remarkable for its similarity to Robert C. Young's definition of
postcolonialism: "postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to forces its alternative knowledges into the
power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think,
the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples
of the world" (7).

Thus, Nilges' work avers that "a similar crisis of futurity in contemporary literary production is a characteristic feature of what I call the periodic shift from postmodernism to post-Fordist culture, that is, the shift from emergent to full post-Fordism" ("Marxism" 68). In terms of my argument here, what is particularly striking in Nilges' work, which takes up the relationship between the development and inter-relationships of postmodernism, post-Fordism, the Marxist critique of literature and the pressing need for a renewed concept of futurity, is the periodization of emergent and full post-Fordism.[110] Given the dynamics of systemic closure that characterizes the contemporary moment – what Nilges refers to as "the social, structural, and cultural 'standardization of difference' that has become a trademark of post-Fordism ("Marxism" 82)" – the movement from emergent post-Fordism (what heretofore has generally been coded as postmodernity) to full post-Fordism as the condition of the present provides new impetus to interrogate the relationship between utopianism and the post-contemporary in the form of a periodizing structure.[111]

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[110] In this relationship, Nilges can be seen as attempting to re-think some of the limits of Jameson's conception of the relationship between cultural and capitalism in *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. I take the following statement by Nilges to be paradigmatic of this difference: "Literary history, by extension, is the history of the cultural regulation of capitalism that progresses through crises and registers on the level of form. Form is the manifestation of the cultural regulation of capitalism that is itself a network of negative relations. All that is not capital can on this account be understood as culture. In full post-Fordism, culture has no other besides capital. We are, therefore, not confronted with the subsumption of culture under capital in the context of full postmodernity. Rather, we witness the full development of the dialectical relation between capital and its social dimension as a battle carried out on the field of culture. Full postmodernity or post-Fordism is the full transition into the cultural regulation of capitalism. It is in this situation that a rigorous focus on negative dialectics in analyses of form is endowed with particular urgency" ("Marxism" 83).

[111] Explicating the basic conditions of this transition, Nilges writes, "The intricacies of this periodization clearly transcend the limits of this particular project. Suffice it to say at this point that we should understand postmodernism as the culture of Fordism in crisis. Postmodernism exhausts itself at the moment at which Fordism is effectively superseded and post-Fordism has become the dominant socioeconomic structure. After the exhaustion of postmodernism we

Nilges' arguments have a clear resonance with Wegner's conception of periods of low and high postmodernity in *Life between Two Deaths*, as discussed in chapter three. Although they differ in their terminology, both Nilges and Wegner are concerned with a transition in the literatures that accompany the shift from an emergent to a late or full postmodernity. Moreover, both can be seen as maneuvering between cultural texts that register a nostalgic desire for an earlier period where social, economic and political conditions were more stable (Fordism for Nilges, the 1950s for Wegner) and those that offer a sense of futurity, generally thought to reside in sf texts (this latter point is more prevalent in Wegner's arguments, but also registers in Nilges' reading of Octavia Butler). As Wegner contends, late postmodernist sf texts like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the novels of Octavia Butler:

> reject any kind of postmodern enclave politics that would attempt to found an alternative community outside the dominant global order: the only valid political project each maintains in its own way is one that would take as its aim nothing less than the transformation of our global totality. […E]ven more significant […] is the fact that the cement unifying these new collectivities takes the form of what Badiou names the 'fidelity to an event,' a shared commitment to a horizon of possibility that promises to transform everything. (15)

Thus futurity and the Event are held out as promises that exist beyond the confines of late capitalism and would operate as extreme negativity sundering the totality of global late capitalism.

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witness the emergence of radically different cultural narratives and forms that mark the transition into post-Fordist culture. It is at this point that the project postmodern theorists and authors hoped to be liberatory reveals itself not only as the very logic post-Fordism rests upon but also, and possibly even more significantly, as central to the supersession of Fordism and the resolution of a severe crisis within capitalism by generating what we now recognize as post-Fordism's MOR" (Nilges "The Anti-anti-Oedipus").

This would seem to suggest that sf's imaginative "transformation of global totality" provides not just a cognitive map, but also something of an elusive postcontemporary periodizing strategy – elusive in the sense that it does not mark a particular known time, but instead marks the possibility of futuricity as an outside to the pervasive logic of late capitalism which seems inescapable. If so, what is the postcontemporary's relationship to post-Fordism and the postcolonial? In a recent series of conferences [112] interrogating the utility of the postcontemporary as a unique historical conjuncture, Christopher Brooks, building on the work of Antonio Cerveira Pinto, has proffered the following as a starting point: "the postcontemporary may be defined as the ongoing and everfast overtaking of the present by changes in technology, perception, and human behavior." While such a definition is a good place to start, I hazard that it is not enough. For there are many ways in which this starting point, presented in the terms of a historical conjuncture,9 fails to register the "post-" of the postcontemporary and instead may inadvertently leave us trapped within the vast, growing expansiveness of post-Fordist late capitalism, if not simply modernity itself. For example, within this definition it is possible to hear echoes of an earlier time, when in 1848 concerning the spread of capitalist modernity Marx wrote, "Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. […] In place of old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes" (476). By invoking Marx, what I wish to highlight is the sense that perhaps the present is not so much overtaken by the "changes in technology, perception and human behavior" that are part and parcel of global late capitalism so much as the present is sutured by them, and it is a sense of futurity, or the

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[112] Including panels at the SWPCA, ACLA, MLA

postcontemporary that is actually precluded and foreclosed by such changes. In other words, what is being registered here is not a post-postmodern period, but, as Nilges argues with his recourse to the contemporary moment as a period of full post-Fordism, a difference of degrees: emergent postmodernity versus immersion in the fulfillment of postmodernity.

In other words, I want to propose the potentially controversial stance that we have yet to enter into the postcontemporary, that the postcontemporary is not a historically inevitable or teleologically determined stage of history on the cusp of realization, but that instead it is merely – and because of this merely, of this marked contingency – an utterly urgent possibility. The present sense and feeling of infinite change may be no more than the experience of globalization, of postmodernity, that is the universalization and transformation of the operations of capitalism that Marx described in 1848. Consequently, in terms of a periodizing structure, then, I'd like to posit that the postcontemporary marks not what is happening, but what could *potentially* happen. That is, I would like to reserve the postcontemporary as way of delineating what, in Alain Badiou's terms, we could call the coming of an Event, whereby an Event marks the coming into being of something utterly and absolutely new. Writing in terms of epistemology, Badiou distinguishes between the encyclopedic as what is generally known and what can be known – it is the aggregate accumulated circulating knowledge. Conversely, an Event, is something that disrupts this encyclopedic knowledge, it is something wholly new and which ultimately shatters previous ways of thinking (for example, the Copernican revolution, which changed not only knowledge generally, but our whole sense of reality and our relationship to life itself). In terms of the postcontemporary, an Event as such would not refer to what *is* happening, but instead what might, perhaps even unknowingly, arrive. As such, the postcontemporary is essentially a utopian periodizing strategy, not in the sense of the full arrival of Utopia as the end of history or

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perfection, but in the sense often utilized by Marxists and sf writers and critics as the possibility of difference,[113] the possibility of a break with the seemingly all-encompassing strictures of global late capitalism, much as Eric Rabkin remarks that, "Utopia (Greek for *no place*) belongs to the future" (1).

As Fredric Jameson has argued, it is a sense of a future, of difference from now that seems most impossible in global late capitalism. That is, in the contemporary hegemony of neo-liberal free marketism, when one stops considering globalization as merely an increase in technology and information-sharing and instead considers the economic aspects of globalization, "what begins to infuse our thinking of globalization is a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale; of forced integration as well, into a world-system from which 'delinking' (to use Samir Amin's term) is henceforth impossible and even unthinkable and inconceivable" ("Globalization" 57). As a consequence, what presents itself as "newness" is really only the expansion of capitalism – or more of the same. In terms of capitalism, then, the utopian Event of the postcontemporary stands for possibility, for escaping the confines of the present, for de-linking, for imagining otherwise, other ways and the 'other' itself as what is inassimilable to the global hegemony of late capitalism as (in Nilges' terms) full post-Fordism. So while possibility and difference always inhere in the contemporary moment in the forms of contradiction and opposition, their fulfillment or coming into being are not inevitable; the postcontemporary, then, would mark this actual shift, the arrival of the Event that alters, completely and irrevocably, our present. Postcolonial science fiction has begun to advance just such a form of possibility by

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    As Russell Jacoby laments, "A utopian spirit—a sense that the future could transcend the present—has vanished. This last statement risks immediate misunderstanding, since *utopia* today connotes irrelevance or bloodletting. Someone who believes in utopias is widely considered out to lunch or out to kill. I am using *utopian* in its widest, and least threatening, meaning: a belief that the future could fundamentally surpass the present" (*The End* xi-xii).

critiquing the subjugation of humanity to machines (as is argued below with *The Calcutta Chromosome*) as well as decentering depictions of the future as the indefinite extension of western hegemony as the determinate form of global reality (argued in the analysis of the Chaga series).

With the above in mind, a central concern for the sf genre and utopian theory today, then, arises in the form of their relationships to the legacies of imperialism and the critical questions proffered by postcolonialism and postcolonial investigations of cultural production and consumption, resulting in the emergent field of postcolonial sf. The field of postcolonial science fiction, both as a cultural and a critical practice, has grown considerably in the last decade.[114] While I enter into discussion of cultural practice below with my readings of the Chaga series and *The Calcutta Chromosome*, it is worth taking the time here to trace the critical development of postcolonial sf as I'll be drawing on a cross-section of the separate critical emphases that comprise the larger and still emerging body of the this practice.

Postcolonial SF's Critical Contours

Science Fiction's trafficking in colonial tropes has long been acknowledged. For example, Jameson's first published article on sf[115] from 1973 on Brian Aldiss' *Starship* (*Non-Stop* in the

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[114] From individual articles by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Gwyneth Jones, to special topics issues of journals like *Science Fiction Studies*, *Social Text* and *African Identities* and essay collections such *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World*, to book-length studies by Patricia Kerslake and John Rieder.

[115] The article originally appeared in the second issue of the Darko Suvin launched journal *Science Fiction Studies* and was the first in the journal to explicitly relate Marxist critiques of the postcolonial economic condition with *sf* narrative construction. Coincidentally, in the same year Brian Aldiss, in his *Million Year Spree*, wrote of the imperial underpinnings of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* while also, oddly, upholding a defensive position of sf as an explicitly Anglophone (specifically British and American) genre.

US) with its characteristic Marxist and utopian emphases argues that, "[a]lthough the conventions of the SF may dramatize ['the intervention of higher cultures into lower cultures'] in terms of galactic encounters, the concern clearly has a very terrestrial source in the relations between industrialized and so-called underdeveloped societies of our own planet" (265). Jameson ultimately concludes in a materialist analysis of postcolonial global relations that, "In the present instance […] it is our willful ignorance of the inherent structural relationship between that economic system and the neocolonialistic exploitation of the Third World which prevents any realistic view or concept of the correct relationship between two distinct national or social groupings" (265-6). Indeed, the categories of Marxist economic analysis along with postmodern posthumanist-feminism as most widely broadcast by Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles remain two of the most important sub-currents for postcolonial science fiction after the major figures and works of postcolonial theory, as two of the most significant utopian strands of postcolonial sf interrogate the twin possibilities of whether can we imagine a truly *post* imperial world-system, which would then be inhabited by truly *posthuman* beings or entities.

Yet it has only been more recently that broad histories of sf like Adam Robert's *Science Fiction (The New Critical Idiom)*[116] have moved from the tacit relationship between imperialism and sf to the stronger assertion that "science fiction first emerges as the underside [… of imperial] cultural dominants; as, in a sense, the dark subconscious to the thinking mind of imperialism" (66). It is this position that is extended and developed in two landmark studies of postcolonial science fiction criticism: Patricia Kerslake's *Science Fiction and Empire* (2007) and John Rieder's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008). For Rieder, sf is an explicitly colonial form:

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[116] Initially published in 2000 and then extensively revised for a 2006 edition.

science fiction exposes something that colonialism imposes [; … it] addresses

itself to the ideological basis of colonial practice itself, by engaging various

aspects of the ideology of progress. By the ideological basis of colonial practices,

I mean a set of beliefs of the sort that Slavoj Žižek calls ideological fantasies—

beliefs that we consciously disavow, recognizing them as untrue, but nonetheless

support in practice. (15, 30)

Accordingly, the operative colonial discourses in terms of their relationship to sf narrative for

Rieder are those concerning the Other and the scientific discourses that progress through the

mastery of nature. Given the latter issue, it is not just sf narratives that deal directly with

colonial-style encounters and that link sf to the logic of colonialism, but instead the fundamental

narrative reliance on science as progress – whether the narrative is critical or supportive of such a

claim – that links the epistemological concerns of sf with imperialism. Thus for Rieder, sf, as

with postcolonial critiques of anthropology and ethnography, can only emerge as a full-blown

cultural practice within the wider scope of imperial logic.

While Rieder focuses his attention on narratives specific to the colonial period, Kerslake

applies a similar focus on scientific progress and the Other to colonial as well as postcolonial

texts. However, while Rieder reads sf texts as particular extrapolations of colonial practices that

both propel and counter imperial thought structures, Kerslake works through a relationship that

emphasizes the relative autonomy of the two poles of the analogous relationship between

colonialism and sf. For Kerslake, while the colonized Other and the alien Other are presented

similarly, she ultimately holds out a separate sphere for the epistemological confrontation that

the alien causes as unique from that of the colonized Other. As such, Kerslake suggests

throughout that the Other of sf, given its ontological non-human status as opposed to its

ideological non-human status (as in imperial depictions of the colonized), has posed a greater threat to our notions of selfhood. This is the biggest weakness to her approach, for as she moves temporally from colonial to postcolonial narratives, the concepts of postcolonial theory become merely tools for analyzing theoretical situations about the state of humanity as such – as a philosophically whole and knowable unit. Consequently, she holds out for a sense in which encounters with the alien Other *because* of its pure alterity take on a productive role in terms of measuring the advancement of human culture. Taking the contemporary socialist and postimperial fictions of Ian M. Banks and Ken MacLeod as her examples, she argues that:

> At this point, postcolonial theory and the development of the Other in SF become divergent. […] As we alter our perceptions of what we are and how we perceive our place, the Other becomes a new entity in its own right, adapting and shifting its function to match the new expectations we have of ourselves. We cannot continue to look for our reflection in a nineteenth-century mirror. And therein lies the constant power of the alien in SF. Since we cannot know what we may become in the future, neither can we see the shape of the people we will consider Other, and yet we need an alterity if only to judge the distance we have come in cultural development. The Other is no longer a thing of pity or fear, but the beginning of a thought experiment which accompanies us to the planets and beyond. Postcolonialism has identified the being of the Other. We now look at how this being continues to transcend theory and is taken into the future. (24)

While it is hard to isolate the theoretical difference between the alien and postcolonial Others as developed by Kerslake, as well as to ascertain the political salience of this differentiation, perhaps one way of understanding her approach could be in contradistinction to Jameson's where

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the cognitive work of difference and the utopian thrust of sf in the latter's approach lies less in

humanity's difference vis-à-vis the alien Other and instead in the projection of the future in

reference to the ideological fissures and aporias of the present. Such a difference can then be

seen in terms of totalization: while Jameson concentrates on the problematic ideological limits of

social relations and the closure of possibility under late capitalism, Kerslake posits the

totalization and identity of humanity itself. From a postcolonial standpoint, this latter totalization

seems a pernicious reappraisal of the self/other binary to a humanity/other binary which could

preclude the racial differences that continue to resonate even in projections of the future, which

so much Afro-futurism has been at pains to illustrate, as well as the long and productive

discussions of posthumanity in so much feminist sf criticism and work.[117]

As opposed to Kerslake's oddly dehistoricized approach, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.

argues for a historicist ideological[118] approach in which the development of the sf genre's

principal worldview is commensurate with the *desire* for a transition from the older logics of

imperialism to more contemporary notions of Empire (after Hardt and Negri). Significantly, this

transition to Empire is neither immanent nor necessarily accurate for Csicsery-Ronay and instead

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[117] David M. Higgins similarly argues that Kerslake's incorporation of "colonialism" as purely philosophical and cultural object of contemplation in contemporary sf produces troubling outcomes: "More troublingly, I do not feel that it is accurate to say that 'we have not left empire behind us' because we still need it in our fictions and cultural productions as an object of philosophical interrogation; it is more the case that we have not actually left empire behind us *at all*, as the actions of the US and its allies in the opening years of the twenty-first century demonstrate. Ultimately, Kerslake's strict focus on 'postcolonial' concerns causes her to neglect the complexities of imperialism more generally; colonialism is one tool of empire, but not the only one, and just because imperialism has developed new hegemonic tools and strategies does not mean that the Age of Empires can so easily be relegated to the realm of philosophical curiosity" (134-5).

[118] Although it should be noted that the Jamesonian, historicist model of sf criticism has recently come under criticism from within Marxist quarters, see most notably Darren Jorgensen's "Towards a Revolutionary Science Fiction: Althusser's Critique of Historicity."

is more attuned with the utopian logic of neo-imperialism and thus operates as neo-imperialism's ideological driving force. As such, he states that he is not primarily concerned with "whether Hardt and Negri's model accurately describes the real conditions of the global capitalist regime" (232). Rather, he is interested in the way that Empire is representative of techno-political development and the management of imperialism. Thus he argues that "Hardt and Negri's notion is thin stuff upon which to base a critique of global capitalism. It is, however, immensely useful as a tool for understanding contemporary geopolitical mythology as a cognitive map, in Jameson's terms, of the present" (232). Central to Csicsery-Ronay's postulation is the role of technology in both Empire and sf. If imperialism was managed by ever greater "technosystems" of control that utilized the superior military and industrial forces of the colonizing nation, following Hardt and Negri, he argues that Empire is "a technological regime that affects and ensures the global control system of de-nationalized communications. It is in this sense that Empire is the fantastic entelechy of imperialism, the ideal state that transcends the national competitions leading towards it" (232). In this light, sf takes on a mediating role positing a national self-image against the global development of Empire, but an image that is also caught within Empire's advancement:

> Sf artists construct stories about why this Empire is desired, how it is achieved, how it is managed, how it corrupts (for corrupt it must), how it declines and falls, how it deals with competing claims to imperial sovereignty, or how it is resisted. The history of sf reflects the changing positions of different national audiences as they imagine themselves in a developing world-system constructed out of technology's second nature. (236)

Ultimately, Csicsery-Ronay presents a rather disturbing critique of the sf genre, where its only

utopian function is tantamount to Empire's desire for an insidiously managed – indeed, enforced

– perpetual peace that is disconnected from the more critically utopian goals of radical difference

and possibility. [119] And although he holds out that particular sf writers are not necessarily

seeking to serve Empire, the vast majority of his examples and the development of the stakes of

his argument leave little room for opposition.

By attributing such a singular logic to sf and categorizing it as "as a creature of

imperialism and inspired by a world-view of technoscientific Empire" (245) whose genesis as a

culturally important form is resolutely tied to the imperial ambitions of the nations out of which

it arose, Csicsery-Ronay's work perhaps necessitates the position later staked by Andy Sawyer in

the introduction to a recent volume of essays on postcolonial sf, *Science Fiction, Imperialism*

and the Third World (2010). Attempting to formulate a broad working definition of a

postcolonial sf artistic and cultural practice, Sawyer writes, "An explicitly postcolonial science

fiction not only has to be *written* from outside the traditional strands of Western science fiction

(claiming them as progenitors, perhaps, while recognizing that the future nowadays is a very

different world to that which it once was) but explained and criticized from outside them too"

(2). For Sawyer, postcolonial sf maintains a resolutely oppositional stance that differentiates it

from earlier sf practices: "It arises from the sense […] that the default future of what John Clute

calls the 'First SF' of the Hugo Gernsback/John W. Campbell model is neither possible nor

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[119] Indeed, without referencing Jameson's work on sf and utopianism directly, the following
seems to run in direct opposition to it: "Sf's debt to utopia is great; but it owes more to Empire.
For sf's techno-science—which is the basis of its icons, energies, and imaginary historical
conflicts—has little to do with utopia's institutionalized balancing acts and containment
strategies" (238).

desirable from where we stand now " (2). For Sawyer, as well as for Rieder, a truly postcolonial sf and postcolonial sf criticism would have to not only critique the aims of imperialism but also develop and allow for a space of postcolonial and subaltern subjectivity to take root.

Within this broad framework, we can begin to pull various strands from those already mentioned into a flexible critical approach. This emergent understanding takes into consideration (1) the genre's development alongside the struggles for and against imperialism and colonialism (as well as other globally ideological frameworks such as the development of finance capitalism and international socialism, and the concomitant globally polarizing logic of the Cold War, for example); (2) its shared emphasis on the Other whether as the ideologically necessary foil for selfhood or inimical difference to be eradicated; (3) the centrality of technology expressed alternately as technophilia or technophobia; (4) the disruption of the human/Other binary through post-humanist currents; and (5) the subjugation of the nation through colonial conquest or neo-imperial globalization as well as the desire for the postcolonial nation or even a postcolonial driven post-nationalism as a response to these problems. As the various authors in volumes like *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction* and the critics whose essays comprise *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World* remind us, sf is no longer a genre belonging exclusively to the first world (an often implicit fault that unites many approaches to sf); rather, it is being written, read and critiqued from the margins of the globe as well as those liminal spaces within western nations.

Drawing on the work of Rieder, Kerslake, Csicsery-Ronay and those others who have opened the door to a postcolonial sf, and coupling it with the utopian desire for futuricity of Marxist critics like Wegner or Nilges, for my own part, I would like to analyze the way that certain postcolonial sf narratives can be read as a particularly postcolonial utopian longing for

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form. That is, rather than merely responding to the legacies of empire (whether in the form designated by the little or big "e") – which of course many do, and do well – they also perform what Jameson recognizes as the central role of utopian thought in sf – that of imagining other ways of being and of reclaiming the possibility of a future that is truly *post* colonialism and beyond colonialism's lingering vestiges in Empire. While I am alluding here to Timothy Brennan's argument about the postcolonialism novel's national longing for form (which the novel is representative of, and takes part in), there are some significant differences between Brennan's work and what I am developing here. In terms of similarity, I am particularly invested in the way that Brennan draws on the, largely Marxian, tradition of the novel's relationship to the rise and cultural codification of nationalism, particularly in the way that the novel helps to give a substantive and consolidating form to the period of bourgeois and later "Third World" nationalism out of the otherwise chaotic disarray from the fallouts of absolutism and formal colonialism. In this sense, the novels discussed below can be seen as attempting to create a truly post colonial form out of the chaos of the present, which is marked by the failures of many postcolonial nations to achieve a full independence from the imperial powers of the West, resulting in the lack of fully democratic postcolonial nation-states as well as the increasingly decentralized and fragmented experience of full postmodernity that seems to call such goals into question. However, in terms of the "gestative political structure," that Brennan identifies, these postcolonial sf novels lack that sense where they "should also be understood as the *institutional* uses of fiction in nationalist movements themselves" (46-47). Opposed to creating a usable postcolonial tradition, the novels take part in the construction of a postcolonial utopian imaginary which can be roughly characterized as a process of decentering the West's stranglehold on conceptions of *the* future and of futuricity itself. Accordingly, their utopian impulse is directed

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towards the cognitive and political desires for a world in which the remnants of imperialism are either removed or the balance in global power is redressed, thus allowing one to imagine what a truly post colonial world might look like.[120] In Russell Jacoby's terms, then, they are not "blueprint utopians" who "map out the future in inches and minutes" in order to illustrate the perfect society, and whose narratives also serve as the very real plans for such a society (*Picture* xiv). Instead, they are closer to his category of "iconoclastic utopians" who are "protestors and breakers of images" (*Picture* xv), thus shattering the image of any conceivable future as currently germinating in the West.[121]

By drawing on the sf genre, Ghosh and McDonald do not intend to give accurate prognostications of the future or to draw clear paths to it with their novels; instead, they incorporate the use of the sf novum to illustrate just how radically other and incommensurate a truly postcolonial world would be to our own, and it is in this sense that they are most explicitly

[120] The longing for form can also be seen as a generic aspect of sf with its emphasis on world-building. Indeed, Brian McHale has famously argued that sf is essentially an ontologically-driven genre due to the emphasis on world building and the cognitive dissonance that results from the reader's and text's comparison and clash of worlds. "Science fiction, like postmodernist fiction, is governed by the ontological dominant. Indeed it is perhaps *the* ontological genre *par excellence*. We can think of science fiction as postmodernism's noncanonized or 'low art' double, its sister-genre in the same sense that the popular detective thriller is modernist fiction's sister genre. [….] What distinguishes science fiction is the occurrence of this *novum* not (or not only) at the level of story and actors [which would be true of all fiction] but in the structure of the represented world itself [. …] Or, better: not the occurrence of a single *novum*, but the projection of a *network* of innovations, with their implications and consequences; in other words, the projection of a world different from our own yet, as Suvin and Scholes both specify, in confrontation with our world" (59). McHale refers to this as the "confrontation between worlds" and as providing an "interplanetary context" (61). And as Higgins argues, "This assertion of multiple, valid, and incommensurable realities challenges the 'ontological imperialism' that [Robert] Young argues is a central characteristic of imperial modernity" ("Colonialism" 137).
[121] See also Fredric Jameson's "The Future as Disruption" Part III in *Archaeologies of the Future* on the transition from blueprint utopias to the more politically charged critical utopias (after Tom Moylan) that make up the post-1970s return to utopian writing, "in which it is not the representation of Utopia, but rather the conflict of all possible Utopias, and the arguments about the nature and desirability of Utopia as such, which move to the centre of attention" (216).

a *longing* for form. For both McDonald and Ghosh this means introducing a concept – the introduction of a completely alien technology/life-form or interpersonal transference, respectively – that unseats the colonial legacies that continue to inform global political relations. It is in this sense that each employs a seemingly impossible *novum* around which to construct their narratives and thus give form to the no-place and (at least potentially) good-place that is the postcolonial sf utopia.

Refiguring the Lineages of the Future: Ian McDonald's Chaga Series and the British Boom

> "You don't pass the greater portion of your life through the 'Troubles' without
>
> some identification with similar conflicts in the developing world"
>
> – Ian McDonald

At this point, I would like to turn to Ian McDonald's Chaga series[122] in order to further elucidate the more general points I've been making here about periodicity and utopianism, as well as to introduce and elaborate my second concern about the relationship between the postcontemporary, which I'm utilizing as a utopian periodizing strategy, and the postcolonial in sf. McDonald is a member of what has been termed the British Boom generation of authors writing from the 1990s into the 2000s, a group which includes Iain M. Banks, China Miéville, Gwyneth Jones and Ken MacLeod, to name but a few of the more notable authors whose work

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[122]   Principally comprised of *Evolution's Shore* (1995) and *Kirinya* (1998), and the projected forthcoming final installment *Ananda*, but also includes the related side texts "Towards Kilimanjaro" (1990) a short story that was later refigured as *Evolution's Shore* and the novelette *Tendeleo's Story* (2001) which takes place in the world of the Chaga series but is not directly related to the events of the principal novels.

covers the gamut of speculative fiction.[123] The British Boom coincides with Wegner's period of

a late postmodernity, and thus with Nilges' period of full post-Fordism, discussed in chapter

three and earlier in this chapter, respectively. Describing its emergence in the introduction to a

special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* devoted to the Boom, Mark Bould and Andrew M. Butler

(under the combined acronym I.C.R.) write:

> […] the Boom comes out of a particular historical moment when British culture
>
> navigated between powerful opposing tides: Thatcherism and anti-establishment
>
> resistance, the American umbrella and the EU, the conservatism of literary culture
>
> and the rich mix of immigrant cultures, technoscientific imperialism and anti-
>
> hegemonism, latecoming and closeness to the cutting edge, and between what
>
> Butler calls the 'can't do' spirit and the 'just do it' of remix culture. (354)

To this historical-cultural description undergirding the periodizing of the British Boom, we

should also add Paul Kincaid's literary insight that the Boom generation is also greatly

"concerned with subverting traditional [sf] tropes to social, political, or literary ends" (181).

That is to say, Bould and Butler's description of the context of the Boom indicates that the Boom

writers are operating in the same cultural, social and political sphere as McEwan and Barnes do

in *Saturday* and *England, England* but that their engagement with these issues is characterized

by a sense of newness and possibility expressed through their playing with the traditions of the sf

genre as noted by Kincaid. The newness implied by this formal and generic experimentation thus

brings to mind Sawyer's notion that a postcolonial sf would have to be inventive in its adaptation

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[123]
    See A. M. B.'s (a composite of Andrew M. Butler and Mark Bould) "Toward a Reading List
of the British Boom" for a much longer and authoritative list of authors and titles.

of traditional sf tropes, harnessing the older conventions to new and different postcolonial and

postimperial ideals.[124]

However, although certainly a part of the current "British Boom" of sf authors,

McDonald occupies an odd, almost liminal position in contemporary sf studies. Despite being a

multiple award winner and an author much favored by sf fans, he has largely remained outside of

the academic critical focus on sf and is often left unaddressed by those studying the Boom. This

liminal status is perhaps exacerbated by his North Irish national identity – a nationality that

occupies a rather liminal space within Britishness itself – but is more likely due to the fact that

the non-Western settings of his novels have been deemed unappealing to an American

readership, which is still the largest market for sf. As a result, many of his novels are either out

of print or have never been made available in the US, hence his relative obscurity.[125]

McDonald's own background provides a near perfect case study for the vexed lines of

Britishness in the twentieth into twenty-first centuries. Born in Manchester, England in 1960 to a

Scottish father and an Irish mother, McDonald was relocated to Northern Ireland at the age of

five and he resides in Belfast to this day. Despite being born in England and having a Scottish

father, McDonald generally considers himself Irish, asserting that his formative experiences were

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[124]
    Indeed Sawyer's assertion that "A postcolonial sf criticism will also consider whether traditional concepts of genre are even worth holding on to in the light of the revisioning of these ideas from writers whose connections with the traditional generic histories and structures of science fiction are second- or third-hand" (3) can already be seen as happening at the artistic and formal level with many of the genre-bending texts that are characteristic of the boom.

[125]
    This is, however, beginning to change as his most recent novels *River of Gods* (2004, set in India), *Brasyl* (2007, set in Brazil) and *The Dervish House* (2010, set in Turkey) have been garnering a lot of attention with multiple nominations for the Hugo, British Science Fiction Association, Nebula, and Arthur C. Clarke awards (winning the BSAF for best novel in 2005, 2007 and 2011, the Hugo for best novelette in 2007). This has led to the reprinting of some of his earlier work in the US, but his African novels remain obscure (*Chaga* was nominated for a BSAF, but *Kirinya* received no award nominations and is not currently in print in the US).

most strongly influenced by being raised amidst the "Troubles." Moreover, he attributes growing

up in this environment to his development of something along the lines of a Third World

solidarity. In an interview conducted with the British sf magazine *Interzone* and subsequently

reprinted on the sf website *Infinity Plus*, he writes, "you don't pass the greater portion of your

life through the 'Troubles' without some identification with similar conflicts in the developing

world" (Gevers). Later in the same interview he further elucidates the connections between

Northern Ireland and what he terms the Third World:

> I'd use the expression 'Third World' only in the sense that I include Northern
>
> Ireland as a Third World country: a society of two significant social groups that
>
> have been set against each other by historical engineering; a skewed economic
>
> infrastructure based on the public sector, with a highly economically significant
>
> samurai elite (the RUC); a highly-politicised population with the ability to arm
>
> itself to the teeth if it's disregarded; a post-colonial process of disengagement that
>
> failed half-way through; physical marginalisation, poor infrastructure, a monied
>
> class rapidly moving upwards that is yet unable to engage fully in either Irish or
>
> UK society; the sense of cultural inferiority that forces both social groups into a
>
> re-engineering of their cultural tropes ... (Gevers)

This postcolonial outlook and sense of Third World solidarity permeates McDonald's fiction.

His earliest works, published in the late 1980s, concern the terraforming and colonization of

Mars as well as attempts to rewrite the cultural and historical trajectories of Ireland. However,

it's been the function of his work since the mid-1990s with the publication of the first book in the

Chaga series, *Evolution's Shore* (*Chaga* in the UK) in 1995 to fully embrace what I'd like to call

a postcolonial undertaking of decentering the future.

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A particularly powerful critique of much science fiction and utopian writing is that its presentation of the future almost inevitably ends up extending a Western, often Americentric, cultural hegemony forwards, which in many ways could also refer to my critique of the postcontemporary. Such traditional conceptions of an sf future replicate the worst of Hegelian tendencies by solidifying the West as the Absolute World Spirit and thus the engine of history and progress whereby the projections of the future in sf and utopian texts are only so many reaffirmations of this Western cultural chauvinism. Starting with the Chaga series set in postcolonial Kenya in the first years of the twenty-first century and continuing through *Brasyl*, the Cyberabad series set in India in 2047, and his most recent novel *The Dervish House* set on the cusp of Turkey's entry into the EU in 2027, McDonald's novels work against this tendency as they attempt to posit conceptions of the future from the position of various postcolonial and non-western cultures and locations. Instead of foisting western technology and ideals upon various exotic locales, the novels attempt to present how each one of these various nations/peoples/cultures may extend itself into the future. In McDonald's own words, "I like the way that the tropes and assumptions of SF mutate and transform when they hit a totally different society from the one in which they were bred" (Gevers). Despite a Northern Irish sense of Third World fellow-feeling and an open admittance that "I'm the outsider trying to feel my way into different, complex and subtle cultures" (Gevers), we cannot, nor should we, forget that McDonald is still a white, British westerner and that while undertaking a literary process of decentering his own privileged position in the world-system, he is also writing someone else's future for them. However, far from merely trafficking in a colonial adventurism and exoticism of

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yesteryear, it is the unresolved and palpable tension between Western and postcolonial

perspectives in his decentering works that makes them so interesting.[126]

Turning to the Chaga series specifically, when asked about his motivation to write near

future sf set in Africa as opposed to Ireland, which had been his previous earthbound setting,

McDonald replied, "The future's coming to Kenya as much as to Kentucky; and to me, it's more

interesting in Nairobi than Nashville" (Gevers). Questionable American geography aside, his

opening phrase, "the future is coming" serves as a wonderfully succinct and accurate distillation

of what's at stake in this novel in regards to the earlier references to the postcontemporary and

futuricity. The first book of the series, *Evolution's Shore*, is a first contact story ostensibly

presented in the form of a disaster narrative. A "biological package" has impacted the Earth at

the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro and has begun terraforming the earth into an alien landscape that is

spreading outwards at a rate of around fifty feet per day known as the Chaga – named for the

Wachagga people who had lived at the site of initial impact. "Chaga," then, refers to the alien

terraformed terrain in its entirety and to the alien substance itself; or, put slightly differently, the

Chaga is both what transforms as well what is transformed. In terms of the novel, the Chaga is an

Event in its truest form, and as such, the reader is constantly referred to the inability of language

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[126] For McDonald, one way of acknowledging this tension has been through deliberately placing his protagonists as outsiders: "As I said about *King of Morning, Queen of Day*, in the Chaga Saga, I'm an outsider, so the main character, Gaby, has to be an outsider: a journalist who manages to wreck every good thing she touches. She has to find her way into and through levels of very different societies, and her journey has far from ended" (Gevers). Moreover, this may also only serve to highlight the very problems associated with the term "the postcolonial" as Ania Loomba articulates them for attempting to allay an identical formation on vastly different colonial experiences both externally between former colonies as well as internally by terms of gender, class, race, etc. Hence her suggestions that postcolonialism should really only be understood broadly and "flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" (qtd. in Hoagland and Sarwal 8).

to describe it or the senses to properly ascertain it. We're told from multiple characters'

perspectives that it lies "on the frontier of imagination" (18); that

> "It is a just a hard thing to get a good image of. […] It looks the same wherever
>
> you point the camera. And there are things in there so different from what we
>
> understand as *living* that we find it hard to comprehend them. We cannot *see* them
>
> like we see a tree and know what it is and what it does, what the bits we cannot
>
> will look like" […] "I could pair off adjectives to you all day and not have
>
> communicated to you anything of what it is truly like in there. It is alien, it cannot
>
> be understood; much of it is so strange that it cannot be *seen*" [and] Even analogy
>
> could not describe this Chaga: it was like *this*, but it was also like *this*, with a
>
> seasoning of *that* too, but in the end, none of them. (39, 55, 138)

The Chaga is presented as the complete alien-ness and otherness of the future, outside of existing

conventional knowledge and therefore necessitating the complete and total rethinking of literally

everything; in other words, it is an Event.

Given this indeterminacy, the conflict that structures the action of the first novel is about

how the Chaga is to be perceived: as threat, commodity or possibility. Initially the Chaga appears

as an allegory for imperialism in two different ways. First, the Chaga is presented by the

Kenyans as an alien colonizing force and secondly it is seen as providing a means through which

to further US neo-imperial interventions into Africa. With the former in mind, the first eye-

witness account of the Chaga comes from Daniel Oloitip (Dr. Dan), a "member of Parliament

from Amboseli and Kajiado South constituency," who is returning from "an aid-begging mission

around the capitals of the European Union" (17). He tells Gaby, the Irish Skynet reporter and

protagonist of the first novel, that the Chaga is "a cancer. […] As there are sicknesses that eat a

person's life way from inside, so there are diseases of nations. It invades the land, draws strength from it, kills what it finds and duplicates only itself" (16). After this, Dr. Dan laments that the postcolonial nations had not had enough time to become true nations due first to the neo-imperial relationships that structure the capitalist world-system and now due to the Chaga's very erasure of Kenya from the globe. This becomes the official line of the Kenyan government and elites who attempt, wholly unsuccessfully, to retard the Chaga's forward momentum through conventional bombing as well as through biological means.

This view of the Chaga as threat is also, at least initially, shared by the UN task force, UNECTA, who are charged with the policing of the Chaga infected area. The area transformed by the Chaga is thus effectively denationalized and under the control of UNECTA, whose initial mandate is to prevent the spread of the Chaga, while simultaneously clearing all peoples from its path. The novel, then, begins within a familiar postcolonial framework with the premise of the postcolonial state lacking the time and means to develop, falling prey to a faceless outsider that literally eats away at the nation's resources. Moreover, due to the inability of the Kenyans to hold their own nation together, it becomes the site of global and humanitarian aid in the guise of UN forces (under the control of the US) further reducing claims to national sovereignty.

It soon becomes clear, however, that the Chaga represents a different kind of threat for the UN, which serves generally as a figure for western interests, and particularly American interests, although its ground forces are clearly multinational and multiethnic – itself another reference to the continuing neo-imperial operations of the global capitalist world-system and the subordination of other nations' resources to American interests. As it becomes clear that the spread of the Chaga is unable to be contained, thus substantiating the UN's mandate while also undermining the legitimacy of their claim to be able to control it, it also becomes known that far

from the life-threatening cancer that Dr. Dan initially presents, the Chaga is actually a life-sustaining force. While Gaby interviews Peter Werther, a German national believed to have been killed by the Chaga's initial impact, she, having recently been the recipient of Dr. Dan's description of the Chaga as cancer, refers to it as the proverbial "heart of darkness," invoking both the persistent alien otherness of Africa from the western point of view as well as the nakedly aggressive responses this fear engenders in western forces that are sent to enlighten this dark heart. But Peter quickly corrects her, and explains that it is actually, "The beginning of all light" (55). He goes on to tell her, "The lies UNECTA tells! It is not hostile to humanity: it supports life, whatever life comes into contact with it. Symbiosis; that is the way of the Chaga. It feeds and shelters you and you become part of it" (55-6).

This emphasis on symbiosis and synthesis is significant in the novel and is meant to be contrasted with the assimilative, destructive processes of colonialism and the global capitalist contemporary moment. As such this moment demonstrates how the Chaga is not in fact to be understood as the colonizing force that it is first described as. Rather, it turns out that the UNECTA, under US direction, while nominally attempting to halt the progress of the Chaga, is simultaneously seeking to commodify it through the development and licensing of patents based on the life sustaining Chaga technology described by Peter Werther. The research being done by the scientific arm of UNECTA is then funneled out to the marketplace, as the reader is told that "most of those patent new-gene food staples the agribusiness corporations have cut from Chaga sources come out of the work of done by Shephard's team" (288), while a UNECTA space mission to a Chaga terraformed moon is underwritten by US arms developers who have first rights to any discoveries made by the scientific team. In this sense, it is the UN/US that represents the legacy of imperial logic in its attempts to commodify the Chaga, while the Chaga

itself stands in as the possibility for something new against and completely different from this imperial legacy.

In other words, the Chaga, if not repurposed and commodified, potentially represents the end of commodification *tout court*. As another scientist, Yves Montagnard, who secretly and illegally lives inside the Chaga infected area of Kenya explains:

> They want another agribusiness product; [but] out there is the end of agriculture. The end of the slavery of the plow. The end of markets and subsidies and surpluses that mean grain mountains here, famine there. Everything may be had here just by taking. It is the return of the hunter-gatherer society, which is the best-nourished, healthiest and most culturally adventurous on earth. (222)

What Yves presents, then, is the Chaga as a new path for humanity beyond western capitalist ideology and neocolonial economic relationships between the Global North and Global South. More than a return to a previous stage of hunter-gatherer society, however, or the complete mastery of nature, the Chaga represents a symbiotic living-in-nature where the Chaga, animal life and plant life are mutually reconfigured. Looked at conversely, the UN's displacement of Africans whose villages are in the path of the Chaga and their legal, militarily enforced jurisdiction over the Chaga presents another attempt at securing the resources of Africa for the West. In this sense, their actions can be seen as a disruption of the Event heralded by the arrival of the Chaga, as the capitalist-contemporary attempt to subsume the potentially coming postcontemporary Chaga.

The UN are not left uncontested, however, as a group of urban Kenyan guerillas, a modern day Mau-Mau called the Black Simbas who, instead of making their camps in the forests and mountains make their bases in the Chaga, fight to open a path for people to enter and live in

it. Indeed, by the end of the novel, even Dr. Dan has reassessed what the Chaga means for

Kenya:

> Five years on I can see that the Chaga is giving us the time, and the space, and the
> resources, to build the Kenya we should have built. A fine nation, an African
> nation; that is not some continuation of Western colonialism in another form, with
> Western legal and political and educational systems, Western values and morals.
> In the Chaga we can find African solutions to African problems—maybe we will
> find out in there that what we thought were our problems are those we have been
> given by the West. We can do a frightening thing: we can build a new Africa that
> does not owe the West anything, that does not need what the West has to sell us,
> that has resources and capabilities the West can only envy. (285)

The language of fright and possibility in Dr. Dan's new estimation of the Chaga for Kenya

specifically and Africa more generally reveals the indeterminate unknowability of utopian

possibility that accompanies the postcolonial longing for form as similarly developed in the

terms of the weak-utopianism discussed in relation to postcolonial nationalist longing in chapter

one. It is for Yves, Dr. Dan, and the tens of thousands whom the Black Simbas help to enter the

Chaga that the Chaga truly arrives as an Event, as the utopian possibility of breaking with the

postcolonial and late capitalist strictures that have withheld a sense of futuricity from them.

    In this sense, *Evolution's Shore* is a re-writing of the traditional sf disaster narrative.

Roger Luckhurst argues that the destruction of civilization at the hands of the alien other that

runs through the British sf tradition is particularly prevalent in the British sf of the 1990s;[127]

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[127] As Roger Luckhurst writes, "It has long been established that the English tradition of SF has heavy investments in the imagination of disaster, from H. G. Well's delight in the demolishing

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however, perhaps due to the Third World solidarity that he feels, McDonald turns this on its head in his postimperial, postcolonial Chaga series. The alien other does indeed destroy the contemporary order, but it does so in order to usher in a posthuman, postcontemporary world where all lifeforms are dialectically linked through a constant symbiotic transformation of one another. What is at stake in *Evolution's Shore*, then, is a question that that critical theory and radical politics have long wrestled, and which is at the center of Marx's most famous thesis on Feuerbach: How does newness enter the world? Or, as the contention over the Chaga by the various factions concerned in the novel illustrates: How can the Event occur without being circumscribed by the present as another part of its already operative logic? And significantly, for Dr. Dan, this means providing the means for imagining new "African" nations in the sense that Chatterjee values, where the imagined nation is free to take on forms that are not indebted to the modular western form and are not beholden by need to western aid.

Given the emphasis on symbiosis and co-evolution, McDonald's Chaga series, then, can be understood as part of the sf subgenre, identified by Laurel Bollinger, that is developed from the theoretical biologist Lynn Margulis' concept of symbiogenesis.[128] Against the individualism of orthodox Darwinian evolution, Margulis has argued for a symbiotic and cooperative model of evolution, known as endosymbiotic theory. As Bollinger explains,

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suburban London in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), through John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), to the fascination with the decline of England envisioned by J. G. Ballard since the 1960s" (84). See also John Rieder's "Visions of Catastrophe" in *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* where he argues that visions of catastrophe operate as the opposite of "Fantasies of Appropriation," that is, as the dialectical blowback of imperial conquest narratives.

[128] As Bollinger notes, these ideas have been explored in fantasy and sf texts like Madeline L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door* (1973), Octavia Butler's *Clay's Ark* (1984) and *Xenogenesis* series as well as the work of Peter Watts with various works taking celebratory, neutral, or hostile stands on symbiogenesis.

> Traditional Darwinian and neo-Darwinian models of evolution focus on
> competition, on 'survival of the fittest' in reproductive terms, as the primary
> source of species' mutability. Margulis proposes instead that cellular evolution
> occurs through symbiotic incorporation of bacterial communities, suggesting that
> cooperation, not competition, provides the fundamental engine of biological
> change. (34)

Bollinger later adds, "While of course entities created through such incorporation must then compete both with their predecessors and with other similarly incorporative beings, Margulis' concept suggests that the most successful cooperators will ultimately out-compete organisms focused solely on competition" (34). This description of symbiogenesis encapsulates much of the thematic material of the Chaga series given the emphasis on symbiosis between the Chaga and everything that it comes into contact with. Moreover, this sense of cooperation and symbiotic adaptation forms a counter to the rapaciousness of the capitalist West. As Bollinger notes, Margulis' ideas then offer a counter to the hegemony of Dawkins's "selfish gene" – a concept that is often fostered as a biological underpinning and naturalization for neo-liberalism. Hence, as seen later in *Kirinya*, the analytical political, cultural and economic divide figured by recourse to the terms of the Global North and the Global South becomes actualized in the Chaga series (although never fully explained or rationalized in the novels, the biological packages only land in and thus subsequently transform the Earth's southern hemisphere). In the novel, the Global North's depictions of the world, whether in terms of maps, news or political relations, entirely leave out the South as if it no longer existed. The novel thus concretizes the global divide in the paradigmatic terms of late global capitalist North and a newly vibrant Chaga-human hybrid de-

linked South that is developing new ways of being and living beyond capitalism and neo-colonial globalization.

Consequently, what's at stake in the Chaga series, and what becomes more pronounced in the second book *Kirinya*, are the twin concepts of posthumanity and postnationalism, or perhaps put in a more totalizing way, the conditions of postcontemporaneity as a radical break from the late capitalist world-system and its inscribed neo-imperial political relations. As Bollinger notes, "Margulis sees symbiogenesis as moving beyond symbiosis, in that symbiogenesis creates an entirely new organism, and in the process irrevocably alters all participants, original entities as well as offspring" (36). The emergence of a new species of Chaga-transformed humans who have various new powers (foresight, different relations to temporality and the duration of the present, the ability to link with other beings and share their senses, etc.) who can utterly rely on the Chaga to fulfill any basic need of food, water, and shelter as well as a whole array of non-vital needs (the Chaga can basically replicate anything, creating organic self-powered TVs, cars, and coffee-makers as well as simpler materials like diamonds, designer clothes, etc.) creates an existential crisis for the North. [129] In this sense, in the tradition of the British Boom, McDonald's novels work to re-imagine the sf catastrophe narrative, which is often read as colonial revenge fantasy fueled by imperial guilt. Thus rather than emphasizing death and destruction at the hands of the alien, the alien Other becomes the harbinger of posthumanity and their world is freed from the limits of scarcity and necessity. [130]

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[129] As Bollinger explains, in some sf, symbiogenesis is seen as a threat, whereby the new organisms outcompete the older ones (as seen with the American/Global North response to the South and the Chaga). The fear is that the new organisms will ultimately lead to the determinate end of humanity as it is known, which for some, is to be lamented (37).

[130] As Terry Eagleton reminds us, this is also Communism as an Event: "The post of communism, conceived in [the] classical way, is not only to escape scarcity but to forget the very

The symbiogenetic co-evolution of the Chaga and the Chaga-adapted posthuman race has

created a world of freedom that both encapsulates and surpasses Marx's concept of human

freedom as tied to necessity and the cultivation of natural resources. In *Capital Volume III*, Marx

writes,

> The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity
>
> and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of
>
> material production proper. […] Freedom, in this sphere ['the realm of natural
>
> necessity'], can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers,
>
> govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under
>
> their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power;
>
> accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most
>
> worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm
>
> of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an
>
> end in itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of
>
> necessity as its basis. (958-59)

The Chaga-terraformed zone of the global south creates a reality where necessity is no longer

linked to scarcity, or particularly to labor in any traditional capitalist conception of these terms.

If *Evolution's Shore* provides the *novum* through the introduction of the Chaga and

symbiogenesis that free one segment of humanity from the economic constraints on need, then

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possibility of it" (102). What he calls a condition of "superabundance" (102). He continues, "Shakespeare provides us in *The Tempest* with an imaginary resolution of [the] contradiction [of developing the productive forces of capitalism to undo their own ends in communism] by re-locating the ceaseless productivity on the side of Nature rather than of humanity, thus ensuring an abundance of production along with the minimum of sweated labour" (103). Of course, except in the Chaga, it is very much not nature as such, but the alien other and the dialectical resolution of nature and humanity affected by the Chaga.

Kirinya presents the reader with a vision of the coming into being of this post-economic, posthuman and thus postcontemporary world. Significantly, it is no Utopia in the blandest sense, but instead a world of danger and contestation, not merely between the Chaga and the US armed "national liberation armies" of the African nations that continue, futilely, to attempt to halt the progress of the Chaga in order to preserve their hold on the disappearing political states, or between the Chaga-South and the principally Western dominated North that fears the former, but also within the Chaga-South itself as new concepts of politics begin to emerge.

The political parties, such as they are, have to grapple with two central concerns: the relation of the various Chaga-communities to one-another on the local level and the relation of the Chaga-South to the North on the Global level. Significantly, the Chaga-South is not a united or centralized political unit; instead the initial internal cultural and political landscape of the Chaga takes the form of the sort of pluralized utopias proffered by Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, the State and Utopia*:

> The conclusion to draw is that there will not be *one* community existing and one kind of life led in Utopia. Utopia will consist of utopias, of many different and divergent communities in which people lead different kinds of lives under different institutions. Some kinds of communities will be more attractive to most than others; communities will wax and wane. People will leave some for others or spend their whole lives in one. Utopia is a framework for utopias, a place where people are at liberty to join together voluntarily to pursue and attempt to realize their own vision of the good life in the ideal community but where no one can *impose* his own utopian vision upon others. The utopian society is the society of utopianism … utopia is meta-utopia …. (qtd. in Jameson *Archaeologies* 217)

However, in *Kirinya*, this last precept on imposition begins to break-down due primarily to the lack of systemic utopian closure in the form of the imposition of the Global North; as the populations and communities formed in the Chaga are continually threatened by the aggression of the North (including military strikes and the setting up of detention centers to contain the emerging refugee populations in the wake of the Chaga expansion before they can join the Chaga-South), they form different political groupings that are centered on how to manage relations with the North.

Ultimately, three demonstrable factions form. The first, the Black Simbas, are a paramilitary operation seeking to destroy the North by introducing specially made Chaga biological packages to terraform the North in a similar manner as to the South. The second is a reimagining of the Kenyan concept of *harambee*, originally an ethos of communal assistance (in Swahili, it literally means "all pull together"). However, it has been re-imagined for the Chaga context less as a national spirit to overcome inter-tribal conflict for resources (as there is no scarcity of any kind in the Chaga) and more as a deliberative body: "It considers itself a forum rather than a traditional party. A consensus. It says its purpose is not to govern, but to reflect and represent the diversity of its constituent societies. It makes much out of unity in diversity" (*Kirinya* 70). Harambee's primary goal then is to negotiate a peace between the UN and the various Chaga-South societies that are its constituent members; it is comprised entirely of ambassadors and has no formal law-making or adjudicating powers. Finally, there is the "centrist state" of iMerina, that in the eyes of Harambee "represent[s] old-style political conformity" (148). iMerina stands in opposition to Harambee in that it operates as a political unity whereby members are politically bound to the Merina (the controlling population of iMerina) in something akin to a tight federation. If Harambee wishes to make peace with the North through

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the UN in order to share the bisected globe in peace, then iMerina ultimately seeks unity with the Chaga-makers beyond the Earth on the Big Dumb Object (i.e., Hyperion, the former moon of Saturn that has been Chaga-terraformed into a cylindrical world/spaceship that is slowly approaching Earth). What's at stake in these various political factions, and not entirely resolved in the Chaga series as it stands (although a third volume has been planned for some time) is the shape or form that postcontemporary society will take. As such, the real conflict of the novel comes back to politics as the management of people and resources and the widening divisions between the human of the late capitalist present of the global North versus and the posthuman of the postcapitalist Global South. That is, the conflict revolves around the harnessing of the Chaga-technology towards posthuman life – the concept of futurity itself – or its repackaging as a commodity.

In relation to this last determinate question of futurity, although the series has yet to be completed, *Kirinya* hedges its bets towards the posthuman by acknowledging that despite most of humanity's being unaware, the end of humankind has already occurred [131] in the form of the "post-social" singularity also known as the "Toatéu" or "The Transcendental Object at the End of the Universe" (*Kirinya* 302). According to one of the iMerina scientists attempting, successfully, to wrest control of the BDO (the containment point for the singularity) from the Americans, "Our theory is that it is a cognitive social nexus. An evolutionary crisis point: the end of the socially constructed world and the beginning of a new one" (364). Central to the developing storyline of the Chaga series, then, is that the posthuman adaptations between the Chaga and the Chaga-adapted as an ongoing process of symbiogenesis in the Global South is

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[131] For those with their eyes on the doomsday clock, the Event occurs on December 18th, 2014 at 8:15GMT.

only a first step on the way to producing a fully undifferentiated species of pure, infinitely

adaptable genetic information. The upshot of this evolutionary leap being that one could program

reality and one's place within that reality infinitely. In other words, this is the Event imagined as

the complete outstripping of all forms of knowledge or being. Moreover, the fact that the Chaga

and Toatéu are believed to have been created and sent from either some "far future or incredibly

remote past" of already evolved humans to the Global South in order to prepare humanity's

transition to the posthuman, underscores the postcolonial politics of McDonald's series (302). In

other words, the projection of Western hegemony and the totalizing aspects of global capitalism

into the future as generated by so many sf narratives are instead rendered as stasis and a cultural

and evolutionary dead-end. In order to decenter and free concepts of the future, McDonald turns

to the destruction of the capitalist and neo-imperial discourses that structure contemporary global

relations in order to imagine what a concept of freedom divorced from commodification and

production would look like. In this sense, like Caute's *The Decline of the West* discussed in the

first chapter, McDonald is appropriating postcolonial discourse – Afrofuturism in this case – in

order to imagine new global realities and futures that are not tied to the supposed universality of

Western hegemony, finding openings in this discourse that *England, England* closes off with its

depictions of the overt insularism of present day England.

I would like to conclude this discussion of the Chaga series with the idea that it is this

sense of the complete and utter eclipsing of postmodernity as the logic of late capitalism and the

postcolonial, neoimperial economic relations that it both depends on and further exacerbates that

the Chaga series presents as necessary for imagining anything like a truly postcontemporary

reality. In other words, as Jameson argues with his lament over the near unthinkability of

delinking, the current neocolonial form of global late capitalism and its exploitative conditioning

of the world-system seems so permanently entrenched that it takes the arrival of the absolutely

alien to disrupt it. It is this sort of utopian desire for a future, for possibility, that the

postcontemporary, refers to. That is to say, finally, that the postcontemporary – as Event as real

newness – must not merely replace postmodernity or postcoloniality in our critical and

theoretical lexicons as a more suitable word for the present, but instead, in order to be

meaningful, must offer something other and beyond these terms which continue to define our

contemporary moment unabated by mere technological changes in the late capitalist world-

system. Indeed, McDonald's use of the absolutely alien in the form of the introduction of a

technology/lifeform that exceeds any contemporary human form of understanding (that is, he

doesn't rely on a technology developed by contemporary society, which then illustrates the most

advanced nation or culture on the planet) may indeed be one sign of the intractable structural

logic of late capitalism and neo-imperial global relations, thus revealing not only the poverty of

our imaginations to free productivity and resources towards radically different and non-

commodified uses, but also the poverty of our politics in the T.I.N.A. age of full postmodernity.

Counter-Science Fiction: Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*

> "Let me put it like this, then,' said Murugan. 'Do you think everything than can
>
> be known should be known?" – Amitav Ghosh (59)

Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (1995)

was his first and, at least so far, only foray into sf and won him the prestigious Arthur C. Clark

Award. Most often in criticism that takes the novel's sf content seriously, it is referred to as an

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alternate history,[132] where Ghosh attempts to both retell but also reinvent the history of malaria research by unwinding the tightly controlled narrative of Ronald Ross's – a scientist in the Colonial Medical Service – discovery of the *anopheles* mosquito as the vector for malarial infection. Indeed, the practice of narrative unwinding dictates much of the structure of the novel; although often sub-categorized as a medical thriller or even mystery, the novel's formal structure works against the grain of standard mystery or thriller conventions. Instead of shedding false leads and narratorial miscues in order to hone in on the lone culprit or the determinate answer to the question that provides the impetus for the search, *The Calcutta Chromosome's* plot moves in ever widening concentric circles, with each lead and clue only producing further questions and more leads. This results in a centrifugal structure and an ever-expanding narrative until the storyline eventually folds back into self, simultaneously ending where it began by retelling the whole story over again.

Through this non-linear and additive structure the novel presents a postcolonial critique of colonial reason and seeks to undermine the liberal and colonial logic of linear progress with its prototypical narrative of the lone genius operating in isolation. As Anshuman A. Mondal succinctly summarizes, the novel offers a counter to "those Eurocentric self-representations about the diffusion of modernity, Reason, Progress and the civilising mission enforced by

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[132] Given the novel's emphasis on fevers, dreams, delirium, ghost stories and the blurring of the lines of reality, perhaps it would be better to think of the novel as pertaining more to sf subcategory of slipstream fiction than just alternate history. According to Victoria de Zwann, "At its most interesting, slipstream addresses the possible fluidity of the boundary between sf and non-sf; at its most problematic, it highlights an anxiety about the legitimacy or what [Bruce] Sterling calls the 'worthiness' of sf. […] In 1989, cyberpunk writer and theorist/propagandist Bruce Sterling introduced the term 'slipstream' to denote what he thought was an 'emerging genre' on the borderlines between sf and 'mainstream fiction,' in which the sf techniques – no longer able to service what Sterling called the 'coherent social vision' of genre sf – were adapted by non-sf writers to produce more imaginative, estranging, counter-realist, and innovative works than sf proper could produce" (500).

colonialism [, … by] unravel[ing] the very concept of 'discovery' itself and the empiricist, supposedly universal but nevertheless culturally determined assumptions of modern scientific knowledge that underwrite such a concept" (13). However, this postcolonial-inspired critique is only one aspect of the novel, and, although certainly a rather important element, it leaves out consideration of many of the novel's sf components. In what follows, I lay out the relationship of this colonial critique, centered on the concept of what the novel refers to as a "counter-science," to its more sf-oriented *novum* of "interpersonal transference" understood as the literal transference of one's personality and memories, one's essence, as such, into another's body. Doing so highlights the text's function not only as a postcolonial reclamation of lost or marginalized voices within the dominant colonial discourse, but as a utopian vision of futurity that lies beyond the confines of present conceptions of knowledge or being.

A Subaltern Counter-Science

The novel's plot is notoriously difficult to paraphrase given the centrifugal development of the story, the widening expansiveness produced through the various background stories that keep pulling the narrative further and further away from the center of Ronal Ross's lone discovery, as well as the fact that various characters in the novel merge with others through interpersonal transference and have different names in the different time periods that the narrative traverses. That the novel's narrative cannot be contained in one neat summary or even teleological timeline is part of its larger politics given its critique of the empiricism that underwrites imperial discourses of history, science and progress. The novel, then, develops this critique through the destabilization of narrative control and closure, which it presents in its opening chapters. Here, the reader is introduced to one of the principal characters, Antar, an Egyptian national living in

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New York City, who is working as a data analyst for an NGO known as the International Water Council, which had swallowed up the previous company he worked for, Lifewatch. While it is never entirely clear exactly what the International Water Council does, or how it goes about doing it, the reader gets the sense that they are in involved with controlling the world's access to clean water supplies. As for Antar's position within the company, it is his job to monitor the AVA/IIe computer, which is feminized and humanized as Ava throughout the novel, as "she" goes about her job of cataloguing "the endless detritus of twentieth-century officialdom—paper-clips, file-covers, diskettes. They appeared to believe that everything they found in places like those [of the 'Agricultural Extension Office in Ovamboland or Barotseland'] had a bearing on the depletion of the world's water supplies" (7). Antar's job in all of this is to explain and define for Ava those objects that fall outside of her programming and that she therefore cannot recognize, and "[o]nce she'd wrung the last, meaningless detail out of him, she'd give the object on her screen a final spin, with a bizarrely human smugness, before propelling it into the horizonless limbo of her memory" (4).

The scene deftly presents a critique of the empirical – and by extension, imperial – inner workings of international NGOs charged with controlling local access to global resources. Their belief in their own mission and sense of progress is so paramount as to amount to a master-narrative of History: "They saw themselves making History with their vast water-control experiments: they wanted to record every minute detail of what they had done, what they would do. Instead of having a historian sift through their dirt, looking for meanings, they wanted to do it themselves: they wanted to load their dirt with their own meanings" (7). Antar thus refers to Ava as a "*Addaad al-Turaab*" (Arabic for "Dust-Counter"), which is a personal childhood reference to the anthropologist he remembers coming to his remote village in Egypt, which further

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explicitly links his own current mission with Ava to the colonial development of the discipline of

anthropology and its practice of subjugating various and sundry world cultures to a distinctly

Western narrative and history of humankind. In this light, Christopher Shinn argues that "The

International Water Council attempts to make world history in much the same way that Michael

Hardt and Antonio Negri describe as epitomizing globalization's resurgent forms of empire:

structural hegemonies perpetuate the neo-imperialist ambitions of multinational corporations,

turning the so-called natives into docile, subservient laborers" (145). For Shinn, not only is the

International Water Council able to regulate or control the rhythms and functions of biopower,

but it subdues any resistance to its goals by incorporating "the so-called natives," in this case

figures like Antar, by putting them in roles subordinate to the technology that enables the NGO's

power in terms of global reach, thus subjugating all materials to their own master-narrative of

History.[133]

Although the action with Antar and Ava is part of the latest period in the novel's complex

temporality, being part of its near-future narrative, the novel begins with this relationship to

emphasize its engagement in both the past and the future. To this end, I begin my reading with

these opening future-moments in order to emphasize that the book is more than simply a

rewriting of colonial history. Indeed, the critical literature on *The Calcutta Chromosome*

typically begins with a discussion of the novel's historical timelines (Murugan and his

investigations into Ronald Ross and the colonial history of malarial research) to emphasize the

importance of its historical intervention as Ghosh restores the lost Indian voices to the narrative

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[133] Suparno Banerjee makes a similar argument about the movement from colonialism to Empire
and the regulation of Antar's character, "The new subaltern does not belong only to a
colonizer/colonized relationship, but to the invisible power of the new corporate empires, where
Antar loses his job and is monitored by a computer" (56).

of malarial history. Marking the significance of Antar and Ava's storyline as the opening

narrative in the novel, however, places a greater emphasis on the connections between the two

historically-centered narratives concerning Ross and Murugan and the two near-future narratives

of Antar and Ava's work and the transformations of interpersonal transference in the digital

realm that is often left under-examined in the critical literature surrounding the novel.

While the novel jumps back and forth, almost randomly, in time, connecting various

moments throughout the Victorian colonial period of India, the 1990s with Murugan's research

in Calcutta, and a near-future (seemingly somewhere in the mid-2010s) in New York, Antar and

Ava's story really provides something similar to a framing narrative[134] for the colonial story of

Ronald Ross as well as the chronologically much later story of Murugan's research into Ross's

work. As Claire Chambers notes, Ross attempted to control the narrative of his discovery of the

malarial vector with the publication of his self-edited and annotated diaries, which continue to be

widely accepted amongst scientific researchers today (Chambers 60). According to Chambers, it

is these same diaries and memoirs that Ghosh mined for his novel and which provided all of

Ross's dialogue in the novel, as every word attributed to Ross in Ghosh's novel actually appears

in Ross's own memoirs. As Murugan explains to Antar, "'the great thing about a guy like Ronald

Ross is that he writes everything down. You've got to remember: this guy's decided he's going

to rewrite the history books. He wants everyone to know the story like he's going to tell it; he's

not about to leave any of it up for grabs'" (52). Through Chambers' careful research and

Murugan's depiction of Ross, we find the same basic operative principles as with the

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[134] It's not a formal framing-narrative as we do return to Antar and Ava periodically throughout the narrative for short periods of time, but in that their story opens and closes the novel and in that their story eventually encapsulates the others, it serves as something similar to a narrative framing device.

International Water Council in terms of the control and dissemination of information. This mirroring of the operating principles provides the analogy for the contemporary sf aspects of the novel (as opposed to the purely alternate history aspects) and the continual development of the *novum* of interpersonal transference through computers. Hence the novel posits the ongoing instrumentalizing of technology to ideological frameworks – Ava and The International Water Council can only see one way to harness their advanced computer technology in collecting the traces of human life (data, badges, etc.) – and submitting them to their master-narrative instead of furthering the possibilities of life itself.

Therefore when Chambers argues that: "In The Calcutta Chromosome, Ghosh problematizes the universalist claims of Western science and questions the widespread tendency of historians to view scientists as geniuses who work alone, fomenting epistemological revolution for the benefit of mankind" (58), she is certainly correct, but this only captures one particular aspect of the text which we could call the historical aspect. By concentrating on the inner narrative that circulates around malaria, many critics ultimately miss the outer connections and sf aspects that structure the framing narrative. In Chambers' case, this leads her to the conclusion that "[i]n The Calcutta Chromosome, Murugan *reverses* [Ross's] claim to lone discovery, suggesting instead that the servant Lutchman – here depicted as a leader of the 'counter-scientific' cult – in fact led Ross to his achievement by placing the clues in his path. In this ironic subversion of Ross's narrative, it is the Western scientist who is portrayed as a pawn, blindly unaware of the forces that precipitate his victory" (64, my emphasis). This desire to read the text as principally a reversal of Ross's narrative, as Banerjee notes, misses the pertinent idea that although subverting western imperial scientific dominance is one aspect of the text, "the importance and the success of indigenous knowledge and tradition in this book are intertwined

with foreign interventions, and vice versa" (50). Consequently, reducing the novel to a mere reversal or correction of the official narrative would render it a similarly empiricist claim to authenticity as a counter truth claim, which would thereby remove the futurist sf and speculative narrative elements, which is to say, that this is not merely a novel of what can and can't be known, but also a novel of what *could* be known. But even the word "known" here is problematic, because it assumes the full presence of knowledge as such, thus denying the central axiom of counter-science: "to know something is to change it."

The introduction of the postcolonial, or even subaltern, concept of counter-science provides a critique for both the way that malaria was thought of and utilized in imperial medical discourses as well as the novel's more contemporary and even futurist critique of the scientific instrumentality of the International Water Council; in other words, it is a critique of the operations of knowledge itself and as such outlasts the strictly colonial setting of the novel and is projected into the future, thus presenting a lack of futurity or difference as a constituent part of the contemporary moment. Describing the conditions of a counter-science practice to Antar, Murugan surmises that the first principle of counter-science would have to involve enveloping one's self and one's work in secrecy:

> […] it wouldn't just have to be secretive about *what* it did (it couldn't hope to beat the scientists at that game anyway); it would also have to be secretive in what it did. It would have to use secrecy as a technique or a procedure. It would in principle have to refuse all direct communication, straight off the bat, because to communicate, to put ideas into language, would be to establish a claim to *know*—which is the first thing that a counter-science would dispute. (104-5)

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The novel, then, is attempting to subvert claims of knowledge, solidified into language and constituting a particular discourse, which is then ultimately made to function as a master-narrative and, due to the structural limits of such a hypostasizing and arresting process, a mode of oppression. Keeping this in mind provides for a unique critique of the role of Murugan as master detective, as the one who is going to set the record straight. Hence when Bishnupriya Ghosh argues that "Murugan simulates the task of an archivist in reconstructing this alternative history, in part garnered from seemingly unrelated medical discoveries, in part interpreted, and in part hypothesized […, and that] such imaginative historiography has been the mark of Ghosh's fiction and nonfiction" (203), we may need to interrogate that claim further. Indeed, as Murugan claims countless times throughout the novel, he is the world's foremost expert on Ronald Ross: "I've tracked him through every single one of those five hundred days [in Calcutta working on malaria]. I know where he was, what he did, which slides he looked at; I know what he was hoping to see and what he actually saw; I know who was with him, who wasn't with him. It's like I was looking over his shoulder" (52). However, Murugan's claim to know, far from merely reversing or countering Ross's initial claim, instead becomes enfolded in the practices of counter-science. Returning to the same conversation referred to above where Murugan is explaining the secretive operations of counter-science to Antar, he states:

> Not making sense is what it's about—conventional sense, that is. Maybe this
> other team started with the idea that knowledge is self-contradictory; maybe they
> believed that to know something is to change it, therefore in knowing something,
> you've already changed what you think you know so you don't really know it at
> all: you only know its history. Maybe they thought that knowledge couldn't begin
> without acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge. (105)

From here, Murugan speculates that this is why the counter-scientist group, led by Mangala, began working with and through Ross in the first place, as Murugan surmises that they must have hit a wall in their research into interpersonal transference; therefore, they were secretly providing Ross with what they knew in order to provoke a further mutation. However, following the logic of the novel, as Murugan comes upon this realization, what he realizes he knows has now changed and when repeating almost the same exact speech about the methods and practices of counter-science later to Urmila he has to admit that he is merely another pawn within the larger story: "Someone's trying to get us to make some connections; they're trying to tell us something, something they don't want to put together themselves, so that when we get to the end we'll have a whole new story" (217).

Consequently, what is most interesting about Murugan's research, then, is not necessarily the critique of the claim to power that formalized knowledge represents, but really the blind spots that this truth or any such counter-truth creates, that is, the lack of power that is generated and admitted by the claim to knowledge. This is underscored in the novel by the tropes of mixing science with archeology and anthropology; the practice of such disciplines becomes, in fact, the process of admitting that one doesn't know what something is and then creating a narrative around it in order to force it into a larger ideological structure, an existing commonsense or worldview. For example, the common recourse to narratives about human sacrifice in so-called primitive societies tells us much more about the anthropologists creating these stories and fitting pieces of evidence into them then it tells us about those societies supposedly under analysis).[135]

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[135] As Nelson, an anthropologist herself, writes, "Anthropology has always had an activist bent; knowing and changing (power and knowledge) are permeable boundaries within it. Social science insists that it is the most true account of the world, based on the methodology of 'I've

Similarly, as Murugan attempts to explain regarding counter-science's relation to knowledge, when something is known, it puts a limit on the object as well as the subject, it arrests the fields of possibility and understanding, thus creating logical blindspots and aporias in particular elements that by the codified logic of scientific discourse cannot *be* and, as a result, go unnoticed or are rejected as counterfactual or merely anomalous. Thus for the British colonial scientists, malaria can only be understood in the logic of imperialism and capitalism as a disease that although existing for millennia, only came under British scrutiny with the imperialist advances into the Indian subcontinent and Africa. As such, it is only known within the imperial narrative as a hindrance, as something that needs to be eradicated, and therefore its properties as a mechanism enabling "interpersonal transference" are occluded by the imperial mindset and the narrative constraints that this enforces.

The "power" evinced in counter-science, then, is not as a mere correction or reproof to the powers of Western science – a mere fixing of the math or correction of the equations as a superior truth claim. Rather, it is found in the counter-science's operation as a praxis of mutability. This comes in the form of denying the hypostasizing nature of the verb "to be" – that is, through the practice of "counter-science" nothing "is" as such – at least not in a way that can be ascertained by science and held in knowledge. Much as in Adorno's concept of negative dialectics, the empirical form of a concept is not its truth content, instead it is only a reflection of the limits that the larger context of the contemporary social structure places on that particular concept. All that is codified by the claim "to know," then, is a particular narrative history of how something has been conceived and how it *can* be perceived at a particular time within the governing ideological framework. Moreover, as in the hopes that surround the post-social

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been there.' Yet it constantly struggles with how to figure otherness, how to familiarize the utterly strange without domesticating it" (250).

singularity in McDonald's *Kirinya*, if you can access the narrative, you can change it, thus gaining control over reality. Ghosh's appellation of a "counter-science" is significant, then, in that it is not an "anti-science" that would work to undo or deny Western scientific practice, but is one that works as a secretive consort with it – furthering it, drawing on its findings and instilling further mutations and changes from these. In this sense it engenders a symbiotic relationship in that it spawns further mutations that affect the work of both Mangala and Ross, transforming both simultaneously. So finally what is perhaps most interesting, and what needs to be added to the accounts that focus on Ghosh's remapping of the one-sided presentation of Ross's narrative to include the native intelligences that it skips over, is that correcting the narrative is not really what is finally at stake as this emphasis ultimately reproduces the same kind of knowledge claim. Fleshing out the historical narrative of malaria represents merely another claim to know. Instead, the novum here, the real sf quality, is interpersonal transference and its implications for the logics of imperialism, colonialism, and identity, as well as the counterpoised logics of posthumanism and postnational desire.

It is the subaltern and postcolonial counter-science, then, that opens the way for the novel's real sf novum: interpersonal transference. In the terms of counter-science, interpersonal transference is a "genuine discovery." As Murugan explains, if an answer to a question is known ahead of time, then it cannot be considered to be a genuine discovery (217); rather, a genuine discovery would have to arrive unexpected and unannounced, that is, as Event. Hence, as both Ava and Ross attempt to fit their experiments and information-gathering into already established paradigms, neither can be said to have genuinely discovered or known anything. Interpersonal transference, on the other hand, was an accidental side effect of healing syphilis through the introduction of malaria by Mangala. Explaining its discovery and operation, Murugan tells

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Urmila that while administering the malarial cure for syphilis, she began to notice in her patients "what looked like strange personality disorders," which she eventually realized were caused by "a crossover of randomly assorted personality traits, from the malaria donor to the recipient" (249). Essentially, he argues that personality traits have genetic analogues in the form of the "Calcutta Chromosome" which has eluded western science because it is "different, non-standard, unique" (250). Moreover, the Calcutta Chromosome is only a chromosome "by analogy" in that it houses the biological coding of personality traits, but is not sexually transmitted nor a part of the standard pair of twenty-three chromosomes: "what we have here is a biological expression of human traits that is neither inherited from the immediate gene nor transmitted into it" (250). In fact, following the logic of the text, it is not particularly important to know exactly what it is or how it works. Instead of trying to figure it out, Mangala proceeded to experiment with it, prompting further mutations until finally stumbling onto the ability to transfer the entirety of one's selfhood into a new body, thus enabling one to prolong their life inevitably into the future. Due to a lack of scientific constraints, the impossibility of such a Calcutta Chromosome or a project of interpersonal transference would not hinder her from their discoveries.

It is this sense of interpersonal transference as transcending the finitude of human existence that underlies Suchitra Mathur's provocative claim that Ghosh raises Mangala to the level of "Cyborg Goddess." Taking the clay figurine that represents Mangala and her achievements, Mathur argues that "The figurine then, and by implication, counter science, may be seen as the Cyborg Goddess, as a mode of being that combines the artificial with the natural *and* the supernatural, that thus posits a 'third' identity for third-world (women) natives which combines the past with the future, the innocence of the organic with the knowledge of the technological" (135). For Mathur, it is thus the "supra-human" subject produced through the

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"genuine discovery" of interpersonal transference that is of significance, and this emphasis on

the supra-human emphasizes the continuing development of interpersonal transference as

moving beyond the body by the end of the novel by positing this third space as a "community

that transcends space and time and promises the bliss of ultimate homecoming" (136).[136]

Coming full circle and returning to the framing narrative of Antar and Ava that I began

with, we are able to ascertain that the "connections" that "[s]omeone's trying to get us to make"

(217) that Murugan speaks of are a further mutation of interpersonal transference into the realm

of cyberspace. This also then means wresting control of technology from the auspices of NGOs

or global conglomerates like the International Water Council and thus the de-subordination of

Antar to Ava. By the end of the novel it becomes clear that Mangala, alive in the twenty-first

century but in a different body with a different name, has been manipulating Ava and thus Antar,

sending Antar down back through the roots of the story, like Murugan before him, in order to put

it together in a slightly different way – thus effecting a further mutation. Although we are not

told how, it seems that by turning Ava's data-mining and cataloguing capabilities towards the

secret history of interpersonal transference, the counter-scientist group have managed to take

interpersonal transference into the realm of the digital, unhinging the coded personality

information from the biological form of the Calcutta Chromosome to the pure information world

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[136]
    While I tend to agree with the general outline of Mathur's argument, Shinn argues against the
liberatory aspects of the "Cyber Goddess." As such, he contends that the Cyborg Goddess as
providing a form of Third World liberation is at best suspect. For Shinn the more radical thesis is
not that Mangala is the new "Cyborg Goddess," but that it is "Mother Nature" that "continues to
be in charge of a complex generative process of constant mutation" thus instituting a "new state
of biological organicism" (152). In this light he argues that all the represented forces and sides in
the novel are ultimately indistinguishable in their motives and desires: "Mangala, the
International Water Council, Antar, and Murugan, then, all seek to possess the global circulation
of biopower; the first to obtain this technology will be able to seize the 'soul' of the people,
granting as well as taking away life, sacrificing and killing to achieve the advances of human
progress and a grand mystical union of postcolonial subjects in cyberspace" (157).

of cyberspace. Thus, the "crossing over" that had been the code for transferring one person into another's body now becomes a process of fully encoding oneself in this new "postcolonial cyberspace."[137] The great Utopian dream of the information age would thus come true – all information would be freely accessible and manipulable with a particularly postcolonial twist in that digitizing humanity as information would render the colonial imperial versions of knowledge as mastery moot and dead; all information would be known, sharable, and transferable and effectively dehistoricized and denationalized.

If we extrapolate from the plot to the form of the novel for a moment with its constant interjecting of new stories, new participants, ever greater and further connections that move the singularity of one person's life and their distinct narratives into ever greater contact with others, we can see the novel itself as a formal register of the counter-scientific technique, where interpersonal transference becomes a guiding formal metaphor for interconnectedness and the decentering of a singular line of knowledge that the novel undertakes with its formal structure. Along these lines, when teaching this novel as an example of postcolonial and postmodern narrative in an Introduction to Literary Studies course, one of my students mapped the inter-connections of all the novel's various characters in an attempt to order and unify the various strands of the plot. While this particular student understandably missed a few connections, it is worth taking a look at her resulting character map:

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[137] The term is Christopher Shinn's.

Figure 1 *The Calcutta Chromosome* Character Chart
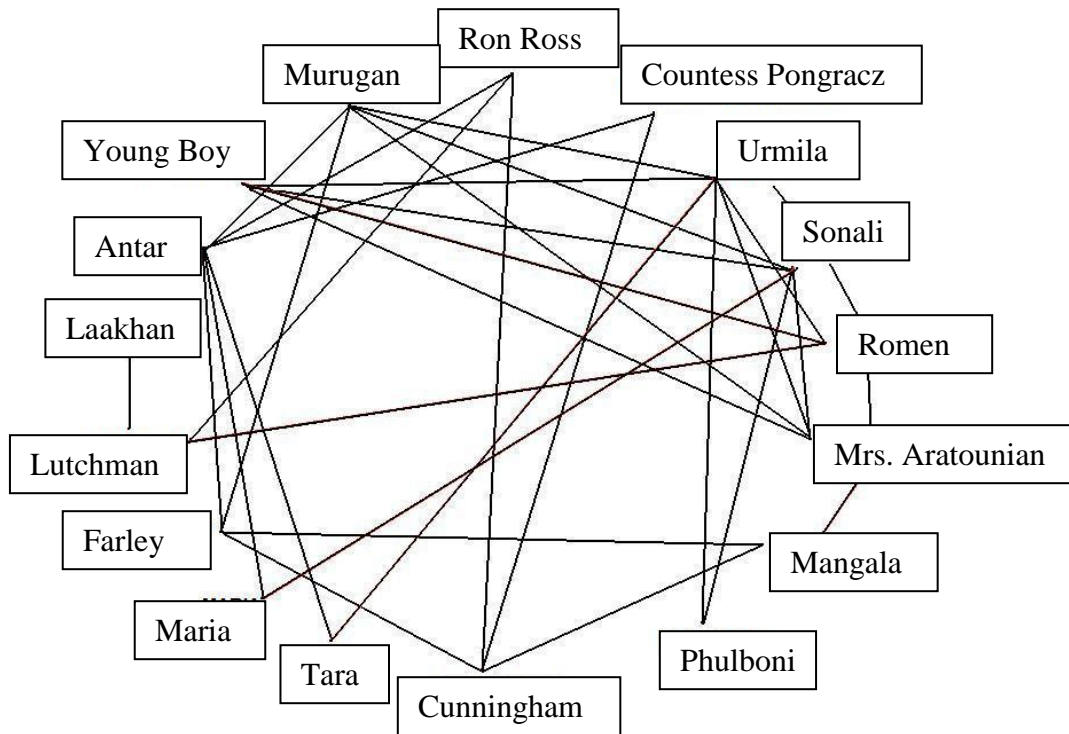
This diagram illustrates that what is being developed is something akin to a computer network where the totality of individual subjectivity is radically undermined by its entanglement with others. Or as my student found, the novel purposefully resists logics of linear ordering as well as novelistic devices like providing or raising one character to the level of a principle protagonist whose position of priority then unites and gives meaning to other characters, essentially subordinating the lesser characters to ancillary positions and making their stories and subjectivities meaningful only in relation to one particular character's master-narrative. By taking this strategy of decentering to the realm of cyberspace and interpersonal transference, the novel is suggesting that the unity of this web-like structure of interconnection could only be re-established under the auspices of total knowledge; in other words, in the form of the singularity augured by the next mutation in interpersonal-transference. Hence, the novel's own inability to communicate the unity of the narrative – this is only provided for Antar after he "crosses over." *The Calcutta Chromosome*, then, does not only decenter its major characters to form some kind

of enclave in which every voice is given its due, or proven to be radically contingent. Instead, as seen through the web-like structure above that is then reconstituted in interpersonal transference's creation of a "postcolonial cyberspace," the novel reinscribes a new totality that brings all the fractured and decentered strands of the narrative into a new unity and does so in a manner that could only be referred to in terms of the singularity as the conditions of the Godhead: to know everything in its actuality, past, present and future.

In this light, we might therefore need to step back from installing Mangala as cyborg goddess, who would then merely replace Ross as lone genius within an individualized narrative, which, as Shinn contends, would make her comparable to the International Water Council, Ross or any other entity that "seek[s] to possess the global circulation of biopower" (157). Instead, the novel sets its aims higher; as Murugan explains to Urmila, "See, for them, writing 'The End' to this story is the way they hope to trigger the quantum leap into the next," only "they're waiting on a technology that'll make it easier and quick to deliver their story to whoever they're keeping it for: a technology that'll be a lot more efficient in mounting it than anything that's available right now" (218, 219). For that end to come to fruition requires a technology that is not only more capable of carrying and transferring information than the Calcutta Chromosome, but indeed surpasses the dictates of biology and discrete individuality altogether. As such, Ghosh's novel suggests that tackling the difficulty of the place for a subaltern knowledge and indeed a voice means a radical reconception of humanity and its discourse beyond merely creating a new subject position or third space within the already existing social-political stratum.

Thus, when we arrive at the end of the novel and return to the framing narrative with Antar and Ava, we actually return to the beginning of the story, but instead of learning it through scraps and documents and half-passed down stories, Antar's consciousness merges with all of the

other characters in a virtual realm that Ava has somehow created out of the digitalization of all of the various characters' minds, stories and fragments of evidence – and which is then kept apart from the reader. The novel ends on the promise of the completability of the story, of the totality of information itself, as the various threads that comprise the novel are being communicated to Antar, who is hooked up to Ava's "SimVis" virtual reality headgear: "There were voices everywhere now, in his room, in his head, it was as though a crowd of people was in the room with him. They were saying: 'We're with you; you're not alone; we'll help you across.' He sat back and sighed like he hadn't sighed in years" (311). The suggestion is that they have found their better technology and not only have they surpassed death and "overcome the heterosexual bottleneck of Darwinian reproduction" as Diane Nelson asserts (260), but have achieved a post-biological posthumanity, where there is no longer any such a thing as discrete individualities, classes of knowledge or singular voices as represented at the end of the novel with Antar's crossing over into "postcolonial cyberspace." Significantly, though the story will unfold in its entirety for Antar as he merges with the others, this resolution is left unrevealed to the reader, thus accentuating the gulf between the transformative posthumanity proffered by interpersonal transference in the novel and the reader's own reliance on the regulated dissemination of information, and therefore highlighting the structures of power that continue to exceed the practices of everyday life in the contemporary moment.

In the end, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, like the Chaga series, uses the genre of sf to decenter visions of the future from the hegemony of western discourse by subverting the imperial empiricist logic that dominates scientific practice and that handcuffs the use of technology. The novel offers instead a radical sense of possibility that could ensue if they were to be unfettered. While the novel begins from a particularly Indian postcolonial locale and thus could perhaps be

said to institute a particularly postcolonial Indian vision of the future, it ultimately wishes to break with the tyranny of nationalities and bounded nation-states altogether in favor of a postnational supra-global domain of pure information and interconnectedness. *The Calcutta Chromosome's* globality is really the transcendence of the globe itself and is thus without nationality, without nations or bodies. Rather, it is pure information in a "postcolonial cyberspace" as the arrival of an Event beyond current concepts of humanity or even current governing notions of reality. In this sense, Murugan's first invocation of the inevitable death and transcendence involved with knowing everything echoes throughout the text, revealing the cross pollination of power, tyranny and transformative possibility encased in the dissemination and control of information:

> "Let me put it like this, then," said Murugan. "Do you think everything than can be known should be known?"
>
> "Of course," said Antar. "I don't see why not."
>
> "All right," said Murugan, dipping his spoon in his bowl. "I'll turn a few pages for you; but remember, it was you who asked. *It's your funeral*." (59, my emphasis)

Conclusion

As Mark Bould contends, "SF world-building is typically distinguished from other fictional world-building, whether fantastic or not, by the manner in which it offers, however unintentionally, a snapshot of the structures of capital" (Bould 4). Significantly, the two novels under discussion in this chapter attempt to imagine new worlds that transcend the structural limits placed by late capitalist global Empire on postcolonial nations. With the backdrop of a

potential water crisis looming in Ghosh's novel and the Chaga's radical eradication of scarcity and labor in relation to necessity as the determinate factor of social organization, both novels certainly explore the vicissitudes of a global form of capitalism that manages to place a Coke in every city, hamlet or village, but is seen as structurally incapable of providing for, or more likely, that its stewards are ideologically merely uninterested in the equitable global distribution of or access to the materials necessary to maintain life. Central to these novels, then, is a control over futuricity and futurity and what earlier anti-imperial nationalists referred to through the discourse of national liberation and national self-determination – hence each novels' emphasis not only on necessity in its material forms, but on information and knowledge, on being able to shape one's own reality and life free from the constraints of colonialism or Empire. In this sense, they share postcolonial nationalism's vocation of emancipation, autonomy and self-determination, even if doing so means imagining futures that are best coded as post-national. In decentering the western grip on visions of futuricity, they ultimately reveal a certain utopian postcolonial longing for form – for possibilities, unwritten maps and modes of social organization and being that demand the seemingly impossible.

> And let us also remember that the nation-state is, for better or worse, the political institution which has most efficacy and legitimacy in the world as it is. Modernity reproduces itself in nation-states, there are few signs of it happening otherwise. To reject nationalism absolutely or to refuse to discriminate between nationalisms is to accede to a way of thought by which intellectuals – especially postcolonial intellectuals – cut themselves off from effective political action.
>
> – Simon During (139)

National Specters

Throughout this dissertation I've examined the ways that different writers, from different nationalities, working in different genres have appealed to nation-ness in a utopian register, where this utopianism varies between a form of closure (the nation made fully present, completed, and here and now as in *England, England*) and a form of possibility (a desire for futurity as in *Petals of Blood*). In this latter form, nationalism, in the ideals of Frantz Fanon, Partha Chatterjee, or Fredric Jameson must be part of a wider project, a politics beyond the independence of the nation-state, otherwise, in Jameson's words, come independence, nationalism will be found to be "without content" ("Globalization" 469). Such is the case for the unnamed protagonist in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* as he finds national independence to be empty and without meaning, where this lack, as I've already suggested, stems from the failure of nationalist politics to attach itself to the internationalism that Fanon calls for, or the larger project of "liberation" to put it in Edward Said's terms.

But novels, of course, are not political theory and consequently, aside perhaps from the more stringent postcolonial nationalist *Bildungromane*, nation-ness can be a slippery term to pin down in some of the novels under discussion, even as I maintain that it functions as a particularly powerful *ideologeme*. Part of this slipperiness is related to the very modalities of nation-ness themselves (the nation-state, nationalism, a national), which are, as Benedict Anderson so stridently reminds us, the fabric of the nation as imagined community. And, while I've been concentrating on the utopian registers that underpin nationalist discourse (including the desires for postnationalism) and the sorts of formal moves that push towards closure or possibility, this slipperiness is also compounded by nationalism's vacillating tendencies and complex temporality. In a manner of speaking, the nation neither exists concretely or absolutely, nor does it not exist; instead, to paraphrase Timothy Brennan, it is lacked, desired, invoked, and imagined, and it represents both continuity and futurity. In this, there is something ghostly about the nation that resembles Derrida's discourse on Hamlet's father's ghost that begins his *Specters of Marx*. This national ghostliness and its resulting untimeliness is perhaps best evinced by the passage from Nairn discussed early on in the introduction to this dissertation, and so in the spirit of conjuring, I bring it forth again:

> […] through nationalism the dead are awakened, this is the point – seriously awakened for the first time. All cultures have been obsessed by the dead and placed them in another world. Nationalism rehouses them in this world. Through its agency the past ceases being 'immemorial': it gets memorialised into time present, and so acquires a future. For the first time it is meaningfully projected on to the screen of futurity. (*Faces* 4)

While the dead are not necessarily ghosts, here they are approached as such, as they are brought

forth to embody a spirit which, when awakened and properly "rehoused" through the national

invocation, authorizes the present's future. What can be glimpsed here is a certain untimeliness

that resembles Derrida's pronouncement that "time is out of joint" in which he reminds us that

the figure of the specter unsettles temporality. What Derrida has to say about Hamlet's father's

ghost can be productively applied to the ghost of the nation's past invoked by Nairn: "The

revenant is going to come. It won't be long. But how long it is taking. Still more precisely,

everything begins in the imminence of a re-apparition, but a reapparition of the specter as

apparition *for the first time in the play*" (*Specters* 2). Although not entirely commensurate with

the hauntology that Derrida develops, it is the dead's reapparition – their appearing for the first

time as the nation's dead – and their "rehousing" in the present that seems to arrest and solidify

conceptions of nationalism. The disjunctive temporalities of the past, the present and the future

are all thus resolved and coalesce in Anderson's, by way of Benjamin's, empty homogenous time

of the nation.

Yet, as revealed by the invocation and conjuring of the dead, nationalism is not, or at

least not only, about who we are or were, but also about who we would like to be. In this, it is a

desire for a collectivity, a desire to know one's self among others and against "Others" in one's

place among Others' places; in a word, it cleaves. It takes the appearance of this ghostly figure of

the nation, invoked as authorization and authenticity, to reappear in the present as the promise

for the future, for the national "play" to come into being. Nationalism, then, floats between death

and futurity, constancy and radical break; it is simultaneously regressive and progressive. In this

sense, it is a figure of modernity's rupture with the past while at the same time it also seeks to

enshrine the immemorial past in the historical, ongoing present. It is ambivalent in the truest

sense of the word, that is to say, not as apathetic but as countervailing, oscillating and ultimately, contradictory. This need to call forth and produce the dead, to properly rehouse them from "time immemorial" into the properly present goes a long way towards explaining nationalism's relationship to novel writing: nationalism needs, in a sense, to parade its dead, to substantiate them as living proof for the present. As Szeman and Brennan suggest, part of substantiating the nation, then, is writing it, summoning it forth from its ghostly dimensions into the inter-mediate realm of the novel, where the novel then becomes both means and ends in the form of a written tradition of the nation: it becomes the secret history, as Balzac asserts. Thus every novel in that tradition risks becoming a last word as *this*, it announces, *is* the state of the nation.

National Speculations

As a result of this "untimeliness," writing about the writing of the nation is a tricky thing; doing so risks reconciling its ambivalent nature so that one takes sides and becomes simply for or against nationalism, rooting for those Kenyan nationalists in Illmorog while disparaging Sir Jack and Martha and their various white-washed Englands. What remains impossible to escape, then, as with most movements towards collectivity, is nationalism's desire for power. This is most clear in the appellation of the nation-state as the replacement for other forms of political collectivity – kingdoms and realms as much as colonies or protectorates, as well as nationalism's compatibility with imperialism, as Kumar contends. If prior to the nationalist revolutions of the last few centuries the peoples that were held in atomistic relations to one another while under the complete authority of the state were generally conceived of as the state's property, then nationalism became a way of challenging this, of attempting to repossess the state as the people's

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common property. As Arif Dirlik claims in an interview about nationalism's role in providing the grounds for the development of Chinese anarchism:

> While we obviously are concerned with many of the negative manifestations of nationalism, it is a rather radical idea at its origins. It calls for both a new conception of state, a new conception of the relationship between state and society, and a new conception of the political subject as citizen. In that sense, it breaks radically with earlier forms of political consciousness that rested legitimacy in the emperor and rendered the subjects into passive political subjects, whereas nationalism called for active political subjects. ("Dimensions")

This desire for political power, in the form of the national collective that makes demands on the state, that calls for the state to work in the interests of the people, is often today seen as outmoded given the rise of multinational and transnational conglomerates and the general fears over the loss of national sovereignty in global late capitalism. Paradoxically, however, this may actually fuel the engine for nationalism's continuation rather than its demise, as I've suggested with Barnes' *England, England*. Or, in a similar context, as globalization spreads on a wave of free-market Utopian ideology of deregulation, to quote Jameson, "Here, the defense of the national suddenly becomes the defense of the welfare state itself" (470). It is the originary radicality of nationalism, referenced by Dirlik, that the periods of decolonization and globalization have called on, and as such, it has been invoked as part of a larger anti-imperial or anti-neoimperial discourse. Yet doing so cannot exorcise the ambivalent oscillations of nationalism. In this, it is imperative, then, to re-read nationalism, to recall its pitfalls and its contradictions, remembering that although the nation-state "remains the only concrete terrain and

framework for political struggle" against the near universal dominance of global late capitalism, this is more of a lament and resignation than a hearty endorsement ("Globalization" 470).

National *Apologias*

Marxism and the Left have had a long and difficult history with the nation. That the nation remains a site of political intervention against global late capitalism is of cold comfort to most us on the Left. As the nation occupies some sort of strange pivotal point, teetering amongst the utopian dreams of postnationalism and the dystopian nightmares of the fully administered world of Empire, it provides for a necessarily ambivalent relationship. Reflecting this ambivalence many of us find ourselves, like Bruce Robbins or Fredric Jameson, begrudgingly fighting for the maintenance of the welfare-state, itself a deeply nationalist project, while simultaneously decrying its bourgeois liberal limits. As such, we struggle against language, mixing conceptions and metaphors as in Jameson's "nationalist passion in [the] Gaulist sense" or Fanon's "national consciousness which is not nationalism" or my own unstable "international nationalisms," which all simultaneously evoke a "spirit" of nationalism while attempting to reject it.

Writing about the writing of the nation, then, remains an important task since the forms of nation-ness persist as the lens that politics and collectivity are still most often thought through, whether in the realization that Hardt and Negri's call for universal citizenship replays much the same political structures as found in the earliest nationalist revolutions, or Simon Gikandi's assertion that Rushdie's postnationalism does little to exorcise the materiality and *patria* of nation-states themselves. In other words, despite so many pronouncements to the opposite effect, the nation-state and nationalism do not seem to be going away, at the very least as conceptual memes or as ideologemes. Due to the radically shifting and unstable contours of the present −

witnessed by national and international financial collapse, and the current political uprisings in the Arab world, for just two hasty examples – the role of the nation-state is again being re-assessed and rethought. Indeed, in a recent article in *New Left Review*, Perry Anderson, echoing Jameson, has argued that if the recent Arab revolts are to succeed in really changing the nature of their political states, then they need to embrace a form of anti-Americanism as anti-imperial nationalism. Moreover, this nationalism cannot be merely about replacing one set of rulers with another, but must instead take the form of an Arab internationalism that seeks to change the contours of the global world-system itself; that is, nationalism must be part of a larger politics in a way that once again confronts us with a call for Fanon's international nationalism.

At the risk of seeming to authorize one form of nationalism over another and thus to bring forth the condemnation of all its faults, as surely as *all* nationalisms have their faults, I'd like to conclude on a reconsideration of the following passage from Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood*. Here we find not the simple rehousing of the dead, but instead an engagement with them, evoking their identity and their non-identity, which allows for their untimeliness persist:

> […] we must not preserve our past as a museum: rather we must study it critically, without illusions, and see what lessons we can draw from it in today's battle-field of the future and present. But to worship it – no. Maybe I used to do it: but I don't want to continue worshipping in the temples of a past without tarmac roads, without electric cookers, a world dominated by slavery to nature. (323)

What's of interest here is the critical turn towards the past, towards heritage and inheritance, and the realization that its ideals are not necessarily our ideals. There is a disjunct between past traditions, present desire and what the future may bring that cannot finally be reconciled in the empty homogenous time of the nation. So finally, if nationalisms and nation-states are to persist,

and it seems that they are, then let them be critical, heretical and untimely, let them recall what

Adorno refers to as "the consciousness of *non-identity*" (55) and not the museumification, or the

sacramental rehousing of the dead that confines the future to the inviolable traditions of the past.

That is, perhaps, what is to be gained from the writing on the writing of the nation between

decolonization and globalization.

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