

English Identity After Britain: Restructuring Englishness in the 20th Century

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how writers in early 20th-century Britain grappled with nationalism, particularly its relationship to English national identity. I analyze how authors during this pivotal moment in British history attempt to disentangle or redefine concepts of patriotism, nationalism, and national identity. I explore the tensions between ethnic and civic forms of nationalism and how authors navigated this divide. Grounded in critical nationalism studies drawing on the work of theorists like Benedict Anderson, Michel Foucault, Craig Calhoun, and Stuart Hall, I conduct close readings of both fiction and non-fiction, focusing on how writers engage with ideas of Englishness. Chapter One considers how George Orwell attempted to harness national identification for left-wing politics—with particular attention to his attempt to distinguish between “patriotism” and “nationalism”—and examines the difficulties of such an approach. In chapter two, I explore how Virginia Woolf rejected both patriotism *and* nationalism, in favour of a cosmopolitan project that retained national identity while also promoting a “global citizen” ethos. In chapter three, I discuss J.R.R. Tolkien’s focus on creating a national myth for England, separating Englishness from the larger imperial category of “Britishness.” This chapter also explores Tolkien’s use of fantasy to enact what he called a “recovery” for national identity, looking backward in the style of Romantic Nationalism but using it progressively. Lastly, chapter four turns to Scottish and Irish case studies via the work of Hugh MacDiarmid and James Joyce, in order to provide a point of comparison for the English writers’ projects and the complex relation between their versions of “Englishness” and anticolonial nationalisms from elsewhere in the home empire. I argue that while the English authors studied might not have been entirely successful in articulating an English national identity separate from imperial Britishness, their efforts demonstrate a potential for a progressive

use of national identity. These writers were aware of nations as rhetorical constructs. They sought to use this understanding to cultivate an ethics of care at home rather than a defensive or expansionist attitude abroad. The work of these authors demonstrates how literature can shape, critique, and reimagine national identity. Completely separating national identity from its problematic aspects may not always be possible or desirable. While acknowledging that risk, this study shows that national identity can potentially be mobilized for progressive purposes and to foster an ethics of care.

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Dedication

To Madeline Wright, Jim Burgess, and Bob Cameron for showing me what it means to hard-working, resilient, and brave. I will always be chasing the example you have set.

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Introduction: Interrogating National Identity

In examining stories that are concerned with the formation of national identities, a recurring tension emerges between the desire to envision a future with ambition and the inclination to reflect on the past with reverence. While it might seem like we can do both of these things at once, this tension between a malleable future and a fixed past represents an underlying contradiction in how we conceptualize the nation: do we primarily look backward or forward? Is national feeling about forging the bonds of community or policing a community's boundaries? Having a national identity can mean an attachment to the past—to where we come from, or to a community's shared history. This backward-looking tendency can be compatible with progressive, liberal-democratic principles, but on the other hand it can also be compatible with a dangerous chauvinism that fosters racism and xenophobia. Moreover, some forms of national identity seem like elements of everyday experience or personal identity, while others are more explicitly weaponized by nationalist political movements. While it may seem easy to separate the benign forms of individual national pride from more harmful forms of nationalism, the field of critical nationalism studies suggests that the distinction is not as easy to make. Indeed, as Tom Nairn and Craig Calhoun have argued, many of the impulses that drive an attachment to a place, or a civic ethos, are similar to—if not the same as—the impulses that shape nationalist ideologies and political movements (Calhoun 4). Therefore, the question has become whether, to use Eric Hobsbawm's words, we can separate nationalism as an ideological project "constructed essentially from above" from national identity as an everyday phenomenon rooted in the "hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" (10).

That entanglement is one of the primary subjects nationalism studies took up in the second half of the 20th century. This dissertation builds on that work but also argues that earlier, in the first half of the 20th century, literary writers had already identified a similar problem. The writers this dissertation studies were eager to distinguish a more subtle and potentially useful form of national identity from the harmful forms of nationalism they witnessed at home and abroad. In many cases—most explicitly in George Orwell’s attempted distinction between “nationalism” and “patriotism”—a rejection of nationalist ideologies did not mean jettisoning national identity altogether.¹ Instead, it provoked a search for more practicable models of national identity; ones that could be used to mobilize the national character politically without the unacceptable impacts of chauvinistic nationalism. In the chapters that follow, I will examine several authors in England who joined that search, whether obliquely (like Virginia Woolf) or overtly (like Orwell and J.R.R. Tolkien). I will also explore how these English efforts relate to those from the home nations, especially in the quite different situations of Ireland and Scotland. In this introduction, I will first outline how nationalism studies have sought to parse out different paradigms for national identity, such as ethnic vs. civic models of nationalism, or the related distinction between seeing the nation as an ancient tradition or a modern invention. A key distinction in the history of nationalism, I will show, arises between a model of the nation on the one hand as essentialized, traditional, and exclusive; and, on the other hand, as modernizing, malleable, and inclusive. After surveying the grounds of this distinction in studies of nationalism by Hobsbawm, Nairn, and others, this introduction will show how that original schism has persisted into more recent nationalism studies, with many parallel divides coming to structure the ongoing debates in that field. I will first survey the scholarly conversation about what constitutes

¹ Ben Clarke argues that Orwell’s “emphasis on patriotism in this [post-war] period can.... be identified with the defence of an England that retained civil liberties eradicated in occupied Europe” (98).

a nation—what a nation is as a unit—and how language and art are vehicles through which people create the nation. With a turn to literary studies, particularly scholarship on literary modernism, I will explain why the early 20th century is a crucial period of change in English national identity.² During this period of change for British imperial identity, in particular, many authors became preoccupied with the project of reconciling the divides at the heart of national identity—even if such an effort may be futile. Finally, I will clarify the scope of my study, namely how my primary case study authors—George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, and J.R.R. Tolkien—took on the project of creating a new form of Englishness for the 20th century, and (in the final chapter) how those authors’ work compares with other anti-imperial reconfigurations of national identity by Hugh MacDiarmid in Scotland and James Joyce in Ireland. In my argument, those more clearly decolonial projects provided a template English writers could use to position national identity as an alternative to rather than as a support for empire.

My examination of English national identity during the 20th century is not just an attempt to understand a moment in history; I believe that this study is relevant today as it can help us understand contemporary dynamics of national identity formation, which is especially useful in the ongoing process of decolonization. By looking at this era of literature, we gain an insight into what I argue is a one of the most important shifts in British imperial identity and that of the home nations of the U.K. and the efforts of some of its most famous authors to make sense of that moment. My hope is to make a contribution to the current discourses surrounding nationalism, imperialism, and postcolonialism, offering an understanding of how narratives of national

² Note: throughout this dissertation I will be using English to refer to the nation of England and the character people who reside there, and British to refer to the political unit of the British Empire and what we today refer to as the United Kingdom. It is important to make this distinction not only for factual accuracy, but also, as I argue, because the difference between how these two separate yet intertwined nationalisms work is emblematic of the contradictions I explore in this dissertation.

identity evolve, devolve, and intersect with the world around them. This dissertation will explore how authors like Orwell, Tolkien, and Woolf embarked on the process of understanding their changing Englishness in response to the shifting politics of the 20th century, leading the way to a reimagining of national identity that attempts to reconcile itself with former ties to the empire. By juxtaposing their work with the decolonial projects of Hugh MacDiarmid and James Joyce, I demonstrate both the interconnectedness and the separateness of national identity across the British Isles. I believe that these alternative narratives of nationhood are important to understand in our own context today as we begin to make sense of our own national identities in the 21st century as the world begins to leave behind the status quo established in the 20th century. In our current context in 2024, this dissertation becomes more pertinent amidst specific events that epitomize resurgent nationalism, geopolitical shifts, and the legacies of imperialism. For example, the rise of populist nationalist leaders in Europe and North America leading to Brexit in the United Kingdom and the presidency of Donald Trump in the United States have ignited debates on sovereignty, immigration, and national identity. This dissertation also contributes to the ongoing conversation led by scholars, activists, and public intellectual in the field.

As I examine the strategies by which English writers reconfigured national identity in this way, the main questions I seek to answer are: why do authors who repudiate nationalism, and who are in many cases vocal critics of “the nation” or of “Englishness,” so often seek to rehabilitate Englishness by other means? How did they seek to construct Englishness in new, less pernicious ways? Moreover, in doing so, were they escaping the logic of nationalism, or merely repeating it by other means? I will focus specifically on works³ by my chosen authors in which

³ I say “works” rather than “texts” because, as James McGann has noted, “all texts are embodied phenomena...By studying texts through a distinction drawn between linguistic and bibliographical codes, we gain at once a more global and more uniform view of texts and the processes of textual production. Body is not bruised to pleasure soul”

they directly or indirectly engage with the idea of Englishness, and I will consider both fiction and non-fiction as the sites of cultural production where authors help form, imagine, or reinforce national identity. I do not consider non-fiction work that deals with national identity as a more direct or explicit “key” that would unlock the meaning of a fiction. Instead, both types of writing—especially in performative public writing such as Orwell's essays and non-fiction books—are sites of cultural production and imagining the nation.

Most importantly, I will also explore how each author attempts to deal with the contradictions of nationalism. I am referring here both to temporal contradictions (such as whether the nation was understood as an ancient institution or a modern invention), as well as the problem of the potential for tremendous harm to be done in the nation's name. Each literary assertion of national identity must deal with the fact that the distinction between “good” appeals to national feeling and “bad” ones is razor-thin, and any slippage can be catastrophic. With these liabilities in mind, this dissertation does not presume that any of the authors considered are entirely successful in creating an English identity separate from imperial Britishness.⁴ Nor do I mean to suggest that any of their appeals to national feeling entirely avoids the pitfalls of harmful nationalism. Instead, I mean to demonstrate that the Englishness these authors endeavour to create—or to “recover,” as Tolkien puts it (19)—is geared toward creating a livable future rather than defending an imagined past. The idea of the nation appeals to Orwell, Woolf, and Tolkien not because it seems to be a self-evident or natural category, but for precisely the opposite reason: because of their self-awareness that nations are rhetorical constructs, and their conviction

(14). Referring to the “text” emphasizes the specific shape of the writing but referring to “work” emphasizes the literary work as a product of human labour and social relations.

⁴ Krishan Kumar defines Britishness: “There is what we might call institutional Britishness, the result of living under or with institutions that have long been defined by their Britishness. This includes the British Monarchy, the British Parliament, the British Armed Forces, the British Civil Service, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and many parts of the British Welfare State” (357).

that a national imaginary can be used for other, better purposes, such as to cultivate an ethics of care at home rather than a defensive or expansionist attitude abroad. It may or may not be true that Englishness, or any national identity, can ever be perfectly or unproblematically constructed, but I argue that these authors tried to do so. In those attempts, there are positives and negatives, and I hope to show how each of them attempts to resist prior, damaging forms of nationalism by forging a new, reimagined model of English national identity more suited to the international stage of the 21st century.

NO TRUE SCOTSMAN: ETHNIC VS CIVIC MARKERS OF THE NATION

One of the biggest tensions in conceptions of nationalisms is the tension between the nation as a civic unit and the nation as an ethnic unit. As Enlightenment-era Europe became disenchanted with the divine right of Kings as a basis for forming a state, people began to look for other reasons to call themselves part of a national group. While cleaving to certain political ideals can be the basis to form a new nation, as if from scratch—what Eric Hobsbawm has called a “democratic-revolutionary” (22) nation—some of the earliest studies of nationalism were torn between seeing nations as strategic alliances and as longstanding, essentialized outgrowths of ethnic groups. Ethnonationalism was increasingly recognized as a racist idea and rightly condemned, but the rifts in theories of the nation persisted into the 20th century and set the terms of the debate that the authors I study in this dissertation wrote within, navigated, and pushed against. Here, I will briefly outline the relevant criticism on the ethnic/civic divide and how it impacts this study.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), a Genevan philosopher and commentator on the French Revolution, is a complex and controversial figure in the field of nationalism studies due

to many scholars tracing his political thought to later atrocities committed by nationalist governments in the 20th century. Rousseau was deeply concerned with how to mobilize a "politics of sympathy," like national identification, in order to "regulate and redirect psychic dispositions" to form a solid and ideologically unified nation (Maloy 235). However, we must also consider Steven T. Engel's claim that, though Rousseau's ideas certainly helped pave the way for the excesses and abuses of modern nationalism, it is evident in his writings that he would not have approved of those outcomes, and that they mobilized his proposed tactics to different ends (516). Further, Rousseau's work, the first to foreground the politics of identification "rooted in our natural capacity for pity," is foundational to the concept of "imagined communities" that will later become an essential concept in the field (515). Rousseau is primarily concerned with mobilizing nationalistic features and feelings for political ends. He experiments with the question: can the force of national identification be used to take a folk (cultural) unit and make it become a unit of political power? For Rousseau, different identifications are constituted through shared cultural stories but can still be mobilized for political ends—whatever those ends may be.

Writing at the same time as Rousseau, German philosopher Johan Gottfried Herder (1744-1801) is one of the earliest thinkers who saw the nation as a unit held together by the elements we would now call "culture." Unlike Rousseau, who was concerned with how to harness that unit politically, Herder is concerned with the actual cultural process of forming that unit in the first place. His work on folksongs was among the first to identify a "collection of practices" that traced music and speech as a site of the formation of human identity (Herder 57). As Phillip Bohlman argues, the intersection between folklore and "ethnomusicology" laid the foundations for the idea that a particular group of people living in the same place and sharing similar traits could solidify that identity through cultural practice and storytelling (32). For

Herder, the folksong is an important site of this practice. Further, Herder is interesting because of the distinction he makes between the “nation” as a cultural body and the nation-state as a political unit, with the former being of primary interest to him and the latter being the source of trouble, in his opinion. According to Frederick M. Barnard, Herder was “hostile to all states, and merely conceded that, though they were also artifacts, nation-states could be considered the least natural” (10). For Herder, the political formation of the nation is less interesting than the cultural formation of a nation. That national culture, for Herder, represented “the mode of overall thinking [that] was more similar *within* nations than *between* nations. Indeed, it was essentially a certain *consciousness* of having ways of seeing and feeling in common that made people think of themselves as *belonging*” (10). Of course, framing nations as quasi-natural units of this sort also came to characterize the ethnic nationalist projects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The ongoing debate about Herder’s relation to later totalitarian or anti-imperial, antiracist movements is a testament to the tension this dissertation is studying: the nation is a unit that can be mobilized for contradictory purposes.⁵

Ernest Renan (1823-1892) was a French scholar who strongly influenced nationalism studies’ critiques of ethnicity as a basis for national identification. Unlike others, he was not primarily concerned with the functions of state and internationalism. Instead, he felt too much emphasis was placed on the nation as constituted by linguistic and ethnic similarities between peoples. In contrast, Renan rejects race and ethnicity as nation-building identity markers and chooses to focus on something he calls the “spiritual principle,” which, despite its echo of Herder on the “spirit” of a nation or “*Volksgeist*,” Renan emphasizes as a choice rather than a fixed marker of identity (Renan 10). One of his most famous works, “What is a Nation?” went so far as

⁵ On Herder as a precursor to totalitarianism, see Richard Shorten, *Modernism and Totalitarianism*. On Herder’s anti-imperial foundations see John O. Noyes, *Herder: Aesthetics Against Imperialism*.

to propose that "Forgetting, and I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation" (3). By this, he means that for a nation to form and endure, its inhabitants/citizens must forget many aspects of their history because the idea of "nation" is a cultural construct, and so many historical facts would contradict the myth of a unified people. He further writes: "Unity is always brutally established. The reunion of northern and southern France was the result of a campaign of terror and extermination that continued for nearly a century" (3). For Renan, true unity is built by joining people and removing those who refuse to assimilate (he does not advocate for this practice, he merely notices that it occurs). Not only must nations forget the violence of their origin to flourish, but they must also forget the realities of their differences in ethnolinguistic identity:

A nation's essence is that all its members have a great deal in common and have forgotten many things

. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgund, an Alain, a Taifala, or a Visigoth. Every French citizen has forgotten St. Bartholomew's Day and the thirteenth-century massacres in the Midi. Only ten families in France can furnish proof of Frankish origin; even such proof is essentially defective due to the thousand unknown pairings that can derange every genealogical system. (3-4)

Here, Renan articulates why he rejects race and language as essential nation markers. For Renan, if a French citizen looked long and hard enough, they would find that their ethnic and linguistic unit, or Herderian *Volk*, is much more specific and unique than "French." For the nation to work, that person must forget that fact and forge a different, broader affiliation. Renan's final and most eloquent expression of what he feels makes up a nation is:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which, properly speaking, are the same constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past; the other is the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present consent, the desire to live together, and the desire to continue to invest in the heritage that we have jointly received. Messieurs, man does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the outcome of a long past of efforts, sacrifices, and devotions. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate: our ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past with great men and glory (I mean true glory) is the social capital upon which the national idea rests. These are the essential conditions of being a people: having common glories in the past and a will to continue them in the present, having made great things together and wishing to make them again. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices that one has committed and the troubles that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one passes on. The Spartan chant, “We are what you were; we will be what you are”, is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every fatherland.

(10)

Here, we can see division forming in the varying theories of nationhood developing in the 19th century between minds like Herder and Fichte and more future-oriented nationalisms like Renan’s. A key development is that for Renan, there is not a French race, nor is speaking the French language a prerequisite, but there is a French soul and a French character that forms in the French person through shared memories and common goals with other French people. For that reason, Renan is crucial to the idea that nations are strategic modern inventions, and his ideas have links to later ideas about “progressive” civic nationalisms as well as reactionary

nationalisms that saw the “national spirit” as the ideology a reactionary state must compel its subjects to adopt.

On that note, I must also mention that though Renan rejected ethnicity as a constituting principle of nationhood, he was also a deeply racist man who espoused antisemitism in his speeches and writings (Arvidsson 107). This racism, despite his rejection of ethnonationalism, makes him a complex and fraught figure in the tradition of nationalism studies. Renan's contribution will relate most directly to my study of J.R.R. Tolkien and the concept of "imagined communities"—that the nation is something created through an intentional act of forgetting; and that people must all subscribe to the same unifying myth or story to create that nation. Further, it is more important that the myth comports with the people's idea of their national character than its historical accuracy. If history should prove contradictory, one agrees to forget, and the nation collectively ignores that which would conflict with the story. Renan is one of the first to foreground this idea of "national character" as more important than racial or linguistic practices. Collective belief, for Renan, is critical to national identity. These ideas resonate with Tolkien, who used fantasy as a genre that allowed for "forgetting" some of the actualities of present-day Britishness to recover a more important past Englishness. This dissertation is not about approving or disapproving of these national constructions. Rather, it is about exploring how modernist authors sought a new way of seeing (or seeing again) what nations are in the first place.

From this early history of nationalism studies in the 18th century, the topic is picked up again in the 20th century by various critics who will explore how these units form communities and how those communities are politically mobilized. The concept of the “imagined community” was coined by Benedict Anderson (b.1936), a foundational figure in more recent approaches to

cultural and national studies who picks up on ideas originally from Herder's work (28). Anderson argues that print capitalism allowed many people over an ample geographic space to conceive of themselves as part of the same community because they were reading the same things. They were partaking of the same symbols, reading the same stories, and participating in and reading about the same political processes. According to Anderson, these are all things that create the imagined community of the nation. He provides a bridge from what Herder and older critics who subscribed to the theory of culturally produced identity said to more widespread sharing of stories that create national characters via modern technologies like the printing press. Anderson is interested in the implications of the stories being more standardized and disseminated across larger spaces and how they play out in terms of the "modern nation"—in which cultural units can be more overlaid and intertwined (3). He argues that this transition began earlier than the mid-20th century, and I am interested in this modernist moment because this idea becomes most relevant in the UK as the British Empire begins to fracture. My dissertation explores how Anderson's ideas can be mobilized to understand what modernist writers are doing, given the specifics of their cultural, historical, and political moment(s). The key problem that emerges through this analysis is: who gets to do the imagining? What happens when individuals in the same geographic country have competing narratives about what the nation is?

Anderson does seem argue that community is imagined according to particular interests: his is not a naïve Herderian theory of the *Volk*. Anderson's perspective is very important to this dissertation because he is part of the movement that turned away from primarily critiquing nationalism and instead was interested in how the mechanics of imagining the national community can be used for all sorts of purposes, including revolutionary anticolonial purposes.

What Anderson perhaps does not consider is the power dynamic involved in who gets to choose which narratives are the narratives that the imagined community uses to form and organize itself. How do the stories reported in things like newspapers shape the narratives of the nation and influence how readers form an imagined community?

Anderson's work overlooks the struggle for narrative control within the imagined community, which is where Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) ideas in "Truth and Power" become relevant. Foucault argues that what we call the "truth" is determined by who is in power. Those in power can influence what we deem the truth and even the ways we determine what the truth is. For Foucault, the truth centres on the form of discourse and the institutions that produce it, and it is subject to constant economic and political incitement; the object of immense diffusion and consumption; produced and transmitted under the control of political apparatuses; and the issue of whole political debate and social confrontation. The truth is a system of ordered procedures for statements' production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation (Foucault and Gordon 123-124). Using Foucault to inform our understanding of Anderson, we might say that the "truth" is merely the dominant narrative of the imagined community. Therefore, why shouldn't there be a struggle about whose narrative gets to occupy that prime position? The struggle for that position would inevitably involve mobilizing and destabilizing power dynamics in the imagined community.⁶

This Andersonian approach to the nation—as a community imagined in the present, for new purposes, but framed as existing since time immemorial—also speaks to another key area of modern nationalism studies that will be important for this dissertation. This dual conception of

⁶ Patrick Parrinder also argues that literature plays a critical role in national identity, highlighting the move from oral to written culture that Anderson notes, and that leads to modernism emphasizing the role of the individual, internal experience (10-11). He also argues that novels represent a shift from elite to democratic forms of story-telling.

the nation—as both ancient and modern—is what theorist Tom Nairn has called the “Janus problem,” “likening nationalism to the two-headed Roman deity who couldn’t help looking backwards into the past as well as forward into the future” (Nairn 67). As Nairn defines it, the Janus problem is the slippery, overlapping relation between “modernizing ambition and novel cults of a particular past and tradition [that] notoriously co-exist within most varieties of nationalism: the backward- and forward-looking faces of any discrete population or area struggling for tolerable survival and prosperity” (71). Nationalism faces inward and outward, but also toward the past and the future. Understanding nationalism through the lens of Foucault helps us see how these two sides of the coin are more closely related than we might think. It is not as if cultural identity pertains to an imagined past, and other rhetorics of nationalism aim at producing new future communities. The two faces are too closely related for that, and the rhetorical battle about how to understand a national community typically looks forward by looking backward (and vice versa). Taken together, Anderson and Nairn urge us to ask who is imagining the nation's past and futures in a particular way; to what purposes; and who is left out of that struggle to define the community.

This lens is especially relevant to my study of Woolf and the question of who is left out—can a person in the “inside group” with authority about what it means to be English write something that questions what that is or tries to make it more progressive? Also relevant will be Orwell's attempt to divide two forms of national feeling, which he termed nationalism and patriotism. In cases like theirs, I will argue that attempts to resolve the dilemmas of nationalism only wind up revealing the dualities built into the nation: forward-looking and backward-looking; inward and outward; as a cultural force and as state power. The Janus problem ties back to Renan's idea of forgetting—forgetting the fact that today's nation-states formed recently, not

anciently, in order to imagine those nationalist identities as more enduring. In that sense, the Janus problem is not a problem to solve, but one to keep ever in mind when examining attempts to imagine the national community.

For the purposes of this dissertation, it will be especially important to remember that attempts to imagine a new national future remain tied to ideas about the national past; and that writers who attempt to separate “good,” forward-looking nationalisms from “bad,” backward-looking nationalisms are often engaging in some degree of self-deception. Homi Bhabha, writing in a postcolonial context, similarly argues that nations and national identities are not fixed, but narratively constructed through the ongoing process of cultural hybridity and negotiation. He emphasizes the ambivalence and fluidity of national narratives, exploring how they are shaped by cultural differences and interactions across borders. Explicitly invoking the Janus problem, he writes that “this turns the familiar two-faced god into a figure of prodigious doubling that investigates the nation-space in the *process* of the articulation of elements: where meaning may be partial because they are *in medias res*; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of ‘composing’ its powerful image” (3).

This duality of nationalism as, expressed by Anderson and Nairn, raises important questions about how national identities are constructed. While their frameworks emphasize the temporal and rhetorical tensions within nationalism, Bhabha’s work on cultural hybridity and ambivalence provides a greater emphasis on how national identities are shaped through negotiation and rearticulation in response to political change. Applying Bhabha’s postcolonial framework to figures like Orwell may seem challenging, given Orwell’s rootedness in English traditions and his explicit attempts to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. However, Bhabha’s work on the fluidity and ambivalence of national narratives illustrates how even

Orwell's seemingly rigid distinctions are part of a broader process of reimagining Englishness in a time of imperial decline. For Bhabha, national identity is subject to reinterpretation and rearticulation in response to political change. The words "partial" and "ambivalent" can also be seen as building on the tensions Nairn describes, although Bhabha's immediate concern is the nation as constructed and reconstructed from a marginalized position: "The marginal or 'minority' is not the space of a celebrity, or utopian, self-marginalization. It is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity—progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past — that rationalize the authoritarian, 'normalizing' tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative" (4). Orwell (and other authors in this dissertation) are not marginalized figures, but they do seem to be engaging with the category of nation-building in ways that, like marginalized practices of nation-as-narration, are "antagonistic" and "ambivalent" about the category of the nation and that engage in it in ways that destabilize its traditional source of authority.

The work of disentangling can be very tricky. Within the context of modernist literary studies, Englishness will always be associated with Britishness, which will always be associated with Imperialism, which is of course bound up with the issue of race. While one cannot deny the straight line from Englishness to whiteness in most contexts, it need not always be so simple: "The difficulty the English have in separating themselves from the British is frustrating for some, especially those wishing to promote a more robust English nationalism (not to mention those elsewhere in Britain who see it as a continuing expression of English imperialism). But for others it can seem a positive advantage, indicating the way that a less essentialised identity can be offered to various groups that do not or cannot identify with an ethnicised or racialised Englishness" (Kumar 479). As Kumar notes, while Englishness is certainly historically

associated with whiteness, if one is careful in how one constructs it, it need not *always* be attached. Though Kumar makes space for this possibility, he emphasizes the extreme difficulty of such a construction:

For the English, a larger sense of their place in the world has to be the starting point of their rethinking about themselves. That has to include Britain, which England can no more do without than it can without England. Englishness and Britishness are joined to each other as the limbs to the body.... Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland without the United Kingdom are conceivable, as the Republic of Ireland showed nearly a century ago; an England without Britain is virtually unthinkable. (481)

The authors in this dissertation faced an extremely difficult task, which is why I am concerned with it. It is crucial to note that Kumar is not arguing that it is impossible, only that it is extremely hard.

Sonya Rose also asks the question of whether or not the category of “British” is racially constructed and seeks answers by analyzing how the British describe themselves: “Britain was depicted by numerous social commentators as engaging in a war being fought by and for a country imagined as a unified land of ‘ordinary people’” (2-3). This is the conception of Britishness that, for Rose, most British people had of themselves during the World Wars. This is the version of national identity that Tolkien and Orwell were claiming was essentially English and was actually constructed and mobilized in a British context in World War II. Rose further notes that Britishness is a category that British people primarily locate in an attitude: “Persons who are believed to possess the qualities to be ‘good citizens,’ that is, those who, on the basis of personal characteristics...can be trusted to fulfil the formal and informal obligations of community members” (16). This is not to say that Britishness is not a category that often is

bound up with race, but for Rose, Britishness is not seen as a birthright, but as a thing one has to enact repeatedly by conforming to certain ideals or behaviours.

The tension between civic and ethnic markers of nationalism reveals a complex landscape where national identity is neither purely cultural nor entirely political. Theorists from Rousseau to Bhabha have shown that nations are “imagined communities” constructed through shared narratives, power dynamics, and ongoing negotiation. While ethnic markers have historically dominated nationalist discourse, the potential exists for more inclusive conceptions of national identity that transcend racial or linguistic boundaries. The modernist authors in this study engaged directly with this challenge, seeking to reimagine national character in ways that could accommodate multiple perspectives that resists the exclusionary impulses of traditional nationalism.

THE FURTHER BACK YOU LOOK, THE FURTHER FORWARD YOU CAN SEE

So far, I have traced ideas about the nation as a primordial essence or a modern invention into some of the key touchstones of modern nationalist studies, namely in the works of Anderson and Nairn. Modern scholarship has revised the tensions they identified into a debate between progressive and reactionary nationalisms, or what we might, following Orwell, call patriotism and nationalism. The connotation of “nationalism” has become decidedly negative, even as other forms of national identity have been linked to progressive politics or to nations formed in righteous revolution. Especially in the line of theory influenced by Hobsbawm, nationalism can seem to take on a more benign or positive connotation when it looks toward the future and toward reform, even though it still tends to be related to ideas of history, tradition, and the past. Here, I will outline that debate.

The tension between what I am calling “patriotism” and “nationalism” maps onto the two kinds of nations postulated by Hobsbawm. The first is the “revolutionary-democratic” nation. These sorts of nations are born in modernity through a revolution towards democracy, as in the case of France and the United States. In this understanding of the nation, the state is comprised of the sovereign citizen people. The community is formed through mutual citizenship in the same political nation, and it forges itself as a nation in the spirit of a democratic civic alliance. I am calling this kind of nation “patriotism” in order to look ahead to Chapter One: however imperfect a concept it ultimately may be, this brand of civic, democratic nationalism resembles the form of national identity Orwell will attempt to rescue as “patriotic” rather than as nationalist. The other kind of nation, for Hobsbawm, is conceived of as a prior, longstanding community, often one whose existence predates modernity; it is defined by its claim to historical continuity and its ethnic and/or linguistic distinction from foreigners. Loyalty to this sort of nation is more frequently what takes the term “nationalism.” Hobsbawm addresses the fact that nationalist movements in the 20th century often were xenophobic and antisemitic. He argues that this is a common feature of such nationalisms and identifies three factors that often contribute to such formations: a resistance by traditional groups who are threatened by the onrush of modernity; new and non-traditional classes and strata emerging in developed countries; and an increase in immigration (37). If these things are true of a country, that country may be at risk of seeing harmful nationalist movements develop. Hobsbawm writes:

All that was required for the entry of nationalism into politics was that groups of men and women who saw themselves...as Ruritarians [i.e., a rural, uneducated person as described by Ernest Gellner], or were so seen by others, should become ready to listen to the argument that their discontents were in some way caused by the inferior treatment

(often undeniable) of Ruritarians by, or compared with, other nationalities, or by a non-Ruritanian state or ruling class. (109)

As noted above by several scholars, there is a contradiction at the heart of nationalism. Hobsbawm speaks of it as two different constitutional ideas, or two answers to the question “how were we formed?” The two answers are either that a nation is formed in modernity, often through revolution; or that it derives from antiquity and has simply always been there. This contradictory narrative and ideological framing is a problem essential to understanding nationalism. As noted already, for Nairn this is the “Janus problem”: nations are unquestionably a modern idea, no more than a few centuries old as we currently understand them, yet nations often seek to align themselves with a much more ancient history, implying a continuity of their nation since time immemorial. Even nationalist movements rooted in a future-oriented, modernizing ambition are often accompanied rhetorically by what Nairn calls “cults of the past” (89). One thing Hobsbawm and Nairn share is the idea that national identity itself can, in some senses, be worth defending. Where Hobsbawm parses out the revolutionary-democratic nation as the template that can be endorsed, Nairn’s extension of this idea is somewhat more controversial, since he thinks that although nationalism’s modernizing ambition is often accompanied rhetorically by cults of the past, that might not always undercut the progressive nature of nationalism at the core of a political movement (71). Hobsbawm and Nairn both see a generative potential inherent in something like nationalist movements. This is part of the tension that I am tracing in the field. Hobsbawm thinks he can separate these terms out and that is why he can advocate for revolutionary-democratic nation. Nairn is more controversial because he seems to be saying something slightly more taboo than Hobsbawm about the types of nationalisms that might be

acceptable (where Hobsbawm sees two categories, Nairn sees two sides of a coin, and therefore the positive and negative go hand in hand).

I have just explained the duality of the concept of the nation, in terms of past vs. future-orientation and in terms of civic vs. ethnic. Briefly, I will preview this very idea of what constitutes a community, a group of people in alliance. To do that I need to go backward a bit and to look at the idea of “the people” that gives rise to the age of nationalism in the first place. When speaking of the nation as a unit defined by shared cultural practices, we are indebted again to Herder as his most valuable contribution to the field of nationalism studies is the notion of the *Volk*. For Herder, the *Volk* is “a social continuum throughout the passage of time...the source of that continuum primarily in the development of *cultural* characteristics” (Barnard 119). The idea of the *Volk* is that the root of all sociopolitical considerations must be those who share the same memories, stories, and language, as this unit of people have the most to bond them into what we call a “nation.”

Volk is comparable to the English term “folk” but translates to “people.” It can mean “people” in the sense of a nation or people in the sense of an ethnicity. That tension is baked into the secondary definitions of even the most basic terminology in nationalist studies. When the *Volk* is defined culturally in an imagined community's sense of its core identity, it provides a helpful way to understand how a conception of nation can differ from a politically organized nation state. Defined ethnically, as used frequently in Nazi Germany, it can be used to justify atrocities. Indeed, Hitler justified the Anschluss by appealing to reunite all ethnic Germans in the expanded “Fatherland.” As a result, for many modernist writers this symbolic marker is powerful but empty, or worse. It does not have a tangible payoff for the groups it is meant to support.

LANGUAGE, ART, AND CULTURE

There are, however, other ways to frame the project of national cohesion, some of them a better fit for the cultural work literature performs—even the literary works of modernists writers resistant to the idea of nationalism. This sort of cultural and artistic nation-building also has a long history in nationalism studies, from long before Herder's nineteenth-century focus on folk literature to the twentieth-century turn to cultural studies. To return briefly to the eighteenth century, Fichte followed Herder in the tradition of German nationalist philosophers. His thinking resembles Herder's belief that the nation was culturally rather than politically constituted. After France's backslide under Napoleon, Fichte felt that it was up to the German people (i.e., nation) to carry on the moral and philosophical goals of the French revolution, doing away with the state constituted by monarchy and asserting the primacy of the nation as constituted by its people and culture (E. Anderson 29). To that end, he delivered lectures emphasizing culture and language as the foundation of national character. For Fichte, the purpose of German nationalism was to "found an empire of spirit and reason, and to annihilate completely the crude physical force that rules of the world" (Fichte 496). Like Herder, he focused on aesthetic and artistic forms of culture rather than the state's instruments as the German nation's critical elements.

The role of cultural production takes on a slightly different role in the work of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), a 19th-century Italian politician and socialist. We can best describe his nationalism as "cosmopolitan patriotism" (Flaherty 30). He advocated for cooperation across many divisions, including class, gender, and national lines (Borkenau 101-102). Like many at the time, he advocated for Italy to unite and form a republican nation like the United States and France. His nationalism, unlike that of the German thinkers that came before him, was very concerned with the official actions of the state. He thought the "nation" should be constituted in

ways that encourage cooperation across lines of identity such as gender and class, and he frames the nation in ways that would eventually come to be known as cosmopolitan. For scholars C.A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini, Mazzini makes two main contributions to nationalism studies. The first is that Mazzini's emphasis on broad social responsibility and obligation renders his theory of nationalism quite distinct from other types that came before him, specifically the German school of nationalist thought often linked to extremism. They even argue that the term "nationalism" may not even be fair for Mazzini because though he "advocated a system of government based on nationality [a unified Italy]," he also advocated for "a creed of duty towards others, including the members of other nations, which could only be fulfilled through democratic political structures" (Kelly 746). For a person to be a true patriot in Mazzini's eyes, they not only had to have the interests of their nation at heart but the best interest of the larger international community as well. They argue that "as an ethical cosmopolitan, Mazzini believed that 'peace and international stability would result from the virtue inherent in the domestic political life of the European nations once they were blessed with democratic and republican institutions" (746). Only through national democratic republicanism (fixing one's nation) could that nation be a productive member of a peaceful international community in the vein of cosmopolitanism.

The second important aspect of Mazzini's contributions is that his cosmopolitan patriotism was a secret project in practice, bolstered not through legislation but through cultural production. Bayly and Baigini claim: "Mazzinianism was a vehicle for the globalisation of democratic nationalism, its influence outside Europe relied upon networks of exiles and sympathisers, to a degree reinforced by secret societies, propagating the faith through meetings, print media and performance" (747). This is perhaps where Mazzini returns slightly to the tradition of Herder and Fichte in that the focus is on sites of culture (faith, print, performance) as

a means of making a case for cosmopolitan patriotism. The goals are those of an official nation-state, but the means are cultural.

With the common consensus amongst thinkers like Herder, Fichte, and Renan being to look at "culture" as a unit of commonality between members of the same nation (with language or a second shared element that constitutes nation), Stuart Hall (b. 1932) complicates that framework by approaching culture by examining it in terms of representations. Hall also sees the "discursive approach" that Craig Calhoun notes, in which we examine culture as a conversation or "cluster of ideas" (14). Hall, aiming to explore cultural "representation" as part of his study, also wants us to look at language as a way that culture works, not just as a unit of culture. This "semiotic approach" "examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but also how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, and studied" (Hall 6).⁷ Hall shifts the focus of nationalism studies toward "poetics," as the means or the "how" of the representation, which fills a gap in the discursive approach which looked only at the "what" or the consequences of the representation.

Picking up from Hall's discursive approach, Craig Calhoun (b. 1952) to a certain extent problematizes the distinction between "good" patriotic nationalism and "bad" chauvinistic nationalism: trying to view the two as separate things, he proposes, obscures the reality that they are deeply connected, often slipping into one another. For Calhoun, the proper way to think of nationalism is as a discursive formation or practice. "This way of thinking about social solidarity, collective identity, and related questions (like political legitimacy) plays a crucial role both in the production of nationalist self-understandings and the recognition of nationalist claims by others"

⁷ This perspective echoes Foucault's focus on the ways in which power dynamics are at play in these systems.

(Calhoun 4). He further lists ten characteristics that, while not all required to constitute a nation, make "the pattern [of a nation] formed by having a preponderance of them" (4). They are Boundaries, Indivisibility, Sovereignty, governmental legitimacy, popular participation in collective affairs, direct membership, culture, temporal depth, common descent or racial characteristics, and historical relationship with the specific territory (4). Calhoun qualifies this list by saying that these are how a nation is commonly rhetorically formed or justified. Since there is no empiric measurement of nationhood, these are not "essential" facts required for a nation. For Calhoun, however, if a group of people make rhetorical claims to a "preponderance of them," then we may have a nation on our hands (4). This echoes Hall's discursive/rhetorical construction of nationality as the legitimacy of the nation is derived from the group's ability to credibly claim itself as one.

JANUS UNSOLVED

For the purposes of this dissertation, the main takeaway from this foundational phase of nationalism studies is the persistent tension between ethnic and cultural identification as unifying forces. Almost universally agreed upon is the concept of the *Volk* or the small cultural-linguistic unit bound together through similar language, stories, and art. Another source of tension is whether the *Volk* can be responsibly mobilized in functions of the state for political ends. The "spirit of a people" as a nebulous yet essential "thing" bound up with place and identity is difficult to characterize and define. All of these contradictions and conflicts present in nationalism studies contribute to the muddy waters that modernist authors wade through as they attempt to articulate an English nationalism.

Before moving to a discussion of literature, I want to highlight two aspects of these theories of nationalism that remain live debates, especially as concerns language and cultural production. While earlier it may have been taken for granted that national myths are essential to a national society, Gérard Bouchard contends that this concept is being increasingly challenged, especially in the West. This stems largely from the violence perpetrated by nationalist regimes in the early 20th century as many began to wonder if these national myths are appropriate to serve as the glue of the national unit, and if they are, how are we to avoid the negative side effects? The Janus problem is a riddle without an answer, and numerous attempts to solve this unsolvable problem are the subject of this dissertation. Secondly, for Hall, Anderson, and to a certain extent, Foucault, the concept of the *Volk* persists in modernity as the most valuable unit of expression for national identity. Our national identities are defined socio-linguistically through artistic expressions of our language and culture. This is why literature is one of the most important sites of national production and the subject of this dissertation. Linda Colley reminds us that this particular type of moment of consideration of national identity in English culture is brought to us by war (Colley 6). Therefore, the early 20th century is a fruitful area of study for Englishness. Finally, as Calhoun points out, we cannot look at patriotism and nationalism as two different things (even as much as we would like to when trying to redeem national identification). They are two sides of the same coin or two faces of the same god.

NATIONALISM AND LITERARY MODERNISM

As a literary movement, Modernism is most often associated with cosmopolitanism and internationalism (Walkowitz 15). However, as Robert Crawford notes, there is “another....side of Modernism that is demotic and crucially ‘provincial’” (Crawford 219). This is important, as a

core premise of this dissertation is the study of nationalism and national identity creation is a concern of the literary movement of Modernism, despite that movement's cosmopolitan inclination. There is good precedent for studying Modernism as a movement concerned with the nation and national identity. For example, critics Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward W. Said, in their 1990 book *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, each write of nationalism in modernist literature as a colonial or anti-colonial force (3-5). In the context of (primarily) Irish modernism, these scholars view nationalism as a vehicle to resist colonial oppression in the spirit of the "empire writes back."⁸ When deployed in the English or (even worse) the British context, nationalism is a "westernizing" force for colonialism in the same vein (Conversi 14). My work builds on these theorists insofar as I also understand modernist writers to be motivated by an anticolonial project that raises skepticism about uncritical identification with the British empire. However, on my argument, this anticolonial motive also forces a new way of viewing Englishness; for many modernist writers, the end of the British empire requires a recovery of Englishness. Though the English opposition to "Britishness" cannot be seen as anticolonial, I argue that Englishness and Britishness represent a tension to be resolved within the consciousness of the English people—and that this quest for "resolution" holds important implications within the broader discourse of anti- and post-colonialism. In the context of the "home nations," as discussed in the final chapter, I remain very much indebted to postcolonial theorists, particularly in the example of Ireland. Yet the main project of this study is to show how a similar logic motivates modernist literature's attempted recoveries of Englishness.

⁸ This phrase, coined by Salman Rushdie, is also the title of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's landmark book in postcolonial literary theory, on the ways in which the "Empire writes back" to the imperial 'centre'" (32).

A central conviction of this dissertation is that the work of imagining the nation did not just take place in political writing, and that the critique of nationalism did not just take place in historical and political scholarship like Hobsbawm's and Nairn's. In fact, both of those projects had already been central to literary Modernism. Since the focus of this dissertation is first and foremost literary, an explanation of how modernist critics have understood the phenomenon of nationalism in modernist literature and their relationship to my work is in order.⁹ Notably, in his book *Nationalism and Modernism* (2000), Pericles Lewis identifies the same tension between a constructive patriotism and a dangerous nationalism that I have described in critical nationalism studies. He claims that, though critics initially saw modernism as a movement that fostered cosmopolitanism and sought to move beyond national identity, nationalism was nevertheless "an attitude that influenced the development of modernism in the European novel around the turn of the century" (Lewis 3). For Lewis, nationalism and national identity are not just hostile political forces for modernists to progress past. Instead, Lewis argues that "the role of the modernists' experiment with the form of the novel" was linked to "their attempts to rethink the values and institutions associated with the sovereign nation-state" (3). The goal, in other words, was to reshape national identity rather than strictly to overcome it. Further, Lewis identifies national subjectivity as a critical factor in understanding modernist texts, assigning it a level of importance akin to other historical contextual information surrounding them. He writes: "Max Weber showed that ideas can be more than mere epiphenomena produced by inevitable historical forces and capable simply of serving one set of social forces or another. They can also influence action in unpredictable ways...I am concerned here with one such magical and religious force,

⁹ I should note here that my case studies are strongly allied with literary Modernism with the notable exception of Tolkien. Part of my project here is to justify Tolkien's inclusion within a Modernist studies paradigm because he engages in similar projects, tackles similar issues, and writes during the same period, even as there are significant stylistic differences.

the idea of the nation” (Lewis 12). Lewis contends that national identity is an excellent subject for modernist authors to explore, given these authors’ preoccupation with individual subjectivities and psychology. Using Joyce's Stephen Dedalus as an example, he argues that modernist explorations of nationalism centre on the crisis of the “liberal subject” and often present these figures as Christ-like redeemers of the nation (7). My work builds on Lewis' idea of the liberal subject as a figure in crisis in modern texts. We both understand modern writers to be preoccupied with national identity and contend that understanding nationalism as an essential part of their work is vital to understanding these texts fully. Rather than focus on the (singular) liberal subject as a preoccupation in modernism, however, my work focuses more on the authors as they grapple with the idea of their nations' *collective* identities. Lewis sees national identity as a lens through which to understand characters and their subjectivities, whereas I am concerned with how those characters, and other aspects of these writers’ works, join a project of theorizing national identity more generally. To this end, I do not find certain characters to be "redeemers of the nation." I instead view these writers as working through the vehicle of fiction to portray different aspects of nations and nationalism, and to think through its possibilities and its problems.

I now turn to specific literary forms and themes that modernist authors employed in their exploration of national identity. A genre that modernist studies examines often in seeking to understand literary representations of identity is the *Bildungsroman*. For the purposes of this dissertation, I consider the genre as a critical lens for understanding the complex relationship between individual development and national identity formation in early 20th literature. This perspective allows us to explore how authors grappled with changing conceptions of Englishness during a period of significant social and political transformation. Richard Begam explores the

intersection of modernist literature and colonialism during the early 20th century. He examines how British and Irish writers engaged with themes of empire and national identity, often criticizing imperial ideologies from inside them. Begam's work with both Joyce and Woolf will be relevant in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Begam notes that during the modernist movement there was a revision of the *Bildungsroman* genre¹⁰:

The developmental logic of the *Bildungsroman* is drastically revised during the modern period, as national economies expanded and fractured into colonial and global systems, and the allegorical pair of nationhood/adulthood was destabilized. What resulted was a nonteleological *Bildungsroman* in which the hero lingers in adolescence, forever deferring the closure that adulthood implies. The political consequences of such anti-*Bildung* is a hero who, failing to assume the duties and responsibilities implied by the Victorian imperial romance, does not become a servant of empire. (9)

This quote underscores how modernist authors grappled with the destabilization of traditional narratives and how that reflects broader social anxieties about national identity. This dissertation follows Begam in that regard, arguing that the authors under consideration were actively questioning and reshaping notions of English identity in response to changing political landscapes.

Begam's use of the phrase "servants of empire" is telling, as the relationship between Englishness and empire becomes increasingly fraught in the modernist writing. He explains this tension in his criticism of *Ulysses*: "The novel [Ulysses] strategically situates its modernism in relation to two of the dominant trends of the Irish 1890s: Oscar Wilde's aestheticism (which dared not speak its Irishness) and Douglas Hyde's nationalism (which spoke nothing but its

¹⁰ Peter Kallinney also argues that the *Bildungsroman* is a key genre for examining modernism from a transnational perspective focussing on imperialism and cosmopolitanism in *Modernism in a Global Context* (2016).

Irishness). Seeking an alternative to both these traditions, Joyce constructs what is in effect a literary Trojan horse, designed at once to advance the claims of international modernism and to smuggle within itself a distinctly Irish modernism” (10-11). My argument is indebted to Begam, as he lays a foundation for my exploration for the tension between cultural particularism and broader modernist movements. This idea that Joyce is playing in the space between overt nationalism and cosmopolitan aesthetics in a hybrid fashion, and that this creates a distinctly Irish form is something I am concerned with in the final chapter of the dissertation. But I also locate a similar hybrid project—between the aimless or in-between space of stunted *Bildung* and the assertion of positive national and imperial identity—in the works of Orwell, Woolf, and Tolkien.

That focus on *Bildung* and its discontents has been an important shift in Modernist studies. Jed Esty, too, examines how modernist novels challenged traditional ideas of progress and development through portrayals of stunted/eternal adolescence:

To lift out the somewhat buried role of national form [...] I want to suggest that the tension between open-ended temporality of capitalism and the bounded, countertemporality of the nation plays out in fictional or symbolic form as a vivid struggle between youth and adulthood—and this would be a formative condition of both the classic (national-era) and the modernist (global-era) *Bildungsroman*. (5)

He argues that as authors became more aware of global inequality and uneven development in the early 20th century, the conventional *Bildungsroman* form was disrupted, with the protagonists’ growth frozen. His analysis, which includes attention to Woolf I will discuss in chapter 2, shows how the “unseasonable youth” trope reflected broader shifts away from narratives of steady progress. For Esty and Begam, national narratives were shifting in ways that

are reflected in changes to the coming-of-age story. In this dissertation I will show how the authors I examine repurpose existing national narratives and genres to critique them and to reimagine the kind of identity national narratives were meant to build.

I also emphasize that the narrative innovations of my authors are not entirely departures from past national narratives, but remain indebted to them. In that regard, I follow Lewis's work on national identity and narrative experimentation. In *Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel*, he argues that modernists engaged with ideas of nationalism through different literary forms in the novel. Particularly relevant to this dissertation is his work on Joyce and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "In forging the uncreated conscience of his race, Stephen will not be inventing something entirely new, but re-enacting and thus reshaping an eternal substance that precedes and conditions all his personal experiences" (2). I am indebted to Lewis' argument about re-enacting and reshaping, although this dissertation additionally reads that process more explicitly in terms of Nairn's Janus problem: the tension between looking backward and looking forward which is inherent to *any* conception of national identity or nation-building. That said, Lewis helps explain why the modernist movement put particular pressure on the novel of individual development, and on the relation between coming-of-age and national identity:

The modernists represented this relationship through an account of the vagaries of the novelist-hero's consciousness of the nation-race rather than through a chronicle of the external social and political events of their era. They frequently concerned themselves with what Louis Althusser would later identify as the subject's 'interpellation' by society and the state, that is, with the processes whereby an individual comes to inhabit a particular set of beliefs. (3)

For Lewis, modernists' tendency to focus on internal, psychological aspects of national belonging makes them unique. He argues that modernists were concerned with how subjects come to inhabit certain beliefs about their nationality. One thing this dissertation proposes is that writers like Orwell and Woolf are interested in these internal dynamics, but are also trying to manipulate or refashion them in ways that resist interpellation.

While the *Bildungsroman's* theme of personal development offers one lens through which to examine national identity in modernist literature, Modernism's representation of physical spaces and cultural practices provides another. Building on this exploration of national identity formation, I turn to Ian Baucom's analysis of how physical spaces and cultural practices have shaped and been shaped by conceptions of Englishness, particularly in the context of empire. Baucom argues that struggles over the idea of "Englishness" have largely been struggles over places endowed with the capacity to evoke feelings of national continuity. He explores how imperialism created tensions between affective and political ideas of national space. He analyzes various locations of identity like architectural sites, literature, and cultural practices to examine how English identity was constructed and contested in relation to empire. "They [English spaces] are...crucial to the construction of English identity. But they exist not only as determining but as determined cultural locations, as spaces of memory that alter the identities of the persons inhabiting, viewing, or passing through them, and that simultaneously suffer a sea change as wave after wave of the empire's subjects was over them" (39). Baucom's analysis of "spaces of memory" that both shape and are shaped by imperial subjects offers a theoretical framework that will help me examine how national identity is constantly negotiated through cultural and literary practices. For Baucom, national identity is mutable and Englishness transforms over time, in particular through imperial encounters.

The ways Modernist studies have addressed questions of place is another interesting facet of the field's engagement with Englishness. This is important because while some of the works I examine are at least partially set in the city, most associate "Englishness" with rural landscapes. On that subject, Peter Kalliney has looked at how some literature in the 20th century made a deliberate focus of the city. He writes: "Because the discourse of land reform made explicit the material and imaginative connections between domestic geography and imperialist ideology, estate novels even vaguely aware of contemporary politics could no longer rely on the fiction of a singular, hermetically sealed English culture centered on the countryside" (40-41). For Kalliney, it is not possible to maintain a purely domestic conception of Englishness in the face of imperial realities. Authors were forced to confront the interconnectedness between English national identity and Britain's imperial role. "London represents simultaneously all that is best and worst about national space...it epitomizes an imperial, patriarchal, class-bound England...Yet London also stands for intellectual energy, social vitality, and personal freedom" (77). This tension between city and country is inflected by the Janus problem. It would seem that for many writers, it would be less complex to focus purely on rural landscapes because the countryside can more easily conjure an idea of the idealized English past; whereas the reality of cities is that they are both centres of imperial power and centres of cosmopolitanism.

To look to the city and the country is to look both forward and backward. Cities also present more stark comparisons of race and class with more diverse groups living closer together. As Kalliney notes, "More than just a stereotypical symbol of English culture, which had become inescapably yoked to the country's imperial identity, the class system, ironically, was becoming one of the most salient reminders of national unity" (41-42). This is another good example of a symbol of national identity with problematic applications. The thing that provides a

reason to unite can also be mobilized as a tool for the imperial project. This is different, however, from what I will argue in Chapter 1 about Orwell, and his argument that national identity can be used to encourage people to “close ranks” or unite people across class lines.¹¹ Here, the symbol itself is two-faced. The tension between city and countryside in representations of Englishness reflects the Janus-faced nature of national identity that Nairn describes. The countryside often evokes an idealized English past, while cities embody both imperial power and cosmopolitan diversity. This duality makes urban settings more complex and potentially problematic for authors attempting to define Englishness.

The class system, as Kalliney notes, serves as a two-faced symbol of national identity. On one hand, it provides a sense of national unity and shared cultural experience. On the other, it reinforces social hierarchies that can be exploited for imperial purposes. This duality illustrates how symbols of national identity can simultaneously unite and divide, preserve tradition and perpetuate inequality. Unlike Orwell’s argument for using national identity to unite people across class lines, which I will explore in Chapter 1, the class system as a symbol of Englishness is inherently contradictory. It both binds the nation together and stratifies it, serving as a reminder of shared culture while also highlighting social divisions. This two-faced nature of class as a national symbol demonstrates the complexity of defining Englishness in a period of imperial decline and social change.

Shifting focus from the city to the county, it is important to note that landscape has always been central to defining Englishness. David Matless argues that landscape is a site where versions of the past, present, and future intersect: “Landscape is now understood as a way of

¹¹ Interestingly, though Paul Ward argues that the urban space is not viewed as a great site of national identity, he makes an exception: “One event when it was possible to celebrate urban Britain as heroic, stoic and therefore typically British was during the Second World War at the height of the Blitz” (58). The city gets to be a symbol of national identity when it is under attack.

seeing—a scopic regime—at the same time as being symptomatic of the appropriation of land” (21). Matless suggests that how people view their surroundings is culturally conditioned, which suggests that reimagining is possible, highlighting the tensions between cultural imagination and material reality in constructing national identity. “In the inter-war years, the signifier ‘Rural England’ served an important purpose by reminding people of their Englishness, in spite of all modernist attempts at devaluing the past, and Victorian values in particular. Thus, the signifier ‘Rural England’ certainly contributed to the unquestioned survival of a national identity in the inter-war years” (199). Matless points out the persistence of traditional markers of national identity, even as modernist writers sought to reimagine Englishness. Even as those writers moved away from Victorian values and pastoral ideals, the symbol of Rural England remains a powerful means of shaping identity. Along similar lines, Ward notes that late 19th-century uneasiness about Britishness was often expressed itself in terms of urban and rural identities. He writes: “The dominant sentiment in English-British culture is anti-urban and that the true source of the strength of English-British national identity is to be found in the countryside... This association of urban life with national ill health has become supplemented by a view that the nature of modern cities has inflicted fundamental damage on the national way of life” (55). The core image of national identity seems to be primarily rural, and there is probably even a bias against urban spaces that the authors in this dissertation sometimes play into. In the first chapter, we will see this play out in Orwell’s tendency to position Britishness (urban) as harming Englishness (rural).

The argument of this dissertation may be closest to that of Esty’s *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (2004). Esty argues that the renewed interest in English national culture in the modernist movement is part of an “anthropological turn” that

refocused literature upon “cultural wholeness” (2, 47). Specifically, he defines this anthropological turn as “the discursive process by which English intellectuals translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture,” and as an attempted “reclamation of England’s cultural integrity and authenticity” (2). In short, English authors felt compelled to “reintegrate their national culture” in response to the contraction of the empire (3). This is a turn away from cosmopolitanism, diminishing its appeal as the empire loses global importance. In his study of some of the same authors here considered—Orwell, Woolf, and even briefly Tolkien—Esty shows how an “examination of the anthropological turn of late modernism leads him to seek out contained narratives of Englishness that do not rely on colonial othering, but on writers’ attempts to define culture within the national and geographic boundaries of a finite, contracting space that became apparent as the British empire came apart” (E. L. Johnson 186). Like Esty, I also locate the inciting event of my authors’ concern with Englishness as the decline of the empire. As he puts it, “the imagined harmony between culture and state, taken as a way to manage and to narrate the uneven development of capitalism, came under pressure as a new phase of empire-building revealed modernization to be unpredictable and unending” (6). These authors are defining Englishness in a way that attempts to move away from imperial narratives towards a more localized (and I would argue, inclusive) conception of national identity.

Esty also lays a framework for how I examine some of the authors’ work, Tolkien in particular: “The anthropological turn names the 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 redarning obsolete some of modernism’s defining aesthetic techniques” (2). He uses the phrase “anthropological turn” to signal that writers responded to Imperial contraction by renewing

interest in English traditions, rural life, and local culture, rather than a racial or ethnic feeling. Tolkien and others similarly become interested with the anthropological elements of Englishness. My approach builds from Esty's by examining these authors' attempts to come to terms with the conflicting models of national identity they had to work with—and in particular, their attempts to disentangle the forms of national identity they approved from the dangerous forms they worried they might inadvertently be complicit with. In order to salvage a politically devolved Englishness, these writers needed to grapple with the tensions built into concepts of national identity itself.

Kristin Bluemel proposes “intermodernism” as a critical concept to describe mid-20th century British literature that does not neatly fit into categories of modernism or postmodernism. She defines intermodernism as having three features: represents working class cultures, politically radical, and is committed to non-canonical genres. This positions intermodernism as an alternative to expansions of modernist studies to better capture the diverse literary forms of the period. “*Intermodernism* explores the manifestations and implications of such intermodern responsibilities, focussing on three defining features: cultural features (intermodernists typically represent working-class and working middle-class cultures); political features (intermodernists are often politically radical, ‘radically eccentric’); and literary features (intermodernists are committed to non-canonical, even ‘middlebrow’ or ‘mass’ genres)” (1). The concept of intermodernism is important in understanding why I am studying both traditional modernists like Woolf and Joyce alongside figures like Tolkien, who fits the non-canonical, middlebrow genre description. Tolkien, and Orwell, I argue, are transparently/explicitly attempting to reshape national identity. For Orwell, this reshaping is done to deliberately favour the working class.

Finally, to clarify the kind of national identity I am tracing in my case studies, I want to draw the reader's attention to Douglas Dowland's argument in *Weak Nationalisms: Affect and Nonfiction in Postwar America* (2019). Although his focus is American rather than British literature, he offers a distinction that is especially relevant for British modernist writers seeking to turn from imperial Britishness to a supposedly more modest form of Englishness. In particular, Dowland distinguishes between "strong" and "weak" nationalism: "Far from its chauvinist, exceptionalist counterparts, weak nationalism is a reminder of the ordinariness of national affects. And it is its ordinariness that gives weak nationalism its power" (13). He notes that the nation and nationalism are not always about large displays of flag-waving or military parades, but that the most powerful forms of nationalism can be those that occur in the most mundane, everyday contexts. He continues:

This is not to say that the nation becomes invisible, or that its citizens unreflectively presume its presence. Rather, weak nationalism reminds us that 'people recognize, interpret and align themselves with pressing issues in explicitly national terms. But most of the time, the nation is not something ordinary people talk *about*; rather, it's something they talk *with*.' Nationalism blends into the foreground to such an extent that one presumes its presence without necessarily seeing it there...that weak affects provide strength to one's affective schema, weak nationalism provides a strength to its practitioners that, while difficult to articulate, should not be underestimated. (14)

For Dowland, turning to more modest or "weaker" forms of national identification can actually be what solidifies the nation's power as an imaginary. This follows Anderson in that the power of the nation as an imaginary is in the way it can become like second nature and suffuse ordinary

life; but it also suggests one way that the field of nationalism studies might critique Orwell, Tolkien, even Woolf: that when they think they are moving away from capital-N nationalism, they might be redirecting their energy not really to something else altogether, but to the very strategies that maintain the nation's prominence as a critical identification anchor. It is important to note that each of these reclamation projects and attempts at Englishness might be significantly compromised from the beginning in their attempts to distinguish and disentangle themselves from strong or chauvinistic nationalism.

While the theoretical frameworks discussed thus far provide valuable tools for analysis, it is crucial to understand the historical context that shaped modernist writers' engagement with national identity, particularly the impact of World War II. The Second World War marked a critical juncture in the evolution of English national identity, forcing writers to confront both the unifying potential and the dehumanizing dangers of nationalism. As external pressures mounted, authors grappled with the complexities of Englishness in ways that both reinforced and challenged traditional notions of national character.¹² Wendy Webster's analysis of wartime narratives illuminates this tension, highlighting how the concept of a "people's war" sought to democratize national identity across class and gender lines, while the idea of a "people's empire" attempted to foster unity across racial and ethnic divides (7). This deliberate construction of Britishness aimed to create a strong, unified defense against external threats. However, as Webster notes, these efforts often devolved into xenophobic attitudes (8). The war's impact on literary representations of Englishness was profound and multifaceted. While some works embraced the unifying rhetoric of wartime propaganda, others began to question the foundations of national identity itself. The work of Orwell and Woolf reflect this ambivalence,

¹² *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans, 1890-1950* by Rau Petra and *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1945* by Sonya O. Rose are both key texts exploring this theme.

simultaneously exploring the power of collective identity and exposing the potential for nationalism to mask deeper societal divisions. This period of intense national self-examination was driven not only by the immediate threat of war but also by the looming spectre of imperial decline. As the British Empire began to contract, writers were forced to reconsider what it meant to be English in a rapidly changing world. The authors I examine in this dissertations engage with these pressures, attempting to reconstruct a vision of Englishness that acknowledges both its unifying power and problematic history.

The first three chapters of this dissertation focus on literature from the first half of the 20th century that comes from the nation of England. My research suggests that this period represents a particular moment in the history of nationalism, as many forms of nationalism in Europe lean hard into the most problematic and dangerous elements of the social phenomenon. Britain is a unique case during this period due to the end of the empire. In *Britons: Forging the Nation*, Colley examines the formation of the British national identity, or Britishness, from the Acts of Union through the Napoleonic Wars. For Colley, the critical aspect of Britishness is that it was formed with the constant backdrop of war from clashes with other imperial nations; “Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it” (Colley 6). This constant external threat makes national feeling akin to an act of military service, a "support the troops" ethos meant to paper over the genuine divisions within Britain (as evidenced by the need for the Acts of Union in the first place) continually bolstered by the real, practical context of an actual "foreign threat." For Colley, Britishness is as much a wartime strategy as a cultural project. In the twentieth century, these founding pressures continue in new context, moving from imperial competition to the

feeling of imperial decline; and, above all, the World Wars as an external threat that consolidated Englishness. For example, Petra Rua's *English Modernism, National Identity, and the Germans* argues that Germany was a particularly important "other" and a conduit for articulating ideas about Englishness. Likewise, Sonya O. Rose's *Which People's War: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1945* shows how this period's versions of national identity—typically presented as essentially English—were actually constructed and mobilized by the external pressures of the second World War.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Picking up from Calhoun, who argued that such a disentangling of state ideology and cultural identity was not feasible, I observe in several examples of modernist-era literature a cultural force that seeks to maintain the benefits of national identification while disentangling itself from harmful effects becoming visible as the dark nationalisms of the 20th century begin to take root. My dissertation positions England as a fruitful site to study because of its imperial context, with the British Empire still looming large in how the national unit functioned, but also for how it is a constituent nation of that imperial unit; its forms of culture, language, and other identifying markers (whether semiotic or discursive) make it distinct from the other constituent nations of the British isles. I have selected George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, and J.R.R. Tolkien as my primary authors of focus for several reasons. Firstly, they are three of the most recognizable figures in English literature of their day, and that recognition is due, in part, to their direct engagement with the concept of Englishness. They write stories in English settings, about English people (or, in Tolkien's case, English people recoded and displaced through fantasy), and about what it means to be English in an era that sees the decline of the British empire. In other

words, they explicitly set out to represent quintessential examples of English literature. This shared feature allows me to examine the literary work often thought of as emblematic or representative of the English culture or spirit. Secondly, each actively engages in the project of moving the national identity of their compatriots through the period of diminishing empire, or "Britishness," and into the new century with "Englishness." As the empire ceases to be a helpful unit of identification in the changing world, and as they begin to note the weaponization of nationalism by fascists throughout Europe, each is explicitly working to reform the English national identity through their work.

This dissertation will examine both fiction and non-fiction by each author to understand their goals for the English nation and how they went about trying to accomplish those goals through the cultural production of their literature. I will also examine their attempts to disentangle their new and particular conceptions of Englishness from forms of nationalism (chauvinism, ethnonationalism) seen in Europe (and, indeed, Britain), and the varying degrees of success each was able to accomplish in this project. Finally, the dissertation closes with a chapter that examines other literary national identity projects within the British Isles (Scotland and Ireland) as a point of comparison. Turning to Ireland and Scotland in particular will show how nationalism could at that time become an anti-imperial position, a resistance to Britishness. If the English authors I examine seem to be borrowing that anti-imperial logic in the name of Englishness, then it will be important to understand the differences between the English, Irish, and Scottish positions vis-à-vis the British empire.

This study's main contributions are to modernist literary studies and to national identity studies. Firstly, this dissertation addresses a gap in the scholarship regarding English authors who explicitly attempt to resolve Nairn's Janus problem and articulate the degree to which such a

project has been (or can be) successful in England. Though nationalism always has one eye (or face) on the past, my work examines how each author is looking to the future for England, even if, at times, all three fall prey to the slippages and pitfalls of navigating such a fraught and complex cultural phenomenon. While other scholars have examined these authors and their national projects, my distinct approach is that I will examine how they grapple with the contradictions inherent in nationalism rather than judging them as failed nationalists.

Secondly, each author I will examine offers a unique lesson for our contemporary reckoning with nationalist politics. Orwell's failed attempt to harness national identification for the left is a warning to those who might try to grab the proverbial tiger by the tail. Woolf and Joyce make a case for a more cosmopolitan form of patriotism that is perhaps more useful in a global community sense, although the prevailing political winds seem to be against internationalism at the time of writing. Finally, Tolkien (astoundingly, due to his choice to set his story in a fantasy world) might provide the best lesson for the present in how to disentangle a nation from a colonial past without risking chauvinism by writing a myth of national character and landscape.

As this argument suggests, the importance of understanding nationalism, precisely the ways it may be deployed in opposition to chauvinistic or ethnonationalism, is made more evident by the global politics of the 21st century. Famously in 2016 and since, harmful nationalist political movements have won significant victories in both North America and the United Kingdom, as evidenced in Donald Trump's election and in the success of the Brexit movement—the latter of which makes a study of British nationalism all the more crucial. These blows to internationalism and the alarming rhetoric of various nationally oriented movements' leaders have emboldened those who would make the worst, most exclusionary, chauvinistic, forms of

nationalism most likely to incite violence into a mainstream political ideology. Unfortunately, in many places, they have succeeded. While this dissertation will not solve this problem, I think there is value in understanding writers who were actively engaged in trying to steer national identification away from such harmful politics and understanding where they were successful and where they were not.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

In Chapter 1, “England My England,” I argue that Orwell posits (positive/beneficial) “patriotism” and (negative/harmful) “nationalism” to be opposing ideologies and seeks to eliminate the slippage between the two because he thought patriotism could be mobilized to advance leftist political aims. I will establish Orwell's earliest engagement with national identity as a negative aspect of his schooling. Next, the chapter will establish that he believes nationalism serves the capitalist class and hurts the working people of England. The chapter will show how his time in Spain disillusioned Orwell about the possibility of successful socialism in England without using the tremendous power of national identification. Therefore, his goal became to harness national identification and divorce nationalism from chauvinism, resulting in patriotism which was helpful to leftist ends. We can understand Orwell's body of work as part of a lifelong project to establish socialism in England by harnessing national identification. We can see this explicitly in his essays and implicitly in his fiction. Ultimately, the project is partly a failure because he cannot untangle national identification from its chauvinist, fascistic uses. Orwell attempts and often succeeds at making solid arguments for a patriotic collectivism that avoids nationalist chauvinism, but he fails to fully disentangle these two conflicting impulses in his work, leaving him open to criticism. When thinking of the Janus problem, an author usually

takes one side or the other. They either reject national identity as an evil tool of fascism or embrace it as a fully redeemable force that bad actors have appropriated. Orwell attempts a middle ground, unique among authors who engage with this issue.

Chapter 2, "As a Woman my Country is the Whole World," argues that Virginia Woolf does not, as many critics have claimed, think that nationalism in and of itself is sexist. Instead, Woolf claims that the nation, as constituted under systemic sexism and the nationalism married to chauvinism that was popular in Europe, withheld the benefits of such nationalism from women and were therefore not worth supporting. I establish the concept of gendered nationalism both in general and for Woolf, and I demonstrate how Woolf's understanding of the gendered nation operates according to a sort of "cost-benefit analysis" for women, which leaves her outside the traditional patriot/nationalist binary. Rather than engage with the debate/project like Orwell does, Woolf rejects the premise of the debate as useless from a feminist perspective. Her solution is a cosmopolitan project, a collective of nations that nevertheless do not erase individual nationalities. This dissertation aims to provide a lens to fully understand Woolf's famous "as a woman I have no country" quotation and how she repurposes English symbols, such as English soldiers and the work of Shakespeare, in her fiction. The connection between Woolf's understanding of nationalism as a gendered, chauvinist force and her goal for a cosmopolitanism that retains national identity as a category helps me argue that she is interested in a "global citizen" project while not rejecting patriotism outright.

Next, Chapter 3, "There and Back Again," turns to J.R.R. Tolkien and his national myth project. I argue that while other authors try to disentangle Britishness from, Tolkien attempts to define Englishness through the creation of a national myth while *ignoring* the category of "Britishness." Tolkien's approach differs from Woolf's, who also declines to attempt

disentanglement, because while Woolf is still caught up in the practical matters of identification within English society, Tolkien focuses only on the version of Englishness he feels has been neglected. The chapter will show how Tolkien sets the myth in a fantasy world to create the possibility of "recovery," a concept from his scholarship relevant to national identity. I will give background on Tolkien's life to set up his engagement with England and Britain and why he is interested in English landscapes. The chapter will explain how he uses "Romantic Nationalism" to drive this myth and demonstrate the progressive qualities of Tolkien's myth. While I will acknowledge his conservatism, he is not a reactionary like others who try to repurpose romantic nationalism. Tolkien's story as a myth of England is generally accepted, but my work here offers a more fulsome/nuanced explanation for his rhetorical moves and broader purposes. I explain his need to displace it into fantasy, his fascination for landscapes and the mode of walking, and how his repurposing of romantic nationalism avoids some of the most common reactionary pitfalls. Most writers are preoccupied with one of two things: either explaining why nationalism is harmful or attempting to redeem patriotism by disentangling it from nationalism. Tolkien does neither, and unlike Orwell and Woolf, his project is largely successful. That is worth noting for an author who is not taken nearly as seriously by literary scholars. As a result, one contribution of this chapter is to highlight the underappreciated role of the fantasy genre in nationalism studies and in modernist studies, and to show how attending to fantasy might change our understanding of the relation between literature and nationalism.

Finally, Chapter 4, "Four Nations: Exploring the Adoption of Models of National Identity Alongside English National Identity," explores how Home Nation movements of national recovery look similar to Englishness but are coloured by their anti-colonial nationalist histories. I will give a general survey of the UK home nations. I will then use two case studies, first

contrasting the Scottish context and the work of MacDiarmid with Orwell's socialist goals, and then examining the work of Joyce to explore how Irishness is less about political goals than it is cultural, not how can Irishness be mobilized to political ends, but how can we forge an Irishness that is worthy of the respect of the world. I will illustrate that disentanglement may not always be a worthwhile pursuit. Rather, I think that the most effective way to restore the value of nationalism is by approaching it “correctly” and directly, free from the unnecessary complications of disentanglement. In conclusion, my project endeavours to show the limitations of disentanglement and emphasize the importance of executing nationalism properly, without any hindrances. This final section will demonstrate how authors in these other contexts were able to better disentangle their national identity from chauvinistic mobilizations of nationalism, providing an example of success where some of the English authors struggled.

Chapter 1: England My England

What is the difference between patriotism and nationalism? “Patriotism” still tends to bear a positive connotation and to refer to individual affect, while “nationalism” tends to name a political ideology. Since that political ideology is often associated with the most chauvinistic forms of national identity, it has been also associated with many harmful political movements. While that may make one seem “good” and the other “bad,” to construe patriotism and nationalism as a binary distinction would erase the considerable grey area between the terms. In fact, the two blend: citizens of a given country can oscillate between a feeling of pride in their country and an exclusionary framework without being fully aware of how their actions and rhetoric are changing. It can be quite a difficult distinction to make. Yet George Orwell, famously a harsh critic of nationalism, tried to make exactly that distinction in his 1945 essay “Notes on Nationalism.” In this essay, he draws a distinction between nationalism and a more benevolent form of patriotism that he wished to retain: “by ‘patriotism’ I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life...Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power” (141-142). The fact that Orwell felt it necessary to explicitly state the distinction between the terms demonstrates the tendency for slippage between them, which he acknowledges in the essay. To some degree, that distinction makes him a progenitor of later work in the field of nationalism studies, which still seeks to differentiate between national identities and nationalist ideologies.¹³

Orwell’s work to differentiate between the terms follows his own critique of political terms in art. In the essay, “Politics and the English Language” (1946), Orwell warns that the use of political euphemisms and indirect, overly complicated language has allowed for the public to

¹³ See “Introduction” above.

accept indefensible actions like British occupation of India. The resistance to the bleeding together of patriotism and nationalism is natural for Orwell, as he would have seen the political use of the linguistic interchangeability between the terms as a dangerous tool for an oppressive, nationalist government. In *1984*, he writes at length about language's ability to shape political thought and the dangers of an oppressive regime manipulating the meaning or even the existence of words to control the populace. As Syme, a language specialist and Winston's co-worker at the Ministry of Truth states, "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it" (58). Indeed, for Orwell, drawing a clear distinction in plain and obvious terms would have been of the utmost importance to political discourse in the early 20th century. Winston demonstrates this in an internal monologue as he contemplates the "labyrinthine world of doublethink":

To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself -- that was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethink' involved the use of doublethink. (41-42)

The broad context of Orwell's fiction tends to frame such "double-think" as a top-down manipulation managed by the state. However, his attempt to distinguish "patriotism" from "nationalism" also shows that he thinks there is a kind of national feeling that matters to ordinary people, which he usually frames as working from the bottom-up. In nationalism studies, Eric Hobsbawm would later suggest that people's everyday feelings and motivations might not be fully inextricable from the state's top-down imposition of a nationalist ideology (10). For his part, though, Orwell remains convinced that there is a difference. This chapter will explore how that difference (which, admittedly, Orwell struggled to define) maps onto the distinctions made within the field of nationalism studies.

To understand how the two terms operate in his essay writings, and how these opposing concepts of national identity also play out in his fictions, this chapter will explore Orwell's use of patriotism and nationalism over the course of his career. I will argue that Orwell views national identification as a useful tool for political mobilization. Orwell eschews the dominant forms of nationalism of his day, but he has a very particular form of national ideology, which he calls "patriotism," that he *did* want to mobilize. In particular, he sought to "awaken" the English spirit in service of a 20th-century socialist movement (Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* 200). As I will show, Orwell saw this union of Englishness and socialism¹⁴ as a natural alliance, since he believed both that the problems facing the modern Englishman were best addressed through socialism, and that socialism itself was actually more in line with the English national character than capitalist imperialism was. For Orwell, English socialism represented a way to use national feeling to modernize England. I will argue that he attempts to accomplish this goal by trying to disentangle "Englishness" from Britain's imperial interests, and by creating an English

¹⁴ For this chapter, I mean "socialism" as an organized political movement rather than as a general collectivist attitude to politics.

patriotism that would look inward, toward inter-class solidarity, rather than outward toward an imperial sphere of competition. For Orwell, in other words, the project of international socialism needed to begin at home, and an attachment to Englishness was the surest way for English people to imagine the kind of community he had in mind. Since national identity already functions as a way for people within the same space to imagine they are in commune with people they will never meet¹⁵ (other English people), national identification extends nicely to the goals of socialism, for Orwell.

To begin, I will detail Orwell's first encounters with ideologies of nations and nationalism as a schoolboy, exploring his early artistic expressions of nationalism and his dawning reflections on how English schooling uses the ideology of the nation to political ends. Moving to Orwell's exploits on the continent as a young man, I will argue that his experiences in Spain fighting for socialist ideals led to a newfound respect for the political power of national identity, thus creating his desire to harness that power and use it for his own political ends in England. In particular, I will demonstrate, he sought to repurpose what he would term an English "patriotism" in order to bring socialist policies into the political mainstream in England. I will then examine how this political strategy plays out in his fiction, beginning with the novel *Burmese Days* (1934), which is aligned with the disillusionment with imperialism occasioned by the Spanish Civil War. Then I will show how his reformulation of Englishness functions more directly in the non-fiction works *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). Overall, this chapter will demonstrate that Orwell attempts to distinguish between nationalism and patriotism to repurpose the powerful political force of national identification for what he saw as a desirable political outcome. However, I also argue that he ultimately fails in this goal and never fully

¹⁵ This idea comes from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

overcomes the inevitable slippage between patriotism and nationalism, even as he tries to combat that slippage to maintain a supposedly more “pure” national identification.

NOTES ON PATRIOTISM VS. NATIONALISM

As noted, Orwell differentiates between patriotism and nationalism. He further divides nationalism into three broad categories: positive, transferred, and negative. Positive nationalism involves promoting one’s own nation, transferred nationalism occurs when one identifies with and promotes a country other than their own, and negative nationalism is defined by opposition—such as, in Orwell’s examples, Anglophobia or Trotskyism. (Orwell, Notes on Nationalism 7). These tensions and distinctions have been the subject of much scholarship in the field of nationalism studies. I will here outline the examples relevant to this dissertation.

To begin, Jed Esty’s *A Shrinking Island* lists Orwell as one of the many authors in the British canon dealing with the end of empire. For Esty, Orwell is part of a group of authors also including W.H. Auden, Graham Greene, and Evelyn Waugh, who respond to Britain’s changing global position by depicting the theme of “an individual soul (especially the cosmopolitan traveller) caught in a tragic world or in an English nation increasingly bereft of any hope for moral, political, or artistic renewal” (166). He considers Orwell’s work to be part of “English anthropological nativism,” or a construction of English identity in response to the loss of imperial power (166). “The nativism of the 1930s era is distinct in its self-conscious replacement of mimetic primitivism (based on idealization of the alien tribe) with an insular primitivism (based on an idealization of the domestic)” (43). My argument about Orwell is aligned with Esty’s view that Orwell was part of a broader literary movement responding to Britain’s changing global position and the loss of imperial power. Like Esty, I recognize Orwell’s work as an

attempt to redefine English identity in the face of imperial decline. My argument build's on Esty's by focusing specifically on Orwell's efforts to distinguish between nationalism and patriotism, and his attempt to harness forms of English national identity for socialist political aims. I am interested, in other words, in how Orwell's project builds up national identity both in the sense he terms "negative" and the style he terms "positive."

Since Orwell is especially interested in separating negative nationalism from other kinds, I will begin there. In her 2003 article, "'My Mother, Drunk or Sober': George Orwell on Nationalism and Patriotism," Joanne Barkan explores the distinctions that Orwell makes between the two concepts. Writing in the aftermath on 9/11 and United States' military response, Barkan is interested in the difference between a leftist patriotism and a right-wing nationalism. She is particularly interested in Orwell's concept of "negative nationalism," which she describes as an attitude where individuals exhibit behaviour that is "obsessive and indiscriminating in their anti-Americanism, but they [critics of the Nation] no longer wave anyone else's flag" (83). Barkan's article is a comparison of Orwell's critique of the British left in the lead up to World War II and her own critique of American Leftism in the wake of 9/11. Negative nationalism is the tendency on the political left to reject jingoist colonialism so emphatically that they performatively root against their nation in potential conflicts. Barkan argues that this alienates the working class, who feel their patriotism is being unfairly criticized and mocked by the left, leaving them more sympathetic to a fascistically mobilized nationalism. Barkan argues that Orwell offers no solutions to how the left might solve this problem, whereas I argue that Orwell does in fact attempt to create a leftist patriotism even as that project proves very difficult to accomplish. For Barkan, Orwell's patriotism that is set against nationalism is a failing project because it alienates the working class. While I agree that Orwell's delineation of the concepts of patriotism and

nationalism is not always successful in terms of establishing distinctness and avoiding slippage, I also argue that his appeal to patriotism through a communal English spirit did not necessarily run the risk of alienating the working class.¹⁶ In fact, class solidarity is one of the main reasons he seeks to create national solidarity in the first place.

Ben Clarke, in his 2006 article “Orwell and Englishness,” picks up some of the points from Barkan’s work, especially about resolving tensions between patriotism and nationalism, as well as the utility of these forces for a leftist movement. Clarke tracks Orwell’s representations of Englishness through J.B. Priestly’s “three Englands” model: “modern towns of ‘technical experts,’ the urban working class, and the rural order of his Edwardian childhood” (Clarke, *Orwell and Englishness* 83). Clarke argues that Orwell reconciles the tensions between patriotism/nationalism and the three Englands through a political system of socialism. In other words, he believes that socialism will solve those tensions, rather than the tensions needing to be solved first in order to create the conditions for socialism in England. I agree with Clarke in his assessment of Orwell trying to reconcile different versions of England to create a unified national identification, but disagree on the order of motivations. Instead, I argue that Orwell attempts to create a distinct patriotism as a first step, and that this patriotism would create the conditions for English socialism and its subsequent reconciling effects.

While Orwell’s overarching goal was to foster class solidarity, critical scholarship has sought to situate this project within the specific historical context of England’s national crisis of the mid-20th century. Peter Lowe’s 2009 article, “Englishness in a Time of Crisis: George Orwell, John Betjeman, and the Second World War,” exemplifies this approach by examining how

¹⁶ A case in point would be Orwell’s work in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which documented the lives of working-class people in the north. Likewise, in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, he chronicled his experiences living in poverty to better understand the struggle of the working-class.

Orwell's conception of English national character evolved in response to the pressures of World War II. He argues that the idea advanced by Orwell that the natural spirit of the English people was a leftist, anti-totalitarian in nature, and that it was forged largely in the time of crises leading up to and during World War II. Lowe tracks Orwell's writing from pre-war, to wartime, to post-war and argues that Orwell begins his career arguing that the true English spirit lies dormant in the English people, and that their anti-fascist spirit is then awakened in the crisis of the war only to falter once the threat is neutralized;¹⁷ We can see why the post-war novel *1984* is perhaps his most pessimistic. My work is indebted to Lowe's argument here, as I certainly agree that Orwell's motivating factors come largely from times of national crises in England. In fact, as I will show, Orwell advocated specifically for a national identification that generated collective defense at the sign of an attack. That attack for Orwell, though, as I will show, is less about foreign invaders and more about economic and political conditions that Imperialism and the upper classes impose on the rest of the English people.

Likewise, Brendan McQuade argues that we should view Orwell's body of work as a microcosm of the leftist project of the early 20th century, with many clues as to why those projects failed in Europe. He also tracks many contradictions in Orwell's biography, commenting on "the road from Mandalay to Wigan that transformed Eric Blair, a disappointing-Etonian-turned-imperial-policeman, into George Orwell, a contradictory and complex socialist and, later, literary icon" (313). McQuade sees in Orwell, and his work, a tension between "cosmopolitanism and radicalism" which poses challenges to Orwell's goal of mobilizing national identification (313). Another scholar who views Orwell's work through the lens of his complex and often contradictory political and artistic positions is Kristin Bluemel, who focuses on Orwell's place

¹⁷ By "true" I mean what Orwell describes when he characterizes the English as private community hobbyists rather than imperial expansionists, by nature (Orwell, *England Your England* 196).

within a group of “radical eccentrics” who resisted conventional ideological categorizations, while McQuade view’s Orwell’s work as representative of the broader challenges faced by leftist projects in the early 20th century (313). McQuade argues that “Orwell represents...the historic failure and inability of the left to find a revolutionary path forward between the ‘timid reformism’ of social democrats and ‘comfortable martyrdom’ of anachronistic and self-satisfied radicals” (313). While I agree with McQuade that the many contradictions in Orwell’s work and thinking ultimately make his political goals difficult to achieve, I locate the primary problem in the inability to successfully delineate patriotism from nationalism rather than an inability to balance radicalism and pragmatism in leftist politics. This chapter argues that Orwell’s shortcomings in his project of engaging national identity for leftist goals lie not in what McQuade argues is a problem for all leftism, which is to balance two differentiating visions (one too radical, one too timid). Instead, I argue that slippages between patriotism and nationalism ultimately make Orwell’s project a mixed bag of helpful national identification that sometimes slips into the very negative nationalism he seeks to replace. This journey was a lifelong one for Orwell, as he was engaged with English identity since his days as a schoolboy.

SCHOOLBOY’S WEEKLIES

Orwell’s first writings concerning national identity were poems he had written as a child published in a local Oxford paper. Samuel Hynes describes the poem, “Awake Young Men of England”: “All the clichés are there—the evocation of England, the glorification of sacrifice, the images from medieval, romantic battle, the emotive language of courage and cowardice. It is a poem written not so much by a boy as by a tradition” (18-19). The implication is that the poem is a product of a national tradition which might also be to say, by an ideology that is more

significant in its composition than the author. In his 2007 book, *Orwell in Context: Communities, Myths, Values*, Ben Clarke essentially agrees with Hynes's assessment, and argues convincingly that as a child Orwell simply parroted the clichéd sentiments of nationalism that had been instilled in him as a schoolboy. This means that when he criticized these forms of nationalism later, in adulthood, he was partly criticizing himself—or at least his own former, naïve repetition of those forms, and the way nationalist ideologies were inculcated in the schools.

As Robert Roberts explains, early 20th century English schools were a site of an “indoctrination” of national identity. This would have been especially true for “public” schools like Eton, which were designed to develop public servants who would go into imperialist positions. Schools provided students with a series of stories designed to “propagate the imperialistic idea” and to “instill in their charges a stronger sense of national identity and a deeper pride in expanding empire” (Roberts 143). Schools instilled national identity in their students so that they would become good imperial citizens. The importance of the school as the site of the creation, or rather, the reproduction of imperial national identity, became an important part of Orwell's critique of the empire. Early on in his adult life, Orwell understood the force of national identity as a negative thing. In fact, in later life he would come to recognize the power of that identification with nation and to critique the school as a tool of the empire that abuses that power. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* he writes: “I suppose there is no place in the world where snobbery is quite so ever-present or where it is cultivated in such refined and subtle forms as in an English public school” and proceeds to link that snobbery to the creation of an attitude of Imperial superiority (128). As his own socialist politics developed, he began to criticize the role of the school in creating imperial citizens merely as a means for the empire to ensure its continued existence. Clarke again provides helpful context here by pointing to Pierre Maillaud's

book *The English Way* (1945), which claims that it “is often said that English education lays emphasis on character rather than on intellect...the importance of behaviour, and, above all, of social conduct and social codes” (36). As Clarke points out, Orwell criticizes British schools for being a means of the reproduction of empire rather than an improvement of nation, anticipating the critique that Louis Althusser would make a few decades later and would term “educational ideological state apparatus” (Clarke 111). Orwell’s critique of national identity comes from a socialist perspective. Therefore, for Orwell, the educational ideological state apparatus is not just a function of a few zealously patriotic schoolmasters. Rather, it is a structure invested in creating and recreating the means of political indoctrination in its pupils. The school functions as an assembly line for young British people invested in a nationalistic view of their nation.

For Orwell, the schools were a site of indoctrination, but it is important to note that he saw it as indoctrination of a specific backward-looking sort. In *The Lion and the Unicorn*, for example, he writes that “public school education is partly a training in class prejudice” (424). Crucially, it is the combination of imperial, nationalistic feeling with that “class prejudice” and its set of social codes that was calculated to create a certain sort of citizen. This emphasis on instilling a certain kind of character in young English children (particularly those of the upper and upper middle class) so that they will come out of school ready to uphold English values of capitalism and imperialism is a problem for Orwell. To understand how he ultimately frames this problem, it will be important to understand how he came to see national identity as entangled with class consciousness. However, Orwell’s first form of resistance to this schoolboy ideology came in his rejection of the rote, unthinking ideology that propped up the empire and its interests. In that regard, as I will show in the next section on Orwell’s anti-imperialism, Orwell’s critique of nationalist ideology bears some resemblance to Hobsbawm’s later analysis. In particular, I am

thinking of Hobsbawm's critique of a backward-looking nationalism that dresses itself in the language of preservation and tradition. For Hobsbawm, some nations are formed with the idea that they have been there since the dawn of time, while other nations form through a revolutionary moment, a moment when a new nation is born because citizens became dissatisfied and radically changed the structure of their nation:

Two quite different concepts of the nation meet: the revolutionary-democratic and the nationalist. The equation state = nation = people applied to both, but for nationalists the creation of the political entities which would contain it derived from the prior existence of community distinguishing itself from foreigners, while from the revolutionary-democratic point of view the central concept was the sovereign citizen-people = state which, in relation to the remainder of the human race, constituted a "nation." (Hobsbawm 22)

In other words, one concept of the nation looks back to uphold the status quo, while the other looks forward and is invested in upending the status quo. The problem with the school's participation in the creation of imperial citizens, for Orwell, was not that it fostered a national identity, but that the *kind* of national identity it produced looked backward instead of forward and was overwhelmingly invested in the maintenance of the status quo.

Orwell makes that aspect of his critique clear when he writes specifically about the boys' weeklies, which were story-papers published for boys while he was young. He criticizes these stories as site of national indoctrination into children:

All the better because it is done indirectly, there is being pumped into them [English boys] the conviction that the major problems of our time do not exist, that there is nothing wrong with *laissez-faire* capitalism, that foreigners are unimportant comics and

that the British Empire is a sort of charity-concern which will last for ever. (*Orwell, Boys' Weeklies* 200)

The concern of the schools, or the educational ideological state apparatus, is not to create a better England, but to ensure the continued reproduction of the state. Implicit in the term “charity concern” is the idea that the Empire presents its preservation as a noble and selfless goal, and presumably Orwell loads this with some irony. However, what this is really getting at is the insinuation that every subject has an obligation to contribute to it. In context, Orwell is not really even suggesting that the empire *presents itself* as a force for good, but that it presents itself as the recipient of the charity of its subjects. Imperial education creates good imperial students to sustain the empire. For Orwell, the reason the empire needed to instill national identity and patriotism into its citizens was so that, if the empire should be threatened, a national pride would cause the common citizen to be compelled to defend it, and that could be accomplished by creating a desire to be involved in military operations. He writes that the goal is to create a man who “finds in the moment of crisis that he is a patriot after all” and that, though British people might in peacetime decide they are above such simple feelings and traditions, “a time comes when the sand of the desert is sodden red and what have I done for thee, England, my England?” (*The Limit to Pessimism* 119-120).¹⁸ Here, Orwell is noting that national identity is meant to function as an emotional trigger to cause English citizens to want to fight. The empire is first and foremost a war machine, and its primary concern is to continuously renew its supply of military operatives. Without the army, the empire would fall, so the empire needs citizens to be ready to become soldiers. For Orwell, the school functioned as that ideological assembly line that created

¹⁸ Here, Orwell references the title of a short story by D.H. Lawrence written during WWI and depicting the suffering of a veteran of the war. The story is often read as an engagement with the cost of English nationalism and preoccupation with “Englishness.”

the necessary nationalistic sympathies in its students such that they would be prepared, when called upon, to become the sword of the empire and to defend things as they were. While a general pessimism with British institution was a common post-war feeling, Orwell locates the schools as the first (and sometimes worst) cog in the imperial war machine.

THERE ARE OCCASIONS WHEN IT PAYS BETTER TO FIGHT AND BE BEATEN THAN NOT TO FIGHT AT ALL

Orwell's path toward that critical position involved becoming a soldier himself, as he joined the fight between socialism and fascism on the continent. Orwell's pathway toward socialism added the other key piece of his critique of British nationalism. For example, according to Althusser's later rendition of these arguments, all ideological state apparatuses (like the educational one) serve the ruling class and not the proletariat. For Althusser, the purpose of the apparatuses of the state is to replicate the means of production so that the ruling class of capitalists can exploit the labour of the proletariat for profit (1). For Orwell, the education system that is an apparatus of the English state seeks to replicate the means of producing the Empire and protecting its economic interests. The "middle-class man" is instilled with imperial national identity as a child so that he will instinctively defend the empire if it is threatened. This serves those who benefit from the empire as an institution, namely those in the upper class who profit from the resources of the colonies. The middle-class man is mobilized in the military to defend the economic interests of the British elite.

The instinct to participate in this tradition is one that Orwell admits to feeling during World War I, but this changes during his time in the Spanish Civil War. It is important to note that he knew firsthand about the emotional pull of military service. He felt a national duty in

World War I,¹⁹ but he missed the war by a very slim margin thus belonging to a group who felt they had missed out but were also vilified by the war generation for becoming the bright young things of the 20s. The patriotic desire to serve combined with the social pressure to “earn” his battle stripes may have played a role in his eventual mobilization as a soldier himself in the service of political ends. Of course, by the time he found himself drawn to military conflict on the continent, Orwell had already developed a passionate belief that class conflict was England’s biggest 20th-century problem. He could already reject nationalism as a tool of the empire, but it would seem that socialism still had a similar kind of emotional pull, and it was socialism that made a soldier out of Orwell. In December of 1936, he travelled to Spain, saying “I’ve come to fight against Fascism” (McNair, UCL 1964). His reason for travelling abroad to fight in a foreign war was related to his politics: he felt an obligation to “combat fascism and defend democracy” (Haycock 152). Though both sides in the Spanish civil war contained numerous factions (the Republicans consisted of socialists, communists, separatists, and anarchists, while the Nationalists consisted of monarchists, conservatives, and traditionalists), the conflict was viewed in terms of ideological struggle, one of the most common being fascism vs. communism.²⁰ Though communism is very different from socialism, and Orwell would later go on the explicitly critique communist regimes in his work²¹, he felt that the framing of the Spanish Civil War in terms of fascism vs. communism provided an opportunity “to write about the situation and endeavour to stir working-class opinion in Britain and France” (McNair, *George Orwell: The Man I Knew* 10). Indeed, though his initial goal seemed to be to use the war as an opportunity to

¹⁹ Orwell was still a boy during the war; during his schooling he wrote poems that were “the product of a ‘traditional’ form of patriotism integral to public and private schools of the period, including St. Cyprian’s, which Orwell attended from 1911 until December 1916” (Clarke 109).

²⁰ The Republicans consisted of various socialist and communist parties, and the opposing faction literally named themselves “Nationalists.”

²¹ Specifically in *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

drum up support for socialism, his enlistment seemed inevitable given his political convictions: “he was a revolutionary Socialist...He went to Spain... to write some newspaper articles, but he probably knew all the time that he would get into the war if it seemed to be his kind of fight... he promptly enlisted, ‘because at that time and in that place it seemed the only conceivable thing to do’” (Hicks 2). Though it would be reductive to say that the Spanish Civil war was totally about socialism vs fascism, this is certainly the lens through which Orwell saw the conflict according to his stated goals and purposes for getting involved.

Orwell joined forces with a militia aligned with Republican government to fight the fascists in the war and was shocked at their lack of soldiers and basic military provisions; he was badly wounded by a sniper and was forced to flee back to England in July of 1937 (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* 140). He returned disillusioned about military service, writing that “the idea of war is just a nightmare to me, and I refuse to believe that it can do the slightest good or even that it makes much different who wins” (Orwell 11:329-30:330). Even though he would later support British military involvement in World War II, Orwell returns from Spain critical of the concept of military action, and especially of individuals inspired by obligation. This was self-criticism, insofar as he felt seduced into military service by his own sense of obligation—even though that obligation was to anti-fascist socialism, a cause he continued to believe in. Back at home, though, this regret translated into a critique of British education, and the way it, too, mobilized a sense of obligation and a willingness to fight for the maintenance of the empire.

WHAT TO DO AT HOME?

Having rejected the jingoist Imperialism drilled into him as a schoolboy and having seen the failure of the fight for his socialist allies in Spain firsthand, Orwell set out to find a middle

ground that incorporated the admirable goals of socialism with the emotional power of national identity. In “The Lion and the Unicorn,” he writes about the emotional power of identification with a nation: as “a *positive* force there is nothing to set beside it. Christianity and international Socialism are as weak as straws in comparison with it” (392). Orwell recognized the immense emotional power of the nation, and of individual identification with one’s nation, as a means of creating comradeship and solidarity between people. Orwell at first understands this powerful national identity as a distraction from his goal—the goal of fighting fascism by spreading democratic socialism. “The people who stand to attention during ‘God Save the King’ would readily transfer their loyalty to a Socialist regime, if they were handled with the minimum of tact” (Orwell, 740. London Letter, 3 January 1941). Nationalism was wielded deftly by the fascists of Europe to accomplish their political ends, and socialism was typically framed as an internationalist movement that threatened the nation’s integrity. Orwell saw no way to overcome the way fascists used nationalism to mobilize citizens and rally people to their causes because it is so appealing and emotionally powerful. “According to Orwell, the problem for socialism was to appropriate or at least accommodate national identity” (Clarke 113). Acknowledging that national identity, though seemingly not a traditional element of socialism, was one of the most powerful methods to mobilize citizens to a political cause, Orwell sought to harness the power of national identification and incorporate it into a socialist politics: in other words, he wanted to simultaneously take the power of national identity away from the fascists, while mobilizing its power for democratic socialism. For democratic socialism to achieve acceptance in the mainstream, it would have to play within the framework of a political body motivated by national identity. The significant hurdle he faced in this pursuit was that nationalism, at least as wielded by fascist movements, was not compatible with democratic socialism. The type of

national identification he sought would also need to be distinct from the imperialism inculcated by Britain's public schools. Both of these traditional models were self-serving, creating widespread national identification among the populace in order to allow a smaller group of people to grab and maintain control of the levers of state power. Orwell's brand of national identification had to be constructed differently in order to reflect his socialist ideals.

This is the aspect of Orwell's nationalism that has been recognized as a progressive or reformist approach to the nation. Clarke, for example, aligns Orwell's "patriotism" (as opposed to "nationalism") with just that: "Orwell insists that it [patriotism] is not a commitment to maintain the nation as it exists, but to 'liberate' or improve it" (113). This is the aspect of Orwell's appeal to the nation that I would align with Hobsbawm's "revolutionary-democratic" concept of the nation, or with the category of civic nationalisms rather than with primordialist nationalisms and their appeals to the past. Most importantly, in contrast to imperial and fascist nationalisms that create an identity set up in opposition to some kind of outsider, Orwell's democratic-socialist patriotism would primarily be used to improve class relations *within* the nation. In his essay "Patriots and Revolutionaries" (1941), Orwell makes this argument explicitly: he argues that the type of national feeling World War II had created was actually the same type of feeling that *could have* mobilized a Socialist revolution, which would end capitalism. He writes:

Had any real leadership existed on the Left, there is little doubt that the return of the troops from Dunkirk could have been the beginning of the end of British capitalism. It was a moment at which the willingness for sacrifice and drastic changes extended not only to the working class but to nearly the whole of the middle class, whose

patriotism, when it comes to the pinch, is stronger than their sense of self-interest.

(235)

Patriotism, the love of England, motivated both working and middle-class people to sacrifice their own interests for the national interest in the war effort at Dunkirk by mobilizing civilian boats to rescue the survivors. Orwell claims that this was an important strategic moment missed by the Left because it was an opportunity where British public opinion was more receptive to the ideals of collectivism and socialism as patriotic ideals. What this passage shows is that Orwell really did think that national feeling could serve more than the unthinking perpetuation of the Empire. He thought national feeling could also be the key to unlocking the kind of social concern that could transform British society.

ENGLAND, BRITAIN, GREAT BRITAIN, THE BRITISH ISLES, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND, IN VERY EXALTED MOMENTS, ALBION

Orwell's emerging model of patriotism, focused not on preservation of a national past but on progressive liberation and improvement, is closely related to the revolutionary-democratic model of the nation Hobsbawm describes. Imperial nationalism and revolutionary-democratic nationalism can sometimes share the aspect of the separation of nation and state if the ideology is that the state should be made equivalent with the "nation" construed as an ethnic, linguistic, or cultural unit. For example, while revolutionary-democratic nations would hold that nation and state are different things since they have founded a state based on a pre-existing concept of a nation during their revolution, Imperial nationalism would also hold that state and nation are separate but that they should become one thing. For Hobsbawm, the ideology of nationalism is that the nation and state should simply coincide.

The dissonance between nation and state matches accounts of the kind of nation Orwell had in mind: for him, Clarke writes, “The nation was not perceived as the realisation of an essential identity, but as an evolving community” (114). This identification as an evolving community with mutual concerns and goals is the kind of national identification that Orwell wanted to cultivate for socialism because it would mobilize the individuals of England with the same passion that Imperial or Fascist nationalism was able to generate but would be set up toward what he viewed as the positive ends of democratic-socialist policy. While England is much more closely aligned with the British Imperial centre, Orwell tries to bring strategies home for resisting complicity with the Empire. By framing England as a smaller national identity subsumed by a larger Imperial identity, there are overlaps in strategy with former colonies.

This radical patriotism geared towards improving the nation towards socialist values is predicated on an imaginative understanding or assessment of the nation: if all nations are imagined communities, as Anderson suggests, Orwell suggests an intentional re-imagining of the nation that requires a highly rational and deliberate approach.²² The problem with such reimaginings is that, as Orwell admits, national identification is not usually a rational process. In fact, it is often and most powerfully an emotional identification that defies logical understanding. Even if one laid out a rational argument for identifying with the nation, it would not create as strong a response as convictions that were created emotionally. Orwell recognizes this, and it explains why, to quote Clarke:

his work on national identity...concentrates on the ‘passionate subjective response’ to the nation. It is, therefore, the ‘intangible’ network of myth, ritual and cultural tradition that forms the site of his struggle to construct a radical patriotism. The

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Eric Hobsbawm, *Invention of Tradition*.

production of a revolutionary commitment to the nation is complicated by its unconscious, even irrational basis, the extent to which it exceeds the formal relations of citizenship. (115)

Stories and cultural traditions are the places where national identity is constructed and therefore to create a radical patriotism that is as strong as nationalism, it must also be created through stories and cultural traditions. Orwell's remarks about the evacuation of the troops from Dunkirk could be taken in precisely this way: it was an opportunity to create a national narrative, in which English patriotism was naturally aligned with Socialist collectivism. He decried how leaders on the Left missed the opportunity to create propaganda to push that narrative:

We have got to make far clearer than it has been made hitherto the fact that at this moment of time a revolutionary has to be a patriot, and a patriot has to be a revolutionary. "Do you want to defeat Hitler? Then you must be ready to sacrifice your social prestige. Do you want to establish Socialism? Then you must be ready to defend your country." (Orwell, "Patriots and Revolutionaries" 241)

Dunkirk, if properly framed and harnessed as a national myth, could have been a story that framed collectivism and patriotism as one in the same, and therefore created a narrative where English people might be compelled to socialism as part of their patriotic duty just as they were compelled to cross the channel for the war. If stories are the way that national identity is formed, then Orwell's vehicle for creating the type of national identification he wanted would surely be rooted in new narratives.

What are the stories and cultural traditions of England? As previously discussed, Orwell heavily criticized the cultural stories and traditions that were fed to him as a boy because they were, in his view, tools of the Imperial machine. In "England, My England," Orwell writes about

a shared English consciousness, the common stories and culture that all the English can partake of, by using an intimate metaphor:

England is not the jewelled isle of Shakespeare's much-quoted message, nor is it the inferno depicted by Dr. Goebbels. More than either it resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons. It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of the family income. It is a family in which the young are generally thwarted and most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. Still, it is a family. It has its private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks. A family with the wrong members in control – that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase. (210)

While this speaks to the unity of the English people bound together through bonds as strong as familial ties, it does not describe any specific traits of what it means to be English except a “private language and its common memories.”²³ The trouble with creating a radical patriotism for the English to identify with through shared stories and culture is that, particularly in England, it is difficult to define what those shared stories and cultural traits are. In this passage, Orwell rejects the narrative of Imperial British nationalism (symbolized by the jeweled isle) but also rejects criticism from outside of England (from Nazi Germany) and articulates that the foundations for a positive national identification (private language and common memories) are

²³ Not to say that private language and common memories are uniquely English, but rather that both are essential components to any national consciousness. For example, many Canadians view Canadian vernacular as an essential national identity marker while those outside of Canada struggle with the correct use of the word “eh.”

present in the English consciousness, but that the wrong members of the English family are driving the formation of that consciousness.

Therefore, this passage sets up the work Orwell will go on to undertake: the formation of a radical, revolutionary, socialist English patriotism. To fit his metaphor, the work of that patriotism would be to remove the power from the irresponsible uncles and the bedridden aunts, to make sure the young are no longer thwarted and that the poor relations are no longer horribly sat upon. This metaphor, when read with the knowledge of his greater body of work, is clearly meant to speak to the working class of England. For Orwell, these are the English people who are affected first and worst by Imperial nationalism (only of the English, obviously the primary victims of Imperialism are those who suffered colonization). The working class bear all the risks of Imperial nationalism: they work the unsafe mines to harness national resources, their labour props up the Imperial machine, and when it comes to violence, they are the ones handed a gun and pushed to the fore. His struggle is to create a national identity that speaks to the working class that is separate from elitist British nationalism. Many of his other essays choose to focus on creating a patriotism that is distinct from nationalism with the goal of accomplishing this work, rather than tackling the extremely difficult question of what it those specific, uniquely English narratives and cultures are.

Though he sets out to create a radical patriotism that is distinct from what he describes as harmful nationalism, Orwell recognizes the potential for slippage between the two terms. In the interest of maintaining the distinction so that he could argue for radical patriotism as a positive thing compared to harmful nationalism, as this chapter will show, Orwell continued to write essays critical of nationalism even as he sought to construct radical patriotism through stories in his novels. In “Notes on Nationalism,” Orwell defined nationalism by the obsession of its

proponents; the nationalist's obsession with nation reflects an unthinking, uncritical engagement with the idea of national identity:

Nearly as possible, no nationalist ever thinks, talks, or writes about anything except the superiority of his own national unit...it is difficult if not impossible for any nationalist to conceal his allegiance...he will insist upon the superiority of his nation not only in military power and political virtue, but in art, literature, sport, the structure of languages, the physical beauty of its inhabitants, and perhaps even in climate, scenery and cooking. (Orwell, Notes on Nationalism 145)

The nationalist can only ever be a nationalist, unable to do anything but expound the virtues of his own nation in any and all contexts, regardless of rational thought or changing of circumstance. The level of devotion to the idea of national superiority is obsessive. Orwell also claims that nationalism is unstable because the nationalists are not driven by a tangible connection with other members of the nation like citizenship. Orwell was keenly aware of the tightrope he walked when he wanted to mobilize national identification, as one false step would cause his cultural work to descend into the very nationalism he sought to oppose. Therefore, differentiation was a critical part of his project.

To extrapolate Orwell's argument in an example, nationalism in Nazi Germany was not driven by shared identification with those holding German citizenship, but rather a contrived of racial hierarchy that placed the Aryan, ethnic "German" above other races. But it is important to remember that the Nazis constructed what it meant to be an Aryan German, and they could have constructed it a different way if they had a different agenda; it is not a rational distinction to make because it can (and did) evolve and change over the years. "What remains constant in the nationalist is his own state of mind: the object of his feelings is changeable and may be

imaginary” (146). The nationalist is always devoted to some definition of the nation, but that definition or understanding of what he is devoted to can change and it will have no effect on the level of devotion he feels; the devotion is stable, the object of devotion is not. For example, Orwell lists many nationalist leaders and notes: “One quite commonly finds that great national leaders, or the founders of nationalist movements, do not even belong to the country they have glorified. Sometimes they are outright foreigners, or more often they come from peripheral areas where nationality is doubtful. Examples are Stalin, Hitler, Napoleon, de Valera, Disraeli, Poincaré, Beaverbrook” (146). Why should Hitler, an Austrian, lead a German nationalist movement? It makes no sense unless Orwell’s notion of the instability of nationalist, the idea that the object of the nationalist’s devotion is instable and transferable, is true. In order to square the circle of an Austrian man leading a German nationalist movement, Hitler and the Nazis set up their nationalism in a racialized way, emphasizing a Pan-Germanic people of which Hitler was a part. While some Austrians and Germans indeed share an ethnic background, this has very little to do with nation in a pragmatic political sense, but as Orwell notes, this is of no concern to the nationalist.

Finally, Orwell argues that the nationalist is characterized by their “indifference to reality” in their moral and ethical evaluation of actions taken by their own country both in history as well as in the present. He writes that actions:

are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage—torture, the use of hostages, forced labour, mass deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassination, the bombing of civilians—which does not change its moral colour when it is

committed by 'our' side...the nationalist is haunted by the belief that the past can be altered. (147-148)

The nationalist is not loyal to any code of ethics or principles, he is loyal to his national unit. For Orwell, this represents a disconnect from reality because the same action (torture, for example) can be bad when another nation does it and good when the nation with which the nationalist identifies does it; the objective reality that torture is wrong is irrelevant to the nationalist. This brings us back to Orwell's critique of nationalism and his turn towards what he will call patriotism because a key difference he will draw between the two is that nationalism is uncritical: nationalism looks backwards to justify the present regardless of any critical understanding of that present; by contrast, Orwell's patriotism that he tries to describe looks at the present in a critical way in order to improve the nation in the future. For Orwell, the patriot must be hyper-aware of the nation's past and present and observe the state of the nation's affairs in a discerning, critical way with an eye to future improvement. Nationalists are not concerned with improvement because that would imply an acknowledgement that the nation is not perfect, which is a thought the nationalist cannot permit in him or herself. To this end of always being in the right, nationalism "appropriates, adapt and reinterprets historical narratives in order to legitimise present actions" (Clarke 117). In other words, historical reality is not relevant to nationalists either. If the historical facts do not support that nationalists' agenda, they simply change the history.

Having so extensively examined what it means to be a nationalist and how nationalism functions in his essay, Orwell's essays build toward distinguishing that nationalism from the patriotism he advocated for. Having recognized the immense power of national identification, Orwell admits that patriotic identification would function in many of the same ways, especially

in that it is primary an emotional, or “irrational” identification. “However, whilst nationalism is aggressive, intolerant and concerned with power, he defines patriotism as a simultaneous defence of tradition and commitment to renewal. It interpolates individuals within a specific set of historical and cultural narratives and produces an ‘imagined community’²⁴ that links the ‘nation as state’ to the ‘nation as culture’” (Clarke 118). His patriotism is everything that nationalism is not. It is not obsessive because of its focus on renewal rather than national supremacy. It is not unstable because it involves devotion to a specific (and fixed) set of historical and cultural narratives rather than devotion to the nebulous and changing definitions provided by nationalists. It is not indifferent to reality because the trend towards renewal requires a direct response to the real circumstances of the nation. For Orwell, his patriotism answers the shortcomings of nationalism and provides a strong opportunity for socialism to harness the power of national identification for good.

The problem with Orwell’s distinctions is nationalists could easily work within his definition of patriotism to accomplish their own ends. Despite his attempts to delineate the two terms, the fact remains that “nationalism” and “patriotism” remain similar terms often used imprecisely and interchangeably, sometimes even by Orwell himself. In fact, as Clarke points out, Orwell uses the term “patriotism” very differently in “The Rediscovery of Europe” than he does in “Boys’ Weeklies,” and even still both are different from his eventual treatment in “Notes on Nationalism.” Therefore, even despite a painstaking effort to create a clearly defined separation, the potential for slippage between the two terms remains simply because of their widespread and differing uses. For example, Orwell sometimes uses terms interchangeably even when he has spent much time illustrating their key differences: “the working class...have no

²⁴ This being Benedict Anderson’s description of how nations are formed and function.

imperialist feeling and dislike *patriotic* bombast” (Orwell 236, my emphasis) Furthermore, nationalists are adept at reshaping words and contexts to suit their ends. As Clarke notes, “The examples of ‘Neo-Toryism’ and ‘old-fashioned British jingoism’ illustrate...nationalists are capable of using the codes, traditions and rituals upon which patriotism relies. Indeed, nationalist movements can use patriotism itself. The Nazi exploitation of German patriotism is one prominent example of this process in this period” (Clarke 120). National identification is like a hammer in this way. In the right hands, it is a useful tool for construction. In the wrong hands, it is a destructive weapon. In a sense, the distinction Orwell seeks to make is as much about who wields the power of national identification as how it operates and what its goals are.

Though Orwell is, as I have argued, unsuccessful in totally separating the terms “nationalism” and “patriotism” due to the slippages he allows in his own writing,²⁵ his essays were nonetheless important in the field of critical nationalist studies eventually pursuing his goal. Hobsbawm would eventually argue, “it is important to distinguish between the exclusive nationalisms of states or right-wing political movements which substitute [themselves] for all other forms of political and social identification, and the conglomerate nation/citizen, social consciousness which, in modern states, forms the soil in which all other political sentiments grow” (145). For Hobsbawm, the distinction is that nationalism has a trend towards totalitarianism which is distinct from the patriotism that forms a foundation for meaningful political engagement. The philosophical point of agreement between Hobsbawm and Orwell is that some varieties of national identification are backwards-looking and maintain power at all costs, while other forms might be forward-looking and constructive. This distinction is one that

²⁵ Though there is only one example of him literally using the terms interchangeably, functionally, in both *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and *Homage to Catalonia*, his descriptions of patriotic movements display some of the features of nationalism that he criticizes.

Orwell approaches in his essays, even if he never quite articulates it successfully. As the next section of this chapter will show, the struggle for Orwell's novels is to do the cultural and narrative work of establishing that social consciousness that forms the soil from which his radical patriotism can grow, inspiring a renewal of England. As I turn to Orwell's fiction, the chapter will demonstrate that while Orwell makes a clear argument against nationalism, the entire project of his fiction still grows out of a commitment to national identification and national feeling—one that, lacking a better term, he tries to differentiate under the designation of "patriotism." If that remains a loose distinction, and if he is not ultimately successful in solving the problem of slippage between his own terms, his work remains instructive for the field of nationalism studies, and there is much to be learned from his successes as well as from his shortcomings.

BRITISHNESS HARMS THE ENGLISH CHARACTER: *BURMESE DAYS* AND ENGLISHNESS

Orwell's earliest attempt at using fiction to reconcile the difference between patriotism and nationalism is in 1934 with his first novel: *Burmese Days*. Esty frames this novel in ways that explicitly link Orwell's experience of the empire abroad to his later ability to view England with new eyes; he writes, "Born in the Asian empire, Orwell was a colonial outsider who, like Kipling...had the 'eyes of the observer, of the man coming back to England...eyes full of [the] experience of imperialism.' Unlike Kipling...though, Orwell was a political radical" (220). Set in Burma during the period of British rule (1858-1947), the novel explores the colonial system of the British Raj, and the people on both sides of power within that system. As we know from the essays, Orwell is critical of the British Empire and its outward looking nationalism. In particular, he took a negative view of the colonial state Britain had set up in India, which he saw first-hand when he worked in Burma. It is, therefore, unsurprising that his novel set in the British Raj is

concerned with the failure and breaking down of the different elements of that colonial system. Orwell there argues that colonialism not only has a clear and obvious detrimental impact to the Burmese people, but also a severe and negative impact on the identity of the English people. The consequences of outward, backward-looking nationalism are laid bare in this novel. The motivations for colonialism are also made clear for Orwell: this is not just a regrettable institution which in no way reflects the hearts of the reluctant English participants. Rather, he depicts a system motivated and perpetuated by an attitude of racial superiority. This animus, combined with the nationalist fervor of Empire, should have rung an alarm bell to signal the closeness of fascism to mainstream English society. This is essential to understanding why Orwell wants to mobilize an inward-facing patriotism to remedy the ills of outward facing nationalism.

Orwell's depiction of colonialism in *Burmese Days* emphasizes that private feelings or good intentions are ultimately irrelevant in the context of imperial oppression. He portrays a system where individual morality is overshadowed by the inherently exploitative nature of colonialism. Even characters who express criticism of the colonial system—such as protagonist John Flory, a British timber merchant who becomes disillusioned with the colonial system and racism of his fellow Englishmen—are unable to effect meaningful change or challenge the status quo. The novel is set in the British colony of Burma during the 1920s, and it follows Flory, who forms a relationship with a Burmese woman called Ma Hla May; this relationship complicates his position with both the British ruling class and the local Burmese people. This critique of colonialism's impact on both the colonized and the colonizer sets the stage for Orwell's broader exploration of how outward-facing nationalism, fueled by an attitude of racial superiority and imperial ambition, corrodes not only the society it dominates but also the moral and cultural

identity of the dominating nation. Orwell's Englishmen are direct in their disdain for the Burmese people, and Orwell makes no institutional excuse for them. This attitude is evident in the scenes where the local Burmese doctor, Dr. Veraswami—a loyal supporter of the Empire and a close friend of Flory—attempts to secure membership in the European club. One of the Englishmen, Ellis, exhibits unapologetic racism when discussing the prospect of allowing a local Burmese into the club: "He's asking us to break all our rules and take a dear little n—r-boy into this club. *Dear* Dr. Veraswami, for instance. Dr. Very-slimy, I call him. That *would* be a treat, wouldn't it? Little pot-bellied n—rs breathing garlic in your face over the bridge-table" (Orwell 16). While Ellis is only the most egregious offender, his views are echoed and unchallenged by other members of the European club. Orwell clearly shows that Englishmen in Burma are guilty of, at the very least, tolerating overt racism from their peers in addition to participating in the racist project of the empire. Coming back to Orwell's criticism of imperial nationalism, what is to be done about the British Raj from the English perspective?

It would seem like Orwell is only criticizing the British people and the racist motivations behind colonialism, but it is not that simple. Orwell also evinces a position that is willing to criticize the colonized people for complicity with their colonizers. For example, Magistrate U Po Kyin is a corrupt official who has no problem ruining other Burmese people if it furthers his position because "to fight on the side of the British, to become a parasite upon them, had been his ruling ambition, even as a child" (1). We later discover that his plan is to get elected to the European club. Indeed, it is U Po Kyin's scheme that sets in action the plot of the novel. He causes the problems with Veraswami; he causes the riots and violence; he disgraces Flory by parading his Indian mistress at church. Kyin is undoubtedly the villain of the story. Orwell here is criticizing both sides for their participation in the system of colonialism. He criticizes the

English for engaging in racism and hypocritically exploiting the Burmese peoples. He criticizes the Burmese people for self-betrayal and corruptly collaborating in the oppression of other Burmans for petty personal gain. To map this on to Orwell's understanding of nationalism vs patriotism, it is clear that, in the novel, the English are engaged in uncritical, imperial nationalism and that is bad. He also, however, criticizes the Burmese people (rather harshly) for political impotence due a lack of patriotism. To clarify, we know that many former colonies gained independence through patriotic movements that appealed to the colonized peoples' sense of national identity (India perhaps most famously) but, in Orwell's novel, the Burmese people are primarily pragmatic, accepting the conditions of the British Raj and attempting to make the best of them (Veraswami and U Po Kyin's ultimate goal is the same: a position of privilege through proximity to the white colonizers). Implied in Orwell's critique of a too hot Imperial nationalism and a too cold Burmese complicity is a useful patriotism. Such a Burmese patriotism may not, of course, really be entirely unproblematic, but Orwell implies that it would have use, and a value, in the context of the resistance to imperialism.

The protagonist, Flory, is a character that both disdains Ellis' racism (as a friend of Veraswami) and is an enemy of U Po Kyin; he is caught in the middle with no real friends on either side. In some ways, Flory is meant to stand in for the concept of the "good, progressive Englishman" who does not adhere to normalized (British), racist views of the local community; however, this status is undermined in the novel through Orwell's portrayal of Flory as, in fact, a coward. He does not defend the Burmese to the other Englishmen because he does not want to deal with an argument with Ellis, and he also does not engage in the conflict with U Po Kyin because it might affect his standing: "Even to know the rights and wrongs of a 'native' quarrel is a loss of prestige" (66). While Flory disagrees with the harmful racism that the colonial system

allows the English to visit upon the local population, he will not risk loss of standing within that system and so he complies. This is Orwell's critique of the progressive Englishman's refusal for radical (socialist) reform in England.

Flory's large birthmark that he continually tries to hide symbolizes his weakness. Orwell emphasizes the birthmark when Flory is finally undone by U Po Kyin, by having Flory's mistress walk into a church in front of his fiancée Elizabeth, ruining Flory's reputation among the other Europeans, Orwell writes: "worse than anything, was his ugliness at this moment. His face appalled her [Elizabeth], it was so ghastly, rigid and old. It was like a skull. Only the birthmark seemed alive in it. She hated him now for his birthmark. She had never known till this moment how dishonouring, how unforgivable a thing it was" (244). The birthmark represents his weakness and inaction, and Elizabeth sees it as the only live thing about him at this moment. Rather than take a side in the conflict or try to remedy the situation, Flory is governed still by that weakness and inaction. Unable to actively engage with others in this moment of crisis, Orwell makes the metaphor literal by having Flory turn a gun on himself in an ultimate refusal to participate. Here, Flory illustrates Orwell's biting critique of what he considered the average proper Englishman's cowardice: the character does not even try to dismantle the institutional constraints or challenge racist statements made by his peers. What is at stake is the relationship between proper Englishness and the colonial system, and Orwell seems to suggest that by allowing the British Raj and imperial nationalism to exist, one damages or even destroys good English character. Orwell's novel suggests sharp criticism of the people on both sides of colonial oppression, but his most significant rebuke is aimed at the Englishman who does nothing to change it. This suggests that, for Orwell, an end to colonialism is necessary and right, but he does not seem to offer any real specifics on how to do that or what comes after. It seems as

though the English are too deep into this system to change it, and Flory's suicide is the only way for him out of that terrible situation.²⁶ The implication is that British nationalism literally destroys the English spirit.

Orwell's novel offers a contrary account of the British Raj, as he argues that the English bear more responsibility for the tension between themselves and the indigenous population than the British public may have considered (I am aware of how obvious this sounds to a contemporary reader, but bear in mind the political circumstances of the late British Empire and how they coloured the English peoples' understanding of their role in colonialism). Orwell's story does not hold with the idea that people are forced into conflict because of the regrettable apparatuses of the imperial system. *Burmese Days* instead places the blame on some fault in the British people—in other words, with an aspect of British identity itself. Flory notes of Ellis: “Any hint of friendly feeling towards an Oriental seemed to him a horrible perversity. He was an intelligent man and an able servant of his firm, but he was one of those Englishmen—common, unfortunately—who should never be allowed to set foot in the East” (24). Ellis is a racist Englishman hostile to the Burmese people. Ellis' overt racism exemplifies the pervasive attitudes that Orwell identifies as both fueling and sustained by the colonial project, demonstrating how prejudice and imperial structures reinforce each other. Through this depiction of Englishmen in Burma, Orwell is making the still logically prior point that racism is there in the first place and is an essential element of the Imperial machine; the empire cannot function unless the English accept the idea that they are superior to those whom they colonize. Therefore, for Orwell, racism is part of how Englishmen are asked and invited to see themselves in these colonial settings from their days as schoolboys.

²⁶ Gopinath also reads Flory's suicide as a metaphor for the futility of the British occupation in her examination of the intersection between Imperialism and masculinity.

In the context of Orwell's own nationalism vs. patriotism dichotomy, this is why racism is so difficult to disentangle from outward looking, imperial nationalism: racism is an essential precondition for imperial nationalism for Orwell, and the English people are asked to accept individual racism in order to enable the institution of the Empire to endure. By claiming that Ellis, and men like him, should not be allowed to set foot in the East, Orwell creates an ambiguity around his critique of imperialism. Does the judgement of Ellis imply that Englishmen should not be in the East at all, or that a colonial system would work if only one could remove racism and prejudice from the colonizers? Flory's suicide at the end of the novel partially addresses this problem, since it takes place after he has been attacked by nefarious characters from *both* the English and the Burmese communities and feels unable to cope with the loss of his reputation and prospects. Though Flory is not without prejudice (he enjoys the Burmese culture as a spectacle rather than something with intrinsic value), he is certainly the least prejudiced English character in the novel. The ending suggests that such people are not compatible with life in a colonial state. Therefore, Orwell's criticism of imperialism in the novel echoes the work of his essays, suggesting that an outward facing²⁷ imperial nationalism would actually kill the character of the English people.

The novel criticizes English culture directly. Upon leaving the European club and sitting through the racist opinions of his fellow Englishmen, Flory insults the members of the club and their reverence for English culture as superior:

Dull boozing witless porkers! Was it possible they could go on week after week, year after year, repeating word for word the same evil-minded drivel, like a

²⁷ "Outward Facing" nationalisms are conceptions of nation that uncritically seek to expand that nation, such as imperial nationalism or Hitler's policy of Lebensraum. This term is in opposition to "Inward Facing" nationalism, which Orwell would term "patriotism" that turns a critical eye towards how the country functions with an emphasis on improvement.

parody of a fifth-rate story in Blackwood's? Would none of them EVER think of anything new to say? Oh, what a place, what people! What a civilization is this of ours—this godless civilization founded on whisky, Blackwood's and the 'Bonzo' pictures! God have mercy on us, for all of us are part of it." (33)

Flory criticizes the Englishmen as lazy and wonders why stereotypical elements of English popular culture like periodical magazines and cartoons are held in a higher regard than Burmese culture. Orwell does not choose the best of English culture, focusing his critique on "lower," more common forms of art, but Flory's thoughts on the culture of England and its relationship to the Burmese people suggests that he is skeptical of the idea that the empire is somehow elevating the culture of the colonized peoples by bringing them into contact with English culture. Orwell rejects the notion that England is the "jewelled isle of Shakespeare" and honestly depicts the numerous meaningless and poor artistic outputs of English culture, thus moving beyond the colonialist idea of English exceptionalism and the notion of the cultural improvement of the colonies through the presence of the English. Here, Orwell rejects a key concept of outward looking nationalism: the "civilizing" ideology that would make colonization by the British a good thing. That ideology implies a larger, and crude, commitment to one's own nation (which Orwell mentions in the essays), but here, Orwell implies a hypocrisy in the claim that English culture is superior to the culture of Burma. Orwell's critique of nationalism in this novel is a resistance to English nationalism and colonialism that grows out of (and leaves untroubled in many ways) a basically Orientalist framework. Perhaps more consistently, Orwell offers a critique of nationalism that (still distastefully, to the modern reader) begins its critique with *other* nations and then turns that critical lens back to England itself.

Burmese Days is about a moment much earlier than his later engagement with nationalism in his essays. It is a more fully negative and critical moment in Orwell's thinking about national identity than readers have come to understand about his thoughts on nationalism in general. The novel's rejection of an imperialist attitude of English superiority holds with Orwell's personal politics and beliefs expressed in his non-fiction, but not with his reputation as a quintessentially English author concerned with expressing English patriotism. Orwell sought to harness the social power of national identification for socialist political purposes and he felt that, in order to do that, the left would have to do some work to reclaim "nationalism" from the fascist forces that had so publicly abused it.²⁸ This movement amongst the political Left in England comes for Orwell later in the 1930's, after the publication of *Burmese Days* and his disillusionment in the war in Spain. The novel, published in 1936, reflects Orwell's attitude that rejects his schoolboy nationalism and experiences working in Burma as a young man, but does not yet move towards a positive patriotism. Instead, he presents, in the form of the European Club, a portrait of a hypocritical imperial nationalism. The suicide is the only conclusion Orwell sees as possible for a the character who exists pulled between two identities: on the one hand, an Englishmen interested financially in British rule, on the other a decent man who appreciates the culture of the country in which he lives. In the end, this tension breaks as Flory cannot exist as a man committed to both sides of the conflict in Burma, since both sides reject him. Flory's death is the expression of the dead end that Orwell felt British national identity (as then constructed in an imperial context) led to. Orwell's novel rejects the British empire as a context in which a good, patriotic Englishness can flourish.

²⁸ Andy Croft writes in *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s*: "Patriotism could be rescued from the embarrassment of the Right...successfully mobilized against fascism, British and German" (194).

RECONCILING SOCIALIST GOALS WITH THE ENGLISH CHARACTER

Up to this point, I have examined Orwell's early career use of fiction as a vehicle for critique of nationalism. Later in his career, Orwell would turn away from explicit engagement with Englishness in fiction and tackle the subject more in non-fiction in the form of his essays, some of them book-length. The reason, I argue, is that he begins to use literature less as a vehicle for critique and more as a technology of constructive nationalism.

The first problem Orwell, and many other writers concerned with constructions of national identity, faced was to come up with some sort of definition or at least a set of characteristics for Englishness. Orwell attempts to do this in his essay "England Your England" (1941) by describing some shared traits of the English. He starts by saying that the English are not at all gifted artistically (except in literature) compared to the other nations of Europe, but he does point out some other shared qualities:

Here it is worth noting a minor English trait which is extremely well marked though not often commented on, and that is a love of flowers. This is one of the first things that one notices when one reaches England from abroad, especially if one is coming from southern Europe. Does it not contradict the English indifference to the arts? Not really, because it is found in people who have no aesthetic feelings whatever. What it does link up with, however, is another English characteristic which is so much a part of us that we barely notice it, and that is the addiction to hobbies and spare-time occupations, the *privateness* of English life. We are a nation of flower-lovers, but also a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans. All the culture that is most truly native centres round

things which even when they are communal are not official – the pub, the football match, the back garden, the fireside and the ‘nice cup of tea’. The liberty of the individual is still believed in, almost as in the nineteenth century. But this has nothing to do with economic liberty, the right to exploit others for profit. It is the liberty to have a home of your own, to do what you like in your spare time, to choose your own amusements instead of having them chosen for you from above. The most hateful of all names in an English ear is Nosey Parker. It is obvious, of course, that even this purely private liberty is a lost cause. Like all other modern people, the English are in process of being numbered, labelled, conscripted, ‘co-ordinated’. But the pull of their impulses is in the other direction, and the kind of regimentation that can be imposed on them will be modified in consequence. No party rallies, no Youth Movements, no coloured shirts, no Jew-baiting or ‘spontaneous’ demonstrations. No Gestapo either, in all probability. (196)

The key aspect Englishness, for Orwell, is privateness. Englishness, even when communal, is still private first and foremost. Orwell seeks to reframe this privateness not as a selfishness or economic individualism, but as something that will help those conscriptions into collective service from becoming fascist. There is, he argues, a natural temperamental check upon any wartime drive toward the communal. In a way, Orwell argues that fascism is simply not in the English character. This argument is in tension with another point he makes in the same essay about the “dysfunctional family” with a “private language” that closes ranks at the approach of an enemy. On the one hand, he portrays the English as a private, insular people focused on their hobbies and local communities. On the other, he describes them as a “family” that unites against external threats, suggesting a more outward-facing nationalism. This apparent contradiction

reflects Orwell's slippages in his writing on English identity. In "The Lion and the Unicorn," for instance, he argues for harnessing English patriotism for socialist ends, while still critiquing imperial nationalism. He attempts to reconcile his desire for a progressive English identity with the realities of how nationalism often manifests.

Arguably, the most useful aspect of nationalism is collective action in times of crisis: in Orwell's terms, a social body that is "communal but not official." One that "closes ranks" at the approach of an enemy. Orwell's essays are concerned with the misuse of that instinct to collective national action by fascists and with the repurposing of that instinct for a socialist political movement. Since socialism is primarily concerned with domestic policy that affects the economic relationship between different classes, the instinct to "close ranks" at the approach of an external enemy does not seem to be useful; socialism combats fascism and the negative effects of capitalism within a given country's body politic. Here is the first big difference between outward-looking nationalism and Orwell's use of inward-looking nationalism: the "enemy" is unjust domestic policy and domestic politics moving towards fascism. The aim, as expressed in his essays, is to use the instinct of national identification to cause a movement to improve English society, or rather influence English politics to trend left towards socialism, which Orwell viewed as the only way to ensure the liberty of the English people. Orwell attempts to describe a collective, or socialist, attitude in terms that would be more acceptable to an existing British identity that staked everything on individual or private benefit. He attempts to take an impulse to create a national identity, which is usually coded in right wing politics, and recode it in left wing politics. He makes use of his own concept of doublespeak from *1984*, which ironically has allowed the political right to claim that the novel is in fact a critique of

socialism in the name of that very same sort of British aspiration to simple privacy and going about one's own business.²⁹

Since domestic policy and political discourse are not “enemies” in the usual way we think of the word, Orwell sets out, in his non-fiction work, to demonstrate and describe how these laws and discourses affect everyday English people and visit certain social ills upon them. Using these books as a way to explain how these detrimental policies work in action, Orwell hoped to create a sense of identification across class divides with the aim of aligning as many people as possible to the political movement of socialism. One should embrace socialist policies because they are the best way to help one's fellow Englishman survive and prosper and, because all Englishmen are part of the same national unit; this is a desirable outcome to support one's own communal social body. Non-fiction is a vehicle for a more direct critique for Orwell, which allows him to make his case much more explicitly than in a novel like *Burmese Days*³⁰.

The first of these social ills that Orwell tackles in his non-fiction is homelessness or the phenomenon of “tramping.” In *Down and Out in Paris and London*, he describes his own experiences with poverty and homelessness in both cities, exploring the economic hardships as well as social stigma that people affected by homelessness deal with every day. After narrating his story, the book ends with an essay about England that examines the *causes* of “tramping” and the hardships that many face every day, especially those who dealt with a more severe and long-lasting poverty than Orwell:

Why do tramps exist at all? It is a curious thing, but very few people know what makes a tramp take to the road. And, because of the belief in the tramp-monster,

²⁹ Literary Critic Ron Charles has written about the trend in conservative politics to attack liberal politicians and policies by calling them “Orwellian” (Charles 2). John Rodden also written about how “Orwell” as a figure in popular discourse has been appropriated for various political ends.

³⁰ Though, a novel like *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* might also be said to be emphasizing these everyday actions.

the most fantastic reasons are suggested. It is said, for instance, that tramps tramp to avoid work, to beg more easily, to seek opportunities for crime, even—least probable of reasons—because they like tramping...A tramp tramps, not because he likes it, but for the same reason as a car keeps to the left; because there happens to be a law compelling him to do so. (238-239)

In this passage, Orwell explicitly states that homelessness and vagrancy are not an unfortunate result of some flaw in a tramp's character, a side-effect of addiction or mental illness, or any of the other usual excuses one hears when the question of why people live on the streets is considered. For Orwell, homelessness is an essential part of English society as it was (and still is) constituted. He states what many feel is obvious but is often neglected in political debates: that most people suffering from homelessness would rather not be doing so, and it is there are policies in place creating the circumstances where someone must choose between food and housing. "A destitute man, if he is not supported by the parish, can only get relief at the casual wards, and as each casual ward will only admit him for one night, he is automatically kept moving. He is vagrant because, in the state of the law, it is that or starve" (239). Orwell goes on at some length about the various troubles that people affected by homelessness face, the struggles both physical and psychological, and the societal causes for those various troubles, but it is important to note that he also claims that homelessness is antithetical to the English spirit:

Deliberate, cynical parasitism, such as one reads of in Jack London's books on American tramping, is not in the English character. The English are a conscience-ridden race, with a strong sense of the sinfulness of poverty. One cannot imagine the average Englishman deliberately turning parasite, and this national character does not necessarily change because a man is thrown out of work. Indeed, if one

remembers that a tramp is only an Englishman out of work, forced by law to live as a vagabond, then the tramp-monster vanishes. (240)

Here, Orwell's language displays signs of classism by calling some tramps "parasites" as well as partaking of the sort of outward nationalism his essays seek to avoid by using an American example as a way to hold up English virtue. The slippage into the outward looking and problematic nationalism accompanied by an expression of prejudice shows how difficult it is to strike the sort of balance with nationalism that Orwell seeks to achieve; however, there is still one aspect of the passage that does accomplish the goal of unifying countrymen across class.

He asks his reader to see past poverty and look for shared national identity. He argues that no reasonable Englishman would choose to be vagrant and therefore English people should not believe in the classist tropes about the "tramp-monster" having some defect of character that resulted in his homelessness. Rather, Orwell suggests that by seeing people affected by homelessness as Englishmen, by first looking to national identification, the tramp-monster trope that causes the visceral prejudiced reaction against such people can be overcome or even erased. For when one acknowledges that one is part of the same national community as a tramp, one must recognize oneself in that tramp; the same "English character" lives in both the tramp and the person with a home, and with that shared national consciousness an alliance of interest begins to form. For Orwell, this is crucial since the very laws and policies that perpetuate homelessness are often created by the classist tendency to dehumanize people experiencing homelessness. The tramp-monster must be destroyed, and Orwell argues that the best way to do that is to recognize the common English character that unifies Englishmen across classes. "I am not saying, of course, that most tramps are ideal characters; I am only saying that they are ordinary human

beings, and that if they are worse than other people it is the result and not the cause of their way of life” (240).

Orwell not only makes the argument for large scale political change in England, but he also makes the argument smaller and more personal, reframing the larger political aims of socialism into the personal stories and choices made on an individual level that reflect national character. The relative ease with which an ordinary Englishman can fall into poverty and vagrancy is demonstrated by Orwell himself in his narrative. Already living frugally in Paris, his room is burgled, and he is left with nearly nothing. On his return to England, he lives on the streets for a short period before he finds steady work. This experience seems to be the driving force behind his newfound understanding for the plight of people affected by homelessness. This is not to say that he completely rids himself of classism, or even snobbery, but at the very least he recognizes the humanity in these people enough to write on their behalf: “I shall never again think that all tramps are drunken scoundrels, nor expect a beggar to be grateful when I give him a penny, nor be surprised if men out of work lack energy, nor subscribe to the Salvation Army, nor pawn my clothes, nor refuse a handbill, nor enjoy a meal at a smart restaurant. That is a beginning” (254). Not only does he speak about how his experience forced him to see the humanity in “tramps” and “beggars,” but he also writes about how his life and habits shall change now that he is no longer on the street. It is not a call to collective political action in the form of socialism, but it is a demonstration of how the personal attitudes and actions of everyday Englishmen can help alleviate the conditions that drive people to homelessness. That, as Orwell says, is a good beginning because if the national character can be shifted to reflect collectivist values, then the need for organized socialism in government is less dire. Here, the tribal nature of national identity can be mobilized to achieve political action on homelessness; if the English see

vagrants not as tramps, but as a fellow Englishman, the natural urge to help a compatriot would create a natural English collective.

ENGLISH SOCIALIST IDENTITY AS A DEFENSE FROM FASCISM

In his second work of non-fiction, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell documents his visits to the North of England and spending time in the mining communities there. He describes in great detail the work and working conditions of the miners, their families' day to day lives, the various hardships and dangers associated with that type of work and lifestyle, and the economic realities that the miners faced. "The place is like hell," he comments in one instance, drawing readers' attention to sensory elements such as the "heat, noise, confusion, darkness, foul air, and above all, unbearably cramped space" miners must endure during their working hours (18). As one might expect, the life of an early 20th century miner was physically exhausting, incredibly dangerous, and financially difficult. They endured harsh working conditions that often resulted in injury or death, spent most of their days working or traveling to work leaving them little to no waking hours at home with their families, and their wages were low, especially in light of the considerable effort and danger involved with the job.

Orwell moves from this description of the lifestyle of northern miners to a discussion about the potential benefits of socialism. It represents a shift from his previous work in *Down and Out in Paris and London* and changing individual attitudes towards explicit socialist theorizing and official policy work. Orwell argues that socialism is uniquely appealing in an industrialized society like that of northern England:

Granted industrialism, the idea of Socialism presents itself naturally, because private ownership is only tolerable when every individual (or family or other unit) is at least

moderately self-supporting; but the effect of industrialism is to make it impossible for anyone to be self-supporting even for a moment. Industrialism, once it rises above a fairly low level, must lead to some form of collectivism. (169)

Industrialism, for Orwell, makes it impossible for a person or family to lead a self-sustaining life as might have been possible before the industrial revolution. For example, a family could have a farm and produce enough food and supplies for themselves so as to not rely too heavily on large markets like a national economy. Once England became industrialized and this sort of lifestyle was made impossible by the conditions of industrialization (mass production, work specialization, factory and mine work, rich men controlling the means of production), English people were forced to begin to rely on each other in the form of an interconnected national industrialized economy. For Orwell, socialism is the next logical step in this process of establishing collectivism, for without it, people cannot thrive in an industrialized world. The overall aim of his work is to use writing as a vehicle to change the national character of the English people to be more receptive to general collectivism and even organized socialism.

If Industrialism “must lead” to some sort of collectivism as Orwell argues, why had England not adopted some form of socialism? Why did Orwell feel the need to write this book to argue for the merits of socialism and warn of the dangers of fascism? The reason, according to Orwell, is class prejudice:

Here you come to the real secret of class distinctions in the West— the real reason why a European of bourgeois upbringing, even when he calls himself a Communist, cannot without a hard effort think of a working man as his equal. It is summed up in four frightful words which people nowadays are chary of uttering,

but which were bandied about quite freely in my childhood. The words were: The lower classes smell. (115)

Here, Orwell tackles an aspect of classism firmly rooted in affective response to sensory perception: disgust. Much like how emotional identification with nation can motivate politicians to use national identity as an engine for social decisions, classism is also rooted in emotional responses. He explains that middle and upper-class English children are taught that the lower classes smell and that this creates an “impassable barrier. For no feeling of like or dislike is quite so fundamental as a physical feeling. Race-hatred, religious hatred, differences of education, of temperament, of intellect, even differences of moral code, can be got over; but physical repulsion cannot” (115). The prejudice against the lower classes of England is rooted in a perceived physical repulsion that cannot be overcome because physical repulsion is involuntary; we cannot help what we find displeasing to our nose. This prejudice against the lower-class working people of England is even more insidious than the prejudice against people affected by homelessness in the form of the tramp-monster because “It may not greatly matter if the average middle-class person is brought up to believe that the working classes are ignorant, lazy, drunken, boorish, and dishonest; it is when he is brought up to believe that they are dirty that the harm is done. And in my childhood we were brought up to believe that they were dirty” (116). This prejudice, rooted in physical and affective responses rather than a social perception, is what Orwell claims prevents the middle and upper classes from aligning with the lower classes in the form of socialism. There is also the small matter of it not being in their economic interests to make a socialist alliance and a fairer English economy, but the prejudice that allows the English to justify their exploitation the lower classes is rooted in physical repulsion.

The work of *Road to Wigan Pier* is two-tiered in his effort to combat this feeling of disgust that pits many English people against each other. Orwell moves between giving a first-hand account of the downtrodden with which his reader can more easily empathize and exposing the way those emotions of disgust and repulsion have been programmed into the reader. These prejudices are a remnant of “Old Britain,” and therefore will always be a problem so long as they are engaged in a national identification that looks backward rather than forward.

As we see from his work set both abroad and at home in England, Orwell criticizes harmful nationalism not just as the phenomenon that drives imperialism abroad, but also the creator of conditions of class conflict in England. His critique is meticulously set up to make concessions to English prejudices while still exposing the self-image the English have, how it influences the national character and the real working people of the country, and how reluctant the English are to give it up. Orwell compares the English peoples’ acceptance of economic injustice and lower-class prejudice to their similar acceptance of Imperialism:

[T]he high standard of life we enjoy in England depends upon our keeping a tight hold on the Empire, particularly the tropical portions of it such as India and Africa. Under the capitalist system, in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation—an evil state of affairs, but you acquiesce in it every time you step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream. (144).

Here, Orwell implicates not just the elite political class, but all English people in the subjugation of the Indian people under the British Raj. He even suggests that the left-wing activist is part of the problem, claiming: “He is perfectly ready to accept the products of Empire and to save his soul by sneering at the people who hold the Empire together” (144). Though he is careful to

distinguish between the racial prejudice towards Indians and class prejudice towards the poor, the parallel Orwell draws is that many decent Englishmen, even those on the political left, are happy to participate in a system of exploitation and oppression so long as there is a net benefit for them. What's to be lost in the abolition of the empire or class-distinctions? For Orwell, such an act would represent a destruction of a part of the "self." If the British empire ceases to be, then England's role on the global stage diminishes and so they will have abolished part of their own identity.

Orwell argues that class identity can be just as powerful as national identity because one's personal taste and notions about all sorts of things in life are created within the context of the class in which one sits. Therefore, to abolish class distinctions would mean to break down one's personal taste and notions of the world; a frightening prospect. Furthermore, Orwell points out that England was too reliant on industrialized capitalism to quit cold turkey:

Practically everything we do, from eating an ice to crossing the Atlantic, and from baking a loaf to writing a novel, involves the use of coal, directly or indirectly. For all the arts of peace coal is needed; if war breaks out it is needed all the more. In time of revolution the miner must go on working or the revolution must stop, for revolution as much as reaction needs coal. Whatever may be happening on the surface, the hacking and shovelling have got to continue without a pause, or at any rate without pausing for more than a few weeks at the most. In order that Hitler may march the goose-step, that the Pope may denounce Bolshevism, that the cricket crowds may assemble at Lords, that the poets may scratch one another's backs, coal has got to be forthcoming. (29)

For Orwell, all of these things, industrialism, collectivism, class-prejudice, and the politics of socialism, are interconnected. Being so intertwined, he views it as impossible to pursue the ends of socialism outside of the context of industrialized capitalism. One cannot simply begin the socialist revolution because such immediate abolition of the current conditions of industrialized capitalism is not practical, just as he claims that to abolish the Empire would be to “reduce England to a cold and unimportant little island where we should all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes” (144). What then, is to be done about the unacceptable conditions of the lower classes in England?

As suggested by his comparison to the Imperial context, a force of identification as strong or stronger than class is national identity. Orwell is ultimately concerned with class politics, but he knows that national identity has been crafted so as to trump class identity. This is how we arrive at the peculiar formation that is Orwell’s distinctive national-political attitude which aspires to socialism but sounds, so often, like Englishness. He explicitly states that, were the English in the position of the Indian people, having a foreign power imposing poverty on them, they would not tolerate it, yet they tolerate it from upper-class Englishmen: “Thus in England we tamely admit to being robbed in order to keep half a million worthless idlers in luxury, but we would fight to the last man sooner than be rilled [sic.] by Chinamen” (131). Again, Orwell is clearly willing to make concessions to the regressive attitudes of conservative English people, like racism, as part of a rhetorical strategy, and the argument makes perfect sense. If foreign invaders tried to force the northern miners into dangerous work with poor compensation, one could expect that the English people would “close ranks” and stand in solidarity with their fellow Englishmen against oppression. Thus, Orwell believes that national identification is enough to create the solidarity necessary for a truly national socialist movement. Communal socialism

motivated by shared English identity and patriotism, for Orwell, is the key to success for England in the 20th century. This is not a failure in the sense that Orwell is acquiescing to broader global inequities. Rather, it is a first step, and one that is necessary if England wants to have any hope of making ethically sound collective action on a more international scale.

CONCLUSION

Orwell seeks to mobilize a form of patriotism unique from existing colonial attitudes and even other progressive critiques. He believes that the problems facing modern Englishmen are best addressed through socialism, and that this is actually in line with the national character. The things that stand in its way are classism and industrialism, which are remnants of Empire. English Socialism represents the ways to modernize England to be a force in the 20th century. Orwell means to disentangle the English spirit from its imperial impulses by creating an English patriotism that is separate and distinct from British nationalism. Orwell is pragmatic in his political goals, willing to, in his reimagining of English character, make concessions to racism, or really the general snobberies with which he seems to group racism. Part of what Orwell sees as an impediment to solidarity between the classes of England is what he called “regional snobberies” (Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* 105). What he means by this is the natural human inclination to view one’s home a locality as favourable and more desirable than other places; but, in England, there exists a scale of snobberies ranging from north to south. “When nationalism first became a religion, the English looked at the map, and, noticing that their island lay very high in the Northern Hemisphere, evolved the pleasing theory that the further north you live the

more virtuous you become”³¹ (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 102). Though Orwell accepts the racism of such a theory of northern superiority, he does recognize that such regional snobberies are “nationalism in miniature” (7). He also points out that the more industrialized northerners having a localized nationalism is not distinct from the class differences between north and south. He argues that these regional nationalisms are beginning to break down, but such change is slower in the north. This is because the south, being the cultural and media centre of the country, involved more cosmopolitan contact. This is evident in the “collapsing” of accents in the south “before movies and the BBC” (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 105). Though regional dialects and accents persist more strongly in the north, the collapsing of accents in the south “makes it much easier to get into contact with the working class” because accents and ways of speaking are not only regional, but frequently signal class distinctions as well (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 105). Hence, with a barrier of snobbery removed, more national identification across classes can take place. Overcoming linguistic barriers between classes is essential to establish a national solidarity in socialism. To this end, Orwell writes: “therefore, we need intelligent propaganda. Less about ‘class consciousness’, ‘expropriation of the expropriators’, ‘bourgeois ideology’, and ‘proletarian solidarity’, not to mention the sacred sisters, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis; and more about justice, liberty, and the plight of the unemployed” (209). For Orwell, the most pressing issue for the socialist movement is to not engage in forceful class breaking, but rather to have each class avoid frightening the other. Then, through national identification, a socialist movement based on the solidarity between Englishmen from all classes can form.

In conclusion, Orwell’s exploration of English identity and its intersection with socialism saw success and failure. He effectively highlights the entrenched classism and industrialism

³¹ Interestingly this logic does not extend directly to intra-island prejudices as north and south in England do not have tidy superior-inferior connotations that fit with the map directions.

within English society, explaining how these factors hinder a socialist patriotism. He portrays the struggles of the working class, whether in mining communities or among the homeless, to humanize this struggle and challenge prejudices. However, Orwell's approach did have flaws. While he attempts to navigate the complexities of national identity and class, he makes concessions to other forms of nationalism and regional snobberies leading to a problematic slippage. Without fully disentangling these issues, Orwell risks having his work used to reinforce existing biases rather than dismantling them. Orwell believed that English socialism had the potential to form a collective identity transcending class boundaries. Despite its imperfections, Orwell's vision offers valuable insight into the challenges and potential of mobilizing national identity for progressive political change.

Returning to the critics with whom I opened this chapter, while this analysis aligns with Clarke's interpretation of Orwell's view of socialism as a unifying force for different conceptions of England (62), it extends this understanding by proposing that Orwell considered patriotism as a necessary foundation for socialism, rather than socialism fostering patriotism. My conclusions align with Lowe's emphasis on Orwell's belief in a latent anti-fascist English spirit, but focus more on economic and class issues rather than foreign threats. My argument differs from McQuade's framing of Orwell's work as exemplifying the failures of leftist projects, instead positioning Orwell's efforts as a valuable, if imperfect, attempt to harness national identity for progressive ends. And, unlike Barkan's view that Orwell offered no solutions to leftist patriotism, my interpretation sees Orwell actively working to create a leftist patriotism, even if ultimately unsuccessful in fully distinguishing it from nationalism.

Having explored Orwell's utilization of nationalism to further socialist objectives, the next chapter will pivot toward a parallel exploration of the utilization of nationalism for political

goals. Shifting focus to the work of Virginia Woolf, I will look at how nationalism intertwines with gender and feminism and attempt to uncover Woolf's literary contributions to this dynamic.

Chapter 2: As a Woman My Country Is the Whole World

Virginia Woolf is perhaps one of the most elusive literary writers on the subject of national identity. At times, she openly disdains national identifications while at others she speaks of England with reverence. Her best-known pronouncement on matters of national identity comes from *Three Guineas*, where she writes, “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (197). For the purposes of the present study, this assertion raises the question of the relation between gender and national identity. Many feminists and feminist movements have rejected war in the nation’s name and have advocated for peace, even in some cases claiming that enfranchising women in the political process would lead to a decrease in armed conflict.³² As April Carter explains, these feminist claims about a natural feminine aversion to war are based on two things: first, on the fact that women’s role in war is often understood purely as one of suffering (losing loved ones, becoming victims of sexual violence) with none of the opportunities afforded to men in war for fame, glory, or sociopolitical advancement; and, second, on the cultural (not biological) phenomenon often framed as maternal instinct (39). In other words, this type of stance depends on a gender essentialism that most modern scholars and feminists would likely reject. While Woolf may have sympathized with the broader goal of peacemaking, she too would have likely been skeptical of such essentialist notions of gender. However, the overarching sentiment that underlines the complexity of national identity ideologies, particularly in relation to gender, aligns with her famous statement: “as a woman, I have no country.” While Woolf might reject simplistic gender

³² Jill Liddington covers this topic in her book *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820*.

categorizations, she still recognized fundamental issues in how national identity is an especially vexed construct for women.

This chapter argues that, though Woolf publicly claims here that women have no national allegiance, her criticism does not really aim for the erasure of the nation as a unit of personal identity, but for the restructuring of that national unit. I will develop this argument through an analysis of *Three Guineas*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Between the Acts*. My framework for this argument is to think through the significance of nationhood in the context of war. In context, Woolf is not arguing that nationalism, and by extension, nations themselves, are *inherently* sexist. Rather, she argues that the forms of nationalism which were common and gaining popularity in Europe during her life, in addition to targeting ethnic minorities and outsiders, represented a significant impediment to the rights and freedoms of women. For Woolf, therefore, the status of nationalism as a strong cultural force should have no appeal at all to women, since the benefits of that cultural force will be at the expense of the very women it seeks to recruit for its cause. Though there is the more radical reading prevalent in more recent feminist thought—that nations are constructed by patriarchy and therefore national or state boundaries are, or should be irrelevant—we do not know the extent to which Woolf would have agreed with that proposition.³³ We can, however, be sure of her main argument that, from her own historical vantage point, that women have no stake in the nation because they are not recognized as citizens.

For Woolf, therefore, the rhetorical rejection of the nation is part of a subtler pattern, visible throughout her fiction and nonfiction writings, of reforming what it meant to “have a country;” and of offering alternative ways to relate to “Englishness.” Woolf often frames this as a

³³ On the question of nations as patriarchal constructs, see Anne McClintock *Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism, and the Family* and Nira Yuval-Davis *Gender and Nation*.

rejection of Englishness and Britishness, or as a cosmopolitan critique of identifying with a nation in the first place; yet in practice, what she offers is still a form of Englishness, one that (like Orwell's "patriotic" rather than "nationalist" Englishness) builds in the possibility of productively (and without chauvinism) critiquing one's nation. Julia Briggs writes, "Even while making her most unequivocal statement about the irrelevance of patriotism, Woolf could not fully disengage from the deep pull of the English landscape, the English language of her childhood" (199-200). Woolf's simultaneous rejection of patriotism and deep connection to the English landscape serves as a rhetorical strategy. By highlighting this tension, she aims to challenge and redefine the concept of Englishness rather than completely abandoning it. The point, in part, is to say to England, "what have you done for *us*?" In other words, she aims not to jettison the idea of Englishness altogether, but instead to demand the nation do better when it comes to women.

The key contrast between my analysis of Woolf and my analysis of Orwell is that Orwell looked for positive aspects of Englishness and English culture or heritage to hang onto, whereas Woolf often pointedly critiques exactly that kind of identification with heritage. That being said, Woolf's form of critique is *still* a kind of civic engagement. It may operate in the negative, but it is not a "negative nationalism" in Joanne Barkan's sense of the term. Woolf's claims about women's relation to their country are still premised on the idea of a community of discourse and thus may even be considered a civic nationalism of a sort. This is often seen as a *cosmopolitan* ethos³⁴ here, similar to what we have already seen with Orwell: a global or transnational view that lets us come back to England and critique it, and reform it, from a broader perspective. In

³⁴ Rebecca Walkowitz claims that Woolf "saw herself as an 'outsider,' and in this way she was a traditional cosmopolitan, detached from her country but attached to artists and to other pacifists and to a community of 'educated men's daughters'" (81).

this chapter, I will demonstrate how Woolf's idea of a gendered national identity is expressed not just in explicit terms when she is asked to weigh in on national politics, but also more implicitly within in her fiction as well. This chapter explores what, in the British context, was the narrative appeal of nationalism. What did nationalism have to offer the British people and how and why does Virginia Woolf argue against it? Woolf's famous expression is not a rejection of national identity, but rather the conclusion of a cost benefit analysis of the mobilization of national identification politically for women. Nationalism is often created through symbols, and the benefits are often delivered symbolically. Woolf argues that national symbols are empty promises. Instead of a typical nationalist mobilization of national identity, Woolf suggests that blurring, rather than reinforcing, borders provide the necessary fluidity for a revision in the English national consciousness that might make it a worthwhile project for the Englishwoman as well as the Englishman.

TENTATIVE PATRIOTISM

In the last twenty years, the topic of a gendered nationalism has been explored by many Woolf scholars. Some locate Woolf, as I do, as in a struggle between the modernizing cosmopolitan pulls of modernism and the cultural shift to rely more on the national unit in the 20th century. Like Orwell, Woolf is trying to reconcile these two forces. In 2002, Paul Gerard Kintzele wrote of Woolf, among other twentieth-century writers, as writing at the centre of a tension between the "centrifugal force of internationalism" pulling at the "centripetal force of nationalism" (4). He argues that modernism was an international movement not just because of its international appeal and the artists' tendency to circulate in "the multinational metropolitan centre," but also because the subject matter in the artistic movement articulated internationalism

as a political goal (5). Kintzele argues that the push against nationalism in modernist writers is not just a reflection of the more connected metropolitan space emerging from the industrial revolution, but an intentionally set political goal by artists in the movement. He views modernism as an intentionally internationalist movement, both in its artistic practices and political goals. He argues that modernist writers actively pushed against nationalism in favour of internationalism, seeing it as a deliberate political stance rather than just a reflection of changing social conditions. This is related to my argument here for Woolf, but I disagree with the idea that Woolf rejected nationalism on artistic principle. Rather, I argue that she rejected it on practical terms of utility and advocated for a revision of national identity rather than abandoning it for internationalism.

Woolf's engagement with nationalism is obviously only understood through a gendered lens, and many see her supposed rejection of the nation as a rebuke of the nation for gendered violence. Susan Stanford Friedman argues that Woolf advocates for a "cosmofeminism" that rejects any loyalty to a nation that does violence to its own citizens. From a feminist perspective, this would include nearly all nations in the early 20th century. For Friedman, Woolf's cosmopolitan text *Three Guineas* is gendered in that it is based in women's second-class citizenship and resistance to nationalist patriotism (26-27). The resulting conclusion is that Woolf's rejection of nation is an anarchist/pacifist political move, rather than an attempt to promote global feminism. This view posits Woolf's famous line is a direct challenge to the nation-state system, aligning with anarchist and pacifist ideologies that question the legitimacy and necessity of state authority. By framing Woolf's position this way, Friedman argues that her critique of nationalism stems from a more radical political philosophy that envisions alternatives to state-centric models of social organization. While I agree insofar as Friedman argues that

gendered violence is a big part of the reason Woolf rejects nationalism, I depart from Friedman's conclusion that focuses on Woolf's anarchist/pacifism³⁵ and instead argue that Woolf is interested in revising national identity to better suit the needs of the 20th century and to be more inclusive.

Woolf's work is not only critical of nationalism (and it is very critical), but it is also constructive of an Englishness at times. One key strategy through which she accomplishes this constructiveness is by depicting blurred boundaries and borders in her fiction. Erica Johnson takes up this aspect of Woolf's writing in "Giving Up the Ghost: National and Literary Haunting in *Orlando*," which examines Woolf's story of literary-national legacy. (110-111). There, Johnson argues that the titular character is literally the ghost of the nation of England, carrying the past and engaging with those who have been excluded from Englishness through history. Orlando's Englishness is constant even through a change in gender. For Johnson, *Orlando* is a haunting product of an exclusive model of national identity and a national literary canon. This relates closely to *Between the Acts*, which I will argue is a novel about how blurred lines, as represented in a queer character, create the opportunity for a fluid revision of national identity.

Jessica Berman continues this line of criticism as she argues that the concept of transnationalism, challenging the "normative dimensions of nationality" and "disrupt[ing] systems of embodied identity" should include the idea that embodiment and gender identity are strongly linked to the concept of nation (218). She examines *Orlando* to argue for more focus on the "centrality of sexuality, embodiment, and gender to national and transnational categories of belonging" (218). For Berman, transgender theory is important to understanding the concept of national and transnational systems of identity. If we read a character's trans identity as a rejection of existing categories and binaries as it comes to gender, then rejection of national categories in

³⁵ I do not mean to claim that Woolf was not a pacifist. I mean to say that her engagement and critique of nationalism is not simply an expression of pacifist disdain.

the form of transnationalism is not so much about doing away with the categories altogether as it is about revising them so that those who are currently marginalized by their construction can fully benefit from them. This is most relevant to my reading of queerness in *Between the Acts* as an element of blurring boundaries to allow for national revisions in England. In *Orlando*, Woolf uses the protagonist's gender-shifting and time-travelling narrative to challenge fixed notions of identity, including national identity. Similarly, in *Between the Acts*, Woolf employs a queer character to represent the blurring of traditional boundaries, suggesting that this fluidity can lead to a more inclusive and adaptable conception of national identity. Both novels, therefore, are part of Woolf's attempt to reimagine Englishness in a way that resists rigid categorizations and embraces ambiguity and change.

So, we have Woolf making a political objection to nationalism, but it is also true that she felt deep affection for the place of England. Part of her constructive project is to rewrite Englishness to reconcile that identity with her politics. In 2005, Helen Southworth engages with an idea that I am also concerned with here: the contradiction between a disdain for imperial jingoist nationalism that represented Britishness and Woolf's nostalgia towards the land she calls home. Southworth examines how Woolf engages with foreign characters in her stories as a means of exploring alternatives to Englishness.³⁶ She argues that Woolf's entanglement with the ideas of foreignness, nationality, and nostalgia are reconciled through the creation of alternate versions of "home" (Southworth 128). In 2006, Colleen Donovan picks up on this contradiction as well, focussing on Woolf's engagement with the idea of an imagined community as created and recreated by continued participation in national rituals, symbols, and narratives. Like

³⁶ The treatment of foreign characters often opens a discussion about race and racism in the work, particularly in the context of early 20th century Europe. Leena Schroder's "A Question is Asked which is Never Answered" argues that Woolf (and British) antisemitism is often bound up in the kind of snobbery that Orwell discussed in the class system.

Southworth, Donovan also notes that Woolf creates alternate Englands in her stories, but for Donovan, these Englands are not just gendered but also “historically contingent” in what she calls Woolf’s attempt to point to the mutability of national identity which leaves the possibility for a “rewriting” of Englishness (81). This is closely related to my argument about Woolf’s engagement with national symbols in *Mrs. Dalloway* and her blurred lines of identity in *Between the Acts*. My argument builds on Donovan’s idea of Woolf creating alternate, mutable versions of England; I extend this concept by focusing specifically on how Woolf engages with national symbols in *Mrs. Dalloway* and explores blurred lines of identity in *Between the Acts*. While Donovan emphasizes the historical contingency of these alternate Englands, my analysis delves deeper into the specific literary techniques Woolf employs to challenge and reimagine national identity.

Woolf has often been read as an author concerned with the opposition of the public and private spheres, and particularly with gendered aspects of that divide.³⁷ Often, the public is read as a male and the private as a female space. I argue that Woolf, while concerned with the public/private binary and the gendered aspects therein, actually moves past a binary understanding by blurring the border between them in the context of public national identity and private national identity. Along these lines, Galia Benziman interprets *Between the Acts*, usually regarded as one of Woolf’s most directly political texts, as less a radical departure from then-current models of national identity and more of an examination of national identity as a private rather than a public matter (54). Benziman argues that while examining a public national identity, Woolf continually uses the language of the private sphere which, for Benziman, suggests that Woolf views collectivity (a goal of national identity) as only possible in terms of the subjective

³⁷ On Woolf’s negotiation of public and private spheres, see Anna Snaith *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* and Alex Zwerdling *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*.

mind (57).³⁸ Benizman points to the prevalence of mirrors in the novel and the psychoanalytic theory of the mirror stage as important in the act of creating identity (57). Most relevant to my work is the argument about mirrors, which I pick up to demonstrate that Woolf is using mirror imagery to argue directly to the English public and their engagement with Englishness.

By rewriting Englishness and blurring traditional boundaries between public and private expressions of national identity, Woolf actually anticipates Tolkien's fantasy-based approach to national identity: she creates alternate versions of England, albeit not fantastical versions.³⁹ Representing alternate Englands in fiction gave Woolf a framework for exploring how English identity might be formed and remade in alternate contexts. It allowed her to hold a mirror to Englishness to show it to the English people. Southworth revisited Woolf's engagement with England in 2007 as she argued that Woolf's regard for translator George Borrow's Anglocentric work created a "template that made possible a reinvention of the idea of home and the heart of England" (196). Borrow's work had a reputation for unorthodoxy, and Woolf, according to Southworth, picked up on this concept by writing of eccentric characters who mapped onto her representation of England in her novels; if her alternative Englands are unorthodox, it follows that her alternative Englishmen would be eccentric (by then-current standards). The result is an abnormal Englishness, one outside "the culture of colonialism" (196). This abnormal Englishness demonstrates that Woolf is engaged with revision of stereotypical Englishness. I argue that this is a deliberate attempt at revising Englishness so as to make it relevant and useful in the 20th century.

³⁸ This would align with her work in *The Waves* as well.

³⁹ On the subject of physical space and landscape in Woolf's work, see Jennifer Nesbitt's *Narrative Settlements: Geographies of British Women's Fiction Between the Wars*.

Anti-Imperialist concerns continue in the scholarship and are important in understanding my differentiation between Britishness and Englishness for Woolf. Anna Snaith and Elleke Boehmer note a shared concern between Woolf and her husband that was evident in both their writing: anti-imperialism. They compare Virginia's *The Voyage Out* and Leonard's *Empire and Commerce in Africa* as texts that explore the violent capitalist motivations of economic imperialism and the ways in which the production of English culture is tied to that process (Snaith and Boehmer 30). My work takes "anti-imperialism" and argues that the concept of Empire is tied heavily to an outward looking, chauvinistic conception of national identity.

Woolf's work on nationalism is not confined just to the English context. Lisa Weihman writes of Woolf's attitude towards Irish nationalism in *The Years*. She argues that *The Years* anticipates Woolf's later criticism of the nation as "founded and sustained through the legal and social domination of women by men" (Weihman 31). Though one might view Ireland, the first post-colonial European nation, as a prime example of a positive nationalism meant to free itself from an imperial oppressor, Weihman argues that Woolf's depiction of Irish nationalism in the novel suggests that even nationalism with anti-imperial goals, still harms women. This speaks to the idea that Woolf has no moral evaluation of nationalism itself or the ends it can be used to achieve. Rather, I argue that she instead demonstrates a pragmatic evaluation. It does not matter that the Irish used nationalism to liberate themselves. What matters for Woolf is: does this leave women better or worse off?

Since I argue that Woolf's engagement with the nation is not only critical but also constructive, I believe my argument picks up on a more recent theme in Woolf scholarship that tentatively views some of her work as optimistically patriotic. In 2010, Christie Purifoy suggests that not all of Woolf's engagements with the idea of nationalism or even the empire are critical.

She argues that *The Waves*, with the themes of grief and mourning, suggest that Woolf deems the British empire worth mourning even if its decline is necessary. For Purifoy, *The Waves* is a text meant to “shore up an optimistic patriotism in the midst of evident imperial decline” (25). In 2013, Alice Wood identifies a shift in Woolf’s level of political engagement from the 1920s, where Woolf is more engaged with modernism as a cultural/artistic movement, and the 1930s where Wood views her as more engaged in the debate about what the role of art is in a time of national crisis like a world war. Wood argues, similar to Kintzele, that the latter period is a natural development from the former, rather than a deliberate departure or shift (11).

Since Woolf is engaged in a constructive project about rewriting Englishness to suit her own politics, she is very similar to Orwell; her specific politics differ, but they share an interest in putting Englishness to use for their own purposes. How then might she avoid some of the pitfalls and slippages that mired Orwell’s work? Some argue that her writing style makes it possible for her to write a constructive national identity while avoiding using the tools of nationalism in her critique. Elsa Högberg posits that Woolf’s critique of nationalism, particularly the aspects of it associated with masculinity, manifest in the aesthetics of her writing itself. For Högberg, Woolf saw subjective autonomy as the root of the aggressive aspects of nationalism and so she sought a “textual politics which unsettles the autonomous self and nation” (6). The problem with writing a fiery polemic against nationalism is that one ends up using the same aggressive tactics one is critical of in the first place, and so Högberg examines how Woolf uses “sensual, metaphoric writing” to force us to “revise expectations” (1). Högberg’s analysis illuminates Woolf’s nuanced approach to critiquing nationalism without succumbing to the very pitfalls and slippages that George Orwell’s work encountered. Woolf, in her constructive project of redefining Englishness in alignment with her own politics, leverages her distinct writing style

to effectively address these concerns. By creating a textual politics that challenges the notion of autonomous self and nation, she seeks to transcend the aggressive aspects of nationalism. This transformative approach, characterized by “sensual, metaphoric writing” forms the cornerstone of my examination into the intricate form and substance of Woolf’s work in *Between the Acts*. As we delve further into this landscape, I will explore how Woolf’s innovative narrative techniques and aesthetic choices contribute to her unique vision of a reimagined national identity.

GENDERED NATIONALISM

In its most obvious sense, Woolf’s statement, “as a woman, I have no country,” refers to the political disenfranchisement of women. The argument is simple: why should a woman feel any loyalty to a nation that does not recognize her with equal rights? However, as Carter points out, this argument is flawed, since “it does not follow that an ‘unequal stake’ means ‘no stake’; women might be unequal but still have very considerable interest in maintaining their country and its political system. This is especially applicable to the context in which Woolf was writing: a Europe threatened by Nazism” (Carter 44). Following Carter’s logic, we might ask whether Woolf’s intended meaning might transcend the apparent paradox, suggesting a deeper layer of significance that Woolf sought to convey. Indeed, since rights functionally come from citizenship in nation-states, it makes more sense to maintain citizenship in a country that does not fully enfranchise women than it does to become a stateless “citizen of the world” as a form of feminist protest. Carter’s analysis, along with the broader context of my analysis of Woolf’s writing, suggests that the statement is clearly hyperbolic for dramatic effect. Given the fact that Woolf elsewhere partakes of Englishness or positive representations of English identity, it is simply more likely that she is being hyperbolic. It is an intentionally extreme statement meant to call

attention to the fact that, in her view, a nationalist political movement has even less to offer women than the already sexist status quo. Indeed, other countries that went further than the United Kingdom on the road to a populist nationalist government saw large setbacks for women politically.⁴⁰ Her use of the word “have” is also telling with its implications of ownership and possession, suggesting that perhaps the flaw in gendered nationalism is a reduced ownership stake for women.

Even today, the notion that a nationalist movement is truly beneficial to everyone within the nation is somewhat laughable. Yes, nationalism remains a powerful political and cultural force, but just as Woolf used hyperbole to dismiss it as an empty promise to women, today’s artists similarly regard the conservative and “traditional” values of early 20th century nationalism to be worthy of mockery, especially when it comes to any benefit the nationalist might claim to bring for women. Suggestions that the lives of women might be improved by an outward thinking nationalism are commonly regarded as a joke. For example, in the 2019 film *Jojo Rabbit*, the 10-year-old protagonist spends a weekend at a Hitler Youth camp in 1945, and the captain of the activities for the children proclaims: “This is your first step towards being men. Today you boys will be involved in such activities as marching, bayonet drills, grenade throwing, trench digging, map reading, gas defense, camouflage, trap setting, ambush techniques, war games, firing guns and blowing stuff up. The girls will practice important womanly duties such as dressing wounds, making beds, and learning how to get pregnant” (Waititi 2019). The satire points to the fact that militant, nationalist rhetoric and discourse often replicates and reinforces essentialist, traditional gender binaries, something that has been noted in nationalism studies,

⁴⁰ Kevin Passmore writes in his 2014 book *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* in a chapter called “Fascism, Women, and Gender”: “Whether in Germany, Italy, or Croatia, fascists assigned to women the task of producing the future citizens, soldiers, and mothers of the race. Women must inculcate national values in their children, and as consumers (rather than producers) they must ensure that families consumed national products” (127-128).

such as in the work of Ann McClintock⁴¹. Nationalist ideologies frequently made gender their business, and emphasizing traditional gender roles has often been a cornerstone of nationalist movements. This is not to say that women cannot participate; on the contrary, they *should* participate, but must do so precisely by taking a supportive and subordinate role. If Liberal democracies like Britain exclude women from the levers of political power, an aggressive, outward-looking nationalism would exclude women further. So, when Woolf receives a letter from a gentleman asking for help in preventing war between a Britain that has already failed her, and a fascism rising on the continent that would surely erase what semblance of equality could even be remotely seen in the UK, she had the unenviable task of choosing between bad and worse.⁴² For Woolf, the fact that one of the negative options is supposedly her “national” side is not a compelling enough argument. Rather, the prospect of a *worse* nationalism prompts a critique of English nationalism as she already saw it.

The depictions of and criticisms of nationalism that Woolf explores in *Three Guineas*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Between the Acts* are all consistent with this orientation, and they are concerned with gendered aspects of nationalism and how divisions along gendered borders position the nation and affect the relationship of individuals to a national identity. In this regard, Woolf’s critique is consistent with later work in the feminist critique of nationalism. McClintock, for example, also argues for increased awareness of gender in the field of the study of nationalism. She claims that studies of nationalism have been done overwhelmingly by men and that these men have missed an essential aspect of the context surrounding nationalism. Thus, McClintock argues, a blind spot in the scholarly conversation is present. She claims that the

⁴¹ In her 1993 article “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” McClintock claims that “all nationalisms are gendered” (1).

⁴² *Three Guineas* is a book-length essay responding to a letter sent by an unnamed gentleman asking “how can war be prevented?”

ignored context is related to gender power dynamics, arguing that: “all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender. Despite nationalisms’ ideological investment in the idea of popular unity, nationalisms have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalizations of gender difference” (McClintock 61). She also quotes Cynthia Enloe: “nationalisms have typically sprung from masculinized memory...humiliation and...hope” (62). She claims that “not only are the needs of the nation here identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men, but the representation of male national power depends on the prior construction of gender difference” (62). McClintock is pointing out what other studies of nationalism have ignored: sexism came first and therefore it affects the construction of nationalism.

Once we understand this crucial piece of historical and theoretical context, other aspects of nationalism make their meaning plain to us. McClintock demonstrates this through her discussion of the nation as expressed through the metaphor of the family unit⁴³, which, understood with the context of patriarchal gender difference in mind, becomes an aspect of nationalism that is oppressive to women as it sets up a power hierarchy with the male father figure at the top. She also discusses how this context can be used to inform other understanding of nationalism, such as Tom Nairn’s Janus problem, with nationalism concerned with both the past and future. Women are seen as permanently in the past, outside of the current time period of the nation and thus excluded from the future and progress. In a contradiction, women are also the “bearers” of the future as the people who can produce more citizens. This temporal issue was previously understood to refer to indigenous peoples in colonized countries, who were always in the past, permanently “uncivilized/savage” and thus could never join the real nation (62). McClintock’s contextual analysis allows us to extend this to understand how nationalism

⁴³ Orwell also uses the metaphor of the family for nation in his writing.

oppressed women. She presents cases where certain women have found it useful to leverage nationalist ideals to achieve their objectives. For instance, nationalism offers specific advantages and opportunities to both Afrikaners and Africans. In one instance, the traditional family model of nationalism perpetuates sexist oppression, but in another, the exalted status of motherhood and the concept of the “motherland” can serve as a strategic tool for women (62).

Woolf’s rejection of nationalism in *Three Guineas* is a critique of its masculine nature, leading her to advocate for a feminine internationalism that challenges traditional patriotic rhetoric and opens up the possibility of a distinctly feminine understanding of national identity. *Just* like Orwell was unable to reconcile the image of a good Englishman with the colonial realities of the British Raj, Woolf is unable to reconcile nationalism in its current form with the desire for the expanded rights of the British woman. Carter views Woolf’s goal in *Three Guineas* as a way “to challenge rhetorical appeals to ‘our country’ by reminding the reader that this as a masculine understanding of patriotism” (43). Nationalism studies often thinks in binaries (e.g., patriotism vs nationalism, outward vs inward, ethnic vs cultural) and Carter’s analysis of Woolf offers another; if nationalism is a masculine understanding of patriotism, then there must also be a feminine understanding of national identity too.

Woolf’s response to the question of “what can be done to avoid war?” is essentially to rearrange the way in which nationalism is constructed in terms of gender. Woolf clearly views nationalism (accurately) as a conservative cultural movement that has a culturally conservative idea of a traditional gender role relationship between women and public life. Though she is certainly not a freedom fighter for equality, she clearly frames her response as a sort of cost-benefit analysis for women. The prospect of war with Germany is clearly a response to the nationalist policy of lebensraum from the Nazi regime, but England had a fascist-nationalist

political faction at the time that would have welcomed war as a means of pursuing its own ends of creating an environment more welcoming to their ideology. As discussed in the previous chapters, war is a time when nationalism is a key mobilizing force for the defence of the country. If the choice facing Woolf is to avoid war by kow-towing to Hitler and his national expansionism or to allow an injection of nationalism (or patriotism, depending on whom you ask) into English society to defend itself from a worse form of nationalism, which one leaves her, as a woman, better off? Her response is a rejection of the premises of the question. She famously claims that nationalism has nothing to offer women, but to understand that we must consider what nationalism has to offer in general. What are the sociopolitical benefits that lead people to elect and support outward looking, aggressive nationalism? There are, of course, several obvious benefits: citizenship in a successful nation provides a level of physical, social, and economic security that is otherwise impossible. It is better to be part of a large, powerful team than a stateless free agent⁴⁴. These benefits are not, however, exclusive to nations with a militant nationalism at the core of their identity. Countries with no plans of expansion or promoting a narrative of supremacy can offer all of those tangible benefits. The benefit of nationalism is more complex.

In *Human Communication and Narration*, (1987) Walter Fisher argues that human beings are natural storytellers; it is just how we communicate and think. The world as we know it is a set of stories, or narratives, that must be chosen from in order to create an understanding of our own human experience. He says, “my central contention is that *narrative* is a concept that can enhance understanding of human communication and action” (Fisher 20). Fisher believes that an

⁴⁴ These benefits are described by Giuseppe Mazzini, who argued the political strengths of a unified national unit (Kelly 746). Also, Craig Calhoun’s list of traits that constitute a nation are all most easily formed and maintained through a strong national unit, or *Volk* (Calhoun 4).

understanding of narrative is essential to an understanding of human discourse. He further explains that narration is any symbolic action—words or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them. This theorization of narrative works differently from Orwell’s approach, since he wanted to use narrative as a vehicle to create a political habitus in the English people that was open to socialism. It is also different from Tolkien, who (as the next chapter will show) used narrative as a vehicle to recover what he felt was a lost Englishness. For Woolf, the appeal is to show harmful nationalisms (read Britishness) drawn to what she feels is their logical conclusion to demonstrate how they are harmful to the English spirit, especially that of English women. This is similar to how Orwell writes women and nation in *Burmese Days*.

Political campaigns, including nationalist campaigns, must participate in storytelling. Fisher explains the concept of “Public Moral Argument”: a publicized discussion aimed at untrained thinkers about “ultimate questions” (85). A political campaign is just a months-long public moral debate, where the audience is, by and large, non-expert in the inner workings of politics and governance, and thus the debate becomes about “ultimate questions” of what the country should be. To win the debate, each politician tells his or her story, which functions as an answer to that ultimate question. The audience, being non-experts, can only come to a non-rational conclusion about the actors on stage and the merits of the narrative that each has told. Political campaigns are then a contest of conflicting stories of nation and the voter has the role of validating one story over the other. What informs this choice?

The criteria for deciding which story to subscribe to are narrative probability (coherence; does the story make basic narrative sense?) and, more importantly, narrative fidelity. Narrative fidelity is judged by how closely the story that the listener experiences “rings true” with the other

stories they know to be “true” in their own lives (Fisher 8). “Does this jive with my understanding of the world or not?” What determines which narratives “ring true” to a given person’s experience? Pierre Bourdieu’s book, *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991) explains that every utterance takes place in a sort of marketplace, with the speaker and audience participating in the linguistic exchange where the speaker must choose his or her words in order to ensure the best possible outcome (given the economic metaphor, the highest possible profit from the audience) (37). Bourdieu explains that there is a “legitimate language” (standard English, for example) in any given context and that the formality of the setting determines how closely the speaker must adhere to that standard language in order to maximize profits (45). Linguistic communities, according to Bourdieu, are an illusion (220). The idea of a large, homogenous language community (something that Benedict Anderson says helped create the very concept of Nation) is a myth. There is no “objective” language of a people, nation, or community, only one that is dominant and therefore seen as “legitimate.” This official language was promoted to a national language in many places, thus establishing a hierarchy of dialects within states, with priority placed on proximity to the official language (220). I argue that, though it is not technically a language, we must understand political discourse through the lens that Bourdieu provides and understand that there are advantages and disadvantages to deviating from the standard. Bourdieu provides the concept of the habitus, a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways (37). To map Bourdieu’s concept of linguistic economy and legitimacy onto Fisher’s idea of narrative coherence, we can see that when we have competing narratives and language about what a nation is (as we do in nearly every nation) the one that wins the day is the one that achieves the most narrative coherence and legitimacy, which is measured by how closely it aligns with the habitus of the audience. Benedict Anderson also

writes about this sort of narrative appeal to legitimacy and coherence. He notes that nationalisms were first formed after the enlightenment saw humanity turn away from religion as its primary source of narrative coherence and meaning:

The eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought. The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary. What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning. As we shall see, few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation. (B. Anderson 11)

After the Enlightenment diminished religion's role as the primary marker of one's identity and source of meaning, nationalism stepped in to fill that vacuum. It provided narrative coherence and a habitus for people to act through in a world where one's religion no longer served as an all-encompassing identity marker.

"The Discursive Construction of National Identity" by De Cillia et al. explicitly claims that we should think of national identity as a habitus: a complex of common ideas, concepts or perception schemes of related emotional attitudes intersubjectively shared within a specific group of persons; as well as of similar behavioral dispositions; all of which are internalized through national socialization (De Cillia, Resigl and Wodak 28-29). The dispositions that comprise the habitus are learned to be second nature, reflect the social condition in which they were acquired, are durable, and generate practices and perceptions outside the field in which they

were acquired. What set of dispositions comprise the habitus of someone likely to embrace a nationalist narrative?

In Woolf's time, at the bridging the turn of the 20th century, England looked very much like a country that might embrace nationalism not only because much of Europe fit Anderson's description of nations primed for nationalism, but also because of the rapid modernization/industrialization which created a larger working class and drew large numbers of immigrants to the UK. This aligns with Hobsbawm's theory of nationalism as a product of modernization and industrialization, which he argues created new social classes and economic structures that fueled nationalist sentiments. It also resonates with Gellner's view that nationalism arose from the need for cultural homogeneity in industrialized societies. Additionally, the influx of immigrants to the UK during this period connects to Nairn's concept of uneven development, where nationalism emerges as a response to perceived threats to national identity.

Hobsbawm identifies three factors that make a country likely to embrace nationalism: resistance of traditional groups threatened by the onrush of modernity, new and non-traditional classes and strata growing in developed countries, and unprecedented levels of immigration. At the time of Woolf's writing of *Three Guineas* in 1938, England fit this description fairly well. Though this was sometime after the industrial revolution, England was very concerned with the question of how to deal with the issues facing the newly created working class and how that class affected the formation of the English nation, as evidenced by George Orwell's extensive writing on nationalism and class. The UK also saw a large increase in immigration in the 1930's with refugees fleeing Nazi Germany and war-torn Spain. In 1930, there were almost no refugees in England. In 1931, there were over 3,100 refugees coming in per year. By 1938, the annual

refugee intake was over 11,000 (Her or His Majesty's Stationary Office) By Hobsbawm's criteria, the British people of the 1930s were socially and historically positioned to be susceptible to the appeal of nationalist politics. As a nation with a large conservative, traditional ruling class having to share the nation with a larger working class and a new middle-class while also seeing a significant rise in immigration, 1930s Britain seems like an ideal place to start a nationalist movement. Obviously, nationalist movements in individual countries across Europe share some basic characteristics, but each is unique. As Orwell demonstrated, the basic raw power of national identification can be harnessed and applied to different contexts. Britain was fertile ground for some sort of nationalist movement, but that potential did not bear itself out like it did in other parts of Europe.

The tension between Woolf and classic works of critical nationalism studies is, for all their attention to class, they have been noted (by McClintock and others) as insufficiently attentive to other differences like race and gender. Woolf therefore successfully anticipates the critique that the theory would later catch up to. Nationalist movements usually draw lines about who is in and who is out of the nation. Sometimes those lines are drawn along ethnic lines, sometimes linguistic lines, and sometimes through shared cultural stories, but a line is drawn. Nationalist theory presumes that those who are included in the new definition of "citizen" will see similar benefits and will be better off. Woolf throws a wrench in this idea by complicating it with the layer of gender. Even within the boundaries of nationalist citizenship, sexism remains a factor. Woolf asks us to revise our understanding of nationalism to analyze how it operates and what its effects are through the critical lens of gender.

THREE GUINEAS

In this section, I argue that Woolf reads the appeal to national identification put before her as nationalism, rather than patriotism (in Hobsbawm's terms), and therefore as inherently chauvinistic. The question put before her then is: are the benefits of such a chauvinistic conception of national identity worth the inherent drawbacks for women? *Three Guineas* is a cost-benefit analysis of that decision. The text as a whole elaborates on the premise that current versions of nationalism fail women.

To illustrate this failure, Woolf explains how nationalism is presented to women and how they are asked, from a young age, to engage with it. She writes of Englishwomen who:

will have imbibed, even from the governess, some romantic notion that Englishmen, those fathers and grandfathers whom she sees marching in the picture of history, are 'superior' to the men of other countries. This she will consider it her duty to check by comparing French historians with English; German with French; the testimony of the ruled—the Indians or the Irish, say—with the claims made by their rulers. Still some 'patriotic' emotion, some ingrained belief in the intellectual superiority of her own country over other countries may remain. (*Three Guineas* 185) ⁴⁵

The feeling of being best, of English superiority, is one of the abstract appeals of nationalism, particularly in a nation that once dominated the world. It is hard to argue against the idea that, at the height of its power, the British empire was the strongest political, economic, and military

⁴⁵ Here Woolf, like Orwell, emphasizes the formative role of childhood education in shaping English children's attitudes toward nationhood and national identity.

force in the world. The narrative that English people are best is appealing because it calls back to a time when, by many measurements, they were dominant.

Woolf's criticism of this kind of appeal of nationalism is that it is incomplete and that the benefits of that appeal fall disproportionately to men. For example, if the narrative of England being best is bound up in narrative of the Empire, then military exploits are naturally considered as the best examples of English superiority. Not only are battles historically and narratively interesting, but tales of military exploits also form a cycle of storytelling that solidifies the nationalist narrative. If England is best because it dominates the world militarily, then Englishmen who want to be remembered as good Englishmen seek out the opportunity for daring military exploits (to become war heroes), and these exploits naturally become part of the national tale of those who fought for King and country like good Englishmen, and the cycle repeats. People who sought diplomatic solutions in national conflicts may have objectively done more for the good of the nation than a soldier dying on the battlefield, but because of the narrative cycle, one is immortalized, and the other is forgotten.

For Woolf, this cycle is part of the reason she believes war is inevitable: as long as nationalist sentiment of English superiority exists, there will be men who seek to prove it on the battlefield. But this narrative/cultural benefit is exclusionary to women who do not die heroically on the battlefield (though they are often the most affected victims in war). If the narrative benefit of nationalism is not available to her as an Englishwoman, she must ask whether she still has any interest in supporting this narrative of England. She quotes the Lord Chief Justice of England to describe the male perspective:

Englishmen are proud of England. For those who have been trained in English schools and universities, and who have done the work of their lives in England,

there are few loves stronger than the love we have for our country. When we consider other nations, when we judge the merits of the policy of this country or of that, it is the standard of our own country that we apply. . . . Liberty has made her abode in England. England is the home of democratic institutions. . . . It is true that in our midst there are many enemies of liberty—some of them, perhaps, in rather unexpected quarters. But we are standing firm. It has been said that an Englishman’s Home is his Castle. The home of Liberty is in England. And it is a castle indeed—a castle that will be defended to the last. . . . Yes, we are greatly blessed, we Englishmen. (8)

The passage constructs a national identity where a masculine, private domesticity is key; the Englishman’s home is his castle.⁴⁶ The Lord Chief Justice has, in one passage, demonstrated the difficulty in reconciling two forms of nationalism. English identity is usually staked on the domain of privacy but the Chief Justice paints that picture alongside one of public grandeur on the battlefield and in the history books. Woolf’s work is concerned about the tension between public and private, and the Lord Chief Justice demonstrates that public/private tensions are also prevalent in constructions of national identity. Notably for Woolf, they are also gendered in the context of national identity.

Woolf then describes a feminine response:

That is a fair general statement of what patriotism means to an educated man and what duties it imposes upon him. But the educated man’s sister—what does “patriotism” mean to her? Has she the same reasons for being proud of England, for loving England, for defending England? Has she been “greatly blessed” in

⁴⁶ Thought, the site of domesticity, here, is framed in rather imposing terms.

England? History and biography when questioned would seem to show that her position in the home of freedom has been different from her brother's. (8)

The Chief Justice makes the claim that the English are best, and it is in everyone's interest to support that narrative because it has made England prosperous, but Woolf holds that the wealth has not been evenly distributed, especially along gendered lines. Here, Woolf suggests that women do not have the same interest in holding up the national myth as men do because women get relatively little. Sure, there is a physical safety guaranteed by a strong English military, but the social and political benefits flow to Englishmen in far greater volume than they do to Englishwomen.

Woolf's statement, "as a woman, I have no country" answers the question "what is in this nationalism for me?" From her perspective, nothing merits the commitment to nationalism. In fact, nationalism threatens to lead the country down the road to fascism which is the most complete form of the patriarchal collusion between government, church, and domestic life to deny the rights of women. She rejects nationalism because the benefits it offers are gendered so that she will not receive them, and the risks involved (war, fascism) are also gendered as women are the likely victims. *Three Guineas* is the long form version of her practical calculus in her engagement (and rejection) of a nationalist model of Englishness.

We might imagine that Woolf's rhetorical goal is not really to disavow the nation, but to call it to account: to emphasize that it ought to have done better for women. But if that is the case—if she is not really calling for women to reject nations and become stateless—what does she mean by "citizen of the world?" Woolf cites the classic example of Antigone, a woman caught between her duty to the state versus her duty to her family and the gods. She uses Antigone as an example of an essential difference between men and women: "it is not my nature to

join in hating, but in loving” (45). King Creon decrees that Antigone’s brother Polynices is not to be buried as punishment for his “betrayal” of the state. Antigone defies Creon and buries her brother. Her reasoning is that the laws of the gods supersede the laws of men and so her true allegiance was not to the state but to the gods. Crucially, then, it is not—as McClintock has suggested—that Antigone falls into the problematic opposition of the masculine state and the feminine caretaker; she is appealing to a higher authority above and outside of the state. Woolf claims that Antigone provides an example of female calculus when it comes to affairs of state, and this is relevant to the way Woolf frames being a citizen of the world. In terms of nationalism studies and this dissertation’s exploration of attempts to curate Englishness, the Antigone example is also prescient. All the writers I examine are not, as a reductive critique of a nationalist project would claim, caught hopelessly between the forces of negative nationalism and positive cosmopolitanism, doomed to fail. Rather, they are appealing to a “higher,” or more perfectly naturalized authority⁴⁷ for national identity, one that functions properly to meet the challenges of the changing 21st century.

The goals of women, as Woolf sees it, ought to be a fairer and more just society than the one that nations and nationalism have, at best, failed to provide. It is to these principles that women ought to be loyal, rather than the state of which they are citizens. Woolf is appealing to a type of universality that she implies supersedes the narrower claims of the male-centric militant-nationalism she objects to. Through her use of the Antigone example, we can see that Woolf is arguing for women to make a practical calculation about what is best for them when offered the benefits of nationalism, but also to coordinate that with concerns that transcend the limits of the national unit.

⁴⁷ By “more perfectly naturalized” I mean a national identification that both fits the character of the English people (how they see their past) and provides utility in the quickly globalizing future of the 20th century.

As Carter points out, to look beyond the capabilities of individual states, a more collective worldview is required. In the 20th century, this collectivism played out in the form of international agreements and treaties:

Nation states are increasingly constrained by the proliferating number of international conventions and treaties, by membership of important international organizations and by the reality of environmental, economic, and social global interdependence. Therefore, individuals within states may gain additional rights through international conventions their governments have endorsed—or be able to claim such rights even if their governments have failed to endorse international agreements or failed to implement them. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that individuals acquire more (or even legal) obligations to try to ensure their governments respect international commitments.

(Carter 47)

The goal of these organizations and treaties, like NATO and the UN, is to create a world where individual nations are so interconnected socially, politically, and most importantly, economically, that war is no longer advantageous to those individual nations. This does not mean the erasure of nations or patriotism in the face of globalism, but rather creating the scenario where those who fervently desire the success of their nation would be compelled implicitly to desire the success of a larger international community. Theoretically, this international community would work towards mutually beneficial goals of peace and prosperity because it is in each individual nation's local interest as well.

Antigone represents this desire, for Woolf, “standing for public principle over political imperative” (Woolf, *Three Guineas* 46). Since public principle pursued by an international community has more to offer women in terms of rights and freedoms than outward looking nationalism does, women ought to pursue this “citizen of the world” approach. This is not to say that some forms of

nationalism are not compatible with this view; the individual nations still exist, and they are inherently concerned with the success and survival of their own nation first. This works several ways for individual citizens: one becomes invested, literally, in the economic success of other nations because an able trading partner helps the economy of the nation. One also becomes invested in one's own government keeping international commitments, lest the nation face sanctions from the larger community that harm the nation. If, as is the ideal, these commitments are made in the spirit of promoting an increase in the overall equity of society and the expansion of rights and freedoms (for women, as is most important to Woolf), this sort of nationalism in this specific context is actually advantageous to women. Even if the men of a particular country do not *want* to treat women fairly, the international community creates a situation where it is in their political and economic best interest to do so even if they have a personal prejudice.

To be clear, this is a theory only. This is a theoretical desire, or political affect that Woolf has at this moment. It is not *specifically* or causally connected to later historical developments. It is tempting to see the treaties and international communities formed after World War II as a realization of this concept of global citizenship. This experiment, however, has not been executed perfectly, and insidious nationalism continues to have broad appeal even in a context where an interconnected international community exists. The reason for this is partially the same as the reason that Woolf saw no use for aggressive nationalism; certain people do not see a personal benefit to this system of "globalization." Notably, in the 2010s, nationalist politicians have been able to exploit this dissatisfaction with the system of international community because, as was Woolf's criticism of nationalism in the first place, the benefits of this international community were not distributed equitably with most of the "prosperity" or wealth created going disproportionately to the already wealthy, while poorer, working-class people saw fewer benefits. This is very similar to the argument that Orwell makes in a class context, except that

Woolf makes it in the context of gender.⁴⁸ This allowed for nationalist politicians to argue (in bad faith) that outward looking nationalism could offer more equitable benefits by putting their needs first over the commitments and obligations to the international community. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf dismantles the empty promise of nationalism for women, laying bare the stark realities of exclusion. As we turn to *Mrs. Dalloway*, we will engage with a narrative where national symbols are of the utmost importance. Woolf delves into the emptiness that shrouds these symbols, exposing the profound disconnect between the grandeur they profess and the disillusionment they can create.

MRS. DALLOWAY

Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) is one of the most famous works of modernist literature that explores post-World War I British society. Set in a single day in June 1923, the novel weaves together the lives of various characters in London. The main character is Clarissa Dalloway, an upper-class woman preparing to host a party that evening. Through Clarissa's stream of consciousness, Woolf explores her struggles with societal expectations, regrets, and desire for fulfillment. Interwoven with Clarissa's story is that of Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked war veteran grappling with the trauma of his experiences in the war. Septimus' deteriorating mental state provides a commentary on the devastating effects of war on the individual psyche, highlighting the disillusionment felt by many returning soldiers. In addition to Clarissa and Septimus, Woolf introduces several characters from their lives, including Clarissa's husband Richard, her former suitor Peter Walsh, and the aristocratic Lady Bruton. Central to

⁴⁸ Michael Cox notes that Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, and the leaders of the Brexit movement are all major political figures of the 2010s who engaged in populism, which "in its modern iteration is a search for meaning in what Tony Giddens earlier termed a 'runaway world' of globalisation" (14). On such Brexit leader who eventually became Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, campaigned during the Brexit referendum with a bus that said "We send the EU £350 million a week. Let's fund our NHS instead" (Watt 1).

Woolf's story is her critique of nationalism and its role in shaping English identity in the aftermath of the war. Through characters like Richard and Bruton, who embody fervent allegiance to the empire and its symbols, Woolf exposes the emptiness of nationalist ideals and the disillusionment they engender. Moreover, Woolf uses motifs such as the symbolism of Shakespeare's works to underscore the characters' relationship with English culture and tradition. While some characters find solace and meaning in Shakespeare's words, others dismiss them as vulgar or irrelevant. Overall, *Mrs. Dalloway* is an important exploration of the complexities of English identity in the aftermath of the war.⁴⁹

Some of Woolf's criticisms of nationalism, particularly the glorification of the British empire, are woven into the novel. Written in the aftermath of World War I, a conflict that saw Britain's transformation from a formidable global power to a state of vulnerability, *Mrs. Dalloway* grapples with themes of disillusionment concerning the empire. The novel explores the fervent allegiance to the empire that compels men to engage in a war, which we would today characterize as "nationalism." In particular, Woolf depicts characters who hopelessly cling to a national myth that is simply no longer true in the 20th century. Curiously, Woolf does not throw out all national symbols; in fact, she repurposes some of the most iconic. In this section, I will argue that Woolf views nationalism (correctly) as preoccupied with symbols, and that *Mrs. Dalloway* is about how those symbols are, for Woolf, empty promises. As a novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* contains a significant critique of the nation. This novel is a way for Woolf to voice this sense of how nations and nationalisms have failed their citizens—women especially, but not exclusively, as these national myths and symbols fail even for the young men to whom they supposedly are meant to appeal most directly. It gives us, in narrative form, what *Three Guineas*

⁴⁹ Peter Kalliney argues that *Mrs. Dalloway* is Woolf's attempt to create a culturally specific English modernism.

also give us is, which is an anti-nationalist rhetoric that is meant not as a way to reject the nation but as a way to engage with the nation and call it to account.

The characters in the novel that are most devoted to the idea of a nationalist loyalty are Richard Dalloway and Lady Bruton. Richard, a member of the upper class, is depicted as a man of leisure who has aspirations of writing a history of Lady Bruton's family. Bruton, on the other hand, takes great pride in her family's history, particularly their military and administrative service. Woolf writes a passage that demonstrates the characters' attitudes towards national service:

And Richard Dalloway strolled off as usual to have a look at the General's portrait, because he meant, whenever he had a moment of leisure, to write a history of Lady Bruton's family. And Millicent Bruton was very proud of her family. But they could wait, they could wait, she said, looking at the picture; meaning that her family, of military men, administrators, admirals, had been men of action, who had done their duty; and Richard's first duty was to his country.

(78)

The description of the Bruton family and Richard's admiration of it is similar to the cycle of nationalist military expression that Woolf would later go on to criticize in *Three Guineas*. The Brutons, an old and traditional family, "men of action who had done their duty," are examples of the military exploits that gain respect in a nationalist society. Richard, not being a military man, nevertheless does his part in developing and propagating the nationalist myth through his desire to quite literally mythologize the family's history. Richard sees these military exploits as worthy of historical documentation, and furthermore feels it is his duty to do it himself. Just as the Brutons did their duty, so too must Richard do his, and his "first duty was to his country."

Richard's desire (and subsequent action, if he ever got around to doing the writing) forms the second half of the cycle of militaristic nationalism: the inspiration to contribute. Moved by the militaristic deeds of the Brutons in service of Britain, Richard wants to write their history, also in service of Britain, but how can he compare the duty to serve in the military to the duty to write about serving in the military? Well, for Woolf, the glorification of patriarchal expressions of military violence in service of the nation brings us back to the beginning of the cycle. A person serves the country in the military, this service is mythologized, this national myth inspires more men to serve in the military. For Woolf, much like Orwell, the national myth of Britain is a recruiting tool for the military. This passage occurs fairly early in the novel when Richard visits Bruton's house. The characters' discussion about Bruton's family and Richard's desire to write a history gives us an insight into the concerns of the British upper class in post-World War I London. Bruton's pride in her family's military background and Richard's interest in documenting it exemplify the national values and historical-national consciousness prevalent among the characters. This emphasis on lineage and national identity reflects Woolf's broader exploration of English society and its evolving sense of self in the aftermath of the war. These characters clearly demonstrate that the novel is a text deeply concerned with exploring English national identity.

Interestingly, Woolf is critical of this expression of nationalist duty by Richard, but not much is made of his decision to perform his duty to his country through an act of narrative. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf describes the profession of literature as the last profession that has not had a great battle. She writes of biographies:

For almost every biography we read of professional men in the nineteenth century, to limit ourselves to that not distant and fully documented age, is largely

concerned with war. They were great fighters, it seems, the professional men in the age of Queen Victoria. There was the battle of Westminster. There was the battle of the universities. There was the battle of Whitehall. There was the battle of Harley Street. There was the battle of the Royal Academy. Some of these battles, as you can testify, are still in progress. In fact, the only profession which does not seem to have fought a fierce battle during the nineteenth century is the profession of literature. All the other professions, according to the testimony of biography, seem to be as bloodthirsty as the profession of arms itself. (145)

Here, Woolf makes a criticism of capitalism as a bloodthirsty, warlike system, but notably excludes literature from that system.⁵⁰ In terms of how the publishing industry functions within capitalism, it is fair to say that other professions are far more “bloodthirsty,” but in one breath Woolf claims that much of history written in narrative form is concerned with war and battles, and in the next claims that literature is the last field without a battle upon it. Though Woolf makes no claim that the narrative retelling of history in the form of biography is the same as a work of literature, they are at least aligned in their narrative medium. Therefore, it is noteworthy that one is associated with violence, and one is not, especially given her thoughts on the cyclical nature of national violence. Analyzing which part of a cycle is most crucial is antithetical to the structure of cycles; each element is required or the cycle breaks. Consider, for a moment, the removal of the glorification of fulfilling national duty in war. No national myth exists. Does war still exist? Yes, but a valuable recruiting tool has been lost and this diminishes a nation’s ability to keep an army stocked with bodies and thus makes waging large, global wars, very difficult. It would seem that the national mythology is extremely important to the patriarchal violence of

⁵⁰ The obvious exception to this sort of thing would be something like literary biography or explicit propaganda.

nationalism. Woolf acknowledges this in *Mrs. Dalloway* through Richard's sense of duty to contribute to that national myth through writing "history" (in the form of narrative biography) and therefore I think it is a mistake in *Three Guineas* to reduce literature's role in nationalist violence.

It would be a mistake, however, to view Richard as a warmongering imperialist. Richard expresses several conflicting thoughts about the war (WWI): "Really it was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle. Here he was walking across London to say to Clarissa in so many words that he loved her" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 82-83). Richard acknowledges that the war has killed thousands of "poor chaps" and that, in terms of the national mythology, it means relatively little. Many of the young men who died for king and country will simply be forgotten, unmythologized by the nation and of no use to nation in terms of a recruiting tool. Here, Richard's thoughts can be read two ways. Either he is grateful for the sacrifice of these men who have died and will not even be compensated with immortalization in the pantheon of great English warriors; grateful that they died so that he could live a normal life with his wife. We can also read that Richard is grappling with the randomness of the war. He is walking across London to tell his wife that he loved her while so many poor chaps sit in mass graves in Europe, forgotten. While the second reading fits with the theme of disillusionment with the war in the novel, it does not fit with the rest of Richard's character. By contrast, the first reading of being grateful for sacrifice without recognition seems to exist in conflict with the idea that military exploits must be glorified if they are to serve a nationalist narrative. Does Richard's acknowledgment that, for most of the Englishmen who died in the war, there will be no

recognition within the national myth, highlight that perhaps he is not as committed to the nationalist ideology as his desire to write military biographies suggests?

To answer this question, I go to Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. When Richard says that the poor chaps have been "half-forgotten," I think it is important to note two things: why not completely forgotten and which half has been forgotten? Richard is thinking about them and therefore, to some extent he remembers them and the fact that they died in the war, but the phrase "half-forgotten" can also mean that we have forgotten their individuality. For example, Richard does not say "Rob Gilson was killed at the battle of the Somme on July 1st, 1916." He offers no specifics about who they were or how they died, only that it is a shame they did and that their sacrifice has allowed for his miracle of a life with his wife. What is important in this moment is not who they were, but that they died in the war. Here, Richard inadvertently memorializes them in this impersonal way, but this is in fact consistent with how national myths sometimes function. The immortalized figure in the national consciousness need not have a name or a face. Anderson writes about a monument to war dead called the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier:

No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely *because* they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times... Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings. (This is why so many different nations have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the

nationality of their absent occupants. What else could they be *but* Germans, Americans). (9-10)

Richard visits a kind of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in his mind, expressing his gratitude for their sacrifice. This kind of anonymous memorialization is only possible because the poor chaps have been half-forgotten. Many Tombs of the Unknown Soldier are empty⁵¹, and functionally, this is irrelevant. The Tomb is a national symbol, not an actual Tomb. It is a symbol “saturated with ghostly national imaginings,” and by this, Anderson means that the Tomb functions within the national myth as a method of anonymous immortalization. What is the only thing we can be sure of about the Unknown Soldier? That he is of the nationality of the country in which the tomb resides. His entire being is shrunk to this one trait: he is English.

It is also worth noting that Anderson is grouping Cenotaphs (from the Greek for empty tomb), a monument with a deliberately empty tomb for symbolic effect, and Tombs of the Unknown soldier, which sometimes do contain the remains of a soldier, together in his discussion. The fact that this conflation can be made without impact on the symbolic effect of either type of monument speaks to the interchangeability, and therefore primarily symbolic function regardless of the presence of a body. In fact, both exist in London and were unveiled on the same day, November 11th, 1920. There was an older, temporary cenotaph made in 1919 for a parade of returning soldiers to salute symbolically, while the body of the unknown warrior was given a state funeral before being interred in Westminster Abbey. Prime Minister David Lloyd George wrote: “The Cenotaph is the token of our mourning as a nation; the Grave of the Unknown Soldier is the token of our mourning as individuals” (462). While Lloyd George sees a

⁵¹ Though the British grave of the Unknown Warrior does contain the remains of a soldier killed in the first world war. The point is not whether or not there is a body inside, the point is that it does not matter symbolically whether there is or is not.

distinction in the type of mourning, functionally, this is not necessarily the case. As Rachel Bryan notes, the Unknown Warrior is:

Irrevocably unknowable, each of his potential identities was permitted to remain in play; and thus, as Neil Hanson has observed, ‘every person, if only in the privacy of their own thoughts [could] assume a person link’ with the Unknown Warrior should they wish.

What one witnesses in the case of the Unknown Warrior, then, is an occasion on which the imaginative appropriation of the vulnerable, silent body was permitted, if not encouraged, on an almost national scale. (141-142)

While the two monuments appear to distinguish between national and individual mourning, they actually demonstrate how deeply intertwined these forms of grief are. The Unknown Warrior, symbolically representing every English person, allows individuals to project their personal losses onto a national symbol. This creates a powerful intersection of private and public grief, where each person’s source of mourning contributes to a larger collective experience. The state funeral given to the Unknown Warrior, typically reserved for monarchs and statesmen, further blurs the line between individual and national mourning. It elevates personal losses to a national level, while simultaneously bringing the abstract concept of national sacrifice down to a deeply personal scale. This interplay between individual and collective grief demonstrates how mourning for those who died for the empire becomes both intensely personal and broadly nationalistic, creating a complex emotional landscape where private sorrow and public commemoration are inseparable.

Why do we create these empty Tombs? For Anderson, it is because nationalism replaces several older systems, (religion, dynastic kingdoms) that offered people symbolic continuity. People die, but with these systems, and later, nationalism, people can symbolically replace that

fatality with continuity. As Richard's thoughts suggest, the sacrifice of the Unknown Soldier has had a direct effect on his ability to lead a life back in England, and so the soldier's actions echo beyond his death and those who live to reap the benefits are grateful. Richard directly expresses this desire for continuity through participation in national symbols and consciousness:

As for Buckingham Palace (like an old prima donna facing the audience all in white) you can't deny it a certain dignity, he considered, nor despise what it does, after all, stand to millions of people (a little crowd was waiting at the gate to see the King drive out) for a symbol, absurd though it is; a child with a box of bricks could have done better, he thought... but he liked being ruled by the descendant of Horsa; he liked continuity; and the sense of handing on the traditions of the past, (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 84)

The Tomb functions to ensure this continuity exists as part of the national myth and that it is available to anyone. For example, Richard wants to write about the Brutons because they were famous military men, Generals and Admirals—men whose names will be in history books written about the battles they fought. The path to their memorialization within the myth is clear because their names and titles are important. What of the many soldiers who will not be worthy of memorialization through literature or history because they don't have the right name, title, or station to perform a high-profile deed? This Unknown Soldier is precisely the sort of man that the national myth targets for recruitment; the British Army has enough Generals and Admirals, but it still needs privates and junior officers to actually go into battle to fight. What benefit is afforded to the poor chaps who die and are half forgotten? How can young men be convinced that fighting and dying in war is worth it when they will not get individual recognition that will be granted to the higher profile members of the military? The answer is related to the Tomb of

the Unknown Soldier. These young men may not be mentioned in biographies except as a statistic, but the symbol of the Tomb allows for a symbolic continuity in the abstract. People like Richard will remember the Unknown Soldier and glorify him in their gratitude. As long as the identity of the Unknown Soldier remains unknown, the vacuum can be filled by the common soldier; because the Unknown soldier is no one, he could be anyone. Therefore, all that is needed to be memorialized in the national myth and replace fatality with continuity is to be English and fight in battle. The abstract symbol allows for the glory to be distributed widely and therefore completes Woolf's nationalist cycle.

That is how the symbol of the Tomb is supposed to work. The question that Woolf considers is: is that worth it? Is it worth it to die in battle contributing to the national glorification of England to be memorialized in the abstract? Is that memorialization even a promise the Tomb can fulfil?⁵² Woolf explores these questions in the character of Septimus Smith. A World War I veteran suffering from severe PTSD, Septimus struggles with traumatic memories of the war and the loss of his friend Evans. Through the novel, his deteriorating mental state contrasts with the superficiality of the upper-class world of the novel. "Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square" (62). In this description of the character, Woolf demonstrates several things about him. First, that Septimus was a willing and eager soldier being one of the first to volunteer. The reason he was so eager was because he wanted to "save England," and therefore we can infer a strong sense of national pride in the character. Finally, that the reason he has such a strong national pride is because of national

⁵² Many other modernist authors and people writing in the wake of World War I were questioning these types of narratives—as in poems like Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est."

symbols, like Shakespeare and the woman who taught him Shakespeare. Septimus appears to be the kind of young man that the nationalist cycle has successfully recruited.

Septimus goes off to war and returns suffering from shell shock. Septimus is a casualty of war, albeit a living one, but still he fought for the national consciousness and theoretically, he should be ready for memorialization in that national consciousness. Woolf engages with this “unknown soldier” motif through the figure of a still-living man who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder to demonstrate how the purely symbolic nature of the monument, and the detachment that the anonymity of the supposed “soldier” provides, allows for citizens to perform patriotism by honouring “symbolic” sacrifice, while ignoring the uncomfortable realities of the consequences of the actual sacrifice that soldiers make. The nameless dead are easy to honour; the living disabled are treated like an inconvenient burden. Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Septimus sees Dr. Holmes, who tells him:

‘So you’re in a funk,’ he said agreeably, sitting down by his patient’s side. He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn’t she? Didn’t that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn’t one owe perhaps a duty to one’s wife? Wouldn’t it be better to do something instead of lying in bed? For he had forty years’ experience behind him; and Septimus could take Dr.

Holmes’s word for it – there was nothing whatever the matter with him. (66)

Dr. Holmes dismisses Septimus’s concerns about his condition, even questioning his manhood. Most people would hold that English society owes Septimus a tremendous debt for his sacrifice and that they ought to take care of him properly and help him through the trauma he suffered on their behalf, but Woolf does not depict that. Instead, she depicts Septimus’s complaints falling on

deaf ears and the doctor who is supposed to treat a war trauma wound dismisses the serious condition as a “funk.” Why?

The issue that Septimus and the reader might miss at first, the issue that Woolf’s novel illuminates, is that, in a nationalist model of militarism and national myth, English society owes Septimus nothing. Set in 1923, the events of the novel take place three years after England became the first country (along with France) to build a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. From the perspective of a nationalist ideology, all Septimus is owed for his sacrifice is this symbolic recognition. Woolf’s story demonstrates that, in some scenarios, this transaction is simply not worth it for the soldier. Yes, Septimus needs medical care, but most importantly he needs to be heard and understood, as evidenced by his constant failed attempts at communicating. Septimus repeatedly seeks to make himself heard in some way and one of the few times he feels he is getting a communication back to him is when a plane (a symbol of industrial modernization and warfare) starts skywriting.

“Look, look, Septimus!” [Lucrezia, his wife] cried. For Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself. So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely,

with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks. It was toffee; they were advertising toffee, a nursemaid told Rezia” (16).

Septimus, influenced by his illness, sees an unimaginable beauty in the fact that the airplane is communicating with him. Notably, Septimus was a lover of poetry before the war and no longer has a taste for it after, but here, the prose is written in a poetic fashion demonstrating obsession with an abstract, undefinable beauty. He hallucinates that the plane is speaking directly to him and that it is in a language so terribly beautiful that he cannot comprehend it, but this illustrates his desire to simply be spoken to and to be heard. This plane, a symbol of the modern world and the war, both of which have left him behind, tries to speak with him and this brings him to tears. Woolf shatters this image by telling the reader that the plane is writing something mundane and meaningless, a candy advertisement. Post-War Modern England has nothing to offer Septimus except toffee.

Septimus eventually kills himself in a desperate attempt at communication, and Woolf here seems to illustrate the high human cost of the unfulfilled promise of national myths and Tombs of the Unknown soldier. For Woolf, the continuity they offer is a lie. This ties in with the greater theme of the novel surrounding the disillusionment with the British Empire and English society and tradition. All of these things contribute to the national myth and, as Septimus demonstrates, that myth is no longer sufficient. Peter Walsh serves as a foil to Septimus in the novel as a more emotionally stable war veteran whose struggles with societal expectations and relationships differ from Septimus’ PTSD and inability to reintegrate into polite society. Peter sums up the sentiment of the shortcomings of national myths well:

Nobody looked at him. They just went on talking, yet it was perfectly plain that they all knew, felt to the marrow of their bones, this majesty passing; this symbol

of what they stood for, English society. Old Lady Bruton... swam up, and they withdrew into a little room which at once became spied upon, guarded, and a sort of stir and rustle rippled through every one, openly: the Prime Minister! Lord, lord, the snobbery of the English! thought Peter Walsh, standing in the corner. How they loved dressing up in gold lace and doing homage! (123)

Peter literally claims that English society is symbolic and that it is no longer relevant. Woolf's exploration of the contradictory and insufficient nature of nationalist appeals, as depicted through characters like Richard, Septimus, and Peter, anticipates further nationalist movements as just a year after writing *Three Guineas*, the world would plunge into another devastating world war.

Septimus's pre-war love of Shakespeare demonstrates a pre-war love with English culture, specifically a love of England's most famous writer. Woolf, however, uses Shakespeare several times throughout the novel and not exclusively as a means of demonstrating national pride. In fact, sometimes the motif functions in the opposite way. Septimus's loss of love for Shakespeare fits the theme of disillusionment with nationalism, but many of the characters who I claim have nationalist impulses in the novel, like Richard and Lady Bruton, also have disdain for Shakespeare. I argue that the motif functions in different ways for different characters as it relates to the theme of the search for artistic beauty. While some scholars, such as Cristiano Ragni and Marjorie Garber, emphasize Woolf's reverence for Shakespeare, I highlight how Woolf pressed beyond what she saw as Shakespeare's limitations, particularly in exploring women's experiences.

I have argued that Septimus' love of Shakespeare and subsequent disillusionment with it represents a failure of English symbols to live up to the nationalist promise, but what of Clarissa's encounters with Shakespeare? She reads lines from *Cymbeline*: Fear no more the heat

o' the sun/Nor the furious winter's rages" (7) and *Othello*: "'if it were now to die 'twere now to be most happy.' That was her feeling—Othello's feeling, and she felt it, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel it" (25). The link between Septimus and Clarissa is through Shakespeare, but also specifically the passages Clarissa encounters, both of which are about embracing death as respite from life. This functions in the Clarissa/Septimus mirror relationship through his suicide. The Shakespeare motif is complex because he is clearly a symbol of England, but the passages in the novel are not nationalist in nature. Clarissa and Septimus's (temporary) appreciation of Shakespeare seems to stem from objective beauty in the writing and how they relate to the characters in the play through human (not English) themes. This would seem to contradict the point that Shakespeare represents an English national symbol, but it is important to remember that for Woolf, these national symbols fail not on their own merit, but only in their inability to fulfil the promise of nationalism.

To examine this, I move to the characters who are most associated with nationalism and their disdain for Shakespeare. Richard, who wants to participate in the nationalism through literature, thinks: "How could she let him hold forth about Shakespeare? Seriously and solemnly Richard Dalloway got on his hind legs and said that no decent man ought to read Shakespeare's sonnets because it was like listening at keyholes" (54). For Richard, Shakespeare is vulgar, low art, not some symbol to be held up as an example of English artistic greatness. The general agreement that Shakespeare is one of the best writers ever, especially in an English context, seems not to matter with Richard.

Lady Bruton is held up as the picture of quintessential English nationalism:

For she never spoke of England, but this isle of men, this dear, dear land, was in her blood (without reading Shakespeare), and if ever a woman could have worn

the helmet and shot the arrow, could have led troops to attack, ruled with
indomitable justice barbarian hordes and lain under a shield noseless in a church,
or made a green grass mound on some primeval hillside, that woman was
Millicent Bruton. (129)

Woolf deliberately mentions that Bruton has not read Shakespeare. This fits with the theme of “traditional English society” rejecting art as trivial, but within the theme of nationalism, the fact that this information is delivered in parentheses suggests that the information is meant to undercut the rest of the passage about her. Bruton is a proud Englishwoman (who hasn’t read Shakespeare). This is a rejection of art but also an engagement with national symbols without engaging with the specific content within. To understand how the Shakespeare motif works differently in with Septimus and Clarissa than it does with Richard and Bruton, we must remember that lesson about national symbols that comes from the Tomb of the Unknown soldier.

Such Tombs are most powerful and effective as recruiting tools for nationalist causes and sentiments because they are empty or anonymous. If we knew the soldier’s name, it becomes *his* tomb and therefore loses the power to allow all young men to see themselves as the recipient of potential nationalist glory; the anonymity allows for wide applicability. Shakespeare, as I have argued in Septimus’s case, is an example of a symbol of the English nation. The problem with Shakespeare as a symbol is that he is not an empty tomb. The body of Shakespeare’s written works lie within the national symbol that the name “Shakespeare” creates and, once we look inside, as Septimus and Clarissa have and Richard and Bruton refuse to do, we find that Shakespeare (specifically in the works mentioned in the novel [*Othello*, *Cymbeline*, sonnets]) is not concerned with writing the story to inspire English pride or nationalism (the history plays might be worth delving into in an exploration of Shakespeare’s role in constructing English

national identity, but Woolf specifically avoids those works in her motif), but rather with larger themes that apply to people across many national contexts. The themes in Shakespeare's work apply more to Woolf's "citizen of the world" idea than they do to any sort of "England first" mentality. Therefore, for Richard and Bruton, it would be dangerous to read Shakespeare. It would be a kind of sacrilege akin to opening the Tomb of the Unknown soldier. Once the curtain is thrown back, the national symbol loses most of its power. The Tomb's power is in its visibility and centrality, which allows it to accrue reverence. Just as there is a distinction between the Tomb's symbolic function (monument to patriotic sacrifice) and its literal contents (nothing), there is a distinction to Shakespeare's symbolic function (national poet) and the reality of the meaning in the work (which, apart from the history plays, do not espouse an English nationalism). If Richard and Bruton were to engage with Shakespeare's text rather than the symbolic culture of "Shakespeare," this fact would confront them and rob the symbol of its power.

The preservation of national symbols' functions is crucial to the promise of continuity replacing death that Anderson argues is the purpose of nationalist thought. Peter Walsh describes such continuity of Lady Bruton:

she had the thought of Empire always at hand, and had acquired from her association with that armoured goddess her ramrod bearing, her robustness of demeanour, so that one could not figure her even in death parted from the earth or roaming territories over which, in some spiritual shape, the Union Jack had ceased to fly. To be not English even among the dead—no, no! Impossible! (129)

Like the Unknown Soldier, Englishness will be a quality associated with Bruton even in death, even if it is the last quality anyone remembers about her. Septimus's disillusionment, Clarissa's

identification, and Richard and Bruton's disdain, with Shakespeare, function as a motif in the novel of national symbols, how they function, and how they fail. Septimus's hallucination sums up how the national myth is meant to contribute to the national consciousness by providing work in the form of bodies for wartime sacrifice: "Septimus, was alone, called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth, to learn the meaning, which now at last, after all the toils of civilisation—Greeks, Romans, Shakespeare, Darwin, and now himself—was to be given whole to... . "To whom?" he asked aloud. "To the Prime Minister," the voices which rustled above his head replied" (48). In the end, Septimus' education, his appreciation of his country and its art, even Shakespeare, was meant to be given "to the Prime Minister," the most obvious symbol of the English nation in the novel. Nationalism is often about symbols and *Mrs. Dalloway* is about how those symbols are empty promises for the English. Interestingly, as in her other work she frames nationalism as a raw deal for women, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, much of the focus of her critique is how these national myths and symbols target young men but fail to deliver on their promise. Though women certainly suffer in war, the type of anguish Woolf depicts in the novel would have been felt most often by the young men who served in the trenches, and so this gendered sacrifice (billed as a path to glory for young men) is an empty promise as well. As she critiques this emptiness from the male and female perspective, in her later work, she will even explore how nationalism works in the space between the traditional binary genders.

BETWEEN THE ACTS

In her posthumously published 1941 novel *Between the Acts*, Woolf explores how the concept of blurring boundaries and borders can help form a national consciousness. The novel narrates the events of a single day in a small village in rural England in 1939. There is to be a

pageant that depicts and celebrates events in English history and the whole town is to be in attendance. The series of tableaux and the narrative strategies Woolf uses to implicate the viewer both inside and outside the novel create both a criticism of English nationalism and an ideal for English identity.

Esty argues that *Between the Acts*, similar to Orwell's work, is part of a broader trend in which author's grappled with England's changing global position in response to imperial decline with a need to redefine national identity (94). He argues that her use of the pageant play structure allowed "Woolf to mediate between genres, between concepts of individual and community, and perhaps most saliently, between local contingencies of history and deeper, vaster patterns of time" (253). Further, for Esty, the genre represents a turn from the individual to the collective in Woolf's concern: "Woolf has shifted emphasis from private production ('I have had my vision') to collective reception ('I have made them see')" (106). My argument reflects Esty's view that *Between the Acts* reflects a trend of author's grappling with the end of empire and the need to redefine national identity. Like Esty, I see the pageant-play structure in Woolf's attempt to bridge individual and collective experience, as well as her shift from private to collective concerns. My argument builds on Esty's by examining how Woolf uses this structure to critique and reimagine English national identity. I am more focused on Woolf's political motivations, and her specific approach to redefining Englishness in the context of imperial decline. *Between the Acts* is a key moment where Woolf is not *just* offering a critique, but where her constructive project related to national identity can be glimpsed. In the novel, Woolf will blur boundaries between genders as well, which, since for her the nation is gendered, represents an important intermingling between seemingly binary concepts. This represents a big change from what I have examined thus far. In this section, I argue that *Between the Acts* demonstrates that Woolf believes a blurring of national

borders is necessary for the kind of revision the national character needs to be relevant and useful in the 20th century.

Set just before World War II, *Between the Acts* is a novel preoccupied with borders and boundaries, specifically the threat of violation of those boundaries. Jackson Ayres, in his 2017 article, “The Planes Made One Think: Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* and Invasion Literature,” characterizes the novel as an example of “invasion literature.” For Jackson, Woolf’s story is an examination of a national identity that is both threatened and formed by invasion. “Woolf positions a looming Nazi invasion as threatening to end a historical process in which invasions initiate and define stages of English national identity, devolving Englishness back to a primitive, savage past” (Ayres 634). The characters in the novel define their relationship to England with temporal reference to invasions: Lucy Swithin’s family “couldn’t trace their descent for more than two or three hundred years”; her late husband’s family, the Swithins, “were there before the Conquest” (Woolf, *Between the Acts* 320). On the one hand, this makes perfect sense, both practically and in terms of how nationalist myths function. Of course, invasions, like the Norman Conquest, were enormous world events that shaped the world in new ways. The effects on the English people were vast and their relationship to their country was undoubtedly shaped by that. In these moments of invasion, the nation is at first unmade, and then remade; the England that existed before the conquest is gone, the new England is born. The threat of Nazi invasion, therefore, is also a threat of an identity crisis for the English. If Hitler sets foot in London, the England they know ceases to exist and a new England will be formed. This is an unsettling prospect. Furthermore, invasions, whether England is invading or being invaded, whether the invasion is successful or unsuccessful, are the most obvious types of military campaigns that nationalism seeks to cause and exploit. Either one is passionately

defending one's home from the barbarians, or one is seeking to expand the motherland's glorious empire. A successful invasion or defence bolsters the national myth, while the unsuccessful invasion or defence, which contradicts the underlying "truth" of the nationalist myth (that one's own country is best) requires the tearing down and revision of that national identity. What Woolf does, in this novel, is demonstrate that this revision process is not limited to times of invasion and conquest, but that the revision is done every day, unwittingly by every English person. *Between the Acts* is a story that is concerned with how national revisions are performed and precipitated by blurred boundaries.

Ben Harker's 2011 article, "'On Different Levels Ourselves Went Forward': Pageantry, Class Politics, and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf's Late Writing," hypothesizes that Woolf's goal in examining constructions of national identity in *Between the Acts* is to bridge the gap between the aesthetic values of modernist literature and the goals of national identity. He writes: "Woolf's challenge...to get inside English literature and trace various incarnations of a trans-historical 'song making instinct' through different economic, political, and cultural contexts...was instead invested in presenting a cultural continuum that would loop the individuated 'I' of late modernism into the 'we' of national tradition" (Harker 441). For Harker, *Between the Acts* is an examination of how national tradition is played out in modernist literature with particular emphasis on literary form. The novel is an attempt to reconcile the form of modernism that focuses inward on the self and the cultural force of national identification that looks outward to others. Harker believes that Woolf ultimately failed in this attempt, but he argues that the means by which she did the attempting, whether we judge them to be successful or not, are important in a discussion of how nation and nationalism function in the novel. Harker's analysis of Woolf's attempt to reconcile modernist literary form with national tradition

provides a useful framework for understanding the structure and purpose of the pageant in *Between the Acts*. By examining how Woolf uses the pageant to depict and satirize various periods of English history, we can see how she explores the relationship between individual experience and collective national identity. This is particularly evident in the final scene of the pageant, where the blurring of boundaries between actors and audience serves as a metaphor for the fluid nature of national identity.

The scenes in the pageant depict several periods in English history and satirize popular art forms from the periods in which they are set. The restoration scene pokes fun at drama from that period, while the Victorian scene features a police officer directing traffic in an attempt to display the complex political and social landscape of Victorian England. It is clear that the forms the pageant takes are meant to interact with the periods it depicts in some way. At the end of the pageant, the actors hold up mirrors to the audience. The obvious implication is that the audience is the next stage in English history. They, the audience, are part of the English tradition that the pageant satirizes. Within the novel, the border between audience and stage, the fourth wall, is deliberately and obviously blurred. This is another border, but unlike the English border that is only threatened, this border is actively violated (visually, though not spatially).

Concerning borders that are crossed, Linda Camarasana has a queer reading of the novel that adds to the argument I am making about blurred boundaries and the national consciousness, specifically with reference to Miss La Trobe.⁵³ La Trobe is an eccentric elderly spinster who wrote and directed the bizarre pageant that is the centrepiece of the novel. She is an outsider, possibly foreign, and obsessively micromanages the details of the production. She serves as a

⁵³ Maria J. Lopez, in "The Gothic, the Abject and the Monstrous: A Revision of National Identity in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*," similarly explores the novel's engagement with liminal spaces and blurred boundaries. Lopez's focus on the gothic elements of the novel complements Camarasana's queer reading, both highlighting how Woolf uses these liminal spaces to challenge and reimagine national identity.

personification of Woolf's concept of the androgynous creative spirit. Through her alienation and likely queerness, La Trobe possesses an emotional separateness, allowing her to observe the village and its inhabitants clearly. In "Trespassing the Nation: a Queer Reading of *Between the Acts*," Camarasana identifies the queer traits of La Trobe as well as the implications this character has on Woolf's exploration of national identity as it La Trobe who puts on the pageant. La Trobe is described in overtly masculine terms. She is "swarthy, sturdy and thick set; [she] strode about the fields in a smock frock; sometimes with a cigarette in her mouth; often with a whip in her hand; and used rather strong language—perhaps, then, she wasn't altogether a lady?" (Woolf 58). Her masculinity is further emphasized in the description of her "abrupt manner and stocky figure; her thick ankles and sturdy shoes; her rapid decisions barked out in guttural accents" (63). As Camarasana puts it:

Arguably, La Trobe is the queer character on which to focus when discussing subversive erotics and cultural disruptions—especially the anti-imperialist and anti-war assertions—in Woolf's novels. Unlike other Woolf novels, in which lesbianism is submerged in a fantastical gender parody (*Orlando*), has been revised out of the text overtly (as is the case with Rhoda in *The Waves*), or coincides with heterosexual marriage (as in *Mrs. Dalloway*), at the time of its publication in 1941, it took no very sophisticated reading to perceive La Trobe's sexuality. (9)

Thus, in her final novel, one that deals thematically not just with past war (as in *Mrs. Dalloway*) but with impending war, Woolf has cast in a key role "the only 'out' lesbian in [her] fictional repertoire" (Weil 241), an artist who presents a critical image of the nation and its normative regimes. La Trobe puts on the show that is supposed to celebrate Englishness and what it means

to be English: a defined national identity with clear binary boundaries. This same character blurs, or queers, sexual boundaries and thus, for Camarasana, queers the nation as well by blurring borders and stage boundaries. This is important because it allows for blurred borders not just literally in terms of invasion, but within the English people themselves. This is similar to what Orwell was doing in his delineation between inward and outward looking nationalism. The idea that an identity predicated on an outward gaze towards an othered group is problematic while an identity predicated on an inward gaze reconciling differences within the “in-group” is very much at play with Woolf here as well. By having a queer character present different conceptions of Englishness, Woolf demonstrates blurred lines between those conceptions, and thus allows for revisions of Englishness even outside of times of literal invasion. Woolf’s use of a queer character to present different conceptions of Englishness suggests that national identity, like sexual identity, can be fluid and resist rigid categorization. The queer character’s ability to embody and transition between various historical personas in the pageant mirrors the fluidity of queer identity, challenging the notion of a fixed, monolithic Englishness. This blurring of lines between different conceptions of Englishness through a queer lens invites readers to consider how national identity, like gender or sexuality, can be performative and subject to reinterpretation across time and social contexts.

La Trobe’s queerness is directly related to her national identity as the other characters perceive her to be not “pure English” (Woolf 57). Camarasana argues that Woolf ties La Trobe’s queerness with nationalism as a means of resisting the regime of British nationalism, but while it is true that blurring lines and borders does present a problem for traditional nationalism, as we have seen, Woolf’s politics as they relate to national identity are not geared towards the erasure of Englishness, but rather the cultivation of an Englishness that creates a less sexist England.

The Victorian tableau is undoubtedly a critique of the Empire, as Budge, the Victorian constable, standing in London, says of the colonies: “crossing the ocean; to proclaim her Empire; all of ‘em Obey the Rule of my truncheon...The ruler of an Empire must keep his eye on the cot; spy too in the kitchen; drawing-room; library; wherever one or two, me and you, come together. Purity our watchword; prosperity and respectability” (Woolf 162-163). Budge is an unapologetic imperialist who celebrates the maintenance of purity of the Empire through the threat of violence. This is nationalist sentiment at its worst, and it is, unfortunately, an accurate portrayal of British Imperial nationalism. It is a fact that those who partake of problematic British nationalism, on some level, implicitly endorse this sort of violence. It is also a fact that this pageant’s main goal is to demonstrate moments of national identity construction. In the end, the mirror is turned upon the audience and they are not wealthy imperialists. They are, as Woolf describes them, average villagers in the heart of England. While of course they benefited from the empire, as Woolf demonstrates in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the empire is passing away. The empire, and the Victorian tableau depicting its nationalism, is only one kind, one snapshot of Englishness (in this case, Englishness is conflated with Britishness). With the Empire diminishing, what is to be the national identity of these humble folk from a rural village in the heart of England? The mirror is turned on them and it causes an uncomfortable uncertainty. La Trobe, the queer, border-blurring pageant artist, exposes the need for a new tableau of national identity, one that the audience in 1939 must be prepared to form. The last lines of: “Then the curtain rose. They spoke,” implicates the actual audience of Woolf’s readers, not just the fictional audience of villagers (Woolf 158). With these lines, Woolf draws attention to the form of the novel, to the fact that La Trobe is not actually putting on a show, she, Woolf, is. The novel is simply a meta-tableau of the English identity crisis in 1939. The mirror is turned not just on the villagers, but

the reader as well. Woolf points out that this identity crisis has not been solved and it is now time for the reader to participate in the discursive process of formation of Englishness. In highlighting the ongoing identity crisis within Englishness, Woolf invites the reader to engage in a discursive process of formation, one that transcends traditional boundaries and incorporates diverse perspectives, including queer characters like La Trobe. To return to the subject of gender, we can see how the androgynous creative spirit embodied by La Trobe gives us a lens through which to view English identity. Woolf suggests that a non-exclusionary discursive process involves embracing the complexities of identity, including the marginalized. This approach aligns with Woolf's broader exploration of nationalism, where she critiques the limitations of traditional symbols and calls for a more inclusive understanding of what it means to be English.

To map this onto Woolf's contemporary political landscape, as Jackson claims, nationalism, as expressed through invasion literature, is a politically conservative response to the external threat. Liberalism, becoming popular and mainstream in Woolf's time, seems not set up in opposition to nationalism, but rather against extreme ideologies (fascism) that use nationalism most often as a tool. For Ayres, one of the main selling points for Fascist strongmen is the ability to keep citizens of the nation safe through nationalistic militarism. Therefore, nationalism has a strong appeal to those wary of foreign military invasion, and in times of peace, this element of nationalism is weaponized by fascists in the form of xenophobia. Liberalism does not offer the same safety benefit. In fact, the nation is objectively less safe from invasion when embracing Liberal policies than protectionist ones. Woolf critiques both liberalism and its extreme counterparts from a feminist perspective, suggesting they offer little to women. In the novel, she parallels the invasion motif with the invasive nature of English liberalism's self-destructive tendencies, implying that both external threats and internal ideological conflicts contribute to

women's marginalization. Woolf finds corrosively imperialist, patriarchal, and militaristic values embedded in English liberalism, making it akin (but not equal) to the fascism positioned in liberal discourse as its antithesis" (Ayres 629). Through the criticism of old, imperial nationalism and the implication of the reader in the writing and rewriting of national identity, we see what Jackson calls "Woolf's desire for a cohesive national identity apart from the vulnerabilities of traditional liberalism" (629). For Woolf, according to Jackson, old imperial nationalisms are patriarchal and wrong, but Liberal nationalism is impotent. Some new form of national identity must come forth. This makes Woolf a proponent of reforming national identity rather than abandoning it. She *does*, in fact, have a constructive project when it comes to national identity, and that, like Orwell, it is based on criticizing and refashioning what the nation meant to people, as a shared space of civic engagement rather than as a traditional engine of inequality.

Ultimately what Woolf feels are the failures of nationalism are ultimately the failures of patriarchy, but this does not mean that the two are inseparable. "World citizenship is therefore compatible with a qualified patriotism but not with uncritical patriotism or any form of assertive and xenophobic nationalism" (Carter 48). So much of Woolf's work with nationalism is about deconstructing it to illustrate shortcomings and blurring the binaries, the borders (male/female) that create violence. "The crucial test of being a citizen of the world is willingness to repudiate nationalism and oppose war when nation states or ethnic groups come into conflict" (Carter 49). This qualified patriotism that is bound up with global citizenry to support international peace as well as national prosperity is the kind of national identity that could possibly get Woolf to want to participate. Woolf envisions a qualified patriotism that is compatible with global citizenship as she confronts the limitations of nationalism in a changing world. With a more interconnected

global community, she calls for a more nuanced understanding of national identity that has room for solidarity across borders.

Chapter 3: There and Back Again: Tolkien's Recovery of Englishness⁵⁴

Compared to the authors examined in this dissertation's previous chapters, J.R.R. Tolkien was less vocally a critic of nationalism; he was far more willing to ask what Englishness actually was, and to seek positive uses for an English national identity. He even made use of literary techniques aligned with Romantic nationalism. Though Orwell and Woolf are concerned in one way or another with an English national identity, that concern is most often manifested in their critique of Britishness, Imperialism, or overtly problematic nationalisms. As I have illustrated in the two previous chapters, both Orwell and Woolf approach the question of Englishness first and foremost by critiquing examples of Imperial Britishness gone wrong, rather than providing a positive example of the English national character. For Woolf, as the previous chapter argued, any semblance of an English national identity was to be found in the sphere of civic exchange and critique: in calls for the nation to be better, not in celebrations of the nation as it was or as it had been. For Orwell, that process of critique *did* lead (if only for his own strategic purposes) to a celebration of an English character that could bolster inter-class solidarity. Yet that celebration, such as it is, is limited to his essays, and was generally not a project with which he aligned his fiction.⁵⁵ This is perhaps why, although Orwell and Woolf critique nationalism in the form of Imperial Britishness and seek to separate English identity from that larger imperial construct, they ultimately stop short of constructing a positive English identity.

⁵⁴ "Recovery" is Tolkien's own word for his project and for the function of fantasy. It means to "see again" that which we ought to have already seen (Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories* 19). This concept obviously evokes Nairn's Janus problem of something that looks both forward and backward, suggesting fantasy, for Tolkien, might be an especially useful genre through which to explore a national project in.

⁵⁵ In fact, I argue that his fiction operates in the reverse vein by showcasing the damaging effects of not having that inter-class solidarity.

Tolkien takes a different approach as he does not tell a story about the dangers of Imperialism or the shortcomings of Britishness. Rather, he attempts to get to the heart of the question “what is Englishness?” Tolkien, too, is interested in identifying an English identity that is separate from a larger British imperial identity, but he attempts to work the other way around. Rather than critiquing the larger, imperial identity and the nationalist ideologies that support it, Tolkien attempts to identify the salutary elements of an English identity more directly. That may seem like an unusual claim to make about a fantasy author because the genre has an inevitable amount of indirectness. Yet Tolkien’s goals are specific, and in his own publications and letters we have direct evidence of his explicit engagement with the national project. J.R.R. Tolkien sets out to provide explicit examples of Englishness in his books about Middle-Earth, specifically *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

While national myths are certainly, as the name suggests, mythological, they are not commonly fantastical in genre. Fantasy is “any kind of fictional work that is not primarily devoted to realistic representations of the known world” (Baldick 135) with many subgenres contained within this definition. Myth, on the other hand, is “A kind of rudimentary narrative sequence, normally traditional and anonymous, through which a given culture ratifies its social customs or accounts for the origins of human and natural phenomena, usually in supernatural or boldly imaginative terms” (235). In the technical sense, myths usually have to do with the divine and with matters fully removed from the domain of ordinary and historical experience. Most ancient national myths depict the founding of that nation and heavily involve the participation of the gods. The most famous examples are Homer’s *Iliad* for ancient Greek nations and Virgil’s *Aeneid* for ancient Rome. The *Iliad* provides the various Greek city-states with a story of cultural unity aided by the Gods, and the *Aeneid* provides the Roman people with a founding myth, again

often helped by divine intervention.⁵⁶ In the more modern sense entailed by Benedict Anderson's account of the imagined community, "national myths" might also include founding stories of a secular variety, such as those more in line with legend or with histories of time immemorial. Since Tolkien was both a devout Catholic and a scholar of Anglo-Saxon languages, he would have known better than to imagine a homogeneous past for England, whether construed in terms of shared religious founding stories or of a shared cultural and linguistic heritage. He was too aware of the various cultural and linguistic influences that resulted from the many migrations and invasions of the British Isles throughout history. In short, Tolkien would have known that England lacked what nationalists often cite as the prerequisites for a nation: the same people living in the same place since time immemorial. A myth could therefore not honestly appeal to common ancestry, like the *Aeneid*⁵⁷, or to a common territory and institutions like the *Iliad*. Instead, Tolkien shifts the arena of national storytelling from myth and legend to the emergent genre of fantasy. Instead of appealing to any claimed national past (be it mythological or legendary), his fantasy instead appeals to the concept of the national character: a set of beliefs, values, and character traits he believes are common to the English people.⁵⁸ Since fantasy allows him to represent all the various different types of English people throughout history, a fantastical national myth allows him to display the full breadth of the national character.

These stories are relatively easy to gloss as a transposed depiction of English national character – and before delving into the context of Tolkien's approach to national identity, it might help to offer a brief sketch of such a reading of Middle Earth. In terms of its location, the

⁵⁶ Tolkien was likely quite aware of the debt his national project owed to classical culture as he makes heavy use of the *Deus Ex Machina* in his stories, a trope that comes from classical theatre that involves divine intervention.

⁵⁷ The *Aeneid* was deliberately written to establish a myth of nation where none existed, but the way it goes about this is by appealing to a common ancestry for the Romans by suggesting that they come from the survivors of the fall of Troy.

⁵⁸ This is fairly closely aligned with Orwell's discussion of the English as hobbyists.

Shire itself is not a vision of ancient England, although it does seem to evoke a nostalgic view of an English landscape untouched by the Industrial Revolution. The Hobbits are interested in small hobbies that cultivate a “friendship with the earth,” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* 1). Not only do they value their own privacy, but they also preach the value of respecting the privacy of others, as Sam’s father, called the Gaffer, advises: “‘Elves and Dragons’ ... ‘Cabbages and potatoes are better for me and you. Don’t go getting mixed up in the business of your betters, or you’ll land in trouble too big for you” (31). Ultimately, Sam does not heed the Gaffer’s advice as he cannot help “dropping eaves” (Jackson 2001) on Gandalf and Frodo and so is swept up in the grand business that is not his own: the quest to destroy the Ring. This may appear at first glance to be a cautionary tale to mind one’s own affairs, as an ethos of English privacy. Yet Sam’s decision to ignore the Gaffer’s advice to respect the privacy of others is not Tolkien criticizing the English tendency to value his own privacy, but like Orwell, Tolkien recognizes the potential for slippage into snobbery which is, in Tolkien’s view, an unfortunate part of the legacy of Imperial arrogance. The Gaffer’s advice, on the face of it, seems like good English sense (mind your own business. Keep to yourself. Do not get involved in external entanglements). The possibility of these seemingly sensible “English” values risking slippage into snobbery is acknowledged explicitly by Tolkien in the text. The reference to “the business of your betters” implies a hierarchy to privacy, suggesting that affairs of the British state are for the snobbish aristocracy, while the salt of the earth Englishman keeps to himself. Sam’s transgression of the boundaries of privacy are motivated by a communal duty to Frodo and the safety of his Shire, to preserve the Englishness and the Englishman. He responds in a moment of crisis. By my argument, this is crucial for the kind of national identity Tolkien seeks to cultivate through fantasy: similar to Orwell, Tolkien wants his readers to rediscover an English identity that allows

not only for privacy, but also for collective action in times of crisis. In Orwell's terms, this Englishness would hold together a social body that is "communal but not official," not one that "closes ranks" at the approach of an enemy (Orwell, *England Your England* 196). Through a fantastical representation of these ideals, Tolkien seeks to inspire a rediscovery of the liberty of the English spirit in his readers.

For Tolkien, I argue, fantasy was a genre centrally connected to the idea of national identity. This makes sense when one considers the role of narrative in national identity, a subject to which I will now turn in more detail in order to lay the groundwork for Tolkien's intervention in national storytelling. A national myth is a story that helps forge and indeed, becomes part of the identity of a given nation, and it often functions as a clear origin story for the country that forms the foundation of what Orwell calls its "common memories" (210). This is a return to ideas I have explored earlier in the dissertation. Linguistic communities, according to Pierre Bourdieu, are an illusion (220). The idea of a large, homogenous language community is a fiction, though as Benedict Anderson has shown, that fiction becomes indispensable to the creation of a national community and the rise of nationalisms (B. Anderson 32-33). There is no "objective" language of a people, nation, or community, only one that is dominant and therefore seen as "legitimate." Part of determining the dominant, or "legitimate" language or narrative is a unifying story (220). This is something every person of a certain community can point to and describe as essential to that community, regardless of personal or political difference. In the United States, the story of the Founding Fathers functions as an origin story, with the dominant narrative pointing to their virtue and wisdom as well as their stance against the British monarchy. Therefore, any narrative that points to their shortcomings (for example, many of them were slaveholders) can meet with resistance because it is not in line with the "legitimate" language. In

terms of constructing a community, the strength of the myth is far more important than the truth. The myth is an important part of what Anderson would call an “imagined community,” since shared histories and stories are vital to connecting people from different geographic locations in the same nation who otherwise have little in common and do not interact often (28).

The myth also usually provides some sort of moral: a bit of truth, or an ideal or value that the reader or listener is meant to internalize. The moral of the myth is meant to change the behavior or habitus of the person who hears it. To move closer to the fantasy genre and to Tolkien, it is “the truth once known but now forgotten” (Jackson 2001) that serves as the opening to the film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings*. Both myth and fantasy are concerned with taking the reader into a highly fictionalized narrative space that is sometimes notably removed from reality in order to teach the audience and influence how they move through the real world—to rediscover via fantasy, something about the real world. Therefore, the common element between fantasy and myth, besides the occasional monster or supernatural flood, is the fact that they both seek to engage reality on a basic level.

One of the most important scholars on myth, Claude Levi-Strauss, echoed Tolkien’s own concept of recovery in the context of modern, scientific worldview and “mythical thought,” saying: “I think there are some things we have lost, and we should try perhaps to regain them” (5). He further elaborates that a common characteristic of most myths across all cultures is “that we have deities or supernaturals, who play the roles of intermediaries between the powers above and humanity below. They can be represented in different ways: we have, for instance, characters of the type of a Messiah” (32). The presence of divine intermediaries in typical myths is important. For Lévi-Straus, they help the human characters (and by extension, the human

readers) “regain” something we have lost (a moral, an understanding of a natural phenomenon, etc.)

For an Andersonesque national myth, Tolkien uses these divine intermediaries to fulfil fantasy’s function of recovery, which relates to national myth’s grappling with the Janus problem. These characteristics, along with the need for recovery or alternate memories, link myth and nationalism together. As Arash Abizadeh notes, just like Ernest Renan once argued that nationalism required selective memory on the part of its subscribers, national myths “should be seen as something closer to stories [than to history]” (293). These alternative memories and stories, for Abizadeh, spring from the same sort of imagination that Anderson talks about in with imagined communities. Clearly, myth and nationalism are linked. What Tolkien does quite well by using the genre of fantasy is to simply be upfront about the “imaginary” bit. True, most readers accept that national myths are simply stories, but subscribers to national myths usually hold on to the idea that they express some deeper national truth. For Tolkien, he removes even the most basic reality claim from the story, which I believe was a way to pursue what he understood as a purer form of recovery—the equivalent, in terms of national identity, of what Levi-Strauss imagined as the regaining of that truth of myth that had been lost in the modern scientific era but could possibly still be rediscovered and reintegrated.

Modernist writers are frequently concerned with moving past the national unit in the name of some sort of cosmopolitanism, or else reconceptualizing the national unit to fit into their worldview. Tolkien is an outlier in this study because, even though he is writing in a similar time period, he is a fantasy writer and not easily aligned with modernist aesthetics.⁵⁹ Fantasy allows

⁵⁹ His modernity is perhaps best seen, as Anna Vaninskaya notes, in his “typically interwar portrayal of its ravages” (361). She also notes that Tolkien interacts with politics in a way similar to other modernists like Orwell, and even interacts with Romanticism in a way similar to Yeats’ Celtic Revival. Aaron Jackson, in “Authoring the Century: J.R.R. Tolkien, the Great War and Modernism,” argues that then generic choices Tolkien made that separate him

him to get at the project of accessing an Englishness suited to the modern age (like Orwell and Woolf attempt) but gives him a completely different angle of approach. Fantasy allows for a project of national identity production through a removal from reality. This is like Woolf's strategy of alternate Englands and Englishnesses, but taken further into an alternate, fantastic reality. This is similar to how Michael Bell describes the role of myth, or "Mythopoeia," in modernist literature. Although Tolkien is a far cry from modernism,⁶⁰ looking at his engagement with and deployment of myth brings him more closely into connection with more canonical modernisms.⁶¹ Bell explains that myth is similar to the Freudian concept of the uncanny in that myths are meant to "superimpose two meanings" (Bell 1). "Fully conscious citizens of the twentieth century are aware that their deepest commitments and beliefs are part of a world view...which cannot be transcendently grounded or privileged over other possible world view" (1). The result is a "double consciousness of living a world view *as* a world view" (1). Here again, the role of myth in modern fantasy evokes the Janus problem of reconciling seemingly conflicting ideas, which is of course one of the main features of nationalism. Fantasy fiction has the goal of influencing the reader in the real world in the same way that most of its protagonists return to reality with the tools necessary to better their lives, but many are dismissive of the genre precisely because of the departure from reality and because it can be difficult to see a real-world application to that which is represented in the fantastic or unreal beyond broad and general ideals.

from most modernists also made him more immediately successful even as he wrote about similar themes like the aftermath of World War I (65).

⁶⁰ His writing style and themes differ significantly from typical modernist works as his storytelling is more traditional than experimental. His work is deeply rooted in mythologies and medieval literature as opposed to the typical modernist association with the contemporary. Unlike many modernists who embraces cosmopolitanism, Tolkien's work emphasized the local.

⁶¹ Patchen Mortimer argues that Tolkien's experimental approach to language and his commitment to examining the concept of identity align him with modernists. Theresa Nicolay also argues for him as a modernist as his work is a response to the collective traumas of war and modernization.

With this difficulty in mind, it is fair to ask why a writer would use this genre at all. Indeed, it might seem that one could create a more effective and accessible story if it were less cloaked in the guise of a fantasy world. To answer this question, Edward Gron examines the “paradox of fiction” (81). That is, we feel real feelings for fictional characters even though they are not real: “We have emotions, such as sadness, pity, and fear, for fictional characters. We believe that to have such emotions, the objects of our emotions must exist. For example, my fear of sharks seems to require the existence of at least one shark. But most of us believe there is no sense in which fictional characters actually exist. So how can we have emotions for them?” (81). This issue is layered further in the case of fantasy because not only is the narrative fictional, but the events narrated are also impossible. For example, the character of Winston Smith in *1984* inhabits a fictional world with science fiction elements, but there is nothing about him as a character that *could not* exist in our real world. Gandalf the wizard, on the other hand, exists in a fantasy world and has supernatural abilities that preclude his existence in our world. One could imagine bumping into Winston Smith on the street and not batting an eye, but if one bumped into Gandalf on the street, one would wonder how long the comic book convention is in town. Interestingly, despite this additional layer of difficulty in creating relatable narrative for the reader, fantasy is still able to generate affective reader response. This is because, as Norman Krietman theorizes, our emotional responses are to images or ideas, rather than currently unfolding events (607). That which is most emotionally compelling is variable in its applicability rather than specific and contextualized. This is why some theorists suppose that the most compelling narratives can be reduced to some small number of variety and that individual authors and stories map their own particulars onto the tried-and-true images and ideas.⁶² As long

⁶² Christopher Booker’s 2004 book *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* is a prominent example of this attitude brought to us from the field of psychoanalysis.

as the main idea or image holds emotional value to the reader (and the writing is good) it does not matter how impossible an image is in reality. It still generates a strong emotional response in the reader. Fantasy is often dismissed as frivolous and derisively referred to as children's literature (though, to be fair, *The Hobbit* is intended for children, but much writing for children is very good, sophisticated, literature) that has little to offer serious adult readers in terms of insight into the world they live in. Even well-respected writers, like Kazuo Ishiguro, worry if their experimental work would be lumped in with a derided genre like fantasy. He spoke of this concern ahead of the publication of his novel *The Buried Giant*: "Will readers follow me into this? Will they understand what I'm trying to do, or will they be prejudiced against the surface elements? Are they going to say this is fantasy?" (Alter 2). Importantly, though, as I have shown in my previous chapter regarding Orwell and the Schoolboy's Weeklies, children's literature has long been recognized as a site of national identity creation. More importantly, not only is that strong emotional response a goal of fantasy, but fantasy is able to pursue that goal in ways that other genres cannot.

Although positioned in relation to myth, in formal terms the fantasy genre draws heavily on the tradition of fairy and folk tales. Brian Attebery explains fantasy's relationship to the different kinds of folklore in *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin* (1980): "The type of folktale known as fairy tale, wonder tale, or, among most folklorists, *Märchen*, were collected, edited, and published in the early nineteenth century by the Grimm brothers. Whose versions of many of the tales are still well known" (4). It is from these types of stories that modern fantasy springs. "True *Märchen* are full of magic and supernatural beings. They are tales of witches, dragons, soldiers, and princesses, pitting tailor against king, Godmother against stepmother, Jack against giant. Their origins are obscure, but they seem to be

akin to epic and myth, deriving from them or evolving alongside” (4). By the mid-twentieth century, literary fairy tales had evolved into what critics were ready to recognize as its own genre: fantasy, which “drew on oral tradition on the achievements of [its] predecessors to create increasingly complex stories of wonder” (12).

Attebery lists several attributes that fantasy shares with fairy-tale and myth to show how the genre of modern fantasy grew out of this more ancient category. The first thing is that they were always set in a world that is separate from our own. “This Other World is not accessible by ordinary means...The notion of a magical Other World is present in oral *Märchen*, with their opening formulas: ‘Once upon a time’...Fairy tales, like myths, are always and never, long past and yet still taking place” (12). This out of time, forward and backward at once quality of these stories evokes the Janus problem. “The best fantasies perform the trick of investing the familiar with enough touched of the unreal...to evoke an acute sense of longing in the reader, a nostalgia for the never-was” (12).

Structurally, fantasy shares with folktale the Proppian morphology of functions that fulfil certain parts of the tale. They always have a very specific sort of protagonist: “The hero of a fairy tale embodies every reader’s desire to come into his own. Extraordinary things happen to him, but he himself is ordinary...the protagonist in fantasy is likewise ordinary: lucky and clever perhaps, but no more than we imagine ourselves to be” (13). In contrast, the secondary characters are often as extraordinary as possible. Finally, all these genres attempt to imbue their stories with moral significance:

Fantasy establishes a sphere of significance, in which the actions of hero and inhuman, helper and villain, reflect a coherent and extractable order. Characters are not merely individuals but the upholders of moral and intellectual standards.

In most fantasies there is a strong polarization of good and evil, so that the hero's quest concerns not only his own coming of age but also defeat of the Kingdom. Acts of fantasy are always meaningful because everything connects or signifies everything else. (13)

Fantasy is useful to Tolkien because of its proximity to mythmaking. Fantasy, by the mid 20th century, had come to stand for a certain way of understanding 'literature' as supplanting myth, but unlike Modernist mythopoesis—like the way James Joyce modernizes mythmaking in *Ulysses*—fantasy most often attempts to return to the mythic mode, and to do similar cultural work *as* myth.

What advantage does this genre in particular offer an author concerned with the state of his or her society? As the rest of this chapter will argue, Tolkien claims that the advantage is in “escape and recovery,” and that fantasy is uniquely equipped to help the reader to find, or rediscover, aspects of ordinary and modern life that Tolkien characterizes as missing, lost, or overlooked. For Tolkien, fantasy provides the necessary distance from reality that allows the reader to “see again” that which was always there. This characterization of fantasy—as a genre that can strategically mobilize the unreal for the purposes of bettering reality—suggests that fantasy can be critical of contemporary society, and that it can seek to inspire readers to make a positive change, even if just in themselves, to make that society better. In short, Tolkien's approach to fantasy is rooted in the recovery of a particular kind of Englishness; but this Englishness was not a feature of some mythical past, but a tacit feature of the present he wanted to help people become more aware of, identify with, and improve. I will now discuss Tolkien's relevant biographical information as his exploration of Englishness and his conception of what the term “fantasy” means is, I argue, shaped strongly by his travels.

FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO SAREHOLE: TOLKIEN'S EXPERIENCE OF EMPIRE AND ENGLISHNESS

Tolkien was born in South Africa in 1892. A child of an imperial colony, Tolkien and his mother, Mabel, moved back to England in 1895. Before he could reunite with his family in Birmingham, Tolkien's father sadly died of fever in 1896. That same year, his mother moved him and his brother to the village where her parents lived called Sarehole. According to Humphrey Carpenter, "the effect of this move on Ronald was deep and permanent. Just at the age when his imagination was opening up, he found himself in the English countryside" (Tolkien: A Biography 20).⁶³ This made him see England from an outside perspective, as a distinctive setting rather than a given or familiar one. Sarehole was a small hamlet on the bank of the river Cole made of mostly farmland; it also contained a brick mill used for grinding corn that was built in 1771 that was only three-hundred yards away from the Tolkien house. This mill may have inspired the Old Mill in Hobbiton, which was destroyed during the War of the Ring in *The Return of the King* and rebuilt as the New Mill, just as the Sarehole Mill was rebuilt on the same site as an older mill. It was here, in Sarehole, that young Tolkien and his brother Hilary ran through the English countryside which was home to many different farms. There were several bridges that spanned the river Cole, as well as many pools that Ronald and Hilary enjoyed. Sarehole resembles Hobbiton, as they are both rural settlements containing many farms, with a centralized river and mill.

Tolkien's time in the country as a boy clearly impacted his later descriptions of Middle-Earth. Most obviously, Tolkien takes the name of "Bag End" from his aunt Jane's farm (Morton

⁶³ For this section which provides a biographical account of Tolkien's experiences with walking and landscape I have primarily relied on the work of Humphrey Carpenter and his collection of Tolkien's letters, as well as his biography.

2009). Farmer Maggot was perhaps inspired by an old farmer who once chased Ronald for picking mushrooms. Many have supposed that the surrounding hills and nature preserves were the inspirations for many Middle-Earth landscapes; one nature sanctuary called “The Dell” by locals was noted by Tolkien for its natural beauty and may have been the inspiration for Rivendell and the Old Forest. The Dell was a “great mill pond...ringed with willows...densely grown, wild and solitary” (Ezard 4). In the nearby meadow stood nineteen great oaks. Tolkien invested Middle Earth with these qualities he saw around his home to mythologize England as he saw it, in real material and present terms, not in terms of founding myth.

While in the countryside, Tolkien moved through the world like any English child would: he walked. Tolkien’s time in Sarehole is not just reflected in the landscapes of the novels, but also in the language that Tolkien used and invents within the texts, most notably “gamgee” for cotton wool, that would serve as the surname for one of his Hobbits. Growing up in Sarehole, and his walks in the English countryside, clearly played a profound role in shaping Tolkien’s mythology and sense of place. Michel de Certeau notes the similarities between walking and speech. “[walking] has a triple ‘enunciative’ function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a special acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic ‘contract’ in the form of movements” (97-98). When one wants to embody a language, one speaks it. When one wants to embody a place, one walks there; one embodies Englishness in part by walking in England. This makes walking particularly useful to the construction of a national myth. Therefore, the act of walking is vital to a myth in pursuit of the recovery of a

national identity. Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2000) offers valuable insight into the cultural and philosophical significance of walking in ways that resonate with Tolkien's uses of journeys in his mythology. Solnit explores walking as a creative pursuit and a means of connecting landscape with identity (89) and a metaphor for character growth (52) providing a framework for understanding Tolkien's use of walking as a literary device to explore and construct English identity through his characters' journeys across Middle-earth. In practice, this meant that Tolkien's sense of Englishness had a lot to do with the actual, present material realities of England itself—as both a physical space and a society, to walk through, live in, and engage with. When he turns to the project of writing a national myth via fantasy, he takes the English landscape and character as he sees it at present it in fictional form by having distinctly English echoes of places, characters, and attitudes in his story. This sentiment is explicitly echoed by Sam in *The Lord of the Rings* when he discusses the connection he feels between the Elves and their homeland of Lórien: “They seem to belong here, more even than Hobbits do in the Shire. Whether they’ve made the land, or the land’s made them, it’s hard to say, if you take my meaning” (Tolkien 469). Sam expresses the circular relationship between an identity and a place, as both the place and the people are constantly making and remaking each other.

I have turned to Tolkien's biographical information here in order to highlight the relation between his experience of England and his experiences of foreign locales and travel. Moving from South Africa to England gave him a sense of England as a distinctive and real place, and as one particular place among others, rather than a nationalistic sense of England as “all there is” since time immemorial. This was reinforced in his later travels, and on my argument set the terms for his sense of Englishness as in need of “recovery”—in the specific sense that to many people it was a background condition of everyday life they took for granted, or as all that there

was⁶⁴. This information helps us work through the question of how his middle-earth Englishness was also not strictly fetishizing England itself, but was also thinking of England in relation to the wider world. Like other approaches to national identity discussed in this dissertation, Tolkien saw Englishness as a way of being, but it was one of many, not a privileged or essentialist category. Through his depiction of fantastical landscapes, Tolkien attempts to re-code existing English landscapes⁶⁵ to provide opportunities for escape and recovery.

In 1911, then aged 19, Tolkien and 11 companions took a walking tour of Switzerland that took them from Interlaken to Lauterbrunnen by “mountain paths” and on to the moraines in Mürren (Letter 306). They spent weeks traveling throughout the Swiss Alps, going on several hikes on the Aletsch glacier and traveling an estimated 175 miles on foot: “We slept rough—the men-folk—often in hayloft or cowbyre, since we were walking by map and avoided roads.” (Letter 306). The landscape left a deep impression on Tolkien, as he remarked to his son 56 years later: “I left the view of *Jungfrau* with deep regret: eternal snow, etched as it seemed against eternal sunshine, and the *Silverhorn* sharp against dark blue: the *Silvertine* (*Celebdil*) of my dreams” (Letter 306). The keen reader will note that Tolkien and his companions number the same as the company of dwarves that embark on the quest to the Lonely Mountain in *The Hobbit*. The effect of the journey and the landscape of the Swiss mountains is made explicit by Tolkien in his letter to his son Michael: “The hobbit’s (Bilbo’s) journey from Rivendell to the other side of the Misty Mountains, including the glissade down the slithering stones into the pine woods, is based on my adventures in 1911” (Letter 306). Indeed, mountains play an integral role in all the Middle-Earth texts. They exist as obstacles to be

⁶⁴ This type of rhetorical move common in fantasy that Tolkien is characterizing as recovery and escape is also a method of defamiliarizing the every day to help the reader access a clearer view on it.

⁶⁵ This is reminiscent of Matless’ idea of landscapes being a place where time can collapse and we can see versions of past, present, and future expressed in a single space.

overcome, catalysts to essential character-building moments, and sites of great loss and transformation. They are also sites of evil and menace, as Gollum, goblins, orcs lurk in the mountains; the climax of *The Lord of the Rings* even takes place inside a fiery volcanic mountain. Both journeys in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* feature mountain destinations: the Lonely Mountain for Bilbo and Mount Doom for Frodo. Both mountains represent the climax of the task. The 1911 Alpine tour had a profound influence on Tolkien's writing as it provided direct inspiration for the Misty Mountains, and provided Tolkien with the experience of mountaineering that he would later draw upon in the novels. These tours abroad not only inspired Tolkien's taste for landscape and walking, but also functioned as an escape and recovery, as leaving England granted him the opportunity for an appreciation of the landscape of his home.

Literary criticism on landscape and walking provides valuable insight into how authors engage with and reimagine national identity through physical and metaphorical journeys. This criticism is particularly relevant to Tolkien's work, where the act of traversing Middle-earth becomes a means of exploring and redefining Englishness. Drawing on concepts like de Certeau's "spatial acting out of place" and W.J.T. Mitchell's view of landscape as a "social hieroglyph" (5), we can analyze how Tolkien uses detailed descriptions of landscapes and characters' movements through them to construct a mythical English past and critique contemporary notions of national identity. This perspective allows us to see Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth not just as fantasy world-building, but as a complex engagement with questions of national character, belonging, and the relationship between people and place in the formation of cultural identity.

After his tour of Switzerland, Tolkien resumed his studies in England. After the outbreak of World War One, Tolkien elected to delay enlistment until the completion of his degree in English Language and Literature (for which he received First Class honours). Upon completion of his finals, Tolkien enlisted as a second lieutenant in the 13th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers. Before his departure for the battlefield, Tolkien married Edith Bratt. Their time together was short as he was deployed to France shortly after in 1916. Tolkien was taken to the base camp at Etaples and after three weeks of waiting with the rest of the 11th Battalion, he took a train the Front. While in Etaples, Tolkien composed a poem called “The Lonely Isle.” The poem is obviously a farewell to the “white rock” of England, but the many references to the “Sea-voiced, sea-winged” soldiers on their way to battle will later appear in the Numenorean civilization of Middle-Earth. This seafaring people was the oldest and most powerful civilization of men before their island’s destruction. Their descendants became the men of Gondor, who live in the white city of Minas Tirith, carved in the side of a white cliff. Aragorn is the lost king of this country, and the link to Tolkien’s poetry suggests a connection to England in their culture. Tolkien’s verse’s reflection on England at this critical moment of departure offers an idealized, mythological view of the nation. There is a sense that Tolkien is joining a heroic lineage in his own fight for England.

Tolkien and his battalion disembarked in Amiens and proceeded on foot, marching through the French countryside. He and his schoolboy friends from King Edward’s School, Birmingham, who called themselves the “Tea Club and Barrovian Society,” were all enlisted and would exchange letters in the trenches. In these letters, the T.C.B.S. would exchange thoughts about poetry and literature, in addition to relaying personal experiences of the war. In one letter to his friend G.B. Smith in August 1916 during battle, Tolkien describes pondering an idea raised

by fellow Society member Christopher Wiseman: “I went out into the wood [probably the small forest near the village of Acheux] ...last night and also the night before and sat and thought” (Letter 5). Indeed, Tolkien often stole away to wooded areas for respite from the war to think. These moments of solitude represented a retreat into the natural world, which allowed Tolkien brief escape from the “animal horror” of the trenches and may have reminded him of his time as a boy in the countryside. These proved precious as he would soon see his first action of the War.

On June 30, 1916, Tolkien’s battalion moved from Amiens into a hamlet called Rubempre near the front lines; the Battle of the Somme began at 7:30 a.m. the next day. Though Tolkien’s battalion remained in reserve that day, Rob Gilson of the T.C.B.S. was one of the first British troops to go over the top and was killed. In the days following, Tolkien’s battalion was involved in several attacks in the trenches, followed by a march back to the hamlets to rest before heading back to the trenches. The 11th battalion participated in an unsuccessful attack on the German controlled hamlet of Ovillers, where many men were killed by machine-gun fire. They later provided support for the storming of the German fortification: the Schwaben Redoubt. In August, Tolkien met with G.B. Smith in Acheux before returning to the trenches. He and G.B. Smith managed to survive the most intense fighting of the battle, and on October 27th Tolkien was struck with trench fever and was taken from the battle to hospital several miles away. The fever did not abate and on November 8th, ten days before the end of the battle, and Tolkien was sent back to England. Once back home, Tolkien received a letter from Wiseman informing him that G.B. Smith had been killed by an artillery shell. Days before his death, Smith had written to Tolkien: “May God bless you, my dear John Ronald, and may you

say the things I have tried to say long after I am not there to say them, if such be my lot” (Carpenter, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* 86).

Tolkien experienced extreme guilt knowing that he had been taken away early from a battle that claimed the lives of two of his closest friends. He would later express this feeling through Eowyn in *The Lord of the Rings*. Eowyn was wounded at the Battle of Pelennor Fields, leaving her unable to march on the Black Gate with the forces of the West. She laments, “But I cannot lie in sloth, idle, caged. I looked for death in battle. But I have not died, and battle still goes on...But I do not desire healing...I wish to ride to war like my brother Eomer, or better like Theoden the king, for he died and has both honour and peace” (Tolkien 230-231). Eowyn would rather have died in battle than bear the thought of her brother and friends marching to war without her. Tolkien must have experienced a similar feeling knowing his friends were in battle when he could not be. He took Smith’s final words to heart and resolved to pursue his poetry and fiction, as the T.C.B.S had often encouraged him to do. The events of the war, traveling to and from and in the trenches and the physical experience of marching, clearly affected Tolkien’s depiction of mythological warfare. Indeed, Tolkien’s chapter “The Breaking of the Fellowship” is almost certainly a reference to the breaking of the T.C.B.S. at the Somme and a tribute to his fallen friends.

Following Tolkien’s career, we can see his development of an approach to myth and legendary literature. After the war, Tolkien became a professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Leeds specializing in Old and Middle English. In 1925, Tolkien returned to Oxford, taking up the post of Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Pembroke College. He published *The Hobbit* in 1937 and gained widespread acclaim as a children’s novelist. Too old for active duty, he was asked to serve as a codebreaker during World War Two. Tolkien agreed

but was told his services would not be required after taking a cryptography course in London. Puzzles, riddles, and maps would go on to feature as plot devices in each of Tolkien's novels.

During and after World War Two, Tolkien was engaged in the writing of the sequel to *The Hobbit*. During the composition of *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), Tolkien stayed often at the guesthouse of Stoneyhurst College in Lancashire while his son John attended the school. Tolkien would often walk the grounds, which were private, well-manicured lawns surrounded by trees on the border of the property; many of his paintings and sketches were done on the grounds as he would take a respite from his work to enjoy the scenery. These green, rolling lawns, as well as the nearby river and forest, may have influenced his creation of the landscape of the Shire. The path to the front of the main building of the college is a causeway with ponds on either side. This provides a picturesque approach to the school, especially with the forest framing the grounds. The grounds also contain monuments to Cromwell, an Anglo-Saxon cross, and a Jesuit college (Stoneyhurst College 1). This walk through the grounds would also have been a walk through the different conceptions of Englishness, a possible precursor to the various representations of Englishness Tolkien would depict in the novels. The grounds represent different moments chosen throughout English history embodied in monuments. Tolkien does something similar with his characters, as the hobbits, the riders of Rohan, and the men of Gondor: each represents a different historical idea of an Englishman. The locals claim Tolkien's time here provided several inspirations for *The Lord of the Rings*. For example, nearby Shire Lane and the Shirebourn river seem to be influential, although one does not have to go far in England to encounter any number of Shires, and the name is probably meant to show that the Hobbits' homeland is representative of the English countryside. What is most significant about Lancashire for Tolkien is the landscape, rather than the names of landmarks. The region is home

to a variety of landscapes, lowland and highland, farmland, uncultivated moorland, and a mountain called Green Hill. The view from the house where Tolkien stayed is the basis for the view from Tom Bombadil's house described by Frodo in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and the nearby ferry at Hacking seems to reappear in Middle-Earth as the Buckleberry Ferry. Today, there is a walking tour in Lancashire that retraces Tolkien's steps through the grounds of the college and the surrounding area (The Guardian 1). Though not directly acknowledged by Tolkien, his time spent walking this quintessentially English region seems to have provided the inspiration for several aspects of Middle-Earth.

WHY FANTASY?

By attending to this biographical background, I have attempted to show how Tolkien's fantasy writing re-coded an English landscape. While the repurposing of English landscapes is a well-documented aspect of Tolkien's work (the Shire is an unmistakable reference to Englishness), my argument here is that it provides that essential recovery/escape function that Tolkien felt was essential to fantasy works. I now want to turn to how he came to understand fantasy as a vehicle for imagining community. For Tolkien, fantasy and mythmaking are so closely linked that they provide an interesting opportunity to play with the type of narrative that supports the imagined community. Moreover, this narrative space is an ideal landscape for an escape from that which is terrible in our reality. In his seminal 1947 essay *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien claims that this escape is vital for fantasy:

There are hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death. And even when men are not facing hard things such as these, there are ancient limitations from which fairy-stories offer a sort of escape, and old ambitions and desires (touching

the very roots of fantasy) to which they offer a kind of satisfaction and consolation. Some are pardonable weaknesses or curiosities: such as the desire to visit, free as a fish, the deep sea; or the longing for the noiseless, gracious, economical flight of a bird, that longing which the aeroplane cheats. (22)

It is important to note that fantasy does not only provide escapism but, as Tolkien explains, it also allows readers to experience and entertain ideas that are beyond the possible. This expansion of the imagination gives the reader a landscape in which any desire is attainable, and any possibility can be explored, even if it is unrealistic. The most common criticism of fantasy is that such means of escape are trivial. Gary K. Wolfe writes about the origins of the fantasy genre as a type of literature that is meant to engage “imagination and fancy” and how this framing has often led to criticism and problems of legitimacy for the genre: “Fantasy elements were widely regarded as superstitious, to be tolerated only if supported by evidence of actual belief or if supported by didactic or moral purpose” (9). He even describes the key features of fantasy (imagination and fancy) as “terms of derision” (9). But escape for escape’s sake is not ideal: to bury one’s head in the sand or an imagined universe, and ignore reality, is not the goal.

In *On Fairy Stories*, Tolkien emphasizes that fantasy serves a more profound purpose beyond wish fulfillment, highlighting its essential function as “recovery.” This concept, as articulated by Tolkien, involves regaining a clearer perspective on the world, not necessarily as it is, but as it should be perceived. This notion suggests a collective loss of identity, which fairy stories aim to restore. Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the theme of lost knowledge. The film begins with Galadriel narrating a prologue: “The world is changed. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air.

Much that once was is lost. For none now live who remember it” (Jackson 2001). Thus, fantasy's primary concern lies in the recovery of essential truths.

The most common sort of fantastic adventure that has this goal is “portal fantasy,” in which characters from our world travel into the fantastic world where they are forced to reckon with some sort of challenge; once they overcome that challenge, they are returned to reality having learned something essential (Mendlesohn 4). Often, this process is demonstrated by having the character fail in a real-world situation before the adventure and then, upon return, have them confronted with a similar situation, only this time, they have the tools necessary to succeed. In a sense, the fantastic element of the story is only relevant because of how the character takes the lessons they have learned back through the portal to reality. C.S. Lewis, who was a contemporary of Tolkien (and close friend and interlocutor), wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56) which follows this model. Tolkien’s Middle-Earth novels do not follow this formula explicitly. Rather, he asks the reader to occupy the space of the one transported through the portal. By declining to include an intermediary character (like the Pevensie children or Harry Potter), Tolkien creates a narrative where it is the reader themselves who go through the portal to recover something lost in Middle-Earth. This creates a more inaccessible story in a sense because intermediary characters are often stand-ins for the reader that allow for exposition that makes the fantasy elements’ relevance to the real world more understandable. For example, it is vital to the *Harry Potter* books that Harry was not raised by wizards and is thrust into the magical world as an 11-year-old because it gives Rowling an excuse to have magical characters explain magical things to Harry that he is unfamiliar with, when what is actually happening is Rowling is explaining the relevant details of her magical world to the reader. In those moment, the intermediary character provides a space for the reader to occupy to help them understand. This

strengthens the bond between reader and protagonist as it is the protagonist who does the essential recovering.

Tolkien, with his lofty goal of recovering an entire national identity, forgoes this type of character or story structure completely and instead asks his readers to identify with the hobbits of the Shire. This type of fantasy, Tolkien's, is about displacing Englishness fully onto a fantasy double. For Tolkien, his type of fantasy allowed more space for a national ideology or national myth to be expressed than a type of fantasy with intermediary characters. This is crucial because a recovery of something forgotten should not need an intermediary character: the knowledge is not unknown to the audience like magic to a muggle. Rather than revealing the nature of Englishness to an ignorant or foreign character, Tolkien creates a fantasy where characters simply demonstrate their English spirit, and thus the nature and quality of that spirit is recovered by an audience that had ostensibly once known it to be part of themselves. In the same way that classical national myths were meant to explain or demonstrate the character of a people, Tolkien views his form of fantasy as most aligned with national mythmaking and therefore most likely to produce a useful picture of a national habitus. "Once upon a time...I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate simply: to England; to my county" (Letter 131). This is a Tolkien clearly expressing a goal for his fiction to function in the way national mythmaking does for England.

This displacement works to achieve the goals of national myth, which was also to form a national habitus. To give a contrasting example, in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* the Pevensie children participate in the foundation, or reclamation, of a nation (Narnia) but they

bring their Englishness with them from the real world. Therefore, although Lewis might perform the work of national myth in a more general sense—a narrative that reinforces English identification as many fictional narratives do—the Englishness is part of the ostensibly real-world setting of the series, to which Narnia stand as a fantastic “other.”⁶⁶ By fully displacing Englishness by submerging the reader in a fantasy world entirely divorced from the real world (there are no wardrobes to Middle-Earth in the English countryside), Tolkien allows for the possibility of the Middle-Earth saga functioning as an English myth. They serve a similar role to myth, or to national legend, by being removed from the actual realm of possible, lived experience and by serving instead as a story of an Englishness that speaks to us from time immemorial. Although the characters are not literally English, we can read their moral character and actions as consistent with Tolkien’s sense of the English national character. In contrast, the Beavers of Narnia are undoubtedly characterized as English, but the reader is jarred out of seeing them as a figure *for* Englishness by the fact that the Beavers speak to actual English children. The presence of literal Englishness in the story thus foregrounds the self-consciously literary aspects of Lewis’s fiction, such as the symbolic parallelisms between the real world and the fantasy world. Tolkien, on the other hand, lets Middle Earth stand on its own as a mythic stand-in for Englishness, in ways that more directly aim to perform the function of myth.

As with most myths, the characters often stand in for the reader/listener in some way. In Tolkien’s case, the characters the readers are meant to identify with most are the hobbits. The hobbits speak the most plainly in the novels, they have the most characteristics in common with real people, and the reader has access to their thoughts and feelings the most. Much is made of the perspective of the 3-4-foot-tall hobbits being abnormal in the novel (as opposed to the race of

⁶⁶ It is also worth noting that Lewis’ purpose is much more connected to Christianity and its central stories/figures, and nationhood is therefore simply not his primary concern.

Men, the “queerness” is mentioned often), but this is the perspective that the reader most often occupies. The first hobbit we are asked to identify with is Bilbo, who is swept off on an adventure which, for the purposes of this argument, we shall call a (begrudging) escape from the reality of the Shire. Bilbo leaves the hobbit as a Baggins: a respectable but snobbish member of upper-class hobbit society. What he rediscovers on his journey is a deep-rooted Tookishness inside him, which represents a desire for adventure but also a deeper appreciation for his home. When he returns, he has a deeper reverence for the landscape of the Shire itself but is no longer interested in snobbishness or his social position. In Bilbo, one hears echoes of a Britishness and Englishness (at least in Orwell’s terms) in tension. Asking the reader to identify with the hobbits is an advantageous strategy for Tolkien as he sets out to create a myth for “my country-England,” in his fiction.

As Tolkien crafts his myth for England, inviting readers to identify with the hobbits as they embark on their adventures, he taps into a longing for a distinct English identity. This longing arises from Tolkien’s belief that England lacks its own national myth, a sentiment stemming from his studies of Old and Middle English literature. However, his purpose is not to reject the shared British identity but to offer a unique narrative that rekindled ancient English aspirations. In doing so, Tolkien’s myth-making mirrors modern constructions of national identity, albeit with a fantastical twist that acknowledges the fictional nature of such narratives. Through his studies of Old and Middle English language and literature, Tolkien came to the position that England lacked a national myth. England, he lamented, had no stories of its own, and its national identity was shared with the rest of Britain (Letter 131). In *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien encourages the reader to escape from this shared British identity, and recover, through the reading of his newly minted myth for England, an English identity. This

identity includes the “old ambitions and desires” that he saw as predating the act of union in Great Britain (Tolkien 22). In this regard, Tolkien’s sense of Englishness comes out of a particular sense of post-Romantic English national identity. Of course, in the wake of Romantic nationalism, in fact not only *did* England have national myths (myths that Tolkien may not have seen as such), but those myths, like many ‘invented traditions,’ were decidedly modern ideas rather than truly representing an ancient history. For example, English culture has mythologized versions of historical characters or events, like the Duke of Wellington or stories of the World Wars, which imbue these histories with modern ideas or values. In other words, that the kind of myth that Tolkien is writing is in keeping with how theorists of national identity tend to see the modern invention of the nation in the first place. The key difference is that Tolkien’s fantasy-based theories *are aware of* the fact that national myths are useful fictions.

Miroslav Hroch notes that Romantic Nationalism⁶⁷ was also a response to the Enlightenment as people began to reject the traditional worldview of rule by divine right and craved a more rational understanding of the world and indeed, their nation within that world: “The turn to national identity...grew out of the crisis of identity, which was brought about by changes at the dawn of the modern era: the loss of religious legitimacy and also therefore the loss of axiomatically formulated principles, the weakening of the old traditional feudal and patriarchal bonds, and, from that, the loss of security” (6). With the slow erasure of different sorts of identities, be they old cultural understandings or shifts in religious beliefs, people began to create national identity as a maker of identity both individual and collective that would hold up to the new rationale of the post-enlightenment world. In keeping with this chapter’s turn away

⁶⁷ For this dissertation, I will use Joep Leerson’s definition of Romantic Nationalism: “the celebration of the nation (defined in its language, history and cultural character) as an inspiring ideal for cultural production; and the dissemination and instrumentalization of that production in political consciousness-raising” (Leerson 37).

from high modernism, Tolkien is the first writer examined in this dissertation who is specifically making use of the literary techniques aligned with Romantic nationalism. That is, he turns to myth and folktale as a means of constructing identity. Tolkien recognized the opportunity for creating national consciousness via myth through his expertise in Anglo-Saxon language and culture, which gave him a clear view of the imported nature of almost all English tales and legends, as well as their blending with the Nordic mythology and folktales that unified the people who invaded England in the Middle Ages. Viewing the folkloric and mythic traditions that accumulated throughout English history convinced him that there was a vacuum at the heart of English national mythology (Letter 131). Interestingly, Tolkien viewed this as an opportunity: it presented Tolkien with a gap that could be filled, and a way to rethink what it means to be English.

One way in which Tolkien mobilizes a post-Romantic nationalism is through his approach to folklore,⁶⁸ and it is important to note that a shared folkloric culture could support nationalisms of very different types: it could root a national identity in a shared, malleable history, but could also bolster the idea of membership in a longstanding in-group defined by language and ethnicity. The earliest form of shared stories were folklore. Shared folklore was an essential building block of the first national bonds between fellow citizens as each culture had its own set of stories that eventually came to be viewed as essential parts of that culture that bound

⁶⁸ Scholars have extensively examined Tolkien's engagement with folklore and its relationship to nationalism. Dimitra Fimi, in *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History: From Fairies to Hobbits*, traces how Tolkien's mythology evolved in response to cultural contexts, reflecting the malleable nature of folkloric traditions. Michelle Douglass, in *A Mythology for England: Tolkien's Attempt to Create an English National Myth* directly addresses Tolkien's project as an attempt to create a national mythology, akin to Romantic nationalists. Julian Eilmann, in *J.R.R. Tolkien: Romanticist and Poet* emphasizes Tolkien's Romanticist mindset, further connecting his work to the tradition of using folklore to construct national identity. These perspectives illuminate how Tolkien's approach to folklore could support various forms of nationalism.

together its people and its space. Folklore, along the other shared stories, began the formation of the nations of Europe we now see on the map today.

Romantic nationalism emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a cultural and political movement that sought to redefine the concept of nationhood. It emphasized the importance of shared language, history, and cultural traditions in forming a national identity, moving away from previous notions of nationhood based solely on dynastic or imperial rule. Romantic nationalists celebrated folk culture, myths, and local customs as authentic expressions of the national spirit, aiming to construct a sense of collective belonging rooted in a romanticized vision of the nation's past. Though Romantic nationalism was initially a movement that sought to redefine the nation—rather than in terms of a monarchy, as a relation to others within a shared culture—the devastating effects of some forms of this kind of nationalism are well attested in 20th-century Europe. The idea of a nationalism rooted in “the people” can present a short route to ethnic nationalism, which is the idea that a nation is comprised of people who share common descent or racial characteristics, and a historical relationship with the specific territory (Calhoun 4). Shared stories are still a part of this form of nationalism, but the focus on historically shared qualities of an in-group can easily foster racism and xenophobia. The paradigmatic example, Nazi Germany's white supremacism and the wave of conservatism and fascism that swept over Europe in the first half of the 20th century, was a major context for Tolkien's career. In fact, he did write against fascism, and one of his major goals was to recover alternative, healthier forms of national identity. Yet ethnic nationalism also had a long history in the Romantic approaches nationalism that gave rise to Tolkien's own views on the role of national myth, and traces of its less salutary aspects can be found in his writing, too.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ The relation of Romantic nationalism, racism, and the rise of 20th century fascism is a vexed debate. As Manu Chander summarizes in his 2020 article “Romantic Diversitarianism: Problems and Promises,” romanticism both

In other words, Romantic nationalism takes a variety of shapes, both in general and in Tolkien's work; and for his part, we know that Tolkien was comfortable with some of the worst aspects of Romantic nationalism. For example, he subscribed to the racist idea of moral geography that painted the East as evil in contrast to the goodness of the (white) West (Drout 622-623). Tolkien's shortcomings on the issue of race and his own personal prejudices are well documented, and he did, in fact, seek to create a unifying myth for the English people which is a goal often shared by ethnic nationalists.⁷⁰ "In particular, critics point out that all the races enlisted by Sauron (Orcs, Southrons, and Haradrim) are dark-skinned and, not incidentally, 'evil,' while the races arrayed against them or generally light-skinned and, not incidentally, 'good'" (555). Tolkien's politics were indeed traditionally conservative, and the Middle-Earth novels do contain racist depictions of people of colour. In fact, my goal here is not to rehabilitate Tolkien's racial politics, but to understand how he pursued, simultaneously, an ethnic nationalism and an antifascist nationalism. In this regard, his approach to national myth differs from some of the other twentieth-century European nationalisms with which it shares a family resemblance. Some of the evidence for this is biographical: for example, Tolkien himself strongly condemned the Nazi regime in Germany both publicly and privately in a letter to his German publisher (Letters 29 & 30).

Other evidence comes from within his texts: for example, though the heroes of Tolkien's novels are depicted as white, there is clear cooperation between different races, even and especially races that initially have a prejudice against one another. Surely, to a modern reader,

lacks diversity because of historical exclusions, and has an "excess of it" due to the number of scholars who disagree about what romanticism even means (298). On Chander's argument, romanticism is often about celebrating diversity as "we were encouraged to cherish difference," but its approaches to diversity already pave the "way to nationalism and cultural supremacy" (299).

⁷⁰ Rearick Anderson, Dimitra Fimi, and Robert Stuart have all written on this topic.

this is not enough to make Tolkien an anti-racist, and criticism of Tolkien himself and of his novels for racism are fair. However, when it comes to the question of the sort of national identity Tolkien meant to provide for the English people, I argue that what he delivers is not an ethnic nationalism. He is far more concerned with the character of the English consciousness, the relationship between the behaviour of the English population (however construed) and the landscape of England that they inhabit, rather than the creation of an ideological ethno-state. His instinct to rediscover Englishness (a national identity for his own sense of the average English person) at the expense of a Britishness (a more imperial outward looking construction of national identity) suggests acknowledgement of the end of the Empire and the need for the English to concern themselves with home rather than Imperialism. As in other places in this dissertation, my project is not about recuperating or excusing problematic nationalisms. Rather, it is about identifying competing logics at work simultaneously in a corpus like Tolkien's.

This understanding of Tolkien's approach to national identity highlights his focus on the character and consciousness of the English people rather than promoting an ethnic nationalism. His appreciation for the multifaceted nature of English history is evident in his academic work and his personal writing. From his time as a student at Oxford and through his own academic work on Anglo-Saxon language and literature (which is extensive and well-respected) Tolkien was well-versed in the many influences of early English literature from Nordic, Scandinavian, Celtic, Germanic, Roman, and Norman cultures. This was especially true when it came to the folklore of the English people. The effect of this eclectic and syncretic influence on language and culture was that there was no exclusively English story.⁷¹ In a late 1951 letter to his friend Milton Waldman he stated, "I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it

⁷¹ I mean both the effect of the many different historical influences on English language and English cultural history; and also, the effect of studying this on Tolkien's pronouncement that there was no English story.

had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found...in the legends of other lands” (Letter 131). This is not to say that legends do not originate within the British Isles, but as Tolkien noted, “There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian and Finnish...but nothing English...Of course, there was and is all the Arthurian world, but powerful as it is, it is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not with English” (Letter 131). As Britain’s history is one of a mixture of nations and of various ruling colonizers, their folklore and mythology is muddled and hybridized, and difficult to attribute directly to the English people themselves. All nations of Britain can be bound together by some of this shared folklore, but Tolkien noticed there was nothing distinctively “English” per se. Tolkien saw this “imperfect naturalization” and tried to create a story that would provide England with the myth it had been lacking. It almost sounds like he is uncomfortable with the idea of being a mixed or hybrid ‘people’—and wants to fabricate or naturalize a fictional origin for this people, which *effaces* that hybridity he knew so well as a scholar. On those grounds, the cynic here might say he is trying to fabricate a purity of some sort, and that his lamenting of the lack of purely English stories reflects a commitment to some supposed English ethnic purity.⁷² The more charitable reading, and one that I argue is *also* accurate, is that he is trying to do justice to hybridity by giving this historical amalgam (‘English’ character) its own story. It seems equally likely that his acknowledgement of the absence of a purely English mythic tradition reflects an awareness that there was no such authentic ethnic origin, and that the myth he set forth in his novels was meant to reflect England as a hybrid, amalgamated historical identity.

⁷² Robert Stuart argues that Tolkien’s work contains “blood and soil” (173) elements of racism in *Tolkien, Race, and Racism in Middle-Earth* (2022).

The English reader needed to find again what “we are...meant to see.” Rather than seeing this as a recovery of some founding essence of Englishness, I suggest that we see it as a recovery of Englishness in the sense that it had previously been lost within a larger British imperial identity. Though the Kingdom of England is more ancient and predates the United Kingdom by many centuries, by the early 20th century when Tolkien was writing, the British empire had played such a large role in the world for so long that many English people would have responded to a question of their national origin with “British” rather than “English.” Therefore, recovering Englishness requires at least temporary escape from Britishness. We have seen this pattern before: George Orwell, in his 1941 essay “England your England,” demonstrated that though the British might rise as one against a common enemy, the individual peoples of Britain are very distinct from each other:

It is quite true that the so-called races of Britain feel themselves to be very different from one another. A Scotsman, for instance, does not thank you if you call him an Englishman. You can see the hesitation we feel on this point by the fact that we call our islands by no less than six different names, England, Britain, Great Britain, the British Isles, the United Kingdom and, in very exalted moments, Albion. (5)

Now it is clear that each nation of Britain is distinct from the others in its people and culture, but defining English negatively by saying that to be English simply means that one is not Irish, Scottish, or Welsh is both insufficient and runs the risk of defining nation on ethnic lines. For example, consider the ties that hold the union of the United Kingdom together. For Linda Colley, what bonds the union together is shared fear of invasion (French or Catholic) and so common Francophobic and Protestantism are key elements of Britishness. Katie Trumpener describes a

relationship more like a national marriage: a Union of the “very soul of the nation” (128).

Tolkien essentially resists the very kind of English co-opting of Celtic identity that Trumpener says is a problem. As these theorists examine how writers dealt with the Union in their texts, one thing is clear: Englishness escapes positive definition. How the English should identify themselves as a distinct nation is of top concern to Tolkien as he writes this myth.

This act of recovery is the key element of fantasy as the purpose of the escapism in the genre is for a return to the real world with a new perspective and skill to address real problems in the world. For C.S. Lewis, the Pevensie children are returned from Narnia to war torn Europe. For Tolkien, when the reader takes the narrative trip to Middle-Earth, they must come back through the proverbial wardrobe ready to apply what they have learned to the real world. This is what Tolkien calls “recovery,” essentially the idea that removal from reality grants the reader a chance to see the world in the proper way again, to rediscover a truth that had been forgotten. This truth, for Tolkien, is the national identity of England, which is easy to overlook in everyday life but can be recognized when encountered in its displaced, defamiliarized, mythologized form. Tolkien himself did not offer an explicit discussion of what it meant to be English. Indeed, he himself might be annoyed at the very thought that this dissertation proposes that his novels have a thematic project in the first place. In the “Foreword” to *The Lord of The Rings*, Tolkien wrote: “As for any inner meaning or “message”, it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical” (11). However, it is fair to infer from the textual evidence, as well as Tolkien’s scholarship and letters, that he was very much concerned with English identity and that concern is at play in his novels. So to be clear, although Tolkien himself would probably have disagreed with the reading of his novels as a direct allegory for the story of England, it is fair to say that, based on his own letter writing and scholarship of fantasy literature, that his novels

fulfil a mythic function for England and that this is at least somewhat intentional even if he would bristle at the use of the word “allegory.” Therefore, to understand what types of characteristics might be at play in Tolkien’s conception of Englishness, I will look to works on the subject written during the formative years of his life both as a man and a scholar.

CONCERNING HOBBITS

In his creation on the hobbits, Tolkien crafts a distinct reflection of Englishness that transcends mere ethnic or racial identity, instead focusing on cultural or social characteristics that define the English people. By centering his narrative around these small, unassuming people, Tolkien is able to explore national identity in a way that allows readers to find themselves in the story. This section will explore how the hobbits represent Tolkien’s vision of Englishness and the implications of that portrayal.

Tolkien dedicated a large portion of his prologue to *The Lord of the Rings* to a discussion of what exactly a hobbit is and the nature of the shire-folk. We are clearly meant to most closely associate ourselves with the hobbits than any other race of folk in the novel:

It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of ours: far nearer to us than Elves, or even than Dwarves. Of old they spoke the languages of Men, after their own fashion, and liked and disliked much the same things as Men did. But what exactly our relationship is can no longer be discovered. The beginning of Hobbits lies far back in the Elder Days that are now lost and forgotten. Only the Elves still preserve any records of that vanished time, and their traditions are concerned almost entirely with their own history, in which Men appear seldom and Hobbits are not mentioned at all. Yet it is clear that

Hobbits had, in fact, lived quietly in Middle-earth for many long years before other folk became even aware of them. (2)

It is interesting that we are meant to identify with the hobbits, who are even within the text defined as a group that had been overlooked in the founding myths and legends, the “records of that vanished time” (2). This is in keeping with Tolkien’s views on England’s relation to national myth.

Since we are meant to identify with the hobbits, this is the fictional race in which Tolkien imbues the most aspects of his conception of Englishness (though elements of Englishness are expressed through all the free races). “Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt” (1). Here, Tolkien describes Hobbits as ancient, suggesting a connection to the past that supersedes current political formations (as England is more ancient than Britain), and that they are a people who keep to themselves. All they desire is a good countryside. Their physical description and manners are also in keeping with Tolkien’s ideas about English character:

Their faces were as a rule good-natured rather than beautiful, broad, bright-eyed, red-cheeked, with mouths apt to laughter, and to eating and drinking. And laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted. (2)

The broad features and ruddy complexion of the people of the British Isles is reflected in how Tolkien describes the hobbits physically. In addition to simple countryside folk, Tolkien also

describes them as friendly, sociable, and hungry. Though a commitment to community is not an exclusively English trait, it is clear that Tolkien felt it an essential quality of Englishness in its most basic form, as these qualities are not highlighted in any other race in middle-earth.

Tolkien describes the hobbits as a jovial bunch, but he is also careful to emphasize that, like the English, they have had many differing cultural interactions with the other races of middle-earth. While this has brought the hobbits their few technological innovations like craftwork and architecture, it clearly came at a steep cost:

They forgot whatever languages they had used before, and spoke ever after the Common Speech, the Westron as it was named, that was current through all the lands of the kings from Arnor to Gondor, and about all the coasts of the Sea from Belfalas to Lune. Yet they kept a few words of their own, as well as their own names of months and days, and a great store of personal names out of the past. (4)

It is of particular importance that the hobbits have lost their language. While English is certainly not lost (and the proliferation of it is certainly responsible for the diminished use of many languages world-wide), the native tongue of the Britons is indeed diminished⁷³. This matches Tolkien's sense of a vacuum at the heart of English national tradition, and strongly suggests that the hobbits are not meant to supply a mythical origin point. Rather, they are a fantasy reflection of Englishness in the hybrid form Tolkien knew it to be.

In *Spirit of the People* (1907), Ford Madox Ford defines Englishness in a way that might assist in unpacking Tolkien's fantasy:

⁷³ The Britons spoke a Celtic language called Common Brittonic, which eventually split into western and southwestern languages. The western language developed into Welsh, now spoken by a small minority in Britain, and the southwestern developed into Cornish, which became extinct in the 19th century (Koch 291-292).

Modern Englishness manifests itself primarily as a “Historic Spirit,” the expression of a “schoolboy” knowledge of the English past, which, over the course of generations, has evolved into a naturalized mode of understanding English history, culture, and nationhood. To be English is, above all, to know; it is to be conscious of England's historical continuity and to recognize one's place in a community of Englishmen who share this consciousness. (35)

Englishness is more than fervent support for the local cricket or football club. Englishness is a desire to know about England as its own nation and how that nation both fits within and is distinct from the cultural history of Britain. Part of the problem that Tolkien was trying to engage is that Englishness is more of a feeling than a tangible quality. For example, one may feel their national pride fiercely, yet not be able to point to which parts of themselves make them part of their nation. Tolkien's contribution is to build on a sense of loyalty and common memories to offer a new mythology. This concept is felt most directly with the hobbits, who “are an unobtrusive but very ancient people...they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* 1). They are deeply conservative, as Bilbo is described as:

“a very well-to-do hobbit...The Bagginess had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mins, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 1-2)

This conservatism is a source of pride in the shire, but when Bilbo and later Frodo adventure, they lose the respect of the “well-to-do” hobbits of the shire but gain a greater appreciation for their world, and indeed, their home.

Through the hobbits, Tolkien presents a compelling vision of Englishness that emphasizes cultural hybridity, historical continuity, and a deep-seated connection to the land. Their joviality, conservatism, and eventual broader appreciation of the world demonstrates a complex and richly layered identity. By identifying with the hobbits, readers are invited to engage with a version of Englishness that is both familiar and aspirational, rooted in tradition yet open to growth and change.

AN EXPLORATORY NATIONALISM

This section of the chapter builds on my previous discussion of de Certeau and the vital role of walking in this chapter. I have also explored this aspect of Tolkien at length elsewhere,⁷⁴ and my goal here is not to take us through the primary texts, but to think about the implications of walking for Tolkien's concept of Englishness.

I have argued that Tolkien is attempting to create something new with a national myth. Essentially, through using fantasy, I argue that Tolkien generates enough distance between the reader and their current context to allow them to recover an essential element of their identity. This constructionist view of Tolkien's work on national identity may, of course, strike some as an overly charitable reading of Tolkien's project. Some critics have argued that fantasy, specifically escapist fantasy, uses the departure from and return to reality to enforce the dominant ideology of the time rather than subvert it. Daniel Baker criticizes Tolkien for participating in this tradition-bound fantastic genre:

⁷⁴ See my MA thesis "There and Back Again: Tolkien's Recovery of Englishness through Walking" (2017).

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien realized a vision of a world beyond (or behind) the mechanized, war torn reality he knew. Though his stance is "much closer to 'wouldn't it be nice if this were true' or 'I would rather find this true than what I see everyday'" (Hume 47), his medieval, honor-bound, deathless Middle-earth is not therefore less Utopian, but a specifically nostalgic, golden-age, and reactionary Utopian form. It becomes dangerously naive. The impulse behind it becomes not so much a desire to create a "better" world but to escape into a pre-industrial landscape: it turns aside from the deep-rooted structural problems of post global conflict modernity in favor of the perceived simplicity of pastoral Hobbiton, colonial Gondor, and immortal Valinor. This impulse is reactionary and therefore problematic. As the progenitor of "sword-and-sorcery," Tolkien set the great majority of the genre on a seductive path, a path to the status quo. (439)

Baker accuses Tolkien not only of writing conservative reactionary fantasy, but also of steering the genre towards what he considered to be a useless politics for literature; one that does not advocate for change but reinforces the "norm." At first, this conclusion seems accurate, as Tolkien clearly yearns for a preindustrial landscape untouched by machines and warfare. Some even accuse him of technophobia. A plain reading of the text set in an idyllic imagined past would lead one to the conclusion that Tolkien is simply nostalgic for simpler times and would like his readers to join him in that feeling. In this reading, the reader would be called to go back to and preserve a comforting and familiar version of society.

However, this is an incomplete reading, especially given the central place of pedestrianism—walking— within the novels' events and aesthetics. In keeping with de Certeau, I see walking in Tolkien's works not as an affirmation of nostalgia, but as by its very nature

exploratory and transgressive. Walking is an activity that tests and challenges the conventions of contemporary society and invites a rediscovery of the country and its physical spaces. It might look like a nostalgia for the pre-industrial landscape, but it can just as easily be an invitation to think of England as a land to be explored and understood in new ways. To map this onto theories of nationalism, pedestrianism represents an interesting reworking of Tom Nairn's "Janus Problem." It looks to a countryside that might invoke ideas about the nation's past, or its natural existence since time immemorial; yet if walking implies a spirit of exploration and discovery, it might actually support a much more malleable, re-negotiable vision of the nation. Rather than retreading ground that has been covered thousands of times over (all of the myths and histories, the hodgepodge of Britishness imported from other lands), through the use of the walk in a fantastic setting, Tolkien asks his readers to step onto the road in an imagined landscape. Just as it is for the hobbits, "if you don't keep your feet, there's no telling where you'll be swept off to" (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* 74). This concept, at its core, is what separates Tolkien's nationalism from the works of the various scholars and authors in this dissertation: unlike Nairn (and Hobsbawm), Tolkien imagines a method of crafting a unifying myth or story that binds the nation together based on shared character or culture, but not by looking either backward or forward. Rather, he invites a move sideways into the realm of fantasy. We might "recover" Englishness by discovering something new, or by walking where we simply have not walked before. Tolkien's engagement with the concept is best encapsulated by Gandalf, who has left Thorin's company for a while. While he is gone, the dwarves and Bilbo are captured by Trolls only for Gandalf to return and rescue them at the last minute. "'Where did you go to, if I may ask?' said Thorin to Gandalf as they rode along. 'To look ahead,' said he. 'And what brought you back in the nick of time?' 'Looking behind,' said he" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 41). Here, Gandalf

embodies both the Janus problem (looking both forward and backward), as well as recovery's relationship to escape. Gandalf leaves the company to scout ahead, to look forward and get a sense of what the company's next move should be on the road. He escapes the present company to get a clearer view of the future. If he had not done so, Gandalf would have been captured by the trolls along with the rest of the company and the quest would have failed. He returns, however, to rescue the company by "looking behind." He looks back at the situation he left after having achieved a distance, and returns to recover (or save) the company. By looking in both directions, escaping and recovering, Gandalf is able to ensure the survival of his companions.

By having his characters travel on foot and to place such an important emphasis on pedestrianism in the novels, Tolkien avoids the trap of consecrating a longing for the past. The very mode of travel that his characters use reacts against fixity and seeks to find a new space for the walker to occupy. A person who sets out on a thousand-mile walk is not someone who is satisfied with the status quo. This is not a leisure walk or a tourist walk. This is a walk that is essential to putting a great wrong in the world to right. The landscape is not about celebrating an essence but about engagement and interaction. Baker's allegation of reactionary conservatism may capture one aspect of Tolkien's work—its technophobia—without viewing it in the larger context of the entire story. While there certainly is a theme of resistance to technology and trepidation at industrialization in the text, Tolkien's attempted recovery of the pre-industrial English landscape was also bound up with his attempt to reimagine Englishness, in a new way, and to recover Englishness from imperial Britishness.

This distinction is also bound up in his experience in the war with the advancements in war technology that allowed death to be dealt on an unprecedented scale. This distrust of technology was a part of the post-war mood for many. Although there is a clear association

between technology and wanton destruction in the novels, Tolkien does not simply advocate for the removal of technology, but rather he suggests alternatives to hyper-industrialization. Isengard and its factory of war machines is replaced by the march of the Ents, which suggests that not only is Tolkien concerned with eliminating harmful elements of the modern world but also in exploring how certain elements of a natural past might be a more effective replacement. This is a fantastic representation of a supernatural natural world surely, but it does not enforce conservative societal conventions. It challenges the status quo. This idea is clearly at play in the character of Bilbo, who starts the story as a Shire aristocrat whose primary concern is his respectability and social standing, but upon his return, no longer has any concern for trivial rules of decorum because he has rediscovered a deeper identity that is more connected to his home of the Shire than his stuffy identity before that was. For Tolkien to allow his reader to rediscover a forgotten national identity he must complicate, for the reader, the relationship between themselves and their home.⁷⁵

Though Baker argues reactionary escapism conforms to establishment authority rather than subverting or challenging that authority, W.A. Senior differs:

what fantasy reacts to most aggressively - and therefore most threateningly to the establishment - is the imposition of some construct of rigid authoritarian control, whether it is Tolkien's Saruman, the quisling voice of mordantly cynical realpolitik, or Rowling's comic Umbridge, another factotum bloated with temporary power and using it to bludgeon others who disagree with her limited understanding. (2)

⁷⁵ This is tied to the notion of “defamiliarization” which is closely related to Tolkien’s fantasy specific terms of escape and recovery.

For Baker, Tolkien's supposed nostalgia represents a resistance to troublesome progressivism or changes to the status quo, but Senior argues that when one examines the representations of authority figures and "official" policy makers in Tolkien's work and other fantasy, one finds that these are often characters that form obstacles for the heroes to overcome. These characters, like Saruman, represent a rigid, unmoving sort of authoritarianism that was common in the 20th century in countries that flirted with extreme right-wing conservatism and fascism. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* is written in the wake of World War One, and *The Lord of the Rings* was written during and after World War Two. For this reason, it is not difficult to understand why Tolkien would choose to represent hyper-conservatism, even fascism, in antagonists such as Sauron, who behaves like a tyrant of a far-right movement such as Hitler or Mussolini. Of course, it is possibly a mistake to make direct comparisons between villains in *The Lord of the Rings* and real political figure since Tolkien famously decried allegory, claiming that he dislikes it "wherever I smell it" (Tolkien, BBC Sound Archives); nonetheless, 20th century politics are one applicable context for the themes of his works. Saruman is not Mussolini, and his politics are not direct representations of 20th century fascism, but he does still seem to figure into Tolkien's criticism of extreme conservatism in any form.

If Tolkien is depicting real political issues in a fantastic setting, we must pay attention to which ideologies our heroes support and which they are determined to oppose. The forces that the fellowship is opposed to are those that would impose an authoritarian conformity as Sauron seeks to have all of Middle-Earth under his absolute rule. Gandalf is offered the opportunity to join the enemy and become a privileged member of Sauron's ranks. Gandalf resists Saruman, who wants to become a lieutenant of Sauron and find a place in the new world order characterized by unquestioning submission to Sauron as ruler over all Middle-Earth. Aragorn

resists the traditional conceptions of royalty by humbling and exiling himself. Even Frodo resists the social expectations of being a respectable hobbit of the Shire by engaging in adventurous walks. Upon Bilbo's sudden disappearance from the Shire, Frodo "at once began to carry on Bilbo's reputation for oddity" (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* 42). He earns this reputation by "tramping"⁷⁶ over the Shire with them [Merry and Pippin]; but more often he wandered by himself, and to the amazement of sensible folk he was sometimes seen far from home walking in the hills and woods under the starlight" (42-43). Therefore, in spite of his own personal shortcomings, I would argue that the politics of Tolkien's fantasy are in large part progressive, even challenging established social and institutional hierarchies.

We know that Tolkien noted a vacuum at the centre of English identity because of the lack of an English myth. It is important to consider why that lack distressed him so to the point that he took it upon himself to fill that void. Why was an English myth so important that he stopped his academic publishing to focus on fantasy novels? We know that most western societies have some sort of formative myth, from the wolves of Rome to the *Kavela* in Norway, although the most famous of the west are from Greece.⁷⁷

Classical myths are so pervasive that many people today know more about ancient Greece than contemporary Greece. Indeed, the study of many societies begins with the study of its myths. Why? Brian Attebery supposes that "the role of myth in codifying a society's sense of itself and its institutions" is important to understanding why we teach and read myth (407). For Attebery, myth is our way into seeing how a society viewed itself. It is telling for example that the Romans, who would conquer much of the known world and wage war on an unprecedented

⁷⁶ Note the use of the charged word for vagrancy as noted by Orwell.

⁷⁷ As Tom Shippey notes, the use of the Finnish Kalevala ties Tolkien's myth to a certain "Northness" commonly seen in many European identities.

scale, located their origins in the apex predator wolf. As Tolkien sets out to create a myth for England in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, he necessarily attempts to codify Englishness, to paint a picture of the country as it would appear to most English people.

This means Tolkien attempts to take that vague, indescribable “feeling” of Englishness and provide a demonstration of what Englishness looks like in practice. If someone were to ask: “is there a story that explains what it means to be English?” Tolkien would have liked to be able to point to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The attempt at describing Englishness engages in the sort of political unrealism that makes fantasy so useful as a genre. Tolkien does not just remove his story for England from the real place of England.⁷⁸ He also complicates the process of removal by allowing different temporal periods to exist simultaneously in Middle-Earth; the hobbits, the riders of Rohan, and the men of Gondor, each represent a different historical idea of an Englishman.

Attebery suggests that temporal fluidity is also good political strategy: “The more important function—dare I say political function—of creative anachronism occurs when you take a little bit of the Middle Ages and plop it down in the midst of freeways and shopping malls. The contrast, the disjunction, transforms the present” (15-16). Having multiple time periods occupying the same physical and social spaces in Middle-Earth creates the contrast and disjunction that Attebery claims is both jarring and politically necessary for the reader. Since the setting of Middle-Earth is obviously removed from reality, the English reader is made aware of the different versions of Englishness across history coming together in the story.

De Certeau claims that legend is important to making a place habitable, and so to truly inhabit England, the place must have a legend in which the inhabitant can locate him or herself

⁷⁸ This is similar to what Woolf does in *Between the Acts* with her tableau of England throughout different historical periods.

(106). Tolkien asks his reader to imagine what Englishness means in the 1930s and 1940s. How would the English codify a sense of their own society and institutions?

Tolkien's fantasy is subversive, because before it can establish Englishness, it must first dispel Britishness. This is not to say that Tolkien is "anti-union"; rather he saw that, while a united Britain had many advantages, one disadvantage was a loss of the individual nations of Britain, a fact that the Scots, Welsh, and Irish would have felt even more keenly than the English. In his apparent anti-Celticism he is also, I argue, laying the groundwork for a devolution of national identity, which would conceivably be in the interest of all four nations. Tolkien means not to do away with Britishness altogether, but rather prove that it should not come at the expense of Englishness. This also provides space for the other nations of Britain to reclaim their own national identities. Fantasy seems particularly suited to the task of asking a culture to forget everything it currently understands about itself and remember a forgotten past because, in fantasy, "we have the ability to envisage states of the world other than the one immediately present or identical with those previously encountered" (Krietman 611). Fantasy allows the reader to imagine a new sense of his/her own society, and the evocation of "common memories" also allows for new allegiances.

AND BACK AGAIN

To conclude this chapter, I want to turn to one more theory of national myth that by now should strike a clear chord with Tolkien's storytelling as I have here framed it. As Gérard Bouchard points out in his edited collection, *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, many national myths, especially in Western countries, are now being seriously challenged as necessary parts of a modern society. He writes, "if the national framework has

become inappropriate to provide the symbolic glue of modern (or post-modern) societies, what would be a possible surrogate? And how can binding collective representations be rebuilt without repeating the mistakes of the past?” (Bouchard xii). Though Bouchard is writing in 2013, many years after Tolkien and after significant political shift in how the U.K. fits into the world, the basic question remains the same: “the loss of the Empire, the devolution process...has stripped this nation of its major identity staples” (280). This is the same issue that Tolkien confronts, and Tolkien further identifies the issues that all of England’s myths are borrowed, stolen, or “imperfectly naturalized.”

Simply, a myth is a set of stories that uses symbols and metaphors to express a system of values. Further, it is designed to have an effect on the reader/listener in the form of holding those values in a sacred regard. Myths are designed to shape us in a certain way and to influence us to behave in a way that aligns with the value system the myth represents. It is therefore no surprise that when we study ancient cultures that no longer exist, we look to their myths to get a sense of who they were and what they believed. Reading Aristotle and Plato might give us insight into how the ancient Greeks thought intellectually, but tales of gods and heroes give us a sense of what they believed and which behaviours they thought were admirable and which were to be discouraged.

More specifically, national myths are:

enduring, deeply rooted, inclusive representations that suffuse a nation’s past, present, and future with a set of values, ideals, and beliefs expressed in an identity and a memory. Inclusiveness is a defining trait since a national myth is usually intended to transcend the boundaries of class, gender, religion, language, and party allegiances. Needless to say...national myths are always constructed, they

may be to a large extent invented, and sometimes they lapse into sheer machinations. What finally matters, however, is that for those who embrace them, they are lived as true and meaningful. (277)

The first sentence of Bouchard's definition does a great deal of work that is worth unpacking. Firstly, he lists three criteria for a myth. First, that it is enduring, meaning that it is long-lasting and able to hold its place in the mind of those who embrace it despite the changing sensibilities of people that come with time. Factors that contribute to the longevity of a myth are, for Bouchard, "polysemy, hybridity, and plasticity,...the sense of an external threat,...and almost everywhere, powerful symbols, a vivid emotional rooting, and a close fit with the major concerns and challenges of the nation (or its rulers). Another contributing factor is the structure of myths comprising a collective imaginary" (278). Second, that it is deeply rooted, meaning that it is established firmly in the minds of subscribers, perhaps even viewed as essential or foundational to the nation. Indeed, many national myths are stories of the origin of the nation. Thirdly, that it is inclusive in that it seeks to call in those who share the same space of the nation with each other and give them a connective tissue that demonstrates that they share a commonality: a national identity based on the values set forth in the myth. It is worth noting that, just as a myth is intended to be inclusive in calling all members of the nation together, the drawing of any national barrier, even symbolically, is necessarily exclusive to certain people. Indeed, it is not difficult to see how this symbolic boundary drawing could be used nefariously by those who wish to define their nation on ethnic or religious grounds, especially if that nationalism is outward-looking and intended to justify the expansion of said nation. In this vein, while Tolkien's myth-making may have created a more coherent sense of national identity, it could easily be critiqued for not fully addressing the type of criticism Woolf makes about gender inclusivity in national narratives.

Bouchard proposes that, once these three criteria have been satisfied, a national myth is able to manifest as the basis for identity for a particular community. For example, the myth of the start of Roman society born of wolves and building a great city expresses, in the form of a collective memory, the values and ideals that would lead to great empire building for that culture. The myth also depicts an identity in the form of Romulus, the first Roman. All national myths partake of these tropes in the form of collective memory (usually of the origin of the nation) and the depiction of a proto-national figure who is usually some sort of hero. Finally, Bouchard acknowledges that all national myths are deliberately constructed and range from hyperbolic depictions of real historical events and figures to complete fiction (288). For Bouchard, the level of truth involved in the myth is not relevant. What is relevant is that the people of the nation find the values, ideas, and beliefs conveyed through the myth are “true and meaningful” (277). This, layered on top of the intended quality of all myths, that their believers view the values depicted as sacred and tailor their behaviours to reflect that, means that national myths are designed to portray a set of values as an essential quality of anyone who is a member of that nation and to influence, on a larger national scale, behaviour in line with those values.

These functions sound vague but they are important. A national myth is important because of all the ways it knits a national culture together, but even if one argues that nationalism or national identity are flawed ways of accomplishing that goal, there are numerous other functions of a national myth. Bouchard lists:

They feed identities, they inform powerful narratives to which a collectivity can return in times of adversity, they provide a remedy to offset humiliation and defeat, they build togetherness beyond cleavages and conflicts, they provide security by projecting consistent visions of the world, they generate energy in times of wars and other traumas,

they mobilize populations toward particular goals or wide-ranging social change, they help conceal or overcome contradictions and shortcomings of the nation's creed, they secure the required support for institutions to function, and they allow a society to respond positively to any kind of challenges. (277-278)

This list can largely be grouped into two sorts of functions: inward looking self-improvement and outward looking defense. A national myth provides the narrative ability for a nation to come together and improve its own functions so as to better perform (or at least, appear to perform) the ideals that the national myth would convey as a sacred to that nation. It also, just as Orwell's *Boys Weeklies* did, creates a narrative ability to respond to external crisis. Continued progress towards a sacred ideal as well as the ability to defend oneself from attack are both essential functions of a nation. There is debate about whether or not a progressive nationalism or a national myth is the best way to achieve such a collective imaginary in a populace, but the national myth is both effective and efficient in accomplishing such an effect in the people. Though Tolkien never explicitly expressed his desire to create such feelings and values in the English people through the creation of a new national myth, his instinct to create one upon noticing the gap speaks to a natural drive to cleave to these sorts of myths.

As I have pointed out, there are several events, landscapes, and characters in Tolkien's novels that resemble quintessentially English events, landscapes, and figures. It is, however, a mistake to view these resemblances as allegorical. Tolkien himself cautioned readers against allegorical readings of his texts:

I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence...I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I

think that many confuse ‘applicability’ with ‘allegory’; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.

(Tolkien *Foreword*, 2nd Edition).

This description bears a remarkable resemblance to Bouchard’s description of myth, particularly in the reference to history that can be true or constructed (or for Bouchard, somewhere in between). Tolkien’s disdain for allegory is also interesting because it gets at the heart of the difference, according to the definitions that I am working with, between a myth and an allegory. A myth must be deep-rooted and enduring while an allegory need only, and indeed can only, work within the context that the writer intended it to. For example, *Animal Farm*, while an interesting story that illuminates the politics and aftermath of the Russian Revolution, does not make sense outside of that context (nor does Orwell mean for it to). It may provide a set of ideals and values (which may be sacred, depending on your politics) but it is not deep-rooted or enduring in that it only applies to one context fixed in one point of time. Tolkien, and myth, aspires to a feigned history that has “varied applicability” across temporal contexts.

Tolkien Scholar T.A. Shippey made a connection between Tolkien’s aversion to allegory in his own fiction and Tolkien’s scholarly writings on *Beowulf*. Tolkien wrote of the epic poem: “large symbolism is near the surface but...does not break through, nor become allegory” (Shippey 127). Tolkien, though not an author known for his subtlety in his fiction, clearly preferred stories that had clear symbols, things that stood for something else, but for meaning to have “varied applicability.” For Tolkien then, the best literary symbols are ones that makes sense in varied contexts and could be suited to mean many different things if applied to a different set of circumstances by the reader. This seems obvious because the texts we revisit most in contemporary study are the texts that we can still produce new meaning with through a new

interpretation of the symbols, but Tolkien's words should be taken, for this dissertation, to be a roadmap for effective mythmaking. Shippey further explains Tolkien's meaning:

'Allegory' would after all imply, to Tolkien, that *The Lord of the Rings* had only one meaning, which would have to remain constant all the way through; he toyed contemptuously with the notion in the 'Foreword' as he sketched out a plan for his work as a *real* allegory with the Ring itself as President Truman's atomic bomb. 'Large symbolism,' however should not be a matter of one imposed diagram but of repeated offered hints. The hints would work only if they were true both in fact and in fiction. History, thought Tolkien, was varied in its applicability. But if you understood it properly, you saw it repeating itself. (127)

This suggests that Tolkien is not concerned with that which is contextual, but that which is applicable to many contexts. Just as national myth is meant to transcend boundaries of class, gender, religion, language, and party allegiances, Tolkien means his story to transcend particular English contexts in order to be applicable to the broader English context. Shippey notes that, if one looks closely, one can see allusions to Nazis, Neville Chamberlain, and the Maginot line, but that this is simply one real historical applicability of Tolkien's feigned history, and if one looks beyond the 20th century, one can see the same part of the novel having applicability to Arthurian legend, Shakespeare, and the Battle of Hastings. This varying applicability is what makes Tolkien's story a valiant attempt at a national myth since it seeks to achieve the goal of deep-rootedness and endurance.

In conclusion, Tolkien's exploration of fantasy literature illuminates its transformative potential in offering an escape from the confines of harmful national contexts while concurrently fostering a reclamation of a more constructive national identity. By emphasizing the concept of

"recovery" within fantasy, Tolkien invites readers to reconsider their perceptions of reality, prompting a re-evaluation of collective cultural values. This discourse on national identity in Tolkien's work resonates deeply within the broader comparative conversation of this dissertation, particularly when juxtaposed with other authors' attempts to re-appropriate national imagery for social causes (Orwell with class and Woolf with gender). As I transition to the next chapter, which delves into the literature of the other home nations, I will explore how their distinct national identities evolve within the British context. Through this comparative lens, I aim to explore the similarities and differences of the complex national identities developing within Britain, shedding light on the interconnectedness and divergence of narratives across the British Isles.

Chapter 4: Four Nations: Exploring the Adoption of Models of National Identity Alongside English National Identity

At the same period when Orwell, Woolf, and Tolkien are noticing and attempting to fill a vacuum at the centre of English national identity, the other home nations within the UK are navigating the decline of the British empire as well. Even my use of the term “home nations” to refer to England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, comes with a set of political assumptions that not everyone will agree with. To be clear, I use this term to refer to the nations in the British Isles; however, it is very fair to say that these “home nations” are just as easily called “colonies.” Indeed, one could argue that the differences between Ireland and India in this context are merely that Ireland has been a colony for far longer and India is further away, so why not refer to India as a home nation? I make this distinction for several reasons. The first, and most obvious, is geography. The home nations are historically and geographically part of the United Kingdom, and therefore share a closer history with much more interaction with England. Secondly, these nations have been united not just symbolically, but also politically through various agreements over the centuries, most famously being the Acts of Union. Other British colonies, like India, were much further afield and therefore they were not subject to the same sort of identity slippage seen in the home nations. There was also not nearly the same level of political integration. While the home nations got Acts of Union, India got the British Raj. Though both home nations and further colonies were subject to exploitation and subjugation, the home nations undoubtedly received benefits from the colonies, while the colonies did not receive nearly the same benefits from the home nations.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ I am not aiming to compare different types or experiences of colonial oppression. The history of English colonization of the home nations is written in blood, just as it is in India. As a member of the Scottish diaspora, I am

The home nations are grappling with all the cultural issues of the erosion of the Empire as a global force, but are experiencing that from a context as nations subsumed by the English in the UK. They are among the ‘home nations,’ but from within a ‘home nations’ perspective they can also be seen in terms of a subordination to England and therefore the erosion of the empire does not leave a vacuum so much as it creates breathing space for the previously existing identities of those nations. With the decline of the value of being part of a British empire came the opportunity to explore one’s own national identity outside of that larger category. Alongside the struggle of experiencing one’s own national culture while subsumed by a larger cultural category of “British,” there is an added layer of political struggle. If England’s 20th-century crisis of identity was a search for a post-imperial identity, then that takes a very different shape in British nations that could view themselves alternately as a *part* of that imperial power or as among its colonized subjects. In England, as discussed in earlier chapters, the sense of an Englishness “vacuum” was based not just on the search for a post-imperial identity, but also on a long history of Britishness itself as an amalgamated identity, where local identities originally asserted against ‘internal colonization’ became co-opted *as* figures for Britishness.⁸⁰

In other words, in order to understand how Orwell, Woolf, or Tolkien attempts to articulate a distinct English identity, we need to look at the amalgamated nature of British identity in the first place. On the one hand, such examples of “Englishness” were often newly understood as *disentangling* themselves from that history of amalgamation, as witnessed, for example, in Tolkien’s resistance to co-opting Celtic traditions. On the other hand, some of these

aware that I was born in Canada because my ancestors were unable to make a living in their homeland due to the conditions of English rule. I only mean to say that there is a distinction to be made here historically, geographically, and culturally that merits talking about the “home nations” as a distinct group.

⁸⁰ As Katie Trumpener notes, symbols of Celtic culture underwent a cycle of prohibition and revival as repatriated British symbols.

“devolutionary” strategies were borrowed, consciously or unconsciously, from anti-imperial tactics used within the home empire. Ireland, for example, had long needed to negotiate its participation in the exploitation of British India with its own colonial subordination.⁸¹ This chapter will examine how the movement discussed in previous chapters—an early 20th century era of “recovered” Englishness, to use Tolkien’s term—inherits goals and strategies from decolonial nationalism in the so-called “Celtic periphery.” The twin goals of stepping back from imperial exertion and, in the process, stepping back from “Britain” into a more distinctive, local national identity, need to be understood in that wider context.

Jed Esty argued in *A Shrinking Island* that the contraction of the British Empire forced a new anthropological interest in Englishness among writers and intellectuals. This shrinking of national identity was partly caused by the complex relationships among the four nations of the United Kingdom, as well as the broader decline of imperial power. In this context, anti-colonial nationalism in Scotland and Ireland offered potential models for reimagining a more focused English identity, even as it contributed to the very “shrinking” that necessitated such reimagining. Within this framework of a “shrinking” English identity, I will move to explore two case studies—the work of High MacDiarmid and of James Joyce—in order to set my main prior examples of English national consciousness within this wider context: specifically, the forms of national consciousness that arise in opposition to Englishness. English recuperations of national identity look deliberate in Orwell, Woolf, and Tolkien: each author, in their own way, attempts to carefully locate the “English spirit,” or the underlying national consciousness in England that exists separate from the larger category of Britishness, and then tries to disentangle that from

⁸¹ Jane Ohlmeyer notes that Ireland and India share a “natural relationship between...nationalist movements,” due to the fact that Ireland was England’s oldest colony and India was its largest. Also, Ireland contained a major colonial metropolis in Dublin. “If Ireland was colonial, it was also imperial. The Irish were victims of imperialism as well as aggressive perpetrators of it” (1).

more problematic forms of nationalism, often represented by Imperial Britishness. They function as careful attempts to recover that subsumed identity while trying to avoid an ethnic or expansionist nationalist movement. When we look to Scotland or Ireland, we can see similar movements, but those movements are able to take the form that, for most English writers, needed to remain subtext: the form of an anticolonial nationalism.

SCOTTISH NATIONALISM AGAINST “ENGLISHNESS”

In a letter to the editor published in the Times Literary Supplement in 2020, Michael Upton and David C. Speedie claim that the 20th century iteration of Scottish nationalism, specifically that of the 1940s, was born in response to German aggression, and runs a constant risk of “dissolving into mere obsession with being different from people in Berwick and Carlisle” (1). With the use of nationalism by various fascistic political movements in the 20th century, the danger of drawing simplistic “us” vs “them” national borders with xenophobic undertones is a constant danger to constructing national identity. This is a problem that many movements to recover national identity encounter: the impulse to define one’s identity negatively through a process of “othering” is a delicate balance to strike and can even be a short route to fascism. In point of fact, in the 1940’s the Scottish National Party (SNP) aligned with any “interest adverse to England,” allowing Anglophobia to align them (implicitly, or sometimes explicitly) with the Axis powers and the rhetoric of Nazism (Bowd 131). The reason for this slippage between Scottish Nationalism and Nazi sympathies may be, as I have argued in other chapters, that it is simply very easy to define a national identity outwardly, as an in-group defined against outsiders. Playing on someone’s national pride by turning them against someone of a different nationality is a cheap but very powerful political trick. Yet the point is not just that

the SNP saw fit to align itself with England's enemies, but that fascism and nationalism are so compatible in the first place. Though the SNP has since shifted away from that troubling way of thinking, Scotland, it seems, flirted with fascism in the 1940's as a way of escaping English influence. Indeed, right-wing political ideologies were fairly common and popular at this time, and various modernist authors have been associated with those ideologies (Payne 270).⁸²

Scottish nationalists frequently framed that English influence as a colonial history of cultural domination. This history of English rule over Scots spans centuries, making it challenging to avoid defining one's nationality in contrast to the colonial power of England. This is especially true when, historically, England has sought to suppress expressions of unique Scottish identity in politics, culture, and aesthetics.⁸³ In that regard, their attempts to recover a Scottishness separate from the larger category of Britishness offers an instructive point of comparison with the English authors this dissertation has so far examined, who seek to redefine or recover Englishness around the decline of the Empire. The main point of contrast between those authors and the 20th century Scots doing something similar in Scotland is that, for the Scots, there has never been a true conflation of Britishness and Scottishness. The terms British and English are often used interchangeably, and a person might not even be corrected for using them that way, precisely because of the way that England as an imperial centre became identified with the United Kingdom as a whole. In contrast, though legally a Scot is British and appetites for political independence vary amongst the Scottish public, most everyone recognizes the Scottish people as a separate people who are nominally British but clearly a unique people and

⁸² For example, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein all expressed some form of support or sympathy for various right-wing movements.

⁸³ The Dress Act of 1746 banning highland dress and strengthening prohibitions on Scots owning weapons is perhaps the best example of this, as well as the well-documented campaign of anti-Jacobite propaganda against highlanders (Pickering 526).

culture. In London, one might meet a man at a pub and reasonably think he has met a representative of Britishness, but no such mistake can be made at a pub in Glasgow. Scotland is its own “nation,” in the sense of a region of people with a distinct and shared linguistic and cultural history. “English” can be conflated with the generic “British,” whereas a Scot is always a particular *kind* or subset of Britishness. This idea is noted by Krishan Kumar, who writes:

both the Scots and the Welsh have privileged their Scottish and Welsh identities over their British ones. The English, on the other hand, have historically not shown such a preference, being rather reluctant to identify themselves as ‘English only’ or English as ‘most important’. They have been perfectly content to call themselves equally English and British. (475)

To those outside of the UK, this distinction is undoubtedly informed by popular culture and cinema with Mel Gibson’s cry for freedom ringing out in theatres or the immortal warrior of *Highlander* informing the world of the unique Scottish identity trodden down by the English.⁸⁴ Poetic license with history and Anglophobic tropes aside, these contemporary pop culture depictions tell us very little about Scotland’s response to the decline of the British Empire in the 20th century. Nor do they inform us about how that identity really came about and the literary traditions that shaped it.

Scottish Romantic literature of the 18th and 19th centuries often comes to the foreground in discussions of literary nationalism, notably by Katie Trumpener in her book *Bardic Nationalism*. Scotland’s literary nationalism came about during what has been termed the “Age

⁸⁴ Tim Edensor in his 2002 book *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* claims that the film *Braveheart* tells us a lot about its moment, in terms of Scottishness, despite what it also caricatures for the rest of the world. “Many commentators cite what they call the ‘Braveheart effect’ in contributing to this renewed national awareness. Yet popular responses to the film highlight many of the ambivalences and conflicts about the constitution of Scottish identity” (Edensor 145).

of Nationalism,” but also specifically at a period when many touchstones of Scottishness were under attack (5). The phasing out of Scots and Gaelic languages, political reforms designed to eradicate the clan system, the bans on highland dress, and the seizure of Scottish land were all part of an attempt to reduce the ability of those living in Scotland to identify with the Scottish nation rather than the British Empire. In more recent times, as the restrictions on these expressions of Scottishness eased, these touchstones of Scottish culture experienced something of a revival (128-130). In the hands of 19th-century Scottish writers such as Walter Scott, the idea of a distinctive Scottish history and culture was safe for amalgamation into the larger concept of Britishness.

The result was a need to struggle against that amalgamation in order to form a distinct national identity. This concept is something that Robert Crawford has explored in his book *Devolving English Literature*. Crawford claims that though “a cursory account of Modernism stresses its cosmopolitanism and internationalism...there is also another, equally important side of Modernism that is demotic and crucially ‘provincial’” (219). He argues that this other side is evident in the work of authors who lived away from the cultural centre of England in an around London. This is true for Romantics as well, as writers like the Brontës and Gaskell from the north of England leaned into the provincial perception of them that their southern audience would have had by borrowing stylistically from Scottish poets like Burns and Scott, eventually influencing a “heyday for provincials such as the Irishmen Yeats, Shaw, and Wilde, the Cornishman Arthur Symonds, and Scots like John Davidson, Andrew Lang, Robert Louis Stevenson, and ‘Fiona Macleod’” (216-217). The reason for earlier strategic borrowing of provincialism from the Celtic periphery is because writers from that periphery had remarked that using English was of little value anymore and could even be a hindrance. That sense is amplified

in 20th-century writing, as when Joyce noted: “I cannot express myself in English without enclosing myself in a tradition” (263). “Tradition” was once the most culturally significant in the world at the height of the Empire, but writers increasingly began to see a diminished return on investment as the Empire declined and more value was placed on the cosmopolitan while many modernists outside of the centre of the English ethos chose to focus on provincial dialects and languages to “outflank the English cultural centre” (262). Crawford further argues that this borrowing on the part of the northern English writers was designed to “outflank Anglocentricity of established Englishness through a combination of the demotic and the multicultural” (270).

Without suggesting that they explicitly borrowed strategies from the Celtic periphery, I argue that Orwell, Woolf, and Tolkien employ strategies reminiscent of those used by authors of other home nations; read alongside each other. Therefore, we can understand how authors working from different locations within the United Kingdom were engaging in a parallel process of reimagining national identity during a period of imperial decline. As Scottish, Irish, and Welsh writers seek to disentangle themselves from Britishness, they offered an image of a “devolved” national literature that was useful to English writers who were, from a different cultural context and relationship to the category, also attempting that disentanglement. There is a decline in the value of Britishness that leads to a resurgence of smaller national literature formations in patterns that inherit much of the 18th and 19th century material from that “age of nationalism” in the heyday of empire.

While the writers in the Celtic periphery were trying to use provincialism to outflank Anglocentrism, the writers discussed in this dissertation use these strategies to try to decentre Britishness. Much like Tolkien, and in fact often through the projection of a quasi-legendary

past,⁸⁵ many Scottish Romantics sought to establish a national literature as a key element of forming a strong Scottish identity. On the surface, this seems like a much more accomplishable project than creating an English national identity through literature because of the lack of confusion between the categories of Scottish and British as well as a clearly distinct history that includes many instances of outright hostility between the nations. By the 20th century, within Modernism, this movement takes the form of something Edwin Muir calls “Scottish Renaissance” (Robichaud 135). This movement is part of Modernism but, according to Nancy Gish, included some distinctive factors from other regions of Europe. For Gish, this movement was massively important as it was the site of the exploration of what it meant to be Scottish. “The Scottish Renaissance defined a set of interrelated questions and issues debated in Scotland throughout the twentieth century, questions focusing on nationality, identity, language, and poetic experimentalism that, as Cairns Craig has argued, reveal Scottish history and culture as exemplary of the multiplicity and pluralism explored in much current theory” (Gish 1). The degree to which this movement is viewed as a legitimate distinct offshoot of modernism was debated by critics at the time.⁸⁶

I have at many points in this dissertation, especially with respect to Orwell’s work, spoken of an asserted tension between chauvinistic, outward-looking nationalism and what Orwell would call patriotism. “Inward looking” would be more in line with how Benedict Anderson describes nationalism as creating a story of a particular people in a particular place. Outward looking would borrow from Tom Nairn and the faces of Janus, as the type of nationalism that defines the nation as an “in-group,” which is in turn defined in contrast to

⁸⁵ The quasi-legendary figure of the poet Ossian is an example of a foundational figure of a national literary tradition. Tolkien, and most fantasy writers, were heavily influenced by Scottish romantic literature like *Ivanhoe*.

⁸⁶ An example is T.S. Eliot, in his 1919 review of G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919) titled “Was There a Scottish Literature?” (Note the past tense).

external others and, as I emphasize in this dissertation, the way that this mobilization continues with imperialism.

Orwell's patriotism, on the other hand, appeals to a desire to improve the nation as currently constituted to better achieve the "ideals" of a national character. In the Scottish context, poet Hugh MacDiarmid saw these ideas not in conflict, but rather as essential sides of the same coin. He rails against: "those Anglo-Scots intellectuals who bleat of a false antithesis, internationalism, not nationalism, as if it were possible to have the one without the other. They sin against the universal law of life which invests life in individuals not conglomerates" (Lyll 341). Here MacDiarmid points to something that perhaps Orwell does not consider when he sets patriotism and nationalism against each other: one concept depends on the other. MacDiarmid instead uses the term "internationalism," which is different from patriotism, as Orwell's patriotism was an attempt to create English national solidarity that was continuous with an internationalist socialist ethos. Orwell seeks to disentangle while MacDiarmid sees the entanglement as essential. The problem for a concept like internationalism, and even for Orwell's goals of establishing a socialist collective, is that life is experienced on individual terms. The cliché "all politics are local" holds true because of this idea. Since the individual cannot be separated from the time, space, land, or nation that he or she lives in, any form of internationalism, for MacDiarmid, must meet people where they are first.

Ironically, fostering a sense of responsibility to an international community as a crucial element of an individual nation's character might lead to an effective contradiction: an international nationalism. Scott Lyall describes MacDiarmid's politics as follows: "the crucial correspondence between the local and the universal was a relationship that could only be fully required in national terms—in Scotland, this meant through complete political independence"

(4). Much has been written about Scottish Marxism and the “national question,” and MacDiarmid’s history there (including his party affiliations) is an interesting one.⁸⁷ Again, the similarities to Orwell’s project are striking. In other words, for MacDiarmid, infusing socialist internationalism with a recuperated *national* identity looks similar to Orwell’s project; but it has a different relationship to Imperial history. How then can Scottish citizens say they honestly participate in internationalism as themselves when they must operate under the conglomerate of the U.K. For MacDiarmid, as with Orwell, socialism and nationalism are not enemies, but rather key partners to help create a modern national identity. This move to establish a cultural history completely separate from England highlights a unique Scottish approach. It diverges from the Irish strategy, which often embraces a hybridity with Britishness.

My reading is in line with the work of Gardiner (cited in Lyall) who not only discusses the slippages between different sorts of nationalism that Orwell fell victim to but also delves into the complexities of Scottish cultural and political identity, offering a broader explanation of these dynamics. He provides an apt description of how these issues manifest in Scottish work and explores the intersections of nationalism, postcolonialism, and other emancipatory theories:

Michael Gardiner, in *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution* (2004), regards what he terms 'The First Scottish Renaissance' as 'containing some of the seeds of a post-British culture,' but sees the movement as ethnocentric, with MacDiarmid's Enlightenment individualism and synthetic Scots being conducive to an elitist concept of national anteriority. Yet postcolonialism, along with other theories that have an interest in political and social emancipation, such as feminism, may need

⁸⁷ MacDiarmid was a founding member of the National Part of Scotland, but eventually left to join the Communist Part of Great Britain before being expelled for his nationalism. For more information, see Alan Bold’s *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve: a Critical Biography* (1988).

to rely on what Gayatri Spivak has termed 'operational essentialism' precisely in order to resist the essentialist procedures of power; this tactic can be deployed even if no 'ontological integrity' can be ascribed to liberation's objective—womanhood or a particular national culture, for instance. An understanding of identity that apprehends the (psychological and cultural) alterity of the subject is a useful theoretical tool that allows us to perceive the hybridism of cultural construction. However, by challenging the essential wholeness of subject formation, it also undermines the possibility of political action arising from a sense that the subject position of the colonised, as seen and constructed by the coloniser, is subordinate. This is important in Scotland where, according to James Kelman,⁸⁸ there is simply no question that by the criteria of the ruling elite of Great Britain so-called Scottish culture, for example, is inferior, just as ipso facto the Scottish people are also inferior'; as such, 'Scotland is oppressed.' (10)⁸⁸

“Operational essentialism” here means a political tactic for minority groups to act collectively, despite deep differences between them and other minority groups in the collective, in order to achieve a political or cultural goal. Post-colonialism allows us to better understand power structures and the need for liberation of certain groups from oppression, but as Spivak points out, it does so by deconstructing the essential “identity” of the oppressed which can undermine political solidarity. Therefore, for MacDiarmid, the individual is essential in pursuing the goal of international socialism. This presents us with a contradiction: how can we want to deconstruct the many aspects of identity, a seeming reduction of each individual’s uniqueness, and yet claim that MacDiarmid’s project depends on the individual? In fact, this contradiction presents us with

⁸⁸ Gregory Baker argues that MacDiarmid’s formation of synthetic Scots helped him make a “polyglossic vision of poetry” to try to form a “new classicism” (40-41).

a further problem: a non-strategic essentialism that seeks to diminish the individual for the sake of a national collective is exactly a blueprint for an essentialist nationalist movement. Spivak herself disavowed the term because of its appropriation by such movements. For MacDiarmid, a key way to avoid such slippage and to maintain the ideals of international socialism is, ironically, to place an emphasis on the individual. The nation is the way of mediating the connection between the individual and the international. If the wholeness of the Scottish subject is undermined, this makes it more difficult for a Scottish cultural identity to manifest itself in political independence and participate in internationalism as Scots rather than British subjects. Like most people concerned with creating a productive nationalism, MacDiarmid is struggling to find the right balance between two seemingly contradictory ideas. If one focusses too much on the individual, one will not have been a person whose values align with those of international socialism. If one focusses too much on the collective, one runs the risk of that collective identity subsuming the individual and in turn, risks chauvinistic mobilization of that collective identity. Each individual's relationship to that collective identity, in this case "Scottishness," is where that balance between individual and collective must be struck.

The search for a Scottish identity often took the form of a revival of Scottish culture in language, literature, and song. In particular, folksongs were an important element of this revival. MacDiarmid rejected this element of the revival describing "folksong as inherently antithetical to the demands of modern literature" (Gibson 209). In contrast, Hamish Henderson took issue with MacDiarmid's dismissal of folk culture revival and responded in *The Scotsman*. Rather than this focus on the individual experience of Scottishness, Henderson found value in the cultural Gaelic revival that focussed on recovering a more collective experience. The subject was the importance of folk songs to the national consciousness in the 20th century. The main point of

disagreement was that Henderson viewed folk songs as an important element of Scottish revival that served both the political and aesthetic goals of the Scottish people (210). MacDiarmid, on the other hand, felt that the folk revival was outdated in an industrialized world and did not serve the higher intellectual purposes needed to serve the Scottish cause in the 20th century. Essential to my argument is the attitude noted by Gibson, who wrote that MacDiarmid's criticisms of folk songs focussed on his perception that they were a low-brow form of art and that popularity amongst the masses was indeed an indication of their failure as art, rather than a success:

MacDiarmid concludes that 'the interests of the masses and the real highbrow, the creative artist, are identical, for the function of the latter is the extension of human consciousness'. On an individual basis, any one of the 'masses' can therefore engage with 'highbrow' art, or advanced science, and thereby expand their consciousness as part of a solitary process of poetic realization.

Where MacDiarmid draws on Lenin to express his 'guiding principle'....Henderson believed that a reinvestment in the folk arts was not the work of a 'parasitical interpreting class', but that it might revive a collective mode of self-expression for 'the people', by 'the people', and on their own terms. George Davie pointed out the essential difference, from MacDiarmid's perspective, between the two projects represented in the 'Folk-song Flyting':

There is... a struggle between the elite, the intellectual few who do the discovering, and make possible the progress, and the anti-elitist many, who are not equal to participating in the general argument, and who seek [to impose] egalitarianism, of which the Bums international is for [MacDiarmid] the great example.

At this level the debate is about the agency of the artistic avant-garde as opposed to the collective 'creative spirit of the people'. Again, this seems to be an impasse, but if the 'Flyting' is considered as a whole, and these opposing voices as its constituent parts, the need for resolution fades while the importance of the debate itself becomes more prominent. (218)

The tension expressed here between the two is that folk songs are popular amongst the Scottish people in the 20th century. They were a legitimate means of forming a national consciousness, a national moment. All these songs every Scot knew the words to and could sing together regardless of all the other elements of their identity. In the moments of singing those songs, their shared Scottishness came to the fore. For MacDiarmid, the problem with this is that it does not propel Scots to a true internationalism because the art does not hold much value to those outside of Scotland. While it may provide a localized effect, it does not serve a larger international goal for him. For MacDiarmid, it is up to the aesthetic elite of a country to lead the way in forming a national artistic movement rather than scoring cheap points with feel-good folk songs.

Where MacDiarmid sees bad art, Henderson sees opportunity. Interestingly, he weighs in on Tom Nairn's "Janus problem" – the way in which nations look backward or forward, toward essentializing pasts or flexible futures. My argument aligns with Corey Gibson's who notes, normally, a folk tradition would be seen as a backward-looking type of nationalism:

However, Henderson's view of the folk tradition...is one that transcends this division between backward and forward looking. In their estimation the indomitable force of the anonymous, collective folk tradition stretches back further than documented literary history, and forward beyond the impasse that Scottish poets faced in the 1960s. Poetry could 'become people' by learning from

the folk-singer, and this was Henderson's vision for the revival. [Edwin] Morgan [Scottish poet] concluded with the following thought: 'If we see a beatnik in the kailyaird, he is as well being studied as shot down... Better still, if he will come forward and tell us his story'. At the very least, Henderson hoped that the 'folknik' might be awarded the same opportunity. (223-224)

For Henderson, folk songs present a learning opportunity for the aesthetic elite. The folk singer is a representative of the common person, the very people that MacDiarmid is supposedly out to represent. Henderson feels that listening to the art of the common people is just as important as having an internationally well-reviewed national aesthetic. In fact, this listening is essential to the project of building a national literature.

When considering the case of Scottish literature as a nationalist project, it becomes clear that its development within the broader framework of UK literature has been impacted by a tension between assimilation and resistance, shaped by the quest for a distinct Scottish identity. The dichotomy between low and high art underscores the complexities of class distinction within this literary landscape, with folk songs emerging as potent expressions of Scottishness despite being relegated to "low art." Conversely, pursuing "high art" risks diluting its Scottish authenticity. This tension between authenticity and artistic elevation serves as a poignant backdrop as I transition to the next section, where I will delve into the Celtic revival movement in Irish literature. Much like the Scottish revival, the Irish literary landscape grappled with similar tensions of cultural reclamation and cosmopolitan aspirations. Through the lens of Joyce's cosmopolitan nationalism project, I will explore how Irish literature navigated the complexities of national identity within a broader international context, offering further insights into the intricacies of literary nationalism in the Celtic context.

JOYCE AND IRELAND

Ireland's inclusion in this examination of the home nations of the UK may require some justification given its far more vexed relation to Britain and Britishness. The first, and most obvious reason for the inclusion of writing from Ireland is that part of that island, Northern Ireland, remains a home nation of the UK. Moreover, the entire island remained part of the United Kingdom well into the 20th century with the official process of independence starting in 1919, becoming a free state in 1922, and finally culminating in a totally independent republic in 1949. There is significant overlap between that chronology and the chronology of the other writers in this dissertation. One might even say that the Irish refashioning of Englishness, and their skepticism about imperial British identity, were happening in a related context. Irish national identity, in this period, was forged through tensions with Britishness similar to those in Scotland, and, most importantly, Ireland is a unique case as the Republic of Ireland is the only nation among the British Isles to pursue and achieve the goal of full political independence from the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is especially worthwhile to compare how these nationalisms work in England: in Scotland, a nation that shares a state but has a vibrant independence movement; and in Ireland, a nation that *did* achieve a post-British identity.

Much like in Scotland, the most obvious influence British rule had over Irish literature and national identity was linguistic. In the 18th and 19th centuries the language of the Irish aristocracy in Dublin and the Pale and, therefore, the patrons of Irish art, was English. This meant that, though Ireland had a long tradition of stories and legends written in Irish, the

predominant literary tradition was Anglo-Irish.⁸⁹ English was the language of linguistic art with the Irish language being relegated to a lower-class dialect. There were, however, some works written in Irish and Ulster Scots.⁹⁰ Beginning in the 1790s and gaining prominence with many societies promoting Irish culture in the 19th century, there was a cultural movement in Ireland of renewed interest in the Irish language and Gaelic culture called the Celtic revival. This movement persisted through that century and culminated in the formation of the Gaelic League in 1893 with the express goal of combating the anglicization of Ireland (Hyde 116).

This cultural and linguistic movement had the effect of creating the Irish Literary Revival, often called the Celtic Revival or Celtic Twilight after W.B. Yeats' collection of the same name. The Celtic Twilight saw arts of all sorts (music, theatre, literature) focused on uniquely Irish subjects and histories, aimed at celebrating Irish culture, and creating a sense of unique Irishness. Yeats remains the best-known writer of this movement. Interestingly, the Celtic Twilight did not last farther into the 20th century with the same popularity. In fact, Irish modernism did not follow in the footsteps of the Celtic twilight, but rather it reacted against it. Two of the most famous Irish modernists in the literary cannon are Samuel Beckett and James Joyce. Both men were born in Dublin, and although they both left Ireland and did their most significant writing on the continent, Irish modernism is most frequently set in the city of Dublin, giving the writing both a cosmopolitan aspect and a predominantly urban feel. This contrasted with the Irish nation still being largely rural in the West where the literature and music was mostly Irish.⁹¹ It is during this period that Irish literature achieves its greatest height, with

⁸⁹ This is true for the written trad, but in the 18th century, Irish storytelling, poetry, and song persisted throughout and may have been denigrated by the English speakers of the Pale, but not necessarily by Irish speakers in other parts of the country, especially the west.

⁹⁰ The "Weaver Poets," were a group from Ulster who were influenced by Scottish romanticism and wrote in Scots. The most famous of the Weavers was James Orr.

⁹¹ As Lauren Arrington explains, although "Irish Modernism has its genesis in the Irish Revival... high modernist literature was provoked by a rejection of the Revival's values. These reactions are exemplified in William Butler

Ulysses often being held up as the leading example of the modern novel, or even as the greatest novel of the 20th century.

For the purposes of this dissertation, perhaps what is most interesting about Ireland as a point of comparison is its ultimate success in securing political independence tied to a national identity. The obvious similarities between the literatures of the home nations as a struggle against Anglicization are clear, but only Ireland ever achieved a successful bid for political autonomy. Even more interesting is the idea that, during the 20th century, Irish writers who attained significant public recognition appeared to distance themselves from the Celtic revival movement. Yeats tried to move beyond it, while Joyce openly criticized the quality of work produced by the movement. This echoes the sentiments of English writers in the dissertation who aimed to reclaim a local national identity while simultaneously rejecting certain forms of nationalism they deemed excessive (for instance, Orwell and Woolf explicitly rejected jingoist forms of British nationalism). There are several possible explanations for Irish modernism's fraught relationship with the revival: firstly, that the political drive for independence is a separate project from any literary construction of a national identity within the culture of a place. This is surely true, but it would not account for the fact that some of the strongest pushes for home rule occurred during the Gaelic revival and had a clear role in shaping the political question of Irish independence as a matter of national conscience.⁹² We must also consider the roles of other individuals and the relationship between politics and art (Yeats and the Abbey Theatre, the role of Maud Gonne in the revolution, for example). Secondly, projects aiming to establish a national identity may not

Yeats's poetry from *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), in which he castigates the Irish public for its religious conservatism, and in Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)" (Arrington 2017).

⁹² In 1886 during the revival, the poet John McDonald published a book called "Irish National Poems," claiming: "my aim has ever been to infuse hope and courage into the hearts and minds of my countrymen, and to hasten, as far as in my power lay, Ireland's deliverance" (2).

need to emphasize language so much, given that Irish independence was achieved even though English remained the dominant spoken language.⁹³ This idea, however, would not hold up to the countless other examples around the world of decolonial projects focussed on the preservation of indigenous languages against undue English influence. Finally, and particularly relevant to the dissertation's focus on Englishness, this pivotal historical juncture, characterized by the upheaval wrought by two catastrophic World Wars, demanded the emergence of a new kind of national identity in response to profound shifts in politics and culture unseen for centuries.

While I have thus far depicted the Irish relation to a national literature⁹⁴ as quite different from Scotland's—given the differing political outcomes of their independence movements—it has been suggested that their literatures should be read in closer relation. In particular, Scott W. Klein writes that Joyce's engagement with Irish nationalism should be read as an echo of Scottish writers' own reckoning with national identity after the defeat of the Jacobites. He reads *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* against Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* to demonstrate the value of this reading. He justifies the comparison, saying: "The young Joyce's attitude toward the Union of his native country's parliament with that of England shares parallels with Scott's attitude. Joyce shared the older author's mixture of cultural pride and an unwillingness to take an activist political stance against what had occurred a hundred years before" (Klein 1024). Klein further links the parallels between these two nationalist movements: "Both Scottish Jacobitism and Parnellism hinged upon similar mythoi of the return of native Celtic countries to a legitimate lineage or rule, despite the disparity between Ireland's Catholic

⁹³ While this is a contested idea, Ireland's independence was secured without Irish becoming the primary spoken language, which suggest that the earlier emphasis on reviving the Irish language may not have been as crucial as some believed.

⁹⁴ Although there are many Irish authors who have written literature that explores the question of Irish identity, or have written "Irish Nationalist texts," the figures that are most clearly seen as emblematic of these ideas in the Irish modernist movement are Yeats, Beckett, and Joyce (Arrington 237-238).

hopes and Parnell's Protestantism" (1025). Though it should be noted that it is problematic to equate Catholic with Irish and Protestant with English (the leaders of the 1798 rebellion were Protestant, for example), we can see, from Klein's work, that the Scottish and Irish contexts share many similarities in terms of how they use literature for a nationalist project. Nonetheless, I argue that Joyce ultimately rejects Celtic revivalism and Parnellism insofar as it is a backward-looking project rather than a forward looking one.

Frank Callanan argues that, particularly in *A Portrait of the Artists as a Young Man*, Joyce embraces Parnellism. Early in the novel, a young Stephen contemplates the Parnell question:

He turned over the flyleaf and looked wearily at the green round earth in the middle of the maroon clouds. He wondered which was right, to be for the green or for the maroon, because Dante had ripped the green velvet off the back of the brush that was for Parnell one day with her scissors and had told him that Parnell was a bad man. He wondered if they were arguing at home about that. That was called politics. There were two sides in it: Dante was on one side and his father and Mr. Casey were on the other side but his mother and uncle Charles were on no side. Every day there was something in the paper about it." (13-14)

Though Stephen is too young to understand the politics, the boy is acutely aware of how the nationalist politician, Charles Stuart Parnell, who ended his career in disgrace as a result of a sex scandal through which he was not supported by the Catholic church, caused intense division between the Irish people as religion and national politics seemingly came to an impasse. This controversy caused strife between even family, as Joyce narrates in a Christmas dinner dispute between Dante and Mr. Casey:

--Let him remember too, cried Mr. Casey to her from across the table, the language with which the priests and the priests' pawns broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave. Let him remember that too when he grows up.

--Sons of bitches! cried Mr. Dedalus. When he was down they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats in a sewer. Lowlived dogs! And they look it! By Christ, they look it!

--They behaved rightly, cried Dante. They obeyed their bishops and their priests. Honour them!

--Well, it is perfectly dreadful to say that not even for one day in the year, said Mr. Dedalus, can we be free from these dreadful disputes! (33)

As evidenced by this scene, the issue of Irish politics clashing with Irish religious identity was a matter of intense strife at the time (continuing later into the 20th century with the Troubles). Even as Mr. Dedalus pleads that the group should enjoy their Christmas in peace, they are unable to drop the topic: should the catholic church have held with Parnell for the good of the Irish people, or were they right to side with the English and participate in the assassination of his character? Parnellism contends that the church's actions constituted a betrayal of Parnell, the nationalism movement, and the Irish people themselves.

For my purposes here, I contend that Joyce's engagement with Parnell demonstrates his sense of the failures of previous Irish nationalism efforts, particularly those aligned with Fenianism⁹⁵ and Celtic revivals, and that Joyce models a kind of resistance to one form of

⁹⁵ The Fenian Brotherhood, named after the mythological Fianna warriors, were a mid-19th century secret military organization dedicated to the freedom of Ireland. More colloquially, Fenianism is the belief that Ireland should be independent, and that armed revolution was the only way to achieve that independence (Fenian 2015).

nationalism that opens up a new weaker, more cosmopolitan nationalism akin to the sort that Woolf engaged with.

My reading of Joyce is more in line with the work of Emer Nolan, who saw Joyce as rejecting the cultural nationalism of his peers such as Yeats:

Yeats himself sought to create an advanced art from the materials supplied by popular imagination, and he found Ireland (as he may be recommending to the indifferent Joyce) a congenial place for such experiment. But Joyce, of course, welcomed that modernity which Yeats feared. He did not believe in resuscitating outdated traditions, either to help aspiring artists or to pacify the masses. Instead, his mature work celebrates an ideal of self-creation for all. (23)

The problem with cultural nationalism, for Joyce, was its perceived incompatibility with modernity. On my argument, much like Orwell and Woolf, in rejecting that form of backward-looking nationalism, Joyce is nevertheless engaged with it. This engagement allows for theorists like Callanan to read Joyce as a Parnellite. His story “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” about vote canvassers meeting and discussing politics on a day to commemorate Parnell is one such example. The group men go back and forth amongst each other debating the politics of the day, and even debating Parnell himself. Finally, Mr. Hynes is called upon to recite a poem he has written. The poem is called “The Death of Parnell,” and begins “He is dead. Our Uncrowned King is Dead” and says “The Irish heart where’er it be/Is bowed with woe—for he is gone” (Joyce, *Dubliners* 131). The previously discordant meeting erupts in applause that unites them. “Even Mr Lyons clapped...[and] Mr Crofton said that it was a very fine piece of writing” (132-133). Even those critical of Parnell rally around a bit of nationalist literature. Joyce reserves a

wink for an artistic criticism of nationalist literature since the poem is not good, but it is nevertheless effective in the story.

Other scholars have read Joyce's expressions of nationalism as a gendered critique of chauvinistic forms of Irish nationalism, in ways that resemble the argument I have made about Woolf.⁹⁶ For example, Agata Szczak-Brewer writes:

Joyce's texts...expose the dangerous rhetoric of the nation that presents emasculation, deformation, and ethnic otherness as a threat to its independence. Thus, social masquerade, race, and gender come together in *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, two texts conflating the myth of emasculation by a powerful woman with the myth of a strong, virile polis, a society whose preservation depends on female submission and exclusion of the ethnic other. (20)

Szczak-Brewer argues that Joyce is aware of the gendered stereotypes common in chauvinistic nationalism and deploys them in mockery.

Chauvinistic nationalism that relies on gendered tropes aligns with the type of nationalism that is used to justify imperial projects. While Joyce mocks the sexism of chauvinistic nationalism, he is not too shy to depict Ireland as an "impotent" nation in the face of colonial power. The unique problem of Irishness is perhaps best explained in Joyce's short story "After the Race," in which an auto race is held in Ireland, but no Irish car competes. The protagonist, Irishman Jimmy Doyle represents Ireland, and he is invited to dinner and a yacht with four friends, each representing a global power: France, Canada—most likely serving as a commonwealth symbol of Imperial Britain—Hungary, and the United States. Each of these

⁹⁶ See chapter 2.

countries has a different relationship to colonial power. On the drive to dinner, Jimmy sits in the back of the car: “The Frenchmen flung their laughter and light words over their shoulders and often Jimmy had to strain forward to catch the quick phrase. This was not altogether pleasant for him, as he had nearly always to make a deft guess at the meaning and shout back a suitable answer in the teeth of a high wind” (37). Jimmy (Ireland) is a backseat passenger who is excluded from the important conversation, participating without truly understanding what is being said. The group has dinner in Kingstown, a loyalist neighbourhood in Dublin and “That night, the city wore the mask of a capital” (39). By the end of the night, Jimmy has gambled all his money away. Again, he is participating without really understanding: “Jimmy did not know exactly who was winning but he knew he was losing. But it was his own fault for he frequently mistook his cards and the other men had to calculate his I.O.U.’s for him” (41). Ireland has a seat at the table, but this is not a meeting of equals as Jimmy is being taken advantage of. “It was a terrible game. Jimmy understood the game lay between Routh [American] and Ségouin [French]. What excitement! Jimmy was excited too; he would lose, of course. How much had he written away?...They began to gather in what they had won. Farley and Jimmy were the heaviest losers” (41). By the end of the night, in a vain attempt to wear the mask of a rich and consequential man, Jimmy has financially ruined himself. He says he will regret it in the morning, to which a companion immediately opens the door and says “Daybreak, gentlemen!” (42).

A theme in *After the Race* is self-betrayal. We see this in the Doyles and therefore, symbolically in the Irish people:

His [Jimmy’s] father, who had begun life as an advanced Nationalist, had modified his views early. He had made his money as a butcher in Kingstown and by opening shops in Dublin and in the suburbs he had made his money many

times over. He had also been fortunate enough to secure some of the police contracts and in the end he had become rich enough to be alluded to in the Dublin newspapers as a merchant prince. (36)

Jimmy's father was an Irish nationalist but changed his views to pursue financial gain. He makes his fortune in Kingstown, so named after British powers, by selling meat to police who uphold British law. Jimmy's father betrays his own nationalism to pursue wealth; even becoming a "merchant prince," which evokes the British crown. He sends Jimmy to England to be educated, again denying "Irishness." Jimmy betrays himself too, by tricking himself into believing his friends are true when they can barely hear or understand each other in the car, and the French are most likely using Jimmy for an investment in the motor company. At dinner, when Jimmy and Routh argue, Segouin silences the Irish sentiments with his toast and Jimmy continues as if nothing is wrong. On the boat, Jimmy engages in a game he knows he is sure to lose and thus betrays himself out of a large sum of money. Jimmy says that he will regret his choices in the morning, but ironically, daybreak has already come. The Doyle's self-betrayal is meant to reflect what Joyce feels is the self-betrayal of the "gratefully oppressed" Irish people (35).

The relationship between Ireland and France is key to the story. The French were unreliable allies in Ireland's fight for independence, thus leaving Ireland alone in the European political landscape and paralyzing the country (Brown 256). The race is a parallel of this, as there is no Irish car involved; Ireland is not a significant player in Europe. The card game symbolizes a conflict of nations too. Jimmy is permitted to play, but he never has a chance to win or even affect the outcome of the game in any meaningful way. The game comes down to Segouin and Routh: England and France. England wins, and Ireland loses because Ireland was never fit to

play with England, France and America, the great independent nations of the world. In the end, money flees Jimmy's pockets, just as the cars (symbols of continental wealth) flee Dublin.

The problem, for Joyce, is that Ireland's self-betrayal comes from the Irish not being honest with themselves. He calls Dublin a city "masquerading as a capital" because true political power resides in London. In the story, Doyle Sr. abandons his nationalist sympathies in exchange for money and that financial success does indeed get his son Jimmy a seat at the table with the powers of the world, but it is a false seat. In the car, he can barely understand what is being said, his politics are ignored, and he is taken advantage of in the card game. It would seem that Joyce does not think very highly of the idea of Ireland gaining prestige on the world stage through successful capitalists.

On the other end of the scale, Joyce also rejects the idea that some sort of Gaelic Revival or Celtic Twilight is a useful way to inspire Ireland into the 20th century. In several stories in *Dubliners* Joyce repudiates Celtic Twilight: firstly, in "A Little Cloud." This is a story about entrapment, but Chandler is the mastermind of his own entrapment. We have this portrait of a man who would or could act in his life, but inexplicably does not. He wants to be a poet, but never writes anything (66). He wants to be well travelled but will not go farther than the Isle of Man (71). He wants to have an exotic lover but will not leave his wife (78). Chandler is impotent in his attempts to exercise any sort of agency over his life. He reminds us of Jimmy, in that he wants to be involved in the affairs of continental Europe, but fails to act in a meaningful way: "Gallagher had lived, he had seen the world. Little Chandler looked at his friend enviously" (72). In the end, Chandler is helpless to comfort his child, who demonstrates more ability to influence the situation than his father by commanding the attention of his mother.

The child stopped for an instant, had a spasm of fright, and began to scream...He tried to soothe it but it sobbed more convulsively...The door burst open and a young woman ran in, panting...Giving no heed to him [Chandler] she began to walk up and down the room, clasping the child tightly in her arms...Little Chandler felt his cheeks suffused with shame and he stood back out of the lamplight. He listened while the paroxysm of the child's sobbing grew less and less; and tears of remorse started to his eyes. (80-81)

Chandler's tears of remorse at the end are for his regret at not being the active player in his own life. Life happens to Chandler; he does not live it.

Chandler experiences an epiphany at the end, but it is not the first epiphany of the story. The first is when he is on Grattan bridge, which spans the Liffey. He walks from the north side on Capel street in central Dublin and goes south toward Parliament street, signifying his catering to English influence as a means of bridging the gap between his Irish identity and the realities of British rule. Chandler expresses his desire to be a poet, and his belief that he could be successful in his use of Celtic melancholy, or the Celtic twilight mode. "The English critics, perhaps, would recognize him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems; besides that, he would put in allusions" (68-69). In addition to hoping his Celtic school poetry would resonate with English critics, he openly acknowledges that Dublin is a dead end, or "blind street" as Joyce puts it in *Araby*: "There was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. You could do nothing in Dublin...Every step brought him nearer to London" (68). This is Ireland catering to English desires as Chandler acknowledges that he must become popular with English readers, as well as bad poetry as he would simply put in "allusions without purpose; Chandler's delusion is that he could be a good poet, but he misunderstands what this

means. During this realization he claims that “a light began to tremble on the horizon of his mind” (68). This image of an idea evokes the epiphany, but it is a phony epiphany. A great truth is not unveiled to him here, rather he is deluding himself into thinking he could be a successful artist, which the reader knows is not true. This false epiphany is juxtaposed with the image of the sunset, which confirms that Chandler is not shedding light on a previously hidden truth, but rather he is descending into the darkness of his own delusions. These delusions include literary reviews he imagines the English critics writing about him: “*Mr. Chandler has the gift of ease and graceful verse. A wistful sadness pervades these poems...The Celtic note.* It was a pity his name was not more Irish looking. Perhaps it would be better to insert his mother’s name before the surname: Thomas Malone Chandler, or better still: T. Malone Chandler” (69). Chandler hopes that English reviewers will enjoy a stylized “Irishness” about his work that is, in the end, superficial. The Celtic note is something that critic Matthew Arnold wrote about in his 1867 book *Study of Celtic Literature*:

[He] identified the Celt as possessing ‘natural magic’ and had popularized the notion of the Celt as being incapable of submitting to ‘the despotism of fact’, many Irish poets had satisfied English stereotypical expectation by supplying verses on Irish mythology and the melancholy past in lines of tremulous mediocrity. Twilight with its suggestion of transience and pathos was a frequent theme which allowed this mode to be described as ‘Celtic Twilight.’... [after Yeats] many lesser poets still sought literary success within the convention and in 1904 AE (George Russell) was involved in the publication of an anthology *A Celtic Christmas* which met with Joyce’s considerable contempt. (Brown 270-271)

Clearly, though the Celtic Twilight was indeed a path to commercial success “across the water” for Irish writers, to Joyce it constituted something of a selling out of their supposed artistic values. One needed only to pimp out their most stereotypical examples of Irishness, to strike the Celtic note, to draw praise from the English, something that Joyce and other “artistes” could not abide. Joyce further mocks the idea of Celtic Twilight by making light of the trend of Irish writers “Celticizing” their names to capitalize on the trend. Chandler (English name) wants to change to “Malone” (Irish name) to be more successful in England.

Another story in *Dubliners* deals with this idea: “A Mother.” The titular mother, Mrs. Kearney, secures a contract for her daughter to play a series of concerts for the Eire Abu (Ireland to Victory) Committee. The concerts for the Eire Abu Committee evoke nationalist ideals. The way the committee goes about promoting “Ireland to Victory” is through concerts. The idea is to promote nationalism by showcasing Irish artistes. “The *artistes!* ...said Mrs Kearney. Of course they are doing their best, but really they are no good. Mr Holohan admitted that the *artistes* were no good but the Committee, he said, had decided to let the first three concerts go as they planned” (Joyce 128). The few artistes that are any good are past their prime. This suggests that Ireland experiences an artistic paralysis in addition to the political paralysis. This is supported by the singing of *Killarney*, which ends up going poorly. “The poor lady sang *Killarney* in a bodiless gasping voice, with all the old-fashioned mannerisms of intonation and pronunciation which she believed lent elegance to her singing. She looked as if she had been resurrected from an old stage-wardrobe and the cheaper parts of the hall made fun of her high wailing notes” (145). This song of Irish pride is butchered by an artiste who no longer has the talent to support the cause in a beautiful way. In the end, the concerts are a shabby affair, under attended and not taken seriously, like Irish art in England. They don’t descend into Celtic Twilight and cater to the

British, but they do betray themselves by putting on a shabby show of Irish artistes. This is emphasized by the attempt to short Kathleen on her pay, as she represents Ireland in name and action.

The key problem then, for Joyce, is that Celtic Twilight is dishonest art and other more honest forms of nationalist artistic expression, earnest though they may be, are bad. In this story, Joyce presents no solutions. He simply argues that the current state of Irish art trapped between nationalist expressions one side, and the Celtic twilight as a way to sell Irishness on the other, is not tenable. In fact, he identifies it as a source of Irish paralysis, a condition that he thinks plagues the Irish and prevents them from moving effectively into the 20th century. Irish paralysis is perhaps the most dominant theme across Joyce's works. At the end, Mrs. Kearney is described as "an angry stone image" (147). This reflects her stubborn and unyielding demeanor. She married out of spite, not love, and now she attempts to advance her family's interest through the concerts. Ironically, Kearney's insistence and unwillingness to compromise on her daughter's pay is what ruins Kathleen's career. The sin of Pride makes her stony; unbending and so impossible to work with. The image of the stone is also still, invoking the theme of paralysis. As we have seen many times, this paralysis is self-imposed. Mrs. Kearney betrays her own cause in the end through a rocky and unbending attitude, and this is reflected in the imagery. The implication is that those unwilling to adapt and compromise will be left with no one to work with and will not be allowed to affect change. Pride is a source of Irish paralysis.

Joyce has his most prolonged and perhaps most beautiful meditation on the problem of Irishness in the 20th century in "The Dead." Gabriel Conroy is the protagonist of the story. He is a middle-aged literary critic who navigates social interactions at a holiday party hosted by his aunts. During the story, he recalls a childhood visit to his grandparent's house. His grandfather

was a glue boiler and Gabriel rode a horse called Johnny while there. Gabriel and Johnny the horse are symbolically linked in the story. Indeed, horse-like imagery is attached to Gabriel several times in the story. Gabriel's walk is described as horse-like as he was "almost trotting" and "clopping along" (178). He fears Aunt Julia will sing *Arrayed for the Bridal* which sounds like bridle (horse equipment) and fears the "blinds will be drawn" (224), which literally refers to window blinds, but also refers to equipment to direct a horse. He is fond of galoshes, which is a complex image in the story as they most significantly reflect Gabriel's penchant for continental fashion, and they represent a fertility denied in Gabriel as a rubber device slipped over his body to prevent contact with moisture which foreshadows the end of the story when he will be unable to seduce his wife. When taken in context with the surrounding horse imagery, however, the galoshes also evoke a horseshoe as it goes on over the boot. Johnny the horse bore Gabriel's grandfather in circles around the statue of King William III, conqueror of Ireland. The circular journey implies meaninglessness and paralysis. The symbolic connection to the horse demonstrates Gabriel's paralysis, and the statue suggests that England is to blame. His preoccupation with the continent is also blamed as the galoshes are continental. He also takes cycling tours on the continent, which are fraught with cyclicity.

An aspect of colonial national identity that Joyce further engages with in his work is the idea that the colonized people's interactions with the rest of the world are always mediated and controlled by the colonizing nation, isolating them from the world. In "After the Race," Jimmy is excited that "He had been seen by many of his friends that day in the company of these Continentals. At the control, Ségouin had presented him to one of the French competitors" (37). Jimmy is present, but he can only achieve the prestige of socializing with the Continentals if it is mediated by one of the Continentals themselves. This is isolation another theme of the story,

something that the Irish feel from the rest of the continent and the world (as in “After the Race,” Ireland is not a true nation of the world fit to sit with the others as equals). This is highlighted by Gabriel’s epiphany at the end of the story; he realizes how alone he is and laments his isolation from the world.

Generous tears filled Gabriel’s eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling. (224-225)

Gabriel has tried to seduce his wife, but failed as she is thinking of an old love, who died. Gabriel acknowledges that he never felt a love worth dying for like Micheal Furey did. His epiphany here is that Furey, even while dead, is more emotionally affectual in this situation than he is while living. This isolation leads to a communion with the dead.

Snow was general all over Ireland...It was falling too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Micheal Furey lay buried...His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (225)

At this point, snow falls on all of Ireland. This is the second appearance of snow after Gabriel has snow on his coat at the beginning. The snow falls in winter during the season of the dead,

and its appearance at the end links snow symbolically to isolation as it occurs at the moment when Gabriel most wants intimacy with his wife but ultimately spends the night not only without that intimacy but with his wife focussed on the memory of an old lover. The snow on Gabriel at the beginning of the story suggests his own isolation, given the influences of England and the Continent that separate him from Ireland. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the story, snow serves as a symbol of Gabriel's inability to emotionally connect with his wife. The snow at the end of the story that covers all of Ireland suggests a shared isolation of the country as a whole. That each Irish person bears this separateness of isolation is a cruel unifier that binds them together. Ironically, shared isolation of the Irish people is a huge part of an unfortunate national identity: a problem that brings the Irish together. Joyce highlights a complex and beautiful problem here. Joyce articulates the balancing act of individual vs collective quite poignantly here at the end of the story, and this allows him to get at an almost collective experience of the individual subject, thus describing a national identity that is compatible with international cosmopolitanism. This interpretation of snow as a symbol of isolation and shared national identity aligns with several critical readings of "The Dead." Like many critics, such as Richard Ellman and Robert Scholes, I see the snow as symbol of mortality and a unifying force across Ireland. However, I want to emphasize the paradoxical nature of shared isolation as a component of Irish national identity.

Joyce describes this balancing act between two seeming opposites earlier in the story as well, although rather than describing isolation vs collective struggle, he describes the tension between celebrating bad nationalist art (from the revival) and good art that is isolating. Gabriel Conroy is matched in a dance with a woman called Miss Ivors, who "did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device"

(187). When Miss Ivors leaves the party she bids everyone goodnight—“*Beannacht Libh*” (196)—and is clearly meant to represent the attitude that supports Celtic Twilight as a cultural movement. During her dance with Gabriel, she scolds him for writing book reviews for a Unionist paper called *The Daily Express*, calling him a “West Briton” (188). This term was originally used proudly by Unionists to describe themselves, but “by the early twentieth century it was a term of opprobrium employed by Home Rulers and separatists” (309). Miss Ivors then invites Gabriel on an excursion to the Aran Isles off the west coast of Ireland, the opposite side of the country from the supposedly cosmopolitan centre of Dublin with its English influence. The trip is especially enticing, according to Ivors, given that Gabriel’s wife Gretta is from the western province of Connacht. Gabriel declines, however, because he has a previous commitment to go on a cycling tour on the continent. Once again, Ivors chides him: “and why do you go to France or Belgium...instead of visiting your own land?” and when Gabriel replies that the reason is, partially, to keep up with the languages of the continent, she replies: “and haven’t you your own language to keep in touch with—Irish?” (189). Gabriel, who does not speak Irish, replies that Irish is not his language, which is true as a matter of practicality in Dublin, but by this time the conversation has drawn the eyes of the other partygoers. Ivors presses on with: “And haven’t you your own land to visit...that you know nothing of, your own people, and your own country?” to which Gabriel retorts “—O, to tell you the truth...I’m sick of my own country, sick of it!” Ivors asks him why and he cannot muster a response through his anger. She leaves him with one last insult, whispering “West Briton!” in his ear again (190). The exchange depicts a tough conversation that reflects attitudes about Irishness in the early twentieth century as some regarded the Celtic Twilight as a lesser form of art, while proponents of Celtic Twilight painted

its detractors as “West Britons,” or not Irish enough due to their lack of participation in what they perceived as important national cultural work.

Gabriel fumes about this exchange later in the evening, as while he acknowledges that he has interests in the landscape, culture, and art from the continent, he bristles at the charge that this makes him less Irish than Ivors. Here, Joyce is exploring the problem of the Celtic Twilight containing many clichés and trademarks of bad art, but also being popular forms of expression of Irish national identity. The Celtic Twilight contains many of the same sorts of cultural expressions that contemporary Irish people might refer to as “Oirish,” a term meant to poke fun at stereotypical markers of Irishness (leprechauns, shamrocks, etc.). The problem is that if one partakes of Celtic twilight, one runs the risk of propagating silly stereotypes or bad art. But if one abstains, one might be branded a West Briton.

But what is the solution to that problem? One possible, if clichéd, solution Joyce seemingly offers is honest passion. The main problem with Celtic Twilight is that it is dishonest art and any attempt at good art within that mode is doomed to fail; it is a self-fulfilling cyclical prophecy, the type of problem that pervades Joyce’s Dublin. This idea is expressed in the angelically named foils Gabriel and Michael Furey. Michael Furey is dead, but he is more alive symbolically than Gabriel. Gabriel laments that “he had never felt like that...towards any woman...such a feeling must be love” (224). Furey had loved Gretta so much that he died for her, and Gabriel admits having never felt such a love for his wife. Furey’s love and passion is so strong that it can affect Gretta even many years after his death, moving her to despair. Gabriel cannot even inspire base lust in his wife, much to his frustration. Dead Michael, therefore, has more of an effect on the situation than the living Gabriel. Symbolically, in terms of a relationship with Gretta, Michael is more alive than Gabriel. Michael died at seventeen, and Gretta asks,

“isn’t it a terrible thing to die so young?” (221). Gabriel disagrees in his epiphany, “better pass boldly...in the full glory of ...passion, than fade...dismally with age” (224). Gabriel is right in this realization, and this is what makes the ending tragic. Gabriel realizes that Michael has lived much more than he ever has, even though Furey’s time was cut short. Gabriel, who dithers about on the continent and engages in book reviews rather than fiction writing, represents an impotent version of Ireland. Furey, in all his passion that burnt out (or was drowned by the rain, rather), represents what is possible if an artist truly bears their soul for the nation.

Stephen Dedalus is the protagonist of Joyce’s semi-autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The novel follows Stephen’s journey from childhood to young adulthood as he navigates his Catholic upbringing, his emerging artistic ambitions, and his desire for personal and intellectual freedom. Stephen is Joyce’s key character for exploring the reconciliation of Irish identity with artistic integrity. However, Stephen’s journey begins very far from this role. Initially, he is portrayed as someone who often yields to authority figures, even at the expense of betraying his Irish heritage.

The forces that paralyze and entrap Stephen in the novel are threefold. At the beginning of chapter V, Stephen hears three distinct cries. First, his father calls him a “lazy bitch”, then his mother says, “I know how it [University] has changed you”, and finally, the mad nun screeches “Jesus! O Jesus! Jesus!” (189). These exclamations represent the three influences that have entrapped Stephen over the course of the novel: family, country, and religion. In the early sections, Stephen is influenced by his family during the dinner scenes and is entrapped by the shortcomings of his father. The father then, becomes a symbol of familial entrapment. The mother represents the motherland of Ireland and the maternal influence that is threatened by Stephen’s education (rightly so, as Stephen will leave Ireland after his time at the school). The

mad nun obviously represents the religious entrapment Stephen felt in the middle section.

Overzealousness and madness suggest Stephen's disillusionment with the church. The chapter ends with Stephen's escape from Ireland but begins with all the markers of his entrapment.

Stephen's goal is to arrive at a new aesthetic, a more perfect art that pursues beauty, truth, and goodness in an earnest way. His friends deride him for this goal: "He pours his soul so freely into my ear" (211). This reference to Hamlet demonstrates what Stephen's friends think of his aesthetic theory and rhetoric. The poisoning of King Hamlet through the ear suggests that he was metaphorically killed through language, the misuse of rhetoric. Here, Moynihan expresses disdain for Stephen's constant espousing of aesthetic theory. Later, MacCann exclaims in frustration at Stephen's artful speech: "Metaphors!...Come to facts" (214).⁹⁷ This is the sort of resistance that Stephen is facing in his fight for individuality and artistic expression. The consequence of his education is an artistic awakening, but also the resentment of his friends and family, eventually the loss of both with his departure from Ireland. Stephen pursues artful language for beauty but cannot escape the negative perceptions of such artful language. This is felt through his friends' reaction to his speech.

The novel draws to a close with a strong refusal by Dedalus: "I will not serve" (260). Stephen's refusal echoes that of Lucifer, and it reflects the pride that forces Stephen to leave Ireland. Just as Lucifer was expelled from Heaven after refusing to serve God, Stephen refuses to participate in the religious and familial rituals expected of an Irishman because he knows he can no longer stay there and uphold his artistic integrity. This is a form of pride because Stephen refuses to compromise himself for the sake of his mother. When confronted with the possibility of overcoming his doubts, Stephen says "I do not wish to overcome them" (260). Again, we see

⁹⁷ The line also evokes Gertrude's chiding of Polonius: "More matter with less art," suggesting that Stephen's friends do not take him seriously and view him as a Polonius-like fool.

the refusal to compromise himself. Besides pride, this is also a form of artistic integrity. Stephen's refusal echoes Lucifer's, but also Bartleby the Scrivener's refrain. This act of pride turns out to be an act of important honesty for Stephen and solidifies his transformation into an artist.

Stephen, in conversation with his friends, declines to participate in fervent Irish nationalism. He says "you talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (220). This is significant because it is the rejection of several systems all at once. As we have seen over the course of the novel, Stephen is very good at participating eagerly and enthusiastically in a wide variety of systems like the ones he lists⁹⁸, but here, he describes them as "nets" to be avoided. Stephen has grown to understand that these methods of defining oneself is just another way to stifle the soul.

It is therefore interesting that the novel ends with a declaration of the pursuit of a sort of Irishness: "Welcome, O life, I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (275-276). Pericles Lewis reads these lines as a religious invocation: "If Stephen sees himself as a Christ-figure, then the 'uncreated consciousness of [his] race' appears to be God the creator, while the 'race' itself approximates the Church, the body of the faithful in need of redemption" (38). He argues that Stephen's disdain for formal politics is what leads to this religious invocation. "Stephen draws upon the organic nationalist conception of the intimate relationship between the individual and his ethnic group which precedes all cultural ties and fundamentally conditions individual experience" (41). Further, "whether this membership in the race depends primarily on one's blood or on one's being born in a particular

⁹⁸ Particularly religion, as he embraces catholic piety on his three-day retreat in the middle of the novel, subscribing to asceticism briefly.

location is a problem that Stephen considers without resolving” (40). Like Lewis, I see Stephen’s final declaration as a complex engagement with national identity and artistic purpose. I also acknowledge the religious undertones and the tension between individual and collective national consciousness in Joyce’s work. However, I would emphasize that the cosmopolitan aspect of Stephen’s exile plays a role in forming a new conception of Irishness. In other word, I argue that Joyce uses Stephen’s journey to explore the potential for a reimagined national identity that transcends traditional boundaries, linking the artistic process to the formation of a new “conscience” for the Irish people.

The absent conscience of the Irish people Stephen references is an aesthetic one. Interestingly, this moment coincides with his decision to leave Ireland for the continent. He invokes the image of his father as well as the mythical Daedalus to give him strength in this endeavour. Given the phrase “artificer” and the fate of Icarus as he journeyed across the water on Daedalus’ wings, this is not the most hopeful picture Joyce paints of Stephen’s prospects of success. It is, however, one of the few genuinely hopeful moments in the novel for Stephen, suggesting a path forward to genuine artistry. Stephen embarks on an exile that will look something like the cosmopolitanism that Joyce thinks will help form a sort of Irishness, what he calls “the conscience of my race.” This desire to create a national consciousness is the basis for a comparison between Joyce and Tolkien. Just as Tolkien means to recover an Englishness that has been subsumed by Britishness, Joyce means to forge the consciousness of Irishness. Joyce is a model for what it might mean to recreate an Irish conscience, which is in fact authentically Irish, but is not beholden to the old cliches and essentialist formulations. The key difference between Joyce and Tolkien is that Tolkien is about recovering an existing national spirit while Joyce is interested in the “uncreated conscience of my race.” So, while Tolkien inherently looks backward

at time, Joyce seems to suggest that the past holds nothing of use to the Irish, and his disdain for Celtic revivals would support this. So, rather than recovering, like Tolkien, Joyce is about the business of forging anew like a civic nationalist. For the civic nationalists, it is not language or culture that binds a nation together, but shared citizenship. While Joyce does not speak on the citizenship, he rejects an Irish nationalism based on heritage and culture, and so we should understand his work here to be not just civic nationalism, but as a national identity understood as new, recovered, and cosmopolitan. The key thing this allows Joyce to do is to get away from looking backward at all (though, with one eye to his old father, to avoid the mistakes of the old artificer) and create an Irishness for the 21st century that moves past simply being un-English.

CONCLUSION

Scotland and Ireland, viewed as contexts for developing national identities into the 20th century, allow us to see models of nationalism that exist both within and in opposition to Britishness. This is a difficult position since, as member nations of Britain, they undoubtedly benefitted from the colonialism of the Empire. However, as has been well documented, they were also victims of much closer colonialism as, within Britain, their national identities were made to be subordinate to the English. They were even subjected to attempts to eradicate this distinct identity. While the writers doing the work of exploring their own literary national identities were undoubtedly engaged in disentangling their local identity from Britishness, they were not burdened, as English writers were, with an identity bound up with an imperial identity.⁹⁹ This allowed Irish

⁹⁹ Even though Ireland and Scotland's relationship with Empire is complicated, it is not often seen that way. In our general understanding, it is common to think of these identities as identities of resistance against Empire and victims of English oppression. The sometimes uncomfortable truth is that Ireland and Scotland have undoubtedly benefitted from and participated in the systems of oppression set up around the world by the British empire.

and Scottish writers to use anti-colonial and anti-imperial nationalism while carving out their own national identities. Due to their seeming success at creating distinct national identities from within the larger British imperial context, the English writers of this dissertation borrowed anti-colonial and cosmopolitan strategies from the other home nations when they were engaged in creating a distinct Englishness.

As I have argued, Orwell's primary motivation in mobilizing nationalism was to increase class solidarity and motivate the English people to be inclined toward international socialism. His motivations are very similar to those of Hugh MacDiarmid. However, they differ in terms of implementation. Orwell, like MacDiarmid, is chiefly concerned with "the crucial correspondence between the local and the universal" and agreed that the best way to reach that nexus was through a national identity (local) that was predisposed to support international collectivism (universal). Where Orwell runs into trouble is his attempt to delineate between chauvinistic nationalism and international patriotism and ineffectively avoiding slippages between the two. MacDiarmid avoids this pitfall by attempting to strike a careful balance between individualism and emphasis on the individual Scottish subject and the international role of Scottish people in the social collective. MacDiarmid sees these goals as the same thing: international nationalism. An emphasis on the Scottish subject will, undoubtedly, lead to a Scottish identity aligned with internationalism because it is set up in opposition to a colonial force in Britain. Orwell attempts to pick up this strategy of using the individual English subject and mobilize them towards international socialism, but without the external colonial context, the slippages that I have noted abound.

I have argued that Woolf rejects traditional forms of nationalism and national identity due to a cost-benefit analysis of her gendered relationship with the nation. While I have not examined

the work of women from the home nations, there is some overlap between her approach and that of Joyce. As noted previously, Ireland has a complex relationship with Empire as it is Britain's oldest colony and, therefore, the longest-standing victim of colonial exploitation by the English. However, it was also a prominent hub of colonial exploitation of other colonies like India, which undoubtedly benefitted the Irish economy. Joyce does acknowledge these benefits in his writing as many of his characters go to England for business and education, and more still are drawn to England for the potential opportunity there. Like Woolf, Joyce finds the benefits of such an arrangement unsatisfactory. His characters often find themselves exploited by their relationship with Britain, dismissed or not taken seriously by English characters, or shut out from the supposed benefits. This mirrors Woolf, who argues that sexism and chauvinism leave women exploited by the men in the nation, not taken as seriously as their male patriot counterparts, and altogether left out of the benefits of nationalism. Woolf can take on this anti-colonial strategy of arguing even as a privileged English subject within Britishness because she expertly makes the case that, as a gendered subject, similar arguments might apply to English women as they might in a colonial setting.¹⁰⁰

A key element of Woolf's critique of nationalism lies in her rejection of symbols of nationalism. I have argued that she sees these symbols as empty promises. This is interesting since symbols of national identity are usually seen as a positive thing, but Woolf argues that this positivity masks the sinister goals of creating more soldiers for the Empire and leaves the real English people who believe in them with nothing but empty promises once their purpose is served. Again, there is some overlap here with the approach of Joyce, who also rejects national

¹⁰⁰ This is not to say that an English woman is a victim of the Empire in the same way that a person living in an actual colony is. Only that Woolf could adopt some of the strategies from those contexts and use them in her argument for national identity.

symbols to a certain extent. The revival of the Irish language and culture came with the revival of old Irish cultural symbols that were supposed to represent a resurgent national identity. However, for Joyce, these symbols were coopted by a poor artistic movement that exploited the Irish culture for an English audience rather than to help the Irish revive their uniqueness from the shadow of the Empire. The symbols, imbued with Irishness, are empty for Joyce since they are exploitation tools rather than expressions. Woolf makes a similar argument about English nationalist symbols and how they ultimately serve to exploit the English subject for the Empire's ends.

Tolkien's work can be functionally read in dialogue very interestingly with MacDiarmid's privileging of the individual subject to address collective contexts. On the one hand, I have argued that Tolkien eschews a description of any particular Englishness in favour of creating a story that could apply to all Englishness in general, but within his story, descriptions of different sorts exist of Englishmen. This is because, like MacDiarmid, he understands the benefits of balancing the individual and collective concerns of national identity in order to create a strong Englishness. He can achieve this balance through his displacement of the story into fantasy, thereby allowing him to describe individual understandings of Englishness (simple rural hobbits, high kings of Gondor, horse lords of Rohan) but still, apply to every collective English context.

Tolkien's work can also be read in dialogue with Joyce. Tolkien is about recovering Englishness, while Joyce is about forging new Irishness, but both use the strategy of displacement to create a national consciousness. For Tolkien, this is achieved through fantasy by describing what he believes as quintessentially English traits and characters and stories on a fantastic backdrop. Joyce suggests that one must leave Ireland to forge the "uncreated conscience" of Irishness, suggesting the utility of removal from the national context in helping to

create a national identity for that context. This allows him to “see again” like Tolkien, and thus Tolkien can borrow the strategy in his concept of recovery that is critical to his ability to create an English myth.

The writers discussed in this dissertation focused on establishing a unique English identity. They drew inspiration from anti-colonial and cosmopolitan techniques employed by other home nations within the British imperial context, which appeared to have achieved their goal of creating a distinctive national identity. Using nationalism to create class solidarity suited to international purposes, critiquing the benefits of nationalism and rejecting nationalist symbols, and moving beyond the particular to address a collective context via displacing the story and characters, English writers have borrowed from their counterparts in the other home nations. Thus, we can understand the writers discussed in this dissertation as engaged in explorations of positive forms of English national identity, careful to avoid the pitfalls of chauvinistic nationalism, and willing to use strategies from other home nations to realize an Englishness ready to participate in the world of the 20th century.

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