

Ordinary Subjects: Being British, the Border and the *Bildungsroman*.

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Ordinary Subjects

There is nothing as evanescent as ordinariness; no thread of selenite crystal or filament of spun sugar more fragile, no radioactive sample with a more perilously short half-life. Human subjects experience ordinariness all the time, and yet it is impossible to point out an ordinary thing, an ordinary person, or even an ordinary interaction, and to have them retain that quality.

Ordinariness is like a *fata morgana*. It creates an antinomy of being and not-being by its persistent, impossible presence, a state which is not agonistic until it is challenged by excess or lack. From a distance, in the desert, it is absolutely legible and identifiable and provides the subjects to whom it pertains with systems of mutual understanding, belonging and growth. It has a monumental amount of use but is only applicable within the kind of imagined community which understands its limitations; this can be as subtle as the particulars of a playground clique or as bombastic as Britishness.

Ordinariness itself as a quality is distinguished from its synonymical neighbours – usual, normal, standard, typical, regular, customary – by both its relationship to subjectivity and its inherent quality of frangibility. Unlike “usual”, “normal” or really any of the aforementioned list, all of which imply systemic relations and which are qualities that stand up to repetition, examination and the creation of methodologies, ordinariness is uniquely esoteric, and uniquely unavailable to the scientific method. The distinction is something akin to the classic line drawn between ethics and morals, although the similarities stop at the level of identification; things that are usual, standard, typical, regular, and/or customary are provided and/or regulated by external, extrasubjective, collective sources, in the manner of ethical contracts and understandings. In

contrast, and in some ways like morality, the ability to perceive that something is ordinary is individual and subject-oriented, although it relies on the presence of the aforementioned norms, standard processes and regulations to exist as such. It is extant within the individual in their role as a member of a political group as big as the nation, or as small as the clique. The sense of the ordinariness of something or someone is a product of politics, and is itself a political weapon as powerful as the law. It moves between us like heat; it even sometimes sways us like morality. Mutual understandings of what and who is ordinary help us to understand ourselves in relation to one another. They dictate our level of immersion in the expectations and limitations of the communities around us. They also ‘help’ us to recognise the foreign, the undesirable and the sub-par via a necessarily limited set of social proprioceptions and aesthetic principles. Monolithic national ordinariness for the English subject, for instance, is a way of knowing and appraising the other, a mirage that functions for its perceiver as a state- and community-implemented sensitivity to conformity, unremarkability, and the unspoken requirements of ‘being British’.

Look too hard at any expectation of ordinariness, however, and it falls apart. This is because the ordinary disappears when it is scrutinized. It can exist solely as a *mutually understood symptom of collectivity*. The complicating factor involved in any discussion of social ordinariness or ordinary subjects is that nothing can remain ordinary when it is the subject of intense focus. Unlike the normal, the usual or the standard, the ordinariness of anything does not stand up to interrogation or analysis if looked at too closely. Paying attention directly to either a character or a real person deprives them of generality. Britishness, to extend the example, can remain a quality they have, but they cannot *only* be that. They cease to point toward an essentialized collective meaning in a useful way when we point them out as specific examples.

This impulse to categorize those around one via a set of reactive criteria one understands implicitly but cannot oneself iterate provokes the obvious problems – racism, classism, xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiment, gender-based violence– but also imbricates them into that system of reactions fundamentally. Monolithic Englishness *is* racist, classist, xenophobic and a cause of anti-immigrant and gender-based violence, among other things. It is that way in part because its very structure relies on specific and mutually understood ideas of which quantities and types of race, class, gender, and origin are “us” (acceptable, unremarkable, ordinary), or “them” (unacceptable, remarkable, extraordinary) at a reactive, almost precognitive speed. As Gilroy also comments in his introduction to *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, provocatively subtitled “Race is Ordinary”,

It is not as many commentators would suggest, that the presence of immigrants corrodes the homogeneity and solidarity that are necessary to the cohesion and mutuality of authentically socio-democratic regimes, but rather that...these beleaguered regimes have produced strangers and aliens as the limit against which increasingly evasive national particularity can be seen... (33)

Monolithic national ordinariness, given this, does not just identify insiders and outsiders, but draws artificial borders between ever more specific groups within these poles. It is possible, for example, to be entirely English, and yet not British *enough* to be considered a member of that community by those more comfortably within it. The *fata morgana* of the “ordinary subject” is no different; there is no single ordinary Englishwoman, for example. There is no absolutely ordinary Welsh child. You can describe what the ordinary Scotsman is like to me, but you cannot point one out on the streets of Edinburgh or Inverness, as doing so would dissolve the illusion the mirage must maintain. In outlining something like this problematic in the terms of the subject’s relation to contemporary conceptions of humanity, Jon Lie, in his 2011 text *Modern Peoplehood*, writes that:

“because the modern state is everywhere marked by the historical contingency of its boundaries...there is no transcendental standpoint from which to define peoplehood. Indeed, the ideal of nationalism is impossible...if modern peoplehood is a product of cultural and status integration, then incomplete integration accounts for nonnational identities, usually expressed as racial, ethnic, or national minorities. Normative and deviant, or majority and minority, identities are relationally constituted” (145).

Lie, Gilroy and many other scholars of 20th century national subjectivity have come to these or similar claims; that it is in attempting to legislate the boundaries of being together that the concept of cohesive national subjectivity demonstrates its own failure.

In agreement with this claim about the relational constitution of national identity, I will in this introduction bring forward the idea of monolithic ordinariness as central to the zones of social exclusion currently being discussed in the field of late 19th and 20th century political literature. In my reading, regulatory concepts central to contemporary and historical understandings of national identity – the developing subject, the border, the resident, the citizen, the law – are shown in this project to rely on a paradoxical, impossible idea; that an “ordinary national subject” could ever exist. The concept of subjectivity I have sketched above is discussed later in my project as a protean instrument of hegemony that Britain developed at home, and exported to its colonies both actively and passively. Ordinariness and the ability or compulsion to perceive it, in short, is always in operation between subjects. One cannot avoid being in some sort of relation to it. It is all-encompassingly sticky, and shades all categories of decision making.

Nationality is a construct that is defined outwardly by its limitations, as Benedict Anderson and his colleagues have observed; in *Imagined Communities*, that author famously stipulates that “the nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which live other nations. [Even] the most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all member of the human

race will join their nation...” (*Imagined Communities*, 6) These statements are of particular interest when the relationship between the nation as it imagines itself and the external pressures of immigration is considered. To generalize, immigration is necessarily the process of introducing something new into something *like it* that has previously existed. There is no ordinarily habitable country in which civilization started with a *tabula rasa* of no pre-existing communities, with no pre-existing structures of geographical, ethnic or social determinism. Moreover, it is fundamentally impossible to immigrate without joining a community, or at least intending to share its space; successfully going somewhere in force where people already live and setting up shop without doing that is not immigration but colonialism. National borders, as such, are drawn by people who are already there, and then subsequently sometimes reshaped by colonizers who control the aspect ratios of “there.” They are also limited by the presence of other borders around them. Nationality means neighbours.¹

This system of understanding one’s national identity as being necessarily agonistic to that of the imagined other is a very effective (if fundamentally conservative) way of delineating spaces which contain us, and spaces which contain not-us. It also allows for the presence of the not-us *within* our space, giving us the conceptual understanding of the foreigner. Nationalism is also thus necessarily a self-limiting concept. Anderson goes on to say that “[the nation] is imagined as a *community* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is imagined as a deep and horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many people, not so much to

¹ Caroline Levine discusses the impossibility of a closed unity of the nation when understood as a form through Derrida’s interpretation of the Athenian scapegoat, which narrative shows: “how there can be no belonging, no inside, without a constitutive ‘outside’ – the political costs of an enclosing wholeness are urgent, from ancient sacrifices to fascism and...anti-immigration policies...totalities depend for their own coherence on violent acts of expulsion and abjection”(26).

kill, as to be willing to die for such limited imaginings”(7). This horizontality when it can be said to exist – “we are all Englishmen”, for instance - contains multitudes in its simple imaginative composition, and those multitudes in their “fraternity” are working within a system that relies on a mutually understood set of ordinary values, practices and traits. Diagnosing socialized, nationalized ordinariness for a subject is revealed to be not only an ontic – is the thing ordinary? – but an ontological –where, how and to whom is it ordinary?– question, one which demands a relation between collectivity and phenomenology. It requires an awareness of not just what *is* – one’s nationality, one’s birth, one’s social value, accomplishments and failures - but the temporality and causality of these items, one’s self-awareness, futurity and sense of belonging.

Monolithic nationalized ordinariness, then is an important element of the bedrock of both being in, and *being* within the imagined community. However, in order to understand the ontic parameters of who is included and excluded in nationalist narratives, a kind of doublethink or mental gymnastics is required. An ordinary British national subject, if they were to exist, would have to be both an *example* of a national culture and an unremarkable fragment of that culture’s monolithic identity. They would be the *most* British, and yet somehow not the most specifically *anything*, comparable to all Britons and recognizable to Britons and foreigners alike. In short, were they to actually exist, to other members of their community, they would be unremarkable, but to those outside their community they should represent the monolithic aspect of their culture. An impossible, all-encompassing meme of the British subject.

Of course, individuals for whom a national identity is hyper-emphasized aesthetically as a part of their everyday life do exist (the British beefeater, the Swiss alpenhornist, the Canadian mountie, the Japanese geisha), but these are not ordinary national subjects. People working in these professions – *they are all professions* - are conceptually imbued with an excess of national

identity, making them remarkable, imaginatively representative outliers – the memes mentioned before – rather than unremarkable and actively constitutive fabric of the everyday being of a nation. They might be thought of, as Barthes notes in “The Blue Guide”, as being “elevated to aesthetic existence” by this excess of stereotypical or caricatured representation, as “the picturesque is found anytime the ground is uneven” (*Mythologies*, 85). They have a fundamental relationship to tradition, but that relationship is also predicated on their temporality; they remain relevant because they are a symbiote of a nation both past and present. Ian Hall puts something like this quite succinctly in *Dilemmas of Decline*, observing that nationalized tradition is itself conceptually fragile and relies on being passed on consensually... “Best regarded as a common inheritance” (171). Nationally picturesque subjects contribute significantly to the fiction of the “ordinary subject”, providing slides for the picture-show of national character one might imagine when trying to invoke Britishness, while rarely being directly affected by immediate social change. Less picturesque, more normal things rarely make the cut; one is almost certainly more likely to imagine a Beefeater at Buckingham Palace when thinking of a symbol of Britishness than a punter wearing this year’s Nikes at a betting shop in Crewe, for instance.

Conventional members of an imagined community (the Swiss who do not live in the Alps or blow Alpenhorns, for instance, as most do not) must, in practice and conceptually, be identifiable as such, but be individually unremarkable in terms of their provenance and practice to *other members* of that community. In so doing, the imagined community forms an ‘us’. “Us” - legible, identifiable, *here*, and in so being, ordinary - is *constitutively* unextraordinary even when it is celebrated as a reason to fight wars or expand borders (and at which times the memes of national identity discussed above play a representative role in both internal and international understandings of national identity). Foreign bodies, or even just bodies who enact their national

subjectivity badly are “Them” – illegible, unfamiliar, *there* even if *here*. They are as such *necessarily* remarkable to a larger imagined community, even if very ordinary in their own setting. Again, the imagined community is self-selecting and self-regulating along the lines of monolithic ordinariness, and its qualifications for that ordinariness are only internal.

These claims are, of course, not made in a vacuum; this project owes a great deal to a series of critical traditions both contemporary and canonical, which outline, among other things, the formal, political and aesthetic relationships between British literature and British colonialism, between the law and literature and between British nationalism and British cosmopolitanism. We understand through this tradition – Bhabha, Anderson, Said, Levine, Foucault, Esty, Saint-Amour, Walkowitz, Gilroy, among many others - that forms, literary or otherwise, are common, delineating structures that help us to understand the workings of things, while themselves being paradoxically both invaluable and disposable or invisible. The form of a thing *is* the thing, but to discuss its form is necessarily to place it within a system of relations.

It is also clear from very contemporary writers interested in British and postcolonial nationalism like Aarthi Vadde, that the surety and integrity of forms themselves have a specific set of integral relations to time, geographical position and “social upheaval.” Vadde begins her text *Chimeras of Form* with a startling reading of the line “how did one map a country that blew into a new form every day?” from Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*. She broadens Rushdie’s question about illustrating ordinary life into a discussion about the relationship between politics and aesthetics, arguing that Rushdie’s “query derives possibility from impossibility...it acknowledges the limitations of aesthetic representation...yet his prose also attempts to overcome those limitations by pushing received styles to their breaking point...to stretch the realms of the sayable”(4-5). Forms which record political change must be beholden to

their environments or one of two things happens; structures of oppression are merely reproduced, as Timothy Bewes writes in *The Event of Postcolonial Shame*, or they fail in their duty to represent their times or to evolve with them, and inasmuch the form itself is placed on display as the reliquary, as Jed Esty observes on the *Bildungsroman* in *Unseasonable Youth*. The literature of turn of the century Britain becomes ever more populated with both of these unwittingly elegiac approaches by its authors, underlining the fact that, as Jordanna Bailkin writes about the more energetic formal engagement of later 20th century works “dismantling the empire was not only characterized by narratives of anxiety and decline, but also functioned as a creative and recuperative project”(The Afterlife of Empire, 22).

To return briefly to the conceptual relationship between monolithic nationhood and form before I begin my discussion of the “recuperative” potential of formal experimentation for the *Bildungsroman*, Homi Bhabha, responding to Benedict Anderson’s assertions about the cultural politics of nationality has also observed the link between nationalism and the concept of the form, writing in “Narrating the Nation” that “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation - or narration - might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west.” Bhabha goes on to discuss the way in which the contemporary nation, which understands itself as a limited unit surrounded by other units, must paradoxically go on to absorb the cultures by which it is penetrated and surrounded, and is always-already aware that its own romantic self-conception is based on temporary truths: and as such, “the nation's 'coming into being' as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity, emphasizes this instability of knowledge”(12). A

national identity's construction as a "system of cultural signification" is inseparable from its constituent's sense of ordinary belonging; national subjectivity has conceptually to inhere to both a geographical area limited by the delineating presence of other nations, and to a sense of belonging to the community within that demarcated zone.

The *here* of ordinary things, or their relationship to space and place, has been historically difficult to extract from the problematic of specific analysis with which monolithic national ordinariness presents us. James Joyce, in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1921, wrote that because "his head [was] full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up 'most everywhere'" that he had determined to allow the subject to dictate the form almost entirely in his next text: "the task I set myself is...writing a book from eighteen different points of view and is as many styles, all apparently unknown or undiscovered by my fellow tradesmen..."²(Joyce, in Murphy 1995) The 'next work' in question, of course, would become *Ulysses*, Joyce's epic of everyday life, in which the usual processes of one day take up the progression of eighteen episodes. As Joyce writes, "every life is in many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love, but always meeting ourselves"(*Ulysses*, 233). It could be argued, as it often has been, that the material content and the plots of Joyce's work represented contemporary Dublin life and its ordinary processes entirely adequately. Its cacophonous approach to representing time, thought and space, every person and thing "walking through ourselves...always meeting ourselves" (233) is a collection of specificities that conceptually make up a world. However, in my reading, the intense individuation, and attention to the

²Intriguingly, Isherwood asserts in an interview later cited that his stylistic choices in his early writing owe a good deal to Joyce - he says that *All the Conspirators* is an experimental novel which "includ[es] a good deal of imitation of Joyce" (Isherwood, in Gehlin, 156)

temporal location of individual life in which we are “always [and only] meeting ourselves” in Joyce’s idiolect of the ordinary actually muddies and often precludes the potential of its political ramifications. Writing about ordinary things directly *must* elevate them – whether they are beautified by this representation or not, they are transmuted by being taken up. While *Ulysses* is certainly a novel about Dublin and about Irish people, it is not one about ordinary Dublin and ordinary Ireland. Each “point of view” is too individuated, each instance of normal life evervated and altered by its representation. Indeed, this special attention takes a writer like Elizabeth Bowen’s offensive tendency to represent the Irish as a voiceless, homogenous mass to the other extreme, making Irish everyday life *too* plurilocular. There’s no coagulated “us” of ordinary national subjectivity in either text to push a narrator or persona out or take them in. The imagined community, in Joyce, is made up of individuals and as such has no ordinary constituents.

There seems to be a critical consensus despite this necessary distinction, however, that the ordinary is ‘ordinary’ in early 20th century literature because it is unremarkable, standard, background, expected; it is what extraordinary or interesting things are not³. It has no useful or interesting aesthetics, or if it does, they exist only to provide a foil for the extraordinary, the rich, the beautiful. This is all very well for the former, but readings like these seem to have missed the fact that everything that isn’t special *makes up the world* around the extraordinary subject or object; the politics of the unremarkable morass are far bigger than those of the point of light. Things that aren’t extraordinary are not nationally or politically coded by these authors because their imbrication into the nation and its politics are taken as read. Of course there are ordinary

³ As this issue of the encyclopaedic recording of ordinary things pertains to Joyce, see in particular John Nash’s 2006 text *James Joyce and the Act of Reception*, and Declan Kiberd’s 2009 *Ulysses and Us: The Art of Everyday Life in Joyce’s Masterpiece*.

people and things in London and Dublin – of course the German word for “table” is “*Tisch*” and they mean the same thing – of course Arabella’s friends in *Jude the Obscure* are uniformly delighted by an arial assault with a pig’s penis and uniformly in support of Arabella’s actions.

When an analytic focus is placed on ordinariness it starts to appear wherever the dust settles, but remains very difficult to address directly. To take the obvious example of both a contemporary of Joyce’s, and a turn-of-the-century writer whose developmental novels have an interest in the processes of typical days, a reading like the above could also be applied to Virginia Woolf’s attachment to the crystalline present moment and the processes of everyday life. Woolf, in her “Letter to a Young Poet” exhorts her youthful correspondent to go and see “real everyday things”; “then let your rhythmical sense wind itself in and out among men and women, omnibuses, sparrows—whatever come along the street—until it has strung them together in one harmonious whole”(Woolf, *Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, 176). Liesl Olson observes, having also cited this piece as a key artifact of Woolf’s focus on the ordinary and the intersubjective, that:

When Woolf...asks us to “examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day”, she demands two things seemingly incompatible. She wants her subject to be both “ordinary” and of the “mind”, though by her own admission in the essays of this time, the subjective mind is a shifting, wildly complex thing...to render the ordinary is to describe experiences with which every reader is familiar, but the mind is a strange unique entity. (Olson, 43)

For Woolf, representing the ordinary must separate the consciousness of the writer and the reader from the ordinary things that surround them, be both “ordinary...and of the mind” (Olson, 43); she can write about “real everyday things”, but the “harmonious whole” that this displays doesn’t include everyone within her imagined community or that of the novel, and more importantly, doesn’t ascribe any kind of political responsibility for what it represents. Olson later asserts that

the main problem of the ordinary in the Modernist novel is that it “eludes representation, or that no representation of it (no matter how experimental) can be totally satisfactory”(44). Although Woolf’s texts and Joyce’s texts are full of ordinary things, the fact of their appearance paradoxically means that there are no ordinary things there at all. Woolf’s lists are not lists of ordinary things any more, *because she lists them*. When “so much depends/on” William Carlos Williams’ red wheelbarrow, Molly Bloom’s clean shifts, and the “Edinburgh-ness” of Ford Madox Ford’s Mrs Macmaster, they all lose the intangible quality of ordinariness that they had previously possessed, merely by being observed by these authors. Even their usualness or their uninterestingness becomes remarkable, as it becomes a meme of national subjectivity. Representing the ordinary, as previously discussed can only be a representation of the specific. Ordinariness evades mimesis when directly addressed. This might make it seem as though it were impossible to identify or usefully analyse the role of the ordinary subject in any text; this is where, in my reading, the relationship between form and monolithic national identity comes into play.

I assert in this project that the *Bildungsroman* is a form very well suited to displaying the vicissitudes of monolithic nationalized ordinariness, as it is a form that absolutely relies on pre-existing systems of social belonging and delineation to function. The novel of development is a systemic form absolutely absorbed with systems. Ordinariness is folded in, fundamental to the *Bildungsroman*. In order for novels of development to run along legible parabolas of growth, a mutual and culturally specific idea of what constitutes acceptable development needs to be in place within the text. A reader can *see* the operations of ordinariness in novels of development, and understands their political importance most clearly when they are vital to the advancement of a character or characters. People who behave in ways that exceed the systems of successful

nationalized development have difficulty within these forms, as the *Bildungsroman* writ large contains little room for interlopers who cannot grow and change successfully within its bounds. The paradox of understanding ordinariness as a thing done together by groups of people *all the time*, but not being able to point out a single ordinary subject only emphasizes the idea that monolithic nationality is formal. It isn't a thing we can see, it is a qualified system of seeing things, one which enforces their edges and obscures their content. The limitations of who belongs and who succeeds in the social worlds of these texts are inextricably involved with the expectations for ordinary national subjectivity they contain. When read with this in mind, it might be possible to see in a new light that the fin de siècle and 20th century *Bildungsroman*'s formal structures are deeply entangled with hegemonic ordinariness's impact on national belonging in general, and the boundaries of the imagined community in particular. This is, of course, troublesome for the hapless *Bildungsheld*, but extremely productive for critical readings interested in avant-garde and experimental methods of recording and problematizing British society's stringent expectations for ordinary development.

Our Island Home.

Given the preponderance of social and political upheaval in Britain in the years closely surrounding 1900, it is startling to consider that for a long time before the turn of the 20th century and its earth-shaking wars, Great Britain's legislators, rulers and writers had somehow collectively seemed to forget their country had borders. This is not to say, of course, that the seagoing affairs of the world's then-largest empire were not in the public consciousness, or even that travel to and from Britain was any different than that of other island nations; they were, and it wasn't. It is, however, to say that before the advent of large-scale immigration *into* rather than

out of Britain at the end of the Victorian period and afterward, the reality of the edges of the country as being a long, open entry-point was not functionally relevant to trade, travel or even defense. As such, enforcing the conceptual British border was not a topic of discussion in political or literary arenas of the day, quite apart from the fact that Britain and its surrounding island territories had absolutely no existing immigration legislation or border control. A large body of work detailing the “island panic” of the interwar period and second world war explains, in more detail than this project can, the change in that practice after 1918. Until 1914, barring a few minor and unsuccessful skirmishes, Britain had not been obliged to actually defend its coastlines from hostile military forces on any major scale since the Norman invasion of 1066. The fact that the United Kingdom was later than many of the countries around it to develop a legislated border, and certainly later than other global superpowers seems particularly odd given that, no matter where you are on the mainland of the United Kingdom, you are never very far from its margins. It is a place where edges are evident. The furthest point away from an ocean border in the mainland UK is in Cotton-on-the-Elms, in Derbyshire, and even that inland haven is only seventy miles away from the water. The border itself is also quite staggeringly huge. The United Kingdom has a longer coastal border (31,368 km according to the Ordnance Survey’s most recent figures) than Japan, Mexico, Brazil, Australia and India.

I will return to the reinvention of the British border shortly, but before the question of England’s conceptual relationship to the island became public-facing, the frangibility of the soon-to-be United Kingdom’s conceptual border had already begun to creep into the Victorian public consciousness. While certainly not on a footing of war, people by the mid-1800s had begun to *come to* England in a way never before seen. This change in the demographics of many areas of Britain, particularly its major cities, provoked political tension and stirred xenophobic unrest,

which necessarily influenced the writers and scholars of that period. In addressing this, in my first chapter, I take George Eliot's final novel *Daniel Deronda* as an extended example of the function of the 'ordinary subject' within a text which foregrounds the underlying structures of nationalized belonging that are so close to all of Eliot's oeuvre.

Daniel Deronda exceeds the limits of the *Bildungsroman* in both scope and content. In so doing it displays for the reader the extent to which the anxiety of influence felt by Eliot's contemporary society toward its rapidly-expanding immigrant population presaged and contributed to our contemporary moment of immigration panic. Rather than being only a novel about English social life, I argue, *Daniel Deronda* can be read as a text which treats Englishness formally, as a compulsory set of unspoken rules and expectations for seeing and interacting. It makes intersubjective ordinariness, its social effects and its restrictions on development an operative form against which characters can move, rather than an unassailable part of the background of events. Eliot does this in manifold ways, but most eloquently by employing a dialectic of the ordinary and the desirable between her characters, between her narrator and her subjects, and most pertinently between the "two novels" which so notoriously constitute her final work.

In this chapter I contend that while conventional, a reading of *Daniel Deronda* as two separate books – something even contemporary critics cannot seem to avoid - stymies the work of the text and, moreover, enforces the kind of legislative and cultural separatism that it itself decries. *Daniel Deronda* interrogates the concept of a novel written in a form as nationally specific and reliant on trajectory as the *Bildungsroman*, at a time when a legible narrative of growth was also a nationally specific, and imaginatively limited one. Growing up, according to the logic of the *Bildungsroman* in this text and others like it, necessarily means growing up as an

identifiably ordinary nationalized subject. Rather than being only a novel about English social life, I argue, *Daniel Deronda* displays for the reader how the anxiety of influence felt by Eliot's contemporary society toward its rapidly-expanding immigrant population presaged and contributed to the iniquitous and still present legal concepts of the "resident alien" and the "desirable immigrant."

The novel describes and collapses an imagined community, between its two halves; and yet these "halves" are fundamentally not extricable from one another, themselves exhibiting the "inside" and "outside" binary of ordinary subjectivity. In "Daniel" and "Gwendolen" threads of *Deronda* themselves depict a microcosm of the vagaries of an imagined community and its reliance on monolithic ordinariness. These sections – together and separately – are in facsimile a subsection of English life, realistically represented, and taken as far as such an idealized representation might be workably pushed. *Deronda* is by no means the only Victorian *Bildungsroman* with two protagonists who journey separately, but it is perhaps the only one where the "conventionally" British character ends up rather less well-off by traditional British social standards than either a co-protagonist (or a significant racially othered counterpart) by close of business⁴.

With the political potential of the form to exceed its own structural limitations in mind, my next chapter takes an alternate approach to immigration law and literature and returns to the ontic paradox of the "ordinary subject ." I read three of Thomas Hardy's texts with Edward Casey and Martin Heidegger on nationalized belonging in space and place, to discuss which of his characters qualify for "ordinary residency" in Wessex; a legal term which also comes from late 20th century immigration law, but draws too from the beginnings of the National Health

⁴ Examples of this version of the genre abound throughout the period - Rudyard Kipling's 1900 novel *Kim*, Olive Schreiner's 1883 *Story of an African Farm*, and of course, Charlotte Brontë's 1847 *Jane Eyre*.

Service in the United Kingdom and its requirements for “being British” in order to qualify for care. Having laid out the formal structures of national ordinariness as they work in the *Bildungsroman* in my Eliot chapter, I extend the idea in my work with Hardy to argue that the *Bildungsroman* is not simply a novel of development, but of *correct* development, a development which is in accordance with the society, nation or state in which it is set. It is a demanding and severe form, and never more so than in Hardy’s late novels. My reading of these texts takes up in more detail the idea the *Bildungsroman* contains within itself *as a form* a system of societally ordinary expectations that the protagonist must achieve within the span of time the novel allots. We can see very clearly the things the text teases as *potentially* happening to Jude Fawley, Tess Durbeyfield and their counterparts, but their failure to conform to the milestones of social development dictated to them by their society renders them extraordinary and thus, excluded from the rewards of passing such milestones ordinarily. They are allowed to exist, grudgingly, but their *being* is put into question. These texts show us what an ordinary life *could* look like, even for a character to whom a lot of attention is paid, and then Hardy’s protagonists *do not live those lives*. We see the trajectory of the ordinary subject’s potential existence only as a form. In this chapter I also consider the role of Wessex as a highly politicized re-imagining, or alternately a palimpsest of a specific and permeable “region” of Hardy’s England, delineate the difference between known “place” and unknown “space” as it relates to 19th century social norms, and trace their use in Hardy’s work. These concepts seem to be irrevocably linked to the imagined community for Hardy, aligning themselves with the known quantity and the Other in ways that only emphasize the *Bildungsroman*’s formalized lack of patience for extraordinary characters; ordinariness is not, for Hardy merely about being a member of a community, but about a character’s correspondence with physical geography. Some

of England is ordinary and some is not. Some people are ordinary in some of it, and some in all of it. I then also, with regard to the concept of “placedness” consider and introduce the term “ordinary residency” to the argument as a version of being-in-place specific to the turn-of-the-century English consciousness and English nationalism, and then reaching far beyond it. I argue that Hardy’s use of the geography of Wessex as a metaphorical “second country” overlaying England displays through amplification bordering on satire the ways in which Britain controlled the peregrinations of its national and international subjects, and limited their imaginations to the labour-producing niche into which they had been born. Hardy’s texts, through this, also create “national borders” between Wessex and England and within Wessex itself, and in so doing bring to light systems of British belonging and the limits of Englishness without even having to leave the British Isles.

My project however now does leave mainland Great Britain, but doesn’t go far; and in some ways doesn’t leave at all. Moving West from Cornwall and Hardy’s “Isle of Slingers” to Ireland during the 1919-21 War of Independence in my next chapter on Elizabeth Bowen, I contend that the “problem” of representing an ordinary system of belonging in *The Last September* is legible in the novel of development as a blurring of pre-existing systems of alterity; who is “British enough,” even as a colonizer? The Anglo-Irish, a now defunct but previously extremely wealthy and powerful subsection of British settler colonialists and landlords, are shown in Bowen’s work to actually exist in a sort of miserable limbo of failed attempts at ordinary English national subjectivity. They are unable to join or be constituent to either an English or an Irish national identity. Bowen makes this perennial discomfort clear in the way she formally represents communication. The Anglo-Irish cannot communicate effectively with anyone in *The Last September*. Meaningful intersubjectivity is totally absent. In this section, I

consider the social significance of the uninterrupted link I unearth between the origins and the English usage of the words “margin,” “border,” and “remark,” which all come from the same Indo-European prefix, and have in some pre-20th Century circumstances been pertinently interchangeable. I then discuss the oppositional correspondence between the “remarkable” and the “ordinary” and the significance of this relationship for defining Anglo-Irish identity and the impossible specter of the Anglo-Irish ‘ordinary subject’. Having worked through these ideas, I explore the failed symbiosis touched on above between the Anglo-Irish and their British allies through an examination of the “remark” itself. The remark as an unfinished speech act in Bowen’s text is often accompanied by the em-dash, which in Bowen’s novel *ends things*, as opposed to creating tender spaces between them as in the writing of Emily Dickinson, or Virginia Woolf. This part of speech is absolutely dominant in conversations between Anglo-Irish characters and the English, a vacuum between things close together that both symbolizes and characterizes the particular problem of hierarchical national subjectivity in Bowen’s work. It is a recurring and oppressive meme of infertile intersubjectivity and failed systems of relation; Anglo-Irish and British intersubjectivity is precluded, paradoxically, by any being together. The remark and its accompanying punctuation appear in almost every conversation in the text, making the novel largely a stilted series of uncomprehending interactions which, as with Hardy, allow the reader to envision what an ordinary interaction might be without rendering it uselessly remarkable.

Finally, in a chapter on Christopher Isherwood which responds to the work of Walter Benjamin on the aesthetics of belonging and the accretive nature of national identity, I move that the *Bildungsroman*’s inherent conservatism and British nationalism’s inherent regulations do not even in themselves necessarily preclude an author from employing the form as a means of

exploring and showing collective development. In Isherwood's work, rather than using the form to display the unkind limits of ordinary social norms, the author reframes depicting collective ordinariness as a deliberate, protective act by character and narrator. In contrast to – but with the same political result as – the other texts I have examined, becoming part of the larger national imagined community in Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* is absolutely vilified, as to do so would be to accede to the horrifying social demands of not just the ordinary German, but the ordinary Nazi. Isherwood did not want to acclimate, and did not want his texts to formally acclimate to dominant narratives of growth in such a bad place to grow. Rather, his texts use highly experimental work with perspective to address socialized ordinariness and ordinary Englishness through memories, which allows the narrator *Christopher and his Kind*, his 1975 novel, to examine it without disrupting its workings. My project here turns to the formal methods of representing himself that Isherwood takes in his later memoirs. I argue that his work with perspective allows for him to represent ordinariness in a similar, if more direct way than writers previous to him.

In this recuperative reading, Isherwood's prose makes tactical use of tense (past, present, future) and point of view (first, second and third person) to provide a four-dimensional commentary which can record the nationalized ordinary of the Third Reich and of turn-of-the-century Britain without disrupting it, or making it uselessly remarkable. Through readings of Isherwood with Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* and contemporary critics on both, I argue that the author adopts in his later revisionist work an affectionate and stratified series of withdrawals from the events of the novels that could in his own words be considered "high camp," as camp engenders distance but "you can't camp about something you don't take seriously." By amending his own recorded past, Isherwood the author is able to both document

and re-experience the “rubble-heap” of his past, fictionally disengaging himself from exclusionary Britishness. The reader of this *Bildungsroman* is presented with the form stripped of all of its contents, and is instead invited to examine the events of the past as they form a narrative of growth in the company of both author and character.

The “extraordinary” subjects of England and Berlin – the chanteuse, the queer, the drag queen, the Jew, to name a few – endangered by state-mandated developmental and social norms, are enabled by this use of form Isherwood’s texts to reject nationalized ordinariness and be depicted within a kind of collective alterity that allows for their development. Between his many selves in *Christopher and his Kind*, Isherwood plays with time to allow his reader to perceive both the “nationalized ordinary” of his German and Nazi counterparts, and the far kinder and more open ended version of belonging that the author wants to suggest was, and is, present and possible. This paradox-defying double vision makes the nationalized, later propagandized and violent ordinary that surrounds the marginalized of the *Berlin Stories* suddenly visible as both remarkable and defunct. It clearly displays that for Isherwood and even for other British writers, it is possible to compose a text concerned with nationalized systems of belonging in which Nazis, homophobes, and the similarly prejudiced and monolithically-inclined are relegated to the status of “them,” and not ever “us.”

To return to the island, briefly; it would seem plausible given all of the above on the amount of regulation and stringency described above that Britain placed upon “qualifying” as a member of its imagined community, that it would be at least as litigious and careful as its neighbours about maintaining the security of its ocean border. However, the UK outside of times of war was, in the 20th century, and still remains, remarkably lax about patrolling its edges compared to other countries with similarly “valuable” passports. The UK currently has only two

border patrol vessels for the entirety of its coastline, which when compared to Italy's 600 vessels for 7,606 km, doesn't seem like much at all (Drury, 2018). Federal regulations in the United States, for instance, give ICE and CBP full authority to operate "immigration checkpoints"(ACLU, 2018) at any location within 100 miles of a US border, whether land or coastal. That encompasses, in a thick imaginary band all around the upper continent, the entirety of New England. All of Florida. Every major city in California. Given that nowhere in the UK is more than seventy miles from the sea, and at its widest point the island is only about 350 miles across, almost the entirety of the country would fall into this zone if similar measures were to be put in place. The previous statistic came from another article in the conservative *Daily Mail*, entitled "UK Sea Borders Could Be Left Wide Open after Brexit", decrying the fact that migrants attempting to seek asylum or shelter in the United Kingdom were now unlikely to be successfully apprehended and turned away by patrol boats from other EU countries. The irony of Britain being forced to remember the scale of its borders again, and to mourn the loss of European aid in preventing UK immigration by a campaign designed to promote xenophobia and isolationism cannot be overstated. Nor can the bizarre concept of thousands of miles of coastline being suddenly 'left open'. Brexit made the United Kingdom an island again, but not in the way its supporters had hoped. The word "island" here is extremely important to the British public consciousness at times when they feel the borders of their country, and as such figuratively the boundaries of their ordinary lives and their imagined communities, their "ethnically and nationally specific little worlds"(Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 52) are put at risk.

Before the advent of global war, when Britain sits (or sat) in full "Rule Britannia" splendour, without threat of ingress unwanted by its rulers and politicians, its self-description in popular culture had primarily been one of simplistic, expansive dissemination; things went *out*

from the “Mother Country” and money and power came in. The largest group of immigrants to Britain between 1805 and 1861 were the Irish, especially during the starveling period of sharecropping exploitation that the British landowner perpetrated during the Hunger of 1845-52; by 1861, “the Irish-born population in England and Wales had risen to 602,000 (3 percent of the population) and to 204,000 in Scotland (7 percent)”⁵ Although it is hard to estimate the actual numbers, given that no official immigration or border control existed at the time, the rate of Irish immigration is estimated to have been exceeded by European immigrants by 1971, and then by Jewish immigrants in the 1890s (Lloyd, 2007). The previously-described antisemitic panic of the late Victorian period was largely a response to some of the first immigration to the United Kingdom which involved nonwhite and non-Anglo presenting ethnic affinities establishing visible communities; however, by 1914 about 250,000 Jews lived and worked in England alone, with schools, an official English Rabbinate, welfare organisations and even early versions of boy and girl scout-groups dedicated to their wellbeing. In 1909 the first practicing Jew as a Cabinet Minister, Herbert Samuel, was elected⁶; the first President of Israel, Chaim Weissman, was a British Jew⁷. By the early 1900s, at the time Hardy was publishing poetry and Elizabeth Bowen’s Anglo-Irish livelihood was under duress in Ireland, Britain’s society was, although still predominantly white and ethnically British, beginning to see more substantial shifts in its demographic composition than ever before. However, at this time, with the threat of oceanic and aerial theatres of war belying the sudden craggy spectre of actual invasion and of barrage from above, a change in political approach to narrating the imagined community for a “tense

⁵ This data and more on internal and proximate British migration and immigration can be found in Amy J. Lloyd’s text *Emigration Immigration and Migration in Nineteenth Century Britain*, in which she also mentions the large population of German migrants to the UK during this time; that population was surpassed by Jewish migration during the lead-up to the Second World War.

⁶ For more information and data on Jewish communities in England at the turn of the century, see the Jewish Virtual Library’s articles and data collection about Jewish life in Britain.

⁷ This data was also sourced from the JVL’s collected data about British Jews.

future”(Saint-Amour, 2) was called for. At the outset of the Victorian period Britain was a country, but modern and Modernist Britain was an island.

Given this change, which like all things Modernist and Victorian has an embattled and enmeshed border in itself, the *fin de siècle* heralded a new approach to the public face of British nationalism. Rather than being the place to which one belonged, as a Briton living in Britain, and in which one was a subject of a set of distant, gilded rulers for whom “Zadok the Priest” always played faintly, the country became rhetorically the property of its denizens, even if nothing materially changed.

This confabulation can be seen quite clearly in an addition to the phrasebook of Britain’s monarchs and prime ministers in the 20th century, when radio and television technology made it possible to introduce a new, characteristic locution to describe national belonging to the masses. Winston Churchill and subsequently Queen Elizabeth II became the primary utilizers of one of the most powerful phrases ever to emerge invoking the power of monolithic national ordinariness to the British imagined community: “our island home.” This phrase is fascinating in the scope of this project because its role, its uniting nationalistic force, is that of essentially evoking the ordinary without specifying that it does so. It essentializes utterly. It invokes smallness. Rather than speaking to a global empire from a secure, affluent seat, Churchill and his monarch began (in a masterfully manipulative affective mood) to employ the opposite aspect of the British imagined community’s power. “Our island home” was presented not as a state to which “the English” and their subjects owed loyalty or even fealty, but reframed as the physical manifestation of the lives and communities of ordinary people, all subjects themselves, that they had built together. They were national subjects, but also subject to violence, subject to danger, subject to the surrounding ocean. Their island – even for Britons of the colonies who had never

seen British soil - became rhetorically theirs to defend from a still-imaginary outsider, in a way which required no political or legislative change from its politicians. Churchill in his so-called “darkest hour” speech in 1940 quite explicitly lays out a differentiation between outwardly-facing, “Empire” Britain and his conception of the imagined community of British people. Churchill notably also employs a technique particular to the Modernist writers of his day in his rhetoric – listing ordinary things in the vein of Joyce and Woolf earlier explored, in order to paradoxically highlight their remarkability – to introduce the concept of ordinary British life as being the key thing that needed defending from all comers:

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle... {sic} (International Churchill Society Online, 2021)

In this speech Churchill reminds his audience that they are living in a place capable of being surrounded from all sides. He draws the listener’s picturing gaze from the beach to the hills, all the while also positing and repositing the “we” angle. It is periphrastic rhetoric, but seemed to have had the desired effect⁸. Ordinary places, in this speech, are recast as concatenating zones of possible heroism. Ordinary British life is given a developmental narrative as something vulnerable, needing protection and defense from outsiders in order to continue. Ordinary British subjects on the island and off it are theoretically formed into an army with a common cause, imaginatively united against a common enemy by their membership in the imagined community. Nothing and nobody has actually changed, but the limitations of who is allowed to be “everybody” in British political rhetoric have fundamentally altered. Christopher Isherwood left

⁸ The fact that Churchill’s rampant racism, antisemitism, absolutely lax military and political record, responsibility for famine in British India and total disregard for the Geneva Convention have not prevented this speech from being so often quoted and anthologized is an astonishing testament to British selective amnesia.

Britain for America just before Churchill gave this speech, and wrote most of his texts of English national identity under the aegis of a Britain with immigration laws and island-centric restrictions on ordinary subjectivity; his version of British national identity is reflective of this change and of the new cosmopolitanism of the country in the mid-20th century. The limitations and changes within the designation of “everybody” allowed to be involved with “our island home” are, to speak broadly, the primary concern of this project. In the following chapters I will examine an aspect of the extraordinary role for the British subject that nationalized ordinary subjectivity played at the turn of the 20th century, and in so doing, will define and explore the role of monolithic national ordinariness in the English fin de siècle *Bildungsroman*.

Immigration Forms: National Anxiety, the Ordinary/Desirable, and Daniel Deronda.

Are you now or have you ever been
skilled with silkworm gut or boric lint?
How intimate are you with breathing

through a Carbolie Chinese Twist? Using
the four-hand lift or bamboo splints?
Are you now or have you ever been

conversant, properly, with pain?
Bandages, assorted. Tincture Eucalyptus.
How intimate are you with breathing

through artificial respiration?
There is no time to get assistance.
Are you now or have you ever been

in want of courage or direction?
Cut the body down at once:
how intimate are you with breathing

life into cadere, the Latin swoon
beyond cadaver and the cadence?
Are you now or have you ever been?

How intimate are you with breathing?
-Nick Laird, "The Immigration Form"

"Culture is ordinary. That is the first fact."

Raymond Williams.

The Village's Limited Imagination

In my introduction I have laid out the parameters for conceptualizing the role of the ordinary national subject within narratives of development, but that definition begs another question.

Could there be such a thing as an ordinary immigrant in those same narratives? It would be possible, certainly outside of the context of legal language on borders in which the word “ordinary” takes on a new tone of regulation, to think of these words as being antonymic. This paradox makes sense, especially in the face of conservative narratives on the way in which immigration is inextricably associated with change. The language of immigration forms, after all, contains questions which are themselves paradoxical and circular. These are a way of safeguarding the privilege of entry and exit, fundamentally differentiating those seeking entrance from those already there, requiring proof of adequacy from the former but not the latter. Being an immigrant of any water is to be forced to represent oneself as a form, or type of person, within a form – are you now, or have you ever been⁹?

Rather than being only a novel about English social life, I argue, when read as a text which treats British nationalism as an operative *form*, or “an organization and arrangement...by which power works” (Levine, xi), rather than as an unassailable fact of life to be observed, *Daniel Deronda* exceeds the limits of the *Bildungsroman*, while still being recognizably a novel of development. Developing, as a subject for Eliot’s protagonists is shown as being inextricable from the demands of living an ordinary, identifiable English life inside the British hegemony depicted within the text. The only non-nationalized borders that are actively difficult to cross in *Daniel Deronda* are the ones that appear between its principal subjects. This draws attention to the state of Eliot’s contemporary British nationalism as it is enacted the depiction of various forms of imagined community. In addition to this tension, the author, in *Daniel Deronda*,

⁹ In a chilling callback to the rhetoric described in the previous section, the current immigration form I-485 required for foreigners applying for permanent residency in the USA asks, among other things, “During the period from March 23, 1933, to May 8, 1945, did you ever offer, incite, assist, or otherwise participate in the persecution of any person because of race, religion, national origin or political opinion in association with either the Nazi government of Germany or any organization or government affiliated with the Nazi government of Germany?”

provides the shape of a conventional form with which the reader is familiar (the novel of development) and then forces the reader to become aware of their expectations for the form and for the ordinary progression of her characters' lives as they move through the text. These expectations, as they are unpredictably both met and stymied, provide for the reader and for the critic a formal representation of the kind of subjectivity that *Deronda* itself is narrating.

Raymond Williams, in his essay "The Knowable Community in Eliot's Novels", explains literature's uneasy relationship to political upheaval by positing that "there is always change in the village, but we can only understand its bearings on literature if we first understand what is happening to the literature itself...the traditional novel...depends essentially on a knowable community"(255). Eliot's final novel treats late Victorian British society as a village nauseously lurching toward change, and uses the form of the *Bildungsroman* to represent the attitudes of her contemporary society towards its rapidly altering sociality. *Daniel Deronda* is both a deeply traditional English novel, concerned with English life, dealing with English characters and with contemporary English issues, and an audacious formal experiment in representing British xenophobia, antisemitism and the "knowable community." The novel makes the reader metanarratively aware of its own formal experimentation as it itself describes and collapses an imagined community, between its two halves. Yet these "halves" are fundamentally not extricable from one another, themselves exhibiting the "inside" and "outside" binary of national identity described by Anderson, Bhabha et al.

In short, the "Daniel" and "Gwendolen" threads of *Deronda* themselves depict a microcosm of the vagaries of an imagined community. They – together and separately - represent a subsection of English life, realistically represented, and taken as far as such an idealized representation might be workably pushed. They actively work with the formal constraints of the

English nationalism they contain by setting up and then exceeding systems of ordinariness, within themselves and as a pair. Contemporary English expectations for the life of the *Bildungsheld* are “proposed” by the text and then retracted in differing ways, leaving the reader to understand that the formal boundaries of the *Bildungsroman* necessarily engender a nationalized system of expectations, that the *Bildungsroman* itself is a form that depends on the ordinary in order to function, and that the limited imagination of the village is a structure that goes beyond protecting its imagined community and becomes, itself, overtly limiting.

This, I argue, is an example of something Madelyn Detloff describes in her commentary on the “traumatic foundation of subjectivity”(12) in *The Persistence of Modernism*; she posits that the transition from a Victorian realist mode to a Modernist mode of writing is that of a “slippage between spectatorship and identification”(13) The novel is one *Bildungsroman* with two protagonists, and the novel’s relationship to national identity formally restricts the actions and substantially informs the subjectivity of those protagonists as the narrative “slips”(Detloff, 13). It begins as two narratives and then, ever more tightly, enacts a reduction of Gwendolen through an excess of Daniel; as Daniel finds “some special Jewish machinery” and (429) becomes a functional, ordinary member of two social groups, exceeding the limits of his community and departing from it by choice, Gwendolen “wanders into a swamp...in her satin shoes”(112) and is able to see the limitations of her own ordinariness. As this happens these two changed characters are held up for examination by the author against the ‘ordinary’ communities of which they are constituent, and the ‘ordinary’ English world of the text. *Deronda* in this reading seems to begin as a *Bildungsroman* with two protagonists, but goes on to subvert and exhibit both the limitations of the genre and the limiting expectations of the nationalized structure of understanding belonging;

Rather than being two novels with different approaches to national identity, I move, reading *Daniel Deronda* in the way I propose interrogates the *concept* of the trajectory of a novel written in a form as nationally specific as the Bildungsroman, at a time when a legible narrative of growth was also an ‘ordinary’, nationally specific, imaginatively limited one. Growing up conventionally in this text and others like it necessarily means growing up as an identifiably ordinary nationalized subject. Eliot’s interleaved mode of representing subject positions in different relationships to ordinariness is *representative* of English cultural anxieties surrounding change in the village, surrounding immigration, surrounding the concept of the Other (especially when such a person might look exactly like oneself.)

The language of immigration law has remained relatively unchanged from its openly racist and xenophobic beginnings, and this fact pertinently calls Eliot’s text and texts like it into our contemporary moment of immigration panic. In order to set the stage for the key problematic in my discussion of the relationship between the ordinary and the national, I begin with a discussion of contemporary immigration legislation, its connection to twentieth century literature and a paradoxical binary that has been in place since the passing of the 1905 Aliens act – the qualification of being “ordinary/desirable” necessary for any subject with immigrant intent. With a view to providing some less anachronistic context for both my reading of Eliot and for this project’s later approach to the knotty subject of immigration law in Western countries, I then discuss the way in which systems of immigration legislation formed and changed in Britain around the turn of the century and the effects of this on the intellectual communities interested in cosmopolitan life in the United Kingdom and briefly elsewhere, outlining the presence of the ordinary/desirable binary in Eliot’s period both in law and in literature. I discuss the significance of the conflation of these terms for the imagined community, and then move to my extended

reading of Eliot's novel, having outlined the parameters for reading for nationalized form in her text.

The infamous "split" between the Daniel and Gwendolen 'halves' of the book is demonstrably, when thinking about nationalism as a form which employs the ordinary, not a bifurcation of narratives, but a very modern evolution of Eliot's "particular web" (*Middlemarch*, 111) of mimetically creating and critiquing community-formation as it limits the conceptual boundaries of national identity and cultural change. What *Middlemarch* does with narrative to represent the complexities of rural English life in the early Victorian period, the sense of an expanding world compounded with the "consciousness of being born and rooted in a specific landscape"(Hollington, 31) *Daniel Deronda* does formally to represent Eliot's contemporaneous England and its intersubjective peculiarities as the "village changes". It suggests the possibility of a double consciousness in understanding English nationalism, while still allowing for the possibility of welcoming and incorporating the new, expanding the limits of the late Victorian imagination.

Ordinary/Desirable Subjects

Contemporary rhetoric on immigration - especially legal immigration to Western countries, suggests that individuals or groups who are not immediately identifiable as ordinary members of the imagined community, beyond being remarkable, are always a threatening quantity. People who are not already 'us' are a peril to the sanctity of a group defined by a metaphysical but no less formal border than the place it geographically occupies. To return briefly to Bhabha's claim in *Nation and Narration*, the problematic inherent to attempting to reconcile entities that amount to "Us" and "Them" is fundamentally a problem of interpretive mass subjectivity, as "The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen

simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation”(Bhabha, 8). Rhetoric surrounding what constitutes a ‘desirable’ and ‘ordinary’ immigrant (these two words are fundamentally inextricable from one another in immigration legislation, which point will be taken up shortly) is not often explicitly legislatively racist in the 2000s, or at least, race and ethnicity are rarely *mentioned in legal language*. It is almost always economically prejudiced toward countries with similar GDPs to the projected destination because of the longstanding desire of wealthy nations to avoid immigrants who might become a “public charge”(USCIS 2020). This in effect is an exercise in institutionalized racism, directly correlating ease of immigration to the ‘use’ of the immigrating subject and to both the real and projected financial and political status of the immigrant’s country of origin.

For example, the firm Henley and Partners in 2016 and 2018 recorded that the Afghan passport was the “least useful” in terms of ability to either enter or immigrate to other countries, followed closely by South Sudanese and Palestinian documents. Almost all countries have some version of these discriminatory policies, with an accompanying rationale of economic interest, but the United States Government and the United Kingdom have additionally (now and always) made the likelihood of one requiring state-supplied aid a factor in the consideration of legal admissibility before a visa is even issued. USCIS explains in a recent memo that “since the 1800s¹⁰... Self-sufficiency has long been a basic principle of U.S. immigration law”(USCIS

¹⁰ This law refers to the US Immigration Act of 1882, also referred to as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This explicitly racist piece of legislation was the first immigration act ever passed in the United States and has, like the Aliens Act of 1905 in Britain, remained the basis for the framework of immigration law in that country ever since.

2009). The concept of the “public charge”, of the alien becoming a burden on the imagined community, and of the potential for the reliant immigrant to disrupt the pre-existing imagined community by requiring the dispensation of resources previously imaginatively earmarked for a constituent member, has been a factor in the immigration policies of both countries since the outset of their respective legislations. It remains a central concept to the rhetoric of anti-immigrant fear and exclusion.

This is not least remarkable because of the fundamentally subjective nature of decisions to allocate visas and immigration benefits in both of these countries. Since the beginnings of the implementation of immigration law, it has usually fallen to the decision of one immigration officer per immigrant to decide, after examining their files, whether or not that person is “ordinarily admissible” (USCIS 2009). This language, although in regular contemporaneous usage, appears throughout British and American immigration law since its advent. It closes the gap between admitting people “ordinarily”, to become “ordinarily resident”— as in, “in the function of regular practice”— and admitting people with the potential to join the imagined community – ie. admitting people to become “resident ordinarily.” The distinction between “ordinary” and “ordinarily resident” here is important because of its reliance on that unspoken proprioceptive quality of diagnosing ordinariness, with all its inherent biases, for all those involved in legislating who and who is not “admissible.” Former President Donald Trump in the speech that launched his campaign in 2016 remarked, in a horrifyingly apposite example of the effects of the idea of the “public charge” when compared with that of the idea of ‘ordinary’ members of the American imagined community, that:

...when Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems.... They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists, and some, I assume, are good people... It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's

coming probably — probably — from the Middle East. But we don't know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don't know what's happening. And it's got to stop and it's got to stop fast. (*Washington Post*, 2016)

Trump's polemic is directed primarily at the category of "illegal alien" as it is outlined by USCIS: a person who has entered a country without registering that entry and without going through due process, someone who according to US immigration law should neither be "resident ordinarily" in terms of the imagined community or deemed to be "ordinarily resident" for the receipt of benefits. While the existence of this category is in itself clearly a human rights violation, going too deeply into it is beyond the scope of this chapter. It is of note however that not even all immigrants who follow due process are legislatively treated the same, even though such acerbically prejudiced statements as the above seem to make up the grand part of the current news cycle on right-wing Western discourse on immigration. Trump's speeches tar most immigrants with the same brush, but come down particularly hard on immigrants whom his party views as infringing on American jobs. Several countries, however, welcome at least small numbers of "skilled" immigrants, a designation that is made by their projected ability to contribute worth to the ordinary processes of life in these places. The accumulation of worth and hence admissibility by means of possessing the *ability for enfranchised use that produces new capital gain for the state* is uncomplicatedly advertised by several nations as an enlightened model of immigration legislation. Canada, Australia and New Zealand all employ points-based immigration systems which seek to admit those who fall under the category of "skilled worker." The concept of a "desirable immigrant", or someone whom the state might be demonstrably able to admit based on their projected likelihood to accumulate worth here becomes apparent, and it is here that the useful problem of the "ordinary/desirable" immigrant also becomes evident.

Anyone who is allowed to immigrate in a non-refugee category under a system which judges potential immigrants against a nationalized framework of suitability must be “desirable” (to wit. employable, able unless special conditions are met, unlikely to become a public charge) in order to be ‘ordinarily admissible’. As such, the categories of the desirable and the ordinary become ontically entangled where they would usually be antonyms. Ordinarity, as previously discussed, is autochthonous in the sense of nationalism. The concept of desirability comes here from the parameters set by that autochthon. To be desirable as an immigrant and to be “ordinarily admissible” by one’s prospective national community is to conceptually gain the opportunity to become part of the ordinary monolith of that new imagined community. The paradox earlier mentioned turns itself inside-out; in order to be an ordinary immigrant and be ‘ordinarily admissible’, the immigrant must exceed the qualities of ‘ordinariness’ (being like “us” to the extent that they are unremarkable) to the extent that they become ‘desirable’ (adding or increasing an improvement to the current state of “our” national life). In some more extreme categories, being “ordinarily admissible” is taken to an even more paradoxical height, requiring that one possess qualities which have been demonstrably proven to be lacking in other applications for the same immigration benefit from the nation’s pre-existing resources. No “undesirable” immigrant is ‘ordinarily admissible’, and so both the legislative and the descriptive boundary between ordinariness, the “ordinarily admissible” and desirability disappears almost entirely. Ordinary immigrants must paradoxically demonstrate the potential to be conventionally good and extraordinarily good, desirably ordinary and extraordinarily desirable.

In an extreme case of the many problems this complex equivalency provokes, and seeking to provide a solution to the apparent state of “no protection and no competence” (Trump 2016) in which the US was operating, the United States Government under Trump in 2016

introduced a bill in the Senate in 2017 called the RAISE (Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment) Act, which would have put in place a US-specific points-based system for immigration, prevented siblings and adult children of USC from immigrating to the United States, and more strongly restricted the distribution of immigrant and worker visas.¹¹ Trump's extraordinarily successful campaign, as such and in many other instances, was built on anti-immigrant rhetoric that uses the language of the imagined community to separate 'desirable'/'ordinary' (wealthy, Caucasian or both) immigrants from their apparent counterparts, based on the language of alienation and fear, on the ludicrous spectre of the "bad hombre"(PD III, 2015), on tweets of Hillary Clinton's face next to a six-pointed star and a pile of cash captioned "Most Corrupt Candidate Ever!"(July 5, 2016). Andrew Wigmore, former Communications Director for Leave.EU, the central hub for the Brexit party's internet presence remarked to *Business Insider* that "the Brexit campaign had "completely, completely, completely" copied the methods used by Trump..." The only way we were going to make a noise

¹¹ The prejudicial impact of this bill cannot be overstated. In order to meet the minimum requirements for immigrating to the United States in any capacity, a person must score over 30 points on the 'suitability test' this bill sets out. I'll place myself in the line of fire here, for example. For context, I am a white, middle-class, cis female British citizen and I have a total of seven postnominal letters after my name: I am currently pursuing a PhD at an Ivy League school in the United States, after completion of which I will have ten. I am undoubtedly a member of one of the most privileged groups of people currently living. I score 32 points within the ranking system (S.354) suggested by the RAISE Act. *Ten* of those points come from my age – had this act passed, were I one year older at the time of writing, I would not be eligible to apply for a visa to live and work in the USA. *Ten more* of those points come from the apparently salient fact that English is my first language. No points are accrued in favour of my immigration potential by any of my degrees apart from my B.A., because all of my qualifications are in the Humanities. Any degree from a US school as opposed to a foreign institution will earn you at least one extra point – more if that degree is in a STEM subject. International PhD students in the Humanities working in the United States on the most commonly issued visa receive one year's grace to work and live in the country before they must either acquire a work visa or fall out of status. Students in the STEM fields routinely receive six. According to the immigration regulations that would have been passed by this bill, which was quite narrowly defeated, I and many of my academic colleagues are *not skilled workers*, and thus ineligible to be 'ordinary'/'desirable' immigrants. Aside from this small subsection of the population, this new visa system would have completely decimated the already-stringent requirements for unskilled workers to enter the United States, and would have done so entirely legally, based on the prerogative of "self-sufficiency"(USCIS 2009) extant in US law and restated by ICE in 2009. The irony that only a very small and specialized group of immigrants have the potential to become 'ordinary'/'desirable' is a bitter one.

was to follow the Trump doctrine, which was: the more outrageous we are, the more attention we'll get, and the more attention we get, the more outrageous we'll be..."(*Business Insider*, 2018)

The *Independent* reported a startling surge in racially-motivated anti-immigrant hate crimes in 2016 in areas where UKIP had a strong foothold, and concurrently in which the majority of Britons had voted to leave:

Lincolnshire was the site of the UK's highest Leave vote, with 75 per cent of voters in Boston voting Out. Other areas in the county such as South Holland and East Lindsey also both posted Leave figures of more than 70 per cent. Police data shows Lincolnshire saw a 191 per cent rise in hate crimes compared to last year. Its police force recorded 22 ethnic and religiously motivated hate crimes in the week corresponding to the EU referendum in 2015, but this year the number surged to 42 such crimes in the week of the EU referendum, and 64 crimes in the week after. (*Independent*, 2016)

However, most interestingly, it seems to be the case that it was in the areas of the United Kingdom with the *fewest* immigrants that the most crime against immigrant communities occurred per capita. This suggests (as has been the case in many of the most major political upheavals since immigration legislation became law and not merely ad-hoc practice), that the *idea* and not the *presence* of those who might present a public charge or a shift in the nature of the imagined community might have been the actual issue at hand; nationalism as a form at work. The public is more concerned with the concept of change in the village than with actual changes, with the borders of their own nationally-limited imaginations than with the actual inhabitants of geography.¹² The imagined community's system for defending itself, apparently, extends beyond actual intersubjective experience with those it views as interlopers and deals directly with the xenophobically imagined spectre of the immigrant. This, chillingly, has been

¹² Indeed, this speculation came up in several publications and focus groups, leading to a comprehensive 2017 study on the distribution of 'Leave' vs. 'Remain' voters and their responses to immigrant communities. "It is the contact [within their communities] that predicts prejudice towards immigrants, and prejudice was a predictor of how people intended to vote" (*Independent*, 2017), writes Dr. Rose Meleady, study co-ordinator.

the case since Britain first began to legislate exit and entry, which it undertook as a direct response to a similarly popular shift in public opinion.

Resident Aliens

In 1905, the sitting British government in the House of Commons under the command of Prime Minister Arthur Balfour made the first major intervention in British immigration law. Previously, any immigrant desirous of entering Britain to live and work, and by signature willing to abide by its laws, was permitted to come through any British port and take up ordinary residency; immigration *into* Britain was still at such a slow trickle that no legislation had hitherto proven ‘necessary’. However, Balfour and his government – his name may be particularly and ironically familiar because it is on the Balfour Declaration of 1917, providing British support for the establishment of a “national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine” – believed that the admission of Jews fleeing pogroms and other institutionalized violence in Tsarist Russia was a threat to the stability of British life. This was especially troublesome to his party especially given the contemporaneously escalating xenophobic political situation in Ireland with the Anglo-Irish system of land ownership. Previously to the Aliens act of 1905, “while Britain pursued a liberal nationality regime in the 19th century, [this liberalism] still needs to be seen as one of the building blocks for excluding foreigners from the civil rights of wealthier Britons in an emerging...parliamentary democracy”(Panayi, 211). Balfour’s 1905 act introduced several clauses into Britain’s relatively open system of borders, creating one of the first systems of regulated immigration ports in the Western Hemisphere¹³, and provided a conditional system of

¹³ “An immigrant shall not be landed in the United Kingdom from an immigrant ship except at a port where there is an immigration officer appointed under this Act, and shall not be landed at any such port without the Leave of that Officer given by inspection...”(2)

immigration requirements the likes of which had previously only been seen in the United States.¹⁴ It was also the first act in British legislature to make the violation of any immigration terms a criminal offence, providing an incentive for British lawmakers to create further discriminatory clauses which principally affected areas in which immigrant populations congregated, and new criminal ‘offences’ and stipulations (which they quickly did). It was not the newly extreme specificity of the language surrounding moving (or fleeing) to Britain, however, that was the intent of this act, but in the vague stipulations addressed in the Act’s first paragraph, and weakly tempered by the milquetoast language of its third.

The 1905 act moved that immigrants deemed “unsuitable or undesirable” by any British immigration officer would not be given leave to land or remain in Great Britain, and if they did enter, would then be removable or at immediate risk of removal by either a magistrate or the Secretary of State. The paragraph below this contests that the mere suggestion that an immigrant “seeking admission to [the] country solely to avoid prosecution or punishment on political or religious grounds” (5) would “be a public charge” would not be “suitable or reasonable” grounds for removal. No conditions are given by which such an extra-ordinary immigrant (especially one who might not speak English, or did not have a “British father”)(6) might contest such a ruling. The law, as such, provided the conditions and the form for removal, but not any such conditions or form for its reversal or contestation, and laid the groundwork for the legislative morass of the ‘ordinary/desirable’ question, which, as discussed above, persists to this day.

While the Act itself does not contain any specific reference to either an ethnic or national group of immigrants, it is widely understood (both now by historians, and contemporaneously as

¹⁴ This is a multi-part section, but it introduces discriminatory physical and mental qualifications: “if he is a lunatic or an idiot, or owing to any disease or infirmity appears likely to become a charge upon the rates or otherwise detrimental to the public”(3), work-suitability requirements and the need to “decently support himself and his dependents”(4), or if “he has committed an offence of a political character...or is [under] an expulsion order.”(4)

the population of immigrants in the United Kingdom grew) that the act was intended to stem the flow of Eastern European migrants fleeing the vicissitudes of Tsarist violence. Although, as William D. Rubinstein writes, a slowing in Jewish immigration to Britain at this time could conceivably have also been due to “perceptions of greater economic opportunity in America”(157), it seems irrefutably true that a new immigration act, created as a direct consequence of widespread “agitation to restrict Jewish immigration [that] began in the 1880s and became more outspoken through the actions of a number of right-wing groups and activists”(JVL, 1) placed what scholars of the period have dubbed “the Jewish Question” at the front and centre of British immigration policy. As the Jewish Virtual Library also states, directly following the First World War, “the 1905 Act was immediately replaced by a much more stringent one which virtually ended Jewish immigration to Britain until the 1930s.” This correlation is oddly rarely remarked, especially given the *explicitly* racist rhetoric and concerns of anti-Semitism surrounding Britain’s recent defection from the European Union¹⁵. Britain began her immigration policy on an anti-Semitic footing, and used the language and the precedent that this set to put in place a series of policies that would mark the beginning of

¹⁵ Britain’s relatively small Jewish population (currently around some 300.000 British Jews) were unusually split on the subject of which party to vote for during Brexit. Britain’s Jewish population has historically been overwhelmingly affiliated with the Labour Party, but due to fears of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn’s stance on the Jewish population the Jewish Labour Movement “decided not to campaign nationally”(New York Times, 2018) in 2018 for the first time ever in its 100-year history. The *Jewish Chronicle* published an article explicitly for “those who would not normally read” it, stating that while “putting oneself in the shoes of another person or group can be difficult...the vast majority by poll (87%) of British Jews consider Jeremy Corbyn to be an anti-Semite...[and] that nearly half (47 percent) of the Jewish community said in that same poll that they would “seriously consider” emigrating if Mr. Corbyn w[on] on December 12”(Jewish Chronicle, 2019) However, voting for Boris Johnson was also a deeply unpopular choice, both because of his staunch support of the Leave campaign but also because of his storied history of racial insensitivity and subsequent jovial British exhortations not to “take it all so seriously”(New York Times, 2019.) Johnson has publicly referred to African-American children as “pickaninnies”, compared Muslim women in hijab to “letterboxes” (both New York Times 2019), and in his book, accused “Jewish Oligarchs” of “running the media” and interfering with political process (*The Guardian*, 2019, and Boris Johnson, *Seventy-Two Virgins*)

formally racialized travel restrictions across Europe and the British Empire.¹⁶ Britain's immigration policy since 1905 has taken this Act as a basis in both precedent and practice; it has remained the foundation of British immigration law and is still regularly cited in cases of policy change. Its significance and novelty cannot be underestimated. It also provided the most significant precedent for other countries in Europe to begin more extreme regulations on the admission of immigrants, and bolstered America's ever-straitening system of stipulations for acceptable levels of ordinariness/desirability. Britain's borders, at the turn of the century, had snapped their teeth shut with the passing of one law, and in so doing had also caught its then-comparatively large, and varied Jewish population between them; whether as prospective immigrants or residents facing new degrees of imperilment.

Within Britain in the thirty or so years before the 1905 act, public anti-immigrant and anti-Jewish feeling had apparently grown so strong - in the urban centers of East London and Manchester in particular)¹⁷ that a Royal Commission was established to investigate a course-correction for national policy. This policy fell under the umbrella of what Major Evans-Gordon, a Tory MP in Prime Minister Balfour's party would euphemistically call "The Aliens Question"¹⁸; also the first time that this word had entered the common parlance of immigration law. The extraordinary amount of popular provocation required to provoke the formation of a Royal Commission to deal with British public feeling, and its highly specific focus on areas

¹⁶ It is worth noting also here that Britain's discriminatory immigration policies were not restricted to ethnic, racial or national groups outside of its own colonies. Any British subject technically had right of residence before the Citizens Act of 1948 and the Ireland Act of 1949, but after these changes came into effect, one's status as a British subject had no bearing on one's ability to immigrate to the UK. The actual enforcement of these changes primarily affected British subjects of colour and those otherwise easily identifiable as nonwhite Anglo-Saxons – this discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter in full, but will be more explicitly addressed in my work on Bowen. See Paul Gilroy, Homi Bhabha, Vivek Chibber, and Lara Putnam here and elsewhere.

¹⁷ (Glover, 123, Panayi, 209)

¹⁸ This moniker eventually lent itself to later British legislature and persists in almost all contemporary immigration legislation in the Western Hemisphere.

where Jewish diasporic communities had formed is emphasized by David Glover in his *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England*. Glover, in this text, discusses various “reports” that British private citizens made on the “alien”(read: Jewish) populations of Britain’s inner cities, and the efforts of this Commission to ‘understand’ the situation in which Britain’s Jewish immigrants lived:

[these reports were]part of a rising curve of similar stories during the period from August 1903, when the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration reported, through to the early months of 1905, when the Conservatives decided to make a new Aliens Bill one of their two key pieces of legislation for the coming Parliamentary session. By this time, the sheer accumulation of ‘facts’ about immigration led to a new focus on how these data were to be understood and whose interpretations of these narratives of exit and entry were to take precedence... those who were called upon by the Commission to represent [the English Jewish] experience typically belonged to an older generation, those who had lived in Britain for ten or twenty years. The *sole* [my emphasis] ‘distressed English Jew’ to speak before this Commission was born in Manchester and had been a British resident for two decades— instructively, the usual adjective ‘destitute’ or ‘pauper’ was replaced by a more genteel designation, perhaps because he was not, *strictu sensu*, an alien and therefore did not warrant the standard pejorative phraseology. (127)

Regardless then of the fact that a large Jewish population of all degrees of orthodoxy and/or interpellation with British culture had been living in Britain for generations before this Act was passed, British conservative public opinion against immigrants had found a new focus. Jewish residents of the United Kingdom legislatively lost whatever amount of integrative ordinariness they had acquired, and were resituated in the spotlight as scapegoats of the British imagined community’s fear of change.

As with almost every move or shift in public opinion, however, the attention of Britain’s liberal intellectual community had also turned toward immigration and, inextricably, the “Jewish Question” that it provoked at the turn of the century. As Amanda Anderson writes, the mere fact of such a ‘question’ and its relationship to late Victorian nationhood for the writers and thinkers of the period “interrogates the limits of modernity”(“George Eliot and the Jewish Question, 39).

Such a question necessarily also calls into the question the status of Britain as a *destination* for its subjects, rather than solely as a point of egress for its colonists. This “interrogation of modernity” happens in multitudinous places, but arguably most publicly and with the greatest amount of generated controversy for the Victorian era’s great stalwart of social representation, George Eliot. It is particularly notable here that the novel Eliot wrote during the beginnings of this public-facing redrawing of the borders of the ordinary is her only published text set in her contemporary moment. *Daniel Deronda*, in its approach to Englishness ordinary national sociality, was a book for George Eliot about *right now*.

Eliot, of course, serves as a touchstone for many critics of both the novel and of Empire in this period -- Raymond Williams in the same essay cited earlier on the knowable community asserts that “the difference between Jane Austen and George Eliot and Hardy is not the sudden disintegration of a settled, traditional order but a change in literary bearings which allows them suddenly to be seen, which brings into focus a persistent rural disturbance hitherto unrepresented in fiction. ...”(256). Eliot’s focus on the “change in bearings”, which makes the world more comprehensible through literary representation, is particularly valuable here when the subject of inquiry is the relationship between the ‘knowable community’s’ “settled, provincial order” and a novel which might show the underpinnings of that community’s assumptions about its constituents and its limitations. Terry Eagleton, also on Eliot and nationalism, notes the vast political potential of her work’s cosmopolitanism in “The Subject of Literature”, writing that “as George Eliot reminds us, there is no personal life that is not determined by a wider public one, and the way we deal with each other in our smallest interpersonal encounters is not finally separable from the destiny of nation”(103). Eagleton’s assertion in this part of the essay is that, for Eliot and for her contemporaries, any subject, regardless of their positionality is inseparable

from national sociality and the nation as they are constituted *by* and *for* it, or made abnormal *by* and excluded *from* it.

Indeed Eliot's final novel could not be more explicitly situated as a response to the complex social situation surrounding a newly-globalizing Britain and its growing Jewish population. It is a text which places the new porosity of Britain's borders and the fragility of the knowable community at the forefront of its formal and narrative aims, and in which, as Eliot herself writes, "the time-honoured British resource of 'killing something' is no longer carried on with bow and quiver; bands defining their passes against an invading nation fight under another sort of shade than a cloud of arrows; and poisoned darts are either harmless survivals either in rhetoric or in regions comfortably remote (*Deronda*, 134). *Daniel Deronda* is a deeply contentious text- this not least, also, because it so clearly states its intentions to supersede its temporality, and to provide a glimpse of a future beyond Eliot's own era, even given its eventual vagueness and opacity. It is a text in which, as Bhabha suggests, "the question of cultural difference emerges as a challenge to relativistic notions of the diversity of culture...[and] reveals the margins of modernity."(*Nation and Narration*, 8) On this relationship between the text's uncertain endings, its relative modernity and its attention to the "Jewish Question"(39) Amanda Anderson writes that "Eliot's own focus on the illuminating position of the modern European Jew grew out of the insight [that]...even the most reflective dialogical models can harbor violent blindnesses and exclusions...such negative potentialities are best guarded against not by rejecting the ideals of modernity, but by continuously testing them against the articulated experience of the excluded particular"(58). In her work with "articulated experience" Eliot's novel acts in formal anticipation, giving the reader an idea of what English intersubjectivity after the turn of the century *could* look like, instead of providing a prescriptive ending to any part of

the text. Both its narrative and its form, aside from being quite experimental, are heavy with a preoccupation toward the futurity of Britain's changing borders.

As such, *Daniel Deronda*, without containing a single instance of contentious border-crossing, is a novel which directly intervenes in the coterminous arenas of immigrant identity and national identity. It does this, as previously mentioned, by taking up and exploring a contemporaneous English subjectivity and the relationship of this subject-position position to being *ordinarily and successfully English*. The two most prominent of these modes of subjectivity in the novel are the states of absolute, identifiable, unremarkable, ordinary Englishness, and its opposite, which takes many forms but is in this text primarily iterated as Jewishness of any degree.

I should say at this early juncture that it is not the intent of this chapter to take up the merits of Eliot's arguments on Zionism, nor at the other end to posit that Jewish immigrants and residents of any degree of orthodoxy or moderateness of Great Britain were at the time the only minority group to undergo alienation, discrimination or prejudice. It is also not my intention in this chapter to intervene directly on the subject of whether Eliot *should even have written* about the Jewish subjects of *Daniel Deronda*; such an intervention on identity politics is beyond the scope of this chapter, and has been productively addressed by many other scholars. Rather, my reading of Eliot takes up the public zeitgeist surrounding Jewish Englishness as a concept which had somewhat subsumed all other discourses on immigration in Eliot's contemporary period. It interrogates the relationship between Jewish Englishness as a mode of being and 'ordinary' or unremarkable Englishness as its foil, along the lines of the "ordinary/desirable" binary so clearly delineated by Eliot in this text. *Daniel Deronda* is not so much a novel about English social life and its workings as it is one about the unspoken *limits* of English sociality both for the reader and

for Eliot's characters, and one which directly addresses the effects of a nationalism so insular and so regulated that it is not instantly recognizable as such. These features are what make it so useful as an extended example to discuss nationalism within the context of form. Cultural hegemonies, especially those within the geographical bounds of the colonizer's country, as Edward Said tells us in *Orientalism*, "work not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent"(7) The English ordinary is effective and pervasive in Eliot *because* it behaves as it does in real life; it is enforced both consensually and by unspoken public consensus. Its presence is compulsory but not noticeable.

Jewishness as a discrete identity and Englishness as the baseline for both assimilability and desirability are figured by the end of the novel as being irreconcilable, in that they cannot ever be thought of as being *the same* state of being, as Englishness itself is, as a hegemonic and cultural state, enacted rather than lived. However, Eliot also does not describe them as structures of being which exist on different registers. English Jews – characters who identify and practice an existence *as* English Jews - do exist in the novel, both as minor characters in the narrative flow (the Cohen family, the gentlemen listed above, many others) and as members of self-described lines of descent to which the text pays real narrative attention. Jews who do not identify as English people exist as productive and welcomed members of English communities. Eliot posits a thoroughly discussed and granular set of distinctions between English, English Jewish (which is functionally similar, but by which I mean all modes of English Jewish life, not "moderate Jews") and non-English identifying Jewish identity in the text as all being forms of life which can and do co-exist with ordinary Englishness. To give a brief example of this tricky suspension, Daniel's mother, the formidable Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein, explains to Daniel that although his grandfather's home and his own surname are Italian, her own mother

“was English, a Jewess of Portuguese descent”(696). Eliot here describes a direct relationship between the words “English” and “Jewess”, but attenuates the other nationalized qualifier, “Portuguese”: Daniel’s grandmother was not only an English Jew, but one whose English and Jewish identities supersede all other cultural denominations. In a direct echo of the problematic of the two concurrent “halves” of the novel, Eliot presents her reader with an image of English cosmopolitanism in the face of globalization wherein two truths are visible as a simultaneously present whole through her work with form.

Englishness is English, Jewishness is Jewishness (not Judaism or even the state of *being Jewish*, but the way the English and Eliot *conceive* Jewishness) but any English Jewishness is formally both Jewishness and Englishness. Daniel Deronda himself is the avatar of this problematic. He is English for most of the novel, but it is then revealed that he has *been Jewish the entire time*, substantially problematizing the text’s critical approach to the portrayal and the parameters of Englishness as it excludes ‘remarkable’ Jewishness. Gwendolen Harleth, as if set up as an opposing example in stark contrast to Daniel, however is *only* English, and cannot seem to be anything else. She is, despite her successes, *only* desirable, ordinary, legible, local, where Daniel is (while having had the capacity to manifest all of these traits previously) now also extraordinary, illegible, foreign *as well as* ordinary, legible and local. He is now, and he has been.

Native Talent.

“I wish he knew that I am not so contemptible as he thinks me; that I am in deep trouble, and want to be something better if I could.” Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest; a sort of trust less rare than the fidelity that guards it. Young reverence for one who is also young is the most coercive of all: there is the same level of temptation, and the higher motive is believed in as a

fuller force... perhaps in that ideal consecration of Gwendolen's, some education was being prepared for Deronda."
George Eliot.

Is there a bad Eliot novel, or – relatedly -- even an ordinary one? In a critical moment where the phrase “evaluative reading” is as damning as any other for a literary scholar, it is of particular interest that readings which use the former adjective oddly recur and recur around the works of George Eliot, an academic who wrote for both a popular audience and with the intent to be written *about*. *Middlemarch*, in particular, Eliot's 1872 blockbuster, is often written about with a kind of reverent deference, an unwillingness to engage in what might be seen as a critique of the unimpeachable Eliot at the height of her powers, where even minor furbelows are viewed as characterful quirks “great, and... her greatness...qualified by characteristic weaknesses” (Leavis, 1982). Ironically, there seems to be an understanding of a similar paradoxical water to that surrounding prospective immigrants within the imagined community of the Eliot novel: because Eliot's writing is usually agreed to be so masterful, an ‘ordinary’ Eliot novel is always already a ‘desirable’ one. At the base level, it seems, her novels are wonderful, accomplished, inspired. Within this, though, at the other end of the spectrum from *Middlemarch*, is *Daniel Deronda*, which many critics have concluded is merely half a masterpiece and not worth inclusion in the community of her other texts. It is remarkable because it is not like her other novels, and as such, is an unwelcome member of that sacrosanct group.¹⁹ These assertions remain relevant because they are so consistent – to discuss *Deronda* without either mentioning the debate or actually making an intervention as to whether it is, in fact, two novels of relatively good and poor quality is a rarity in scholarly writing.

¹⁹ This language sounds bellicose until one has read enough essays comparing *Daniel Deronda* to any of her other texts.

The most well-known of these assertions is, of course, F.R. Leavis's - in 1962, in the same piece above cited, Leavis famously renamed Eliot's novel "Gwendolen Harleth" after its heroine, asserting that the novel is composed of two irreconcilable halves, and writing in acerbic review: "That George Eliot should have been so unconscious of the incompatibility of the spirits she has in fact married together is one of the things that seem most to justify [the novel's] usual dismissal...." Leavis's criticism has remained powerfully present in subsequent readings of the text, particularly his argument that the novel is fundamentally bifurcated by both the relative quality and the level of social importance of its two "halves." William Baker, in a short study of Leavis's notes on *Deronda*, comments that from Leavis's writings it seems that "George Eliot's presence in her narrative"(13) is what is truly of concern, especially in the "Zionist novel", as he calls the 'Daniel half'"(14). This idea, that a novel containing two characters and two interrelated narratives is really two books forced into one frame by an over-present authorial voice has been a through-line in *Deronda* commentary from the novels' publication. Margaret Rowe writes much more recently in *Studies in the Novel* that *Deronda* was Eliot's "most dramatic embodiment of her self-proclaimed 'weaknesses', particularly the 'tendency to melt off the outlines of things'"(10). This critique of oversaturation or, perhaps, even slapdashery in pursuit of the development of narrative voice is also deeply imbricated with commentary on Eliot's work with empire, gender and nation. Critical consensus seems to be that one half of the book, "Gwendolen Harleth" is an English society novel in the realist mode – the tradition into which the 'ordinary/desirable' Eliot novel might be said to fit– and the "Daniel half" is, in direct opposition, a problematic fable of the secret foreigner, the Englishman who reveals himself all along to have been Jewish and who embarks on a somewhat fantastical quest, and is thus

irreconcilable with the aims of Eliot's greater project. *Deronda* is, by critical consensus, a book that does not belong, either to one half of itself, or to Eliot's oeuvre as a whole.

Leavis's suggestion that the 'Gwendolen half' should be truncated and published alone was, however, importantly countered and preceded by assertions of the "Daniel" section's own import from Jewish academics and religious figures alike in Eliot's contemporary moment. David Kaufmann, a German Jewish scholar and correspondent of Eliot's in 1877 asserted that her text presented the state of English Jewish life "with a depth of comprehension hitherto unreachd, and with unexampled grandeur and independence of judgement...in the Valhalla of Jewish people, *DANIEL DERONDA* will take its place as the proudest testimony of English recognition"(23-4). Kaufmann, writing to Eliot, also stated that although Benjamin Disraeli was at the time Prime Minister, a fact that "tell[s] much in England's honour"(23), a grand part of the importance of Eliot's work with English Jewish life was Eliot's assertion that such a life *was* in itself an English life, and not one that was as fundamentally separable from that social sphere as the novel's detractors posited: "even in [England's] literature there are not wanting voices to calumniate the Jews and Judaism, for it is exactly because within her midst the Jewish people have public justice accorded to them *in their quality of Jews* [my emphasis] that the Jew passes all the more for an alien, and must in consequence bear the weight of prejudice, like everything unknown." (25) The tension between readers of the novel, in short, seems to hang on the question of 'separation', but with the tacit acknowledgement that such a critique is fundamentally evaluative and points more to a flaw in the novel than a course of generative theoretical action. Depending on how one squints, one 'novel' apparently is real, one imaginary, one good, one bad, one interrogative of the division between racial and ethnic groups in Britain and one accepting -- both alone and by comparison. This is perplexing because it certainly

seems abstruse that - within the canon of English literature, a place which Eliot undeniably occupies - an author so universally lauded as Eliot could have produced something that so many critical voices have chorused is (quite variably) a one-sided flop, and yet one that so many seem also to love.

It is very possible that *Daniel Deronda* is simply not English, nor Victorian enough to be legible as an Eliot *Bildungsroman* within that designation's rigid aesthetic category, especially as the text works to show the limits of a nationally-delineated version of development, rather than within them. It could also be, as Jesse Rosenthal writes, the persistent hangover of the *fin de siècle* temptation to read this text as "moralism over formalism, good intentions over good writing" (3). These both seem bold claims, particularly given that *Deronda* is certainly not the least English of the author's texts, nor does the setting of the text within the boundaries of England necessarily affect its cultural positionality or its ethical system. *Romola* is set entirely in fifteenth-century Florence, for instance, and both *The Lifted Veil* and *Brother Jacob* either take place in or make strong reference to some very ethically questionable high jinks in locations off the island. Much of the least savoury action in *Middlemarch* happens in Italy. By "English enough", however, I do not mean that the text does not address the particularly English social problems from which Eliot's career grew. Neither do I mean exactly that it seeks to posit new forms of addressing or interpreting Englishness in a way that directly critiques the substance of that state of being in a way that would traditionally fit into a Modernist or Victorian/ist methodology. It does not, for instance, enact an elegy for Englishness like Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End*, which looks at the Victorian and Edwardian periods as a kind of crystallization of the social values of the "Tory of the extinct type" and the power of "monogamy and chastity and not talking about it" (11,18), and hence approaches the limitations of the village's imagination as

necessarily monolithic. Nor does it delve particularly deeply into the variegated strata of an English country town or urban center, or contemporaneously take up the “fair amateur experience”(3) of documenting the seamier parts of life in nocturnal Victorian London, as Dickens does in *Night Walks* as a way of displaying variegation in British cultural identity while disavowing hybridity.

Rather than overtly address the discrete issues of national ordinariness as it relates to the constituents of a national community, Eliot suggests subtly over and over again that nationalized modes of identity formation in *Daniel Deronda* push against themselves, within each of the text’s two narratives and also as her two protagonists come into contact with one another. She does not tell her reader what is bad and what is ordinary, but in typically Eliotic fashion compels the reader to do the intellectual work of deciding for themselves if the way society treats her characters is fair. For example, at the beginning of chapter 36, before the New Year’s Dance and a sequence of passages that are almost entirely dialogues on social belonging between sets of characters in twos, Eliot’s narrator interjects that “Since we cannot tell a man his own secrets, the restraint of being in his company often breeds a desire to pair off in conversation with some more ignorant person”(485) The reader, having been thus informed that all the dialogue to follow is sure to be both subjective and conjectural, is presented with a series of interactions which exhibit differing ‘ordinary’ and ‘remarkable’ modes of Englishness, and given the opportunity without coercion to decide which is which. Nationalism and belonging in *Daniel Deronda* are not, as they are in other Eliot novels, in the background.

It is central to my reading of Eliot’s discussion of national identity that the two versions of the novel of development in which Daniel and Gwendolen appear are so intricately interwoven and interspersed with parallelisms and dualities that they invite the reader to conflate

them, rather than critique them separately. They create an idiolect of ordinariness and acceptance between them as they form a pair, while the formal elements of their narratives perform a model of English exclusionism that reflects both Eliot's contemporary xenophobia and a form of reparative nationalist friendship or inclusion, or "affective community"(Gandhi, 11) Eliot is metanarratively commenting on the decline of the mid-Victorian social novel as form through the implicit discussion of each "section" by its surrounding text. Almost no choice by Daniel or Gwendolen is left undiscussed, and Daniel's success is both amplified by and causally linked to Gwendolen's failure, no matter how little his actions relate to her choices or happenstance. Eliot's narrator, at the end of the section just mentioned, actually interjects to inform her reader that this is happening; she comments that she "like[s] to mark the time, and connect the course of individual lives with the historic stream, for all classes of thinkers." (122)

Disconcertingly however, at least from its bones and especially at the outset, *Deronda* seems as if it might be a reasonably typical example of an Eliot text. As with most of Eliot's novels, it's certainly clear that *Daniel Deronda* contains an evident and central doctrine of exemplary behaviour for some characters to which they can only sometimes live up, and which "creates a tension between theory and existence"(Amanda Anderson, 2013, 444).) It also contains, as much of Eliot's work does, a great deal of thought about exemplarity and the extraordinary as elements of some special characters who exceed the moral expectations of their challenging and rigid society, as Eliot "constantly reminds her readers of the forces and conditions struggling individuals are up against"(Anderson, 446).The text is undeniably both a social novel and a novel of development, and being an Eliot novel, in being so it is also one which places high expectations of exemplary behaviour on characters blessed with special gifts and judgement. Eliot even initially casts her characters in the typically romantic Victorian

mould of her previous *Bildungshelds*. Portraits are given to the reader, in the rapid succession typical of Eliot's prose, of a socially successful young woman who "naturally found it difficult to think her own pleasure less important than others made it"(19) and a raffish young man whose first act in the book is to – unannounced by the author until after this interlude – ask the novel's infamous opening question, "Was she beautiful or not beautiful?"(4) This preoccupation with the special and the extraordinary for Eliot's *Bildungshelds* , however, does not, in my reading, in any way prevent this text from enacting a critique of ordinary systems of belonging. Rather, by paying attention to Eliot's approach to portraying her contemporary society's focus on ordinariness, that doctrine of exemplarity becomes another way in which these characters are put into opposition to that society. Eliot's novel introduces the demands of acquiescing ordinary subjectivity as being another "tension between theory and existence" (444) with which Daniel and Gwendolen characters must grapple, as any character's exemplary tendencies run the risk of violating the rules of "being British" as much as any other foreign quality. It is entirely possible in this text, as I hope will become clear over the scope of this chapter, to live according to a strict moral doctrine and to be extraordinarily ethical, and to simultaneously be ordinarily British for an Eliot character; it just depends on one's circumstances and the tendency of one's actions to provoke or to presage unwelcomed "change in the village"(Williams, 2555). The "village" in this novel is a well-populated social environment, as is the case with Eliot's other major texts. Concerned parents and guardians are introduced quickly, as are friends of varying calibers of trustworthiness and moral fibre, love interests and a central problematic which forms its crux around social status, financial stability, ethics and loyalty. This description graphs fairly smoothly onto the majority of Eliot's texts: however, as K.M. Newton writes, "clearly if Eliot still perceived *Deronda* as belonging to the Realist paradigm, critical interpretation has to try to

account for what seem to be departures from Realism, notably the novel's links with romance, [however, Eliot] would not have accepted that there was a dichotomy between Realism and the imagination"(243) . The assertion that Eliot's text "owes something to the Romance", however, reads today as a somewhat problematic one.

The basis on which Newton's assertion is made – and many assertions like it, which move that a certain amount of genre-bending must be happening - is that it is *only* in the tradition of Dumas or other predecessors of literary realism that Daniel's plot arc of self-discovery as both a Jew and an Englishman may be carried out. The idea that a wealthy young orphaned Englishman should, by such chance as afforded by the novel, meet and fall in love with a Jewish woman, meet and become a friend and then disciple of her brother Mordecai and then himself discover that he is Jewish, is presented as a departure from Britain's hegemonic reality. Such cross-pollinations of cultural paradigms it seems, are necessarily outside the realm of possibility even in a London where the Jewish presence was so high as – as we have seen – to provoke widespread government inquest and debate as to how to best resolve conservative, separatist clamour. Even as Newton writes that such a move is Eliot's method of "creating an interplay between [Romantic] modes of expression and her own"(244), this version of separating out Eliot's narratives reads itself as somewhat sectarian. Such arguments seem even stranger, and even more problematically tied to the text's relationship to Daniel's Jewish identity when one notes that Gwendolen spends almost as much of the novel being described in a surreal or supernatural mode as he. Indeed, she begins the novel as a supernatural figure. She is "beautiful or not beautiful"(3), at an intangible impasse, is shortly described as wearing an "*ensemble du serpent*" (6), and then described as having a "Lamia beauty"(7). Descriptions of extraordinary/undesirable instances in which Gwendolen's life and actions take unpleasant and

unpredictable turns around – indeed, the term “romantic” seems oddly applied to Daniel when it is Gwendolen for whom many of the most important moments in the text could be lifted directly from a Keats poem, where she is actually “alone and palely loitering”(“La Belle Dame Sans Merci”1:2) . A little after the Lamia incident, when considering marrying her eventual spouse, the Baronet Grandcourt, Gwendolen has an encounter with a figure who seems to appear out of nowhere, in the most mystical and Anglo-Saxon of settings possible:

She was falling back among the rest, when suddenly they seemed all to be hurrying obliquely forward under the guidance of Mr. Lush, and lingering a little where she was, she perceived her opportunity of slipping away. Soon she was out of sight, and without running she seemed to herself to fly along the ground and count the moments nothing till she found herself back again at the Whispering Stones. They turned their blank gray sides to her: what was there on the other side? If there were nothing after all? That was her only dread now—to have to turn back again in mystification; and walking round the right-hand stone without pause, she found herself in front of someone whose large dark eyes met hers at a foot’s distance. In spite of expectation, she was startled and shrank back, but in doing so she could take in the whole figure of this stranger and perceive that she was unmistakably a lady, and one who must have been exceedingly handsome. She perceived, also, that a few yards from her were two children seated on the grass. (128)

This encounter is with her future husband’s mistress, and his illegitimate children, one of whom is described as a “cherub...sitting on the grass”(128). As if to cement the import of this archetypal moment, both hyper-English and quite extra-ordinary, Eliot then writes that Gwendolen “...watching Mrs. Glasher’s face while she spoke, felt a sort of terror: it was as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, “I am a woman’s life.”(129). Several critics have noted that Eliot’s unusually specific descriptions of Lydia Glasher might also be another element of the destabilization of the ‘ordinary’ in the text as it relates to identities beyond the culturally or ethnically British. Kathleen Slaugh-Sanford suggests that “a closer examination of this relatively neglected character reveals a subtle yet consistent move by Eliot to continually colour Lydia, her children and her environment with black and dark features...a

technique commonly utilized by Victorian writers to rhetorically differentiate between ‘pure’ Anglo-Europeans and members of racially “impure” groups, such as the Irish [and] the Jews...”(401) Slauch-Sanford’s essay goes on to suggest that Eliot’s subtle manipulation of this rhetoric within the text is a kind of structural destabilization within itself of the ‘safety’ of white English identity. Glasher’s four illegitimate children would be enough to exclude her from the boundaries of conventional, ordinary English society, but Eliot has, in Glasher, also subtly exceeded the category of Anglo-European femininity in a way that makes her non-normatively English.

Gwendolen’s encounter with these children and their mother is made doubly extraordinary by the fact that they are quite literally *not where they are supposed to be*: her experience of these undesirable figures is akin to the way in which the British community is represented as ‘welcoming’ non-British subjects – one of both of discomfort and fear of their sub-ordinary provenance and a sort of moral outrage that they have trespassed on her territory uninvited. As Gwendolen’s (a woman with no non-English markers) own life does turn out to be something of a ghastly vision, such a moment of presage as Glasher gives her of her own eventual downfall can hardly be discounted for its own extraordinariness. Gwendolen’s life, when she eventually marries the Baronet Grandcourt, is proven to be a hardscrabble and painful one, and she is only released from it when he drowns on a sailing expedition upon which he insists on taking her; an accident that directly parallels the watery circumstance in which Daniel finds his own eventual spouse. Gwendolen’s “half” of the text, although perhaps legibly in a sense more traditionally English, is equally as fantastical as Daniel’s, and actually situates itself far more often in foreign climes.

Daniel himself, as an English gentleman, is made secure in his English identity through an absolutely comfortable financial cushion; British national identity is, even when considered as a monolithic structure, still subdivided by class, and being an ordinary/desirable member of the society of gentleman means funds. He is moneyed in the most unremarkable of ways through luck – as Eliot writes, “it is the uneven allotment of nature that the male bird alone has the tuft”(123), and as Victoria Shinbrot comments on Daniel’s unwitting allocation of financial security, “chance propels the narrative undercurrent of the novel” to the extent that Daniel, within his repeated boons of financial betterment “becomes an inadvertent gambler” (65). This luck does not extend across Eliot’s narrative border; Gwendolen loses money despite trying to win it, and gains it only at the expense of several pyrrhic victories. Financial security is only tentatively linked to ability, however, making the novel’s discourse on money even more clearly linked to its discourse on nationality. Being rich does not make one English, but staying rich if one is born into a moneyed class is vitally important if one wishes to remain ordinary/desirable. Some people are born in England and are thus already English. Some other people, however, have to struggle to remain ordinarily/desirably English.

Eliot’s reader is informed, however, that the distribution of these personal abilities for personal improvement is also not equally dispersed within the text. Daniel, as evidenced through his novel-length struggle at great personal cost to come to terms with his “actual nature” (223) is almost preternaturally perseverant. His ordinary state of being is one of presence, not absence in the face of adversity, even in dire straits. He does not work for his money, but he works for everything else. Gwendolen, however, is not blessed with fortitude or natural perseverance: “though never even as a child thoughtlessly cruel...[and her] nature not remorseless, ...she liked to make her penances easy”(53). In matters specifically of money as it relates to nationalized

belonging, Eliot at the end of the text (when Gwendolen is left as the beneficiary of her husband's fortune) has also just provided her reader with the assurance from Daniel's estranged mother that her son will receive even more money than he had previously been left. "You see", the Princess drily explains, "I had no life left to love you with...but there is more fortune for you. Sir Hugo was to keep it in reserve. I gave you all your father's fortune, they can never accuse me of robbery there." (703) Gwendolen, having been forced into a deleterious marriage with an abusive partner, only receives her ordinary widow's allotment after his death; a poor compensation for a miserable relationship, but a far more "ordinary" allocation of wealth than Daniel's windfall.

Daniel, in stark opposition, who would far have preferred a relationship with his mother to an additional portion of fortune, is denied a change in his system of relationships which would add another element of the foreign to his web of contacts. Both receive fortunes, and both lose (or fail to gain) a relationship with a disinterested party. This equivalency however still does not bestow equality; Daniel meets his mother (an act he wanted), is informed about his background (information he went seeking) and receives a fortune (more fortunate if inadvertent "gambling"). Gwendolen loses an abusive husband (a net gain masquerading as a loss) but also loses a great deal of her own sense of purpose and of belonging when she 'loses' Daniel to his new identity. Eliot explicitly suggests that Gwendolen's relationship to her own ordinariness and desirability undergoes a sea change when Daniel informs her that he is no longer merely English; I would argue also that this is a moment in which the text metanarratively highlights the nationalized boundaries of the *Bildungsroman* as a form:

The world seemed getting larger around poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and hopeless in the midst...she felt herself reduced to a mere speck. There comes a terrible time to many souls when the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind...enter like an earthquake into their own lives...That was the sort of crisis

which was at this moment beginning in Gwendolen's small life: she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world. (677)

When Gwendolen is forced to confront the state of her own ordinariness, and the "small" nature of the developmental arc of her life, she is able to understand her subject-position in a way that might allow her to overcome some of the personal foibles that have plagued the "Unlikable Gwendolen" (Byatt, 19) throughout the text. "All the troubles of wifhood and widowhood" Eliot writes, "had still left her with the implicit impression which had accompanied her from childhood, that whatever surrounded her was somehow specially for her"(678). None of the machinations she has had to go through in order to maintain her ordinariness/desirability shake her like this stark revelation of the limits of the village's imagination; afterwards she looks so ill that she must reassure her mother that she "will live"(679).

Gwendolen's great revelation is, of course, exceeded by Daniel's; where her relationship to nationalized belonging and the ordinary/desirable is fundamentally changed for the worse, Daniel just receives another iteration of belonging. He also gains, perhaps most valuably in an economy of the text which privileges nationalized ordinariness, another national identity which can coexist with his English one; having been informed that his mother was Jewish, Daniel undergoes a philosophical shift; he is still as English as ever he was, but he is *also* Jewish. Having been informed of his true provenance, the information he required to commit to Mordecai's plan for him, to "give [the Jewish] people a national centre, such as the English have, although they are scattered across the face of the globe...a task that presents itself to me as a duty." (676) Daniel has far more in common with the conventionally English method of maintaining the ordinary fiscal standards of life than his co-protagonist, both in comparison to her, and to the comparable men of his age within the text. Although undeniably somewhat

unusual, this effortless method of accruing wealth for a young man already of means is not outside the scope of the ordinary even within the novel itself. Gwendolen's deceased husband, Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt, is the beneficiary of a very similar "contingency" to Daniel's; "for while the chance of the baronetcy came through his father, his mother had given a baronial streak to his blood, so that if certain intervening persons slightly painted in the middle distance died, he would become a baron and a peer of this realm." (422) Although Daniel by the end of the novel has temporarily renounced his fortune and departed with Mirah and Mordecai on their mission of spreading a kind of cosmopolitan Zionism, he elects to do this by *choice* and not by financial necessity, and is not required to give up his ordinary status in England, although he does cross its border toward the "East." Daniel accrues more and more signifiers of belonging throughout his life, while Gwendolen by virtue of knowing him only loses them.

Gwendolen's experience of the relationship to locality required of the English who might be considered ordinary/desirable is predictably rather more castigating by Eliot's narrator, who as Victoria Shinbrot further observes,

reserves little in her negative depiction of Gwendolen's vanity, her reliance on her beauty, and her willingness to rationalize away her failings with the aid of social approval. Nor does Eliot grant her redemption by the novel's end. It is safe to say that Eliot is hard on Gwendolen perhaps because she has a broader view in mind, one that goes beyond normative assessments of character and value. (142)

Gwendolen, in these rationalizations of failure, as Eliot observes, is "a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel... nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wire-work of social forms and does nothing particular" (53). She develops largely in a negative relationship to her environment, in that she knows what she does *not* want and attempts to move away from it, and has an idea about who might belong and who does not, within the "wire-work of social forms." We encounter her tenuous relationship to the ownership

of property, land and location at the beginning of the novel's first chapter, in which Eliot in narrating the ruin of Gwendolen's family describes in no uncertain terms the relationship between ordinarily belonging to a social or familial group and a firmly-rooted locality:

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labors men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amid the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and—kindly acquaintance with all neighbours, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood.... The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.(15)

Gwendolen's life is, of course, "rooted in a native land", but she is absolutely lacking in "the definiteness of early memories...inwrought with affection" (15). Her relationship to being both ordinary and desirable is as such directly related to the instability of her locality. In a 'conversation' about this passage for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Inges Sodre and A.S. Byatt discuss Gwendolen's failure to belong, Sodre observing that "Gwendolen isn't sufficiently rooted, which is interesting because she is excessively close to her mother, psychologically still a baby at the breast. Something is not internally established firmly enough for her to be able to separate"(19). Byatt agrees, having observed previously that "while she hurts nobody directly, and is deeply hurt by many people...it's quite interesting that throughout *Daniel Deronda*, nobody likes Gwendolen Harleth" (17). Throughout the text, Gwendolen is figured as having only a tentative relationship to the kind of English identity into which she was born. This begins in Eliot's narration with these light connections to Offendene, and then evolves to become an all-consuming need to belong to the imagined community of the English upper class, in which membership is predicated on the availability of capital. She cannot legibly be an ordinary

member of any of the other substrata of English life that make up the imagined community as a whole, but her ordinariness/desirability in this one is itself only delicately maintained through vanity, farce and luck. She variously must consider gambling her jewelry in order to preserve her financial security, taking up a career on the stage as a singer (which vital scene will be discussed shortly) becoming a governess, which fall would be the greatest of all for her, and finally marrying a man whom she does not love, and whom she has promised she will not wed at the risk of disinheriting his illegitimate children. All of these instances would, had she been obliged to uptake them, have at least risked Gwendolen's exclusion from the social circles in which she was used to moving. Taking on a position as a governess would have been irredeemably socially damaging to her, and her marriage to Grandcourt, while more "ordinary/desirable" by the standards of the British aristocracy is certainly both psychologically and physically destructive. Her ability to remain unremarkable in the negative sense, and as such to maintain her social position, is entirely predicated on uncertain sources of income which she cannot herself adequately generate.

All of Gwendolen's problems of belonging in this text are very specifically gendered as well as being nationally-inflected. Her actions within the scope of her relationship to ordinariness are almost entirely reactive, rather than proactive, especially in the first half of the novel, because of a performatively wrongheaded "favourite motto...of not doing as other women did"(210). She must accommodate herself to extenuating circumstances at great personal difficulty, often sacrificing things which had previously been important to her in order to secure the safety of herself and her family. Eliot explicitly links this to the limitations of ordinary national identity as it affects the capacity of women to work at the end of chapter 24, when Gwendolen is resigning

herself to the necessity to become a governess due to a lack of options (it must be read as the deepest of irony here that this section of the novel is called “Maiden’s Choosing”):

[Gwendolen] was possessed by a spirit of general disappointment. It was not simply that she had a distaste for what she was called on to do: the distaste spread itself over the world outside her penitentiary, since she saw nothing very pleasant in it that seemed attainable by her even if she were free. Naturally her grievances did not seem to her smaller than some of her male contemporaries held theirs to be when they felt a profession too narrow for their powers, and had an *à priori* conviction that it was not worthwhile to put forth their latent abilities. Because her education had been less expensive than theirs, it did not follow that she should have wider emotions or a keener intellectual vision. Her griefs were feminine; but to her as a woman they were not the less hard to bear, and she felt an equal right to the Promethean tone (233)

In this passage it becomes clear that the village’s limited imagination is a clear and present factor in Gwendolen’s decision-making. She is conscious of existing within a form, and conscious particularly of the currency of ordinariness being vital in order to earn actual sterling. She understands that she cannot comfortably exceed the boundaries of ordinary English life and retain its benefits, but also bemoans the fact that this structure is in place, comparing herself directly to “her male contemporaries when they felt a profession too narrow for their powers”(233). Gwendolen desires to remain in her social milieu, which means retaining as much of her socially-granted ordinariness as possible; but she also knows that the station in life she is threatened with having to take on is a descent into a different strata of ordinariness, and that her prevue is limited solely by her gender. Her narrative of development is inextricably linked to that which she perceives as being either advantageous to her or fundamentally beneath her, within the limits of the ordinary/desirable as she understands it.

In addition to these vicissitudes of plot and form, Eliot formally illustrates the claustrophobic nature of English public life for a young woman and the rigidity of its social mores through the constant insertion of additional perspectives on Gwendolen into her narrative;

as before, Gwendolen is always thinking about herself, but it quickly becomes clear that almost everyone else, especially in the sections of the novel which concern her, is mostly thinking about her too. Eliot's characters are always talking about Gwendolen when she is around, to a far greater extent than they ever do about anyone else, including the eponymous Daniel. When she is out of the room she is usually being discussed, even though apparently "Gwen minds nobody sometimes"(98). When she is in the room, the perspective of the text shifts so that Gwendolen herself falls out of the focus of Eliot's narrator and characters discussing her enter it: she is variously "looked at a girl likely to make a brilliant marriage"(98), a girl who "will not rest until she has the world at her feet"(99), and then, the narrator shifting focus to her own observations, is described as a sort of majordomo of every experience in which she participates, and whose very presence seems to act in itself as a regulatory quality on a contemporaneously English "form of life" :

It must be remembered that no one had disputed her power or her general superiority. As on the arrival at Offendene, so always, the first thought of those about her had been, what will Gwendolen think?—if the footman trod heavily in creaking boots, or if the laundress's work was unsatisfactory, the maid said, "This will never do for Miss Harleth"...If, when they were under the stress of traveling, she did not appear at the breakfast table till everyone else had finished, the only question was, how Gwendolen's coffee and toast should still be of the hottest and crispest; and when she appeared with her freshly-brushed light-brown hair streaming backward and awaiting her mamma's hand to coil it up, her large brown eyes glancing bright as a wave-washed onyx from under their long lashes... Always she was the princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour from the seven thin ears of wheat... How was this to be accounted for? The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface:—in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones, so that if she came into the room on a rainy day when everybody else was flaccid and the use of things in general was not apparent to them, there seemed to be a sudden, sufficient reason for keeping up the forms of life;... But beware of arriving at conclusions without comparison. I remember having seen the same assiduous, apologetic attention awarded to persons who were not at all beautiful or unusual... Some of them were a very common sort of men. And the only point of resemblance among them all was a strong determination to have what was pleasant, with a total fearlessness in making themselves disagreeable or dangerous when they did not get it...Hence I am forced to doubt whether even without

her potent charm and peculiar filial position Gwendolen might not still have played the queen in exile... For Macbeth's rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment, referred to the clumsy necessities of action and not to the subtler possibilities of feeling. We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent; we cannot kill and not kill in the same moment; but a moment is wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance. (70-71)

Eliot's narrator here in this long passage does two things which are particularly interesting in the scope of my argument. Firstly, she indicates that it is not necessarily something particularly "special" or extraordinary about Gwendolen that allows for this unusual treatment: Gwendolen is 'ordinary/desirable' but has no particular skills, but rather quite the opposite, a mere "strong determination to have what was pleasant, and a total fearlessness...in making [herself] dangerous." In this scene she is so provocative of the attention of everyone she encounters that she is presented as being absolutely at the centre of her social sphere, and yet, we are assured, even though there is "something unusual about her" it is not that which provokes the "assiduous, apologetic attention"(73). Secondly, the final section of the above paragraph differentiates between "the clumsy necessities of action" and the "subtler possibilities of feeling." It does not seem, in this section or others in the text, that Gwendolen is particularly skilled in provoking the "flaccid" people who surround her into love beyond the familial (her flaccid mother) or the superficial (her flaccid cousin). The effect of all of Gwendolen's charms and the apparent irreconcilability between her actions and feelings provoke very little beyond infatuations and maternal affection that are firmly within the realm of the approved and the ordinary. When she declines his proposal, her cousin Rex resolves to move to Canada post-haste, but his ardour has cooled by the end of an argument he has with his father about leaving. These two points taken together might illustrate the principal message which attention to nationalized form gleans from this chapter: Gwendolen is the touchstone of the ordinary/desirable for her community, whether

an established one or a new. Those around her look to her as both example and arbiter of ordinary/desirable young female life, and it is this which imbues all of her struggles to maintain this state with such desperate precarity. The affective scale on which Gwendolen exists, however, is severely dampened by her failure to engage in productive intersubjectivity with those around her whom she deems either extra-ordinary or merely uninteresting, and yet it is only Daniel, who is avowedly external to her initial imagined community, with whom she has conversations of substance and to whom she herself defers. If Gwendolen, who '[feels] an equal right to the Promethean tone'(233) has conceptually brought the ordinary down from the gods for her imagined community, she herself is looking up to Daniel, who seems unable to share the curse of belonging.

In spite of all this mythological nationalized imagery, Eliot describes Gwendolen always as being a young woman who is hovering on the edge of being really *quite* ordinary in the conventional sense of lacking the qualities that seem to make Daniel special; she is not attractive enough to receive the universal acclaim she really feels she deserves, not quite clever enough to navigate all the pitfalls her life throws in her face, or quite talented enough at the one thing she feels herself good at in order to support herself financially doing it. This almost-success at singing (an activity in which Daniel does not engage) is again, written as a binary of the English/foreign by Eliot. Gwendolen's failure, which seems certain from the outset, is placed in stark contrast to the storied career of a Jewish Englishwoman, Daniel's mother, who remarks upon her own trajectory that "A great singer and actress is like a queen, though she gives no royalty to her own son"(697). It is a rare occurrence in the novel when a character is able to become exceptionally (or desirably) good at something without being born under some lucky

star; it seems fitting that Daniel, whose relationship to national identity is much more comfortable than Gwendolen's, is imbued with a sort of native talent for acceptance and success.

Gwendolen, lacking this skill and this autochthony, attempts to develop herself into a popular singer, or at least a singer good enough to be popular; she wishes for true artistic excellence as well as admiration. The audience she chooses for an assessment of her potential is actually the only place in the novel where Eliot uses the word "ordinary" twice on a page, and invites the reader to imagine ordinary subjects meeting a foreigner: "Fancy an assemblage where the men had all that ordinary stamp of the well-bred Englishman", watching the entrance of the absolutely, incongruous musician Herr Klesmer, "his mane of hair floating backwards in massive inconsistency...his tall thin figure clad in a way which, while not strictly English, was all the worse for its apparent emphasis of intention...an artist great to the ordinary people by their knowledge of his great expensiveness." (210) The scene which follows this dramatic setup is another instance of Gwendolen dancing precariously close to exceeding the limits of the ordinary by *trying too hard*:

Gwendolen was not nervous; what she undertook to do she did without trembling, and singing was an enjoyment to her. Her voice was a moderately powerful soprano (some one had told her it was like Jenny Lind's), her ear good, and she was able to keep in tune, so that her singing gave pleasure to ordinary hearers, and she had been used to unmingled applause. She had the rare advantage of looking almost prettier when she was singing than at other times, and that Herr Klesmer was in front of her seemed not disagreeable. Her song, determined on beforehand, was a favorite aria of Bellini's, in which she felt quite sure of herself. (210)

Gwendolen is keen to have her talent applauded and supported, as she hopes to lift herself and her mother from poverty through its exercise without having to degrade herself through educational labour. However, after this scene in the parlour, which is no more than ordinarily enjoyable, she requests a meeting with Herr Klesmer, the Jewish musical expert whom she among others has asked to listen to her. Klesmer takes up the sense of disturbed ordinary

Englishness in his critique of her technique almost as though Eliot's narrator had whispered it in his ear, and regretfully says:

Still, you are not quite without gifts. You sing in tune, and you have a pretty fair organ. But you produce your notes badly; and that music which you sing is beneath you. It is a form of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture—a dawdling, canting, see-saw kind of stuff—the passion and thought of people without any breadth of horizon. There is a sort of self-satisfied folly about every phrase of such melody; no cries of deep, mysterious passion—no conflict—no sense of the universal. It makes men small as they listen to it. (211)

Klesmer is a figure of controversy in Eliot studies, but my understanding of him in this context dovetails with Allan Arkush's observation that "Klesmer represents neither a direct threat to the novel's Jewish nationalism nor a minor deviation from it, but an ideal against which it may ultimately be measured"(63). Klesmer's "supra-nationalism", as Arkush observes, provides an example of Jewish life and un-English life in the novel that has both maintained its cultural autonomy and also managed to layer itself effectively into English ordinariness. While Herr Klesmer is certainly not an 'ordinary' figure, he is a 'desirable' one; an expert whose opinions are sought after, and one who does not constitute a threat to the delicate balance of Offendene's imagined community. He is, in the sense this essay uses the phrase, an 'ordinary/desirable' immigrant. His words to Gwendolen about her own averageness are harsh but well-intentioned, even as they invoke a nightmarish series of images of the seamier side of ordinariness; "dawdling, canting, see-saw kind of stuff" (211) will not save Gwendolen from her troubles, and in its relentless dullness is perhaps even enough to shake Gwendolen from her otherwise unimpeachable position of 'ordinary' English respectability. It might be possible in this specific context, it seems, to become dangerously remarkable through being *too* ordinary. To be ordinary in this context, where the only talent one should consider exhibiting is of the extraordinary vein – a native talent honed with practice that it would not be extraordinary to want to exhibit, and not

merely “without trembling” as “an enjoyment”-- is ironically anathema to the continuance of ordinary life. Failure, in this sense, would be remarkable, excellence ordinary. This painful interaction is swiftly followed by an extremely telling exchange: having rudely rebuffed further efforts to make her sing, Gwendolen has the following with another party guest:

“I am glad you like this neighborhood,” said young Clintock, well-pleased with his station in front of Gwendolen.

“Exceedingly. There seems to be a little of everything and not much of anything.”

“That is rather equivocal praise.”

“Not with me. I like a little of everything; a little absurdity, for example, is very amusing. I am thankful for a few queer people; but much of them is a bore.” (213)

Gwendolen, having been exposed herself as unexceptional to an extraordinary degree, enacts a critique of the extra-ordinary (one which the reader very quickly sees to be farcically facetious) almost within the same breath. “A little of everything and not much of anything” is exactly in tone (if not verbatim in content) the critique that Herr Klesmer had previously levied against her music. Eliot’s text here draws a direct parallel between provincial, closed-minded Englishness with its aversion to “queer people” (not ‘ordinary’/desirable), and real excellence, that achievable only by becoming or already being a person “with breadth of horizon.” All of the metaphors being employed here are either taxonomical or spatial, as if the anxiety of influence is penetrating even the country parlour filled with the gentlemen class, one of the most English of spaces imaginable.

Perhaps because of the thin line they walk between success and social mortification, the chapters which concern themselves principally with Gwendolen are also presented and usually considered (in this essay and others) as somehow more realistic than the rest of the novel, and more in line with my conception of the category of an ‘ordinary/desirable’ Eliot text. Seemingly, they engage more tangibly with the same problematics of finance, position and affection that

Eliot's other work is known for, rather than taking up that which occurs outside of that sphere (Jewish mysticism, Zionism, estrangement, rebirth). The themes of the 'Gwendolen' chapters of *Deronda* are, as such, somehow considered *more English* than the 'Daniel half', although both characters are as English as the other. Moreover, the 'Daniel half' of the text, regardless of the fact of his birth, is arguably *more* incorporated into the fabric of conventional English life than Gwendolen's, whose security and respectability are, especially at the beginning of the novel, far more in question than his own. Although he is apparently an illegitimate son, and factually not the Anglo-European he presents as, Daniel is wealthy, male and possessed of all the important trappings of social respectability. He is young, handsome, moneyed and aside from a disinclination to commit himself to a course of action in life, has no major obstacles to having almost anything he desires. He has a slight tinge of social malaise, as he is widely considered to be the illegitimate son of his guardian, the aptly-named Sir Hugo Mallinger, but given his other blessings this does not seem to affect his social progress much. Daniel's only real straits seem to set in when he takes up the cause of the advancement of cosmopolitan Jewish life and of Zionism to which Mordecai introduces him.

Eliot's plot moves rapidly in representing the choices Daniel may apparently make, and gives his character a choice that essentially boils down to a self-actualized ultimatum: be English, ordinary and comfortable, or acknowledge his Jewish heritage and be loved, worthy, but remarkable. In 2017 Aleksandar Stević, among many others, notes that contemporary approaches to readings of Daniel's character emphasize the cosmopolitanism inherent in Eliot's depiction of his version of Jewishness: "several influential scholars — most notably Amanda Anderson and Kwame Anthony Appiah — have turned to *Daniel Deronda* as an example of a cosmopolitanism free of pernicious hegemonic connotations, a cosmopolitanism understood as a commitment to

open exchange between nations and races, rather than as the erasure of all cultural difference.”(593) The way in which Daniel’s section of the narrative takes on the form of the *Bildungsroman* has, by many critics, been interpreted as the tale of a young man’s growth toward an inward-facing truth; Chase Pielak, also writing in *Victorian Literature and Culture* differentiates Daniel’s narrative from Gwendolen’s as being in this sense national, while Gwendolen’s is merely gendered; “indeed, both plots reimagine and order: Gwendolen invests a feminine heroine with the power (by allowing her husband to die!) and Deronda’s upends nationalism.”(100) While the importance of the question of nationalism (the poles of this here being broadly Jewish Zionist and British colonial and local) is certainly a central point in *Deronda*, I want to suggest that reading Daniel’s narrative of development for the presence of the ‘ordinary/desirable’ might be a productive expansion on contemporary scholarship on the novel’s cosmopolitanism, rather than an investment in its approach to any monolithic form of nationalism. I don’t think a reading which suggests Daniel is either English or Jewish takes Eliot’s point. Both Stević and Pielak’s essays take this second tack, which precludes the Gwendolen section of the novel from having any meaningful interpretive quality beyond as either a foil for the Daniel section, or as a “monstrous heroine shrunk in the world of her own novel”(Pielak, 100).

Daniel’s Jewish identity, which comes as something of a surprise, is imbricated consistently with the fabric of the British cosmopolitanism in which Eliot was writing and publishing. Part of the methodology by which Eliot interleaves the two parts of the text irrefutably incorporates the concept that Daniel’s borders while he still considers himself an ordinary Englishman are, so to speak, reasonably open, and that he is inherently receptive to ideas of cultural hybridity and change. Daniel is often described by Eliot as being exceptionally

quick and willing to take on new ideas, and this acceptance is often described in the language of English physical or nautical geography. When he begins to suspect the circumstances of his birth, she writes that within a few moments “a new idea had entered his mind, and was beginning to change the aspect of his habitual feelings as happy careless voyagers are changed with the sky suddenly threatened and the thought of danger arise”(139); this happens in a scene so aesthetically ordinary/desirable in its Englishness as to seem taken from a Turner or Gainsborough painting, “a moment full of July sunshine and large pink roses shedding their large petals on a grassy court enclosed on three sides by a Gothic cloister”(136). Beyond being himself quick to absorb the new into his conception of the ordinary, in a mode far more akin to Bhabha’s conception of the ideal nationalized subject than Derrida’s of the hospitable one, Daniel also has an aspect of character which makes others approach him as a teacher or as an authority figure. They entrust him with truths immediately; this is another instance of ‘ordinary/desirable’ entanglement between the narratives by Eliot. Gwendolen is not, as previously discussed, likable, becoming a teacher of any water is revolting to her, and “it had been [her] habit to think of people around her as stale books, too familiar to be interesting”(363).

Gwendolen’s capacity for expanding the limits of her imagination, while not totally missing, seems reprehensibly minor and lacking in the capacity for any hybridity in comparison to Daniel’s cosmopolitan compersion with others. Gwendolen, as the touchstone for the ordinary in this novel, keeps the limits of the ordinary/desirable where they begin because they both limit and safeguard her lifestyle. Daniel, who has far more freedom, has the choice to experiment and expand his understanding of the ordinary/desirable. This is not to say that Daniel is a perfect saint of openness; he is, after all, a *Bildungsheld* whose narrative of growth is ongoing. Especially toward the beginning of the novel, he does express xenophobic intolerance, and does

become annoyed when he is asked to explain his views. This is particularly so when conventionally English people approach him in a mentorship capacity to expand their ideas of cultural difference – he often feels “that peculiar irritation which will sometimes befall the man whom others are inclined to trust as a mentor – the irritation of perceiving that he is supposed to be entirely off the same plane of shame and temptation as those who confess to him.”(392) In this sense, Gwendolen’s abject refusal to embrace or encounter any kind of cultural hybridity works as a foil in the other direction; Daniel’s failures of tolerance seem less shocking in comparison to her imperturbable nationalized conventionality.

Gwendolen adores him almost instantly; as the epigraph to this section says, she wishes “he could know everything about her without her telling him” (363) but beyond this, she sees in Daniel the capacity for an acceptable window into a more cosmopolitan and ethical perspective which she does not herself possess, and which she feels she can only bear to learn from him, as “young reverence for one who is also young is the most coercive of all: there is the same level of temptation, and the higher motive is believed in as a fuller force.”(363) The version of Daniel that Gwendolen imagines as her mentor, as the novel continues, becomes a sort of psychopomp for her attempted development into a more open and culturally aware woman, when it becomes clear that the version of the desirable/ordinary she embodies is not the secure foothold in her imagined community she had hitherto believed:

Her confidence in herself and her destiny had turned into remorse and dread; she trusted neither herself nor her future. This hidden helplessness gave fresh force to the hold Deronda had from the first taken on her mind, as one who had an unknown standard by which he judged her. Had he some way of looking at things which might be a new footing for her—an inward safeguard against possible events which she dreaded as stored-up retribution? It is one of the secrets in that change of mental poise which has been fitly named conversion, that to many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness. It had been Gwendolen’s habit to think of the persons around her as stale books, too familiar to be interesting. Deronda had lit up her attention with a sense of

novelty: not by words only, but by imagined facts, his influence had entered into the current of that self-suspicion and self-blame which awakens a new consciousness. (485)

In provoking “self-suspicion and self-blame” in her, Daniel begins the work that becomes the focal point for his own narrative of nationalized development in the text; through his relative openness, he has the capacity to first accept and then embrace his own hybrid cultural identity, and then to become (even if briefly) an ‘ordinary/desirable’ constituent of two imagined communities simultaneously. Daniel’s appearance and acquired social graces of Englishness, as such, allow him to pass for ‘ordinary’/‘desirable’ even as he initially exhibits no particular skills or talents beyond compassion, kindness and a willingness to apply himself when work surfaces to be done; these traits develop for the *Bildungsheld* into wisdom, compassion and restraint as he encounters the difficulties and the joys of English Jewish life to which he is later exposed.

This is perhaps initially attributable to another aspect of the fact that Daniel’s comfortable financial and social situation allows for his own position within the category of ‘ordinary/desirable’ Englishman to be reasonably unimpeachable. Daniel can go to locations and perform actions that his female counterpart certainly could not without taking on a problematic veneer of the remarkable. Even when he pulls a drowning young woman out of a river, embarking on an adventure which will eventually lead him to this life-changing revelation, this action is not met with the strife and fear of ruination that it might provoke either for Gwendolen in this text, or for a male hero in a novel by Trollope or even Austen. Seemingly because of his highly perceptible aura of openness, instead of being fearful (Daniel himself is “dreading lest he should scare her”(231), the young woman rather lets him rescue her, “fixing” her eyes on him and concluding “You look good. Perhaps it is God’s command.” (231) He delivers this girl Mirah Lapidoth to the hands of some “ministering angels” (236), but not before having a

seemingly completely unprompted exchange with her about her ethnicity; again, people just *tell* Daniel things in the way that they just *talk* about Gwendolen. During this interaction, Daniel informs Mirah that she “must be English, speaking English so perfectly” (233) (this would score her ten points on Trump’s RAISE Act test, making her quite ‘ordinary’/‘desirable’ were she attempting to immigrate to America contemporaneously). Mirah, not knowing how to respond to this apparent fact unknown to her, gives Daniel a look “full of wondering timidity, such as the forsaken one in the desert might have lifted to the angelic vision before she knew whether his message was in anger or in pity”(234). Daniel is made distinctly uncomfortable by this, reflecting that “anyone who had seen delicate-faced Spanish girls might have simply have guessed her to be Spanish”(234). Mirah eventually says, quite simply, “Yes, I will tell you. I am English-born. But I am a Jewess”(234). Rather than reacting strongly to this, Daniel immediately incorporates it, not seeming at all shaken. This is the case, it transpires, for almost all of the large revelations made within the half of the novel that concerns Daniel. The only aspects of mistaken or surprising identity that seem to distress Daniel are ones that concern himself, but even these are taken for the most part in stride.

Daniel’s relationship with Mordecai, the first person outside of his familial group to provoke one of these questions of identity is perhaps the most fraught example of the contrasts between the various levels to which Jewish and English identity comingle in this text. Eliot’s portrayal of the Cohen family and even of Mirah herself almost verge on the caricature at times—indeed, the Cohens, when Daniel attends them for dinner, are shown as “four pairs of black eyes all glisten[ing] a welcome”, (446) and their house is described as literally extraEnglish, “smoky, and all the surroundings were dark enough to throw into relief the human figures, which had a Venetian glow of coloring”(445). The Cohens, however, whom Eliot gives as the text’s primary

example of an ‘ordinary’ English Jewish family, although relatively Orthodox in their practice, identify as both English and Jewish without Eliot making a distinction between the two. They have clear signifiers of ordinary membership within both groups. A subtle move towards an understanding of the hybridity of the city of London is made even before Daniel interacts with the Cohen family; in a way that displays the permeability of Daniel’s understanding of the ordinary/desirable within England, and which imbricates Cohen himself into that category, he muses that “To find an Ezra Cohen when the name was running in your head was no more extraordinary than to find a Josiah Smith under like circumstances”(323)

I will return to Cohen shortly, but it is also relevant here to discuss that Eliot’s formalized mode of describing Daniel’s systems for identifying English or Jewish subjects might seem contradictory to my premise of his cosmopolitan approach to the ordinary. It is easy to see how, within the world of the text, Daniel can *seem* English, but he is *really* Jewish, and it seems, crucially, *was for the entire span of the novel*. His Jewishness, in this light, might account for the text’s entire narrative of difference as it relates to him. However, a little later in the text, as if to emphasize the novel’s remarkable capacity for understanding complex modes of sociality through formal experimentation, Daniel attends a gathering in which, Eliot’s narrator interjects, “pure English blood (if leech or lancet can furnish us with the precise product) did not declare itself predominantly in the party at present assembled...German...Scotch...[a]small, dark, vivacious triple-baked Jew...a Jew of the red-haired, generous-featured type, and Croop, the dark-eyed shoemaker who was probably more Celtic than he knew”(581). While such offensive taxonomies sit heavily to the contemporary reader, this passage is legible as being the counterpart to the text’s declaration of Daniel’s formal, if not yet realized capacity for Jewishness. Whether or not Daniel *seems* Jewish suddenly seems irrelevant in a company where

“only three would have been discernable everywhere as Englishmen”(582). It is also notable here that when Eliot describes this group of gentlemen, made up of varying waters of non-English Jewish-identifying, ‘English Jewish’ and English characters assembled to discuss Zionism, she also lists all of their trades: each one present is a skilled worker, unlikely to become a public charge, and by all accounts both ‘ordinary’ and ‘desirable’ in both Victorian and a contemporary English context regardless of their status as Englishmen or otherwise.

Deronda, upon meeting Ezra Cohen, is absolutely startled by another instance of Jewishness in England which is not immediately identifiable to the naked English eye, as he finds “Ezra Cohen to be the most unpoetic Jew he had ever met with in books or life: his phraseology was as little as possible like that of the Old Testament: and no shadow of a suffering race distinguished his vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous, pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage.” (331) When he sits down for Shabbat dinner with the Cohens, the topics of conversation with that family are English Jewish baby names (“our baby is called *Eugenie Esther*”, Daniel is told “vivaciously”(334), how much the Emperor looks like a cousin of Grandmother Cohen “in the face”, and then a discussion of a visit to that greatest of British Colonial edifices within the metropole, the Crystal Palace). At the other end of the table, however, is a figure who, although vital in Daniel’s narrative of development, certainly does not identify (and is not identified by even the subtlest forces of the text’s narrator) as either English or ordinary. Daniel, in typical fashion, is fascinated by his aspects of difference, not dismissing him as “queer” or “foreign” as Gwendolen might. Mordecai seems immediately to Daniel to be a “rather remarkable person” (336), but here “remarkable” is not meant as the negative antonym of ‘ordinary/desirable.’ The text distinguishes Mordecai in every possible way from the English Jews he lives with, through Daniel’s lens describing him as someone who “not only in his accent

and tone, but in his freedom from the self-consciousness which has reference to others' approbation, there could hardly have been a stronger contrast to the Jew at the other end of the table. It was an unaccountable conjunction—the presence among these common, prosperous, shopkeeping types, of a man who, in an emaciated threadbare condition, imposed a certain awe on Deronda, and an embarrassment at not meeting his expectations”(336). Such a character, introduced in the same seemingly-stereotypical way as the Cohens are, might in other instances be read as a coarse stereotype of the Orthodox mystic; however, Mordecai's rejection of the markers of typical 'ordinary/desirable' English life is one of the principal deciding factors in Daniel's realisation of his own cosmopolitan subjectivity and Jewish identity.

Moreover, Mordecai is a fully actualized character with his own political and nationalist agenda entirely outside of the internal conflicts of the British 'ordinary/desirable'. That conviction is strong enough to change the course of Daniel's life, disrupting his positionality as the *Bildungsheld* of a conventional English *Bildungsroman* and substantially featuring within the novel's formal representation of nationalist practices. Mordecai is a mystic who sees Daniel as the answer to a question he has been pursuing his entire adult life: the search for a person who can use his cosmopolitan and varied identity to lead the Jewish people into both a modern future and into the possession of a homeland; the imaginer of a community in a way perversely similar to Gwendolen's role as the touchstone of the English ordinary. Mordecai's Zionist dream and absolutely unimpeachable sense of Jewish identity is accompanied by a supernatural zeal that hangs about him like a mist: “a sense of solemnity which seemed like a radiation...as utterly nullifying his outward poverty and lifting him into authority as if he had been that preternatural guide seen in the universal legend...”(551). Mordecai does not demand Daniel's service, but something rather more permanent; he wishes to sow himself in Daniel like a field, as he knows

he is dying of tuberculosis, and he feels that Daniel is the only one who might continue his life's work. It is Daniel's status as an Englishman who *seems* Jewish that signals his fertility for this operation, even though Mordecai is convinced that Daniel is a Jew himself before he himself knows it:

You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow. You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages. The generations are crowding on my narrow life as a bridge: what has been and what is to be are meeting there; and the bridge is breaking. But I have found you. You have come in time. You will take the inheritance which the base son refuses because of the tombs which the plow and harrow may not pass over or the gold-seeker disturb: you will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew... The world grows, and its frame is knit together by the growing soul; dim, dim at first, then clearer and more clear, the consciousness discerns remote stirrings. As thoughts move within us darkly, and shake us before they are fully discerned—so events—so beings: they are knit with us in the growth of the world. You have risen within me like a thought not fully spelled; my soul is shaken before the words are all there. The rest will come—it will come.(557-8)

This conviction of Daniel's suitability is not least interesting in the context of this project because it is fundamentally *formal*, and because it echoes what Eliot does with the *Bildungsroman*. Mordecai sees the shape of the vessel of the "sacred inheritance" in Daniel before it has been intimated that it might be present. Mordecai believes he sees the shape of Daniel's life laid out like the peaks and valleys of a *Bildungsroman*, much in the same way that Eliot's reader might by this point in the text. From Daniel's interactions with the Cohens Eliot has already intimated to her reader that it is not necessarily possible for one Jew to identify another on sight; it is paradoxically thus arguably the flexibility of Daniel's ordinary Englishness, and not the unsure chance of his Jewishness, that here makes him desirable to Mordecai.

Crucially here too, as the mystic approaches death, his desires all lean toward *forms* in the abstract, systems of arrangement and understanding rather than concrete goals or past

occurrences. As Gwendolen in declaring she “will live” only understands the form of life that approaches her, a bleak prospect without the chronologically laid out plan that a woman of her age and fortune would presumably have otherwise been conventionally obliged to follow, Eliot, through Mordecai, creates a non-English future for Daniel conceived within the bounds of Britain. Mordecai’s “dream of Zion” is a form, a “thought not fully spelled”, a desire with a scaffolding of requirements and a process by which its attainment can be identified. The formal way in which Mordecai imagines the future for Daniel, and the trajectory upon which he places him cannot help but draw attention to the form of the *Bildungsroman* itself for the reader; Mordecai is casting Daniel as a *Bildungsheld* in a ‘novel’ or trajectory of his own, which, as all *Bildungsromanen* do, has a specific system of nationalized requirements for correct development. Having created a facsimile of an imagined English community between Daniel and Gwendolen throughout the novel, Eliot, through Mordecai, gives Daniel more immigration forms to fulfil at the end.

Daniel Deronda takes up the concept of the limitations of the imagined community most revolutionarily in its doublings and redoublings of nationalized development. For a novel with an enacted romance at its centre, it has a surprising and provocative number of couples and closely pair-bonded relationships²⁰, underlining the text’s intense and various commitment to the depiction of communities which legislate and create insiders and outsiders. The text undergoes an incursion of twos, but these pairings are also almost always comparative and formal, rather than merely procedural to the text’s plot, constantly posing and reposing the question of immigrant forms: “Are you? Are you now? Have you ever been...?” Although I would argue

²⁰ To give a list of these would perhaps be exhaustive, but as an example, Eliot’s protagonists: Daniel and Gwendolen, Daniel and Mirah, Daniel and Mordecai, Gwendolen and Daniel (an arguably different relation), Gwendolen and Grandcourt, Gwendolen and Mrs. Harleth, Gwendolen and Lydia Glasher.

that Eliot's texts all enact a certain amount of their subjects being dictated by their forms, *Daniel Deronda* in my reading is a novel which foregrounds and criticizes the otherwise unspoken aspects of socialized, nationalized ordinariness behind her characters' interactions. The book, after all, starts its narrative with a non-normative binary, a state of being which will come to dictate the affairs of the text. There is no state, it seems, between "beautiful or not beautiful" (*Deronda*, 1), and unfortunately no real distinction, whether in attempting to assimilate into Eliot's fictional England or attempting now to join or retain one's place in any form of national community, between "ordinary" and "desirable."

“Strictly Ordinary Matters” : Forming Borders in Hardy’s Late Novels

Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys,
Seeing at end of street the barren mountains,
Round corners coming suddenly on water,
Knowing them shipwrecked who were launched for islands,
We honour founders of these starving cities
Whose honour is the image of our sorrow,
...
So many, doubtful, perished in the mountains,
Climbing up crags to get a view of islands,
So many, fearful, took with them their sorrow
Which stayed them when they reached unhappy cities,
So many, careless, dived and drowned in water,
So many, wretched, would not leave their valleys.

It is our sorrow. Shall it melt? Then water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these valleys,
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands.
W.H. Auden, from “Paysage Moralisé”

Some forms are more severe than other forms. Hungrier, fiercer, more demanding, less attenuated; they are, as the word is defined, “intense...demanding [of] resilience... strict or harsh, formal and unsmiling” (OED 2019) They require more elements to be present in order to ‘count’ as constituent members of their categories, and respond less well to experimentation, change or flexibility. Severity, in the way I am using it here, is not a stand-in for rigour: the sestina, for instance, is a strict form but not a severe one. Although W.H Auden’s seminal “Paysage Moralisé”, a poem in which “the dualities of bodies and mind, nature and culture are crystallized” (Smith, 204) is deeply mournful, with its “honour...the image of our sorrow” (6) and its “moping villagers.../brought desperate to the brink of valleys”(14,8), the sestina form’s

compounding nature works *with* the subject matter, as Auden's poem is "bound to repeat the past" and yet is also an "exertion against capitulatory, dream-bound passiveness" (Blank, 94).²¹ Its repetitions iterate the cycles of hope and desperation they describe, and are not merely present because the form must squeeze them from the words in order to exist. Their relation is not reciprocal. As James Hardin writes, in the introduction to his collected *Essays on the Bildungsroman* "the identification of a sonnet is noncontroversial, but in this case the term appears to be in some sense tautological, since we identify a poem as a sonnet because a sonnet is that kind of poem"(27). We can identify a sonnet or a sestina or even a mystery novel by their forms, but their content does not have to be regimented by its relation to the nationally ordinary mode of anything. The sestina does not hunger for a sequence of events, nor must it illustrate how character acquiesces or rebels against these requirements and trials – nor must the sonnet, or the villanelle, or the mystery novel. Their forms work to emphasise and support their contents, but do not demand a socialized model from them. The *Bildungsroman*, however, does, or it is not a *Bildungsroman*.

To further clarify, I am also not thinking about the demanding nature of the form of the novel of development here in in Lauren Berlant's sense of 'cruel', as in *Cruel Optimism*, as there is no gap between affective perception and actual understanding of the form in my analysis of the novel of development. We know what happens in *the Bildungsroman* before we know what happens in a *Bildungsroman*. There is a trajectory of the text along the lines of the *Bildungsheld's* development that is fundamental to the form constitutively. Lastly, I want to

²¹ I choose Auden as my epigraph here for three reasons: firstly, because this poem is directly in conversation with the novels here discussed, and because it draws a line directly between Hardy and Christopher Isherwood, who was Auden's friend and lover. Secondly, because given the current political climate in the United Kingdom it seemed far too timely not to include, and thirdly because Auden himself cites Hardy as being his most profound influence: in a 1971 interview at Swarthmore College, Auden calls Hardy his "first model."

draw a distinction between “severe” and something like “mean” or “vindictive”; the *Bildungsroman* is not necessarily a tragedy any more than it is necessarily a love story or a heartwarming drama. It is always, however, a novel form which is concerned with the development of a protagonist or protagonists. It is also always a novel with monolithic nationalized ordinariness woven in, taut, fragile and strong as fiberglass.

There have, of course, been a multiplicity of scholarly interventions which attempt to reduce the *Bildungsroman* to its composite parts, and in so doing more usefully gauge its political value; knowing what a novel of development must contain in certain periods should, after all, help us to understand how development was imagined during those times.²² Hardin, for instance, goes on in the work mentioned above to describe the very negative reaction the scholar Jürgen Jacobs received for his attempt to taxonomize the *Bildungsroman*, and discusses the subsequent loosening of the critical “normative straitjacket” Jacobs has constructed with the introduction of literary terms like “*Individualroman*”, German novels which take the form of autobiographies (28). Tobias Boes describes a “masochistic glee” by some scholars in imposing constraints upon the genre, noting that “Frederick Jameson dismisses the *Bildungsroman* as a ‘natural form’ ...of unhistorical thinking” ...[and] Marc Redfield begins his recent excursion into the genre with the titular premise that the *Bildungsroman* is a “phantom formation ...of aesthetic ideology” (230). All signs of

²² Jed Esty, in line with recent developments in the academy which seek to disengage studies in the *Bildungsroman* from their previously extremely white, male and Western tendencies, in *Unseasonable Youth* suggests that the *Bildungsroman* itself after the turn of the century worked to formally connect the arrested development of its protagonists to the stilted and disorganized temporalities of globalization and global capitalism. In a very recent article in *Modern Language Quarterly*, Ian Duncan writing “Against the *Bildungsroman*”, suggests that the “prototypical *Bildungsroman*” *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* is formed “against domestic fiction and its core principle”, and discusses (among other issues with Nancy Armstrong’s most well-known work) the negative effects of the “developmental imperative” of the *bildung*. Armstrong herself gave a talk at a conference run by the Novel Network called “*Bildungsroman*: Form and Transformations” in November of 2018 at the University of Sydney entitled “Why the *Bildungsroman* No Longer Works”, which suggested among other theses, that the limitations of the form could not transcend the “sharing age” in which we currently exist. This question of “working” in the future aside, the form is still certainly one which garners a great deal of critical attention because of its capriciousness and its severity.

critical consensus on the genre, if they could be said to exist, point to the idea that the *Bildungsroman* is necessarily an ideological or conservative²³ form, and that it is usually significantly swayed by one or more aspects of the popular culture in which it appears. Of the list of the bestselling books of all time in the United Kingdom (those with over a hundred million copies sold) three of six (*The Little Prince*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and *The Hobbit*) are novels that arguably qualify as *Bildungsromanen*.

Whatever else it is, a *Bildungsroman* is always a novel of development.²⁴ It contains within itself a requirement of realism congruent both with the reality depicted within the text, and the world and the sociality in which it is composed²⁵. Most include significant obstacles (previous marriages to horribly disenfranchised Creole women, extreme poverty, World War II) which the protagonist must surmount to overcome their faults and youthful naiveté. Many texts of the genre, especially toward the earlier end of the 19th century also include marriage as the end of the arc of development, especially *Bildungsromanen* where the protagonist is female. Beverly Voloshin, writing on female novels of development at the turn of the century in “The Limits of Domesticity” describes this tendency as a capitulation to the “domestic ideal of the period” by some authors, and the only way in which some narratives of women’s development were able to be concluded to the apparent satisfaction of their readers. She quotes Nina Baym during this argument as stalwartly asserting that “in essence, [the female *Bildungsroman*] is the story of a young girl who is deprived

²³ The *Bildungsroman*’s inherent conservatism is more extensively discussed in my final chapter on Isherwood; see the section beginning on page 210.

²⁴ The word “bildung” is a more complex one than “development” is in English, however, as many critics of the genre of novel have noted; it is also not simply “education” or “artistic growth”, as the terms *Erziehungroman* and *Künstlerroman* already cover these bases. It is something more like “personal acculturation” or “the accrual of education and personhood in a manner congruent with the formation of one’s sociality” than merely “development” or “education.”

²⁵ Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is an example often used in university classrooms to teach the genre, as is John Knowles’s *A Separate Peace*. Both texts focus on the development of a central protagonist, following them closely through their education and the “rites of passage” (Esty, 28) set by their social environments that they must pass in order to enter successful adulthood.

of the supports she rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her through life, and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world [until she is married]"(Voloshin, 284). While of course this is a very limited view, and not all *Bildungsromanen* "capitulate" to domestic ideals, it is usually the case that one can guess the trajectory which a *Bildungsheld* will follow based on their position as the novel's protagonist and the expectations of the society in which the text is set, their gender notwithstanding. It might be said with some certainty, given the previous, that a *Bildungsroman* is not simply a novel of development, but of *correct* development, of development which is at least in some ways in accordance with the society, nation or state in which it occurs. It contains within itself *as a form* a system of expectations that the protagonist must achieve within the span of time the novel allots. These expectations are culturally and temporally specific, but they are necessarily expectations of surmounting obstacles, personal growth and the change --to briefly quote a German philosopher with much to say on personal growth -- "from man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage...[and] the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance" (Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* 1).

But what then of the rigid limitations of the form, with regards to "guidance"(1)? In the aforementioned 2011 work *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant writes that "a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing...these kinds of optimistic relations are not inherently cruel. They become cruel when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially"(1). Berlant, in this work, is writing primarily about the condition of postwar American life, a place she proposes is saturated by the "cruel" relation between our current state of being and the "good life"(1) that is promised to us by politicians. There is an affective disjoint.

However, in my reading the concept of a disjuncture between desire and objective caused by political forces of reassurance and restriction outside of ourselves is one that also applies quite seamlessly to the condition of turn-of-the-century life in England, and to the novels of development which came from this period of considerable change and unrest. The difference here is one of the illusion of agency. Whether or not any other of the “qualifications” of the novel are successfully met, the novel-form of the late Victorian *Bildungsroman* still establishes a continuum or series of events that *must* happen, apogees and lows, narrative arcs beginning and ending at the acmes of those curves. The fact of being a protagonist of a *Bildungsroman* of this period means that the character must have a linear motion in the novel toward change and acculturation, in a way that seems congruent and plausible within the constraints of that protagonist’s sociality. The form drives the action and operates outside of the will and motives of character or even narrator. The *Bildung*-form becomes evident on a minor scale when its protagonists encounter hardships which the text does not seem to support the possibility of surmounting, but feels notably demanding when the sociality of those protagonists enforces an *impossibility* for growth or change toward self-betterment, optimism notwithstanding. As Manya Lempert notes in her essay on Thomas Hardy’s “Theory of Tragic Character”:

Too little noticed in Hardy criticism is the fact that these novels' insistence on plot coincides with their indictment of it; that Hardy represents, qua tragedy, narratives that constitute characters despite themselves, in brutal and coercive ways. Such is Hardy's modernist contestation of modernity's own pretensions to self-mastery and world-mastering. What today draws a groundswell of literary critics to tragedy drew Hardy then: its uncompromising expose of the extent to which we do not author ourselves, and are imprisoned within storylines not of our choosing. (471)

While Lempert’s essay principally thinks through the juxtaposition of Hardy’s modernist style in his late novels with the anachronistic conscription of his protagonists into plotless “Greek” tragedy, it shares a central trait significantly in common with the goal of this chapter; the possibility

that a text can “imprison” a character or characters, and that text and character may work simultaneously both against and with each other to show the problems of a nation-state and the problems inherent to a form. That Hardy was not so much invested in plot and form themselves but the *idea* of plot and form and how they might problematize each other usefully seems key to the pursuit of this idea. Ian Gregor, in his 1971 essay “Hardy’s World” argues that Hardy’s novels are not as “eminently readable” as they are because they are “plotty” or engaging, but because:

Hardy's imagination was profoundly attracted to the whole idea of plot; it expressed his dramatic sense of causality, not only in the sharp interlocking and juxtaposition of event, but because such causation could cast its shadows before and after, in that strict way remarked upon in Tchekov's observation that if you see a gun on the wall in the first act you can be sure it will go off in the third. In such a plot, event is all... But for Hardy the meaning of such a plot lies in its perspective; when in other words it was seen as occupying the fore-stage for a much wider process in which the universe itself is involved... What is involved in his alteration of focus is not that one plot is enlarged in significance by another, but more importantly, in the continuous movement between one and the other we become distinctly but subtly aware of the continuous presence of the author, agent and observer within his own fiction. (279)

This idea, of a kind of double presence in the late novels, a simultaneous perspective provided for the reader on both the text’s action and the anterior machinations of form is central to my concept of Hardy’s manipulation of the *Bildungsroman*. The author makes the restrictions placed on his characters by the ordinary national processes they cannot complete in order to critique structures of national belonging from within. The repeated failures of Hardy’s characters in his last three novels to succeed or develop along the lines mandated by their contemporary environment are to do with their belief in their ability to supersede them, a belief initially shared by Hardy’s readers until it is repetitively disappointed in all three texts. The central narratives of belonging to or rejecting imagined communities in all of these novels are impeded repeatedly by the self-realization of, and self-reflection on the failed “ordinariness” of each protagonist in relation to the norms of their sociality. Through “living badly” within the forms of each of their texts, these

characters preclude their own ability to gain the benefits of ordinary residency within either Wessex or their own communities.

Hardy's protagonists are, in short, made to seem conceptually allergic to the form in which they appear, cringing away from the harsh constraints and restrictions imposed upon them by the form of the *Bildungsroman*. This set of reactions creates a way for the author to comment on both the limiting nature of the novel of development *and* the uniquely limiting nature of his contemporary social climate in late 19th century England. Realism of protagonist and realism of form work in mutual alienation to make each other strange and evident, and thus to exhibit more clearly social injustice on a grand scale where it appears.

In this chapter, I will discuss the way in which Hardy's late novels employ and exploit the intrinsic limits of the *Bildungsroman* form to comment on the insular and hyper-protectionist state of his contemporary Englishness. I will first address the ways in which Hardy (and his supporters and critics) conflate the concepts of ordinary social development, "being British" and literary form in his late texts. I then, in the section "Utilitarian Regions" will move to a consideration of the role of Wessex as a highly politicized re-imagining, or alternately a palimpsest of a specific and permeable "region" of Hardy's England. Employing a phenomenological approach to delineate the difference between known "place" and unknown "space", I discuss their use to underscore Hardy's more explicit work on the hindrances of British popular culture and politics. I also, with regard to the concept of "placedness" consider and introduce the term "ordinary residency" to the argument as a version of being-in-place specific to the turn-of-the-century English consciousness, and reaching far beyond it. I then apply these conceptual readings to first the arcs of development, and then the ironically central theme of marriage in the three texts around which this chapter revolves: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved*.

Hardy's last three novels, like Eliot's experimental *Daniel Deronda* (published, for context, just two years after *Far From the Madding Crowd*, in 1876) take an almost unmistakably Modernist turn in their centralizing of the characterological psyche and its observations, preoccupation with questioning predestination, and fixation with the seeming fecklessness of temporality. As such, it is a curious thing that, in many scholarly circles, Thomas Hardy is considered exclusively a Victorian novelist and a Modernist poet²⁶, and that to suggest otherwise even in the service of discussing the political work of his late texts is to provoke uproar. As Carol Reed Anderson writes, in the "voice" of the purely historicist critic of Hardy "uneasy that he has only disparaged", "What to do then with Hardy? He is certainly not a Victorian chronicler in spite of the *Mayor of Casterbridge*. France has not affected him, neither Zola's "slice of life" nor Flaubert's exquisite phrase. He is contemptuous of James's "minutiae of manners" and certainly doesn't grasp the introspective technique. He must, therefore, be an anachronism" (192). The difficulties, after all, present in discussing or attempting to argue the case for a Modernist hyperrealism, or a Victorian stream-of-consciousness narrative are self-evident. As Virginia Woolf commented on the difficulty of defining and sustaining a form that speaks *for* a time and a place, especially in literary novels, "a contemporary can scarcely fail to be struck by the fact that two critics at the same table at the same moment will pronounce completely different opinions about the same book...yet both critics are in agreement about Milton and about Keats." Such distinctions cannot be avoided, but also seem ill-suited to an author, like Hardy, whose life spanned the turn

²⁶ His poetic works, although often concerned with themes and making use of techniques largely considered overtly Modernist (the decline of British society, the multifaceted psyche, temporality; fragmentation, collage, grids and lists) are arguably often more Romanticist than anything – even "Neutral Tones", the poem most often used in anthologies as an example of Hardy's "transition into Modernist technique"(CIT) employs pastoral imagery and emotionally indicative colour palettes in a mode more Keatsian than Eliotic – "and a few leaves lay on the staving sod/they had fallen from ash, and were grey"(Hardy, *Collected*, 211) is "Waste-Land" in mood but "Endymion" in content.

of the century and whose career as a novelist and poet incorporated many of the of the major events that characterize both periods.

Hardy was writing when Victoria died *and* when the First World War broke out, during the height of the British Empire's power and influence, *and* during the outset of its rapid decline. He published his first successful novel in 1874, the year Gertrude Stein was born. His last three novels, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved* are perhaps, though, the strongest example of the awkwardness of the Victorian/Modernist binary claim in his work, as they describe, problematize and consider the effects of 19th century sociality on their characters. They also, Manya Lempert writes exemplify a "quintessentially modernist moment, which pauses and counters plot, as the locus of personhood"(471). All three of these novels were originally published in serial form, with the third receiving substantial revisions by Hardy after it was significantly less well-received than his more recent works had been. Although *Jude the Obscure* and to a slightly lesser extent *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are now Hardy's most well-known novels, and certainly the ones that have received the most attention in both popular and scholarly quarters, both of their initial receptions were also markedly mixed; Terry Eagleton called the responses of Hardy's early detractors to *Jude* "mean, bigoted and offensive"(1974). Critics of Hardy found the subject of both novels to be wildly inappropriate for Hardy's wide readership and for his influential position at the time – Edmund Gosse, a writer and personal friend of Hardy's famously called *Jude* an exercise in ingratitude, an attempt by Hardy to "rise up on the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at the Creator"(Gosse, *Cosmopolis*, 1896). Both pieces infamously contain references to and depictions of extramarital sexuality, Christian apostasy and the rejection of religion, and both texts imagine a life beyond the parochial for an "ordinary" young person. Both of these earlier texts end tragically, whereas *The Well-Beloved* might more accurately be said to end in

disappointment, both in terms of plot and for its initial critics. In depicting English life as it actually was for many Englishpeople, Hardy had apparently committed a serious crime against the stability of ‘being British’.

In the preface to the second edition of his (far more initially popular) 1874 novel *Far From The Madding Crowd*, Hardy addresses the issue of Englishness in Wessex as it appears throughout the text, and considers the effect of superimposing the “region” of Wessex over the pre-existing map. The author, for whom this novel was a first in terms of major commercial success and popularity, writes that, in his considered opinion, “the ...indispensable conditions of existence, are attachment to the soil of one particular spot by generation after generation”(Hardy, *Madding*, 11). Hardy goes on to express his concern that the boundaries of Wessex, his reimagined southern English province, had somehow bled over into the cultural consciousness of his environs, and that such bleeding-through might produce readings of his work that went beyond his original premise:

[Wessex], the appellation which I had thought to reserve to the horizons and landscapes of a merely realistic dream- country, has become more and more popular as a practical definition; and the dream-country has, by degrees, solidified into a utilitarian region which people can go to, take a house in, and write to the papers from. But I ask all good and gentle readers to be so kind as to forget this, and to refuse steadfastly to believe that there are any inhabitants of a Victorian Wessex outside the pages of this and the companion volumes in which they were first discovered. (11)

Given this project’s vested interest in “utilitarian regions” in which people “write to the papers”, such a statement by the author might seem to preclude Hardy as a person of interest within its scope. It certainly seems to apply most pertinently to his works published before the 1874 *Far From The Madding Crowd*, which all engage with a kind of record-keeping and examination of the effects of moralizing of “ordinary” English pastoral life in the late-to-mid Victorian period, (although these novels were only retroactively implied to be *set* in Wessex, Hardy introducing the term in 1874.) Great attention is paid to the ‘natural’ lives of Hardy’s characters by critics

(particularly in the mid-20th century) who are invested in preventing the idea of Wessex from “bleeding-through” (11) into politics, or even the public consciousness of the late Victorian and early Modernist period into which Hardy’s work fits. For example, John Holloway, in 1953, wrote that, in Hardy’s view, “to live naturally is to live in continuity with one’s whole biological and *geographical environment*”(Holloway, *The Victorian Sage*, 281). Hardy’s novels in this light are merely realist experiments in the depiction of a kind of natural, parochial Englishness which had, it seemed, not been adequately portrayed before in the novels of Eliot, Dickens, Thackeray et al. Current scholarly work— in agreement with much of the previous writing on Hardy that exceeds the superficial - however moves that the setting of Hardy’s works, even his most rurally-focused, are not “merely” representative instances of extraindustrial life, but are rather something far more politically resonant and philosophically demanding, where “[a] border country bears the imprint of the historical shift that trans- formed England into a complex industrial nation by the end of the nineteenth century, a shift that gave rise to ‘complicated feelings and ideas’(Ortiz-Roblez, 82) . D.H Lawrence, more contemporaneously to the author than to us in his *Study* of Hardy wrote that “behind the small actions of his protagonists [lie] the terrific action of unfathomed nature...there is a constant revelation in Hardy’s novels: that there exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it”(29). Hardy’s statement about a “dream-country” from which people may “write to the papers”(11), when taken in another light could also be read as something of a manifesto for Wessex’s political importance. The creation of such an extraEnglish²⁷ place might provide space to comment on the political and interpersonal results of the aesthetics and practices of “the great background, vital and vivid”(Lawrence, 29)in a new and exciting way.

²⁷ By this I mean “extra” in the sense of outside of England; though not actually exceeding its boundaries, still tied to it, and also “extra” in the sense of amplification, *more* explicitly English than England itself.

Wessex as created by Hardy also actually changed English life as lived by its real citizens. As Genevieve Abravanel writes, “the popularity of Wessex as a territorial definition surprised... and certainly outlived” (97) Hardy; it has become so much a signifier for a kind of Southwestern English placehood even in 2019, that an area spanning parts of Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset and Hampshire is popularly referred to as the “Wessex Spread” or “Hardy’s Weald.” Tour groups and Hardy enthusiasts visit “Hardy’s Dorset”, and have been regularly doing so since the 1913 publication of Hermann Lea’s *Thomas Hardy’s Wessex*. Hardy’s influence in reinstating “Wessex/Wessex” as a place of provenance has been so strong that there is currently a devolutionist ethnoterritorial political party, the Wessex Regionalists²⁸, based in the area which seeks home-rule independence and recognition for West-Country culture from the United Kingdom (largely unsuccessfully). Although the author asked all “good and gentle readers” to “steadfastly refuse” the idea that inhabitants of a Wessex existed outside his novels, he created a very real country-within-a-country to which readers still exhibit steadfast interest and devotion. People book airline tickets to Britain to come to Wessex. One can purchase a position in a tour-group to visit all the real places which delineate the parameters of the “dream-country”, and even run for political and legislative office within its bounds.

Ordinary Residents

So: where is Wessex – and why have it, when a perfectly good England already exists, and when both literary political commentary and satire are perfectly executable within its real borders? The answer to the first part of this question is a seemingly simple one, and has been relatively well laid out by both Hardy himself and the Hardy enthusiasts who create maps and tourist itineraries of the region. Wessex is a figurative country-within-a-country, laid out by Hardy over a relatively

²⁸ See citation for the WR website and their political manifesto for 2019.

large geographical area of southwestern England. Beginning as an imagined referent for the area of Dorset in which Hardy spent his childhood, Wessex quickly expanded its borders to contain a large area of Berkshire, a reasonable quantity of Oxfordshire, and all of the counties of Berkshire, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. This composite macroregion is also placed in relation to two other major locations in England and its territories: Cornwall, which in Hardy's texts is offhandedly referred to as "off-Wessex", and the Island of Portland, which in Hardy's universe is renamed the Isle of Slingers. Hardy's province encompasses a far greater area than any county in England. According to the acre values of the counties involved from the 1831 Historic Counties list, Wessex main (excluding "off-Wessex" and the Isle of Slingers) is comprised of some 5,979,600 acres, which seems especially colossal when compared to Yorkshire, England's second-largest county's 3,669,510. The name "Wessex" comes from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom that occupied some of the same area in the sixth century, until the unification of England and the centralization of its government by King Æthelstan in 926.

"Real" Wessex, therefore, had been gone for quite a long time by the publication of Hardy's first novel in 1871, and the census which officially delineated the Historic Counties of England as established by the Normans in 1831 happened nine years before his birth. Wessex is far too big to be a county by the administrative standards of the United Kingdom, although it is subdivided into six "regions" from Lower to Upper – it's larger in acres than Wales by approximately 800,000 acres and would have had almost twice the population. It is also composed of several very variegated groups of Englishpeople who would not conventionally have at the time of Hardy's writing found much to culturally tie them together (apart from, as he mentions in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, "the characteristic intonation of the dialect for that district...rendered by the syllable UR")⁽⁸⁾ Almost all of the places Hardy mentions in the Wessex of his novels have real-

life counterparts. Hardy seemed quite content that readers should attempt to locate (or relocate) places in Wessex into their lived England – as he wrote in 1912, “Subject to the qualifications...given, that no detail is guaranteed—that the portraiture of fictitiously named towns and villages was only suggested by certain real places, and wantonly wanders from inventorial descriptions of them—I do not contradict these keen hunters for the real; I am satisfied with their statements as at least an indication of their interest in the scenes”(*Personal Writings*, 45). These “hunters for the real” quickly noticed that Hardy’s own native Dorchester has become “Casterbridge”, the ancient city of Reading become “Aldbrickham”, and so on.

It is not for reasons of concealment, privacy, or even verisimilitude that Hardy lays a veil over southwestern England and redraws its borders, however; Wessex *is* England, but sideways, shifted, simultaneous. *Creating* a region of England that was both immediately recognizable and also contained an air of the fantastical allowed Hardy’s novels to work both as realism and as allegory, in the same way as a caricature of a politician is made more effective by exaggeration; we know it to be *true*, and it can do *more* than a photograph through exaggeration of the recognizable by showing us points of excess. It also allows Hardy’s texts to comment on the ordinary processes of English life within the novel of development without rendering them less usefully remarkable; the “great background, vital and vivid”(Lawrence, 29) can contain far more ordinary subjects than a Realist England faithfully rendered might. In Hardy’s 1912 “General Preface to the Novels and Poems”, he restates that he wishes the texts of all of his novels (even those written before the formal introduction of Wessex) together to be considered “The Wessex Novels”, and that these can be divided into three categories – novels of “Character and Environment”, “Romances and Fantasies” and “Novels of Ingenuity”, of which these last “might be categorized as Experiments, and were written for the nonce simply; though despite the

artificiality of their Fable some of their scenes are not without fidelity to life” (44). These novels all take the limitations of the imaginary country of Wessex as their stage quite deliberately, as Hardy writes (my italics):

It has sometimes been conceived of novels that evolve their action on a circumscribed scene—as do many (though not all) of these—that they cannot be so inclusive in their exhibition of human nature as novels wherein the scenes cover large extents of country...I am not concerned to argue this point further than to suggest that the conception is an untrue one in respect of the elementary passions. But I would state that the geographical limits of the stage here trodden were not absolutely forced upon the writer by circumstances; he forced them upon himself from judgment. I considered that our magnificent heritage from the Greeks in dramatic literature found sufficient room for a large proportion of its action in an extent of their country not much larger than the half-dozen counties here reunited under the old name of Wessex, that the domestic emotions have throbbed in Wessex nooks with as much intensity as in the palaces of Europe, and that, anyhow, there was quite enough human nature in Wessex for one man’s literary purpose. So far was I possessed by this idea that I kept within the frontiers when it would have been easier to overleap them and give more cosmopolitan features to the narrative. (Personal Writings, London, Macmillan 1967 44-50)

In “limiting” himself to redrawing and depicting a version of life so like English life as to be largely indistinguishable from it, Hardy creates a fascinating formal quandary for his reader in attempting to parse his late novels as either Realist texts of “Character and Environment” or as fantastical “Romances and Fantasies” to a letter. One knows, when reading a Hardy novel, that one is reading realistically-depicted scenes of like-English life; even more specifically, regionally-inflected English life with all its inherent problems, down to the syllable when things “could ha’ been better”(*Tess*, 47). The creation of imaginary landscapes which involve some level of verisimilitude with conventional everyday life is usually the purview of fantasy or science-fiction literature, but Hardy’s texts cannot be parsed as belonging to either of these two genres either. Wessex is in England, but is not *really* in England; it also by no means occupies the state of colony or crown

territory, as its residents appear to enjoy all the privileges (as well as the slings and arrows) of British citizenship as it worked at the time of publishing.

The inhabitants' of Wessex sense of belonging in a British context is never challenged by the text: even the tragic figure of Jude Fawley, the apogee of Hardy's misbegotten protagonists, is not having to battle an immigration system that requires him to acquire a visa and to prove intent to return home to Marygreen when he has finished with his proposed course of study in Christminster. Vitally also, characters may exit and enter Wessex without having to cross any borders, show any identification or pay taxes on goods and chattels. The city of London as the capital of England seems to exist in Hardy's narrative on quite the same plane as Casterbridge and Aldbrickham, and when Jocelyn Pierston wishes to come home to Wessex the only boundary between himself and the Isle of Slingers is the same sea that separates the Island of Portland from the coast of Dorset. Wessex is, as such, permeable and traversable as a region, and is contained within an England in which all is otherwise congruent with Hardy's real surroundings. It is a geographical palimpsest. These questions of place, belonging and of right of abode in Hardy's novels (especially for the reader who has had to grapple with immigration systems) provoke questions of the right of residency in Britain for both his characters and his contemporary British subjects; these rights in Britain, since the establishment of the National Health Service Act of 1946, have a great deal to do with one's execution of everyday, "ordinary" activities, and one's status as a member of the British imagined community.

Britain for the majority of the 19th century (much of Hardy's life) as this project has discussed had no formalized immigration regulations nor any immigration laws; while xenophobia, racism and sectarianism abounded (especially in industrializing cities) immigrants in the comparatively small numbers of the 19th century were actively solicited by the British

government, and most refugees admitted without process or limitation. Subjects of the British Empire were automatically legal citizens of the United Kingdom. Right of abode in Britain for non-citizens was only formally abolished in 1981 with the fourth iteration of the British Nationality Act. Many rights and privileges came with residency in the United Kingdom as it began to develop its early versions of Social Services, but the first to privilege ordinary residency didn't come into being until after 1946. Prime Minister Clement Atlee, in charge of a country crippled by the aftereffects of the Second World War, in which many of its citizens were faced with the need for more comprehensive healthcare than ever before, implemented under pressure from Health Minister Aneurin Bevan a system in which British subjects and residents of the United Kingdom would be able to access free and good-quality medical services simply as a result of their "ordinary residence" in the country. This was the first time this term ("ordinary residence") had entered non-immigration legal parlance (BPA). The language surrounding this revolutionary concept has remained quite simple since the outset of it as legal practice for both NHS medical benefits and for taxation under British law, as is now the case: "*A person is ordinarily resident if they are normally residing in the UK (apart from temporary or occasional absences), and their residence here has been adopted voluntarily and for settled purposes as part of the regular order of their life for the time being, whether for short or long duration*" (sic. British Health Service, 2019). In order to receive the benefits and be responsible for the dues accorded to a British subject, the person in question must only "normally reside" in the United Kingdom as a part of the "regular order of their life", and must do so "voluntarily." The relationship between the edges of one's being-world, the place one occupies and one's everyday processes "within the stage here trodden" (Hardy, *Personal Writings*, 44) is then a fundamental one in British law, as the concept of ordinary residency here illustrates. It is still the case that to prove one's eligibility for NHS services and other "settled

status” benefits one might need to demonstrate one’s commitment to living one’s life in Britain as part of its community, with ties to one’s sociality there more than elsewhere and no plans to leave²⁹. It is not enough merely to occupy space sometimes in a country in order to receive the benefits of citizenship.³⁰ One must do so as a part of one’s everyday practices, declare residency through the act of being resident ordinarily, and ensure the retention of one’s ability to reside by *acquitting oneself* as an ordinary resident.

To borrow from several influential 20th century thinkers on the meaning of living somewhere, however, it is also not enough to simply *be* within a nation-state to legislatively and ontically qualify as a subject with any degree of ordinariness: one must also dwell ordinarily and think ordinarily there too. There is a distinct critical turn to the study of place and space relatively in both the writing of, and the scholarship on the turn of the century, not least because of the relationship of literary form to the changing forms of nation-states. Gail Ching-Liang Low, writing on Kipling’s use of form and Englishness in colonial spaces, suggests that Anglo-Indian literature of the period has “an obsession with walls, with spaces in-between...dress, language, behavior...presented the occupant [of the colonial mansion] with a set of references which helped secure the community’s links with its cultural origins” (83); part of the effort of colonizing, it seems, required that the stolen spaces colonizers occupied became reframed as Englishly as possible. Regardless of where home is or from whom we take it, Orvar Löfgren writes, homely spaces in 19th century literature are based on a new, bourgeois idea of “the sacredness and sweetness of home...neither the peasants nor the old aristocracy shared these notions”(143), and

²⁹ The Government of the United Kingdom now actually provides an “ordinary residence tool” for determining whether one is allowed to receive medical care. It asks many questions, including whether the patient has school-age children in the UK, and whether they consider themselves “properly settled” for “important reasons” they must be able to prove if asked (See Gov.Uk Ordinary Residence Tool, Feb 2022)

³⁰ It is worth here noting that these guidelines for NHS and for tax practices apply to *everyone* in the UK, not just those with right of abode, unlike the United States or France, where accessing public services can actually act as a bar to future immigration benefits.

the concept of home-making and being at home is irretrievably related to one's class position. Marc Augé writes in a different direction, observing that while "more and more is being said on the anthropology of the near"(7), the turn of the century has offered civilization the "non-place" - highways, chain hotels and restaurants, general stores – in which familiarity and placedness is both more and less accessible than ever. Television and films have a role in instantiating a false and fragile sense of placedness too: "Texas, California, Washington, Moscow, the Elysee, Twickenham, the gruelling stages of the Tour de France or the Arabian desert; we may not know them personally, but we recognize them...This spatial overabundance works like a decoy, but a decoy whose manipulator would be very hard to identify"(32). The world of the 20th century was becoming *too big to live in*, it seems; previously-understood modes of thinking place had to be substantially rethought. Pierre Nora, taking from Walter Benjamin in his influential series of texts *Les Lieux de Memoire*, comments that in the face of "the acceleration of history...we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left" (7). The "lieux de memoire" themselves, "sites" of continuity like cathedrals, literary novels and paintings, that deliberately engage the present in the past where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself" have only come into play because "there are no longer "*milieux de memoire*"(7), environments where the historical is seen to still live. Place in this reading and the many it has profoundly inspired is anchored to a relationship with the past of one's nation, knowing where one is and how one is there because of one's relationship to diffuse, fragile memory and to national custom.

Not all versions of being-in-the-world are theorized as necessarily tied to institutions, however. On this topic, Heidegger, in "Building Dwelling Thinking", posits that there is a strongly reciprocal relationship between the architecture of human dwelling and "the manner in which mortals are on the earth" (*Basic Writings*, 350). A person, for Heidegger, is a creature who

“dwells”, who has a fundamental relationship to creating structures in which to exist and then staying with or in them. For Heidegger, it is a fundamental characteristic of man that he is “one who dwells...his relationship to locales, and through locales to spaces, inheres in his dwelling” (359). Setting aside for a moment the stunningly central issue with this claim -- that if a person is unable to access the legislative and social structures that allow them to “inhere” they are not a being, and that Heidegger was writing this text under the assumption that “Man” stood for a white, enfranchised male – the concept remains that at the turn of the century and throughout the World Wars that “dwelling [was often considered] the basic character of Being”(362) To be ordinarily resident within the United Kingdom, in short, is to “voluntarily and for settled purposes” dwell within a delineated nation-state. To partake in or to contribute to its culture from within is to be ordinarily resident; as Edward Said writes, culture is “what is at stake in the phrases *belonging to* or *in* a place, being *at home* in a place”(Said, in Donald, 166), even if the world outside is “[more complex] and more interconnected than the inward view afforded from the garden of a mock Georgian mansion in Dulwich” (Chambers, 148).

To live ordinarily in Britain is complex in the face of 19th and 20th century Anglocentrism and immigration in practice, however, as has been demonstrated in the work of George Eliot: it comes with an implicit requirement to live *Englishly*, regardless of one’s origin or cultural practices. As Ian Chambers tartly remarked in 1989 in an essay on the ludicrous demands of British cultural conservatism that stem from 19th century ideology, “there are ethnic implications of inclusion and exclusion... for example, Black people can become acceptable to Mrs. Thatcher and much of the Conservative Party if they respect a particular sense of Britishness; that is, if they dress, talk, eat and act as native-born Britons”(149). While Hardy’s last three novels do not make direct references to either colonialism or to race in a British context, they do establish a series of

problematics for “dwelling” within the British social and legislative system (whether in the UK proper, in its territories or for its exiles and expatriates) which will be of vital use in discussing these issues in subsequent chapters of this project, and which, like Eliot’s work on immigration forms, seem to presage the development of key terms for establishing British belonging.

“Dwelling” somewhere is also the practice that allows people to inhabit space and assimilate it into their consciousness, making a known quantity: it is impossible, for example, to designate regionalisms or determinisms within “space”, but very possible within “place.” Observing that place has been “subordinated” (ix) to space and time in the Western academic and philosophical mind, Edward Casey in his 1997 text *The Fate of Place* attempts in this work to resurrect the discourse of place from its “latent position” (xi), and to parse its “ingrediency” and “unsuspected importance” (xi) to both the current historical moment and to the Western tradition of being-thought as a whole. Having painstakingly pulled apart the structure of the history of spatiality, Casey elegantly summarizes his historiography of place from the Greeks to the deconstructionists in the Postface of his book as such:

If space did not yet exist as a concept distinct from place in Aristotle’s worldview, and if place became increasingly lost in space after the demise of the classical era, in the twentieth century we stand witness to a third peripeteia – space is now becoming absorbed into place, in the form of the spaces (not space) of which Heidegger speaks in “Building Dwelling Thinking”, in the “smooth spaces” of [Deleuze and Guittari’s] *A Thousand Plateaus*, and in the “open spaces” of Nancy’s *Divine Places*. (340)

As such, Casey, like Hardy in his *Preface*, who theorizes his creation of Wessex on a Greek heritage of dramatic location, seeks to reunite the theses of space and place currently operative. In so doing, he seeks to give space back the diction previously removed from it –given the apparent pre-existing division between the two states -- of “poignancy and plentitude along with that qualitative diversity and ample discernibility” (342) that was previously reserved for ‘place’. Space

doesn't have to be uncanny, but it does have to lack relation and haptics. Both the works Casey discusses and the greater part of the book's diction frame their ideas of *the thisness* of place and the *thatness* of space through the phenomenological instrument of the body. In the context of the body by "thisness" I here mean that which the body knows, incorporates, shares a common temporality with and perceptually processes: by extension, "thatness" is that which the body does not yet know, does not yet incorporate, does not share a temporality with and which it does not perceive. Within the body, the potentiality for a relationship with space's thatness always exists, but the body also experiences, for the most part, place as distinct from space, and comes to place first. This experience of thisness and thatness can happen either directly or indirectly in Casey's reading; either very literally through the body, as he notes as crucial to the work of Edmund Husserl or Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for whom, respectively, "the orientation of things around me depends on my body"(226) and for whom "a placeless world is as unthinkable as a bodiless self"(226), or indirectly – and sometimes, uncannily -- as a "process" which avoids the "via regia"(244) that the body paves for place, and instead employs the "via media of body and mind...and what happens between them"(244).

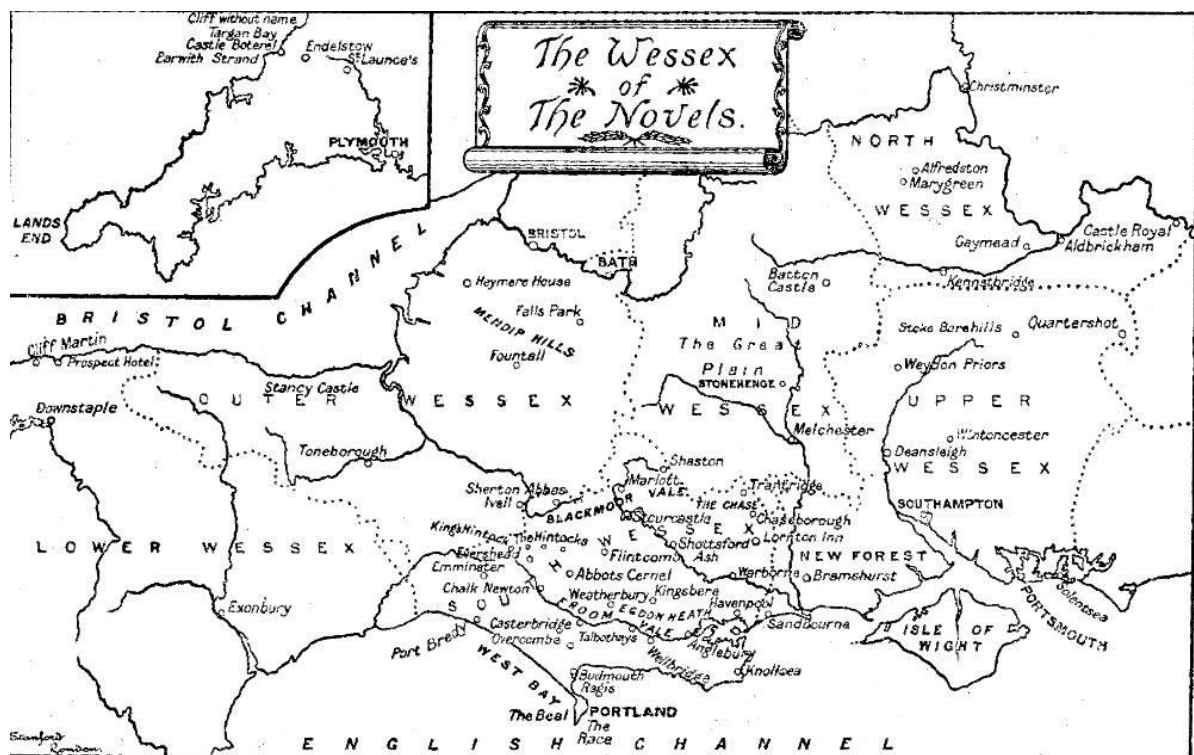
This "via media" of establishing place as around, rather than through the body is Heidegger's approach. Heidegger figures his phenomenology of place and space through conceptualizing being-in the-world through a system of "surroundedness" (Casey, 248). There is always a *where* of the *Dasein*, a regionality, a thisness; even in a dark room, Heidegger writes, "I necessarily orient myself both in and from my being already alongside a world that is familiar" (*Being and Time*, 144). This accounts for place as it relates to *Dasein*, but not for space. 'Space' for Heidegger, is both the opposite of this previously mentioned *thisness* (and its bedfellow *where*), and necessarily constitutive of it, though not directly derived from it. To parse this complex

relation, Casey introduces here Heidegger's concept of "Einraumen" (252); *Dasein* makes places out of the vast largeness of space through the mechanism of its being in the world; it has an "immanent regionality" (248); it has ordinary residency everywhere. Casey in *The Fate of Place* and Katherine Withy in *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* both observe that the idea of 'pure' space, of the undifferentiated material of the world outside of the human subject provokes a moment of deep philosophical angst in 20th century philosophy, as there is a necessary familiarity and "homeliness" [*Heimlichkeit*] to place and place-making for *Dasein*, in the absence of which it feels "intensely anxious and not at home" (255). The idea of the limitless world of space that our being has not yet absorbed and refigured into place makes us anxious, insecure in the directionality and/or the efficacy of our *Dasein*, and is as such figured as the zone of the unheimlich – the unhomely – the uncanny. "Place", in my reading then, is key to conceptualizing the political role of Hardy's 'use' of Wessex and the *Bildungsroman* form.

Place is usually intersubjective in two senses. It predicates a relationship to one's surroundings, which is itself predicated on one's relation to them ("I am not lost because I have been here before, my house is about fifteen minutes away"). It also usually constitutes a system of relation to others, as we may understand unknown places as being known to us because we know they are already 'discovered' or occupied by other known quantities: ("This house is my aunt's house. I have seen it in pictures.") Space is by nature without all of these qualities – our relationship to space lacks intersubjectivity, relation and reference, until it is transformed into place by the instantiation of a relationship. "Place", in these terms, is usually ordinary, and "space" extraordinary, depending on the form and setting in which they appear.

Given all this context, it seems relevant to consider whether Wessex (as a superspace, a region laid over something already there) is a region of "place" or of "space" to the Hardy reader

and the Hardy protagonist, as it clearly contains placehood for its denizens. It is certainly *like* a region with enough placedness to be a known quantity and preclude one from feeling “intensely anxious and not at home” (Heidegger, 255). No one could ever say that Hardy’s weald is traditionally uncanny. As if to aid in the reduction of the uncanny qualities of the like-but-not-same, however, Hardy’s publishers often helpfully provide their readers with maps at the beginning of each edition of his works. The below was drawn by the author, and appeared in the 1895 edition of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*:



Contemporary editions of Hardy novels often have the English place-names listed alongside the Wessex ones; for instance, every Kindle edition of *The Well-Beloved* contains a map of the Isle of Slingers somewhere between the title page and the introduction. Although, as Withy and Casey observe, locations which are both known and unknown to the reader might be considered quite literally the purview of the unhomely and limitless regions of space, Wessex is

not frightening or destabilizing in any of its aspects, although in any other context it seems it should be. Rather – as mentioned before – for an unknown and surreal region laid over the topography of England, it seems eminently navigable, possessing placedness even before the reader is familiar with its geography and customs. After all, the reader does not know anyone who lives in Wessex, even after reading Hardy’s novels; each is set in a different region. It, however, is *so like* England that it bypasses the uncanny valley of doubling in the psychoanalytic sense, rather instead inhabiting the *same place at the same time* as the counties it encompasses. Its roads are not the same roads, but they are equally conceptually navigable, equally legible. Wessex’s placehood does not preclude the existence of the expanse of England it covers, but exists alongside it and around it, an “immanent regionality” (Heidegger, 255) with ordinary residents and expectations for that residency of its own.

Hardy is quite specific about the way that Wessex is a place where ordinary functions of British life can be effectively explored, and their consequences heightened in a mode that brings to light the social expectations of the reader. His texts, especially his later novels explicitly set within Wessex, are preoccupied with the vagaries of everyday life and the consequences of minor interactions and mistakes; in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, a man’s life is forever changed, “all the savings of a frugal life...dispersed at a blow”(37) because of the herding instinct of a young sheepdog, who afterwards looks at Gabriel Oak as if expecting “a great reward for signal services rendered”(37). In *Tess*, among the “oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Froom Vale” (145), the position of the “edge of a carpet” in front of a door prevents a letter from being delivered that would have “removed the mountain” (209) from its protagonists’ life. These consequences play out in a way fundamentally modified from those of the ‘ordinary England’ in which Wessex is superimposed.

It sometimes seems, in Hardy novels, as though the folding-over of regionality that Wessex life implies also implies an intensification of the cruelty of its denizens' social structures. Hardy is able to amplify the stark conditions of his contemporary England's ordinary social processes in a way that reflects them, and shows the limitations of the *Bildungsroman* form's reliance on them precisely *because* it is not quite England he is discussing. Things, in Wessex, start badly and continue to get less good as people act badly or unkindly or –worse – conventionally instead of sympathetically toward one another. Caroline Sumpter writes that Hardy's sequences of events “offer a dark vision of the contemporary limits of human sympathy, but sympathy is also the focus of Hardy's evolutionary hope” (Sumpter, 666). Hardy's works certainly occasionally offer a bleak vision, but it is a bleak vision of Hardy's contemporary England, the place by which we know Wessex and which we are able to see more clearly *through* it, and not necessarily of an imaginary region.

Talking about Wessex allows Hardy to talk about ordinary Englishness without disrupting it. Things which Hardy's readership on publication found morally shocking spawn from quite usual British circumstances: sexual assault, murder-suicides, bigamy; certainly a quality of the turn-of-the-century Realist novel but a particular touchstone of Hardy's “immanent region.” Stanley Rosen in *The Elusiveness of the Ordinary* considers the moral element of our understanding of ordinary events like these in literature, commenting that:

Moral goodness must take into account ...ontological goodness; no moral doctrine can command our allegiance if it requires us to disregard the consequences of our actions, or in other words, consciously to act on the basis of false distinctions and perceptions...This is to say that ordinary experience continues as the context within which the extraordinary occurs. If this were not so, the extraordinary would lose the basis upon which it is distinguished as extraordinary. We do not designate experiences as extraordinary because they negate or totally separate themselves from what usually occurs. (262)

If “ordinary experience continues as the context within which the extraordinary occurs”, as Rosen and many colleagues on the parameters of the ordinary suggest, then the context within which extraordinary things occur is *necessarily* the condition of ordinary residency, in which “goodness” or adherence to the social laws which delineate one as good is predicated on the “dwelling” component of “what usually happens” (262). If the designation of belonging to, remaining in and participating in an imagined community (Anderson, 3) is contingent on understanding oneself to be “ontically and morally good” as that community delineates those things as predicates for pertinence, then the “extraordinary” loses its usually-positive valence as a course of action. To be extraordinary in any sense might mean that one fails to reside ordinarily in these circumstances. Being ordinarily resident involves a choice to stay; extraordinary residency of any kind might not allow one to remain. With this in mind, Hardy’s novels which take the form of *Bildungsromanen* become more evidently legible as texts which exhibit, through their use of form, the way in which Wessex society rejects and suppresses that which falls outside the purview of the ordinary, and in which “the restrictive structures of domestic, religious, and educational institutions are generally detrimental to the lives of the novel’s characters”(Griffith, 138) While beauty abounds, tall-poppy syndrome also flourishes. The texts create conditions where the extra-ordinary is only legible as the delinquent or the deviant. It is intriguing, specifically for this reason, that all three of Hardy’s final novels take the form of the *Bildungsroman*, and formally subvert it in three very differing ways. Development, in *Jude the Obscure*, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *The Well-Beloved* is so stymied by their protagonists’ environments and the requirements of “ordinary residency” these communities predicate that all actual growth comes only through a great deal of dead-heading.

D.H. Lawrence began a series of essays studying Thomas Hardy’s work partially out of disgust with Britain’s involvement with the “colossal idiocy” (Lawrence, 1914) of the First World

War, but largely out of devotion to the author and to the verisimilitude he produced across a range of literary styles. In a letter discussing Hardy's mode of realism to the Dutch author Augusta de Wit, Lawrence calls Hardy "our last great writer...he [includes] a *toughness* which the common people never really lack" (Lawrence, 1916). This essay-project of Lawrence's, which took on many forms, eventually evolved far beyond the scope of its original intent and became something of a philosophical treatise on writing and art inspired by Hardy's works – in 1915 Lawrence went so far as to rename it "*Le Gay Savaire* {The Gay Science}" (Alexander, 1) In the opening sally of "Of Poppies and Phoenixes and the Beginning of the Argument", Lawrence writes that:

Man has made such a mighty struggle to feel at home on the face of the earth, without even yet succeeding. Ever since he first discovered himself exposed naked betwixt sky and land, belonging to neither, he has gone on fighting for more food, more clothing, more shelter, and though he has roofed-in the world with houses and though the ground has heaved up massive abundance and excess of nutriment to his hand, still he cannot be appeased, satisfied. He goes on and on. In his anxiety he has evolved nations and tremendous governments to protect his person and his property, his strenuous purpose, unremitting, has brought to pass the whole frantic turmoil of modern industry, that he may have enough, enough to eat and wear, that he may be safe.... Why are we so rarely away on our holidays? Why do we persist in taking ourselves seriously, in counting our money and our goods and our virtue? (13)

Lawrence goes on to suggest that what makes Hardy's work of such great philosophical importance is not its representation of everyday life, although he concedes that that is meritoriously done. It is, for Lawrence, the way in which Hardy writes protagonists who do "unreasonable things—quite, quite unreasonable things. They are always going off unexpectedly and doing something that nobody would do...bursting suddenly out of bud and taking a wild flight into flower"(20). After these plosive characters have "burst", their sociality dissipates around them, and therein lies the tragedy of Hardy's works, "how to live in it after bursting out of it [is] the problem these Wessex people find themselves faced with"(21). The interesting thing about the concept of "Wessex people" who do "unreasonable things" here, however, is that when Lawrence

writes it he means *only* Hardy's protagonists, the "Poppies" (Sue Bridehead, Bathsheba Everdene, Tess Durbeyfield et al) and the "Phoenixes" – Jude Fawley, Gabriel Oak, Dick Dewey, Jocelyn Pierston etc. The rest of the inhabitants of Wessex, it would seem, are the morass of "it" that these people must find a way to live within after their personal excesses of individuality. Notwithstanding the fact that many "Wessex people" of lesser waters *do* do "quite, quite unreasonable" things – one is reminded here of John Durbeyfield's fateful "I've-got-a-gr't-family-vault-at-Kingsbere—and knighted-forefathers-in-lead-coffins-there!" (Hardy, *Tess*, 9) – the idea that some of Hardy's characters seem predisposed to act in ways that fundamentally *exceed* all the parameters of their social universe is of note, especially in a universe so preoccupied with the inevitability of zero-sum prestige. These characters, although natives of the "dream-country" of Wessex are somehow made uncanny, extraordinary by their failure to live within the bounds the structures of their *Bildungsroman* narratives set them, They are conceptually placed in opposition to its mores, the proverbial tall poppies most likely to be vulnerable.

Dwelling Badly

With regards to the risks of violating the terms of either the form in which one lives, and in so doing placing oneself in a position of vulnerability within a narrative, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* at the outset seems a rather poor start. Its protagonist is eminently ordinary, and wishes only to live a life free from poverty and with love. Tess Durbeyfield, "a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience"(8) is a girl from the Vale of Blackmore (called Blackmoor by Hardy, with great subtlety), an English region which was hit particularly hard by the Long Depression of the 1870s, a "fertile and shaded tract, in which the fields are never brown and the springs never dry"(6). This beautiful part of Wessex is extremely impoverished despite its arability, and Tess's family are no exception to this. Although they hail from a great ancient scion,

the D'Urbervilles, it is "extinct in the male line" (2), a reminder to "chasten [one]self with the thought 'how are the mighty fallen'" (3) rather than a real social distinction. When Tess's father is informed of this in the very opening passages of the novel, Hardy creates a microcosm of the novel's thesis on ordinary residency and its relation to living badly within form within four pages. The parson tells John Durbeyfield that he is a "lineal representation of the ancient and knightly family of the D'Urbervilles" (1), and then gives a short list of the great events of his family history, which all correlate to real English events until "in Charles the Second's reign [they] were all made Knights of the Royal Oak for [their] loyalty" (2). Tess's father imagines a great life in which he could have been a wealthy landowner, parades himself through the countryside in a way unbefitting of his station, and is quickly brought to heel by the fact of his actions mortifying his family; this deviance from ordinary parochial action also catalyses the events that seal his daughter's fate.

Of note here is not only the fact that the novel begins with an admonishment against pretensions above one's station which is so cruel that it can only be ironic, but also the two points Hardy makes about the "Knights of the Royal Oak" and the idea of the D'Urbervilles as a "county family", because the two seem so closely related to the concept of Wessex as being superimposed as an alternate region in a real England. The D'Urbervilles could *not* have been a "county family" in a "real" West Country Victorian milieu, because no Knights of that order were ever actually made. King Charles II had intended to form the order after the restoration for loyalty to the Crown, but decided against doing so out of fear that it would provoke the still-extant animosity between Parliament and Crown, and between the British people and their newly restored monarchical system (Hasted, 229). The timeline of Wessex around 1685, then, seemingly diverges from that of the rest of England at least as it concerns the D'Urbervilles, and does so in a way that also invokes a period of English history in which many "ordinary residents" were so unhappy with

the established order of things as to actually attempt to overthrow it. Tess's world is shown, right from the beginning of the novel and in a way that repeats cruelly, to be one decision made by the aristocracy away from Hardy's English reality.

Tess Durbeyfield is sent to "claim kin" (20) with wealthy 'relatives' the Durbeyfields have found from the Reverends' revelation after she accidentally gets the family horse killed and the family face destitution. This goes poorly, as she is initially welcomed and then brutally raped and made pregnant by the son of the house, Alec D'Urberville. She leaves, her baby Sorrow dies, and she then finds work at a buttery, where she makes friends and lives a life far more conventional for someone of her social standing, briefly. This peace is ruptured when she falls in love with Angel Clare, the apostate son of a rector, in whose heart, Hardy writes, "only the slightest ordinary care was necessary for holding her own"(134). When Clare brings her for their honeymoon to the ancestral "house of the D'Urberville"(187), Tess's erstwhile family seat, she can no longer resist the urge to tell him about Alec and Sorrow; he leaves, heartbroken and hypocritical, and Tess finds work at a "starve-acre"(284) farm. Events conspire to force her to become Alec's mistress, and when Angel eventually finds her, she murders D'Urberville and they run away together. She is hanged for the crime, leaving a final instruction with Angel to marry her younger sister Liza-Lou. Just before she is captured and taken for her execution, she "murmurs" to Angel that "It is as it should be...I am almost glad, yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough; and now I shall not live for you to despise me!" (401) Tess exits the narrative before the teleological promise of the *Bildungsroman* can be fulfilled, and in her final speech seems to demonstrate an awareness of the form in which she was forced to exist; if everything else has not gone to plan, then of course her demise when she had almost achieved happiness was "as it should be."

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy makes his first consistent foray into a narrative structure where almost all planned attempts by its protagonist to better themselves are ultimately met with failure. This is presented as a series of *faits accomplis* by the narrative. Tess has an idea about what needs to be done next, almost achieves it to the extent where the ramifications of its achievement are evident to the reader, and then fails catastrophically through circumstances largely outside her ken. For instance, she takes the horse Prince to sell her father's beehives because her father is too drunk to drive the cart, knowing he is a docile beast who needs "but slight attention, lacking energy for superfluous movements of any sort." During this ride, Tess in a meditative state mentally transforms the staid Wessex scenery around her into something far less ordinary and far more fantastical, "outside reality... the occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul, coterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time...everything became more and more extravagant" (25). Tess is woken from this nighttime reverie with a jolt, to find that a speeding mail-cart has gored her horse, "the shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword...his life's blood was spouting in a stream"(26). Tess is distraught, as the direct consequence of her mental abstraction from Wessex life is this potential ruination of her family. Her little brother compounds this event's inscription into the text's narrative of thwarted betterment by weeping "'Tis because we be on a blighted star, and not a sound one, isn't it, Tess?"(28) Hardy, in this interaction, underscores the abject cruelty of a society where a family might be thrown into utter destitution by the mere loss of a horse. Through this, he also demonstrates the severity of the *Bildungsroman* in which Tess's history takes place. Many critics³¹ have noted that this work is Hardy's first to be characterized by what would later become

³¹ On this sense of disjunction and interruption in Hardy's texts, in particular, see Bernard Paris's 2017 text *A General Drama of Pain: Character and Fate in Hardy's Major Novels*, and Samir Elbarbary's 2018 article "Glimmerings of the Postmodern in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*."

a hallmark of his style, the sense that everything *would have been fine* had an incorrect choice not been made – even though no indication of the choice’s wrongness was present at its making. The text contains itself *and* a hypertext of its own possible outcomes. *Tess* is a novel in seven “phases”, beginning with “the Maiden” and ending, in horrible but tonally appropriate irony, with “Fulfilment.”

In each of these “phases”, the meat is stripped from the bones of the developmental novels’ form for the reader; the text makes its own expected parabolas clear – and illustrates for the reader that, as this is a *Bildungsroman* these apogees are *societal* rather than personal acmes -- while refusing to allow its protagonist to reach them.³² *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* makes the reader hyper-aware of its own narrative structure, as it becomes clear time after time that Tess is somehow unable to work with the form in which her life is presented. Even the title suggests something that could have been, were it not for the misbehaviour of its constituents. Her expostulation on dying, cited above, which comes at the end of the novel is almost a manifesto of this surety that her “happiness could not have lasted” (401). She seems, in view of what has come before, to be conscious of the narrative “phases” of her life, where brief happiness is met with progressively harsher punishments, and attempts to better herself are rewarded with the worsening of her circumstances. She has, in short, becomes entirely “tinctured with emotion” (8) by the end of the text, diluted from her original state rather than having developed into a new form of being. She was a “Maiden”, then was tragically prevented from becoming a “proper woman”(358) by the men in her life. Rather than growing up and receiving the social markers of growth the form she exists in seems to offer her in plenitude (“claiming kin”(30), gainful long-term employment, marriage,

³² To return briefly to Lempert, who invokes Camus and Scott on “Modernity’s...” melodrama” or “romance” as being both present in Hardy’s formal choice of this tragic form, “these moments mark the unjust condemnation of these characters” (473).

children), she has been cut down. All of her attempts to exceed her situation mark places where she has failed to be ordinarily resident in the terms Wessex demands.

Tess's mother repeatedly admonishes her daughter for her intense requirement to tell the truth to her paramour; "quite private, but very strong", she writes Tess is to "on no account say a word of [her] Bygone Trouble...many a Woman – some of the Highest in the Land – have had a Trouble in their time, and why should you Trumpet yours when others don't Trumpet theirs?" (190) Tess feels herself morally incapable of not revealing the truth about herself, when it seems that all around her have no such qualms, especially until they are obliged to do so. Angel Clare himself, a character whose moral uprightness and declared distaste for social norms and familial expectations the text alternatively lampoons and laments, does not tell Tess until after their marriage that he has previously been sexually involved with another woman. The great irony of the novel – that Angel, himself not a virgin, himself a hater of "the aristocratic principle of blood"(186) cannot forgive Tess's premarital rape and subsequent pregnancy, which eventually forces her back into the clutches of her rapist – is only one of many situations in the text where Tess's attempts to learn and develop are utterly blocked by a combination of chance and a set of social constraints made to seem cruel and ridiculous. The other characters in the text after some exposure to Tess seem to become disabused of Wessex's viability as a place to grow and change as being in infinite supply. Hardy's prose also suggests that these characters seem to gain some awareness of their own of the demands of the novel of development in which they exist. Angel Clare, after Tess's great revelation, comes to one by himself:

[Angel] reclined on his couch in the sitting-room, and extinguished the light. The night came in, and took up its place there, unconcerned and indifferent; the night which had already swallowed up his happiness, and was now digesting it listlessly; and was ready to swallow up the happiness of a thousand other people with as little disturbance or change of mien. (235)

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is full of these small, consistent hints of metanarrative unease, making the rigours of the form evident where they might otherwise be read as tragic circumstance of plot.

Jude the Obscure is also rife with this device of metanarrative commentary, but it, unlike *Tess*, begins in a mode which could be used as a primer for the typical setup of a *Bildungsroman* concerned with place. Jude Fawley's lack of fit within the form of his novel of development begins to become clear much earlier on in the text than Tess's does. This second protagonist, mired in humble beginnings, acquires a thirst for knowledge which manifests itself as a desire for both material change and of gaining a degree from the best university in Wessex. He decides to go, and to better himself. Jude, like most *Bildungshelds* acquires this change through events which in turn alter him, and having been altered, he is then able to reflect on the process as having been that which took him from boyhood to manhood. Jude's acculturation however is not thwarted "at the end" of his novel like the typical protagonist of an *AntiBildungsroman* (Arnds, 224); the novel's central tragedy is that Hardy's protagonist *does* become a scholar and an intellectual of some water, but that the circumstances of his life (often as a result of these qualities) force him to *live* as a labourer. As in *Tess*, the structures of his narrative of growth and change are all present, but he is prevented from accessing the fruits of completing social labours *because* he attempts to exceed the limits of his sociality. Unlike Tess, who tries, it would seem, as hard as she can to reside ordinarily, in *Jude the Obscure* Hardy shows the reader that his protagonist can actually *see* the parabolae of his life stretching out before him, and does everything he can to avoid them. Jude's interpretation of his own arc of development is also linked very closely with the concepts of place and space in his locality of Wessex.

As a child with aspirations beyond his parochial origins, Jude is told by his schoolmaster that the same is leaving for the golden city of Christminster. This place, Hardy's locum for Oxford

and Cambridge, is the fount of all transformative knowledge and wisdom in Jude's world, and is placed by Hardy in direct aesthetic contrast to Jude's hometown. Although Jude is occasionally able to find some meagre beauty in Marygreen, directly after the conversation he has with Phillotson the text lays out the rigour of its approach to "ordinary" Wessex life as Jude has been born into it. Looking around him, Jude sees the canvas against which his life will play out, if he allows himself to remain planted in the hill dug for him:

The brown surface of the field went right up towards the sky all round, where it was lost by degrees in the mist that shut out the actual verge and accentuated the solitude. The only marks on the uniformity of the scene were a rick of last year's produce standing in the midst of the arable, the rooks that rose at his approach, and the path athwart the fallow by which he had come, trodden now by he hardly knew whom, though once by many of his own dead family. "How ugly it is here!" he murmured. The fresh harrow-lines seemed to stretch like the channelings in a piece of new corduroy, lending a meanly utilitarian air to the expanse, taking away its gradations, and depriving it of all history beyond that of the few recent months, though to every clod and stone there really attached associations enough and to spare... (7)

Hardy presents country Wessex life here in a much harsher vein than he does *Tess*; *Jude the Obscure*'s relationship to place makes even the known quantity unflinchingly bleak. Wessex itself in *Tess* is (for the most part) shown to be a verdant place against which tragedy plays out in high contrast, where in Blackmoor the "fields are never brown" (6) and the "world is constructed upon a smaller and more delicate scale" (6). *Jude the Obscure*, on the other hand, is painted in a palette of greys and browns, with only Christminster in the distance in glimmering contrast, a place where the "points of topaz gleam" (14). Jude's birthplace actually hems in the sky; it is not only tenuously connected to England, as is the rest of Wessex, but not connected to *anywhere*, preventing either a vision outwards or escape. Marygreen might as well not be in either, so limited is its scope for development. Jude's thoughts, even as a child, are shown to be attempting to reach beyond this poor life apparently set out for him, but also to be aware of the difficulties of the form in which he

appears. Hardy's narrative verges into free indirect discourse from the cruel arbiter of Jude's development in these sections. "Lying down on a heap of litter near the pig-sty", Jude reflects that:

Growing up brought responsibilities...Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony. As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it. (11)

Determined to learn and to escape the life of a labourer, despite the "shuddering" that the text is foreshadowing, Jude directs himself forcefully towards a life of study, even though it is insurmountably difficult, and "nobody did come [to comfort him], because nobody does" (26). Hardy's reader cannot help but sympathise with Jude, as with Tess, as the narrative conveys the events that thwart him to be so intensely out of his own control. He does not fail for want of trying. He works tirelessly until he finds himself beset by the amorous perils of Arabella Donne, a young woman who initially attracts his attention by throwing a pig penis at him. Arabella's character acts as the foil in opposition to Jude's initial dynamism, and is characterized by an absolutely unshakeable connection to the life of Marygreen, an "attachment to the soil of one particular spot" (Hardy, 11) so intense that she becomes an allegory for parochialism. She has absolutely no distaste for either "nature's logic" or the "noises and glares" (11) of Marygreen life, and demonstrates that development and success of the text is possible, as long as one remains within the boundaries of one's ordinary residency.

Arabella is received with far more familiarity and welcomeness in the text than Jude, because she is unabashedly a *local*. She has a very high level of ambient ordinariness in all her actions, and shows the reader what an actual ordinary resident or local of Marygreen might look

like; this gives us a clearer picture of why Jude wishes so intently to leave. Hardy uses this word quite regularly in the text, but only in regard to Arabella when it refers to a person— she talks “local twaddle” (41), and Jude’s life has “nothing in common with her but locality” (40). Fawley’s attempts to break the cycle of the class system into which he was born mark him inevitably as an uncanny, unknowable outsider in these interactions, whereas Arabella, even as she behaves in ways which defy the conventional morality of her period, is accepted into her sociality with a familiar ease.

Jude’s hopes of academic splendor are later curtly dashed with “terribly sensible advice” by a professor from Biblioll College (Hardy’s facsimile of Balliol, in good Wessex fashion imbued with a prefix of “book”) who tells him that he would do much better by “remaining in [his] own sphere and sticking to [his] trade” (124). He ‘sees’, in his disappointment and fury, that “the town life was a book of humanity infinitely more palpitating, varying and compendious than the gown life” (455). This callous rapidity in embracing the disappointment of wasted years of learning is one of the harshest blows from Hardy’s narrator, and one in which the *Bildungsroman*’s form is most evident to the reader in Jude’s movement away from its apparent parabola. It is also a moment unlike others in the novel, in which Jude is shown to have had unrealistic hopes *and* to be living in a world fundamentally ill-suited to the working-class intellectual. When Jude, long divested of Arabella, finds a new paramour in his “sweet-faced cousin” (83) Sue Bridehead, they live together—initially chastely-- unmarried, flouting social convention, and also take in a child of Jude’s previous marriage, the ominously-named “Old Father Time.” This child, realizing their abject poverty and the ostracism that his ‘parents’ face, murders his half-siblings and commits suicide “because we are too menny” (372), and naturally, because of the almost-there nature of Hardy’s

Bildungsromanen, he managed to do this because “nobody came” (26). This act serves as the tipping-point for the fragmentation of Jude’s life, especially as it occurs so suddenly.

Extraordinary transgressions, like those Jude makes in his attempts to improve his station and try to win happiness, are met with bewilderment and unease by Jude’s neighbours and former friends, while the text represents them as being no less morally viable as other decisions, and often more so. The severity of the *Bildungsroman* form is never more evident than in these interactions: Jude is *right*, it seems, to do as he does, but is *wrong* within the novel’s mathematics of the ordinary. Jude’s attempts to change his circumstances and himself are so meticulously thwarted that, when he eventually dies, Hardy presents the scene in an almost comically embodied and material tone. Rather than the Jude the reader has come to know, a spiritual evanescence more suitable to a former “professor of morals” (257), Jude has become an animal body, in which the “bumping of near thirty years has ceased” (502). He has actually, by the end of the novel, given up so totally that he has become detached from the narrative itself; the novel moves to follow Arabella, abandoning his body. His situation just before dying is depicted by Hardy as a dialogue in italics between the invalid Jude and an ordinary outside world utterly unconcerned with him, where people are cheering an event ironically called the “Remembrance Games”:

"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man-child conceived."

("Hurrah!")

"Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein."

("Hurrah!")

"Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? ... For now, should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept: then had I been at rest!"

("Hurrah!") (482)

Jude's death is, as such, literally "obscure"; the final bitter contrast between the harsh social reality of Wessex life and its expectations and his intellectual ambition. Hardy's text formally separates Jude's death from the teleology of the *Bildungsroman* at the end here, too; his thoughts are presented in italics, separated like the lines of a poem from the real sounds of those around him, which are given in parentheticals. The reader is made forcibly aware of the frame of reference the text gives, as the "culture" of Jude's environs in the sense Said gives us is happening on a totally different plane than the one the protagonist appears in. Although it is the crowd's noise that appears in parentheticals, it is Jude who has been made an aside.

Moving to the Hardy work which is most often in critical circles itself made an aside, *The Well-Beloved* is far less literally a *Bildungsroman* or a Realist novel from the outset than *Jude the Obscure* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, although its three movements are certainly divided by different stages in the education of its protagonist, and it is centrally focused on the development of a central character. It is also a text which -- seemingly at odds with its position in this project - is not entirely set in Wessex. Although now widely considered Hardy's last novel, *The Well-Beloved* began to be published in serial form in 1892, almost three years before *Jude* rocked the proverbial boat; the novel form of *The Well-Beloved* also includes some radical revisions and a completely altered ending, while the serialized *Jude* remained relatively unchanged in comparison. Despite the fact that it is absolutely congruent in timeline and in many other aspects, these works are rarely written about together partially because many scholars consider them to be in completely different classes of literature from one another³³. It is, however, vital to keep in mind that when Hardy was developing the very particular, highly amplified mode of "regional

³³ Donguk Kim in 2014 pithily asserts that "although *The Well-Beloved* is the last of Hardy's published novels, it is not considered a great work, at least not to the same standards as *Jude the Obscure* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." (Kim, *College Literature*, 2014)

aesthetics”(Bezrucka, 227) that *The Well-Beloved* exhibits – and which it, as a novel with two different editions, does *twice*, as Bezrucka and others have also noted – that he was also working on and developing the concepts for *Jude*. Thirdly, it should be mentioned also that *The Well-Beloved* was Hardy’s first novel in which he had a declared intention to do “something entirely modern in date and subject”(Hardy, in Bezrucka, 227), which is evidenced by the novel’s uncharacteristically experimental structure, and its commitment to the development of all characters through the lens of a small number of well-developed psyches (a quality it shares with several antemodernist novels such as *Daniel Deronda*). The plot of the novel is deceptively simple, and also contains many analogous traits with both *Jude* and *Tess*.

It also, however, contains a protagonist who actually sets himself up as a *Bildungsheld* whose quest it is to find and love the ideal woman; where *Tess* and *Jude* are quite obviously engaged in metanarrative commentary, *The Well-Beloved* is literally a novel about someone who sees the form of his life from the outside and casts himself as the hero. Jocelyn Pierston, another idealistic stoneworker, finds early in his romantic life that the spiritual manifestation of the ideal woman, the “idol of his fancy” (*The Well-Beloved*, 184) whom he dubs “The Well-Beloved”, has the capacity to inhabit or to appear in almost any woman whom he comes across, and he is paralytic with desire for her in each of her “several guises”(*The Well-Beloved*, 14). He sees himself in these instances as a paramour dedicated to his own betterment in order to achieve and retain her affections; however, when each of them women he pursues turns out *not* to be the final avatar of this spiritual soulmate, he begins the narrative again with the next. This dedication to the diaphanous “Beloved” leads Jocelyn to fall in love with three successive generations of women from the same family – the “Avices.” Pierston considers himself something of an urbane, cosmopolitan sophisticate in comparison to the parochial islanders with whom he

grew up: “a young man from London and the cities of the Continent...nobody could see at present that his urbanism sat upon him only as a garment”(58) Having been jaded by his life in London, Pierston realizes later in life that his obsession with this immutable female quality and his repeated amorous failures are not in fact a spiritual phenomenon, but one deeply rooted in his sense of belonging to his home: “a subjective phenomenon [of] the weird influences of his descent and birthplace”(184); they are a result of his failure to be ordinarily resident in the place to which Hardy’s severe narrative demands he belong. All of these encounters take place largely on the “Isle of Slingers”, the Wessex version of the Isle of Portland in Dorset.

In *The Well-Beloved*, which rather like Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, another island swansong, represents both the culmination of and a significant departure from Hardy’s usual style, the representation of “Wessex” as a simulacrum of the demands of ordinary English life reaches its acme. It is perhaps worth noting here that the Isle of Portland and its literary cousin are not actually true islands. Portland is connected to the British mainland by a tombolo, a spit of land composed mainly of beach materials that makes the isle accessible by either foot or boat. The Isle of Slingers, if, as Hardy wrote, it is imaginarily interchangeable with the Isle of Portland, is therefore quite literally an extension of Wessex, connected to England by another delicate correspondence. There, the already-stultifying social mores that exist in Hardy’s other Wessex novels take on a literally mythic quality; while Jude Fawley’s world is symbolically defined by “something external to us” that repeatedly says Jude and Sue “shan’t learn...labour...[or] love!”(374) that Wessex society presents, Jocelyn Pierston’s world actually seems imbued with forces that prevent human relation, or travel between the mainland of Wessex and the Isle of Slingers. These allow the Island itself to retain a set of customs and requirements for ordinary residence even more restrictive than those of

the mainland. Caught with his lover in a rainstorm so terrible as to seem “almost a hurricane”, Pierston observes that:

The 'Island' was an island still. They had not realized the force of the elements till now. Pedestrians had often been blown into the sea hereabout, and drowned, owing to a sudden breach in the bank; which, however, had something of a supernatural power in being able to close up and join itself together again after such disruption, like Satan's form when, cut in two by the sword of Michael,
'The ethereal substance closed,
Not long divisible.' (305)

The terrible folding-in of the place to which Pierston belongs is an amplified version of the Wessex Jude and Tess inhabit. In the final part of the novel, when Pierston is “On The Verge Of Possession” of the final Avie and intending to leave Wessex with her permanently, he observes that “There seemed to be something uncanny, after all, about London in relation to his contemplated marriage”(213). Taking the Avies out of Wessex both frees and discombobulates them in a way that suggests they are not creatures of the greater England; indeed, his relations to them are almost universally more harmonious when conducted within the boundaries of Wessex, and when on the Isle in particular. Looking at the Isle from “the south shore of England”(213) before his final return to Slingers, he muses that “...in the gloom of the aforesaid evening, the isle, as he looked across at it with his approach, being just discernible as a moping countenance, a creature sullen with a sense that he was about to withdraw from its keeping the rarest object it had ever owned”(213). The Isle of Slingers is so covetous of its denizens that it occasionally actually becomes psychotropic, “closing” and opening when it suits to allow or inhibit departure. This “opening and closing” also seems to affect the aging process of its protagonist, which subdivides the novel into parts.

This is another commonality which places this text on a continuum with *Jude* and *Tess*: Tess’s life is divided into “phases” of development, Jude’s into *places* (“At Christminster”, “At

Melchester” etc....), and Pierston’s into something like phases of place, where place indicates his degree of relation to Wessex and the Island. When he first comes back to the Isle, he is a “Young Man of Twenty”, then later “A Young Man of Forty”, and then finally “A Young Man of Sixty.” Pierston’s narrative of a failure to develop is inextricably tied to his birthplace, and to the way his narrative continually presents him with opportunities to develop, which he refuses or is made unable to take, in another example of Hardy’s political work with the form. Unlike *Jude* and *Tess*, however, these opportunities are usually ones of the heart, because Pierston is not a member of the working class; Jocelyn is a relatively one-dimensional character, whose entire mode of being is predicated around affection for women and for art. This text contains very little of the abjectly heart-rending drama of the two previously discussed, partially because its protagonist is presented as being less *inclined* to development than Tess and Jude, and also because Pierston’s maturation is unrequired by his circumstance.

Pierston’s first attempted marriage is thrown onto the rocks by a social custom even more specific than the relational impedance that prevents Sue and Jude from initially marrying. Avie the First demands that, as Pierston’s family are “such old inhabitants in an unbroken line” of Slingers that they adhere to the “Island Custom” of staging betrothal by having premarital sex before formal marriage is undertaken. Pierston, rather than believing premarital sex to be a desirably modern undertaking, is “surprised by the naiveté it showed” on the part of the first Avie and her complicit mother, and is annoyed at the “antiquated simplicity in supposing *that* to be still a grave and operating principle which was a bygone barbarism to himself and other absentees from the island”(222). Hardy’s narrator piquantly intervenes here to “ask the reader to remember that the date, although recent in the history of the Isle of Slingers, was more than forty years ago”(223). At every turn, Pierston’s imagined modernity is placed in contrast to the edificial

antiquity of his island home; Hardy's narrator also intervenes to remind us that the terms of ordinary residency are especially culturally specific. The morality and the social requirements of London, an area outside of Wessex from which Pierston has returned to Hardy's "dream-country"(Hardy, *Preface*) not only has no place on Slingers but is actually not legible to his environs there. His extraordinariness is, as such, based quite substantially on his "absentee[ism]"(222), and his eventual settlement on his acquiescence to locality.

Similarly to *Jude The Obscure* in another sense, whose eventual demise is also accelerated by being out in the cold in ecclesiastical settings, Pierston is almost felled by exposure while in the "bleakest churchyard in Wessex, telling upon a distracted mental and bodily condition, had thrown [him] into the chill and fever." Having been bodily struck down while on the Isle, he is condemned to remain there: suitably for the island's supernatural purview to punish those who leave, this event also apparently robs him of "the artistic sense"(245) that he had previously so cherished. His inability to recognise the Well-Beloved by the end of the text is the price for his eventual permanent settlement and achievement of ordinary residency on the Isle of Slingers. The ending of the novel – a loveless marriage, and Jocelyn's art "insufficiently recognized...by gourd-like young art critics"(257) -- seems relatively anticlimactic given the melodrama of that which came before, but it is arguably yet another by Hardy, which successfully shows that the protagonists in his *Bildungsromanen* find it almost impossible to succeed. Jocelyn has achieved everything the text initially sets out as the stages which would mark his successful development, but is not allowed to accrue those things – learning, growth, marriage – in the way that would allow them to *matter*.

Hardy prods at the conventions of marriage and the ease with which lovers can fall into "worldly failure" (*Jude*, 401) in all three of these novels, but perhaps most specifically in this last.

Having outlined the ways in which these novels incorporate the idea of ordinary residency and placedness as a crucial aspect of Hardy's work with the constraining *Bildung*-form, it seems pertinent also to briefly discuss this central theme of all three texts, as it is one which fundamentally concerns placedness and its social concerns, while also being a significant milestone (or attempted milestone) in the lives of all three protagonists.

The whole text of *Jude the Obscure*, as Hardy wrote to Gosse, is constructed of "a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit" (Norton *Jude*, 5); in *The Well-Beloved*, spirit and flesh have a less tenacious relationship, and one that is more strongly legislated by relation to place than to the body – indeed, as Pierston believes, women's bodies are capable themselves of becoming "places", made instantly more accessible and more knowable to him by the evanescence of the "Well-Beloved" from one to another. He is dismayed when these unknowing women act in ways which suggest *The Well-Beloved* has not fully possessed them, making them seem ordinary or typical or merely *regional*. Hardy invests this and instances like it with more metanarrative observation about the nature of ordinariness as it relates to development. For instance, when Pierston has evanescenced with the second Avie to London and they are examining a mouse-trap together, he thinks:

It was extraordinary, indeed, to observe how she willfully limited her interests; with what content she received the ordinary things that life offered, and persistently refused to behold what an infinitely extended life lay open to her through him. If she had only said the word, he would have got a license and married her the next morning. Was it possible that she did not perceive this tendency in him? (150)

Pierston sees his own potential to develop, and diagnoses a relative lack of specialness in each successive Avie, who only wants to receive "the ordinary things that life offered." When he encounters each generation of Avie, he immediately understands each woman before he knows her as being the locum for this spirit of exceptional womanhood – the last time she appears,

however, just before and within a chapter named “Misgivings on the Embodiment”, something has changed. Rather than having merely “placehood” for Pierston, he feels “The Well-Beloved” move from one body to another, making the woman beside him, the second Avice, suddenly actually uncanny and unknown, as “before but the relic of The Well-Beloved, she had now become its empty shrine”(178). Pierston’s inability to follow-through on any of his plans for marriage except for the last is the most obvious way that this *Bildungsroman* deviates from the form it seems to set out. Each Well-Beloved represents a significant setback in his self-understanding and his personal growth, even though The Well-Beloved herself is merely a projection “vivified by the weird influences of his descent and birthplace”(159) When Avice the Second, scandalously staying in London with Pierston refuses his advances, and discloses that she has already married another man on Slingers, Pierston angrily asks her why she has done “such extraordinary things”, and asks if her new lover is “that black-bearded typical local character...with the same surname as [his]?”(158) This revelation of her character, of her locality and of his interchangeability infuriates him and detaches the spirit of The Well-Beloved from her body, reverting her “from the ephemeral to the stable mood.” It also, however, reveals to him anew “that hitch in his development, rendering him the most lopsided of God’s creatures...his standing misfortune” (160); Hardy’s work with the form of development as Pierston’s own self-told tale surfacing again. Pierston’s next attempt also represents this “hitch” in his development clearly to him, and as previously discussed, he is only able to actually actuate a marriage when his creative faculties have been expunged. It is arguable that, although *Jude* is considered Hardy’s Ur-text (no pun intended) on the ways in which Victorian sociality negatively privileges the married and vilifies the unchaste, that the ways in which Pierston’s failings regarding marriage cause unhappiness to himself and to three generations of women also speaks strongly to this dilemma. He wishes to be freed of Slingers, to disengage from

its placedness and his own ordinariness to that locality, and in so doing gains a horror of placedness and locality even as they appear as character traits in the women he purports to love.

Marriage in *Jude the Obscure* is similarly presented as being desirable when it is impossible or improbable, and absolutely imprisoning when it is reachable. As with all goals in these novels, ambition always contains a dangerous tinge of the extraordinary, even if it is toward a very conventional social milestone. Sue Bridehead, Jude's lover, is certainly "real" in comparison to *The Well-Beloved*, although less viscerally present than the only-tangible Arabella. Sue and Jude are avowedly both committed lovers and entirely separate social and legal beings. Sue is Jude's wife in commitment and purpose for much of the novel, but is also "called Mrs. Richard Phillotson...but...not really Mrs Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about with...unaccountable antipathies"(224). Jude's 'real' wife, Arabella Donne, exhibits only indifference to her own development, and radiates these qualities onto Jude as a "a new atmosphere hanging around him" (42): rather than living a wholly scholarly life, Jude under her influence is embroiled in a "coarse conjugal" (87) mode of existence, where his development takes on a secondary role to the labour of maintenance. Jude is always able, in his initial courtship with Arabella, to find "excuse for a longer time with her" (47): time, Hardy implies, that he is taking away from his studies to spend on the ordinary activities of Marygreen life. When Arabella tricks him into marrying her, the realization of the trade-off he has made for the sake of ordinary entertainments becomes horrifyingly clear to Jude. He must, in his view, abandon being a "good boy [who] read[s] all he can" (5) and his dream of "impossible scholarships" (62) at Christminster, and instead take care of the woman he has apparently disadvantaged through their intercourse. Sex, in *Jude the Obscure*, always has a quality of locality, which is beneficial for 'local' characters but bad for those tinged with the extraordinary.

Arabella is “no vestal” (46) before the marriage, and the consequences of the consummation of her affair with Jude are not nearly so severe as those that occur in similar circumstances in, for example, *Tess*. Arabella is not “punished” for her extramarital sex (she gains a husband with this “bed trick”) nor for giving up her child, nor even for failing to mourn her husband when he dies. Her narrative diagram (aside from a brief interlude in Australia, which is also not ‘punished’, as is an undertaking made out of necessity, rather than ambition) is apparently adhered to at all its apogees and depths. She does not aspire to exceed her situation. She is quite satisfied with her circumstances in general, feeling “fresh as larks” (426) at most times because the severity of Marygreen does not limit her. Her ambitions – or rather, her occasional opportunisms-- in general, are presented as being absolutely run-of-the-mill with the general state of her sociality. She is, for this reason, the principal female villain of the text, and also the only character who seems to enjoy herself. She has absolutely no objection to the expectations of her Wessex life, or with wifedom, and actively works to subvert those of “extraordinary” people who do, whereas Jude, upon awaking after their marriage, despairingly queries the vicissitudes of the invisible structures of his life: “...in the circumstances he could not have acted otherwise while ordinary notions prevailed. But how came them to prevail?” (62).

It is not Jude’s sexual engagement with Arabella that is morally dubious, it is implied by the narrator, but his temporary abandonment of his academic practice and desire to exceed the boundaries set by his birth. An ordinary marriage, in which Jude remains where he is, is anathema to the form’s developmental arc; however, it is also the only thing on offer and the only thing for which it seems he would not be ‘punished’ by Hardy’s metanarrative. Jude sees the tragedy of his diversion with Arabella, “the hell of conscious failure, both in ambition and in love”(145) and of his choice of materiality over briefly dull-seeming loftier things soon after he and Arabella are

married. This is pre-empted by the narrator's tart interjection on behalf of the form that "a new-made wife can manage to look interesting for a few weeks...there is a certain piquancy about her situation which carries off the gloom of facts"(64). In marrying Arabella, Jude has leashed himself to a quotidian reminder of his allowing himself to be ordinary and local. He has, to his horrified realization, squandered his "one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals"(67) by allowing himself to acquiesce to his ordinary residency. This is emphasized even more clearly by the visceral, literally animal imagery that occurs in the section of the novel which immediately follows this realization. Jude and Arabella kill the pig that they have raised together, a "dismal, sordid, ugly spectacle" (72), which, because of its tangibility, paints in bright colours for Jude the life he might have otherwise have been leading. Instead of inhabiting the "vague city" (17) of Christminster, he is mired in "mean" (9) and *real* Marygreen, where the "meat is red and bloody" (71) and the "white snow is stained with the blood of his fellow-mortal" (73).

Jude's quasi-marriage with Sue, the true desire of his heart, is also beset with failures made by mistake or out of necessity. When Hardy's narrator describes Jude's first marriage, he concludes that 'there seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of foregoing a man's opportunity of showing himself superior to one of the lower animals...what had he done, or she lost, for that matter, that he deserved to be caught in a gin that would cripple him, if not her also, for a lifetime?'"(62). Here Hardy quite literally asks the reader to look at the shape of the text and see the "well-formed schemes" that Jude's sociality necessarily subverts, describing it as a "gin", or a British-made³⁴ steel trap designed to hobble whatever it catches. It's of note here

³⁴ Gin-traps had also only recently before *Jude* was published been made illegal in England, as they had previously been in regular use by landowners in an attempt to deter poachers, which was deemed inhumane in 1827 (see Westcott, 2003-22)

that Hardy uses the gin-trap as his metaphor in the context of Jude's "animal" body and unsuccessful first marriage, as this is a uniquely British invention, and was mostly used in the countryside in order to snare unsuspecting large game – Arabella's actions laid out in stark relief, even though no-one around them seems to be bothered by the circumstances of their union.

Jude and Sue live together unmarried, go through all the processes of life a married couple practice, but are not considered suitable neighbours or friends by their environs; this extraordinary union disqualifies them from ordinary residency. When each eventually returns to their hated spouse, things only seem to become worse and more difficult for each emotionally, although they are living in a way that is in accordance with Wessex norms: Jude cries to Sue that "If there is anything more degrading, immoral, unnatural, than another in my life, it is this meretricious contract with Arabella which has been called doing the right thing!"(432) Hardy's work with the form against its content here is again made clear. The text, like most developmental novels of its period, goes through a cycle of growth, to learning, to work, to marriage and childbirth, to death, but does so in a sense *without Jude*. Or, at least, without his achieving those objectives in a way that allows for his ordinary socialized development. The *Bildungsroman* happens around him, rather than to him.

The issue of whose wife is whose, and how the text doles-out ramifications for extraordinary behavior in light of this is also central to the plot of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess's rape by Alec D'Urberville counts for a great deal of pain, for Hardy's female *Bildungsheld* and very little in the way of ensuring her social security, as it results in a child. Although she has absolutely no hand in her sexual initiation, sex out of wedlock for an extraordinary character like Tess has very different results than it might for a Wessex local like Arabella Fawley. D'Urberville's attempted seduction and assault of Tess is revealed to the reader as being

premeditated as much as Tess's mother's plan to have him marry her; indeed, her mother's plans seem to have involved D'Urberville implicitly. The locality of this sex act is also apparently imperiled by the fact that Alec's family are not actually from Wessex, which makes the circumstances of his encounter with Tess (an actual ancestral D'Urberville) even more extraordinary and even less local than they would otherwise have been. His father "made his fortune as an honest merchant (some said money-lender) in the North, and decided to settle as a county man in the South" (32). Tess's actual marriage to Angel Clare is also metanarratively doomed in a way that the reader can see, but Tess cannot. Angel is from a good family, and he wishes to take Tess abroad with him. When Angel is told about Tess's child, having previously thought her an ordinary milkmaid, he abandons her because of the "extraordinary circumstance" she has put him in, saying "I cannot" he said, "without despising myself, and what is worse, perhaps, despising you. I mean, of course, cannot live with you in the ordinary sense!" (243). Her attempts at ordinary development are again, thwarted; the reader can see so clearly how Tess could have prevented all of these events, or how chance things occurring could have improved her lot, but Hardy's narrative does not allow these developmental arcs to actuate.

Tess's destiny is at least partially dictated by which of the men in her life decide they have a more ordinary societal claim to her body. Alec D'Urberville seems to agree with Angel's assertion that Tess is more of a wife to her rapist than to her groom, as he cries "Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man's wife, you are mine!"(335). Tess sees this as being an inescapable truth, which she attempts to rectify at the end of the novel by destroying the male body she likes less. This brutal action caused by brutal equivalency is one of the only decisions (aside from her brief happy sojourn at the dairy-farm) Tess makes that is allowed, if briefly, to 'work'. Its objective is to reconcile her with Angel, who,

when she tells him, considers her story “very terrible if true; if a temporary hallucination, sad. But, anyhow, here was this deserted wife of his, this passionately-fond woman, clinging to him without a suspicion that he would be anything to her but a protector...Tenderness was absolutely dominant in Clare at last” (390). All of this sympathy, however, is only presented to the reader as being present in Angel after it is already far too late, and even in this context as being only either “terrible if true...or sad”, as qualified by Tess’s emotional state. Her failure is always-already a *fait accompli* of failed ordinary development in the terms set by the Wessex *Bildung*. The source of the beginning of these troubles, and the scene which almost stopped *Tess* from being allowed to be published is also, crucially, one of the most heightened instances of immanent regionality that Hardy has ever published. It exemplifies perhaps more than any other the way in which Hardy links locality, ordinariness and the expectations of growth predicated by an unbending and often cruel British sociality.

Tess and Alec are riding through a misty forest, which Alec tells her is “a bit of the Chase, the oldest wood in England” (68). Tess cannot see around her, and Alec- as the reader knows, but not yet Tess - in his pursuit of her has led her into an unknown area in the middle of the night. Tess is quite literally in “space”, here; she is also, as Alec tells us specifically, in “England”, not Wessex, or perhaps both simultaneously, as they have entered an uncanny region and known things are not ready to hand. When Alec finds her in the dark he can see nothing but a “white nebulousness” (70) at his feet, while “above them rose the primeval yews of the Chase”, with no “guardian angel...or providence of fate” for the “beautiful feminine tissue” (71) of Tess. Hardy’s narrator here intervenes, and asks whether “one may admit the possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe? Doubtless some of Tess d’Urberville’s mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time” (71). The

“immeasurable social chasm” (71) that falls between Tess and her planned life before and after this event, then, is to at least plausibly be considered as being in recompense for the sins of her “county gentlemen” (32) ancestors, as if they too as ordinary residents of the area might be culpable for their excesses and have their actions retroactively punished. This, like almost everything that happens to Tess seems wildly unfair, but it also seems very congruent with the concept that the form of the text this character appears in echoes the form of a life she cannot live accurately or ordinarily in. The densely rural scenery, the obscuration of the border between Wessex and England and the invocation of the ancient past of the D’Urberville here all work as an indictment of English morals, and to do so by placing Hardy’s protagonist in opposition to the developmental form of her narrative. Tess is attacked and compromised in a way that precipitates her downfall in a region which is both local and imbued with the language of “space”, more English than the rest of Wessex and yet less connected to her contemporaneous period than the rest of her abject life; a place in which there are no ordinary residents, but no reprieve from the eventual limits of her developmental form, either.

In conclusion, Hardy’s texts, especially these last three published works, the tragic *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, the hyperrealist *Jude the Obscure* and the self-described “fairy-tale” *The Well-Beloved* are all novels whose preoccupations are the qualities of social ordinariness as made more evident than would otherwise be possible by a form which demands cohesion to their rules. For each *Bildungsheld*, the developmental logic of the *Bildungsroman* remains tangibly unfulfilled, although the reader can see frustratedly how *close* it comes. Hardy’s indictment of English life in his contemporary period and the severity of Wessex’s rules of ordinary residency are shown primarily in these texts through the tragic portrayal of sensitive, charismatic protagonists who are *trying and failing* to be ordinary. Jocelyn Pierston, Tess Durbeyfield and

Jude Fawley are all West Country natives from deeply “ordinary” backgrounds, whose temperaments seem to separate them from those of their peers, who “wretched, would not leave their valleys”(Auden, 42). The texts are full of the expectation of the extraordinary from their protagonists and from the *Bildungsroman* form they both take, who are repeatedly confounded by a world which aggressively defends and defines the qualities it deems necessary and acceptable for ordinary residency within its bounds. For Thomas Hardy, in his novels of development, the issue of Britishness and its role in delineating welcomeness or acceptability is inextricable from his extraordinary protagonists’ failed incorporation into strictly ordinary matters.

The Remarkable Margins of The Last September

Englishness is not what it used to be. But it never has been.

- *Dennis Brown*

Few collective political nouns have fallen out of fashion in Britain and its neighboring islands like “Anglo-Irish”; perhaps only “Whig” in contrast to the still-present “Tory” occupies the same dusty niche. These people are not *gone*, per se, as groups analogous enough to be identifiable as both of the former exist, it is just that the system in which their relevance operated is now functionally nonexistent. Although the remains of the British occupation of the Republic of Ireland remain all over the country, both effluvia and decrepit majesty, there are no Hiberno-Norman nobles or English peers left in legislative power. The Irish Constitution prohibits the conferral or maintenance of titles of nobility, even those formerly given as honorifics. This desuetude is oddly present even in the academy, where once-salient things now underused are typically the source of periodic zealous interest. The Anglo-Irish in literature are usually only relevant in either 18th to mid-20th century poetics, novel studies or postcolonial work, and even then, are relegated somewhat to the marginalia of the study of Empire when it comes to their cultural identity; indeed, an unhyphenated one is generally unofficially assigned. That is to say, they are usually read as either English or Irish writers, and the short sea between those terms is rarely crossed.

Certainly however their cultural positions were predicated by their relationship to Hibernian writing, regardless of their later importance to British culture or allegiance with

Britain. John Wilkes, an English journalist, famously characterized Edmund Burke's writing and oratory as "stink[ing] of whiskey and potatoes"(Lotha, 2019), regardless of his lack of a discernable Irish accent. Jonathan Swift was famously averse to being identified as an Irishman because of its cultural ramifications on his intellectual ability and social standing, and especially reticent to any kind of Irish language revival; he called the Irish language "barbarous", as Gloria Lotha notes in her piece for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Though much of his life was spent in Ireland, Swift felt his natural home was in London, referring to his inability to leave Dublin due to political concerns in 1714 as living "like a poisoned rat in a hole" (Swift, in McNally, 2017) . The Anglo-Irish literary coterie is inarguably uniquely impressive given the small size of the population of this colonial class, containing such luminaries as Swift himself and his contemporary Maria Edgeworth, through (for example) George Moore, Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, the Irish literary Revival greats J.M Synge and W.B. Yeats, through to Samuel Beckett, Elizabeth Bowen and Lafcadio Hearn. While it might seem redundant to provide this very inexhaustive list, it is remarkably possible for someone familiar with British and Irish literature to assign which "side" of the bifurcated Anglo-Irish system of taxonomy each writer might be said to fall into, with the possible and -evidently- intriguing exception of Elizabeth Bowen.

However, regardless of their literary identity, and even when their relative exclusion from English national identity is taken into account, it is undeniable that for a decidedly long while the relatively small Anglo-Irish minority contained within itself an overwhelming majority of Ireland's wealth and power, not to mention the overwhelming preponderance of its educational access. The Anglo-Irish as a class may have disappeared, but the "University Problem" still remains. The divide between Anglican and Catholic educational systems in pre-Independence Ireland serves now, as it served for the Irish Nationalists as a painfully obvious result of the

imbalance of British colonial attention to the requirements of its colonized peoples. Although Catholics were allowed to apply to and attend Trinity College Dublin starting in 1793, the only constituent college of Ireland's only ancient university remained the face of Ireland's Protestant ascendancy until well after the conclusion of the Troubles; in a way, it still is.

The imbalance in funding and prestige at the heart of Irish public education has remained a sticking point for many Irish students and was "rooted in the dissatisfaction of Irish Catholics and Presbyterians"(Moody,90) with the fact that Ireland, ruled from a distance by the British Anglican State could not provide an education that would suit the laities of both groups equally. Catholics were, although eventually allowed to attend TCD, strongly discouraged from doing so both socially and by their religious leaders. The foundation of other, Catholic Universities in Ireland – most famously University College Dublin (UCD), which was formed in 1880 and received its official charter in 1908 - was in large part due to this issue. It is worth mentioning here that every single writer in the group above listed attended Trinity College Dublin, aside from Bowen, Beckett and Hearn, as the University did not then admit women, and while allowed, Catholic men hardly received a warmer welcome. In a recent article for the *University Times*, Ireland's largest student newspaper and tellingly a publication staffed only by students of TCD, Rachel Lavin writes on the subject that, in the same year that UCD received its charter, the "Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Edward Thomas promoted the segregation of Catholic and Protestants students saying of Trinity "... (as) a satisfactory organ for the higher education of the Protestant Episcopalian population of Ireland, it (Trinity) has never been an organ for the higher education of the Roman Catholic population." However, this was only a partial solution, Lavin continues, as:

If [a Catholic student] wanted to attend Trinity they must first request permission from their bishop, and even then, it would only be granted in exceptional circumstances and on

the condition that they did not join any college societies. Archbishop McQuaid later justified this self-imposed ban, saying, “Only the Archbishop of Dublin is competent to decide, in accordance with the norms of the instructions of the Holy See, in what circumstance and with what guarantees against the danger of perversion, attendance at that College (TCD) may be tolerated.”

The “university problem” became and remained one of the most well-publicized issues both political and symbolic at the forefront of difficulty between Ireland and its colonizing power; the wealthy, ancient institution of Trinity College standing as a symbol for Anglicanism, sectarianism and Irish occupation by the British, and the younger universities – again, UCD in particular – serving as a symbol of Irish home rule, Catholicism and nationalism. Several UCD graduates were involved in the leadership of the 1916 Dublin Rising, at one point actually laying siege to Trinity’s campus. Irish (and international) intellectuals, artists and politicians have undeniably emerged from both institutions throughout their history, and the concept of belonging within Irish identity remains a painful and fraught one – but even now who, does one think of as being *more Irish* in the terms that appear to matter– Trinity’s Oscar Wilde, or UCD’s James Joyce?³⁵

Issues like these – seemingly academic in every sense, in actuality deeply rooted in the denial of the basic personhood of the Irish people by the British and the Anglo-Irish elite - were absolutely manifold before the formation of the Republic of Ireland, and especially in the period of the Easter Rising and its threshold with two global wars. In my previous chapters on Thomas Hardy and George Eliot, I have opened a discussion on the way in which nationalized

³⁵ Just as an exercise, I spoke to three non-academic friends – one a landscaper, one a submarine engineer and one a graphic designer while writing this chapter (without revealing the purpose of my inquiry), and posed the following questions:

1) *Where is Oscar Wilde from?* 2) *Where is James Joyce from?*

The data was as follows (of course, this is a tiny set, but it’s indicative for the point made in this paragraph.)

Respondent one: “Oscar Wilde is either English or American” *and* “I don’t know who that is.”

Respondent two: “I know the name Oscar Wilde, but I haven’t heard of the second one.” *and* “N/A”

Respondent three: “Oscar Wilde is definitely English” *and* “James Joyce is Irish for sure.”

“ordinariness” in the context of Empire and colonization has taken on far more than an aesthetic or background role. Speaking about the ordinary directly has, as I have shown, had a directly agonistic relationship to the stability of the ordinary qualities of the thing or person in question. Nationalized ordinariness, then, relies on a subjective, political and aesthetic willingness to defend the things we think of as being the bedrock of “us” against the imagined specter of the not-us. We know when something or someone is ordinary mostly because we do not notice it or them; if they are *us* or *ours*, they are always-already so. Differences from the ordinary can be spoken about without disturbing its power, but the nature of ordinary belonging itself has to come *before examination* in order to remain in place. We as national subjects know when something is ordinary as long as we do not look too hard at any particular examples of it, which then lose their political quality *because they are remarked upon*.

This does not, as I have also previously discussed, preclude the possibility for change or betterment. Things can be extraordinary and acceptable without exceeding the terms of ordinariness in its relationship to nationhood, but only if one can also allow that the thing might be exemplary of a kind of national character. These things must uphold desirable nationalized values and as such increase the limits of the ordinary perception of one’s nationhood, and also be an example of things a nation might have in common with itself. They can exceed expectations and limitations, but not the bounds of the imagined community; or, if they do, the community expands its boundaries to contain them, making their newness moot. These things were always possible for us, because they have always been potentially ours, so to speak. This system of absorption and subsumption allows for nationalized ordinariness as a social construct to be incredibly powerful, incredibly capacious and incredibly fragile all at once. It works with great

specificity and huge impact as long as nobody looks too hard at it; and especially as long as no-one talks about it.

But what happens when we *do* have to talk about *what is* and *who is* ordinary? The remarkable, however much it attempts to assimilate, can never be ordinary; even saying something is “remarkably ordinary” places it in a category of exception. Something that is remarkable is always something that has *already been observed*, and observation withers ordinariness on the vine. When the circumstances of the lives of both real citizens and literary characters compel them to acknowledge the remarkable by warfare, strife and the wolf at the door which directly challenges their sense of nationalized belonging, how do we describe this without rendering everything uselessly remarkable? When the Lady Naylor and Christopher Tietjens and other exemplars of the world of the stable and unuttered national ordinary, who stand for “no talking about it”(*Parade’s End*, 14) are themselves left behind by its changing borders? When the remarkable must become remarked upon? These questions seem especially pertinent given the current political climate, and as “an ignorance of Ireland or tendency to downgrade the significance of things Irish does not solely reside in the minds and attitudes of the so-called British “chumocracy”, public schooled, Oxford-educated, and heavily represented in politics...it extends to the realm of academic studies in Britain too”(Hickman and Ryan, 98).

In this chapter I will translate the necessity for “being British” for the British subject outside of Britain itself. I will explore the necessarily remarkable, but unextraordinary incompatibility of the Anglo-Irish subject with both the figure of the Irish Other and the complacently belonging English subject as depicted in Elizabeth Bowen’s 1929 novel of development, *The Last September*. Drawing from affect and postcolonial theory to iterate the delicate moods of feeling unwelcome and its accompanying anxieties in a novel of development

at the end of a precarious system of governance, this chapter argues that Anglo-Irish colonizers and landowners (and, of course, the macrocosm of British colonization writ large) as represented in early 20th century literature proffered a form of desirable ordinariness within their own limited circles and simultaneously violently mandated Britishness as normalcy everywhere. Although they defended English national occupation and national practice at both a political and social level, they were themselves excluded from this system of belonging when any more than a cursory examination of their subjecthood was undertaken. This fact makes the representation of the development of Anglo-Irish monolithic national subjectivity itself paradoxical. These characters have no monolithic national ordinariness between themselves upon which to rely, and they are certainly not English enough to pass the subjectivity test of the imagined community in that context. Ordinary subjects do not live in the “Big House” novel, and they certainly did not occupy the Big Houses of colonial Ireland.

Anglo-Irish subjects as represented in the literature of the development of Irish independence are *always* remarkable, *always* beyond the pale even as they enforce its boundaries, *always* neither crossing borders nor comfortably nationally situated. They cannot be ordinarily English, and their attempts to conceal this and to assimilate only further emphasize their abject exclusion from both English and Irish intersubjectivity. Elizabeth Bowen creates, within this early novel, a system of intricately failed moments of the intersubjective which manifest in actuality as moments of real alterity from both the English and the Irish, damning with faint praise the efforts of the British colonizer and the ‘moderate’ Anglo-Irish subject “not to notice”, and simultaneously to develop, connect or empathize. This delicate system of relations is, I think, most clearly engaged with through the text’s formal and ubiquitous use of the *remark* as a system of communication by its Anglo-Irish characters.

The remark, as I will discuss in the third section of this chapter, is a mode of speech which requires only the ghost or the potentiality of a respondent, which posits without necessarily requiring a reply. It expects a response but (although this feels truly pathetic when it happens, and it happens a lot to Bowen's hapless colonizers) doesn't require one in order to be followed up by another remark by the same subject. Characters can keep remarking back and forth without ever actually discussing or relating. The remark, in short, is mobilized in this novel in a way which engenders its own failure; it cannot begin a conversation or provoke a reaction. The Anglo-Irish in Bowen's novel cannot talk about ordinary things without rendering them remarkable by the fact of their own fragile cultural standpoint. They certainly cannot communicate with English people without demonstrating the insecurity of the Anglo-Irish identity politic and ensuring their own, unbelonging remarkability. Bowen's work on failed intersubjective form also shows the neutering effects the British cultural-colonial apparatus has on development in characters who are both its subjects and its perpetrators. *The Last September* and the cultural position it represents is a uniquely interesting circumstance wherein any attempts at establishing intersubjective ordinariness and hence, developing ordinary relationships, are doomed from the outset by the pathological remarkability of the hyphenated British colonizer.

The English origin of the word "remarkable" isn't particularly interesting, however, as English words go.³⁶ *Remarkable*, in actuality, is quite ordinary, in that it gets to English directly from French. It comes directly down from the Middle French *remarquer* (to re-mark, or to return to a point), which itself comes from the proto-Germanic *markq* (a spot, or a point), and *markō* (a

³⁶ It doesn't have any of the glamour of Andre Aciman's *apricot*, not from "algebra, alchemy or alcohol" but "from *precoquere*...as in "precocious"(64-65). It doesn't have a winding and mystical path, like the word *clue* – from the late middle English *clew* or "ball of thread", quite literally the sort of thing one would use to guide oneself through a labyrinth toward a Minotaur.

rand, border or edge) and thence from the proto-Indo-European prefix *marǵ-*, or *merg-* which denotes an edge, a boundary or a border.³⁷

All Anglo-European and Celtic languages take their root words for borders, or even the delineation of districts from this same much-diluted Indo-European origin; in the Merriam-Webster citation for the prefix *merg-*, are cited the Latin *margo* "margin;" Avestan *mareza-* "border;" Old Irish *mruig*, Irish *bruig* "borderland," Welsh *bro* "district;" the Gothic *marka* "boundary, frontier", and especially pertinently, the Old English *mearc* "boundary, sign, limit, mark." The word "remarkable" doesn't appear on this page at any point, but its meaning nevertheless comes from the same place as these very spatial abstract nouns, which all – although in usage denoting 'real' things - delineate imaginary ones; bordered ends, stoppages, differences. "Remarkable" is a very English word with very conventional origins, and in so being, like many other ordinary things, is saturated with a kind of nationalized perniciousness in both its usage and its origin. It's worth noting here also before continuing that the Anglo-Saxon word *mearcstapa*, or "border-walker" is also the origin of the contemporary English word "monster." The linguistic concept of the 'monster' as such, comes to us far more directly from the concept of the foreign than it does the marsh, or the sea, or the undiluted. It has always been, unsurprisingly, about the safety of *us*, and the danger of borders.

I want to pause for a moment with these two related words – *mearcstapa* and *remarkable*. We find the first word most famously and first in *Beowulf*, when the hero refers to the monster Grendel as a "*maere mearcstapa*"- usually translated as "well-known" or "famous" monster. Nicholas Kiessling in *Modern Philology* makes an interesting argument, however, that the word

³⁷ It's also pointedly not where we get the contemporary English word "mere", which is relevant in this instance because it's a common homonymic misconception – a "mere", or a marsh that is an arm of the sea, comes from the Dutch and Germanic roots for "ocean", whereas "mere" as a superlative adjective in English comes down from the Latin "merus", meaning *undiluted*.

“*maere*” here may have been mistranscribed. With a long diphthong the word means “famous”, and a short one it means “incubus” or “night monster”(192). The first would not add much to the author’s account of Grendel, as the word does not have “many negative usage connotations”(193) in Anglo-Saxon, but the second, as it links Grendel to a larger cultural fear of the unknown person which spans European literature at the time, makes Grendel “a monster created out of the eclectic milieu in early England, a product of the time when the southern, Classical, and the northern Scandinavian traditions merged”(201). Rather than a beast emerging from the swamp, Grendel here is something much more like the early English version of an undocumented immigrant or transient³⁸, crossing the border between the known world and the unknown in a way that destabilizes and terrifies the inhabitants of Heorot.

The concept of a cosmopolitan monster is perhaps laughable, and equating a violent beast to an immigrant of any water startlingly conservative as an argument, but the point to take here is that the word that works for Grendel in Anglo-Saxon is descriptive, and the one that does not is repetitive. The *mearcstapa*, the edgewalker, is already remarkable; and apparently also draws an etymological line between contemporary and ancient fears of the outsider, or the unfamiliar. The word *mearc* writ alone usually means “march” in Anglo-Saxon writing, as in “The Marches of Wales”, borderlands to populated areas often described as desolate, supernatural and dangerous in texts of the time. Grendel himself is described as all of these things by the Beowulf poet:

*Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel haten,
mære mearcstapa, se þe moras heold,
fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard*³⁹

this grim spirit was called Grendel
the famous/incubus monster, who held the marshes
the fens and the fastnesses; the realms of monsterkind

³⁸ For more on Grendel as a racialized or othered figure, see Toni Morrison and Adam Miyashiro.

³⁹ The opposite lines are my literal translation, for continuity, but Seamus Heaney has a far more beautiful rendering of this as ‘Grendel was the name of this grim demon/Haunting the marches, marauding round the heath/And the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time/In misery among the banished monsters (8).

The concept of border-walking as being fundamentally related to the borders of England and the English use of the word ‘remarkable’ is interesting when it is considered that the “marshes” here described are not in themselves real places. Certainly, they refer to actual geography in our current time, but in this period of speech the concept of the boundary is not a line, but a space; the realm of the uncanny, the province of monsters, the place where things which *are not us* enter from and leave to. It represents the boundaries of the ordinary for the Anglo-Saxon population, which needed to be guarded both figuratively and literally.

This chapter, however, is not the first to suggest a link between the word *mearcstapa* and a fear of the immigrant or the interloper. Indeed, Richard Fahey suggests that the demonization of the immigrant in contemporary culture actually has unshakeable links to the word’s Anglo-Saxon origins:

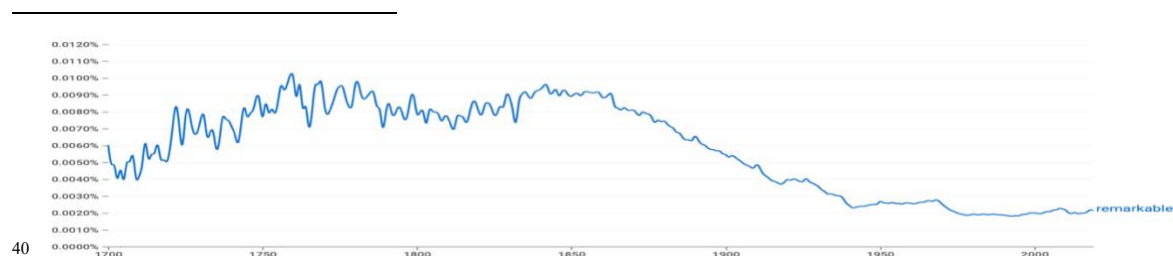
“[A] translation of *mearcstapa* is “border-crosser” and this interpretation of the Old English compound focuses on the Grendelkin’s liminality and sorrowful journeying between the Danish kingdom and realm of monsters. Interpreting *mearcstapan* as “border-crossers” aligns the monstrous Grendelkin with immigrants, migrants, exiles and foreigners” (Fahey, *Medieval Studies*, UND)

The conceptual framework that links those who exist around or cross borders and frontiers with the undesirable, the uncanny and even the supernatural is as such a phenomenon that far predates even the earliest formations of immigration legislation, or even the formalized legislature of national boundaries. There is no way, in short, for a subject associated with the borderlines, the marches, the *fen ond fæsten* to be deemed ordinary by their peers; they are always-already remarkable. Even before they can be known or seen they are, in a very real sense, conspicuously prefixed with *marg-*, or *merg-*. They are never *us*, in form or usage.

“Remarkable” is nonetheless a word which is somewhat unusual in contemporary speech; it occurs far more often in academic writing in the current time than it does in conversational

usage. In speech, the word has a distinctly Victorian and early 20th century cast to it; one is far more likely to hear it said aloud in a period drama than in the supermarket. The graph footnoted below made using the Google Books database, displays the frequency with which the word appears in published writing in English between the years 1700-2019.⁴⁰ As can be clearly seen from this data, the usage of *remarkable* becomes more and more remarkable itself after about 1862. This, it can be surmised with some certainty, has little to do with a disaster of global unremarkability beginning in the early 20th century, and more to do with the evolution of speech patterns, but it does cement this fragment of vocabulary as being primarily the purview of this period. This suggests, however, that the *remarkable* itself is somehow more deeply connected to this era, which although an argument that is somewhat beyond the scope of this chapter, does provoke an intriguing question about the utility of “remarkable” as an adjective and its relationship to nationalized modes of subjectivity.

What is remarkable is, if this does not belabour the point, something that is or can be the subject of a remark. A remark differentiates itself from other parts of speech again through its relation to grammar; it is (by itself) an abstract noun. As a verb it is, like many ordinary English verbs, intransitive. One almost always *remarks* “on” or “upon”, something that is happening. Remarks are almost universally reactive, observations about something that is happening to or around the speaker (Merriam Webster again suggests that synonyms for it include the also somewhat dated, but also reactive *allow* and *opine*). Intransitive verbs prohibit direct



intersubjectivity between speakers, or speakers and objects.⁴¹ In the way of an intransitive verb, the Anglo-Irish landlord in Bowen's novel is also indirect, requires intermediaries, is vastly outnumbered by other sorts of 'words', and are for want of a better word, mostly English in a way predicated on imaginary borders and the position they occupy. Indeed, when discussing her need to fit into a social order that cannot be read as anything but oppositionally nationalized, one of Elizabeth Bowen's English characters in *The Last September* actually tells an Anglo-Irish companion in the language of the grammatical remark that she "like[s] to be in a pattern...I like to be related; to have to be who I am. Just to *be* is so intransitive, so lonely" (142).

Thinking about this kind of intransitive Anglo-Irish subjectivity has typically been a fraught practice in Irish postcolonial studies where they intersect with Modernist studies and before. Crucial to the maintenance of Ireland as a dominion was the concept of the colonized Other as the "mere Irishman", a phrase which at this point in our proceedings following the discussion of the margin-invoking prefix should spark some real alarm – indicating now as it did then both a diminished superlative in comparison to an English person, and a proximity to the extraordinary or the border. The congruence between the etymological and conceptual frames of "mere Irishman", "*mearcstapa*" and "remarkable" cannot be overlooked. Borders that are hard to discern but which are ruthlessly enforced abound in Anglo-Irish ordinary subjectivity.

⁴¹ A neutral intermediary is always required; they have to be accompanied and explained ("I will go *to* war", never I will *go war*"). These verbs when written alone in their infinitive form however almost never *appear* alone, as the previous example demonstrates - they require the company of the prefixive "to." This is another Anglo-Saxon hangover, the "to" preposition coming from the use of the dative infinitive. It is weakened and generalized now and exists primarily linguistically as a prefix. However, in its first usages, and its current form the "to" prefix before the dative infinitive of a verb worked in the same way the word "to" now functions before ordinary substantives – "I'm going to help", "He seems to be fine." It suggested then, and preconsciously suggests now, place, motion toward place, and purpose. It lent movement to now-static intransitive verbs. Verbs like *to remark*, then, live up to their linguistic origins in more ways than one; they contain within themselves a literal "English" border. They require something in-between themselves and the world, before and behind, in order to function; they also have a direct relationship to placedness both in terms of content and function. A remark has movement, but not necessarily in the direction of a destination. It does not require reciprocity or specific direction.

This is largely because the Anglo-Irish themselves were both the most obvious face of British colonial oppression on the island since the English Reformation, and also were fundamentally not *only* British. They were the face of the English nationalist oppressor in an ethnonationalist conflict without, it seems largely from the literature and letters of the period, actually self-identifying as members of that ethnosocial group. This subgroup of citizens owned a huge amount of the real estate of Ireland proper, were almost universally members of the Anglican Church of Ireland and were extensively intermarried with aristocratic and wealthy families of non-English Irish, and British-sympathizing Catholic Irish origin. Bruce Nelson, in his 2012 work *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race*, asserts that political relations between the native Irishperson and the Anglo-Irishperson were always motivated by the machinations of Empire; “in simplest terms, the [British] government’s goal was to extend the reach of the Pale, the region around Dublin where the English language, English common law and English land-use patterns had long prevailed”(19). Here we come to another telling linguistic point in the description of non-English lands in English. The word “pale” in this context derives from the Latin *pālus*, meaning “stake”, and signifies the area initially bounded by the Norman settlements of Ireland in the twelfth century. The “Pale” of Ireland in the late nineteenth century, up until the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, really only referred to the area of County Dublin and its surrounding lands; this area is still sometimes derogatorily referred to as such at the time of writing.

The expression “beyond the pale”, however, remains in current usage in much the same way that “remarkable” does – not something heard in everyday conversation, but still a recognizable phrase to describe something that has passed the boundaries of the ordinary. The Anglo-Irish occupied lands in colonial Ireland that themselves went far beyond the Pale, but for

the most part did not assimilate themselves into Irish culture; their relationship to their Irish counterparts was more settler-colonial than settled. The only gentry who enjoyed some of the same privileges as the descendants of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland were the Irish Catholic aristocracy who signed away their sovereignty to the British government. In describing the intensely complicated relationship that Britain has always had to Ireland, and the impetus behind the maintenance and support of a subjugating class like the Anglo-Irish *in situ*, Nelson also writes:

Apparently, no matter our station in life, we need to imagine the Other in order to envision ourselves not only as mere flesh-and-blood creatures, but also as bearers of a set of characteristics – above all a set of virtues- that define the collective identity we call the nation and the race...English cities could and did draw on a vast reservoir of hostile and demeaning views of the “Irishman by Nature”(17, and 6)

Theodore W. Allen, in *The Invention of the White Race*, notes that the term “mere Irishman” as used to distinguish a person of native Hibernian descent from an Englishperson was used in legal terms as early as the 14th century; “in 1310 an English court in Ireland freed Robert Walsh, an Anglo-Norman charged with killing John Mac Gilmore, because the victim was "a mere Irishman and not of free blood," it being stipulated that "when the master of the said John shall ask damages for the slaying, he [Walsh] will be ready to answer him as the law may require"(37). Anti-Irish sentiment as a justification for discrimination and violence by colonizing invaders has been recorded since the time of Henry II, as both a means of explaining the rapacious expansion of the Roman Catholic Church into Irish territories and spreading London-centered dominions wider. Gerald of Wales, an envoy of the above king, in perhaps the most famous anti-Irish tract written before the eighteenth century, calls the Irish people “truly barbarous...they depend of animals for their livelihood and they live like animals...” (*Topographica Hibernia*, 69) In sections of this text, composed in and around Ireland in 1188,

dubbed “Of Their Treachery” and subsequently “How New-Comers are Stained with the Same Vices”, he also attests that “[the Irish] are given to treachery more than any other nation, and never keep the faith they have pledged, neither shame nor fear holding them to the most solemn obligations”(76), and following this, that:

...however, the pest of treachery has here grown to such a height – it has so taken root, and long abuse has so succeeded in turning it into second nature – habits are so formed by mutual intercourse, as he who handles pitch cannot escape its stains – that evil has acquired great force. A little wormwood, mixed with a large quantity of honey, quickly makes the whole bitter, but if the mixture contains twice as much honey as it does wormwood, the honey fails to sweeten it...even strangers who land here from other dominions become generally imbued with the national crime, which seems to be innate and very contagious.” (77)

Although these sentiments are horrifying, they are unfortunately neither unique nor period specific. Depicting the native Irish population as subhuman, even monstrous is distressingly common in colonial and domestic English literature after the distribution of this polemic. Indeed, the concept of Irish character being somehow a transmissible ill became popularly acceptable, these fictional negative ethnic qualities able to cross between Irish and English people like a virus empowered by geographical proximity and uncanny similarity. For the British, the Irish were alarmingly unremarkable without this narrative; *like ‘us’* enough to provoke alarm and guilt for early colonizers, allegedly and comfortingly *‘unlike us’* enough to preclude fraternity. Irish character was placed in direct opposition to a sort of English ‘civilization’ and consequent purity, and this recurs as both political scapegoating and as justification for the occupation of Irish land in published anti-Hibernian sentiment until the late nineteenth century. The Increased Irish migration to the UK beginning in the eighteenth century as mentioned in my first chapter, and concentrated in England’s cities provoked a long and brutal wave of anti-Irish xenophobia laced with this same anxiety of contagion, where Irish immigrants “in cartoons, newspaper articles,

speeches by politicians and popular jokes... were portrayed as savage, violent, drunken and animal-like (BBC).” On the way in which Irish xenophobia has been misconstrued in much of pre-21st century postcolonial and sociological study, Mary Hickman writes:

The assumption in most accounts of racism and ethnicity in Britain...is that because the Irish are white, because anti-Catholicism has faded, and because of cultural similarities, the Irish were able with great ease to assimilate to the ‘British way of life’...[however] both the types of jobs the Irish did in Britain and the conditions in which they were compelled to live were transmuted [by the English] into corroborative evidence of their degenerative nature...the specific fear of the Irish expressed in the nineteenth century was one of contamination.” (16)

Although Irish immigrants travelled voluntarily to Britain’s shores and were able to cross its borders with far less domestic difficulty than the denizens of Britain’s other colonies, its cultural meshing and proximity to the United Kingdom did not stop Irish nationals of all walks of life from being subject to extreme prejudice from the laws and government they were subjects of. Indeed, even in 1836, a pre-office Benjamin Disraeli wrote that the Irish, a “wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain and superstitious race, have no sympathy with the English character [and their history] describes an unbroken circle of bigotry and blood” (in Blake, 152). This statement came before the Great Hunger of the mid 1800s, caused in the majority by the Whig government of Britain’s harrowing failure to stem laissez-faire capitalism, Anglo-Irish and British absentee landlordism in Ireland, and the consequent establishment of one of the world’s first banana republics in single-crop potato farming. Almost as many Irish citizens (over a million) left Ireland as the amount who died from disease, hunger and exposure between 1845 and 1852; it is still one of the largest emptyings of a nation in recorded history. The shocking treatment of the Irish by the British during the Hunger has entered folk memory as a major impetus for the push for Irish independence in the 20th century, as has the treatment of Irish workers who, upon leaving Ireland for Britain, found cold comfort in the slum conditions to which British cities

availed their navvies and factory workers. Conflict here was also by no means only between the upper class and the working class, although the conditions in which it occurred were certainly orchestrated by the aristocracy and the northern new-money English bourgeoisie. Karl Marx, in a letter to Friedrich Engels on the way in which the British Empire might begin to be destabilized by its subjugated proletariat, writes:

...England now possesses a working class divided into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker, he regards himself as a member of the *ruling* nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the *English rulers in Ireland*...

But the English bourgeoisie has also much more important interests in the present economy of Ireland. Owing to the constantly increasing concentration of leaseholds, Ireland constantly sends her own surplus to the English labour market...[sic]
(*Selected Correspondence*, 221)

As Marx here writes (not without actually displaying some anti-Irish sentiment himself, it must be observed), the position of the Irish worker both at home and in Britain destabilized in terms of belonging and maintained in its paucity of quality of life by the nature of British rule. The English worker and the Irish worker were pitted against one another by the British media, the British educational system and the British aristocracy. The Irish, although in many ways far less distinguishable from the white English colonial than other colonized subjects, were still by the early 20th century viewed as being *not people* quite as much as their English counterparts, both by those counterparts and by the ruling class. While they were not dehumanized in the same way as the subjects of Empire whom Britain enslaved, imported and placed behind colour lines (and this project certainly does not seek to suggest a homogeneity of those experiences), they were still both at home and in Britain treated as being ethnically distinct from, and socially inferior to their English neighbours. The case in terms of British nationalism and its parameters of required

ordinariness for the Anglo-Irish is, given the above, a particularly interesting one. Marx in the same letter continues to decry the position of the Irish proletariat given the stark absence of the very people who subjugated them:

Ireland is the bulwark of the *English landed aristocracy*. The exploitation of that country is not only one of the main sources of their material wealth; it is their greatest moral strength. They, in fact, represent the *domination over Ireland*. Ireland is therefore the cardinal means by which the English aristocracy maintain *their domination in England itself*...But the downfall of the English aristocracy in Ireland implies and has as a necessary consequence its downfall in England.... The destruction of the English landed aristocracy in Ireland is an infinitely easier operation than in England herself, because in Ireland *the land question* has been up to now the *exclusive form* of the social question because it is a question of existence, *of life and death*, for the immense majority of the Irish people, and because it is at the same time inseparable from the *national* question. Quite apart from the fact that the Irish character is more passionate and revolutionary than that of the English.

As for the English *bourgeoisie*, it has in the first place a common interest with the English aristocracy in turning Ireland into mere pastureland...It is likewise interested in reducing the Irish population by eviction and forcible emigration, to such a small number that *English capital* (capital invested in land leased for farming) can function there with “security.” It has the same interest in *clearing the estates of Ireland* as it had in the clearing of the agricultural districts of England and Scotland (223).

The Anglo-Irish only make up a part of the “*English landed aristocracy*” to which Marx here refers, as many British nobles who held land in Ireland never actually visited – making much of Ireland between the seventeenth and the mid-twentieth centuries a unique mixture of settler and trade colonialism in extreme proximity to the metropole. A disproportionately large quantity of Anglo-Irish gentry also left Ireland, but in the service of the administration of Empire rather than in imperially mandated servitude. Many Anglo-Irish lords and dignitaries served as officers in the British colonial apparatus abroad, and at ‘home’ they permanently changed the landscape of Ireland in the late 18th and 19th centuries with the construction of the “Great Houses” that now pepper the countryside. These properties were almost universally attached to swathes of tenant

farms, the lackadaisical, incompetent and often cruel governance of which, as above, was a major point of contention in Ireland's bid for independence from Britain in the early twenties.

This is a brief and extremely limited history of anti-Irish sentiment in colonial Britain and its relationship to English borders and the consequent peculiarities of Anglo-Irish subjectivity, but it goes to show that the issue was and is notoriously fraught. It was not only the British who, in short order, began to consider their colonizing subclass to be distinct from their own ranks. Much of the Irish populace considered the Protestant members of their ruling class to be fundamentally un-Irish and mere spars in the apparatus of the British state, but the Anglo-Irish actually situated in Ireland themselves when on record do not seem to have universally agreed. Many families since the sixteenth century had intermarried with Irish landowning nobility. Many Anglo-Irish citizens never visited the United Kingdom, and some never actually left Ireland itself. This resulted in a system of immensely complicated loyalties within this ruling class, which itself provoked internal discord for the British Administration as it attempted to quash the growing call for Irish home rule. As Alvin Jackson writes, "[Anglo-]Ireland was simultaneously a bulwark of the Empire and a mine within its walls. Irish people were simultaneously major participants in Empire and a significant source of subversion. For the Irish, the Empire was both a significant agent of liberation and oppression(in *Nelson*, 122)." Not English enough to be English, but certainly not Irish enough to be Irish, the Anglo-Irish as such occupy a particularly remarkable place in the discourse of monolithic nationality as expressed in literature, one which requires an examination of what it takes to *count*, the difficulty in describing a mode of intersubjectivity for which the English language contains only a vocabulary of lack, and what a difference in generational position might mean for the understanding of this remarkable period in British colonial operations

Mere Margins

It is difficult to think of an author more associated with Anglo-Irish identity as a whole than Elizabeth Bowen, partially because of the subject matter of her many, *many* novels, and also partially because she repeatedly and emphatically tells her readership that that is the central thematic through in which her books should be read, a mode where “People were handicapped, shadowed and to an extent queered—by their pride, by their indignation at their decline and by their divorce from the countryside in whose heart their struggle was carried on”(*Collected Impressions*, 28). Although Bowen’s novels, which are usually read “in terms of realism” (Momoo, 98) are mostly set in the “ordinary world”(98), the world Bowen describes is far from ordinary for most of the people alive in her lifetime. Born in 1899, Bowen was uniquely situated to recount the experience of the turn of the 1900s, as “her age advanced in parallel with that of the new century” (Glendenning, 4). Bowen grew up in between Ireland and the United Kingdom, spending her summers at the family estate, Bowen’s Court, and the rest of her time in London. In a fashion that now seems typical of the Anglo-Irish abroad, Bowen considered herself primarily an Irishwoman in her youth but was strongly associated with British identity throughout her early twenties and thirties. She was a member of that most infamous of Modernist coteries, the Bloomsbury Group, and upon marrying, settled in London with her husband Alan Cameron. Bowen remained based in London throughout her adult life, even after becoming the only woman in her family’s history to inherit the Big House, a location which remained of paramount importance to her sense of self throughout her life, which served as the basis for the house Danielstown in *The Last September*, and which gave its name to her later volume of autobiography. She did not move back to Ireland until 1952, at which time she and her husband

finally settled at Bowen's Court. He died shortly after, and Bowen was impelled to sell the property, which was later demolished in 1960. She died, back in London, of lung cancer in 1973.

All of the above is another very fast summary of the events of a life filled with contradiction and gaps, yet overflowing with the diagnostic criteria for Anglo-Irish failed ordinariness. Neil Corcoran in 2001, examining the linguistic structure of Bowen's most famous text, writes that in a similar vein, "*The Last September* is a novel full of holes. Ellipsis and lacunae dialogue, its detail and its plotting, and several times it opens into irresolvable aporia"(315). Bowen's life itself is full of "holes", rife with a set of paradoxes relating to national identity; when she died, for instance, she possessed both a membership to the Irish Academy of Letters and an Order of the British Empire. Her novels tread an odd line between sympathy for the Irish cause for home rule and later independence (which played out neatly over the course of her century-aligned life) and with a deep mistrust of Irish nationals and an ingrained loyalty to Empire and England.

The Aubade Historical Society published a book in 1993 which caused an absolute scandal surrounding Bowen, called *Notes on Éire: Espionage Reports to Winston Churchill*. It transpired that after there had been some controversy about whether or not Bowen's work might be included in an anthology of regional Irish writing, it had come to light that Bowen had spent much of the Second World War as a spy against the Irish working for Churchill's government:

The story of this book starts in 1993, when extracts from Elizabeth Bowen's works were included in "*A North Cork Anthology*", with the qualification that, though her family had property connections in the areas, she could not be regarded as a North Cork, or even an Irish, writer. This caused outrage in the Dublin media and some vicious attacks on Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford, the compilers of the Anthology. There was even doubt cast on the fact that Ms. Bowen spied against Ireland in the Second World War. The upshot of that controversy was that the Aubade Historical Society traced several of Ms. Bowen's secret reports, which are published here in full for the first time. For those who would see Ms. Bowen's spying as needing no defence, on the supposition that the Allied war on

Germany was absolutely justified, and that Neutrals had no case, this book provides an extensive survey of international affairs in the decades before the War, including de Valera's role in the League of Nations. (Lane, AHS)

Jack Lane moves here that the “the controversy about how to describe Ms. Bowen goes to the heart of what Ireland and Irish culture is.” In a letter to Kathleen Fitzgibbon in 1997, which formed part of the “debate” in the *Irish Examiner* which made up the substance of this controversy, and discussing a recording of Bowen that the students at a summer school had been “thrilled” to hear, he also writes:

I assume the recording, or the lecture, did not explain aspects of Elizabeth Bowen such the vehemence with which she said, 'I *hate* Ireland' " (emphasis not added) as reported by Roy Foster in his 1993 book, *Paddy and Mr. Punch* ' (page 122). Neither, I assume, did it deal with her paid espionage activities here during World War II, which was her only real connection with Ireland and which produced her most valuable writing on the country, though 99% of it appears to have been destroyed because it was classified as 'top secret'. (*Examiner*,19)

This conversation, with Ms. Fitzgibbon writing in defense of Bowen with the support of the editors of the *Examiner* is the only recorded series of its like to ever be declared ‘closed’ by the editors (Lane, 6). Bowen had been employed by the British government to “perform espionage work in Ireland”(6). She was not conscripted, she “immediately volunteered her services”(4) to provide regular and detailed reports on Irish opinion on neutrality. Churchill, whose efforts to curb Irish uprisings had been a costly, painful and bloody failure had offered the same occupation to many other British writers and intellectuals. Bowen cannot be called a “native informant”, although this derogatory term would seem close to applying; she was *not* native to either the subjects or the acquirers of her information-gathering , but she was close enough to be able to extract useful information.⁴² It is hard to think of a more appropriate term for Bowen’s

⁴² In the *New York Review of Books*, Nesrine Malik writes that the term “native informant” is no longer appropriate when discussing the actions of colonized peoples, as “A native informant” was once useful in understanding the way certain cultural brokers from former colonies could benefit from helping more powerful Western authorities objectify their people... But the term “native informant” has become a troubling one. As a derogatory description of

actions here, however, given the fact that her positionality occupies neither the troubled space of first-tier British colonizer nor the position of colonized Irish person. Readers of Bowen's work have observed, frequently and ardently, that Bowen herself confuses the line between Irish and English national identity; as Jed Esty suggests, "In the last fifteen years, that debate has centered on the claim—influentially made by Seamus Deane in *Celtic Revivals*—that one cannot really avoid seeing Bowen's work as a conservative and nostalgic investment in a dying class."(*Unseasonable Youth*, 181) Many Bowen critics, including Vera Kreilkamp, have riposted by arguing that Bowen is not so much a nostalgic apologist for the Anglo-Irish (here taken narrowly to designate the residual landholding class of the Protestant Ascendancy) as a "cold-eyed chronicler of their historical doom."(2007, 259) In my reading, Bowen protests too much about national identity in a way which is fascinating for a study of ordinariness. Her characters work to cover up or resolve the social barriers between the Anglo-Irish and the English, but her narrative style and her formal choices show this to actually take the opposite effect. She *says* she blurs the lines between them, attempting to portray the liminal status of the colonizer who has incorporated themselves into a modern and internationalizing nation, but in so doing she is actually only deepening the crease, or drawing the border between Anglo-Irish and English identities until it is actually shown to be a crack, and then a fissure, and then a short, thin line -

In terms of Anglo-Irish intersubjectivity then, the question remains of whether it is even possible to construe an Irish national literature at the time undiluted and undirected by the machinations of Empire and England. With this said, if "a writing directed toward an English market serves to perpetuate the alien state of the Irish...[and] the proper function of an Irish writer would...be to represent the people"(Lloyd, 43), is there any possibility for a national

an indigenous person considered a collaborator with the colonial or invading power, it sits too closely for comfort to slurs such as "house slave" and its derivatives."(Malik, 2020)

literature which can represent Irish identity while to use Lloyd's language, potentially still being able to create a non-reductive intersubjectivity between the Irish and the English? Daniel Corkery, writing on the place of the Irish writer in a Western European market still dominated by British and American literary culture, goes further to say that all Irish literature in the early 20th century is 'a colonial literature, written to explain the quaintness of the humankind of this land, especially the native human-kind, to another humankind that was not quaint, that was standard, normal'(Corkery, in Lloyd, 43); in short, to attempt to draw an equivalency that would allow for real intersubjective exchange between British ordinary subjects and Irish ordinary subjects. As Ireland itself was then firmly under the colonial yoke, Lloyd's perspective on this is quite absolute:

Both *Ulysses* and the [Irish popular rather than the aesthetic consciousness], are recalcitrant to the emergent nationalist as to the imperial state formation precisely in refusing the homogeneity of style required for national citizenship...What is at issue here is effectively a matter of *verisimilitude*: which narrative of 'Irishness' comes to seem self-evident, normative, truthful. Control of narratives is a crucial function of the state apparatus since its political and legal frameworks can only gain consent and legitimacy if the tale they tell monopolizes the field of probabilities. The state does not simply legislate and police against particular infringements, it determines the forms within which representation can take place. Access to representation is accordingly as much a question of aesthetics."(6)

If there were ever to be a 'real' Irish writer, one who might accurately be said to represent the quality of Irishness, according to Lloyd, Corkery and many colleagues, they could never have been Anglo-Irish, and they could not have existed before the Irish Revolutionary War. However, it seems such a qualification would be hard to access for even a native Irishperson; Lloyd's text takes several hefty swings at such giants as Heaney, Beckett and Yeats because of their association with Anglo-Irishness and the Protestant Ascendancy. This issue, which as with so many postcolonial problematics turns itself back to questions of subjectivity, representation and

essentialism, does also present the academy with a series of useful inquiries when looking for national representation in literature that seeks to represent ordinary life:

...the query we must turn back upon the text turns twofold. Under what conditions does...writing emerge that so thoroughly sifts the grounds whereon Western metaphysics and a related ethics of subjectivity have rested, its forms implying a radical negation of the aesthetic which has been for a period a principal agent in the formation of ethical subjects?...The intent...is not to claim that the 'personal is the political', but rather...that the aesthetic domain occupies a privileged place in the legitimation of the bourgeois state during...colonialism, and to derive that claim...from the work's capacity to mediate subject and object, to produce reconciliations between individual and totality."(Lloyd, 41-2)

Unlike other English bourgeoisie writers, Bowen does not appear to believe that English, Anglo-Irish and Irish identities are essential and absolute, with the codicil that the possibility of actual cultural intermingling is really only one of cordiality and not actual fraternity or congress.

Bowen artificially creates *more of a distance* between her Anglo-Irish characters and their English and Irish counterparts than seems to exist in any other of the novels of the period. It is, she shows, impossible to create or maintain an environment in which ordinary development might be possible for any of the young people depicted in this *Bildungsroman*, because there is no adequate system of national identity present in which they may grow. Excluded from monolithic British ordinariness, there is no *us*, or at least no *us* sanctioned by *us*'s English arbiters for her characters to join when and if they complete their stages of childhood and adolescent development. They are born into a dying world, but even their predecessors had only the shadow of a cultural paradigm into which to develop. While belonging to an English system of national identity, a monolithic "us", may be denied to the *Bildungsheld* Lois and her counterparts, there is certainly a "them" in the form of the threatening and ever-present Irish National Army, who represent the vast majority of Irish subjects *en masse* in *The Last*

September. Their absence and muteness is a demonstration of the flimsiness of Bowen's engagement with Irish identity as compared to English and Anglo-Irish characters. Jed Esty in his "Virgins of Empire" essay goes so far as to note that in this fashion, Bowen's novel "is neither a Bildungsroman nor an anti-Bildungsroman, but a novel that deliberately splices together the antiprogressive time of Anglo-Irish history and the progressive conventions of the coming-of-age novel. It stylizes youth, but finally exposes and concedes the necessity of the most basic temporal imperatives in the construction of novelistic plot, of personal identity, of national history"(262). Nels Pearson goes on to say, incorporating Rebecca Walkowitz's powerful critique of Modernist style's attitude to the national community, that

British modernist treatments of universality, or non-nationalistic modes of human interconnection, are of course not limited to such abstract and absolute proclamations. As Rebecca Walkowitz has demonstrated, "modernist style" often strongly resists nationally sanctioned modes of imagining community - Woolf's "evasive" subjectivity as an "alternative to wartime patriotism" (18), for example "so as to engage alternative modes of community, as in Joyce's, Conrad's, and Woolf's focus on quotidian, sub-national, microcosmic human relationships. (321)

Bowen's prose manages to invest even the smallest human interactions with a flavour of the national, simply because of the desperation to be included in a cohesive English cultural identity that most of her characters consistently exhibit. This is thoroughly and consistently present in the subject matter, where intersubjectivity is always a vain hope, and "an attempt at sympathy [is] the merest fumbling for outlet along the boundaries of the self"(Bowen, 100). This subject-matter is, admittedly, hard to extract from discourses on the national and its relationship to the ordinary. *The Last September* follows a short span of time in the life and growth of Lois Farquar, a very young woman living through the aftermath of the Great War. She is the titular "Virgin of Empire" in Esty's essay, "a frozen-adolescent figure whose own uneven development seems to correspond to the temporal oddities of the surrounding colonial history" (258). Lois, her aunt and

uncle the Naylor, her laconic brother Laurence and her later paramour Gerald, a young British army officer of limited means, and the various visitors who come through their family seat of Danielstown are all shadowed and affected by the presence of the rumbling threat of rising Irish independence all around them. They attend dances and tennis parties, though always with a fear of the presence of the Irish Republican soldiers whose guerrilla combat strategy takes them around and through the estate. An ugly veneer of bravado covers their fear of the changing face of Ireland around them and their refusal to acknowledge the personhood of Irish national subjects, as Lois, when attempting to explain how she lives with this uncertainty and the proximity of fighting to Danielstown, says brashly that she once danced into Irish Nationalist occupied territory “all the way to the end of the avenue on a bet...to the white gate...but naturally [not] as a rule”(23) Their Irish noble and English guests alike express alarm and anxiety about the proximity of the Republicans to the house, but the Naylor remain for the most part reasonably undisturbed on the face of things; the subject of the war is brought up euphemistically but mostly dismissed. When it does come up, Bowen’s novel often bookends it with the most mundane of household details, as if to strengthen the impression that life and its processes, however dull, inside the Big House has not changed, or if it has those changes must not be discussed in any detail. The way Bowen presents these instances of euphemistically representing violence almost makes it seem as though Danielstown were somehow not quite in the same country as the rest of the Irish violence, itself occupying a vague and neutered Anglo-Irish space:

In Laurence’s plate of clear soup six peas floated. Six accurate spoonfuls, each with a pea in it, finished the soup. He glanced right in his aunt’s direction, left in Mrs. Montmorency’s: both were talking. Mr. Montmorency, listening to Lady Naylor, seemed to be looking across at Laurence, but he sat with his back to the light so that Laurence, short-sighted, could not be sure – he preferred uncertainty.

Lady Naylor spoke of the way things were, with her pointed spoon poised over her plate. She noticed the others were waiting, and with a last bright emphatic look in Hugo's direction bent to finish her soup. He said at once to Laurence: 'And what do you think of things?'

'Things? Over here?'

'Yes – yes.'

'Seem to be closing in,' said Laurence, crumbling his bread detachedly; 'Rolling up rather.'

'Ah!' nodded Mr. Montmorency, in significant comprehension.

'Ssh!' exclaimed Lady Naylor, running out a hand at both of them over the cloth. She frowned, with a glance at the parlourmaid. 'Now you mustn't make Laurence exaggerate. All young men from Oxford exaggerate. All Laurence's friends exaggerate I have met them.'

'If you have noticed it,' said her nephew, 'it is probably so.' (28)

It is unclear, because Bowen has moved this stale, directionless section of the text to the subjunctive mood, whether the "way things were" that Lady Naylor is discussing is the way things *are* (revolutionary anticolonial warfare) or the way things *had been* (domination by the Protestant Ascendancy and the English). Not a single specific noun is supplied in this exchange until Oxford is mentioned and the subject is changed, and yet everyone in the conversation appears to understand what they are discussing (the end of British landed rule in Ireland) without disturbing the conversation's tone. Nobody really *says* anything; everyone speaks subjunctively, and yet the shape of a conversation has occurred. Following this extraordinary exchange, Lois suggests to Mr. Montmorency that if he is at all interested he should come and "dig for guns with her...or at least witness"(29). When she is rebuffed immediately by Sir Richard, Lord Naylor, who is concerned about soldiers "coming and trampling all the young trees!"(29), Francie Montmorency, an aristocratic Anglo-Irishwoman herself, interjects weakly, "I expect one can't be too careful...the poor young little trees...' And besides, she added to Lois, 'One might blow oneself up.'"(29) There is no indication given here by Bowen about what Lady Naylor herself might think of "the way things were" – indeed, by the time the conversation

reaches here, it has left the authoritative factuality of the present tense and entered the subjunctive mood. Laurence, we are told, “prefers uncertainty”, Lois is not allowed to do almost anything for fear of disrupting the fragile peace of the estate, and Francie and Hugo Montmorency are only superficially interested in the burgeoning political situation. Everyone enters and leaves this conversation with different objectives, and nothing has actually changed from beginning to end.

In these circumstances, how does development function for the Anglo-Irish in Bowen’s text, when all intersubjectivity with anyone but themselves is nonexistent, and between themselves it is must and neutered? Anglo-Irish identity as it is represented in these texts and others is neither conventionally nationalized nor conventionally monolithic enough to create the systems of insiders and outsiders so crucial to the social positionality of an early-twentieth century protagonist. There just is not enough material to develop ordinary sociality, when a developing character is not English to the English, nor Irish to the Irish. What is the *point* of passing all of one’s rites of passage, after all, if the final one to pass through “[stands] hospitably open upon a furnace?”(303), as the ‘Big House’ Danielstown does at the end of this novel? The point of being an Anglo-Irish *Bildungsheld*, Bowen’s text suggests, is moot, but there is nothing to be done about it by either author or character. This “nothing” happens principally, as I have previously mentioned, through Bowen’s use of dialogue, which she bloodlessly flenses, relieving sentences and expostulations of all intersubjective potential and meaning even as they are addressed outwardly from the speaker. With this in mind, the hyphen between the key words Anglo-Irish could actually be read as an em-dash; Bowen sometimes actually referred to the difficulty of Anglo-Irish identity politics as “living on the hyphen”(Green, 35). This is a punctuation mark which scores its way through all of *The Last September*, and there, as here, is

used to indicate the end of something incomplete. The words Anglo-Irish are not themselves conjoined to form a cohesive designation, but instead describe a dissolute national subjectivity separated by an unspeakable border. Not even the English, with all their capacity for “being British”, could ever *say* an em-dash.

Other scholars, of course, have observed similar issues within the complex relationship to postcolonial alterity and the nature of Britishness Bowen’s texts retain. Kamako Yamaneki makes the following observation about the house in which the main thrust of the text’s action occurs in her 1995 essay:

Danielstown also symbolizes the “ambivalence” between British and Irish identities. The term “ambivalence,” which “first developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite,” is adopted into colonial discourse theory by Homi Bhabha and describes “the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized” (Ashcroft et al. 10)... The most prominent form of ambivalence shown by the Naylor or Danielstown is the coexistence of isolation and hospitality. (Yamaneki, 2)

However brutal the origins and the continuing reality of their interaction, the relationship between colonizing and colonized subject is never one of complete alterity; the border allows for some diffusion because this relationship is by necessity communicative, suspended between “isolation and hospitality.” Treating a colonized nation as a static, fetishizable, monolithic stereotype – in other words, operating on the basis of the fixity of the colonized subject, the problem of the ‘mere Irishman’ – was and is partial death to the Empire. The residents of Danielstown, after all, invite both British and Irish nationals into their home, even though they are both playing host to and being “hosted” by the former, and exercising executive and legislative control over the latter. The process by which colonizer and colonized interact and the

hybridity of culture begins is, as many antiessentialist⁴³ postcolonial scholars have observed, a paradoxical one when it comes to the execution of Imperial order and the dissemination of its power as “the series of inclusions and exclusions on which a dominant culture is premised are deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly-excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse”(Ben Beya, 2017). Bhabha on this subject writes in *The Location of Culture* that:

A repertoire of conflictual positions constitutes the subject in colonial discourse. The taking up of any one position, within a specific discursive form, in a particular historical conjuncture, is thus always problematic— the site of both fixity and fantasy. It provides a colonial ‘identity’ that is played out – like all fantasies of originality and origination – in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions. As a form of splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes (94).

Becoming even partially interpellated with the subjects of a colonized country, for the Anglo-Irish colonizer, is both inevitable and the beginning of the total destabilization of colonial power. Hybridity cannot coexist for long with the structures of Othering and alterity that Western colonialism has historically relied upon to function; conceptually in places where it inheres, their subjects had to be “almost the same, *but not quite*”(Bhabha, 122), obeying the rules of monolithic ordinary Englishness while simultaneously being reducible to un-English forms of life. Exporting English nationalized modes of ordinariness along with British power and British law had the desired effect with an unpredictable alacrity at first, and then the alacrity sans effect.

These results of attempting to instill and enforce English attitudes, systems of education, modes of development and requirements for success were the opposite of the intended production of cultural homogeneity dominated by the metropole. They create not just subjects of the English monolithic ‘us’ for the colonizer, but subjects who understand, can mimic, and can

⁴³ This is too large a topic to delineate here, but aside from what is expounded on below, much of my understanding of antiessentialist thought on hybridity in this project stems from Franz Fanon’s, *Black Skin, White Masks*, David Lloyd’s *Anomalous States* and in particular, V.S. Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men*.

mock those social requirements, as “the problem for colonial discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values – that is, mimic the colonizer. But instead it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery”(Mambrol, 2017) The existence of the nationalized ordinary is inextricably tied to the problems of the essentializing stereotype. After all, the concept of a national ordinary is, within itself, a fundamentally essentialist idea, which is part of the reason the concept of the ‘ordinary’ cringes when it is directly encountered. Indeed, as previously stated, *mentioning* something or someone ordinary is the beginning of the destruction of the stereotype, as they cease to become a form and become a singular, remarkable object or subject.

The obvious line to draw from this, then, is that ordinary subjectivity has a great deal to do with essentialism even when it applies to the colonizer themselves; stereotypical essentialism underscores and supports monolithic notions of national subjectivity. Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes that it is “with a kind of perverted logic, [the colonizer] works toward your erasure while urging you to keep your way of life and ethnic values within the borders of your homelands. This is called the policy of ‘separate development’ in apartheid language (2011, 265). While she sees the way that essentialism breaks down individuals often to brute stereotypes, nationalized essentialism can be strategic⁴⁴, providing the colonized subject with ground to stand upon which might otherwise be impossible to access, and with compatriots and comrades who may perform the same action as a way of establishing or re-establishing identities taken from them by colonial violence. It is a double bind, where

every path I/i take is edged with thorns. On the one hand, i play into the Savior’s hands by concentrating on authenticity, for my attention is numbed by it and diverted from other important issues; on the other hand, i do feel the necessity to return to my so-called

⁴⁴ As, Min-Ha notes, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famously observes.

roots, since they are the fount of my strength, the guiding arrow to which i constantly refer before heading for a new direction.”(267)

While of course not every aspect of this thorny quandary is covered by a discourse on monolithic national ordinariness, it seems to me that the word “ordinary” is fundamentally absent from postcolonial discourse on the British empire, which is especially surprising in our current political climate, as “the simple presence of the colonized Other within the textual structure is enough evidence of the ambivalence of the colonial text, an ambivalence that destabilizes its claim for absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity”(Ben Beya, 2017). Essentialism requires an understanding of the shared elements of the nationalized ordinary, but is also not universally either useful or applicable even when mobilized “strategically” against colonial oppression. The narrative of alterity seems, thus, inextricable from a discourse on ordinariness in postcolonial literature, but perhaps this has been too obvious to explore, or has been subsumed by the related discourse on the normal, as previously “normal and national [have been] synonymous in literary criticism”(Corkery, in Lloyd, 44). The following question remains, however: how is one supposed to find the edges of one’s path accessible, one’s “turns unthorned”(Minh-Ha, 267) , if acceding to the impossible and humiliating task of mimicry, the vicissitudes of Empire and the homogenization and erasure of one’s culture is one option, and leaning (sometimes strategically, sometimes by necessity, sometimes because it is *all that is there*) on an essentialized version of the self that also reduces one’s identity necessarily to a monolithic stereotype is the other? This question is, of course, beyond the scope of either this chapter or the identity politic of its author to explore, but in this section I do want to emphasize that literary representations of monolithic national ordinariness and ordinary development in Anglo-Irish literature are always-already representations of hybridity and of failed essentialism.

In addition to being out of sync with their geographical and cultural neighbours, Bowen's work with temporality in this text also places Anglo-Irish Danielstown outside of conventional turn of the century chronology. Its denizens are out of step temporally with their English counterparts as they are culturally, just *slightly* out of time. *The Last September* is a text which contains its end in its beginning; it has, so to speak, very little in the middle which functions as the narrative indicates it is supposed to. Its relationship to time is predicated on the subject upon whom the attention of the narrator is resting – aside, it should be observed, from the forceful and distinctive passages devoid of the Anglo-Irish describing time passing which bookend the narrative. Bowen has populated her text in both plot and form with long, awkward spaces in which an implied lack of intersubjective understanding between her characters is a distinguishing characteristic. Nels Pearson, joining their voice with many other Bowen scholars, suggests that the interpellation of time and space in Bowen's novels combines the formal with the thematic:

“like so much in her fiction, Bowen's treatment of time and space is difficult to interpret, exemplifying what Susan Osborn so accurately describes as the "shot-through queerness" of the author's work - the way its stylistic quirks, "destabilizing . . . contradictions and ambiguities" and odd syntaxes evoke ideas that we can fully attribute neither to the characters' experiences nor to the "manifest political conflict" in which they take place (189).

In my reading, the Anglo-Irish cannot move through space and time congruently. They are unwelcome in their space, and their kind are unwelcome in their time. They can take only temporary effect, if any at all.

A reasonably solid way of diagnosing a dearth of development in a *Bildungsroman*, with this in mind, is that nothing changes, and indeed, absolutely nothing changes throughout most of this novel. The arrival of Marda to Danielstown, a distant English family member whom Lois worships and Lady Naylor dislikes, comes with a coincidental increase in the aggression between the Black and Tans and the Irish Republican army in the area. Marda and Lois, whose

relationship ranges between the erotic and the uneasy, are out in the countryside at dusk one day when they encounter an Irish soldier sleeping in an old mill:

The man's eyes went from one to the other, and remained ironically between them. His face was metal-blue in the dusk and seemed numbed into immobility. 'It is time,' he said, 'that yourselves gave up walking. If you have nothing better to do, you had better keep in the house while y'have it.'

Marda, a hand on the frame of the doorway, remained unmoved, but Lois could not but agree with him. She felt quite ruled out, there was nothing at all for her here. She had better be going – but where? She thought: 'I must marry Gerald.' But meanwhile Marda, holding her arm all the time, had softly, satirically pressed it. They could not but feel framed, rather conscious, as though confronting a camera.(128)

This is one of the only instances in the book (there are three others, a tiny portion of the huge amount of the text which is taken up by speech) when a Catholic Irish person uses their voice. It is therefore most telling that Marda, as an Englishwoman, is both unmoved and unthreatened by the action of this encounter (even when she is accidentally later shot in the hand), whereas Lois has a series of responses to it which speak to her Anglo-Irish subjectivity. She is neither Irish, like the soldier, nor English, like Marda, and so is "quite ruled out, nothing at all for her here." They meet this soldier because Marda is discontented and feels "demoralized [and] girlish", and Lois as such is forced out of the relative safety of her vague compatriots and into the nighttime world of unmitigated Ireland with "more than affected nervousness." She and Marda encounter the Irish rebel in question in a location described in many of the same terms as the Anglo-Irish themselves, paralleling in human geography a bleak future which fills Lois with dread. The ruined mill manages to be both extremely frightening and very boring, "banal enough in life to have closed this valley to the imagination, the dead mill now entered the democracy of ghostliness, equaled broken palaces in futility and sadness; was transfigured by some response of the spirit, showing not the decline of its meanness, simply decline; took on all of the past to

which it had given nothing” (p. 123). Lois is horrified by the stark reality of this vision of decrepitude, as it “was her nightmare, brittle, staring ruins.” During the encounter with the soldier, Marda “softly, satirically” pressing her arm is cold comfort, especially in their locale, and the two together in the face of the colonized subject in control of the situation are “rather conscious, as though confronting a camera”(128). The “satirical” quality of Marda’s comfort is intriguing, here, as if she herself is not really present in the action, merely the neutral space between the Irish and the English subjects in apparent conflict. There is no sense of Anglo-, let alone English national solidarity between the girls even intimated here, only an opposition to the silenced Irish ‘enemy’ as depicted by both.

The incident, like almost everything in *The Last September*, is also shaken off so quickly it seems the characters barely noticed its happening. Bowen gives her characters no space in which to share intimacy with each other, by which we might presume that such a thing is not possible in the highly codified world of this text’s intersubjective interactions. In this novel of development, Lois’s only example of successful early adult belonging is only “softly, satirically” close to her; she cannot be like Marda because she is not English, but she has no other examples of women to imitate. Marda has no real interest in anything in Ireland, especially not in Lois; this is often shown in her short, dismissive responses, but never more clearly than shortly after the incident at the mill when she is asked about a potential sexual assault, and she responds “One can’t help things”(128). This sentence is a feat of nationalized passivity. It has a neutral referent, a dismissive verbal response followed by an English culturally-specific active verb, and then the vaguest possible subject, “things.” Marda cannot and does not want to speak to Lois in a way that engenders either growth or intersubjectivity, whereas Lois wishes to do both but cannot make it work.

Even Marda's body rejects fully committing or responding to Anglo-Irish stimulus. When asked if she is bleeding, she is not even doing that as strongly as she might in other circumstances, as if to telegraph the unreality of an experience for an Englishwoman like herself that involves someone as impossible to associate with as Lois: she says she is not bleeding, or at least "Not like I can...I have rather a high standard." When asked to explain the events of the night, including a pistol going off, she merely says "'The fact is...we are neither of us good at explosions'"(127). She has been shot in the hand, whereas Lois is just shocked, but the cool passivity of this cannot go unremarked. Marda might very well be good at "explosions" somewhere else, but in the company of the Anglo-Irish the dampers are firmly down, with any and all events hardly being worthy of her notice, let alone her ire.

The text makes a great deal of the concept of "noticing", as it relates to the degree to which 'noticing' anything unpleasant - whether the surrounding conflict or a breach of ordinary manners - is the ultimate faux pas, and the ultimate failure of "belonging" with the correct degree of Englishness. 'Noticing', in this novel, works rather like remarking on the ordinary in Hardy or Eliot's texts; it foregrounds an object or event in a way that establishes it as being outside the realm of 'us'. Consider the following important exchange between Marda and Hugo Montmorency with the idea that at Danielstown, the 'ordinary' social milieu is the precarious situation of turn-of-the-century Anglo-Irish sociality:

'But I really should not have come back here,' she said. 'There is something in Lady Naylor's eye: a despairing optimism...There will be a raid and I shall be shot on the avenue, not even fatally, or Laurence will take me out and upset that car. Then really she will never forgive me, though the efforts she makes will follow me over Europe . . . How far do you think this war is going to go? Will there ever be anything we can all do except not notice?'

'Don't ask me,' he said, but sighed sharply as though beneath the pressure of omniscience. 'A few more hundred deaths, I suppose, on our side - which is no side - rather scared, rather isolated, not expressing anything except tenacity to something that isn't there - that never was there. And deprived of heroism by this wet kind of smother of

commiseration. What's the matter with this country is the matter with the lot of us individually – our sense of personality is a sense of outrage and we'll never get outside of it.' But the hold of the country was that, she considered, it could be thought of in terms of oneself, so interpreted. Or seemed so – 'Like Shakespeare,' she added more vaguely, 'or isn't it? . . .'(81-2)

In this short passage several things in the text are highlighted and explained which are, in other places, implicit. Hugo is impatient in the face of Marda's coolly posited questions and predictions, and explains that the Anglo-Irish side is "no side, rather scared, rather isolated, not expressing anything except tenacity to what isn't there." This attitude toward the feeling of the British defensive forces is both humorously defeatist and also an excellent example by Bowen's narrator of an enacted failure of monolithic nationality through another failure of essentialism. The British in Ireland *know*, throughout this text, that they are on their way out, "deprived of heroism", and with a "wet smother of commiseration" both for the Anglo-Irish gentry and the Irish themselves. The Anglo-Irish sense of commonality, of a national character is described here purely reactionary, "a sense of outrage." It cannot exist by itself; it has to have something at which it can direct itself, or its differences display its empty centre. Lois, for example, or Lady Naylor saying that things are falling apart would engender its reality; the flimsy ordinariness of the lives of these remarkable subjects would be torn like wet tissue. Admitting this aloud for an Anglo-Irish subject would make it real, force everyone to 'notice' and, it seems, ruin everything. The Anglo-Irish cannot say anything to each other, and they certainly cannot say it to the English with any hope of being understood. Marda and Hugo, as two English people are talking about it here without anyone else present, because part of the contract of their mutually understood ordinariness is an understanding of their separateness from their Anglo-Irish hosts. The stakes between them are different, because they are not having to prove their Englishness to one another

by not “noticing.” Marda actually says that the only thing in the way of panic in the face of Irish independence is this act of “not noticing”(82) by the administrating colonizers.

Marda, as a young Englishwoman, is both hypochondriacally afraid of the Irish Republican Army and determined not to show it; she refuses to admit this even here, saying instead that she is more concerned with Lady Naylor “never forgiving her” than pain or death. Neil Corcoran, writing on how Bowen’s text incorporates many moments of deliberate stepping-away from directly accessible knowledge, which he calls “elliptical” instances, is a fundamental part of both Bowen’s formal work and her writing’s relationship to national history:

What I want to call ellipses of plot are...at least exceptionally patterned and stressed, in *The Last September*, where they are both thematically functional and historically resonant. They are therefore at the heart of the book's effort and meaning; they are the way Bowen writes what she calls in her preface to the second US edition of the novel in 1952, 'fiction with the texture of history', emphasizing that the year of the novel’s setting is eight years prior to its date of composition. ...Constantly playing against the brightness of social comedy in *The Last September*, therefore -- notably the comedy of edgy insinuation and misunderstanding that characterizes Anglo-Irish / English / Irish relations, is an attitude of attenuation, bathos, desuetude.” (2001, 316, 320)

In the spirit of noticing everything⁴⁵, it is perhaps necessary to take a slight step away from Anglo-Ireland here for a moment to contextualize the ubiquity and power of the very English mode of deliberately not “noticing” the decline of the Empire or the sociopolitical remarkable. This is a mode which is most usefully and thoroughly outlined by Bowen’s English contemporary Ford Madox Ford, if it can indeed be said that tracing the outline of the same dead body by several authors is a useful forensic tool.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ This is both a real assertion and a reference to Gertrude Stein’s essay “Composition as Explanation”, also referenced elsewhere in this dissertation, in which she attests “and then there is using everything”, and argues that – among other things – that the only thing that changes in truth between generations is what is seen, how it is seen and how it is used.

⁴⁶ It might also usefully be noted here (especially in the spirit of constellating Bowen’s Modernist coterie as being preoccupied with Britishness) that Ford was an acquaintance of hers, and was writing the *Parade’s End* tetralogy during the period of the Irish Revolutionary War and at around the same time that Bowen was beginning to compose

The paradigm by which Ford Madox Ford addresses the concept of monolithic ordinariness differs from Bowen's significantly, in that it is not a chintzy and milquetoast colonial sterility, but is one of starkly nationalized opposites. It is an often-observed fact that Ford and Bowen have a preoccupation with "a national spirit that is already on the wane"(Ford, *England and the English* 324) to a more intense degree than other writers of their coterie. Ford, however, having spent a good deal of his career attempting to quantify the qualities of Englishness, developed a method of referring to English ordinary sociality without actually disturbing it with directness. The brand of performative Englishness practiced self-consciously by Ford's protagonists and, in many ways unthinkingly aped by Bowen's Anglo-Irish protagonists is repeatedly, if obliquely, referred to in Ford's literary shorthand as "parade", a behavioral paradigm on the part of "the man...in families of position"(492) preoccupied primarily with upholding the principles of the dying breed of 'real Englishmen', "the sort that . . . do not!"(283) Englishness, according to Ford, cannot "be put more articulately into words than "he's been to our School." (Ford, *England and the English*, 238) and this quality places a character possessed of it in a mould that, for these writers, distinguish[es] the Anglo-Saxon from all his human brothers." (*England and the English*, 238) This oxymoronic sentence contains a version of the problem of nationalized ordinariness within itself; you have to be English or very familiar with them to understand this explanation, as that sentence means almost nothing to a reader who *doesn't already know what it means*.

The Edwardian manneredness and fastidious taciturnity of "parade" for the decidedly, ordinarily English is present in *The Last September*, but in a different way; the Anglo-Irish *perceive* the English as being unable to handle unpleasantness or social excess, while they

The Last September. He published *Last Post*, the final novel in the Tietjens saga, five months before *The Last September* came out in England.

themselves are actually the sufferers of these conditions. For instance, the Naylor's neighbour Livvy Thompson is concerned about the briefly-missing Mrs. Lesworth and Armstrong, as "she pointed out it was her duty and Lois's to find out if they were ill, or indeed if worse hadn't happened, as worse might, to the two young Englishmen in a hostile country. Lois, thumbing Viola's envelope, said she was quite certain they would have heard. Livvy suspected something was hushed up for fear of the English papers: nothing was ever allowed in the English papers that could be mortifying for the English people to read"(67). This instance of concern does not seem to be substantiated by the news from the English papers; it is just another Anglo-Irish misconstrual of British social attitudes. This leads to an odd segue by Livvy about the nature of English women as compared to Anglo-Irish women:

To tell you the truth, Lois, I have often wondered if he does not think me a little reserved and cold. Does it ever seem to you that he looks discouraged? You see, he is accustomed to English girls who are very free; I believe there is almost nothing they will not let a man say and that they get kissed before they get engaged. Now I should not like him to think I had no heart at all. You know Irish girls in books are always made out so fascinating and heartless; I should not like him to think that of me. And if he does recover, he might go back to England and get engaged to a girl simply out of his lower nature. I should not like to feel I had spoilt a man's life.(68-69)

This Anglo-Irish 'girl in a book' in Bowen's narration makes the fascinating metanarrative move of placing her own Anglo-Irish 'reserve' against both a second-hand series of guesses about the characters of English girls, and the 'fascinating and heartless' ones of Irish girls. Anglo-Irish girls, as I discussed in Lois's failed interactions with Marda, do not know how to be English girls, but that is also the only sort of girl their sociality accepts their developing into. Livvy is neither English nor Irish, but her troubles here seem to come from a series of direct responses to very essentialized versions of national character, neither of which she can fit into, and which she can only discuss with another 'reserved and cold' Anglo-Irish "Virgin of Empire"(Esty,258). In

direct contrast to this, Marda when talking to Lois tells her that in her English experience sealing oneself off is the only way to survive: “Be interested in what happens to you for its own sake; don’t expect to be touched or changed – or to be in anything that you do. One just watches. Pain is one’s misunderstanding”(144). Of course, as we see elsewhere, this advice only reflects how Marda treats her Anglo-Irish counterparts, reinforcing and facilitating the infertility of conversations between them and herself. Lois may be a somewhat hapless *Bildungsheld*, but she also does not receive any consistent advice on the direction toward which she should be developing. The sense of a desperate need by Lois to understand *what everybody else is really like* in order to develop the necessary nationalized ordinary sociality runs very strongly through this text, making the narrative of Lois’s growth and change more evident as it is consistently interrupted and countered. Sadly, though, her development has nowhere to go, because despite the text’s heavy amount of conversation, nothing can be ‘noticed’ that might be important enough to change anything.

Indeed, Bowen’s characters talk about the English *all the time*, but when they come up, it is not in the terms of Ford’s descriptive nationalized reticence, as may be seen above in Livvy’s speech. Indeed, when the English are described by the Anglo-Irish, the text takes on an unusually direct mode of communication. It is as if the English in this text by virtue of their colonial power are somehow more solid in every sense than the Anglo-Irish, or indeed the denizens of any other country. At one point Lois actually says this explicitly when describing her desire to travel, as she has never left Ireland “Because of the War...there was just ‘abroad’, she wondered how long this feeling lasted...there was America, but one would have to get introductions...she would like to feel real in London”(142). The Anglo-Irish are at their most direct when discussing their more powerful neighbours and benefactors; indeed, it is in a way the only point in the text in which

anything negative is so consistently ‘noticed.’ Lady Naylor, when speaking to Marda about her return to England and her married life, muses that:

‘You could certainly never be happy living like Anna Partridge. She has an unnaturally sweet disposition: I often pity her . . . I always find the great thing in England is to have plenty to say, and mercifully they are determined to find one amusing. But if one stops talking, they tell one the most extraordinary things, about their husbands, their money affairs, their insides. They don’t seem discouraged by not being asked. And they seem so intimate with each other; I suppose it comes from living so close together. Of course they are very definite and practical, but it is a pity they talk so much about what they are doing. I can’t think why they think it should matter: supposing I came up here and insisted on telling you what I had been doing the whole morning!’ Marda, feeling how true this must be, pulled open an empty drawer and looked into it, much depressed. ‘Though I don’t think it is fair,’ pursued Lady Naylor, ‘to say they have no sense of honor and of course they are anxious not to appear conventional, and they are kindness itself once they have “placed” one . . .(135)

Ironically, this is one of Lady Naylor’s longest speeches in the entire text, as she is talking to Marda, who is herself English, as everyone around her seems to forget. The English in this universe, it seems, are far more secure in their sense of national identity and interpersonal affection than the Anglo-Irish, and for good reason, as they are not divorced by the em-dash, “living so close together.” The Anglo-Irish both positively and negatively essentialize the English throughout the text, constantly reducing them to a series of qualities of “both fixity and fantasy”(Bhabha, 94) which they themselves can find secure commonality or discrepancy. Again, it is much easier to have an ‘us’ when there exists at least one ‘not us’, and the Anglo-Irish in *The Last September* enact this ugly mode of strategic essentialism against the native Irish while also essentializing the English with startling consistency. Unlike their own pale and tenuous version of ordinary subjectivity, English national ordinariness and national character is seen by the Anglo-Irish in Bowen’s novel as being quite impossible to disrupt. This is so much the case that English visitors are flattered instead of nonplussed at being taken for native. Some Anglo- Irish lady visitors to Danielstown, when talking to the bemused Gerald, describe:

how a sister of theirs, who was not here today, had once stayed for quite a long time near London, and had been taken by an aunt, who was rather what they would call a London Society sort of person, to a very fashionable party – in South Kensington it had been. But their sister had not cared for the party, she thought the English unnatural and said it was extraordinary how their voices sounded when they were all shut up in the one room.

‘But excuse me,’ concluded the elder Miss Hartigan, turning away because she was afraid the talk was becoming personal and scratching her ankle as discreetly as possible, ‘we should not say this to you.’

‘It was splendid of you to forget I was English. Well, we shall all be leaving you soon, I dare say; all we jolly old army of occupation.’

‘Oh, one wouldn’t like to call you that,’ said Miss Hartigan, deprecatingly. ‘– As soon as we’ve lost this jolly old war.’

‘Oh, but one wouldn’t call it a war.’

‘If anyone would, we could clean these beggars out in a week.’

‘We think it would be a great pity to have a war,’ said the Hartigans firmly. ‘There’s been enough unpleasantness already, hasn’t there? And it would be a shame for you all to go...(37)

The English, it seems, talk too much, but are kind when they have “placed” one, once the Anglo-Irish interloper has been successfully incorporated into their patterns of ordinariness, presumably here by a shared aristocracy rather than much in common from circumstance. It’s also noticeable here that the English characters refuse to call the conflict surrounding them a ‘war’, even going so far as to deny that it is currently happening, as it “would be a pity.” Lady Naylor also has a great deal to say about the way in which the Anglo-Irish put great stock in one’s geographical situability, though of course this is done in what Neil Corcoran would call an “elliptical” fashion. When describing Gerald, Lois’s would-be fiancé, Lady Naylor opines that:

No, he of course is charming, but he seems to have no relations. One cannot trace him. His mother, he says, lives in Surrey, and of course you do know, don’t you, what Surrey is? It says nothing, absolutely; part of it is opposite the Thames Embankment. Practically nobody who lives in Surrey ever seems to have been heard of, and if one does hear of them they have never heard of anybody else who lives in Surrey. Really altogether, I think all English people very difficult to trace. They are so pleasant and civil, but I do often wonder if they are not a little shallow: for no reason at all they will pack up everything and move across six counties . . . Of course, I don’t say Gerald Lesworth’s people are in trade – I should never say a thing like that without foundation. Besides, if

they were in trade there would be money; money on English people shows so much and he quite evidently hasn't any. (58)

Lady Naylor here absolutely damns Gerald with faint praise, along with the entire English crew. Without actually saying it, she here condemns their unwillingness to stay and 'not notice' – "they will pack up everything and move across six counties", and she also makes it very clear that whatever the source of his income, it would never be adequate for Lois, as "money on English people shows so much and he quite evidently hasn't any." Here, she *notices* that Gerald is from an unimportant region, 'difficult to trace', shallow, and without means. She *notices* the passage of time, she *notices* money and the lack of it, and she *notices* locations in England. She never does this with events in Ireland, which seems to suggest as clearly as Marda's acts of negation that English ordinariness is doughty, observable and out of reach.

English people in Ireland, however, seem to think about Britishness and the Empire constantly, which is a function of Bowen's only major English character being a Black and Tan involved in the war effort for the British. Gerald's mental landscape seems, at times, to be composed solely of Lois and the Empire, even when a great deal of other things are going on:

He took up the Spectator, read an article on Unrest *and thought of the Empire*. [my emphasis] Mechanically his hand went up to his tie. He looked ahead to a time when it all should be accurately, finally fenced about and all raked over. Then there should be a fixed leisured glow, and relaxation, as on coming in to tea from an afternoon's gardening with his mother in autumn. He turned in thought to confident English country, days like the look in a dog's eyes, rooms small in the scope of firelight, neighbourly lights through trees. He thought of a woman, kind and palpable, who should never produce this ache, this absence . . . A door dragged forward its portière; Lois came in from the dining-room, brushing rain from her frieze coat. He stood for a moment in a kind of despair at her agitation, as though he were trying to take her photograph. Then he stepped forward and kissed her, his hands on her wet shoulders. '– Oh, but look here –' cried Lois. But she was his lovely woman: kissed. He shone at her, she helpless. She looked out at the hopeless rain.

There is a curious mix of tones happening in this quotation. The flaccid verbiage of “Unrest” in reference to guerilla warfare, and the subsequent vision of the restoration of colonial order in Ireland when “it all should be accurately, finally fenced about and raked over”; Ireland, for Gerald the Englishman, cannot help but return to being his mother’s garden, rather than a hostile country in which he is a foreign invader. He wants a ‘palpable’ woman, a gruesome choice of words that can only make sense in direct response to the subsequent “ache...absence.” Bowen destabilizes this vision of glowing substantialness for the reader but not for Gerald, immediately, as when Lois comes in, her speech is thoroughly broken up and surrounded by em-dashes, even her cry of denial bracketed by a sterile Anglo-Irish space: “– Oh, but look here!–“(88) Gerald, full of the visions of the colonial future so much that the “neighbourly light” shines out of his British face, is oblivious to Lois’s alliterative misery and noncommittal, “helpless...hopeless” stasis.

The Last September, as may be seen, if nowhere else, from the length of the block quotes, is a book of conversations interspersed with the narration of individual thoughts – dialogue between characters takes up more than a third of the text, and much of the page is left as empty air after about the first two or three chapters. This curious formal occurrence happens because many of Bowen’s dialectic sentences are only a few words long. Moreover, these sentences get shorter and shorter when Anglo-Irish characters are speaking to – or in the presence of – English characters. Having primarily discussed the text’s other modes of representing dialogue as being directly related to Anglo-Irish ordinary unbelonging above, I will now move to a discussion of Bowen’s formal work in representing and codifying it. The author’s scions of the Protestant Ascendancy have a very distinctive and very culturally specific mode of communication within the world of the novel, characterized primarily by the speech act of the

remark, and bracketed by the “aching...absent”(88) pause of the em-dash. This mode of speech formally iterates many of Bowen’s thematic and structural devices, but primarily underscores the fact that in this text, the Anglo-Irish cannot speak effectively *to* their English neighbours or indeed to each other, because their sense of ordinariness and the futurity of their colonial dominion has become so disrupted. These characters, while perfectly capable of long, coherent passages of thought, are merely responsive in speech. They do not converse, but ‘merely’ remark.

“The Situation’s Rotten”

“The thought of places without one is so lonely.”
Elizabeth Bowen

Just before entering into an analysis of Bowen’s use of the remark, I want to spend a moment with the em-dash and its role in *The Last September*; this chapter has discussed it as a delineator of emptiness and a symbolic border between identities previously, but it is functionally a great deal more than that in Bowen’s work. Although her creative use of punctuation and her preoccupation with time in the psychological novel have earned Bowen the misappropriated moniker “the Irish Virginia Woolf” in some quarters, it is my reading that Bowen’s use of punctuation is substantially different than Woolf’s, and indeed her use of ellipses. Ellipses have a warmly-guarded place in the Modernist canon, as Woolf, Ford and Conrad all used them liberally.⁴⁷ Indeed, the first novel of *Parade’s End*, “*Some Do Not...*” is the first novel in English ever to be published with an ellipsis in the title, the more interesting because this trailing-off is a direct reference to the incomprehensibility of English monolithic

⁴⁷ See here Anne Toner’s *Ellipsis in English Literature: Signs of Omission*, in which she also observes that Ford and Conrad used the punctuation mark 400 times in their 1901 novel *The Inheritors*.

ordinariness and its social norms to those not... “of our school”(*England and the English*, 238). Woolf’s use of ellipses tends to indicate either an omission, or a trailing-off, too, of a thought or a statement not quite complete. When she uses the em-dash, however, it is usually to indicate a short pause which is followed by either a riposte or a reframing of the speaker’s intentions. “I don’t pity myself,” she said. “I pity”—she meant to say “your mother” but no, she could not, not to Elizabeth. “I pity other people much more”(*Mrs. Dalloway*, 155). For Woolf, it is an aside with a soft half-breath. For Ford, it is a vague and searching pause. For Bowen, it is a small letterbox into a sucking void.

Bowen uses the em-dash in a fashion unlike any other writer in English, but in a way that negatively mirrors Emily Dickinson, whose work asserts, is “born living on the tongue, written as though spoken. . . . Something is being said to you and you have no choice but hear...it speaks *to you*, it is never overheard (Macleish, 213). Dickinson's talking punctuation is but another manifestation of the poet's awareness of, and resistance to, the split in consciousness that was occurring in her time – the “dissociation of sensibility...or splitting away of the mind from the heart that characterized the advent of the new religion of science in the nineteenth century”(Wylder, 212). In Bowen’s text, the dash does not indicate direct address, or presence, but it might certainly be said to symbolize a “dissociation of sensibility.” It is silencing punctuation, rather than one which lends a quality of persistent speech. Bowen’s dashes represent holes. They *end things*; in *The Last September*, they might be productively thought of as “end dashes”, both for their ability to signal a void and for their place in denoting the last, desperate gasp of British landed rule in Ireland.

Rather than being ‘bridges’, as Dickinson’s are often described, acting to indicate a long pause, a tension or a connection between thoughts, Bowen’s dashes are vacuums. They appear in

almost every conversation in the text, and are absolutely dominant in conversations between Anglo-Irish characters and the English, in which instances they only seem to highlight the cultural differences between these two groups, rather than joining the space between them. They also appear in a slightly less aggressive mode in conversations between the Anglo-Irish, usually when the English come up. Em-dashes follow almost every use of the remark in this text, both to signal the continuance of a thought or response which is not continued, and to literally represent something which is not required. They stretch away from Bowen's words, reaching for nothing, amplifying the remark's relationship to failed ordinary intersubjectivity.

So many instances of dialogue by the Anglo-Irish in this text possess this nebulous but particular quality of extending feelers, of being addressed not so much to the other person to whom the character is speaking but to the room and to the time at large. At least one in *all but four* instances of speech in *The Last September* between an Anglo-Irish person and an English one contains an em-dash. These em-dashes, which might usually be seen in a situation when someone is interrupted by the line that directly follows their expostulation, occur quite organically in *The Last September*. It is as if almost everything that Bowen's colonizing characters say is unfinished, or must somehow be gulped back even when there is no risk of interruption, or as if they realise there is no point in continuing. The form of the text is so invested in its subject that, like its subjects, it loses coherence with its environment.

This uncertainty is juxtaposed again with the English characters in this text, who believe themselves to have coherence even in environments to which they do not themselves belong. When explaining his view on the war in Ireland to Lois's Oxford-educated, Irish-sympathetic brother, Gerald Lesworth says with all the certainty of youth, "Well, the situation's rotten. But right *is* right" (132, Bowen's italics.) This expostulation does not seem at all out of place for an

English character fighting for the colonial cause asked to distinguish himself in foreign circumstances, and is often quoted as an example of the blustering and awkward attitude the English seem to take to the war in Bowen's texts. However, if the dialogue between Laurence and Gerald here is examined in more detail, something else comes to light, nestled into Bowen's use of the remark as much as the content of her prose:

[Gerald] was flattered but uneasy under Laurence's interest, which had indeed, for the simple, the awkward menace of someone preparing to cast a net. He pursed his lips into a whistle and shrugged slightly.

"For instance: what do you, personally, think about all this?"

"Well, my opinion is--"

"Oh, but I don't want your opinion. I want your point of view."

"Well, the situation's rotten. But right *is* right."

"Why?"

"Well...from the point of view of civilization. Also you see they don't fight clean."

"Oh, there's no public-school spirit in Ireland. But do tell me--what do you mean by the point of view of civilization?"

"Oh--Ours...[Here follows an interlude where Laurence smiles at the "ring of integrity" in his conviction, and Gerald is embarrassed enough to explain] "If you come to think...I mean looking back on history--not that I'm intellectual-- we *do* seem the only people...And that we are giving them what they really want...though of course the more one thinks of it the smaller it makes one feel.

"I don't feel small in that way. But I'm not English--" (133)

In this instance, which is not typical of Bowen's work, the person to whom the em-dash is so vigorously applied *is* the English character, as this is the only instance in the novel when an English character has their opinion on the war probed further after being initially asked. Bowen, as if pre-empting a reading of this text, muses through Gerald in the following paragraph that "their conversation, torn off rough at this edge, seemed doomed from its very nature to incompleteness"(134). The intriguing thing about this conversation is that it is actually rather more direct and complete than almost any other interaction that happens in *The Last September*. It contains within it the framework of the text's typical structure for Anglo-Irish interactions, and

also a couple of unusually direct questions and responses. Instead of the Anglo-Irish character having to justify their presence or not ‘notice’ the fragility of their national identity, the same paradigm applies to Gerald. The duality of these two modes of interaction is emphasized only by Bowen’s choice to follow the passage up with a long musing by Gerald and Laurence, their consciousnesses intertwining without conversation or comprehension, on the subject of nationality:

Gerald would have wished to explain that no one could have a sounder respect than himself and his country for the whole principle of nationality, and that it was with some awareness of misdirection, even of paradox, that he was out here to hunt and shoot the Irish...he was groping for something Napoleon had once said, something remarkably neat and apposite that Gerald had once copied into a pocket-book. Laurence had not hoped to explain, but rather hoped that Gerald could infer, that there was a contrariety in the notions they each had of this thing civilization. As a rather perplexing system of niceties, Laurence saw it, an exact and delicate interrelation of stresses between being and being, like crossing arches; an unemotional kindness withering no assertion selfish or racial; silence cold with a comprehension in which the explaining clamour died away...[Gerald] had heard that Oxford was full of Socialism, of a wrongness that was the outcome of too much thinking, and in the light of this it did appear to him that Laurence’s conversation had been decided by Sinn Fein. (134)

The formal events of this conversation are as follows, when broken down – Laurence asks what Gerald “thinks about all this”, and then immediately interrupts him when he attempts to give an opinion. He is not asking for an opinion – crucially, he is not asking for a quick remark – he is asking for a genuine feeling. Gerald, correctly reading the affect that the text is thick with here, responds with the most public-school piece of dogma possible; a tautology, like a remark, can usually brook no response but contradiction. Bowen’s text here does something unusual again in terms of her writing dialogue; instead of this cosy chat continuing as a series of remarks and challenges which are only tangentially related to one another, and never finished, Laurence presses Gerald with a direct question. One cannot respond to “Why?” in this context with a remark, having been told that one’s opinion is not what is wanted. Gerald is, like the British

Occupying Forces he is in Ireland serving, placed on the back foot and forced to defend himself against guerilla conversational tactics on foreign ground.

Bowen begins to pepper his speech with the em-dash, and to break his commentary up into short, dense pieces that exist separately from one another. He invites Laurence – a landed intellectual from an aristocratic family – into a “we” to which he himself only tenuously belongs, only cementing both his own English unbelonging and his failure to accede to the ordinary standards of Anglo-Irish recalcitrance. “The only people” to whom he refers, those who have colonized and occupied most of the world are the British bourgeoisie and aristocrats; Laurence is in many ways – aside from the most crucial one of actually being British - more one of these than Gerald, a decidedly middle-class character. Laurence, seeing his discomfort and enjoying it, reinforces Gerald’s proud and weak claim to English sovereignty by immediately disabusing him of the comforting system of “we” he has tried to establish; “I’m not English–” is both extraordinarily cutting, here, and the return, steered by an Anglo-Irish character, of the conversational system to the remark, signalled by the presence of a vacuum to follow.

The fact that this interaction is followed by one of the text’s only screeds on nationality, and the only one in the entire work which juxtaposes the intimate perspective of an English and an Anglo-Irish character cannot be overstated. It directly juxtaposes Bowen’s formal work on nationalized alterity through parts of speech with actual arguments made by characters about nationalism. Bowen tells the reader that Gerald believes that “no one could have a stronger respect than himself and his country for the whole principle of nationality” in a passage already saturated with the arch affect of Laurence’s apparent intellectual and cosmopolitan superiority; we do not need to know that he is “groping for something Napoleon once said” to understand that Gerald has no concept of what is happening socially or politically in Ireland, nor how

ridiculous his feeling on the “whole principle of nationality” would be to someone even adjacent to Ireland. The slightly scraping attitude he takes toward Laurence’s upper-class assurance and his heavy identification with the viewpoint and aesthetics of the British military might be read here as an example of what David Cannadine in his 2002 book dubs “Ornamentalism”, or the way in which the British Empire mechanized a societally-ingrained respect for the paraphernalia of the British ruling class. This done, according to Cannadine, they then mobilized this respect for title and pomp to instill a polarized and disdainful attitude for the colonial subject:

Hierarchy was the conventional vehicle of [the Empire]: it provided the prevailing ideology of empire, and it underpinned the prevailing spectacle of empire ... It bears repeating that one aspect of this hierarchical-cum-imperial mindset was indeed the cultivation and intensification of racial differences based on post-Enlightenment attitudes of white and western superiority and of coloured and colonial inferiority (along with the cultivation and intensification of gender differences based on attitudes of white and male superiority and white and female inferiority). When, as they sometimes did, Britons thought of the inhabitants of their empire ... in collective rather than in individualistic categories, they were inclined to see them, literally, in terms of crude stereotypes of black and white, and no-less crude relationships of superiority and inferiority. (*Ornamentalism* 122)

Gerald’s point of view here is almost a perfect example of this problem with fumbling British essentialism without strategy; in order to explain himself, he “speaks” as a monolith for his entire nation to Laurence as a “crudely inferior” Irishman, his dialogue without even the thought of a native or even non-English referent. Any attempt at ordinary intersubjectivity is abandoned. His words imply a deep, pre-intellectual dependence on systems of colonial hierarchy in order to justify his actions in “hunting and shooting” the Irish Nationalist forces.

Of course, he does not speak aloud. His thoughts, what he “would have wished to explain” go unremarked by Laurence, and Laurence’s by him, stiling the conversation and leaving Gerald with the feeling that their discord is not a matter of incompatible ambivalence but

“a wrongness that was the outcome of too much thinking...Laurence’s conversation had been decided by Sinn Fein”(134). Laurence’s attitude itself is hardly better, itself coming from “Anglo-Ireland’s attitude to the war, [which] is deprived of easy heroics by a “wet kind of smother of commiseration”...for the Irish rebels” (Glendenning, in Bowen, 8). Laurence at least seems to understand that there is some sort of requirement for “niceties” when the Irish are considered, even if his understanding of such things comes from an English source –Oxford– and not from personal experience aside from occasionally being held up by rebel soldiers as he leaves or returns to the Big House. The text is not less aware of the pomposity of Laurence’s conception of national identity and civilization as “a rather perplexing system...an exact and delicate interrelation of stresses between being and being like crossing arches, an unemotional kindness withering to assertion selfish or racial”(133). Laurence’s bombastic opinion is quite as ignorant and problematic as Gerald’s, but leans more toward the weaker side of applications of hybridity to the system of colonialism. Gerald’s point of view is essentialist to the apogee of ignorance, whereas Laurence’s, which rejects essentialism entirely and relegates national identity to the stuff of theory, could be confronted with many of the same arguments that Bhabha’s early writings on hybridity face in Amar Acheraiou’s text *Questioning Hybridity: Postcolonialism and Globalisation*. Laurence’s expostulation is a good example of what Acheraiou might call “angelic hybridism.” It is itself essentializing as it relegates the subject and any subjective detail to the garbage-heap of thought, it employs a narrow, academic and synchronic perspective (Acheraiou, 107), and enacts an erasure of its constituent elements in that it removes political power and agency from the colonized subject; it requires no more intersubjective understanding or sympathy than Gerald’s fumbling English superiority.

However, there are several instances in the text where, having performed a speech act which is out of the common run of the Anglo-Irish dialogue system, a character is teased and sometimes actually excluded for being “too English.” This most often happens when an Anglo-Irish character makes the faux pas of ‘noticing’, and the novel’s most-cited instance occurs when a visitor to Danielstown expresses concern about rumours she has heard of the closeness of the rebels:

‘Listen, Richard,’ said Francie; ‘are you sure we will not be shot at if we sit out late on the steps?’

Sir Richard laughed and they all shared his amusement. ‘We never have yet, not even with soldiers here and Lois dancing with officers up and down the avenue. You’re getting very English, Francie! Isn’t Francie getting very English? Do you think maybe we ought to put sandbags behind the shutters when we shut up at nights?’

‘No, but Richard, seriously –’ began Francie, then, as they all stared, laughed and had to give up and go on laughing. Now in County Carlow they had said things were bad round here, that she made a grave mistake in coming at all. But then, as Richard would certainly say, that was County Carlow all over. (22-3)

Francie here has disturbed the comfortable peace of a party at the Big House by bringing the reality of its temporality into the soft cloud of static Anglo-Irish time. When she attempts to double-down and continue her inquiries despite being mercilessly teased, she does so as if she has indeed brought Englishness into the group, employing Bowen’s classically *remarkable* structure of the broken sentence followed by an em-dash; “No, but Richard, seriously –.” Of course, she cannot be taken “seriously” after doing this, or everything would be ruined, so she is shamed into joining in the laughter of the group as they turn on her and “all star[e].” Crucially here too we are informed that Francie *knows she is right*; in her home county (within the Pale, it should be mentioned, as Carlow is contiguous with Dublin) she had been told that she should not come to Danielstown. The fact that Sir Richard is her imaginary interlocutor, as he has led the teasing and is the paterfamilias of this failing edifice, is an affirmation of the disjointed

relationship Bowen shows between Anglo-Irish speech and thought. Her characters often think complete thoughts, but speech cannot make them material; they are fine on their own, but ordinary intersubjective relations fail.

Bowen's narrative of completeness as it relates to the concept of the faltering façade of Anglo-Irish national identity permeates even the house Danielstown itself. Unlike its inhabitants, Danielstown cannot leave if the fighting becomes too close and too threatening. It is quite literally a monolith of nationalized ordinariness, but for the *wrong culture*. It is placed in an environment in which it is not welcome and to which it does not belong. As with everything in Bowen's texts, however, its relationship to national identity is not simple; the house is, after all, built on Irish land, and the sense of that land coming up from beneath it and crushing from around it grows more and more serious and oppressive throughout the text. Bowen, deep in indirect discourse through the consciousness of Lois, describes a night ride toward Danielstown as laying out this threatening encirclement:

To the south, below them, the demesne trees of Danielstown made a dark formal square like a rug on the green country. In their heart, like a dropped pin, the grey glazed roof reflecting the sky lightly glinted. Looking down, it seemed to Lois they lived in a forest; space of lawns blotted out in the pressure and dusk of trees. She wondered they were not smothered; then wondered still more that they were not afraid. Far from here too, their isolation became apparent. The house seemed to be pressing down low in apprehension, hiding its face, as though it had her vision of where it was. It seemed to gather its trees close in fright and amazement at the wide, light, lovely unloving country, the unwilling bosom whereon it was set...Only the massed trees – spread like a rug to dull some keenness, break some contact between self and senses perilous to the routine of living – only the trees of the demesne were dark, exhaling darkness. Down among them, dusk would stream up the paths ahead, lie stagnant over the lawns, would mount in the tank of garden, heightening the walls, dulling the borders like a rain of ashes. Dusk would lie where one looked as though it were in one's eyes, as though the fountain of darkness were in one's own perception. Seen from above, the house in its pit of trees seemed a very reservoir of obscurity; from the doors one must come out stained with it. And the kitchen smoke, lying over the vague trees doubtfully, seemed the very fume of living. (66-7)

The house is itself a “reservoir of obscurity”, a sinking point in the vista of Ireland before Lois, otherwise populated with life and radiance, “rivers, profound in brightness”, which “flowed over beds of glass. The cabins lifting their pointed white ends, the pink and yellow farms were but half opaque; cast doubtfully on their fields the shadow of living. Square cattle moved in the fields like saints, with a mindless certainty”(66-7). Danielstown crouches *on* more than *in* Ireland, gathering Anglo-Irish vagueness around itself protectively, even staining those who emerge from it with greyish darkness. It, itself, is extraordinary to its environment, as its attempts to exist provoke unwanted, too-open Irish responses, as above: “The house seemed to be pressing down low in apprehension, hiding its face, as though it had [Lois’s] vision of where it was. It seemed to gather its trees close in fright and amazement at the wide, light, lovely unloving country, the unwilling bosom whereon it was set”(67). This expansive vision of Danielstown gives Bowen’s reader a rare opportunity to see a larger picture of the very stilted space her characters inhabit; it also makes one wonder about what the house within this obscurity might actually look like. The answer to this is, unsurprisingly, like a remark.

The following image comes from David Hicks’s book *Irish Country Houses: A Chronicle of Change*.



Hicks also tweeted this photo in 2018, explaining that it is a “rare aerial photograph of Bowen’s Court in Co. Cork [which] shows the missing corner of the house. The house was demolished in 1959 so any pictorial record of its existence is precious.” Ian D’Alton in his essay “Bowen’s Court as an Aesthetic of Living” observes the incompleteness of the house as being one of its defining characteristics, as it would be “a complete square, but the northeast corner was missing”(64). This image is not exactly the same “above” as the Danielstown party would have seen the house in the novel from, but if we take from Bowen’s assertions that this house and her Irish home are in many ways the same place, then its remarkable incompleteness comes to light. The house’s architectural grammar itself is both remarkable and a remark, an unfinished Anglo-Irish sentence on Irish ground; the Northeast corner, where the void or “obscurity” would be its deepest, is also the corner facing England.

Within the house, Anglo-Irish temporality is also shown as brittle and frayed. While Danielstown, when not being observed in isolation as another Anglo-Irish subject is in some ways a bastion of the last vestiges of that cultural identity as seated in an unremarkable security, it is also always craning down at its inhabitants with a gruesome, birdlike peer. The images of previous inhabitants and the remains of past wealth coat the walls thickly, “vaguely”, throwing the brittle state of the current inhabitants’ psyches into stark relief:

Sir Richard and Lady Naylor, their nephew, niece and old friends had a thin, over-bright look, seemed on the air of the room unconvincingly painted, startled, transitory. Spaced out accurately round the enormous table – whereon, in what was left of the light, damask birds and roses had an unearthly shimmer – each so enisled and distant that a remark at random, falling short of a neighbour, seemed a cry of appeal, the six, in spite of an emphasis of speech and gesture they unconsciously heightened, dwindled personally. While above, the immutable figures, shedding on to the wash of dusk smiles, frowns, every vestige of personality, kept only attitude – an out-moded modestness, a quirk or a flare, hand slipped under a ruffle or spread airily over the cleft of a bosom – cancelled

time, negatived personality and made of the lower cheerfulness, dining and talking, the faintest exterior friction. (23)

This grim passage goes beyond just describing the action of an actionless room, but through wordplay actively engages the idea that the inhabitants of the house are not ordinary to the psychotropic house itself. Conversation at the table is neither audible nor directed at anybody, consisting of “remark[s] at random.” Everyone “dwindles personally” even as they “heighten speech and gesture.” The silent figures in the paintings have more of a vocal presence than these remarkable guests; they are immutable [unchanging over time] and immutable [unable to be silenced. They are never at a risk of “becoming quite English!” (22) through ‘noticing’. The very rich final sentence of this paragraph does a huge amount – the neologism “negatived personality”, the odd, symbolic distribution of sentence subject (the “immutable figures’ of old Anglo-Irish colonial life are five whole lines away from their ‘subject’, “the faintest exterior friction”). They observe the base and petty conversation in which nothing may be noticed below, looking down at the “lower [and low, and ignorant] cheerfulness” even as they lower down at Lady Naylor et al.

Even at dinner in their own last-bastion mansion, these modern characters living on borrowed time are “unconvincingly painted, startled, transitory” (23). They cannot, according to the conventions of Lady Naylor’s housekeeping, even sit close enough together to be heard at all, “spaced out accurately” and “enisled” so as to preclude any form of communication that might reach a climax. All instances of development for Lois within this house are subordinated to its determination to cling to passing time and slow it down Even after the scene where Marda is shot in the hand, the quest for unremarkability as a defense from change immediately starts anew: “Darkness resumed, with a discomfortable suggestion of normality. There seemed proof

that the accident of day, of action, need not recur” (105). Though Bowen here is purportedly talking about the day in question, the text doesn’t specify. Safer to have no new days, no new actions, just a discomfortable suggestion of normality ushered in by Danielstown’s veil of vaguery.

The last section of the text – when all have departed this vale of the vague but the older Naylor, and the house has regained some quietude, when Lois has gone away to “art school” and Laurence has returned to Oxford, is such a startling departure from the rest of the novel in terms of form that it bears mentioning here. Bowen’s text drops its raffish tone abruptly and entirely after a final light remark by Lady Naylor – she says “To tell you the truth, I really believe it does. There *is* something in autumn” (302), a very milquetoast statement about the changing of the seasons, but crucially something she has *noticed, and then says* – and suddenly the reader realizes that on the strength of this remark, it is *The Last September*. Noticing really did engender the end of things.

In a novel full of space, void and aporia, there *is* something, unlike Bowen’s remarkable sentences, this text ends with an ending. The text immediately becomes dense, poetic, descriptive and sombre, but only for the Anglo-Irish nobles whose houses are “executed” (303) – “Here, there were no more autumns except for the trees. By next year light had possessed itself of the vacancy, still with surprise...leaves fluttering down the slope with the wind’s hesitation, banked formless, frightened, against the too-clear form of the ruin” (302-3). Bowen is here describing the burnt-out skeleton of Danielstown, but in a way which makes its absence purely the absence of its aristocratic inhabitants. It is not empty, it has merely rejected the remarkable; light “takes up the vacancy”, the “chestnuts and acorns pattered unheard on the avenues”, and the trees still have their autumns. The land without the colonizers is operating on such a rich

chronology that its verdancy formally predates the eviction of the landlords – “for in February, before those leaves had visibly budded...a fearful scarlet ate up the hard spring darkness; indeed, it seemed that an extra day, unreckoned, had come to abortive birth that these things might happen.”(303) After the Irish soldiers who set fire to Danielstown leave, sooted with a different kind of vagueness than Danielstown’s accustomed “obscurity” (67) “bland from accomplished duty” the ultimate reversal of the order of the Anglo-Irish remarkable ordinary is enacted.

“The door”, Bowen writes “stood hospitably open upon a furnace” (303). This image, of destruction reigning within the symbolic seat of colonial occupation, is about as far as the author could possibly get symbolically from the abstract, abrupt conversations and the stilted life of ‘not noticing’ that went on within its walls. There are no remarks in a furnace; everything is finished or stripped down to its basic and most obvious components. Looking at the inferno from a distance, Sir Richard and Lady Naylor “not saying anything, did not look at each other, for in the light from the sky they saw too distinctly” (303). Even in the moment of realizing their house has been entirely destroyed, in an inferno so great it can be seen on the horizon, there is still an insurmountable wall between these Anglo-Irish nobles of an event of national significance so clearly *there* that ‘noticing’ is inevitable. They cannot say it to each other even when it cannot help but be noticed.

The Anglo-Irish, in their never-ending striving to be included in English ordinariness through the act of “not noticing” and their failed attempts at intersubjectivity, are rendered entirely remarkable and outside of monolithic national ordinariness themselves. To be Anglo-Irish in a Bowen novel is as such, is in addition to its other qualities to be inextricably tied to a place that echoes one’s self-expression, which ends before it really meant to, a space allocated that is not filled. It is to have a relationship with between-spaces and borders, but to be neither

the sensationalized monster/migrant nor the distant but “real”(142) possessor of a secure and actualized nationality. For a *Bildungsheld* it provides little more than an impetus to leave, as the accrual of knowledge is impossible when no-one will “notice” anything, and the “rolling-up” of the future of her cultural identity gives Lois nothing to grow up *into* in Ireland. As she cannot be either English or Irish, and Anglo-Irishness has become too “noticed” and too remarkable a category to exist ordinarily within, she has to go away and recategorize herself somewhere else. “Remarkable” doesn’t have the superlative quality of ‘extraordinary’, which, like ‘mere’, denotes something both undiluted and observably different from others of its kind. It isn’t even a particularly strong word, lacking the heft of its close cousin in abstraction ‘fabulous’ and the affectionate, accepting quality of ‘special’. It is however an important word, as I hope to have shown here, especially at the turn of the twentieth century. It is also, finally, a very useful word, as this chapter has attempted to outline, for the study of the role of monolithic ordinariness in the British Empire’s mobilization of English national subjectivity as a tool of oppression, subjugation and unity in Ireland.

There is usually a space between speakers as their words appear on the page in novels in English. It is a formal convention; part of how a reader knows something is dialogue with something else. Separation, metaphorically, between characters, as in, the presence of two or more bodies who speak to each other, is laid out for their audience by the form the text takes. However, Bowen’s novel takes this in many instances significantly further. She quite literally *draws a line* after the remarks of her Anglo-Irish characters when they are speaking to the English, a remarkable, international border. This also crucially and poignantly, as I have observed, does not happen when the text moves into free indirect discourse and these characters are *thinking*; there is no separation between narrator and character, but a great distance between

the characters themselves, put in place by Bowen's "wilfully torturous syntax"(Teekeel, 61). It is not enough, in *The Last September*, to have characters who represent a dying colonial breed separated by space or opinion or fear of those they have colonized. As divided, insecure, unordinary, remarkable subjects, they must be separated by subject, and they must be punctuated.

“The Style is the Man”: Isherwood’s Perspectives on the Bildungsroman

It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different — deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can’t describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean.

C.S Lewis

“Further Up and Further English”

One of the more startling things about the study of 19th and 20th century English literature, as is evident from the dense series of crossovers in the social lives of the authors that make up the earlier part of this project, is that everybody *knows* each other. Many British characters in turn of the century writing all taste the same, because they all come from the same kitchen. Quite apart from common thematic and formal choices, tracing a line from George Eliot to Christopher Isherwood becomes a much less esoteric process when one considers that – due to the tightly packed nature of the British literary elite’s sociality – they were at one or two degrees of separation from each other between Eliot’s death in 1880 and Isherwood’s birth in 1904. The incestuous cosiness between the British Victorian and Modernist literati is indisputably linked to the relationship between the educational systems in Britain that bred and reproduced memes of

national and colonial identity, and Britain and Ireland's ancient universities. The most apparently disparate writers are connected not just by family or regional affiliation, but by tutors, godfathers and a commonality of Blues or Half-Blues.⁴⁸ This makes the heavily striated system of interrelations between Britain's intellectual elite into an ordinary apparatus in itself, with internal rules and systems of identification⁴⁹. It also makes it seem absolutely, claustrophobically awful, forcing one to "conform outwardly to standards of respectability which [one should] outwardly despise..."(*Christopher and his Kind*, 12).

When, as in my previous chapter, Ford Madox Ford was describing the best way to identify an Englishman as having "been to our school" in *England and the English*, he was not only talking about a mode of education, but the location itself of that developmental process; ordinary residency at work again as esoterically geographical and imagined. In the case of Henry Vincent Yorke (better known by his pen name, Henry Green) we can find a vast network of interrelated connections. This author, like Ford, was predicted to have a publishing future that vastly outstripped his own actual posthumous popularity. Green was one of the most celebrated writers of his day, lauded by such influential members of the English and Irish coterie as Woolf, Yeats and Pound, but his work has had very little enduring success. This was apparently due to the highly stylized and formal quality of his nine novels; Terry Southern, when describing Green in the *Paris Review*, called him a "writer's writer's writer." To my previous point, however, he also describes Green as having "in speech, that hallmark of the English public school: the slight tilt of the head and the closing of the eyes in contrast to what he is saying."(Southern, 1958) This

⁴⁸ For those fortunate enough to have evaded this particular signifier of British national belonging by a lack of proximity to Oxbridge, a Blue or a Half-Blue is an award that one is given for competing at the highest levels of University sporting competition, usually "against the Enemy"; so, an undergraduate like Christopher Isherwood at Corpus Christi college, Cambridge might have won a Blue had he rowed against Henry Green of Magdalen, Oxford. He might have won a Half-Blue if he had competed in a less fêted activity, like chess.

⁴⁹ For more on this, see Michelle Taylor's forthcoming monograph on the influence of the coterie on Modernist fiction.

sentence, as with many comments on belonging or unbelonging in the content of English imagined communities, is an excellent example of what J.L. Austin might call a performative utterance⁵⁰, as “to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* [the] doing of what [one] should be said in so uttering to be doing¹, or to state that [one is] doing it: it is to do it.”(Austin, 6)

Performative utterances that identify a person with monolithic national belonging must not disrupt the boundaries of their relations with ordinariness. A performative sentence like the “tilt of the head” remark typifies Southern himself as being a member of the same community as the tilter. The sentence also does two other things which place it within the context of ordinary interactions. It requires an understanding of what such a commonality mandates, and also commits its reader to either identify or disassociate from its contents. Aside from all of this, its product links Green extremely specifically with many of the British figures most concerned with national identity and the creation of a national literature after the Great War.

One of these figures was his close friend and lifetime correspondent, Christopher Isherwood, with whose work this chapter is primarily concerned. Another, however, was his Oxford tutor, C.S. Lewis, who creates another interesting bridge of acquaintance between Isherwood, Green and Bowen. Lewis also provides an interesting transition between Bowen and Isherwood purely in the terms of his own national identity. Lewis was an Ulsterman by birth, but a British immigrant and lifelong Anglican and English apologist⁵¹. Much of Lewis’s work, when viewed through the lens of this project, seems concerned with British borders. The vast majority of Lewis’s texts, as seems fitting given the Anglo-Irish proclivities described in the preceding

⁵⁰ See lectures I and II of *How to Do Things With Words* for more examples of performative utterances; they’re more usually things like “I name this ship the *Mauritania*”, for instance.

⁵¹ (incidentally, a student and later a professor at the same Magdalen College of which Oscar Wilde and Seamus Heaney were members).

chapter, are either explicitly religious screed or deeply nationalistic, Christian colonial fantasies of development about English characters⁵².

Getting into and out of Narnia, the promised land where the primary method of obtaining an entry visa was “correct Christian behaviour” in Lewis’s novels, was, after all, only for very deserving English children. Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, minors with zero qualifications, were able to establish a tyrannical monarchy and subjugate their new, native companions; Aishwarya Subraniman observes that in Lewis’s work as in many other colonial fantasies, England is the “primary world” and all other places the “secondary”, as Lewis’s protagonists, “gaze imperially from above.”(3) Lewis’s writing is full of the language of British supremacy and its relationship to ordinariness, never more so than in the last book of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Last Battle*. In this text, set in a future where the English settler colonists have left only a legacy of their rule, a false king is set up and deposed by nationalist forces, factionalism takes over (“the dwarves are for the dwarves”(55), and all is only resolved when a world that has thrown off the yoke of the foreign colonizer – and has therefore apparently descended into chaos – is destroyed by its own dissatisfied God. Everyone seems fine with this, as Lewis’s “good” characters all embody a deeply Anglo pro-monarchy subjectivity. The bad ones all kill each other, or are cast out of the promised land altogether, a rather starker metaphor for the violation of the expectations of ordinary subjectivity than, for instance, having to continue to be a stonemason.

The “deeper country” that Lewis’s characters enter at the end of this text, having all died in a brutal and briefly mentioned train crash, is a metaphor for an Anglican heaven but also reads

⁵² This has been observed by many other scholars, notably recently Jungmyung Lim, , but Lewis’s longtime collaborator J.R.R. Tolkien’s work adheres to a similar notion of totalitarian value judgements, and is also metaphorically aligned with Western imperial expansion.

as an idealized version of a colonized state. In *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*, Lauren Berlant observes that “the nation’s presence in the generic citizen’s everyday life is more latent and unconscious than it is in his incidental, occasional relation to national symbols...national identity requires self-ablation...Citizenship becomes equivalent to life itself and also looms as a kind of death penalty”(4). Lewis’s national fantasy exerts the ultimate levy of ordinary identification on its former rulers, forcing them to give up all allegiances to their former “primary country”(Subramanian, 3) as it becomes clear they have gained entry to a newer and better England only through their bodily deaths.

This new place is a version of essentialized country that can only exist in the most fantastical of *Bildungsromans*, a Narnia that, like all national fantasies, is better than anyone who has ever seen it remembers, an England beyond Englishness with airtight borders, and where only ordinary subjects remain. In its goodness it cannot be described, as “every blade of grass looked as though it meant more”; it is the *idea* of a nation, and as such, is the “true” location of the place even more fantastically essentialized than its former physical actuality, “further up and further in.” There is no room there for people who do not subscribe to the totalitarian ideals of such a country, or to its requirements for developing successfully and as such entering the “sunlit land”(78). Susan Pevensie, a former Queen, has been excluded entirely and is “no longer a friend of Narnia”(36), because, as Lewis later wrote, she has “turned into a rather silly, conceited young woman...(Lewis, 1957). Several notable critics and authors, including Neil Gaiman⁵³, Margaret Atwood, and Philip Pullman have noted that it seems to be

⁵³ In Gaiman’s short story “The Problem of Susan”, a speculative account of Susan Pevensie’s life after Narnia narrated from the perspective of an elderly English professor who turns out to be Susan herself, several swipes are also taken at Lewis’s national fantasy of an extradited England (and its relationship to politicizing children’s literature.) This project will return to the topic later, but it is worth noting that Gaiman begins the story at the nationalized node where Lewis leaves off, with a description of a place where “the grass is a peculiarly vivid shade of green: a wholesome green, like a cricket pitch or the welcoming slope of the South Downs as you make your way north from the coast.” The elderly professor of the text also has recently published a book in which she theorises the development of

Susan's relationship to sexuality that excludes her from the rewards of Narnia. I agree and would add that this seems also to be true of her relationship to cosmopolitan modernity. Her adulthood as a modern woman exceeds the limitations of suitable development as predicated by Lewis and excludes her from the "rewards" of death by an excess of ordinary national subjectivity. Susan usefully plays the role of the tall poppy, here, making the relative "goodness" of her siblings more apparent through her "bad" choice to defect, which implies a "good" choice to return on their part. It is, as in *Daniel Deronda*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved*, far easier to illustrate the consequences of failure to adhere to the requirements of the *Bildungsroman*'s despotic ordinariness, if the text gives the reader an example of someone who fails through not being able to do so.

These Susans, these scapegoats, are so necessary, it seems, because they allow writers (and in a different manner, politicians and lawmakers) to provide an implied dichotomy which is illustrative of a much larger goal. If a text has some characters who behave as they are expected to, and some who try to do so but can't, the requirements of the expected are elegantly illustrated without having to be directly stated. Tall poppies lose their heads without the scythe having to be crassly visible.

One of the most serious obstacles in adequately representing ordinariness in literary, historical or legal terms, as this project has argued at length, is that it can't be done. As I have discussed in my readings of Eliot, Hardy and Bowen, when this is attempted in novels of development, the ordinary subject ceases to be interpretable as such because it becomes

children's fiction from the Victorian age through the 20th century and tells the young woman interviewing her that "the Victorian notions of the purity and sanctity of childhood demanded that fiction for children be made ...well, pure." When the interviewer asks her if she means they are "sanctified", a clear reference to Lewis's Anglicanism, she corrects her, saying they are, instead, "sanctimonious. It is difficult to read *The Water Babies* without wincing."

galvanized with the current of attention. The ordinary disappears when it is scrutinized. It exists solely as a mutually understood symptom of collectivity, and cannot be examined as a singular object or event. However, like the tingling, lymphatic currents of affect, or the liquid jolts of attraction and dislike, our proprioceptive response to disruptions of the ordinary is one of our most finely attuned social senses, provoking both emotional reactions and embodied responses. Things that are out of the ordinary disturb us in ways that we can only explain in generalities, and which, paradoxically, can only be specifically addressed through generalization and euphemism; or, as this project suggests, new approaches to forms we understand already.

The *Bildungsroman*, whether it comes from Germany in the late eighteenth century or America in the early 21st, relies on the social *fata morgana* of ordinariness as a way of knowing and appraising the other, as this project has outlined. We see ordinariness happening over time in a way that we cannot attribute to any specific or singular moment. The conventional *Bildungsroman*'s reliance on the ordinary's delicate ubiquity displays that the structures of the British novel of development are deeply entangled with hegemonic ordinariness's impact on national belonging and colonial expansion. It would seem, given this, to be a form that is inherently limited and inherently conservative, reproducing and reinforcing blueprints of development that keep society the same.

Notwithstanding this, having traced a line in *Ordinary Subjects* from George Eliot's attempts to weaponize and make apparent the formal structures of the novel of development, through to the British ordinary's foundering affective and social grasp at the beginnings of the dissolution of Empire, I want in this final chapter to suggest that there might yet be hope for the British *Bildungsroman* as a form, without it having to rail against its structural limitations in the ingenious modes Eliot, Hardy and Bowen employ. It might effectively represent togetherness

and community formation outside of legislative and conservative national ideology, given some stipulations. It might not always be a conservative form which requires a *Bildungsheld* to be performatively destroyed by a severe system, despite its stringent requirements and hegemonic history. It could be possible, in short, for an author not to have to weaponize their own writing against the structure of the form in order to usefully highlight that structure's limitations. In fact, the *Bildungsroman* form might under the right circumstances, allow us to isolate, taxonomise and discuss the historical moments of nationalized ordinariness that enable cruelty from the mass to the minority, slow developments toward national and international sorority and kindness, and preclude or slow the development of any politics of friendship. Heretofore this project has argued that the *Bildungsroman* form itself is severe, unyielding, and reliant on the unspoken societal structures which pertain to the immanence of certain subjects. This is all, to the best of my knowledge, functionally true. There is, however, a manner in which communities formed around commonality (and as such, mutual ordinariness) might be represented therapeutically in a novel of development. A text which did this might allow the reader to see the structure of the hegemony in which the piece is set, the work the author does with the form to represent it, and to understand that their contemporary "ordinary" as a reader is fundamentally and usefully distinct from that described in the novel. Its chronological determinism would be productive, rather than merely an element of its conservatism. Pathological ordinarinesses, in this mode, would become observable and categorizable as historical objects, and non-exclusionary ordinarinesses based on commonality or even kindness also reveal themselves. Systems of belonging and of successful development, in a novel which did this, would not necessarily be tied to the form of the novel as a nationalized object, as the *Bildungsroman* would not, in this case, necessarily reproduce the structures of nationalized success and growth paradigms. It would still have to contain them, in

order to be identifiable as a novel of development but would not necessarily be formally reliant upon them. It might actually detach itself from conventional chronologies in many significant ways.

Christopher Isherwood's machinations with perspective in his 1976 text *Christopher and his Kind* are, in my reading, a mostly successful aesthetic and formal experiment in the rehabilitation of the British *Bildungsroman* form with these aims. It, and its counterpart, the *Berlin Stories* are extraordinarily British texts, as were most of Isherwood's works, although they are predominantly set outside of Britain. They are novels about *being British*, concerned with British rules, sensibilities and modes of life, which the author contrasts and subsumes to other influences. *Christopher and his Kind* works on disassociating the *Bildungsroman* from an otherwise necessarily conservative ideology of nationalized development. This is due to the text's unique relationship to temporality, to the author's own idiosyncratic relationship to his past, and to his methodology of recounting both. *Christopher and his Kind* is a singular work because of its multiplicity of perspective, and it is this which educates and reorients its relationship to the conventional 20th century *Bildungsroman* form. The primary material of the novel is the author's own semi-autobiographical set of texts, the *Berlin Stories*, which he wrote as a younger man in Weimar Germany, through Nazi rule and the end of the Second World War. As such, it is able to work outside the formal elements of its genre because it essentially *contains within itself* the superstructure of its analysis. As a retelling and a re-reading of the author's own semi-fictionalized past, it is a book about *itself*, both fiction and a work of criticism, centering the author's relationship to his environs through time. If Henry Green's complexities can be dismissed or explained as the peculiarities of a "writer's writer's writer", Isherwood in this sense is working as something like a "novelist's critic's autobiographer." Shifts in perspective happen

at a blinding pace throughout *Christopher and his Kind*, as the author retells a story about himself and interjects *as* himself. For clarity, I will briefly give an example here of the author's dense plurivocality and work with grammar, all of which come from a short five-page spread.

Encounters in 1930s and 40s Germany form the "present" of *Christopher and his Kind* as readers might contemporaneously understand it, although they are written in the third person past tense: ("The store, like all other Jewish stores, was boycotted from time to time"(68).

Interjections from the author "Isherwood", describing and responding to the complex mixture between his own younger self, his own writing choices as a young man, and the fictional character "Christopher", also abound: "I can understand why Wilfrid chose to discuss his problems as a Jew with Bernhardt rather than Christopher...[who] must have heard something at least of his defiance of the Nazis...why is this aspect of Wilfrid left out of the portrait of Bernhardt?"(68-9). There are times in the novel when Isherwood's authorial or narrative voice directly addresses the reader in the second person, and also times when it turns to an almost aphoristic mode of speech, employing a sort of implied second person. "Christopher outgrew this prejudice as he continued to publish books and began to acquire enthusiastic readers. It is not in human nature to condemn your own worshippers, even when they're not artists"(68). The author Isherwood speaks from the 'future' of his younger self, as he fills in the gaps left out for safety and propriety's sake in his youth. The narrative voice sits in state in the present, the past and the future of "Christopher" simultaneously. The text thus becomes extremely plastic, able to both 'remember' and experience, framing and explaining its own systems and temporalities through its use of perspective. Because of this, it is able to document and record all the shades of shadow of life in Berlin around the advent of Hitler's reign in the development of Isherwood's Christopher 'character'. It is a book about a book about a book about a young Englishman's

development inside and outside his country of origin. It executes an idea that is then iterable only through Isherwood's formal work, which is able to slow down and extrapolate the faster-than-thought processes of sensing the ordinary between characters: that ordinariness is a matter of perspective, and perspectives are not absolute over time. It makes the intervention that attention to *when* we look at things might show us the strands of ordinary life in a new way. It, in short, disrupts the otherwise incorruptible relationship between ordinary subjectivity and ordinary development in the *Bildungsroman*.

Isherwood's narrator in this text and in his earlier works, whether they are retrospective or set contemporaneously with the things they describe, divides its address into chronologically tensed *threes*⁵⁴. The text has an unusually dynamic approach to recounting chronological time, as past, present and future are always vying for formal attention. Isherwood's work in *Christopher and his Kind* does not just introduce the truth of Isherwood's own queer timeline in its work with perspective, but actually queers temporality. Neither the timelines of development nor the authorial or characterological responses to it in this text are linear. One affective register does pervade the entire text, however. *Christopher and his Kind* is full of the recounting of devotion and passion, but marred with a sense of fear and impermanence because of the brutal realities of German life for extra-ordinary subjects. The author touches his associates lightly in the original *Berlin Novels*, and upon his fictional return, elegizes them in a way that revivifies them in *Christopher and his Kind*. In publicly identifying with the queer communities in Weimar and Nazi Berlin in his 1976 book Isherwood is engaging in a literal, if late, act of allegiance to his "kind". The narrator of this novel is never alone, as he is surrounded by those with whom he shares various levels of commonality, but the *narrative* is never alone either – its multiple

⁵⁴ These are as follows: "I will, I was, I am; He will, He is, He was, You will, You were, You are"

temporalities and many voices imbue the prose with a sense of collection, accrual and archival conviviality. This idea, of using multiple perspectives to make one character into several, temporally distinct voices in order to re-orient systems of belonging and development in an otherwise predominantly conservative form is complex to describe, but simple when experienced in the text. For clarity, I will go on to give another example of how Isherwood's work with past, present and future tenses functions, and which engages with several aspects of the formal action I describe above.

A site of important intimacy and tenderness in *Christopher and his Kind* that is gingerly, shamefully skirted in the *Berlin Stories* (in a way the author repeatedly acknowledges) is the rarified and revolutionary environment of the Hirschfeld Institute of Sexology. Isherwood, when introducing the Institute, notes the danger and bravery that its presence in Berlin signified, writing that that Dr. Hirschfeld himself was a member of “all three groups [homosexuals, leftists and Jews](18)” that the German state had already begun to sequester and discriminate against. He mentions also that the building itself was “a visible guarantee of [Hirschfeld's] scientific respectability which reassured the timid and the conservative. It was a place of education for the public, its lawmakers, and its police. Hirschfeld could invite them into the sex museum and guide them through a succession of reactions – from incredulous disgust to an understanding of penal reform”(19). The Hirschfeld Institute was Europe's first center for the study of sexuality and one of the central sources of aid and succour for what resembled the LGBTQIA+ community in Europe at the time. It was also a place with which Isherwood declined to be publicly identified until he moved to America. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld believed strongly in the value of community and transparency for people on a wide spectrum of sexual variation. Edmund White notes that Hirschfeld's work also transcended both the theoretical and the national, as he was not content

with writing about homosexuality but...also started the first homosexual liberation movement...[and] attempted to get the law criminalizing homosexuality revoked, [garnering] signatures from over 600 prestigious persons, including Einstein, the sexologist Kraft-Ebbing, Hesse, Thomas Mann, Rilke, ...Tolstoy and Zola (185). When Isherwood begins to describe the Institute in *Christopher and his Kind*, he has already established the valiant public-facing nature of the place and the venerability of its owner in his third-person narrative voice. He then shifts, in a move that feels provocatively intimate, into a first-person reflection presented in confiding parentheses. Through this, the reader goes in and stands by the window with him. He writes about the building and the work of the institute inside in its function as a place of asylum for those “accused of sex crimes”:

(I have a memory of Christopher looking down from a room in the Institute and watching two obvious plain-clothes detectives lurk under the trees which grow along the edge of the park. They hope that one of their wanted victims will be tempted to venture out of Hirschfeld’s sanctuary for a sniff of fresh air. Then, according to the rules of the police game, he can be grabbed and carried off to prison.) (19)

In this short section, Isherwood performs the extraordinary feat of speaking in both the first and the third person, but also implicitly in the second. “Christopher’s” point of view here is represented as a second-hand memory, a mode of writing where the author is distanced from his own past self in a way that allows for a unique exploration of formal intimacy between reader and narrator. This allows his reader to share in a memory of a thing which seemed ordinary, if abhorrent, to the Isherwood of the past, through the sympathetically more explicit voice of the mature author. We see through Isherwood’s eyes, but we also see the character he speaks about, and are placed in a deeply associative state with both the author and Christopher, and removed totally from the proto-Nazi police officers in their homophobic state-mandated labour. Although they are ordinary members of the German state, the text cannot treat them as such given its mode

of perspectival depiction. The reader, instead, draws closer to “Christopher” and to “his Kind” as they are presented with a startlingly clear example of ordinary state-mandated brutality. The audience is, in this passage, closer to the scene than the Isherwood who writes it, as close as the memory-self looking out of the window at this attempt at institutionalized violence. The presence of these moments in Isherwood’s texts offer up moments of ordinariness otherwise totally unseeable, as they are unblemished and undisturbed by either plot or form; they are only possible because of the author’s multifarious presence in the text and its extrachronological structures. Isherwood’s extratemporal observations can prise out and observe moments of monolithic national ordinary behaviour without disrupting the text itself, like the startling geometry of a tightly filled pomegranate aril when removed from the pushing and nestling of its neighbours. It is uniquely possible to observe instances of ordinary acquiescence to harmful developmental norms in this mode of narration.

Alienation from the nationalized ordinary and association with the marginalized, even at this distance, is also emphasized by the author’s use of grammatical tense to represent perspectival shifts in this passage. It is written almost entirely in the gerund (looking, watching) for the character of Christopher, but is in the third-person present for the policemen attempting to kidnap a denizen of the institution. The reader (and Isherwood) are watching, while these figures “lurk” and “hope.” The structures of state-sanctioned aggression here are quite literally pushed away from the reader, set at an angle both temporally and characterologically, while Isherwood the author watches “Christopher”, and the reader looks out of the window with him. The exclusion of the police characters from the ‘us’ of reader and narrator/reader and Christopher is finally solidified by the unusual use of the subjunctive mood of a modal verb in the final few words. A victim “can” be “grabbed and carried off”, but only according to the “rules of the

police game.” Isherwood, Christopher and the reader are looking at a future that has not occurred, an event not happening, an exercise in current futility; for all its weight, this moment mocks the “obvious” detectives, places them at a disadvantage, and keeps them at a distance. There is no way, here and otherwise in the text, for the reader to sympathise with these instruments of state-sanctioned brutality, or even to relegate them to the “ordinary” background. The State itself loses its ignorable, powerful quality of ordinariness, making what characters “should do” or “should be” impossible and deplorable, and forcing the reader to re-orient their sense of ordinary belonging outside the larger imagined community. The Hirschfeld Institute, to this point, is presented as a professional organization with a political function, a location with ordinary activities, and part of the fabric of ordinary Berlin *polis* activity. It is more ordinary than the police are. The police officers are represented as independent players, thugs associated with an organization that is represented as being less stable, venerable and safe than Dr. Hirschfeld’s building.

In this manner, Isherwood’s work destabilizes the power of the state over ordinary developmental and chronological time. It is not just a *matter* of perspective, this text argues, but that perspective actually orients the *matter of political life*. This, and moments like it show, I hope, the potentiality for the *Bildungsroman* to exceed its own limitations as a form reliant on nationalized subjectivity and its modes of growth. Reading this text in this way also has larger repercussions for the way that readers of Isherwood might understand his vision of the imagined community as extending beyond a merely negative version of exclusionary nationalism; being British is not necessary in order to belong.

Having in this first section laid out the basic structure of Isherwood’s experimental work with time and its ability to make ordinariness in the *Bildungsroman* discursive, I will move to a

discussion the political ramifications of adherence to the *Bildungsroman* form in the mid-20th century. In the section “tense/table/*Tisch*”, and with reference to Walter Benjamin’s work on nationality, chronology and recording history, I will suggest a way that Isherwood’s approach to temporality and to perspective might redeem the *Bildungsroman* from some of its more conservative and severe limitations, providing new ways in which the limitations of the imagined community might be broadened.

With these parameters established, I will later in this chapter discuss the central role of camp subjectivity for narrator and character in Isherwood’s work, and its relationship to representing nationalized subjectivity from a kinder, gentler distance than would otherwise be possible. The productive step-back afforded by camp interactions is a fundamental part of the mobilization of perspective in Isherwood’s later works, as they allow for a literary text to create space between an event and its narrator without losing detail, and imbue ways of looking with meaning and emotional depth otherwise lost. In the section “Christopher and his Kindness” I will explore the role of what Isherwood refers to as “High camp” in delineating what aspects of nationalized subjectivity an appropriately political reader should align themselves with. I will analyse the work that his approach to the camp does to reinforce a highly dynamic mode of drawing closer to the politically desirable, and closing the door to the morally and ethically odious. I argue that Isherwood’s variable use of perspective is interpretable as “high camp” on its own terms, and that it is a fundamental part of the success of Isherwood’s texts in reframing sociopolitical and personal development for the extranational subject.

Thirdly and finally, I will return to *Goodbye to Berlin*, as Isherwood does in *Christopher and his Kind*, and read it closely with that text for the relationships it creates between monolithic nationalism, ordinary development and ways of seeing which allow for renewed interpretations

of the same. Isherwood, in *Christopher and his Kind*, forms a system of relations predicated on an intersubjectivity between reader, narrator, author and character that transcends the nationalism, classism and systemic discrimination with which “Christopher” was surrounded during his time in Berlin. Through these readings of that time in Berlin, and of Isherwood’s early work with perspective, I hope to show that Isherwood’s interpretation of the turn-of-the-century *Bildungsroman* from his seat in the “future” of the 1970s is fundamentally connected to political and transnational concerns about the boundaries of national belonging, and of individual subjectivity. Isherwood’s work with perspective and temporality in these texts directly addresses and enacts a refusal of the “us/them” problematic so prevalent in the texts of British national subjectivity I have previously analyzed. He offers an alternative teleology for the *Bildungsroman* form, one which works outside of reinforcing modes of essentialized national development for author, reader and subject.

tense/table/Tisch

In order to shrieve the *Bildungsroman* of its conservative ideology, in light of the above, an author would somehow have to resolve the problem of internal regulation upon which the *Bildungsroman* necessarily relies, and address the extensive history of distaste for the form stemming from these issues, from progressives, philosophers and leftists. Walter Benjamin— a philosopher deprived of his own status as an ordinary national subject by the Third Reich - writes in *Theses on the Philosophy of History* that “the chronicler, who recounts events without distinguishing between great or small, thereby accounts for the truth, that nothing which has ever happened is to be given as lost to history”(Thesis III). This passage is often cited as a preface on scholarly writing which discusses the Modernist tendency to focus on the minutiae and the ordinary events of daily life. Although they are not often written about together, Benjamin’s

discourse on the relationship between historicism and historical materialism seems in this context particularly pertinent to the examination of Isherwood's earlier writing in the context of his later work. Further to the previously mentioned concept of messianic time as it regards the *roman a clef*, Benjamin in his *Theses* asserts that the only subjects who could possibly hope to comprehend history are those to come after the fact. This, Benjamin moves, causes the problematic understanding that history is somehow sequestered from the present. Instead of accepting the false consciousness of linear history, he writes, the historical materialist must engage with the present, and remember that to articulate what is past does not mean to remember "how it really was, but to take control of a memory"(VI). Remembering what was ordinary, in this context, might seem completely impossible, as singular instances of it must escape our notice, and to remember them would rob them of their ordinariness.

Isherwood, however, through his temporality-altering work with perspective, is both progenitor of history and the "resurrected humanity" (Benjamin, Thesis III) in *Christopher and his Kind*, as in his rewriting of autobiography "each of [his] lived moments becomes a citation a l'ordre du jour"(III). In rewriting his own history in this way, Isherwood's narrator quite literally *comes after the fact*. Isherwood's early writing was being produced at a time when the concept of the "ordinary life" or the "ordinary person" was far more in the public consciousness than it had perhaps ever been before, and would only grow more important and problematic with the outbreak of the Second World War and the rapid escalation of atrocities. Michael Jackson, in his recent work *Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity* writes that:

Even when storytelling belongs conspicuously to hearth and home, its breadth of identifications and its allegorical layerings extend its significance into the public domain. Against the view that storytelling is a homespun, traditional, and conceptually unsophisticated art that conveys conventional wisdom but not objective truth, Hannah Arendt...like Walter Benjamin before her, argues that storytelling is a modal form of social critique (129).

The way in which the collected stories of *Christopher and his Kind* enact a study of nationally ordinary relations could – especially in the context of Isherwood’s later politics and commitment to pacifism – easily be read as an essay into the practice of historical materialism in the Benjaminian mould. Isherwood’s fascination with chronicling the ordinary events of everyday Berlin is, like Benjamin’s historical writing, certainly tinged with the elegiac, but is also fundamentally hopeful and productive at the point of reading. It is not simply future-oriented, but is both “a modal form of social critique”(129) and a suggestion for a way of being together that transcends the imagined community’s subsumption into nationalized systems of development. “How it really was”(Benjamin, VI), becomes in *Christopher and his Kind* quite literally a matter of perspective; the frangibility of memory as Isherwood speaks and reacts to his past and future “selves” actually becoming discursive, formally working to stabilize its recounting.

It is hard to argue, however, with the assertion Benjamin makes in several different ways that novels of development are inherently conservative and conservatively reproductive because they are inextricably tied to the time in which they are written, and that they are in indissoluble matrimony with their contemporaneous chronology. *Christopher and his Kind* avoids this at least sometimes successfully because it is in many ways several books at once. The same parataxis that allows for the representation of an alternative imagined community in *Daniel Deronda* occurs here, as a conversation between several subjectivities. The present is represented in a solution of both past and future by multiple narrative voices, which allows ordinary things to be both present and absent, contemporaneous and a memory which can be recounted.

Extrapolating backward from this, however, the reader must also come to the conclusion that nationalized ordinary subjectivity as it appears in most novels of development must have

some kind of significant relationship with the subject's chronological position. A fin de siècle or 20th century *Bildungsroman* is usually chronologically linear in structure, and relays its message in the consistent relationship with chronology that characterological development usually precludes. Readers expect this, as I have previously argued in my chapter on Thomas Hardy, so much so that the larger structures of the lives of *Bildungshelds* can be reasonably guessed at before they are read. In "The Storyteller", Walter Benjamin posits that the "meaning of life" is what the reader is searching for when perusing a novel and experiencing this surety. This "meaning" is not necessarily the great summing equation that will solve all their problems and those of the world, but for a system of relations that allows them to interpret their own narrative as being somehow in tandem or running alongside that of a character, and as such, safer and more legible:

A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one shares this companionship. The reader of a novel, however, is isolated, more so than any other reader (for even the reader of a poem is ready to utter the words, for the benefit of the listener.) In this solitude of his, the reader of a novel seizes upon his material more jealously than anyone else. He is ready to make it completely his own, to devour it, as it were. Indeed, he destroys, he swallows up the material as the fire devours logs in the fireplace. The suspense which permeates the novel is very much like the draft which stimulates the flame in the fireplace and enlivens its play...the reader of a novel actually does look for human beings from whom he derives the "meaning of life", therefore he knows in advance that he must share their experience of death...The novel is significant, therefore, not because it presents someone else's fate to us, perhaps didactically, but because this stranger's fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields to us the warmth we never draw from our own fate. What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about. (100)

"Consuming" a life as a whole in this way (as unmitigated fuel for personal fulfilment) is in Benjamin's estimation the grand appeal of the novel, which is a form in general he finds to be fundamentally limited. Benjamin goes further, however, asserting that the *Bildungsroman* is *necessarily* limited, more so than any other form, as it "does not deviate in any way from the

basic structure of the novel, [and]...by integrating the social process with the development of a person, it bestows the most frangible justification on the order determining it. The legitimacy it provides stands in direct opposition to reality”(88). It is a novel form that is more of a potentially damaging representation of life than any other. Just as burning coal is worse for the environment than solar power, even though some form of fuel must be consumed, Benjamin suggests that “consuming” the “meaning of life” from a *Bildungsroman* might be worse for one’s humours than usual entertainments, as it forces the consumption of a narrative which promotes continuation of the social order along its previously laid rails. If the way that one develops is too closely associated with the passing of ‘the times’ in which one lives, Benjamin would argue, one is in danger of experiencing one’s life only in generalities, through accounts of others and without intention, “warming his shivering life with a death he reads about.” This life also precludes the possibility of real political change in the reader, as sensibilities whose limitations are predicated by the social expectations of those who lived before us can never fully shake them.

Moreover, the thrust of Benjamin’s distaste for the *Bildungsroman* is that it is a form that is always written in the past. Although everything – including Benjamin’s own writing – is arguably written in the past, the *Bildungsroman* in his reading can only represent the values and expectations of its time. In this reading, novels of development are *always* social novels, or even historical novels.

It is not only Benjamin who doubts the usefulness of the *Bildungsroman*’s future as a form. Another version of this by a contemporary of Isherwood’s is found within Gertrude Stein’s essay “Composition as Explanation”, published in 1940, only months after the 1939 *Goodbye to Berlin*. This work also correlates significantly with Walter Benjamin’s work on the political role

of art at the time, and draws an even stronger thread between Isherwood's early work, his later reflections, and the commentary of that philosopher. In her piece, Stein takes up the role of global violence as it relates to the production of art and the "prolongued (sic)...[or] continuous present": "The only thing that is different from one time to another", she asserts, "is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything...continuous present is one thing and beginning again and again is another thing. And then there is using everything" (Stein, 222). "Using everything" in Stein's estimation is the work of the twentieth-century author's commitment to "see" as others see; the "beginning again and again" of historicism in the conventional sense must be rejected for a continuous present built by a commitment to (if not understanding) acknowledging and recording the other. Formally and narratively engaging with all aspects of perspective, in short, would be "using everything." When Benjamin suggests that "integrating the social process with the development of a person...bestows the most frangible justification on the order determining it", he is making a very similar argument to Stein's here, and also a larger one about the nature of the Modernist *Bildungsroman* itself. Both of these claims would seem to be in direct support of Isherwood's use of perspective and time; *Christopher and his Kind*, although it might not be "using everything" or diverting from a conservative approach to chronology quite perfectly, is using a great deal more information than almost any work of autofiction had before or since.

To place Isherwood's work with perspective and temporality in one more conversation with Benjamin and with historical materialism before I turn to the connections Isherwood makes between form and national belonging, in the ninth of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin famously describes the difference between what the "angel of history" might see, and the way that humans perceive events:

[The Angel's] eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (257)

The world and its systems of ordinance, according to Benjamin, is necessarily made of a climax of all the composite things that have already happened. The angel looking backwards cannot see the future, only the pile of debris which is the effluvia of all the things that have previously happened. Development does not interest it, because messianic time cannot mobilize or use the stages of development; it all ends up in the “catastrophe” anyway. Development is illegible to the Angel – it sees only the cataclysm of completion. This passage is not usually read in the context of Benjamin's critique of the novel of development, but it has an important correlation with the variegated use of perspectives in *Christopher and his Kind*, and Isherwood's stretching, malleable temporalities. The *Bildung*-form, Benjamin might say, in its usual iteration is absolutely reliant on chronological time and becomes an outmoded representation of ordinary subjectivity as soon as it is finished, as it must then represent something past. Most *Bildungsromans* are always-already a part of the pile at which the angel looks, formally devoted to their own obsolescence. The form as a form endures, but all its products are necessarily the detritus of evolving nations and their changing expectations. The usual run of the *Bildungsroman* is the antithesis of “making whole what has been smashed” in its dedication to progress and its inherent contemporaneity. This is not necessarily, as Nancy Armstrong might argue, to say that a *Bildungsroman* is dead on arrival, merely that it doesn't have futurity in the way Benjamin and Stein might suggest is generative. *Bildungsromans* are, certainly, almost always clenched around the time in which they are written. They actively try to represent what it was like *then* to become,

given the specific conditions which surrounded the becomer, and discuss the process of that becoming with attention to nationally and temporally specific goals and values. Isherwood's work is of particular interest here because it is not limited by its form as only having a relationship to the past. Its modes of representing growth and change in societies and nations exceed the form. It does not just narrate a subject becoming an intersubject and then either succeeding or failing at that, but does this *and* contains within itself a discourse on the implications of doing so, destabilizing its connection to chronological time. Having laid out the political ramifications of Isherwood's divergence from the contemporary *Bildungsroman* form, I now want to turn to the way in which the author engages nationalized ordinariness and belonging through perspectival shifts on a formal and lexical level.

When in *Christopher and his Kind* the author is reflecting on "Christopher's" methods for teaching English to German pupils, he makes the distinction between "a table" and "*ein Tisch*" an ontological and aesthetic rather than a purely linguistic matter: "When you're learning a new word, you must never say to yourself 'it means', that's altogether the wrong approach...over there in England they have a thing called a table. We may go to England and look at it and say, 'that's our *Tisch*', but it isn't. The resemblance is only on the surface" (20). Quite aside from the fact that it would otherwise seem that the *entire point* of the table is the surface, Isherwood goes on to make a distinction between German national character and English national character even here at the noun level. He is suggesting a semiotic opposition that requires two identical but separate approaches: "If you can grasp the fact that the thing in England...really is a table, then you'll begin to understand what the English themselves are like...the sort of people compelled by their nature to think about that thing as a table..."(21)

"What is missing [from "table"]", the mature Isherwood writes, is queer sex. Queer sex,

and the association that Berlin had for him to it; as “for him, the difference between a table and *ein Tisch* was that a table was the table in the dining room in his mother’s house, and *ein Tisch* was *ein Tisch* in the Cosy Corner” (21).

The table is not merely a work-surface or a way to keep lamps off the ground in Germany. It is a table in a gay nightclub in Germany in which Isherwood’s Englishness is not ordinary; this means it is not restrictive and parochial. The Cosy Corner is a gathering-place for identificatory activities, a spot by invitation only. The idea and the word-object *Tisch* are part of Isherwood’s understanding of Teutonic glamour, whereas a ‘table’ is imbued with his distaste for England and a very clear idea he has of ordinary English national identity. His reader is shown the structure of ordinary nationalized belonging, but instead of striving to be accepted into it, his *Bildungsheld* rejects it, and the extrachronological narrator derides it.

The operational, normal objects of life in Berlin for Isherwood, as he reflects on his sojourn there from the future, were imbued with an aura of difference and separation that does not preclude their ordinariness to his own later perceptions; even if they are ordinary, they are *German* ordinary, not *his* ordinary, English ordinary. They exist in a different register than the objects which share their signifiers in his home environment of England, because they are not associated in the same way with the parochial repression of selfhood and aesthetic growth that Isherwood had escaped. One still puts one’s beer down on *ein Tisch*, but the point he is making here is that who one *is* (as a subject and as an intersubject) is different when one does so at the Cosy Corner. It because it cannot be otherwise if “our table” is not “their *Tisch*.” His multitudinous prose allows for these two iterations of ordinariness to exist simultaneously, each pointing to the other without disturbing its contents; the ordinary is in this context both nationalized and transnational.

The idea of the table/*Tisch* dyad seems disproportionately important in both the *Berlin Stories* and *Christopher and his Kind*, and is stated seriously in a way which seems dissonant with Isherwood's otherwise quite playful and avuncular prose. The later version of the author – the narrator of *Christopher and his Kind*, glosses over Christopher's attempts to philosophize to his students ("only a few decided that he was being metaphysical and thus listened with respect") and gives a blanket reading of this desire to differentiate modes of relation between the English language and German, and in so doing, between a German mode and an English mode of making oneself understood. In the *Berlin Stories* the reader is presented with the rubric for interpreting Isherwood's philosophy of differing national ontic modes, whereas the methodology and rationale are only given in *Christopher and his Kind*, as Isherwood decides to write a text that is "as frank and factual as [he] can make it, especially as far as [he himself] was concerned" (3).

England, Isherwood writes, was his mother and his brother and his boarding-school friends, and he "couldn't relax sexually with a member of his own class or nation. He needed a working-class foreigner" (3). Isherwood very wished to escape his contemporary, ordinary Britain at the time of the action in the *Berlin Stories*, and "find a place where I can be what I am...[Mother's] Will is the Will of Nearly Everybody, and in their will is my death"(*Christopher and his Kind*,12). He loathed the touch of his British imagined community, but was an expert documentarian of it, and affected Britishness in his behaviours and speech until the end of his life. Gore Vidal, a friend of Isherwood's in his life in America, writes that the last words Isherwood ever spoke to him were actually about Englishness – and indeed, about categorizing Englishness within English bounds. Sitting on the edge of his deathbed, observing that Christopher was "all beak like a new-hatched eagle" (18), Vidal writes that:

[Christopher] had long since made his peace with England and the English. But I had just come from London with numerous complaints of English fecklessness – what would happen when the North Sea oil was gone? They have no plans! I cried. It's just like the grasshopper and the ant, and *they* are hopeless grasshoppers, a nation of grasshoppers. The eyes opened at that. At last, I had his full, focused attention, and he spoke his last complete sentence to me – in the form of a rhetorical question, needless to say. Not for nothing had he swum with swamis yet kept that magic touch. "So", he demanded, "what is wrong with grasshoppers?" (*Where Joy Resides*, 19)

In order, as a younger man, to move away from the "grasshoppers" the author was "hungry to make th[e] journey [to Germany] ...it was Berlin itself he was hungry to meet, as to Christopher, Berlin meant boys" (2). *Christopher and his Kind* makes it clear that within the stifling environment of the British establishment Isherwood's membership to the imagined community was initially an embarrassment and an obligation to him. He wanted, as he records in his autobiographies, to be able to form relationships outside of monolithically English heterosocial norms. England and Englishness predicated parameters of belonging antithetical to his ethics and his affect; and unlike Jude Fawley or Angel Clare, Isherwood had the means to get away and stay away from Britain, and to "meet" Berlin as a subject in itself without having to sincerely reveal his own ends. Indeed, in a note to the reader in his fantastically successful 1937 novel *Lions and Shadows*, he states that he "had better start by saying what this book is not; it is not, in the ordinary journalistic sense, an autobiography; it contains no "revelations", it is never "indiscreet"; it is not even entirely "true. " Its subtitle "an Education in the Twenties", explains its purpose: to describe the first stages in a lifelong education:

A young man living in a certain period in a certain European country, is subjected to a certain kind of environment, certain stimuli, certain influences. That the young man happens to be myself is only of secondary importance: in making observations of this sort, everyone must be his own guinea-pig...this book is also about conduct...*The style is the man*...Because it is about conduct, I have had to dramatize it...Read it as a novel. (8, my emphasis)

Autobiography in the “journalistic sense” then, must in Isherwood’s vision have three major qualifiers beyond something like *reportage* – it has to be revelatory, indiscreet and have a meaningful relationship with truth. This makes the publication of *Christopher and his Kind*, which is certainly revelatory, indiscreet, and true even more interesting when we consider the value of the table/*Tisch* binary to how Isherwood looks at ordinary subjects⁵⁵ If the “style is the man”, then whom “Christopher” was in England and Germany might exceed the bounds of nationalized ordinary subjectivity.

Although Isherwood’s later works are far more explicit about the kind of community-building, internationalism, and peacemaking that he would come to consider the real work of his life, *Goodbye to Berlin* and certainly *Christopher and his Kind* to an extent are already texts that work outside of the nationalist and exclusionary politics of Europe in the 1930s. The novels, although they have differing relationships with the truth, are at least nominally autobiographical, and so necessarily incorporate and mobilize the ordinary and the everyday of Isherwood’s life as their *materiel de guerre*. To expand on this idea within the framework of this project’s interest in narratives of development, in Isherwood’s writing the multiplicity of perspectives allows for large communities and societal groups to form outside of the implied “us” of the State. It also shows that they are forming without relying on the necessarily limited parameters of British nationalized ordinary development or ordinary belonging in the same mode. We can see Nazis and marginalized communities as having idiolects of ordinary belonging and systems of identifying insiders and outsiders, because the text’s responses to them are not individual nor chronologically mandated. This is not Wessex, nor Eliot’s London, nor Bowen’s County Clare. It

⁵⁵ It may be worth noting here that forewords in this vein, especially ones that contain lists as instructive parameters for reading, are extremely characteristic of British Victorian novels and critical works; particularly those by George Eliot in their earlier novels and John Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*, two associations at which Isherwood would have wriggled with horror.

is not even Isherwood's Germany or Isherwood's England, but Isherwood's interpretation of "Christopher's" Germany. His novels of development (these earlier texts are to a word *Bildungsromans*, especially the collected short stories) are all tales of Anglo- *Bildungshelds* who join affective communities sidelined by conventional social order, united against Fascist and totalitarian politics by a politics of –if not actually friendship at this stage of Isherwood's career – then at least mutual intelligibility, and tolerance.

Isherwood's most well-known work of ordinary days, *Goodbye to Berlin*, takes place over the course of six years; its vignettes cover a significant spread of the change in ordinary German existence lived as a British subject after the First World War. It is an episodic narrative intended by the author to give an impression of a particular period of ordinary excitements, failings, and pleasures in the period before the total takeover of the Nazi regime. It – and the majority of Isherwood's other well-known works published before the 1970s - are often read as comic novels because of their particular reticence and performative irony, which comes about largely because of the narrative distance placed between the "camera" (Christopher Isherwood's famous description of the objective of his narrator) and his subjects.⁵⁶

Isherwood in person as well as in prose, however, took umbrage with the ubiquity of the interpretation of his writing as 'camera-like', and the idea that the writing itself was supposed to be simplistically funny; the fact that much of this was attributed to his British dryness did not sit well. In a 1972 interview with David Geherin for the *Journal of Narrative Theory*, he said with some ire that: "What I was simply trying to do was describe my mood at that particular moment. Obviously, the description does not fit Christopher Isherwood in many of the other novels."

⁵⁶ Because Isherwood's style of naming narrators after himself can be quite confusing, especially when one writes about his autobiographical works in comparison to his novels, I have included a diagram of the narrative systems of three of the texts here discussed at the end of this chapter (see fig.2)

(145) The notorious ‘description’ is so deliciously appropriate and period-specific that it has been, to the author’s apparent chagrin, applied to interpretations of his narrative technique where that technique was intended to be decidedly uncameralike. Isherwood said ‘Christopher’ was a camera once, and then was told by everyone else that he himself was a camera ever after. The author goes on to say that in his earlier works he was far less interested in recording the vicissitudes of his own character through personal autobiography than he was with examining the ways in which other people related to him and to one another:

I was always concerned primarily with live models. But I was trying to show the inwardness of the models that I was using for my characters. That is to say, I was trying to show what it was about them that really interested me, why they seemed to me more than themselves, why they seemed to me to be almost archetypes, and therefore why I was writing about them, what was magic about them, what was (sic) noumenous about them. (145)

In the same influential interview with Geherin, the first he had given for some years, he muses on the take that the author Alan Wilde had on him in an autobiography published before the interview. Wilde had called him an “ironic moralist”, to which Isherwood responded demurringly, that he considered himself “ironic, yes...there is a kind of irony in my work...and my humour, I don’t know how to describe it. It has a sort of double-edged thing to it...” When pressed about the use of comedy in his work by an enthusiastic Geherin, Isherwood moved that he had “no use for out and out comedy writing or out and out tragedy writing. They bore me to distraction equally. I think both pictures that they give of life are false in the most heartless way. I don’t know which is worse-the triviality of the total comedian or the superficiality of the total tragedian...”(156). There is, in short, something of the contrarian both in Isherwood’s accounting for his own style and in the scholarly tradition of reading it either defensively or critically. Tellingly, Thom Gunn’s amicable 1990 interview with the author is entitled

“Christopher Isherwood: Getting Things Right”, while Brooke Allen’s 2004 review of a biography of Isherwood, which principally critiques the deceased and not the work of the author, is entitled “Isherwood: The Uses of Narcissism” (New York Times). Nobody, it seemed, could get what Isherwood was really doing quite right – there was “a sort of double-edged thing to it”(145).

This idea of “rightness”, of somehow divining the correct way to extract “that neuter, that composite, that oblique” (Barthes, 142) from Isherwood’s “archetypical” I works – which apparently only comes from being able to justify disassociation between author and subject, ‘camera’ and posing model, Briton and expat - is uniquely perplexing because of Isherwood’s absolutely singular uses of perspective. How would it be possible to know what a narrator meant, if the narrator were several people at once, all coming at the same event from different angles?

It could be said with some accuracy that texts like *Lions and Shadows* or *The World in the Evening* have a narrative praxis that is camera- like; focused, myopic, specific. However, *Christopher and his Kind* looks at everything it “sees” from a chorus of angles; if Isherwood is a camera here it is one with many, many lenses. It is also one placed at a very calculated distance from its subjects; one that is inextricable from Isherwood’s conception of the “high camp.”

Christopher and his Kindness

I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day all this will have to be developed, carefully printed.

Christopher Isherwood.

This statement by the young Isherwood, as above, is almost always read in scholarly quarters as a manifesto for the author’s narrative technique; accurate, passive, nonparticipatory,

disinterested. It is a mode, by all accounts, that looks but does not process. At the time of writing these apparently immortal words, Isherwood had fled a Europe spoiling for war to the United States. He had finished *Prater Violet* (a novel, suitably, about Englishness in English films, set in England) and was writing *Goodbye to Berlin* as his partner served a three-year labour sentence presumptively for “failing to enlist”, but in actuality because he had failed to enlist while in a homosexual relationship. Isherwood was not yet publicly out as a gay man and was somewhat protected from the Third Reich by both his expatriate status and aristocratic British “closing of the eyes”(Southern, 1958), but his partner, a working-class German citizen was, after a long period of attempting to evade the authorities, conscripted and placed in a prison camp.

Hans Neddermeyer’s lawyer damningly suggested he minimize his sentence, which could at the time have been permanent consignment to a concentration camp, as “*eine ausgesprochne Sucht zur wechselseitigen Onanie*”⁵⁷⁵⁸ (*Christopher and his Kind*, 281), or “an addiction to reciprocal onanism”, the least onerous crime linked to homosexuality for which one could be convicted. Isherwood’s avowedly disinterested mode of address in his autofiction when recounting this painful interlude seems fundamentally at odds with his actions and his feelings at the time. This is especially true as the “camera” does not ever record the crimes of the German state against its queer community in the *Berlin Stories* and prefers to direct its pupil elsewhere.

⁵⁷ Isherwood gives this sentence, which Heinz Neddermeyer was to repeat in court as a confession to “the least of all punishable sexual acts” in German in the text, as if to emphasize its incomprehensibility, and caps it with the incredulous “This was the name their love was to dare to speak, in the face of its enemies!”(281) This is an unusual instance in *Christopher and His Kind* of Isherwood placing nationalized references against one another to explain something only implied on the surface of the text – a technique he uses much more frequently in his more euphemistic novels. The reference here to Lord Alfred Douglas’s poem and to its most famous correlate, Wilde’s “gross indecency” trial, is contrasted directly with the implacable German court system and its “matter of fact” (281) lawyers. It is also an unusual instance of distancing through humour in *Christopher and his Kind* – Isherwood “laughs out loud” at the German lawyer’s candour and implacability, because “laughter was the only alternative to futile, screaming hate.” (281)

Knowing where the camera *should* have been looking, after reading *Christopher and his Kind* and then returning to the *Berlin Stories* feels both oddly moralistic and quite jarringly necessary, here, especially as Neddermeyer's crime itself seems to encompass a paradoxical, almost oxymoronic slurring of perspectives⁵⁹. The texts encourage and almost mandate re-reading, complicating and enfolding their moves with temporality and character development even further. Reticence, by the time of publication of the later text was no longer necessary as a life-preserving cover for Isherwood's own queer identity; given his 1976 novel's unique structure, he can simultaneously identify with his queer compatriots and companions, present a detached, thoughtful analysis of their plight, and comment on the failings of his own empathy and bravery. When Isherwood writes about his troubled but deeply loving relationship with Neddermeyer, his long-term 'friend'⁶⁰ and companion, it is only in the diary entries that he excerpts in which any sentiment is allowed to enter the narrative, and this disjunction is taken up by Isherwood's narrating voice. However, even these entries in past-Isherwood's private diary are restrained and avoidant of emotional clarity and sometimes, factual retelling of events. Even when writing to himself, it seemed, the younger author remained at a deliberate distance, which the older Isherwood is compelled to observe and critique.

These failings of declarative bravery, numerous as they are, might make a reparatively queer reading of early Isherwood jar strongly. To introduce the idea of the camp to this, as if it necessarily pertains to any narrative penned by a gay man, might jar even more. Indeed, to employ a word like "camp" to describe Isherwood's formal methodology in recounting

⁵⁹ "Reciprocal onanism" is, after all, not nearly within the same realm of possibility as modern "mutual masturbation", and furthermore seems to require another person only conceptually to be present.

⁶⁰ I use the slightly old-fashioned term "friend" here for two reasons: firstly, because it is the only term Isherwood uses in *Goodbye to Berlin* for any kind of homosocial or homosexual relation, and also because in *Christopher and His Kind* the author expresses his distaste for "lover, or boyfriend. Except in the plural 'lover' suggests...a one-sided attachment, 'boyfriend' always sounds condescending and often ridiculously unsuitable." (199)

nationalized ordinarinesses might seem, in this context, to suggest a reductive and offensive minimization of gay male identity. Peter Thomas, writing on this very problematic, comments that “while Camp, in whatever class, is normally associated with homosexuality ...it is debatable whether this is a necessary relationship. The line between Aestheticism and Camp is often difficult to draw, though rigorous formalists, being entirely serious and resistant to distortion, do” (Thomas,122). I want to argue here that *Christopher and his Kind* demands the kind of “rigorous formalist” reading that does draw a line between a gay male aesthetics and the camp. Nonetheless, observing the presence of a mode of camp intersubjectivity is important to locating and analysing his technique of using perspectival shifts to disrupt conventional development’s timelines in the text. When Isherwood’s narrator “looks at” and forms modes of intersubjectivity with other characters, it becomes clear that his discussion of their quirks and foibles is in itself a camp mode of relation. It illustrates both their ordinariness to each other and their lack of belonging to the hegemonic modes of national belonging around them.

Although some of Isherwood’s camp is avowedly aligned with his homosexuality in his later work, much of it in his novels from the 1928 *All the Conspirators* to 1964’s *A Single Man* is oriented toward the gap in the narrative left by the absence of the speaker’s feelings and sexual desires. *A Single Man* (which, as most of the introductions to that text assert, Isherwood considered his best work) and which has at its center an openly gay man, his friends and lovers, also makes a direct and immediate intervention into the role that disengaging actively from conventional temporality has in divesting from ordinary chronology. This elegiac novel begins:

Waking up begins with saying *am* and *now*. That which has awoken then lies for a while staring up at the ceiling and down into itself until it has recognized *I*, and therefore deduced *I am*, *I am now*. *Here* comes next and is at least negatively reassuring; because here this morning, is where it has expected to find itself; what’s called *at home*. But *now* isn’t simply now. *Now* is also a cold reminder; one whole day late than yesterday, one year later than last year. Every now is labeled with its date, rendering all

the past nows obsolete, until—later or sooner—perhaps—no, not perhaps—quite certain—it will come. (1)

Much of this prose from 1964 reads very much like the author's own "voice" in *Christopher and his Kind*. It is not in the first, second or third person exactly— the reader is aware of a subject, and of a speaker, and of a commenting free indirect discourse, but the topic of this initial paragraph is the subject's relationship with time and its ordinary location, even if it's just the Saussurian form of that location: "*I am now....what's called at home*", rather than its relationship with any voice associated with the text. The absence of proper or even indicative nouns beyond "it" for a presumably human subject here is typical of Isherwood's mobilization of narratorial distance for the purposes of provoking affect and sympathy. These, like much of the *Berlin Stories* and *Christopher and his Kind*, are aesthetic, philosophical, intimate formal choices , which take their subject seriously. These choices together place the reader both closer to and further from the subject in question, making a point of the presence of multiple perspectives even though only one narrator is extant. The relationship with time this subject has is not quite as formally complex as that of the many-faceted Isherwood of *Christopher and his Kind*. But, this short section of the text does engage with what might be recognized as a typically late-Isherwoodian conflation of ordinary location, chronological disruption and multiplicity of character. "That which has awoken", the protagonist of *A Single Man*, who must deduce "I am, I am now" and that "every day is labeled with its date, rendering all the past nows obsolete" (1) finishes his voiceless, faceless introduction to the reader with a suggestion of uncertain futurity, having only located himself in an ordinary "here" because of this fickle and painful "now." He is who he is *in this time*, but it took him, and us, a while to get there together.

Even after this early experimentation in using multiple perspectives to introduce tender distances, Isherwood made no direct admission of his sexual orientation in his writing until the publication of *Christopher and his Kind* in 1976. Early in the novel, he describes as a younger man feeling a deep admiration and a deep envy for the early bravery of E.M Forster's novel *Maurice*, as "the wonder of the novel was that it had been written when it had been written...[in] the jungle of pre-war prejudice, putting those unthinkable thoughts into words"(*Christopher and his Kind*,129). Isherwood describes "wiggling his toes", however, at some of the more "antique locutions" (129) of Forster's text, as "when Alec speaks of sex with Maurice as "sharing", he grimaced...with embarrassment" (130). It is not the antiquated quality of Forster's writing that is so at odds with the young Isherwood's own sensibilities here, but the sheer unmediated seriousness and intimacy of the language of "sharing."⁶¹ There is no distance between Forster and reader. Isherwood's narrators in his early novels do not "share", whether sexually or interpersonally. Though they may take things seriously and experience a full spectrum of emotions, they are always presented to the audience as being at a deliberate distance from the situations in which they find themselves, whether these are emotionally intense or burlesque and ridiculous. Isherwood himself provides a working definition of the camp as transcending homosociality and being linked to the relationship between seriously felt emotion and artifice in his 1954 text *The World in the Evening*:

In any of your voyages au bout de la nuit, did you ever run across the word "camp"?... 'You thought it meant a swishy little boy with peroxided hair, dressed in a picture hat and a feather boa, pretending to be Marlene Dietrich? Yes, in queer circles, they call that camping, It's all very well in its place, but it's an utterly debased form...What I mean by camp is something much more fundamental. You can call the other Low Camp, if you

⁶¹ Forster is not very cool about gay sex or gay love in *Maurice*, and Isherwood even at his most sincere, is always cool, never giving too much away or seeming overenthusiastic; one might even say that one of the effects of Isherwood's layered perspectives is to provoke the uncool (heightened emotion, caring, being explicit, feeling a sense of commonality) in his reader, while never actually putting those affects on the page.

like; then what I'm talking about is High Camp. High Camp is the whole emotional basis of the Ballet, for example, and of course of Baroque art. You see, true High Camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it. You're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance. Baroque art is largely camp about religion. The Ballet is camp about love ... Do you see at all what I'm getting at?' ... 'Mozart's definitely a camp. Beethoven, on the other hand, isn't... But I admit it's terribly hard to define. You have to meditate on it and feel it intuitively, like Lao-tze's Tao. Once you've done that, you'll find yourself wanting to use the word whenever you discuss aesthetics or philosophy or almost anything. I never can understand how critics manage to do without it.' (125--6)

Isherwood delineates an early version of many contemporary scholarly understandings of the aesthetic and political role of the camp in this paragraph. Somewhat pre-empting Susan Sontag (who published her seminal "Notes on Camp" in 1964, ten years after *The World in the Evening*), he understands what he dubs "High Camp" as being primarily a "sensibility" (Sontag, 54) an approach of "seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon", and of being possessed of "a large amount of artifice" (1). High Camp is an approach to things; a way of looking. Isherwood's formal experimentation with distancing arguably begins with "Low Camp" at the level of plot in his earlier texts, and transitions into a more sophisticated formal method of "High Camp" in his later works. "Low Camp" moments often turn the cruel laugh away from the vulnerable party, and toward either the readers' own expectations, or more often towards the representatives of the monolithically national or the totalitarian.

Upon leaving a drag bar full of "middle-aged tradesmen and their families exclaiming in good-humoured amazement" where a young man "in a spangled crinoline and jeweled breast-caps had painfully but successfully executed three splits", Isherwood and his companions of the *Belin Novels* are accosted by "a party of American youths" who are spoiling for a fight. They ask Christopher and his companions what's "on" in the building and are coolly told that "what's on" is "men dressed as women." This unnerves the American youths to no end, "although their

callow, open-mouthed faces...looked a bit scared”, and one pipes up to Christopher “you queer too, hey?” Isherwood stands his ground and says, sans adjective, “Yes...very queer indeed.” The youths are discombobulated and alarmed, and as one “rush into the building utter[ing] some kind of wild college battle-cry.” The beautiful, tendoned, imagined tension of the young drag queen’s splitting thighs has been replaced with the homophobic/homoerotic tension of the hapless tourists, who in the end must see these “Men, dressed as women!” (235) for themselves. The reader sees that two perspectives on what is allowed to be considered ordinary are clearly being put at odds with one another here; a puritanical, highly energetic American idiom of heteronormativity and a much more relaxed German mode of permissiveness and enjoyment. The group who represent a nationalized ordinary system are made vulnerable, and the “very queer” folks outside of this are left in solidarity. Isaac Rosenfeld in the 1946 *Kenyon Review* wryly comments that Isherwood “has something of the movie director in him...he is not afraid or ashamed of using the crudest stock gesture, for he knows vulgarity to be the underside of magnificence”(488) Although vulgarity abounds in *Goodbye to Berlin*, those characters who are finally portrayed as being truly “vulgar” are usually those who have acted cruelly or in a way which precludes any ethical intersubjectivity – often those characters who exemplify the most nationalized and monolithically “ordinary” tastes of their day.

Further to this, Harold Beaver writes in his text *Camp* that the camp “reveals...an aesthetic norm of indirection, self-protection, and speculative irresponsibility...Camp is a withdrawal into inverted commas, a flaunting by self-definition, a leapfrog of distancing” (106) Because of its dynamic refusal to engage with the form in which it purports to be written, the narrative idiosyncrasy of *Christopher and his Kind* is itself very High Camp. It certainly “flaunt[s] by self-definition.” Like the most gorgeous of drag queens, the novel *Christopher and*

his Kind also performs the act of taking something and making it entirely different, while simultaneously clearly showing the audience a version of what it really is, so that the knowledge of the two things together forms something both paradoxical and fresh, sparkling with newly-snapped life. Isherwood's multifarious perspectives keep the reader at a distance, three people in between them and the plot, while simultaneously allowing them into tender moments that show ordinary life otherwise inaccessible.

This incandescent suspension is possible largely because Isherwood takes his retrospective confessional so seriously. Isherwood wrote in the "anticipation" of his own past failure and the condemnation of his own earlier cowardice, naïveté, and avarice. He takes it seriously so he can camp about it; not to make fun of it, but so we can understand the whole of his responsibility towards the thing at which he directs "the spotlight of history, which reveals a tiny area of surface action so brightly" (*Exhumations*, 188). The text demonstrates all of its own culpability as part of its perspectival work. It is formally self-aware, because Isherwood was writing apologetically and in recompense, in the knowledge that he would be judged and found wanting for his actions in youth, fictional and otherwise. It can be said with some confidence that George Eliot wrote to be written about by other academics. Christopher Isherwood wrote *Christopher and his Kind* partially in order to be *read* by the queer community for his early disavowals.

In a diary entry from Trier, past-Isherwood writes that he is almost unable to comprehend the despair he feels at the prospect of his lover being forced to return to Germany and stand trial for draft avoidance and homosexual acts: "At first I didn't think about Heinz at all. Or tried not to, I felt like a house in which one room, the biggest, is locked up" (282). This seems a relatively clear admission of loss, affection and grief, but Isherwood the author in the 70's explains that "In

Christopher's diary there is no mention of his more secret reactions. These were caused by his frustration, which demanded a responsible villain" (283). In such moments of frank retelling, Isherwood completely disassociates the text of *Christopher and his Kind* from any kind of irony, and instead lends his grief at the loss of Heinz more gravitas through the multifaceted series of reflections on it that his model of personal polyphony's disassociation from temporality allows. Every version of Isherwood can grieve simultaneously. This disassociates the grieving process from the temporality of development, making its poignancy more intense in the moment of reading and clarifying its importance over the spread of Isherwood's perspectives.

Isherwood's reflexive autobiography also both comments on and formally exhibits the campness of "Christopher's" many omissions in the earlier novels; there is a pervasive sense of pre-admission knowledge that Isherwood (fictional and real) was a gay man living a sexually active lifestyle in Berlin. Multiple perspectives allow the reader to understand more than perhaps Isherwood even himself did at the time, as a cacophony of queer marginalia come to light. The first instance of unusual, temporally disruptive formal intersubjectivity with which the reader is confronted in *Christopher and his Kind* is quick, within the first paragraph. Isherwood mentions "a book called *Lions and Shadows* which describes Christopher Isherwood's life between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four" (*Kind*, 1). He refers to himself in the third person almost immediately following this, saying that "the author conceals important facts about himself", and then quickly shifts into the first person, declaring that "the book I am now going to write will be as frank and factual as I can make it." This perspectival vacillation, of course, is to become a characteristic of the text in a way far more explicit than in Isherwood's previous novels, but the audience is told very quickly that they will be placed at a distance from some very important things, and then that distance is rapidly demonstrated.

When Isherwood begins (or ‘resumes’) his narration of the events in 1929 Berlin in recounting his first cruising excursion with Wystan Auden, he writes that “I can still make myself faintly feel the delicious nausea of initiation terror that Christopher felt as Wystan pushed back the heavy leather door curtain of a boy bar called the Cosy Corner”(3). The “I” changes to “Christopher” again abruptly, and then back to the first person as Isherwood recounts the first “leading role in Christopher’s love-myth”; he writes with breathless excitement that “at the Cosy Corner, Christopher met a youth whom I shall call Bubi (Baby)”(4). This association and disassociation is then immediately followed by a treatise on what the later Isherwood views as an early version of Christopher’s archetypical symbol of desire:

That Bubi was blond was very important...the Blond had been a magical figure for Christopher from his childhood...anything that one invents about oneself is part of one’s personal myth and therefore true...Christopher chose to identify himself with the black-haired British ancestor and the Blond as the invader who comes from another land to conquer and rape him...but I can’t by any stretch of the imagination apply this to relations between Bubi and Christopher... (5)

When Isherwood describes his adult sexual awakening in Berlin, it is positioned even more of a distance from the reader in *Christopher and his Kind* than it is in his novels, but to the opposite effect. Its frank accounting in the later work is placed at a different kind of distance of distance than *Goodbye to Berlin*’s erotic overstatements, and is almost clinical in its excision of subject from event. Isherwood throughout his life as both author and character had difficulty even ascribing himself to groups or imagined communities which he belonged out of necessity; this will be discussed later, but its paradox is well represented by the fact that he called openly gay men “The Tribe” (*Kind*, 118 and various) and heterosexuals “The Others” – married heterosexuals being the most horrifying, as this was “the supreme affirmation of their dictatorship”(207). However, Leela Gandhi in *The Common Cause* writes that late,

autobiographical Isherwood - having at this point left Europe, converted to Hinduism, and committed to the study of Vedanta philosophy, and undergone the influences of an international life with formative experiences in America, India, and China – is confusingly politically uncomfortable with, even opposed to, the idea of oppositionality (“call it dissidence, alterity, even revolution”). He desires “a manifesto for everybody...which supplements the inside/outside battleground with two options; for radical insideness (we are all within) and radical outsideness (we are all without), respectively” (71). Isherwood is so uncomfortable with the “margins” (71) of political life that he attempts to eschew these margins entirely. This, as Gandhi notes, of course creates a problem with regards to positionality and selfhood - “the trouble really sets in with the realization that in order to embrace everybody, it’s necessary, perhaps inevitable, to become nobody” (71). This is in some ways the opposite of the negative relationality of ordinariness previously discussed, if such a thing as including everyone and reflecting all is imaginable. Neutrality is, it seems, almost impossible for Isherwood as an activated political stance if its objective is not stasis/continuation nor a Barthesian suspension/deepening model (Gandhi, 71), but rather radical inclusion/exclusion with inclusion preferred. It might be argued that Isherwood’s approach to camp distancing is doing some of the work of this radical inclusion, as it engenders a distaste only for people and groups who believe in and enact monolithically ordinary ideologies and actions, themselves instantiating margins. Isherwood’s use of perspective is antithetical to the intersubjective border, as the national subjects around him to whom his narrative does not extend the hand of friendship primarily understood their own subject positions as being fundamentally bordered and exclusionary; state, family, religion, class., race, etc.

To return briefly to the same first paragraph in the *Cosy Corner* Isherwood compares his “nauseous excitement” at entering the *Cosy Corner* to entering “an operating theatre in St. Thomas’s hospital to watch his first operation” (3). The text is thick with tension, of sustained but withheld affect, apparently due to the thing Isherwood seeks to correct about all the things he left out of his previous novels with this work on perspective, “too much fiction and too little frankness” (3). The first sentence of the paragraph exemplifies this and engages in several exercises in dissimulating action from temporality, and spreading the narrative and characterological voice over several bodies : “Christopher’s first visit to Berlin was short – a week or ten days – but that was sufficient; I now recognise it as one of the decisive events of my life.”(3) These moments of camp distance occur throughout, especially when the older Isherwood records mistakes or failures on behalf of his younger self. Consider, for instance, the delicate interplay of tense and time in the following passage, which occurs about halfway through the novel, when “President Hindenberg appointed Hitler to be the new Chancellor of Germany”(119). Noting in response to these developments the presence of a faceless, monolithic crowd of “singing Nazis celebrat[ing] this triumph of backstairs intrigue and manipulation”, Isherwood writes the following.

Christopher wrote to Stephen:

As you will have seen, we are having a new government, with Charlie Chaplin and Father Christmas in the Ministry. All words fail.

....Christopher, like other optimistic ill-wishers, kept repeating that this appointment was a blessing in disguise. Hitler...would reveal himself as an incompetent windbag, would be forced to resign, and the Nazis would be forever discredited. I don’t blame Christopher the amateur observer for his lack of foresight. I do condemn Christopher the novelist for not having taken a psychological interest, long before this...even as late as 1932, it would have been possible for him to meet them personally...it wasn’t too difficult to make interviews with Goering or even Hitler, Christopher wasn’t Jewish, he belonged to the Nazis’ favourite foreign race, he spoke German fluently, he was a writer...what inhibited him? His principles? His inertia? Neither is an excuse. He missed what would surely have been the most memorable experiences of his Berlin life.(120)

So many things happen in terms of perspectival and temporal shifts which indicate Isherwood's relationship to ordinary subjectivity that they are most legible in the form of a list – it would be too exhaustive to do this for all of them, but I'll use this important moment as a representative example. Firstly, Isherwood immediately switches from the third person voice which indicates Christopher's actual presence, to the distant and more grandiloquent tone he uses when Christopher's actions and feelings are being reported upon from the future; this is suddenly in effect reportage. All versions of Isherwood, past and present, are now in conversation with one another. Secondly, the language moves from the serious to the flippant with such haste that it can only be read as high camp; even if the younger Christopher *did* think of Hitler as an "incompetent windbag", the fact that the older Isherwood would choose to report it in this way says more about the older author's motions toward camp distance than the politics of the "amateur observer." Thirdly, the deeply self-absorbed commentary on the possibility that Christopher missed of meeting the Nazi High Command, coupled with the deeply insensitive and crass language of the things that Christopher is and is not, can only be read as a motion towards the identification with those who would not be allowed these dubious privileges; especially given the sentence at the end which equates the possibility of such a meeting with the other most memorable experiences of his time in Germany (which, as we must surmise, are imbricated into Christopher's queer and political self-discovery, as "Berlin meant boys"(2). Fourthly and finally, the text draws closer in sympathy to the younger Isherwood just as quickly as it rejects his naiveté; this section reads as the author alternately acting as an apologist for and lampooning his younger self, the "optimistic ill-wisher." Isherwood, from the future, states his current allegiances through implication, and outlines his former actions and alignments through what essentially amounts to a sort of sympathetic apologia. In so doing, he discusses Christopher's

development not just as a static series of events which lead to a state of increased maturity, but as a continuum of existence which inflects his current sociality and his memories. The timeline of the *Bildungsroman* is fundamentally disrupted through this self-critical and paradoxically kind approach, although all its accounts remain within the text's larger narrative frame.

This affective inclusion is paramount in the text. Any employment of a camp subjectivity or perspective in Isherwood's texts is "basically serious" (*The World in the Evening*, 126) because it is always-already a moment of affective unity; characters about whom Isherwood "camps" are all afforded "their own dignity" (Gunn, 7). As Isherwood argues, what one can be camp about, or represent in a way that is camp, one must also love, and associate oneself with. Although "Christopher" did not want to be affiliated with the openly queer men in the *Berlin Stories*, Christopher of the 1976 text has a far more nuanced view. The youthful disassociation from the "out" and the "outré" and the later gleeful response to it as they are synonymous in Isherwood's novels is most evident, perhaps, in the other text of the *Berlin Stories*. In *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, Isherwood's narrator is alternately repulsed and charmed by the "barbered, manicured and perfumed" (113) Arthur Norris, as there was "something jaunty, even bohemian in his whole appearance." (114) Upon reflecting on these social repulsions in *Christopher and his Kind*, Isherwood is both kinder and more explicit in his expression of "membership" in Berlin's queer "Tribe." He writes that he was at first embarrassed by his "freakish fellow tribesmen and their distasteful customs" as he finds them at the Hirschfeld Institute of Sexology, as "he had behaved until now as if [they] did not exist and homosexuality were a private way of life discovered by himself and a few friends"(43). Isaac Rosenfeld writes that Isherwood's characters in the novels "comprise a sort of minor Dickens gallery" of the strange and the asocial blended with the ordinary, "a surprise of the obvious" (489); Isherwood's descriptions

dodge the explicitly homosocial and homonormative but revel in ordinary interactions between two unusual subjects; even the juxtaposition of the words “freakish” and “fellow” suggests this.

In Isherwood’s later works, Thom Gunn writes, the author has developed the opposite effect, “a stead[ier] attentiveness...he in effect summarizes, but in his summary, nothing is lost. Through the transparent medium [of his prose], each thing, each person presented, is granted its own dignity”(7). The table/Tisch *binary* in its repetitive, insistent importance is very camp, for instance, but a table in England is decidedly not. This of course does not only have implications for the positive aspects of ordinariness and the routine; it is impossible, when reading Isherwood’s camp accounts of everyday life in Berlin, not to be reminded again of Hannah Arendt’s assertion in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that “the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal”(275). High camp in Isherwood is not used to mock, but as a mode of apperception and connectivity as Isherwood mobilizes his use of differing perspectives. In this context Isherwood’s high camp perspective is used to show us more of the dangers of monolithic nationalized ordinary subjectivity and the evils of its banality.

Writing from the future, Isherwood’s elegiac recounting certainly did not actually save any lives or prevent any suffering enacted by the British upper class or the Nazis in the 1930s and 140s. What his perspectival experiments do, however, is record and preserve his experiences as a version of history in which the worst possible form of life is not the only one available; where affective communities can and do address and mitigate exclusion and the relegation to bare life, and where belonging is, at least in part, not fundamentally tied to the successful completion of the stages of societally approved development. The oppressive, looming mass of imaginary ordinary subjects is neutered and disempowered through Isherwood’s perspectives in this text in a way it is not in Eliot, Hardy or Bowen.

Return to Berlin

To return explicitly to “being British” for a moment, it seems clear that there is a requirement that what the author Isherwood is, and what the characters he calls “Christopher” and “Isherwood” are, differ fundamentally whether they are in England or in Germany. Neither author nor characters can be with people in a “revelatory, indiscreet, or truthful way”, if that way is an English way. This distance between identity and character, and between character and environs makes the form of these novels of development more evident, as Isherwood the author describes Christopher developing. The painfully specific and harsh requirements for successful growth in English sociality are thereby exposed, made absurd, and thus more available to be “camped about” (*The World in the Evening*, 126). The novels themselves can observe these rites of passage⁶² in *the sense of both watching and doing*.

All of Isherwood’s texts, however, have a distaste for people who can be aesthetically categorized as a nationalized group, or a group invested in politically nationalist activities made ordinary by a totalitarian state. Any sort of lumpen horde is not tolerated, nor “granted its own dignity” (7). The most obvious example of this of course is the Nazis, whom Isherwood in the *Berlin Stories* refers to as both insidiously ordinary family members and as “hot-headed schoolboys...capable of anything”(201). Isherwood also has deep distaste for the second-most reviled group in the *Berlin Stories*, the population of the city who are complicit in Nazi activity; ordinary national subjects who have not differentiated themselves politically or morally. This distaste tellingly also applies to a lesser degree to the English, Irish and Scots abroad, “a gossipy, inquisitive, hospitable bunch of individualists, always on the lookout for new ears into which to

⁶² See Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, as previously cited.

whisper their elderly scandals”(229). Isherwood’s narrative usually introduces these groups, and then selects one or two interesting characters to pull ‘out’ of them and discuss in more detail. In *Christopher and his Kind* they are explicitly critiqued, and earlier in their original appearances in *Berlin*, they are adroitly mocked in the most ordinary of situations: Frau Nowak complaining that her son has “gone ‘round to his Nazis, I suppose...they put all kinds of silly ideas into his head, it makes him so restless”(44). This has the dual-pronged effect of illustrating a nationalized ordinary social understanding between Christopher and this selected individual, and of relegating the rest of the group even more clearly to the background. Their presence is brief, but the presence of the monolithic oppressor to whom they are tangentially related constant and alarming, and these interstices give that constancy detail and shape. The readers’ attention is briefly brought to them and then rescinded, rendering them explicitly and paradoxically unworthy of attention, even if their actions seem less “ordinary” than those the text addresses at more length and with more humour.

It is worth noting before going any further , however, that the plight of all of the social groups imperiled by the vicissitudes of “ordinary English life” or “ordinary German life” are not addressed in Isherwood’s novels. His early texts, and *Christopher and his Kind* in reflecting on them, have remarkably sparse representations of people of colour in any space in which Isherwood moves, whether Cheshire or the Cosy Corner. There isn’t an instance in the *Berlin Stories* where a character of colour receives any kind of significant development. White characters in the *Berlin Stories* are referred to deprecatingly using colonialist or racist epithets - Bernhardt Landauer, a Jewish acquaintance, has a “soft expansive Oriental smile”(439). Characters of colour are primarily referred to by their race – as if to indicate scarcity - and then their profession - there is a “Negro boxer..who invariably wins”(467) on the

Potsdammerstrasse, but no-one with whom Isherwood develops a genuine relationship in the *Berlin Stories* is anything but white, in contemporary parlance (though, obviously, not the parlance of the society in which he was living.) In *Christopher and his Kind*, in reference to the passage on Landauer, older Isherwood writes that:

‘Isherwood’ stresses the ‘Oriental’ aspect of Bernhard. In this case, the epithet seems to refer to the Chinese. But Christopher had a prejudice, at that period in his life, against another Oriental race, the Hindus. He found something repellent—that is to say, personally disturbing—in Hindu humility and passivity and the arrogance he felt that it concealed. As a matter of principle, he sided with the Hindus against the British raj and agreed that they had every right to treat their English conquerors with arrogance. Still, he identified instinctively with the English. And so he found deeply disturbing the picture of himself confronted by one of these humble-arrogant figures, a Hindu, or a Wilfrid—someone who ‘knew’ about life and whose knowledge might be superior to his. ‘He is not going to tell me what he is really thinking or feeling, and he despises me because I do not know.’ This prejudice of Christopher’s, I now realize, sprang from fear—fear of the unknown something which the Hindus knew, the something which he might one day have to accept and which might change his life. (71-2)

The absence of people of colour in Isherwood’s *Bildungsromans* seems, as such, to be something that preoccupied the author in his later life – especially after his views seem to have changed and expanded, given his later travels, his humanitarian work and his study of Vedanta. The relative absence of people of colour in Isherwood’s earlier work on community formation is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss, but it must be said that is not as if the Berlin of Isherwood’s youth, or the England of his childhood development and adult horrors, was only populated by white Anglo-Saxons and Caucasians. Figures of colour seem disturbingly absent in texts which welcome and humanize other characters who would otherwise fall into the dangerously ‘extraordinary’ category as dictated by nationalized ordinary politics.

This is especially so in the case of expat oddballs like Sally Bowles and Mr. Norris, but particularly Sally because Bowles herself is a fundamentally camp character. Chris Freeman in his article “Isherwood and the Limits of Camp” notes that “camp flourished in the Weimar Republic” and that Sally Bowles is a condensed aesthetic example of it – he dubs her a “camp

goddess...nightclub chanteuse" (15). The "theatrically chaste effect" (33) of her clothes and the "emerald green of her nails, a color unfortunately chosen" (28) are designed to convince her environs, Christopher thinks, that she is terribly unique and somehow shocking. What they actually do, in fact, is only to highlight her attempts at idiosyncrasy through a transparent expression of difference. Rather than expressing individuality autonomously, these choices telegraph a rejection of both the aesthetics and practice of conventionality. Because of this particoloured mode of belonging, in which Sally is both outrageous and utterly legible as having-been once conventional, Isherwood is always "curious to see how she would behave" (31) She is so often playing an extra-ordinary part that she seems unsure of any sense of self apparently whatever=. Isherwood's camp distance draws Sally so close the reader can barely get a sense of her outside of "Christopher." She is the only English character in the novel in whose voice Isherwood inserts the same neologisms of dialect as he does for his German characters: she coos "Hilloo" (28) into telephones, and cries "Dooo tell me!" (29) when rapacious for gossip. Because Isherwood's narrator in *Goodbye to Berlin* is so conscious that he himself is a foreigner in Berlin, Sally's English country-house insouciance, her extreme candor and her unselfconsciously terrible German are fundamentally destabilizing to Christopher's rejection of Englishness. The narratives of both texts exhibit this with glee when he describing his feelings for her: "but no, it wasn't love either, it was worse, it was the most childish kind of wounded vanity" (*Berlin Novels*, 78).

When they disagree, it is almost universally a failure to communicate based on a shortcoming (in Isherwood's conception) of Sally's taste or aesthetic perceptions that is at the heart of the issue. Christopher fails, as it were, to see things her way, in a way that destabilizes the text. When Sally fails to enact her own camp aesthetic, and as such is unironically English or

merely “vulgarly” refusing to act as a member of a group he feels he may be a part of, Christopher’s easy intersubjectivity with her breaks down. When they eventually almost break friends, it is because Sally has him rush an article for her for a magazine and then tells him that it “won’t do at all...it’s not nearly snappy enough” (75). She goes on to say that “these young men, just because they’ve written one book, start talking about Arts and imagining they’re the most wonderful authors in the world...make [her] sick” (76). Isherwood, having understood his situation to be one of intellectual and emotional superiority to Sally’s in its entirety, is horrified to hear that he has, himself, been judged and found wanting. The text immediately after this becomes sparse and stilted, “his would-be facetious tone” in the conversation to follow inflecting the remainder of the prose in the chapter. Isherwood’s perspective, even in the *Berlin Novels*, has here become conflated with that of his intersubject. The text then devolves into a paragraph where Isherwood’s psyche actually begins to disagree with itself on the page: “After all, it’s only what I’ve always known she was like...no that wasn’t true: I hadn’t known it - I’d flattered myself - why not be frank about it? That she was fond of me. Well, I’d been wrong, it seemed, but could I blame her for that? Yet I did blame her...” (78). It is not just the discomfiture of an argument with a close confidante that Isherwood’s narrator is expressing here, but an instance where he, as the central amanuensis of the ordinary in the novel, has been shown himself to be English and ordinary by another British subject. He has been made (for a brief moment) no longer the superintendent of his narrative, and been placed in a group monolithically aligned with an unpleasant sort of provincialism – “young men who talk about Arts...” being capitalized like the degree from Cambridge Isherwood began but did not complete. To the narrative and to the reader, he seems English for a moment and speaks about dull English things; at least from Sally’s perspective. Their relationship is so intense that it actually makes Christopher *feel*

English, and it is probably because of this unique ability to provoke intense feeling that he regrets their schism so intensely. At the end of the “Sally Bowles” chapter in *Goodbye to Berlin*, Isherwood’s narrator actually breaks the text’s verisimilitude, addressing the Bowles character directly in that most invasively intersubjective and intimate of his tenses, his second person:

So now I am writing to her.
When you read this, Sally – if you ever do – please accept it as a tribute, the sincerest I
can pay, to yourself, and to our friendship.
And send me another postcard. (92)

This moment is of so much interest because Isherwood, throughout the chapter, has placed the reader in a position of close contact with Bowles through his camp distance from her. Having established her as a character of interest, he goes on to document the small moments of their friendship in a way that affectionately highlights both the discord in their relative performances of Englishness in a foreign clime, and the very ordinary quality of their too-too Public-school dialogic interactions – “All right, I’ll try/Oh, marvelous!” (74). These characters can have an English sensibility together because of its wonderfully camp awfulness that provides a distance from its parochial actuality. This is fine, as long as it does not devolve into the horror of an English *perspective*. Britishness as a camp artifact is hilarious, but as an essentialized subjectivity, to Isherwood, is abominable. At the end of the chapter, having established that Christopher and Sally have formed an understanding of ordinariness between them, he disrupts the tripartite relationship between himself, reader and Bowles with this anachronistic injunction, breaking camp for a moment to sincerely address her. As, in *Christopher and his Kind* Isherwood later reveals that he and the real woman who inspired Bowles never actually had a serious falling-out, this move can only be read as a formal gesture toward the novel’s structures of relation, in which Isherwood lays out for the reader how awful it would be were he to be

actually “being British.” It is also another instance of perspectival manipulation where Isherwood’s texts extract more affect and provoke more ideas about the limits of Englishness from the reader than they put on the page.

It is not only in his communications with Bowles, of course, in which *Goodbye to Berlin* pre-empts Isherwood’s autobiographical gestures toward perspective-induced closeness in ordinary, everyday interactions. These moments rely on what the author himself here might call the table/*Tisch* paradox at work, where two things which share a sign cannot occupy the same signified space. Christopher’s sojourn as an English teacher in Berlin, it seems, is less an effort on his part to teach his pupils English and more of one on the part of the Germans who surround him to be in the company of an Englishman and to “learn” Englishness. These encounters often hinge around discussions of the differences between German and English national character, a subject which Isherwood’s narrator finds tellingly difficult to discuss, and into which Isherwood inserts some interesting grammatical slips of intersubjectivity. He “gossips in German” with Frl. Hippi during their lessons, after first navigating an awkward encounter about whether he “finds German girls different than English Girls” to which he splutteringly responds “Yes. Very different.” Hippi doesn’t understand this response, and then the house-telephone rings, after which she dismisses him with a cheery “and we shall see us again on Friday?” (20) An “us” has been formed, even in the context of this failure in communication, and, it is affectionately implied, because of it.

It's notable, given interactions like this, that Isherwood’s texts rarely mention the German or Austrian states. He usually talks about the names of cities unless he is talking about England, which seems like another comparative response to an abhorrent view of monolithic nationality. The first volume of the *Berlin Stories*, after all, is called *Goodbye to Berlin*, not *Goodbye to*

Germany, and the second even more disparately *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. As if in direct juxtaposition to this, each of the chapters of *Goodbye to Berlin* begin with a visual anecdote of German life so specific as to eliminate sympathy. In a reading which pays attention to perspective, it might be argued that Isherwood's descriptions of everyday German life and of German landscapes represent in themselves an undesirable, essentialized mode of German being. Isherwood's Berlin has details and can be plastic, but Isherwood's *Germany*, like Isherwood's England, is monolithic and rigid.

The "camera" of Isherwood's gaze in the first chapter looks out onto "the deep solemn massive street" of Berlin in Autumn 1930 in Chapter 1. He is invited to "black coffee, with emphasis on the black" (26) at Fritz Wendel's flat, sees "the deep, shabby cobbled street littered with sprawling children in tears" (123) in the third, sees "gangs of Nazi roughs...on the Leipzigerstrasse" (170) in the fourth and describes the streets "which end in the frozen allotment-gardens, and the Prussian plains" (226), in the fifth. Each of these images is accompanied by a very idiosyncratic set of other somatic phenomena. The fifth chapter contains perhaps the strongest example of this, though it is present throughout the introductory paragraphs of the novel. Isherwood, in what would be echoed far louder in *Christopher and his Kind*, suggests a specific temporality at the beginning of the text ("tonight, for the first time this winter, it is very cold" (226) in his usual implied first-person descriptive voice, but then moves into an oddly partitioned second person perspective and into a much grander scale of time;

Outside in the night...are the Prussian plains. You can feel them all around you, tonight, creeping in upon the city, like an immense waste of unhomely ocean- sprinkled with leafless copses and ice-lakes and tiny villages which are remembered only as the battlefields of half-forgotten wars. Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold; it is my own skeleton aching..." (226)

This second-person “you”, while usually only used in first-person narratives to indicate the second-person general “you”-as-in-one (as in the French *on*, or more pertinently the German *sie*) here seems to work both to do this and to address the reader directly. The reader is made complicit in Isherwood’s feelings of the plains “all around him” as they are distanced in their position as the audience of the philosophical address they are simultaneously being given. Isherwood equates himself to Berlin in the same way; he is unfamiliar and strange to the place in this paragraph with its nearness of “unhomely ocean” and “half-forgotten wars” but the bones of the city which ache in the cold are “his own bones aching”; there is no questioning “or” supplied to reset the conventional interpretation of that questing, questionless sentence.

Isherwood goes on in this introductory segment to denounce the architecture of Berlin itself as being responsible for the “two centers” of the city, “copies of copies... [the reproduced buildings] exert our dignity as a capital city.” The real heart of Berlin, he argues, is the *Tiergarten*, “a small damp black wood” in the center of the city which so invitingly “glows above the plains.” When it attracts its prey, however, the “peasant boys out of their tiny unprotected villages”, the Berlin of “Germany”, a Berlin outside Isherwood’s imagined community is revealed to be a “mirage of the winter desert...with nothing to give” (227). This tirade moves from microcosm to macro- back to micro within the space of a hundred words about ways of looking, and in so doing seems to disrupt the largely affectionate portrayal of queer Berlin that Isherwood had previously espoused. It is not merely the politics of some Germans that frighten the author and destabilize his life and those of his friends, but the city itself as a part of the German landscape which is here portrayed as an essentializing parasite with a taste for the extraordinary subject. This Berlin is not, for Isherwood, merely a place in which people live but an organism which seems in these contexts to prey on its inhabitants, and to

attempt attract more for the purposes of nourishing the ranks of either corpses or ordinary national subjects, turning them both “cold and cruel and dead”(227).

Moreover, immediately following this and in a similarly jarring maneuver, the narrative snaps back into Isherwood’s first-person narration of a “German Berlin” vignette. After this freezing, stark image of Teutonic unwelcomeness, the reader is immediately and unceremoniously informed that “Frl. Schroeder hates the cold. Huddled in the corner in her furlined jacket, she sits with her stockinged feet against the stove” (227). The narrative moves out of Isherwood’s idiosyncratic nonlinear methodology of recounting time, where subject and nation, past and future have actually become conflated. It returns to the “vital” present moment of the “ordre du jour” (Benjamin, *Thesis III*): we have been invited back inside, at the Schroeders’, to ordinary, monolithic, nationalized chronology.

In these moves, which recur several times in the text, Isherwood exhibits three things to the reader. Firstly, he reinforces the distance that exists between narrator and reader through the inaccessibility of even the smaller somatic moments of his narrative; a formal distance is iterated. Second, he makes the anti-nationalist gesture of aligning national spaces which are conceptual and not interpersonal with failed empathy and a scale of temporality too large to be possessed. Germany, and Prussia beyond it are too conceptually and physically large to be anything like the idealized image of the nation-state that invites the worthy “further up and further in”(78). And thirdly, the reader is immediately presented after this with an image and a set of somatic phenomena that *are* accessible; Frl. Schroeder has access to the same views, both visual and political, as Isherwood does, but the space of failed intersubjectivity that exists between them transcends nationality. Christopher does not wish to include her, and so she is placed in direct opposition to this and other moments of profundity and intimacy between author

and reader; indeed, while Isherwood's narrator and his audience gain solidarity through surveying the predating Prussian plains together, she has never left the house.

Christopher's social world in Berlin is also filled with conversations actually about the limits of national identity as it allows for intersubjectivity and 'membership' in small, imagined communities. These interactions, however, are also most often the key moments where a reader sees Christopher's advancement along the arc of his *Bildungsroman*, and where, in *Christopher and his Kind*, the narrator Isherwood intervenes to prevent linear chronology from intruding. Christopher, in the *Berlin Stories*, has been explicitly told not to fraternize with Jewish Berliners by several of his counterparts, and yet he learns far more about life in Germany and life in general from them than he does the German subjects whom the Third Reich would later 'protect'. The character has been informed of the exigency of appearing distant, and yet both texts draw their audiences closer.

Goodbye to Berlin dryly narrates the horror of Isherwood's "first introduction to Berlin politics", a public assault on some Jewish passers-by, "no deaths, very little shooting, not more than a couple of dozen arrests." This series of understatements – an early instance of High Camp at work- is followed up by a sickening anti-Semitic tirade from his landlady, "They're strangling us, they're robbing us they're sucking our life-blood...filthy thieving Jews!" (170) Christopher "retor[ts] icily" and immediately leaves the room to go and take up a letter of invitation to a prominent Jewish family he has been given by a friend in England – a fact to which the reader but not the landlady is privy. At the Landauers, in contrast to the vituperative German imagined community represented by the lone Frä. Koch, Christopher finds a haven of unironic good humour, community and domestic normalcy:

The sitting-room was large and cheerful, pre-War in taste, a little over-furnished...gramophone records, pictures, books...I noticed that the few available wall-

spaces between pictures and cupboards were decorated with eccentric life-size figures...they made a comically ineffectual protest against the bourgeois solidity of the mahogany furniture (171-2)

Upon meeting Herr. Landauer, Christopher is pulled into a discussion in which the narrator is able to use the text's previously established structure of Christopher's relative cosmopolitanism (he is young, educated, foreign and queer) to the advantage of its work with perspective. Herr Landauer has written a thesis in England and has it translated into five languages and is reading about Byron in French. Christopher's awkwardness in responding to this leads to a tirade of questions on ordinariness as it relates to sexuality: "Shall we allow that a man of genius is an exceptional person who may do exceptional things? Or shall we say no ...in your daily life you must behave like an ordinary person, and you must obey these laws which we have made for ordinary persons...was your English law justified in punishing Oscar Wilde?"(184) Isherwood follows this pointed series of questions with a few small intersubjective observations, which have a delicious feeling of privacy for the reader (Christopher is being "regarded delightedly", the business partner Bernhardt "smiles discreetly in the corner" (184) The narrative takes up this extraordinary encounter with a detailed focus on the other speakers and not on the narrator himself, as the only response Christopher gives is to twice "burn red" with blushing.

Rather than mocking Herr Landauer, both the *Berlin Stories* and *Christopher and his Kind* affectionately portray Isherwood as being the fool in this situation – as Landauer's daughter later says, Isherwood was "shocked...because [he] thought [her] father would be a stupid old man...he also can be modern and speak of all the subjects...and he is the best father in the whole world!"(186) The narrative lampoons Isherwood's own unpreparedness for the encounter in a way which underscores both its ordinariness and its value as a moment of friendship. Landauer's family are not shocked by it in the slightest, but Christopher's expectations and his English

sensibility make Isherwood able to portray him as “feel[ing] old-fashioned”(186) with perfect verisimilitude. The reader is invited into Isherwood’s feeling of thwarted Englishness, of embarrassed inadequacy, and also, when the moment is discussed in *Christopher and his Kind*, to the author’s later fond realization that this moment was a thoroughly intimate bonding experience that as a youth he had not fully appreciated. Further to this, Landauer, himself a prominent member of a community which, the reader knows, the Third Reich would later deem not only not “us” but not indeed human, demonstrates a delightfully complex moment through Isherwood’s narrator of high-camp community-formation in this moment. He knows some of what Christopher is (English), and guesses the rest (gay, prideful, clever but young), which simultaneously invites Isherwood in and shows him to be an outsider. A camp distance is created here between author and character, and between these characters themselves; this distance also makes the reader conscious of the limits of the *Bildungsroman*’s formal structure, and of the things pertaining to the form that remain undisturbed. Christopher is learning and changing, and both narrator and the author in these novels respectively are not just telling the reader this, but formally demonstrating it through the text’s abundance of teachers.

Though Landauer is being charming and avuncular in his methodology, he is also enacting a perfect example of the “ability to be modern” and to be international so crucial to the author’s understanding of non-essentialized subjects in both the *Berlin Novels* and *Christopher and his Kind*. He demonstrably does not have to be a part of the German state-sanctioned order of things in order himself to be well-educated enough to mock Isherwood, and beloved enough to inspire words of support from his daughter. He has enough power to gently skewer the author on his own terms in both the first and second tellings of the parts of the tale that involve him. Landauer here; and through the character’s voice, Isherwood, is “camping” about something

which he is entirely serious in a way that is demonstrably more successful than Christopher, in his youthful earnestness, manages – nothing smaller than the state of affairs and their repercussions on Jewish life and livelihood.

Perhaps what is really so difficult and so accomplished about Isherwood's writing in the *Berlin Novels* and in *Christopher and his Kind*, in view of all the above, is its extreme reflexivity. When Isherwood writes about other people's failings and their joys in the Berlin novels, it would seem, he is really writing about his own political and emotional imperfections. Alan Wilde in his critical monograph on the author suggests that this "restricted and hypothetical commitment" to the depiction of character is really only a commitment to Isherwood's developing Communist politics at the time of writing, as are the sardonic and bland aesthetics of the connected texts *Goodbye to Berlin* and *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, "style...which does its judgmental work" (484). Isherwood, in Wilde's opinion, is interweaving an implicit critique of those he describes and the society in which they live into the text. The "restricted ...commitment" to politics that Isherwood's works make are not themselves anything to do with the development of a central character, or truly of character in general, but toward the "achievement of a goal...in this most self-conscious of decades" (484), that of 'disenchantment':

Disenchantment, in fact, expresses exactly the character of the thirties enterprise: the attempt, on the one hand, to reestablish a unified, functional self by freeing it from its delusive, self-centering pain or desire and, on the other, to acknowledge, by the new clear-sightedness this disenchantment entails, the objective autonomy of the world. (485)

In Wilde's reading, this goal although attempted is not achieved, as the "shift from reflectiveness to transparency" that Isherwood's disengagement achieves leaves the central subject "merely and precisely an object of observation" (490).

This observation of what seems to be a well-attempted failure, and the manifold readings like it of Isherwood's work, then seem to me to beg the question of the role of relations with the

subject outside one's own imagined community. Are Isherwood's novels actually just about Isherwood? At his talk at the *Modern Language Association* in December 1974 when asked about his narrative techniques, Isherwood contradictorily quipped that "it's always myself, really, that I'm talking about" (Wilde, 4). Why then are the majority of his texts patently involved in documenting, caricaturing, and reflecting on the everyday life of others in a way that prioritises the subjugated over the national subject, and in formally experimenting with ways to make community formation a central response to nationalized ordinariness? Why bother – and then bother again, at length, forty-one years later? I think it must be that what Isherwood observes in his texts was presumably happening everywhere in the 1930s and 40s in a way that alarmed and excited him; it certainly was in the 1970s and still is now. Cultural crossover between Anglophone and other linguistic cultures are happening on a far larger global scale today, and in ways no-one during Isherwood's lifetime could have predicted.

For instance, a Seoullite friend and I were having a conversation recently about loan words. She told me something which seemed to be an almost perfect contemporary example of the way Isherwood represents cosmopolitan internationalism in opposition to monolithic, essentialized nationality, and which also seemed to speak clearly to the other authors this project concerns. Contemporary spoken and written Korean, like most languages post-millennium in very cosmopolitan countries, borrows many words from idiomatic English. The word this conversation centered around was “인싸” (*inssa*), the shortened version of the Korean word “인사이더” (a word in its own right, the Korean pronunciation of the English word “insider”).

The word's antonym, “아싸” (*ahssa*) is a short version of “outsider”, also loaned from English.

My friend explained that *inssa* is a word in heavy usage to denote someone who is fundamentally

in the know, “someone who is well-versed in new words that are coming up as the ‘hot’ kind of slang, and who knows where to go for hot underground clubs or restaurants...[whereas] *ahssa* would mean someone who is kinda behind the times, or who only knows about mainstream stuff.” This struck me for several reasons, the most evident being that these words, which exist as slang, the most mutable register of language, come from English. They denote a very specific and self-regulatory type of belonging, as not knowing their usage would be incompatible with being an *inssa*. As with Southern’s comment about the public-school tilt of Green’s head in this chapter’s early discussion of English public-schoolboy belonging, to know how the system of reference in which they exist works, you have to know the Korean words for “insider” and “outsider”, understand that the words *inssa* and *ahssa* come from the Korean pronunciation of English words, and then understand their specific usage as abbreviations in social contexts. It would be gauche, for instance, to refer to oneself as an *inssa*, but is acceptable (even an action which would suggest that one was actually an *inssa*) to self-deprecatingly identify as an outsider. The words *inssa* and *ahssa* constitute an almost perfect example of a cosmopolitan, nationalized structure of belonging, one predicated on perspective, and which contains many steps that happen blindingly fast. It is highly culturally specific to the point of being exclusionary in spoken practice, but in itself necessarily stems from the liberal seasoning of ubiquitous internationalism which flavours contemporary cosmopolitanism. You have to know what it means to be an *inssa*, in short, to know that only an *ahssa* would describe themselves as an *inssa*. The fact that the words were once English before undergoing a sea-change only, in this context, makes them more contemporaneously Korean.

In Isherwood’s novels interactions like the above are frequent and vital, as the texts explore the relationship between national identity, the ordinary and spoken modes of iterating

belonging in a similar (if far more thorough) way. A word (like *ahssa*) might refer to the same signified object, but mean something entirely aesthetically or experientially different across two different cultures, especially if one spoke both languages with some facility, as Isherwood spoke English and German. More specifically, and more interestingly, a word might have a feel of some kind of national identity, enough that understanding the word's positionality in the particular imagined community to which one belonged would provide a link to knowing that community; I also observed something in some ways resembling this with "remarkable" and the Anglo-Irish in the preceding chapter. In *Christopher and his Kind*, however, Isherwood actually lays out a model for understanding his mode of recording national subjectivity within something like a semiotics of ordinariness – we see a microcosm in *table/Tisch*, but the same operation is played out formally throughout the text.

Given these readings, it is quite the opposite of futureless, slumped disenchantment with the events of the early 20th century that Isherwood's use of camp perspective enacts. Or, if it is, disenchantment, it is rather disenchantment with a social order that precludes and limits the personhood and the potential for safe interaction for individuals and communities who exist outside of the state-mandated "ordinary", rather than with the concept of social interactions within that system itself. In my reading, the lack of a "unified, functional self" in both the *Berlin Stories* and *Christopher and his Kind* is an exercise in a radical kind of alterity that explicitly includes author, narrator, marginalized subject and reader. It reframes the sociality of the time that *matters, and to which it is indicated a reader should pay attention*, away from the excluders, and toward those excluded and endangered by monolithic national mandates: the drag queen, the chanteuse, the gay man (whether 'entribed' or not), the Jew. Everyone not actively involved with the vagueries of being an ordinary national subject in a totalitarian state, for

Isherwood has the potential to have their affairs narrated with High Camp seriousness and affection. The order of events and the temporality of a world which considered them outsiders, in these works, becomes so unimportant that it can be moulded and moved as the author sees fit. In short, the state of affairs dictated by monolithic national structures in Isherwood's texts is not the only impetus behind the passing of time; the camp distance his works take allow for many kinds of ordinary subjectivity to emerge.

Peter Thomas calls the "Nazi reality" of the Berlin Isherwood left a "nightmare...no longer confined...Camp without comedy" (130). The soft focus, variable camp of *Goodbye to Berlin*, and its future sibling, its brighter and sharper younger twin *Christopher and his Kind*, however, although often funny, does not have its sights set on humour. Rather, the camp distance created by Isherwood's use of perspective might be thought of more productively as the camp of elegiac friendship, which, while it cannot save those it describes, attempts to relegate the crushing violence and dread of the state apparatus to the sideline, where ordinary things and the exclusions of ordinary subjectivity continue without us, untouched. It pushes aside the exclusionary, severely developmental timelines of nationalized subjectivity to show us how we might learn and accrue value outside those cruel boundaries, and to consider modes of recording development, remembering our past and being together that are, rather than merely educational or academic, "revelatory, indiscreet and true" (*Lions and Shadows*, 8).

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