

**BODIES, BOOKS AND THE BUCOLIC: ENGLISHNESS,
LITERATURE AND SEXUALITY,
1918-1939**

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**A thesis submitted to
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities**

May 2001

ABSTRACT

The hypothesis this thesis tests is that interwar hegemonic discourses of Englishness located it as originating in the heterosexual bond between a masculine national subject and a feminine nature/landscape. Discursively, this left little space for women to insert themselves into such a cultural formation. However, a paradox of this heterosexualising cultural matrix may have been to give a voice to lesbian subjectivity, since if 'women' might not be English, could lesbians be? If national land was figured as feminine, and women desired identification with their country-as-land, to become English might mean for some women that they should become lesbian. In order to explore this, three main questions are examined. Firstly, to what extent did the dominant discourse of the rural in the interwar period define 'Englishness' as masculine and 'Nature' as feminine? Secondly, if women were excluded from this discursive heterosexual relationship, can it be seen paradoxically to have opened up a space for alternative sexualities to emerge? If lesbianism were an instance of the latter, then what writing strategies were adopted in order to articulate a relationship between Englishness and lesbianism? Thirdly, what can censored and other literary texts of the period reveal about the relations between such an English masculine national subject, the meaning and powers attributed to literature, and forbidden sexualities and subjectivities?

In its analysis of the relationship between national identity, geographical location and sexuality, this thesis contributes to studies of England and Englishness through the addition of the concept of 'sexuality' to an understanding of their construction. It also contributes to lesbian and gay critical theory by examining the national processes which impinge of the construction of the homosexual subject. Beyond that, the importance of the materiality of the locations offered to different subjectivities shows how national identities are both enabled and limited by these same locations.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the college.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was undertaken with the financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Board, to whom I am enormously grateful. Other financial support was also given by the John Marshall Memorial Fund and the Daphne Doughton Fund who helped me out at a tricky moment.

I feel very lucky to have had such a committed and supportive set of supervisors. This comes with my thanks to Professor Peter Widdowson, Dr. Hilary Hinds and Dr. Alison Oram and also to Professor Diana Woodward, Jacqueline Collinson and Roberta Stevenson who run a friendly and stimulating graduate school. I have also had many interesting discussions with members of the English, History, Women's Studies, and Geography departments at Cheltenham and Gloucester College, especially those who were in the Gender and Spatiality Group. In particular, I would like to thank Cara Aitchinson, Simon Barker, Alan Brown, Andrew Charlesworth, Simon Dentith, Jo Gill, Melanie Ilic, Manzu Islam, Ros Jennings, Ruth McElroy, Charles More, Fatih Ozbilgin and Shelley Saguaro.

I have corresponded with David Matless and Michael Bartholomew about H. V. Morton and Englishness, chatted with Kath Holden about single women between the wars, with Asphodel Long and Daniel Cohen about folklore, paganism and fascism, with Lindsay River about lesbian writings, with Nickianne Moody about cats and popular fictions. Laura Doan kindly took me out to lunch to discuss lesbians of the interwar period. Jayne Nelson was a wonderful companion on a coach trip to view the museums and battlefields of the Western Front. Mrs. Barbara Westgate kindly shared recollections of her father, H. V. Morton, with me, and Brian de Villiers discussed his memories of H. V. Morton in South Africa. The South West England and South Wales Women's History Network has been a stimulating forum for debate. But, in the end, all mistakes are my own, as indeed, they were in the beginning.

I would like to thank staff at Cheltenham and Gloucester College, in particular those who deal with the inter-library loans, those at the library of the University of the West of England, especially Amanda Salter, staff of the British Library at Euston and the Colindale Newspaper Library, the Imperial War Museum and the National Maritime Museum. The Soil Association kindly allowed me access to their collection at a time when they were very busy.

My biggest thanks go to my children, Maya Savarin-Wengraf, Joseph Wengraf and Katia Wengraf - whose witty views on life have provided a counterpart to my own seriousness - and to Helen Udo-Affia - who besides being a girlfriend of extraordinary qualities also sorted out my computer problems with cheerful calm.

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INTRODUCTION

*So now they were launched on the stream that flows silent and deep through all great cities, gliding on between precipitous borders, away and away into no-man's-land - the most desolate country in all creation.*¹

When the lesbian lovers, Stephen and Mary, in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* become involved with a lesbian and gay community in Paris, the narrative provides the above commentary on their situation. Homosexuality, it seems, is neither metropolitan nor rural, but outside national boundaries and in a liminal space between borders. Previously, Stephen had been exiled from England because of her desire for other women. This was a bitter irony to her since, through her love of England, she had chosen to become involved with the war effort in defence of England. However, when the Great War ended she, and other lesbians, found they were still unwanted in England:

The very public whom they had served was the first to turn round and spit upon them; to cry: 'Away with this canker in our midst, this nest of unrighteousness and corruption!' That was the gratitude they had received for the work they had done out of love for England!²

Whilst the war had enabled Stephen to meet others of her kind and create a lesbian identity for herself, it had also provided a metaphor - 'no-man's-land' - for the way she perceived her place in relation to the nation. Without roots in the English landscape, she can only drift on a dangerous stream of water. The silence of this stream suggests that homosexuality is also outside language. In the face of exile from England, desolation has become Stephen and Mary's 'country', but this desolation could be ameliorated if only England would acknowledge their lesbianism. Stephen does not accept that her desire for women invalidates her love of country.

It is the relationship between national identity, geographical location and sexuality that this thesis explores. Is Stephen right that national identity and lesbianism are antithetical? This would imply that Englishness is heterosexual. Nonetheless, the dangers attributed to homosexuality, figured through 'the precipitous borders' between which the stream flows, can be averted through a call on nation. This stream is dangerous because it has no national identity, therefore to provide

national identity to homosexuality would make homosexuality a safe subjectivity to inhabit. But why is homosexuality positioned as outside of nation? Is this a peculiarity of Radclyffe Hall's writing, or do other texts figure homosexuality differently? Is it possible to inscribe a homosexual subject who is also national? These are some of the questions this thesis addresses through a study of literary texts from the interwar period.

The interwar period constitutes a particularly significant historical moment in which to examine the configurations of sexuality and nation through literary texts for two main reasons. Firstly, the nation was in upheaval after the Great War, both in terms of the disruption of previous gender and class relations, and also in terms of a widely perceived need that the nation needed a cultural renewal, and that English literature was a prime site through which, it was argued, the nation could be renewed. English culture was seen to have become too feminised, and needed a renewal to take place through 'virility' - a key term in debates about the state of the nation. Secondly, as Jeffrey Weeks has shown, 'by the end of the nineteenth century a recognisably "modern" male homosexual identity was beginning to emerge', and later, in the interwar years, the lesbian was emerging as a formal identity.³ Her position in the nation was subject to parliamentary and other debate. In 1921, for example, Parliament debated whether to criminalise lesbianism as a means to strengthen the nation against moral downfall. Whilst some saw lesbianism as a danger to nation, others thought it harmless enough to be (pointedly) ignored. The conjunction of these two conditions offers a fruitful area of analysis.

The hypothesis this thesis tests is that interwar hegemonic discourses of Englishness located it as originating in the heterosexual bond between a masculine national subject and a feminine nature/landscape. Discursively, this left little space for women to insert themselves into such a cultural formation. However, a paradox of this heterosexualising cultural matrix may have been to give a voice to lesbian subjectivity, since if 'women' might not be English, could lesbians be? If national land was figured as feminine, and women desired identification with their country-as-

land, to become English might mean for some women that they should become lesbian. In order to explore this, I examine three main questions. Firstly, to what extent did the dominant discourse of the rural in the interwar period define 'Englishness' as masculine and 'Nature' as feminine? Secondly, if women were excluded from this discursive heterosexual relationship, can it be seen paradoxically to have opened up a space for alternative sexualities to emerge? If lesbianism was an instance of the latter, then what writing strategies were adopted in order to articulate a relationship between Englishness and lesbianism? Thirdly, what can censored texts of the period reveal about the relations between such an English masculine national subject, the meaning and powers attributed to literature, and forbidden sexualities and subjectivities? Such questions need to be addressed in relation to a number of areas of critical and theoretical debate - i.e. those relating to questions of 'England and Englishness', 'Nation and Narration', 'Nation and Gender' and 'Nation and Sexuality' - in order to illuminate the process by which England is narrated as a nation which genders and attributes a sexuality to its national subjects.

England and Englishness

Two categories of work fall under this heading. The first is an examination of notions of England and Englishness, and the second is an examination of the cultivation of English studies and English literature as a disciplinary power in national regulation. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd's 1986 edited volume, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, straddles both.⁴ Working from the premiss that 'Englishness' is not a natural quality which those living in the place called 'England' possess, but rather an attribute needing to be made and re-made under varying historical conditions, the various contributors examine the category 'English national identity' and the institutions involved in its production. This identity was partly forged through the creation of an English literary tradition, and Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson show the central importance of literature in 'maintaining ... "the rhetorical forms" and "sentimental culture" necessary to patriotic nationalism [in] the shaping of a version of the past by way of a constructed English literary tradition.'⁵ This literary tradition

utilised the idea of a timeless custom within an England that was essentially rural, even though, as Alun Howkins argues:

Since 1861 England has been an urban and industrial nation. The experience of the majority of its population is, and was, that of urban life, the boundaries of their physical world defined by streets and houses rather than fields or lanes. Yet the ideology of England and Englishness is to a remarkable degree rural.⁶

Here, in this rural image, is the presentation of a 'real England', Howkins says, where 'men and women still live naturally. The air is clean, personal relationships matter ... there is no crime (except "quaint" crime like poaching) and no violence ... It is an organic society, a "real" one, as opposed to the unnatural or "unreal" society of the town.'⁷

How is this rural England gendered? If in this ruralist discourse of England and Englishness men and women lived naturally, what was natural to them as gendered subjects? Jane Mackay and Pat Thane suggest that a:

Clearly defined, uncontested, image of the Englishwoman is surprisingly elusive in this period of the construction and redefinition of Englishness. The classic English man of the period was held to combine certain qualities, including leadership, courage, justice and honour, which were defined as distinctively 'English'. He has no female equivalent.⁸

Arguing that women were not identified with 'nation' but 'race', they explain the elusiveness of an identity for the Englishwoman as dependent on the fact that:

Women were believed to possess transnational qualities. Nationality ... played a more significant role in the redefinition of masculinity ... than in that of femininity; one of the distinctions between male and female was that the concept of nationality was almost always on the male side of the divide. Women, indeed, *had* no fixed nationality. They were made to adopt that of their husband; on marriage to a foreigner they lost their English status and its accompanying rights.⁹

Clearly, there existed two, gendered, relationships to the nation. Men were equated with the nation, and therefore with culture, whereas women were transnational and outside English culture. Identified with 'race', women were thus reduced to an essential and biological function. In this way, a woman's nationality could only be relational, in that it would derive from her relation to a man's nationality. This view of the Englishwoman as not quite national can be found replicated as recently as 1999 in Jeremy Paxman's *The English: A Portrait of a People*. Here, in a book of eleven

chapters, women are not discussed until the tenth. The ninth chapter is entitled 'The Ideal Englishman' and the tenth, 'Meet the Wife'. The first few pages of this chapter on the Englishman's wife are more of a description of one version of English masculinity than of the Englishwoman, and begin:

It is not often you meet someone who has had a bottom transplant. The man in question, lowly, balding, 50ish, in a pinstripe suit and well made shoes, looks the picture of British probity. You know he prides himself that his word is his bond. By day, he runs a merchant bank. At night, he likes to be spanked until the blood runs. His obsession has become known as *le vice anglais*.¹⁰

Following this is a description of the banker's use of 'muscular black women' prostitutes. In Paxman's England, black women are associated with prostitution and white women are national when positioned as married accessories to Englishmen. Lesbians are non-existent. As in the interwar period, white women are subsumed under patriarchal and heterosexual masculinity's control through the sign the 'wife', rather than through a sign which grants them autonomy. Here, again, women are associated with nature through their sexuality rather than with English cultural institutions.

For Jeremy Paxman, 'being English is a state of mind' which one can decide whether or not to adopt, such that '[b]eing English is a matter of choice'.¹¹ Although Michael Wood's *In Search of England: Journeys into the English Past* (2000) similarly neglects to give English women any status in the shaping of England and Englishness, Wood provides a different origin for Englishness to that of Paxman's 'state of mind'.¹² He hesitantly takes a more biological and racial stance on Englishness and argues that:

Sociologists tell us one of the key factors in the creation of national identity is facing up to disasters and the achievement of a sense of a shared past. This is not a literal past, of course, save, possibly, in a biological sense. It is images of the past: often as highly structured and selective as myths - imprinted, almost in the manner of genetic information, on our sensibility.¹³

Where women might fit into either of these versions is difficult to tell. Paxman's 'being-English-by-choice' evades the question of who can make this choice, and also evades discussing who will authorise the legitimacy of this choice to be English once it is made. The legal system, for example, would not accept asylum seekers who claim

a right to an Englishness they have 'chosen'. In order to choose one has to be already English. Since Paxman's masculinised version of contemporary Englishness excludes women from being English in their own right, it would seem that to be already English means to be masculine. Similarly, his view of black women would suggest that to be previously English one must also be white. Only then can one make this 'choice'. However, in Wood's version of Englishness, women would presumably function as the vehicle through which England biologically reproduces more national subjects. As such, to be English would entail having a family history of being English where biological bodies carry this Englishness in their genetic structure, or in the mythical space of their 'sensibility', from generation to generation.

While Paxman and Wood present monolithic views of Englishness, Judy Giles and Tim Middleton in *Writing Englishness 1900-1950: An Introductory Sourcebook on National Identity*, refuse an essentialising Englishness to present a more complex view in which various groups take up, reject, oppose or adapt different versions for their own ends.¹⁴ However, in some ways, they concur with Paxman in their definition by arguing that:

Englishness is not simply about something called 'the national character' but has to be seen as a nexus of values, beliefs and attitudes which are offered as unique to England and to those who identify as, or wish to identify as, English. In other words Englishness is a state of mind: a belief in a national identity which is part and parcel of one's sense of self.¹⁵

Again, Englishness is seen as a state of mind with which one identifies, or not, according to choice, and as such erases the legal dimension to national identity. Similarly, it erases the gendered dimension to national identity that Mackay and Thane identified concerning the Englishwoman's lack of a fixed nationality and her possession of transnational qualities. Although this thesis is not primarily concerned with the law regarding national identity, it does discuss the place of the law with regard to the regulation of English literature in legal attempts to make certain subjectivities not-English.¹⁶

Defining Englishness as a state of mind ignores the fact that this mind resides in embodied subjects who can perform English acts. So, for example, H. V.

Morton, a popular commentator on England in the interwar period, wrote in his travels around the Middle East that no one lays a table as well as the English. Other such acts may be seen in the interwar popularity of the pageant which made a communal ritual performance of England and Englishness. Similarly, for some classes fox-hunting functions as a performance of their English identity. These various actions which perform bodily 'acts of Englishness' may be as important in constructing national identity as thinking of oneself as English. In this way, Englishness may be seen to be performative rather than cognitive. As such, it is similar to the way in which Judith Butler conceives gender. Gender, she argues:

Is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.¹⁷

Performing Englishness would have the same effect of producing 'a natural sort of being', the English subject, whose acts of Englishness 'are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body [like the English body] is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.'¹⁸ However, as we shall later see in the main part of the thesis, only some people are allowed to perform these acts. Their exclusion from Englishness is implicated in the construction of this very same Englishness and helps create the fiction that Englishness is somehow natural to some people and not others. Englishness, then, I argue, is not about a free and open choice, as suggested by Paxman, but is formed through identification with certain states of mind, shared cultural practices and values, bodily acts, and exclusionary practices, underpinned by legal notions.

These debates relate to my research questions in a variety of ways. Did national address in the interwar period privilege both the rural and masculinity as English, whereas women and the urban were less valued terms in discourses of Englishness? Could women be fully national subjects? If constituted as peripheral to the nation, might those women who searched for a national identification contest the

meanings of England and Englishness through other performances of Englishness? This contestation would be possible because, as I have suggested, Englishness has no prior ontological status. Any status it has is produced through a performativity which constitutes it as real.

Nation and Narration

Like all studies of nations and nationalisms, this thesis owes a debt to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*¹⁹ and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, both of which show the role of imagination and the performance of invented 'traditional' acts of national allegiance in the creation and maintenance of the nation.²⁰ Hobsbawm points out a paradox within the nation, whereby its modernity is set against its construction as timeless. 'Modern nations and all their impedimenta', he writes, 'generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so "natural" as to require no definition other than self-assertion.'²¹ Anderson concurs, arguing that '[i]f nation-states are widely conceded to be "new" and "historical", the nations to which they give expression always loom out of an immemorial past'.²² In order to maintain the modern nation as historic, people must use their imaginations to invent this fiction. In this process, love of nation arises through the '*attachment* that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations'.²³ Anderson gives both novels and pilgrimage (or journey) important status in the creation of the nation. The novel is important because it can represent the imagined community of the particular nation. In the act of reading it, readers can imagine themselves as located within a national community of readers who share similar territory, language and ways of apprehending the world. The reader will never meet all other readers of the novel but can be brought into an imaginary relationship with them. Pilgrimage, or journeying, can also produce this imagined sense of national community. In journeying around a particular geographical territory, the traveller will encounter people from 'places and families he [sic] has scarcely heard of and ... in experiencing them as travelling-companions, a consciousness of connectedness

("Why are we ... *here* ... *together*?") emerges, above all, when all share a similar language-of-state.'²⁴ In the case of English nationalism, the answer to this question of 'why are we here?' would have to be 'because we are English'. The interwar popularity of rambling in the English countryside could then be understood in Anderson's terms as creating the imagined community of the nation, and significantly, pilgrimage and reading collide in the work of H. V. Morton whose work is discussed in Chapter Two. As Morton writes of his travels around England, one can see a specific example of how the nation is defined and reproduced in the stories told about it.

In my examination of the ways in which England and Englishness were narrated in the interwar period, I draw in particular on the work of Mary N. Layoun, who argues that:

Nationalism ... of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ... is a masterful effort of narrative construction. Like all narrative, nationalism tells a story by articulating diverse but presumably linked elements, and not by chance, it also constructs and privileges - sometimes as virtually omniscient - its own narrative perspective. Narratives of nationalism propose a grammar of the nation. That is, they propose the correct and orderly placement and use of the constituent elements of the nation. And, not least of all, that grammar prescribes the proper definition and situation of gendered citizens ...²⁵

This idea of 'the grammar of the nation' as an orderly placement of constituent elements is one which I deploy throughout my examination of narratives of England and Englishness which link diverse elements to constitute the nation. As Homi Bhabha points out, there is a similarity between narrative and nation because '[n]ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the mist of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye.'²⁶ Contributors to Bhabha's edited volume, *Nation and Narration*, agree about the fictive quality of the nation, and how literary myth is complicit in its construction. However, Geoffrey Bennington reasons that although '[a]t the origin of the nation, we find a story of the nation's origins', we should be wary because:

Our own drive to find the centre and the origin has created its own myth of the origin - namely that at the origin is the myth. In this story, narration comes too easy, too soon; investigating the nation is here complicit with the nation's own story. The problem is no doubt a result of the pretension to reach the centre directly, whereas such access is in general illusory: the approach to the nation

implies borders, policing, suspicion, and crossing (or refusal of entry) - try to enter a country at the centre (by flying in, say), and the border is still there to be crossed, the frontier shifted from periphery to centre.²⁷

At the borders of the nation, he argues, one meets with other nations, such that the origin of the nation is complicated by the fact that it depends on its differentiation from other nations which have already begun. Therefore it is important to analyse the nation when it is narrated from and in the borders, wherever they might be.

This thesis examines both works which the centre does not accept and excludes from publication and narratives which are located within marginal English geographical locations in order to see the dialogue between narratives which resist central definitions and those which appear to accept them. Thus Edward Said's thesis that 'the corpus formed by works of literature ... belongs to, gains coherence from, and in a sense emanates out of, the concepts of nation' is used to show how even those resisting narratives are still tied up with notions of England and Englishness.²⁸ Similarly, those subjects of Englishness that Bhabha identifies as within the discursive address of the nation - which 'make[s] them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives' - are examined in their acceptance and resistance to these national discursive addresses.²⁹ What Bhabha most usefully shows is the ambivalence and ambiguity within national address rather than its totalising imperative. Putting together the youthfulness of the nation with its mythical ancientness, and indicating what the nation has to repress or hide about itself in order to maintain the fiction of its age, Bhabha shows how a 'problem of knowledge ... haunts the symbolic formation of social authority' of the nation.³⁰ We are obliged to forget that the nation is not naturally given, and in this sense it, too, is a problem of knowledge. Can we actually 'know' the nation in any meaningful sense, or should we view it as liminal? It is this liminality of the nation, he argues, that should be established, and then once 'its "difference" is turned from the boundary "outside" to its finitude "within", the threat of cultural difference is no longer a problem of "other" people. It becomes a question of the otherness of the people-as-one.'³¹ This thesis examines narratives which either subscribe to totalising versions of Englishness or

which threaten the idea of 'the nation as one people' in their rejection of heterosexual forms of English identity.

The 'natural' status of the nation has to be maintained through fictions, and literature, again, is important in this process. Narratives of the nation link up diverse elements to constitute the grammar of the nation, and in this process they naturalise the linkage, so that these linkages appear as an inevitable part of national order. However, it is also important to examine narratives of the nation when they are narrated from and in the margins, in order to see what disruptions appear in the grammar of the nation from these spaces. Here, the limits to the totalising imperative of national address may be seen; here may be revealed what we have had to 'forget' about the nation in order to maintain its ontological status as 'real'; here is a site in which England and Englishness is contested.

These debates about narratives of the nation raise a number of important questions pertinent to the present project. How is the grammar of the nation formulated in culturally valued texts, and how is it formulated in marginal texts? How is the grammar of the nation gendered and attributed a sexuality? What implications follow from the ways in which the nation is ordered?

Nation and Gender

Who is the national subject whose story is to be narrated? To what extent do the categories of gender, race and class inflect this national subject differently? Since Anderson wrote that the pilgrim/traveller will create national identity through encounters with people from 'places and families he [sic] has scarcely heard of', he has been rightly criticised for ignoring the gendered dimension in the imagining of the nation.³² The national subject he discusses is masculine and previous formulations of nation and national identity have often also taken little account of gender.

However, George Mosse, in tracing the history of nationalism alongside the history of respectability, provides a corrective. His argument that the alliance of bourgeois morality with that of nationalism grew to control sexuality gives women a place in the nation. As 'guardians of morality, and of public and private

order', woman 'as a national symbol was the guardian of the continuity and immutability of the nation, and the embodiment of its respectability.'³³ This symbolic status accorded women without a corresponding economic or political status has led to the argument that '[w]omen are both of and not of the nation.'³⁴ Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon and Minoo Moallem argue that an essentialised version of woman, without national power herself, 'becomes the national iconic signifier for the material, the passive, and the corporeal, to be worshipped, protected, and controlled by those with the power to remember and to forget, to guard, to define and redefine.'³⁵

Included in those with the 'power to define' woman are most of those contemporary intellectuals who have theorized the nation whilst ignoring gender. This, Nira Yuval-Davis suggests, is a curious omission given that 'a major school of nationalism scholars ... have seen in nations a natural and universal phenomenon which is an "automatic" extension of kinship relations.'³⁶ Yuval-Davis's work is concerned both with gendering the nation and with 'nationing' gender, such that gender can be seen to be a product of discourses of nation. Both gender and nation, she argues, should not be treated as discrete phenomena but analysed through the ways they inform and construct one another. She suggests that two of the primary ways women have a place in national discourse is through biological reproduction of the nation and through its cultural reproduction. Arguing that 'the pressures on women to have or not have children relate not to them as individuals ... but as members of specific national collectivities', Yuval-Davis shows how nationalist:

Projects which focus on genealogy and origin as the major organizing principles of the national collectivity would tend to be more exclusionary than other nationalist projects. Only by being born into a certain collectivity could one be a full member of it. Control of marriage, procreation and therefore sexuality would thus tend to be high on the nationalist agenda. When constructions of 'race' are added to the notion of the common genetic pool, fear of miscegenation becomes central to the nationalist discourse.³⁷

She also argues that there is another way of imagining national collectivities beside that of 'genetic pools', and locates this in notions of a people's culture and tradition.

This:

Which is usually partly composed of a specific version ... of a specific language, is another essentializing dimension, which in different national

projects acquires a significance higher or lower than that of genealogy or blood. ... Gender symbols play a particularly significant role in this.³⁸

The importance of women in this version of nation lies in their role as cultural reproducers of the nation, and:

Because of the central importance of social reproduction to culture, gender relations often come to be seen as constituting the “essence” of cultures as ways of life to be passed from generation to generation. The construction of “home” is of particular importance here, including relations between adults and between adults and children in the family, ways of cooking and eating, domestic labour, play and bedtime stories, out of which a whole world view, ethical and aesthetic, can become naturalized and reproduced.³⁹

Both of these forms of imagining Englishness can be seen at work in the interwar period. A rhetoric of the nation as a racialised entity (the island race) and a rhetoric of appropriate gender spheres were in operation, as will be seen in subsequent chapters. So, for example, when H. V. Morton travels through parts of London where ‘Lascars’, ‘Chinamen’ and ‘Jews’ live and work, he describes himself afterwards as having to catch a bus ‘back to England’. He has no way of knowing whether these people have been born English, but even if they had been he does not see them as full members of the national collectivity: their ‘race’ precludes this, as they are not ‘white’. Whilst white Englishwomen were charged with reproducing the ‘race’, they were also charged with the cultural reproduction of Englishness within the home. Mrs Miniver, a mythical middle-class English housewife whose diaries were serialised in *The Times*, provide a striking example of this and, according to Alison Light, although they ‘seem to occupy the most personal and subjective of spaces’, they take us ‘simultaneously into the most national and public territories of being English between the wars.’⁴⁰

Women, then, have been accorded a symbolic rather than a political status and have been given a place in the nation through the biological reproduction of more national subjects and through reproducing the cultural values of Englishness within the home. The nation allots women a biological and racial status which it then controls in the interests of national reproduction. In this way, national women must be heterosexual. This imbrication of heterosexuality and nation leads me to ask how this heterosexuality is performed and regulated within national literature. Does the

performance of English heterosexuality have implications for other sexualities? How is sexuality discursively regulated to ensure women's heterosexuality for England? Which sexualities are allowed to the masculine national subject?

Nation and Sexuality

The 1992 collection, *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, carries on and responds to the work of George Mosse, who had argued that in general nationalism produced and privileged male homosocial bonding, whilst enshrining woman as mother.

Contributors argue that one effect of this 'idealization of motherhood by the virile fraternity would seem to entail the exclusion of all nonreproductively-oriented sexualities from the discourse of nation.'⁴¹ However, the nation is tied up with the erotic in that:

Whenever the power of nation is invoked - whether it be in the media, in scholarly texts, or in everyday conversation - we are more likely than not to find it couched as a *love of country*: an eroticized nationalism. The reverse is also true ... [homophobia] shows that this commerce between eros and nation can run in the other direction as well.⁴²

The collection asks '[h]ow is it that the world has come to see itself divided along the seemingly natural lines of national affiliation and sexual attachment? How do these categories interact with, constitute, or otherwise illuminate each other?'⁴³ The imaginary quality of the nation does not mean it is merely fictive, because the institutional forces which regulate it produce the effect of it being real. Therefore, since the nation 'carries ... this immense political freight ... disenfranchised groups have had to appeal to national values precisely to register their claims as political.'⁴⁴

If in the interwar years heterosexuality was the national norm against which other sexualities were measured, this may not have always been the case. Henry Abelove argues that in England between 1680 and 1830 the huge population increase can be seen in terms of a change from an era of very diverse sexual practice to an era in which heterosexual sexual intercourse came to be the most culturally sanctioned form of sexual activity. This, Abelove argues, could be related to the rise of capitalism and the new importance placed on production:

While production increases ... it also becomes discursively and phenomenologically central in ways that it had never been before. Behaviours,

customs, usages which are judged to be nonproductive ... come under extraordinary and ever-intensifying negative pressure. If I should be right in speculating that the rise in popularity of sexual intercourse so-called in late eighteenth century England is an aspect of the same phenomena that include the rise in production, then we should expect to find that sexual intercourse so-called becomes at this time and in this place discursively and phenomenologically central in ways that it had never been before; that nonreproductive sexual behaviours come under extraordinary negative pressure; and finally that both developments happen in ways that testify to their relatedness, even to their unity.⁴⁵

That the idea of the modern nation valorises heterosexuality can also be seen in the work of Mary Layoun. She examines the narratives of Palestinian nationalism and their deployment of the trope of the wedding, the union of a man and a woman, in order to argue that:

This prosaic image of the conjugal union of man and woman as a trope for the union of the national citizen with national territory under the authority of a national state is at the heart of virtually all nationalist rhetoric. (And it has situated itself as well and with considerable regularity at the heart of nationalist grammar as state order.) This vexed trope is arguably the generative basis for the absence and longing on which national desire is erected. And, following mundanely on the terms of that trope, the representation of the fulfillment or consummation of desire is possession and control of the land-as-woman.⁴⁶

How are women to respond to such a nationalist rhetoric? If 'this vexed trope' is the basis for national desire, how are women to orient themselves in relation to it? If they repudiate their objectification in national idealised femininity and want to become national subjects, rather than objects of nationalism, must their desire be oriented toward the national territory? Given that territory is figured through the idea of land-as-woman, to become national subjects must women desire union with this womanly land? In this way, could their desire be said to be lesbian?

The difficulties of inscribing this problematic relation between 'nation' and 'lesbian' can be seen in Emily Hamer's *Britannia's Glory: A History of Twentieth-Century Lesbians*, which, despite signalling itself as a history that might conjoin ideas of nation/Britain with biographies of lesbians, in fact does not. Although Hamer has produced a useful resource book in her attempt to 'map lesbian history: a history of how lesbians thought of their lives, understood their experiences, and charted their commitments', quite how notions of Englishness, or even Britishness, might have impinged on their lived experiences of themselves is not given

consideration.⁴⁷ Similarly, Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*, whilst looking at representations of lesbians in various moments of European culture, does not examine the ways in which these representations may have been inflected by their national positioning.⁴⁸ Her general thesis that the lesbian 'has been "ghosted" - or made to seem invisible - by culture itself' makes culture ahistorical and without a national dimension.⁴⁹ However, since a prime argument in *Nationalisms and Sexualities* is that non-reproductive sexualities are excluded from discourses of nation, then representations of homosexuality must be analysed in relation to these discourses of nation. The exclusion of homosexuality from nation means that it is constructed through this exclusionary discourse, and ideas of nation are complicit in the (im)possibilities of how homosexuality can be represented. The present thesis aims to redress Castle's view, since its impetus arose out of identifying, in a range of literary texts and traditions, the difficulties inherent in inscribing the category 'lesbian' with that of 'nation' in the interwar period.

One such text, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, seems to present the nation as blocking literary explorations of gender and sexual identity, such that the place in which these explorations could happen appear to be 'abroad', elsewhere, or in another time.⁵⁰ But I doubt Virginia Woolf's famous statement that 'as a woman I have no country', since her argument seems simultaneously to suggest that women can have a strongly emotional relationship to nation that can produce the feeling of having a country. Writing about the condition of the English woman as outside a masculine England and Englishness, Woolf argues in *Three Guineas*:

"Our country" ... throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions. "Our" country still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner. "Our" country denies me the means of protecting myself, forces me to pay others a very large sum annually to protect me, and is so little able, even so, to protect me that Air Raid precautions are written on the wall. Therefore if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or "our" country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or *my country*. For ... in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world. And if, when reason has said its say, still some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England dropped into a child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a

beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes, this drop of pure, if irrational, emotion she will make serve her to give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world.[My italics] ⁵¹.

This passage is generally never quoted in its entirety in cultural and literary criticism, leaving the impression that Woolf has said that a woman has no country. However, she does make a claim for it as belonging to her, irrational as she states this claim to be. The ambiguity of the relation between woman and England is expressed in the phrase 'my country'. Whilst disparaging it as not-hers, Woolf, nonetheless, expresses an obstinate and irrational love of England, in the face of its rejection of women. Her relationship to England is sensual and bodily rather than intellectual. It is the sensual pleasure she derives from loving England that leads her to argue, not that countries should be destroyed in favour of the whole world's peace and freedom, but that England should still exist as some kind of flagship nation.

Perhaps, then, women do have a country derived, albeit in a second-hand way, from patriarchal and heterosexual familial relations in which nationality is conferred through fathers and husbands. Or, alternatively, perhaps women do not have a country, but are necessary to the process of nation creation and building through reproduction of further national subjects, and through the cultural reproduction of national values. This problematic is one of the issues at stake in this thesis, as is the question of sexuality. What of those women who fall outside these heterosexual ties? In considering this question, I have drawn on the work of Monique Wittig, who argues that:

The refusal to become (or to remain) heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or a woman, consciously or not. For a lesbian this goes further than the refusal of the *role* 'woman'. It is the refusal of the economic, ideological and political power of a man. ⁵²

Asking '[w]hat is woman?', Wittig suggests that because the term only has meaning 'in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems ... [l]esbians are not women.' ⁵³ Lesbian, she says:

Is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is *not* a woman, either economically, politically, or ideologically. For what makes a woman is a specific social relationship to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as

economic obligation ("forced residence", domestic corvée, conjugal duties, unlimited production of children, etc.), a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual.⁵⁴

Given that 'Englishwoman' is in a relational category with 'Englishman', is it lesbians who do not have a country, whereas 'women' do? Within the grammar of the nation, then as now, the term 'Englishlesbian' is non-existent, suggesting the impossibility of a nationalised formulation of this identity. This consideration of the difference between a woman's relation to England and a lesbian's relation to England underlies this thesis, as does a study of Wittig's position with regard to national identity. Given that her work is not primarily concerned with individual relations between men and women, but the political and economic regimes these relations of heterosexuality operate in, one could broaden her definition of the lesbian - as constituted outside of any relation to man - to include her as outside of any relation to political and economic structures of patriarchy. If the nation is one such structure - as Yuval-Davis and Layoun, for example, have argued - the lesbian inevitably is outside the nation. Would this then mean that those who refuse national identifications might be marked as lesbian? Would a specific relation to nation therefore become a sign that one is, or is not, lesbian? If one engages with the project of nation, does this mean that one cannot be lesbian? Conversely, if one refuses to partake in nationalist projects and agendas, is one therefore lesbian?

Radclyffe Hall's fictional lesbian character, Stephen Gordon, cannot be seen to agree with Wittig's description of lesbians as not-women, or, taking account of the broader implications of her theory, as not-English. Stephen's challenge is to reconcile the differences between England and the lesbian so that they might coexist. Neither did she think of her lover, Mary, as not-woman. As far as Stephen is concerned, the problem between them lies in her inability to make Mary's womb fertile. To apply Wittigian theories to these representations of lesbians would be to cooperate with those rhetorical structures which Terry Castle identifies in *The Apparitional Lesbian* which produce the lesbian as a sign that is displayed precisely in order to be erased. Stephen would have to be marked as not-lesbian because of her

identification with and desire for England and Englishness. It would be ironic to use a lesbian theory to deny the existence of lesbians. If lesbian cultural theory can be used to deny lesbian existence, this might reveal the limitations of such theories. However, on the other hand, it could broaden the way in which the lesbian can be understood as she interacts with nation. In this way, the lesbian may offer a powerful subject position outside the nation from which to provide a critique of national processes. This would make the lesbian less of a sexual subject and more of a political one. Such debates as I have outlined above, with regard to literature, nation, gender and sexuality, are examined in various ways in the chapters which follow.

The first chapter examines censored books in order to deal with my research question concerning the relationship between a masculine national subject, the meanings and powers attached to literature, and forbidden sexualities and subjectivities. The particular writings examined in this chapter were those whose publishers had been subject to prosecution, or texts which had been subject to censorship in its varied forms, whether self-censored by the writer, banned by circulating libraries or by the Home Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions, or were censored in that only certain categories of readers were allowed access to them. This chapter establishes the importance of literature as a primary site through which the nation was being (re)imagined after the Great War, and examines the rhetoric deployed in interwar debates about literary censorship in order to discover what was imagined as 'non-national' when certain literary texts were rejected for the national canon. The chapter asks how the acceptable face of England and Englishness was being constituted in and through this censorship. Which subjectivities and forms of writing were excluded from notions of Englishness? Was there another, more valorised, form of literature that stood in contrast to 'indecent' literature and if so, what characterised it?

Chapter Two turns to a popular example of clean and healthy, fresh-air literature. H. V. Morton's work has particular resonances with Benedict Anderson's notion of how the 'imagined community' of the nation is created through pilgrimage.

Morton himself suggests his travels around England are a form of pilgrimage, and to read of his travels becomes yet another form of pilgrimage. *The Call of England, In Search of England*, and others of Morton's travel texts, are analysed in order to examine the hypothesis that interwar hegemonic discourses of the rural located Englishness in a heterosexual bond between a masculine national subject and a feminine nature/landscape. Beyond that, Morton's work is also investigated to understand the relation between 'woman' and 'nation'. Do women have a location within his formulation of Englishness? What national locational identity is offered for men? How is literature configured in the nation when Morton 'finds' England?

Chapter Three follows on from Morton's version of Englishness as a bond between man and earth to consider the historical conditions which made this trope prevalent. Turning to the Great War, it looks at the material conditions of the trenches where at times men and earth became almost indistinguishable from one another, and asks why the masculine space of trench experience became a particularly powerful way of apprehending the war for post-war society. What could it offer at a time when Englishness was being re-imagined? The texts examined here were implicated in the project of making the nation virile. How did they achieve this? This chapter asks whether a relationship with earth could guarantee the national heterosexuality of the masculine subject. A variety of autobiographical accounts of the First World War, alongside fictional and literary accounts, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Her Privates We*, are looked at. However, a pre-war text, *The Wind in the Willows*, is also analysed to show the use of the trope of men-in-earth prior to the war. *The Hobbit* is chosen because Tolkien had written it in an attempt to provide a mythology for England, and the various works of T. H. White because they signal through their titles - *Earth Stopped*, *Gone to Ground*, *England Have My Bones* and *The Sword in the Stone* - that they dealt with the materiality of earth and a human relationship with it. Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* represents a popular example of this trope, published at a tense period of history just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Later filmed by Fritz Lang as *Man Hunt*, it provides an example

of the power of the trope in the face of fears about an England felt to be yet again under attack.

Chapter Four examines the status of the masculine national subject when he is unable to touch earth. Sailors trouble heterosexuality within this interwar sexual economy because they relate to sky and sea rather than to earth. The chapter also asks which landscapes make possible the inscription of the lesbian and homosexual subject. Few literary texts are analysed, as the main drive here is to examine wider cultural debates about the sailor as national subject, his reading-matter, and the status of the sea. However, the literary work of James Hanley is considered precisely because Hanley straddles two subjectivities - that of the sailor, and that of the national writer whose work appeared 'before the law'. The publishers of his novel, *Boy*, were subject to a summons calling them to account for publishing an 'obscene libel', and the text is discussed in this chapter, rather than the one on banned and restricted books, since it provides useful insights into the ways in which the nation, sea, and the sailor are configured as problematic for England. Since E. M. Forster's *Maurice* begins with a striking image in which diagrams of heterosexual sex are washed off the beach by the incoming sea, this text is chosen to supply an opportunity to analyse the powers of both the sea and watery landscapes in enabling the inscription of the homosexual subject.⁵⁵ Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* provides a popular fictional account of the relations between the nation and the solitary woman sailor, Rebecca. More than this, however, through the body of the woman buried in Rebecca's place, and who appears to have been divorced from all heterosexual familial relations, the novel shows that what the sea can wash up into the national landscape is unassimilable under the grammar of the nation, and thus threatens national order. David Garnett's *The Sailor's Return* places the returning sailor in the archetypal English village. The ensuing dialogue between sea and earth, sailor and villager, offers a useful point of analysis for the constitutive elements of national order and those of national disorder which the returning sailor provokes.

Chapter Five looks at the few texts which represent a woman in earth in order to show how this trope is used to represent monstrosity, disorder and dismembering, rather than the ordered re-membering that the trope of man-in-earth represents in national imaginings. The paucity of texts in which women go to earth is in itself significant. Does earth, then, offer a locational identity for masculinity which is not also offered for femininity? The chapter discusses the question of whether this disallowal of the bond between national subject and earth to women might paradoxically have been productive of lesbian discourse and identity in the interwar period. Women, it appears, cannot go to earth, but if women cannot, can the lesbian? The chapter discusses the question of whether England and Englishness can be lesbianised, or whether that possibility is oxymoronic. Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm* is, like *The Wind in the Willows*, used as an example of a text which uses the trope prior to World War One, with the difference that it has a woman rather than a man in earth. After the war, there were no routine configurations of women with earth. But there was one enormously popular such text, Mary Webb's *Gone to Earth*, which came with a public recommendation from Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister. Here, the attempt of a woman to go to earth with her fox-cub leads to a discussion of the place of fox-hunting within national imaginings through such texts as David Garnett's *Lady into Fox*, D. H. Lawrence's *The Fox*, and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. In these texts, the association of the fox with femininity, and fox-hunting posited as a method through which a young boy achieves adult masculinity, offer a more obliquely metaphoric look at the questions about the relation between women, earth and masculinity. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is discussed here in counterpoint to Rupert Brookes's poem 'The Soldier'. Since Brookes's soldier confers Englishness on the foreign soil of his burial place, can the women who enter the Indian Marabar Caves in Forster's text do the same? In this respect, *A Passage to India* provides a point of inquiry for the place of English women who enter earth in a foreign country. Other texts examined are Radclyffe Hall's *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* and Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowses or*

The Loving Huntsman. These are selected as examples of texts which examine the question of whether women can go to earth in England. However, the status of the characters who do this is debatable: are they women, are they men, or are they lesbians?

Chapter Six discusses the contradictory positioning of the lesbian in national culture. By looking at literary texts and methods of reading, both the centrality of the lesbian in national processes *and* her marginality are put in dialogue. A variety of texts are chosen to demonstrate the various ways in which tropes of Englishness could be criticised and re-written to include the lesbian. Thus, Mary Gordon's *Chase of the Wild Goose* is discussed as an example of a text which attempts to give lesbians a history within England. Other texts which give lesbian characters a centrality, even if obliquely, (Vita Sackville-West's *The Dark Island*, Naomi Royde-Smith's *The Island: A Love Story*, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women: Themes and variations*, and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*), are selected to examine how the lesbian is discursively constructed both within national and non-national landscapes. The chapter also analyses these writings to reveal the kind of landscape which are amenable to the inscription of the lesbian and asks what the implications are for her national identity when she inhabits these geographical places. However, given the difficulty writers appear to have in inscribing the lesbian in the nation, this chapter then turns to Virginia Woolf's *Between The Acts*, in which a lesbian is central to the revelation of England and English history. How is it possible that she can be written as central to the nation? Sharing a similar liminality with that of the nation, the lesbian does seem to mirror the repressed terms that Homi Bhabha and others identify as present in narratives of the nation. Given that national narratives interpellate their subjects through their discursive address, is it any surprise that a national subject might be produced, in and through these same narratives, who reveals what has to be repressed? Is it inevitable that she could become central to the nation?

The thesis thus brings together questions of Englishness, geographical location, gender and sexuality as expressed and represented in literary texts, and examines how the natural world figures in the grammar of the nation. The landscape of England is examined in order to discover if it is gendered and how. What is the gender of this land and what relationship does English masculinity have to it? Is English femininity allowed a relationship with the national landscape, and if so, what sort of relationship? If the nation valorises heterosexuality, how is it that non-heterosexual sexualities come into being? Similarly, if narratives of the nation are heterosexual, how can the lesbian come into writing? Given that many texts were subject to censorship in the interwar period, did the lesbian figure in such texts? Firstly, in order to deal with these questions, the grammar of the nation, as it is articulated in various literary texts and national processes, needs to be analysed to see which diverse elements constitute England and Englishness. The processes of censorship and the content of banned and restricted literary texts is where I now turn to see the nation being renewed through the process of expelling that which it considers unfit for 'English literature'.

¹ Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* [1928] (London: Virago, 1997), p. 360.

² Hall, p. 412.

³ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 115.

⁴ Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

⁵ Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson, 'A Literature for England' in Colls and Dodd, p. 118.

⁶ Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England' in Colls and Dodd, p. 62.

⁷ Howkins, p. 63.

⁸ Jane Mackay and Pat Thane, 'The Englishwoman' in Colls and Dodd, p. 191.

⁹ Mackay and Thane, pp. 191-192.

¹⁰ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. 207.

¹¹ Paxman, pp. 76-77.

¹² Michael Wood, *In Search of England: Journeys into the English Past* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000). Wood's book title is taken from H. V. Morton's *In Search of England* which is discussed in Chapter Two.

¹³ Wood, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ Judy Giles and Tim Middleton, eds., *Writing Englishness 1900-1950: An Introductory Sourcebook on National Identity* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 5.

¹⁵ Giles and Middleton, p. 5.

¹⁶ One of the problems with defining England and Englishness is the way in which 'England' has often been used as a hegemonic synecdoche for 'Britain' and has therefore excluded perspectives from Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland. The term 'British' tends to subsume the Welsh, Scots and Northern Irish under this sign without examining the specificity of the differences between them and erases the histories of domination and oppression in their relationships with England. Similarly, the

term 'island' was used to refer to both England and Britain, while Britain itself often actually meant England. However, if 'England' designates a single territory, rather than co-opting other nations such as Wales, under its umbrella, and if 'Englishness' were an obvious attribute of an easily identifiable English people, then there would be little discussion or struggle for the definitions of their meanings.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 33.

¹⁸ Butler, p. 136.

¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [1983] (London: Verso, 1991).

²¹ Hobsbawm in Hobsbawm and Ranger, p. 14.

²² Anderson, p. 11.

²³ Anderson, p. 141.

²⁴ Anderson, pp. 55-56.

²⁵ Mary N. Layoun, 'A Guest at the Wedding: Honor, Memory, and (National) Desire in Michel Khleife's *Wedding in Galilee*', in *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, ed. by Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon and Minoo Moallem (London: Duke University Press), p. 93.

²⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: narrating the nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 1.

²⁷ Geoffrey Bennington, 'Postal Politics and the institution of the nation' in Bhabha, p. 121.

²⁸ Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991), p. 169.

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation' in Bhabha, p. 292.

³⁰ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 297.

³¹ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 301.

³² Anderson, pp. 55-56.

³³ George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), pp. 17-18. This can be seen in the way the figure of Britannia was used to represent Britain, Marianne to represent France, and the Statue of Liberty as a representative of America.

³⁴ Kaplan and others, p. 12.

³⁵ Kaplan and others, p. 10.

³⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 1.

³⁷ Yuval-Davis, pp. 22-23.

³⁸ Yuval-Davis, p. 23.

³⁹ Yuval-Davis, p. 43.

⁴⁰ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 12.

⁴¹ Andrew Parker, Mary Russo and others, 'Introduction', in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. by Andrew Parker, Mary Russo and others (London, Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

⁴² Parker and others, p. 1.

⁴³ Parker and others, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Parker and others, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Henry Abelove, 'Some Speculations on the History of "Sexual Intercourse" During the "Long Eighteenth Century" in England', in Parker and others, p. 339.

⁴⁶ Layoun, p. 95.

⁴⁷ Emily Hamer, *Britannia's Glory: A History of Twentieth-Century Lesbians* (London: Cassell, 1996), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ Castle, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* [1928] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).

⁵¹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* [1929 and 1938] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 313.

⁵² Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 13.

⁵³ Wittig, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Wittig, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Although E. M. Forster wrote *Maurice* prior to the Great War he worked on revisions throughout the interwar period. It is these interwar revisions which I believe entitle me to consider it as a text belonging to the interwar period.

CHAPTER ONE

BANNED AND RESTRICTED BOOKS: UNACCEPTABLE IN ENGLAND

*There are decent-minded people who read books and appreciate some of the beauties in English literature, and they look to the strong arm of the law to check and prevent the broadcasting of such foul stuff as this.*¹

The laws of censorship operated in favour of maintaining English literature as both 'decent' and 'beautiful'. Obviously, English literature was not naturally this way, otherwise it would not have needed to be legislated into conformity with ideas about its respectability. Nonetheless, without this desire on the part of 'decent-minded people', it would have been difficult for the law to administer its various forms of censorship in the interwar period: they provided not just the support for the law to operate, but also the impetus to ensure that it did. As such, their actions were implicated in locating literary value in some texts, but not in others. In this way, canonical 'English Literature' was safeguarded through the rejection of texts defined as unsuitable for national reading. At the heart of government were several social purists, including Joynson-Hicks, or 'Jix', a devout churchman who was Home Secretary between 1924-1929; a former member of the Council of the National Vigilance Association, Sir Archibald Bodkin, was Director of Public Prosecutions; while the evangelist, Sir Thomas Inskip, was Solicitor General and Attorney General between 1922 and 1936. Cate Haste explains that because of their support, the 'Public Morality Council was allowed discreet influence over public policy' through most of the interwar period and 'was given regular access to the Lord Chamberlain'.² But why should the quality of literature have mattered? The aim here is both to establish the importance of literature in the interwar period as a site through which the nation was being (re)imagined, and to frame the chapters that follow which examine more valued forms of Englishness. The chapter explores books which were seen as problematic for the nation and English literature in order to understand what was unacceptable for 'Englishness', so that the construction of the nation can be revealed through what it

expels as non-national. As such, it offers an exploration of the reverse side of 'England' and 'Englishness'.

What were the perceived problems with interwar society that literature was meant to solve? The war had disrupted both the gender and class relations which had previously obtained, and as women gained more power some perceived this as meaning that English culture was losing its virility and becoming feminised. Alison Light maintains:

That the 1920s and '30s saw a move away from formerly heroic and officially masculine public rhetorics of national destiny and from a dynamic and missionary view of the Victorian and Edwardian middle classes in 'Great Britain' to an Englishness at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more private - and, in terms of pre-war standards, more 'feminine'.³

Contemporary commentators in the pro-censorship debate generally agreed that the influence of the Great War was responsible for the immorality perceived to be present in post-war culture and literature, and that this immorality revealed itself in sexual behaviour. Susan Kingley Kent has shown how 'anxiety about the war frequently took shape as anxiety about sex, or was articulated in sexual terms'⁴, and has analysed how the war was represented as 'unleashed heterosexuality'.⁵ Freud's popularisation in Britain, Kent argues, meant that 'the English could readily accept the notion that impulses toward sex and aggression were intertwined with one another; indeed, many Britons held a view of the war as a release from long suppressed libidinal energies.'⁶ Interwar books such as *Sexual Life During the World War*, by sexologists H. C. Fischer and E. X. Dubois, argued that war had, on the one hand, corrupted men's natural sexuality to allow various immoral sexual activities like homosexuality and bestiality to increase, whereas, on the other, it had highlighted women's naturally perverse sexuality, allowing it to flourish.⁷ Men's sexuality was by nature moral, whereas women's sexuality was by nature perverse. Women, whose naturally perverse sexual desires were more generally contained and controlled in peacetime culture, were roused to a dangerous fever-pitch by a bloodlust caused by seeing and imagining the injured, dying and dead men of the battlefields. This problem was not peculiar to Englishwomen: French and German women were the same.

Anxiety about the Great War's impact on sexual practices, can also be traced in fiction. In 1915, Lord Alfred Douglas had written that 'it is just as important to civilization that Literary England should be cleansed of sex-mongers and pedlars of the perverse, as that Flanders should be cleared of Germans.'⁸ Literary sex-mongers represented a national enemy as much as the Germans did. R. Brimley Johnson's *Moral Poison in Modern Fiction* argued that the war was responsible for the poison present in modern fiction since the war's coming meant that:

Normal existence was wiped out by a flash of lightning. The old duties, habits, manners, responsibilities, were rudely cast aside: for what seemed, and perhaps was, a higher call. The whole of life was revised in a few hours; and it is no exaggeration to say that none knew their way about the new world.⁹

For young people '[q]uite unused to the normal "decencies", without experience in "ordering" themselves, the sex-instinct became explosive, a sense-riot unrestrained', and 'our daughters':¹⁰

Had no chance to know and choose, no test between real emotion and fevered desire - their own or another's. Inheriting a beautiful home-womanliness, the flower of sheltered innocence, they had to make and be themselves in the opening of a new world. Nobility shone out among us in those days, miracles beyond belief of what woman can do and suffer for big, or small, men: a new vision of mothering of humanity that brought God to our side. Also, alas, terrible shattering of English girlhood, ugly staining of the pure in heart, feverish unrest, a fury of overdoing, a hard glitter of cold joy.¹¹

Developing a metaphor of bodily ingestion, Johnson suggested that 'the food for thought' given to readers of modern fiction:

Forced sex-problems upon the most thoughtless; demanded for all on the threshold of life full licence for self-expression; analysed what they called the soul in undigested detail; lingered over body-contact, flushes and fires of the flesh; loudly proclaimed new Laws of Love.¹²

The solution to the problem of a society that appeared to have lost control of women's sexuality was bound up with controlling literature so that non-national subjectivities and forms of behaviour could be excluded from the national canon.

However, class conflict was also a problem in the renewal of the nation. When Henry Newbolt published his *The Idea Of An English Association* in 1928, he wrote of the association as having 'been waiting to reveal itself at the fateful moment, the moment of great national need'.¹³ Set up in 1907, the aim of the Association was 'to promote the due recognition of English as an essential element in

the national education.’¹⁴ In the fateful moment of post-Great War society’s national need, when the disturbance to class relations threatened national unity, English language and literature together came to be the vehicle that would also ‘form a new element of national unity, linking together the mental life of all classes by experiences which have hitherto been the privilege of a limited section.’¹⁵ This unity would be achieved through English literature providing to all classes ‘the common possession of the tastes and associations connected with it’.¹⁶ Newbolt, drawing on the ideas of Matthew Arnold, argued this would succeed ‘[i]f we use English literature as a means of contact with great minds, a channel by which to draw upon their experience with profit and delight, and a means of sympathy between the members of a human society’.¹⁷ The government committee, set up to report on the teaching of English in England and chaired by Henry Newbolt, proposed that the whole educational system should be re-ordered around the centrality of English language and literature. The committee’s report, *The Teaching of English in England*, also known as ‘The Newbolt Report’, was, according to Chris Baldick, ‘greeted almost as a best seller’ on publication in 1921.¹⁸ The report covered the teaching of English in state and public schools, commercial and technical schools, adult education such as evening continuation schools and WEA classes, teacher-training institutions and the universities. Deploying a metaphor of earth, the report argued that through the study of English literature, a literature ‘native to our own soil’,¹⁹ readers could profit morally from ‘intercourse with those whose view of life is deepest and most *virile*.’ [My italics]²⁰ The study of language, too, would engender national pride and provide ‘a bond of union between classes’.²¹ However, the report reveals several anxieties.

What to do about the working-class man? Members of the Committee:

Were told that the working classes, especially those who belonged to organised labour movements were antagonistic to, and contemptuous of, literature, that they regarded it ‘merely as an ornament, a polite accomplishment, a subject to be despised by really *virile* men’. Literature, in fact, seems to be classed by a large number of thinking working men with antimacassars, fish-knives and other unintelligible and futile trivialities of ‘middle-class culture,’ and, as a subject of instruction, is suspect as an attempt to side-track the working class movement. We regard the prevalence of such opinions as serious matter, not merely because it means the alienation of an important section of the population from the ‘confort’ and ‘mirthe’ of

literature, but chiefly because it points to a morbid condition of the body politic which if not taken in hand may be followed by lamentable consequences. For if literature be, as we believe, an embodiment of the best thoughts of the best minds, the most direct and lasting communication of experience of man to man, a fellowship which 'binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time,' then the nation of which a considerable portion rejects this means of grace, and despises this great spiritual influence, must assuredly be heading to disaster. [My italics] ²²

To bring working-class men into this national unity meant they had to have wrested away their associations of literature with domesticity and femininity in order to be persuaded of the virility of literature. By a remarkable twist of argument, poetry was felt to be able to do this, since it 'is natural for man to delight in poetry; the history of mediaeval society, to say nothing of all primitive societies, proves this.' ²³

Presumably, the committee was working with a notion of 'heroic' poetry as its model.

Having rhetorically brought the problematic working man under control, a later portion of the report addressed itself to 'Some Possible Dangers In Reading'. Describing reading as a potentially passive process in which the reader's mind is a tablet written on by the writer, one might well understand the fears of some working-class men that the study of literature might divert them from class struggle and feminise them in the process. Suggesting of literature that 'as a nation we are still far from understanding its power and importance', ²⁴ the report noted that it may be 'harmful as well as beneficial', and yet argued against prohibition. ²⁵ Utilising the trope of contagion, the report reasoned that prohibition of vulgar literature:

Is both futile and undesirable: but it does not follow that there is no remedy against the debilitating effect of vulgarity in print. Mental, like physical, contagion is best avoided by maintaining a vigorous health. The risk cannot be escaped, but it can be forestalled. We have in English an abundance of good literature interesting enough to arouse and satisfy the appetite of youth, and an abundant supply of it should be ready to hand in every school library. ²⁶

The reading of good literature could prevent bodily harm coming from 'vulgar' literature. Since literature came to be seen as of central importance in the renewal of the nation, other commentators thought prohibition desirable in the interests of this renewal, and banned books became caught up in a debate about what constituted 'national literature'. Books were banned or censored in various ways in order to renew the nation.

Some unacceptable texts, such as those deemed pornographic, which were clearly 'foreign' having been published abroad and written by 'foreigners', were generally seized by Customs. They policed the external boundaries of the nation in an attempt to ensure internal national purity. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, printed and published in Paris, was one such text. Under section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act of 1867, copies were seized at Folkestone and burnt in 1923. Travellers returning from France routinely had their baggage searched for copies of books banned in England but published in Paris, such as Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Frank Harris's *Life and Loves*, and Norah C. James's *Sleeveless Errand*. In 1931, Jack Kahane set up the Obelisk Press in Paris in order to re-print books unavailable in Britain, and re-printed several banned books, including James Hanley's *Boy*, Wallace Smith's *Bessie Cotter* and Sheila Cousins's *To Beg I am Ashamed*. In this way, texts that had been expelled were now seen to threaten the nation from outside its borders. Other texts could be seized by the Post Office, since it was illegal to send obscene publications through the postal system under Section 63 of The Post Office Act of 1908. D. H. Lawrence's manuscript of his poetry collection, *Pansies*, was seized in this way in 1929, but later released. Texts taken in such ways might never appear before the courts, with Customs authorities and the Post Office determining their alleged obscenities. In cases where the police supported summonses being taken out, their only evidence for prosecution was often that of other policemen. In *The Law and Obscenity*, Frederic Hallis highlighted how 'officers of the law were the authors of that information on which the search warrant was granted, and they, in their discretion, took possession of the alleged obscene works.'²⁷ One policeman had to be held back from seizing work by William Blake on the grounds of its obscenity.²⁸ However, its canonical status saved it from destruction. Once a work was accepted as canonical, it was difficult to dislodge it, and consequently English literature became policed more thoroughly.

Both the National Vigilance Association and the Public Morality Council mounted campaigns to search out the indecent in literature and have it banned. Given that the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 empowered ‘magistrates, upon the sworn complaint of *a single person*, to search for and seize any written or printed matter alleged to be obscene, and to order its destruction, in the absence of good reason shown to the contrary’, members of these bodies were routinely disgusted by what they found in their searches, and presented publications to a magistrate.[My italics]²⁹ If organisations could do this, so too could private individuals. E. J. Bristow suggests that in ‘an average year like 1931 over one hundred complaints were lodged with the authorities and many were acted on.’³⁰ In 1937, Bishop Winnington Ingram took in twenty-one ‘filthy books’ to the Home Secretary to ask for their publishers’ prosecution.³¹ Both public and circulating libraries practised their own censorship, but Mudie’s Library also complained publicly about some texts. *Bessie Cotter*, a story about prostitution in Chicago, was destroyed on orders of the Attorney General after complaints from Mudie’s and the Public Morality Council.³² The publishers of *Boy*, a story of a boy-sailor sodomised at sea, were brought before the court because a member of a public library had found it there and objected.³³ If libraries did not keep their lists as pure as possible, the Public Morality Council’s Annual Report of 1928 shows that they could expect the attention of the Council. The report states that ‘books were submitted to the Literature Panel, and acting on their opinions, requests were made in twelve instances to the libraries or publisher to restrict the circulation and sale of them as far as possible.’³⁴ It is noteworthy that these were not publications that had been subject to legal proceedings. The Public Morality Council itself was acting as ‘the strong arm of the law’ in provoking a climate in which publishers and writers feared their attentions, and so often operated self-censorship. E. M. Forster was an example of the latter, fearing to publish *Maurice*, his novel of homosexual love, in the period he wrote it.³⁵ Although *Maurice* may represent a special case in that male homosexuality actually was illegal at the time, and Forster wanted to write a happy outcome for Maurice. Conversely, T. H. White,

writing under the name of James Aston, could publish *They Winter Abroad*, a satirical tale of English people in an Italian hotel, since his aptly named character, the homosexual Mr McInvert, commits suicide at the end and is therefore suitably punished.³⁶ White and his publishers escaped prosecution. But murder is also illegal, and yet Agatha Christie's works, for example, were not prosecuted. Anti-censorship commentators noted the absurdity in prosecuting representations of behaviours that were in themselves perfectly legal. Gilbert Armitage argued that:

Even if we assume for argument's sake that obscene publications are in fact capable of converting previously well-ordered people to the practice of fornication, adultery, masturbation or homosexuality it must be remembered that only the last of these, and then only between males, is contrary to the law of England, does it not immediately occur to one as a trifle illogical that, while the physical performance of certain actions can only involve a liability to be censured by public opinion, or at worse be mulcted in damages, the uttering of a hypothetical inducement to the performance of such actions should be punishable by fine or imprisonment ?³⁷

Armitage's question can be productively answered in coming to an understanding of this illogicality, for if books are brought before the law for portraying actions and behaviours which are not in themselves illegal, then perhaps it is the book that is more important than the sexual practice. In other words, if one shifts the focus of the argument from the behaviour a book represents to focus instead on the book itself, one could argue that in this case the law is being used in the service of delineating the official national literature rather than policing particular social behaviours. This would suggest the force which English literature and language was to carry in England's regeneration. In other words, English behaviours mattered less than English writings. These writings were to create new English subjectivities to reclaim the nation from the fear that those morally contaminated by the Great War might come to represent the nation. This would also explain the focus on the effects of poisonous literature on the young. Apparently, the old were not a category which could be corrupted or poisoned; they were either immune, or already corrupt. Therefore, new national subjectivities could be created through legislation concerning literature as much as through legislation concerning immoral behaviour itself.

In March 1929, the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, received a deputation from the London Public Morality Council. *The Times* reported that the chairman of the Council, Archibald Allen, suggested of writers and publishers of indecent books that '[s]o far as the youth of the country is concerned these people are poisoning the world.' The report carried on:

Among the books which Mr. Allen condemned were those dealing with birth control, translations, such as the Decameron, and books of a pseudo-sociological or scientific character. One which he had read, he said, seemed to him to glorify prostitution and advocate promiscuity at the earliest possible age. 'I had this book sent here in the hope that proceedings would be based on it, but your advisors did not see their way to taking any action,' he said. Mr. Allen then described an 'incident' connected with the book which came to his notice. A teacher in a college, who was a corruptor more than an instructor of youth, gave it to a youth aged 20, who lent it to a girl of 17, and shortly afterwards the youth and the girl had established illicit relations and were glorying in the fact.³⁸

However, of particular interest in this report is the power credited to literature in shaping behaviour. In general, as here, campaigners against indecent literature did not publicly name such books, fearing they would then become bestsellers since people obviously wanted to read them: this unnamed book being credited with the power to make people behave illicitly and to glory in illegitimate sexuality without feeling a proper sense of shame.³⁹ Clearly, the London Public Morality Council believed that it was a national moral question rather than a moral question between the two youths, since Mr. Allen was discussing the youth of 'the country', that literature should be made to serve national interests through the control of sexuality, and, indeed, that literature had the power to do this.

Publishers and booksellers also colluded with censorship at times. In 1921, George Allen & Unwin published the anonymously authored, *A Young Girl's Diary*, translated from German and introduced by Sigmund Freud.⁴⁰ Although sale of this book was restricted to professional people in the areas of law, medicine and education, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Archibald Bodkin, describing the book as 'filth', wanted to prosecute. In discussions with the publisher, it was ultimately decided that the Director would not prosecute as long as booksellers supplied him with the names, addresses and occupations of all those buying the

book.⁴¹ Given that the category of 'professional' people excluded by definition the working class, children (by virtue of their age) and most women, since the professions were predominantly masculine and racially white, virtually the only people entitled to read this book were middle-class white men. However, the 'I' of this text is, as the title suggests, a young girl, but a young English girl wanting to read herself in this narrative would be unable to obtain the book. If she had similar secret thoughts to the young girl of the diary, she would not be able to discover this. The fiction of English girls' sexual purity could thus be maintained.

The publishers of *To Beg I Am Ashamed* by Sheila Cousins, which purported to be the autobiography of a lady prostitute, behaved similarly to those of *A Young Girl's Diary*. In 1938, the Home Secretary was approached by the Public Morality Council who had seen a review copy of Cousins's book. The police visited the publishers, George Routledge & Sons, who then decided to withdraw the book rather than face prosecution. Contemporary writers in the anti-censorship camp noted that indirect censorship, such as that effected by publishers, circulating libraries and the Post Office, suited an Anglo-Saxon ideal of maintaining secrecy. M. L. Ernst and W. Seagle argued that:

In any event the Anglo-Saxon hates to go to law when it can possibly be avoided. He will not budge from his stand but he hates to be disagreeable. It is such a nuisance. When the same result can be quietly effected without a clash or scandal or public notice, it is infinitely to be preferred. The fact that sex is involved (which of course is not to be dragged into the open) makes such tactics peculiarly desirable. In terms of tendency the sex-censorship may be particularly described as tending towards the ideal of secrecy.⁴²

Indeed, this is one of the ways in which the Public Morality Council operated: by making representations to libraries and publishers to restrict circulation of certain books. However, an irony of the censorship debate was shown in a cartoon by Will Dyson entitled 'Impure Literature !' and subtitled '[Moral reformers, in the name of the Young Person, are eager for the suppression of "improper" novels in which women novelists, by the way, do such a brisk trade.]' This cartoon showed three elderly men in tails discussing the issue, whilst one of the 'Right-Thinking' people tells the others, '*What we need, my dear Sirs, is legislation to prevent our daughters*

from reading the novels they have written!'.⁴³ This exposes the irony at the heart of the debate: women were to be protected from what they actually already knew. For middle-class men, daughters were clearly a problematic category, breaking secrets they were meant to keep, including the secret that they were not innocent.

One of these 'daughters' was Norah C. James, whose novel *Sleeveless Errand* became the focus of legal and media attention. James worked for the publisher Jonathan Cape as manager of their advertising department, and the critic and publishers' reader Edward Garnett's report on the novel called it 'a real diagnosis of the War generation's neurotics.'⁴⁴ Eric Partridge, James's publisher, wrote an account of the book's suppression:

The book was to have appeared on February 21, 1929, but on the previous evening, at about six o'clock, the two biggest exporting booksellers had their stock seized; at eight, two plain-clothes officers came to my flat and insisted that I should take them forthwith to the office: no, they wouldn't wait till the morning. They removed all the copies from 30 Museum Street and noted the name of every bookseller to whom the book had been delivered. Next morning they lost no time in rounding up the book, both in London and the provinces: there must have been a lot of telephoning done from police-headquarters that night ... The book may fairly be said to have been suppressed before publication. On March 1st, at Bow Street, I had to show reason why the book should not be destroyed (you see where lies the onus of proof): this I, or rather my counsel, failed to do.⁴⁵

The Times reported the Bow Street proceedings, and a summary of the novel was given to the court by Mr. Percival Clarke, who was acting for the Director of Public Prosecutions. Clarke told the court that:

The book itself was a novel of 239 pages. The story concerned a period of two days, and was told in the form of conversation by persons entirely devoid of decency and morality, who for the most part were under the influence of drink, and who not only tolerated but even advocated adultery and promiscuous fornication. Filthy language and indecent situations appeared to be the keynote of the book. He (counsel) did not pretend to be a literary critic, but it seemed to him to be degrading that such a collection of obscene matter should be published by any respectable firm. It was the aim of some writers to pass off as literature matter which could only have a degrading, immoral influence, and which tended to excite unhealthy passions; and to command a market by writing daring and corrupt stories.⁴⁶

The policy with regard to censorship was contradictory and uneven so that Eric Partridge was not given the possibility of a secret collusion between police and publisher in which he agreed to withdraw *Sleeveless Errand* from publication and it was prosecuted with the maximum of publicity.

It was mainly through the efforts of the editor of *The Sunday Express*, James Douglas, who published an article about Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* on 18th August 1928 under the headline 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed', that the law became involved in this case.⁴⁷ According to Sally Cline, he:

Called upon his readers to defend their country, to defend their religion, to protect their children and protect England's tradition of fine literature. He labelled homosexuality a plague, youth and children its victims, the British press its scourge.⁴⁸

Employing a rhetoric of homosexuality as 'pestilence', 'plague', a 'leprosy of those lepers' which society had the task of 'cleansing' from 'its unutterable putrefaction', he famously said that he 'would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid rather than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul.'⁴⁹ He ended by saying :

Let me warn our novelists and our men of letters that literature as well as morality is in peril. Fiction of this type is an injury to good literature. It makes the profession of literature fall into disrepute. Literature has not yet recovered from the harm done to it by the Oscar Wilde scandal. It should keep its house in order.⁵⁰

Diana Souhami, in *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall*, says that the male establishment found the book disturbing. She argues that it:

Was not the state of literature that disturbed them. They did not care about literature. It was passion between women. They feared its acceptance if Radclyffe Hall was heard. They had their view of a woman's place and they intended to legislate against it.⁵¹

However, the way in which the debate took place suggests that 'the state of literature' *did* bother them as much as lesbianism. The Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Archibald Bodkin, wrote to the Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, that the book 'was the more dangerous because of its literary character'.⁵² Its literariness, in other words, gave it a certain authority.

The processes by which books became banned was accompanied by a rhetoric in which literature, the body and the nation were tied up together. In general debates about so-called immoral, indecent and obscene literature, the words filth, poison, unsavoury, revolting, disgusting, pernicious and polluting were routinely

used as threats to the nation and its 'virility'. Although reading indecent literature was credited with the power to make one behave immorally, not everyone accepted a simple relationship between reading and behaviour. A. P. Herbert wrote to *The Times* to argue that:

The majority of the population are not reading books about successful sexual aberration: they are reading books, and seeing plays, about successful murders, robberies, and embezzlements, about charming crooks and attractive burglars. And if there is any substance in the view that the literature of wrongdoing has a demoralizing effect upon popular conduct, we should be suffering now from an unprecedented wave of crime (which is not the case), and Mr. Edgar Wallace should be locked up (which would be a pity).⁵³

However, those who argued for, or against, the introduction of a censor for literature on the grounds that there was a censor for films shared a similar rhetoric: that literature is something which the reader ingests bodily, for good or ill. A letter to *The Times* suggested that:

One does not willingly eat food which causes indigestion or other organic complaints, but so little thought is so often given to the food which corrupts and clouds the mind. There is a wide difference between reading and many other subjects, and when reading of good literature is encouraged it has a powerful edifying influence over the mind and character of readers.⁵⁴

The letter received this reply:

I have no doubt that to the moral dyspeptic many things written today (and not only today) are thoroughly indigestible. I do not believe they can do any harm to a healthy appetite. Of course ... it is the same as with food. But that some unfortunate people are easily upset is no reason why their normal fellows should deny themselves curry and lobster mayonnaise.⁵⁵

The question appeared to be whether some literature could poison the body or be benevolent, even if shocking. Geoffrey Faber had written to *The Times*, fearing that free speech in literature was endangered by the actions of the Secretary of State, who spoke of his office 'as if it were an engine for the moral regeneration of the people.' Faber had argued that the forces that make changes in moral ideas are the 'life-blood of a free people'. His letter elicited this reply:

These forces may *poison* the life-blood of the people; or they may purify and enrich it. But, says Mr. Faber, without drawing any distinction, they ought to be allowed 'to find expression in literature, and to enter the incessant battle of ideas which is the continual salvation of the race.' Most certainly it is important that literature should enter the battle; but on which side? To foster and preserve the healthy, *virile* character of the nation, on which the maintenance of its greatness ultimately depends? or to *inoculate* the minds of

the people, and more particularly the young, with the *poison* of vice and impurity? [My italics] ⁵⁶

Literature should be on the side of national virility, not poisoning the people and endangering England. A literature which could poison the life-blood of the people, and concomitantly the virility of the nation, was generally contrasted with the healthiness obtained from the open-air life found in the English countryside and writings about this life.⁵⁷

Given that a rhetoric of disallowed books as poison was deployed in arguments about them, Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection, in which she argues that identity is derived from abjecting maternal origins, can clarify the character of the process by which the masculinity/virility of the nation and the national subject is arrived at. Indecent literature was written of in terms of poison and disgust and the need to expel it from the body of the reader, the body of the book, and therefore from the body of the nation in order to ensure a virility partly derived from its feminine other. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva writes of the abject that it:

Has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to *I*. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded, and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. ⁵⁸

One might understand the '*I*' as England, carrying the preferred qualities of Englishness, and banned books as 'the jettisoned object', the not/*I*, the not/England. Although some books were abjected because they led to the loss of certain meanings of Englishness, nonetheless they shared similar qualities to nationally acceptable texts. *The Well of Loneliness*, for example, in its deployment of the country estate as metonymic for England valorised England as rurally-based and the heroine's desire is equally oriented toward England as it is toward lesbianism. The abjection of texts such as this was implicated in the constitution of the acceptable '*I*' of England and its identity. Ultimately, the abject points to death, the corpse and their links with maternal origins, as the place of the final collapse of all meaning. Although the abject is

connected to the 'improper and unclean',⁵⁹ it is 'not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.'⁶⁰ When the 'Pioneer Policewoman', Mary Sophia Allen, published her memoirs in 1936, she discussed how policewomen, in 'an absolutely vital national need', had policed shops selling indecent literature by deploying the trope of children corrupted by such literature 'with all that is lewd and *pōisonous* stirred up like noisome *mud* in their minds.' [My italics]⁶¹ Her metaphoric call on noxious 'mud' suggests something of the lack of order and boundaries that the unformed fluidity of mud implies in contrast to the social order that hard, firm earth indicates. In Kristevan terms, this mud caused by indecent literature disturbed national system and order, and existed in contradistinction to the valued national literature the Newbolt Report spoke of as being native to the 'soil'. But if children were a category in need of protection from indecent literature, so too were the categories of 'schoolgirls', 'daughters', women and the working class. What precisely were they being protected from? What characterised these censored texts?

A Young Girl's Diary was restricted to being read by professional people. So what disruptive powers did this text contain such that some English people, and in particular 'daughters', had to be protected from its potentially corrupting influence?⁶² The text deals with layer upon layer of forbidden knowledges that the young girl has to negotiate her way through to some understanding of sex and sexual acts, menstruation, childbirth, venereal disease, prostitution and abortion, whilst simultaneously withholding from her family the knowledge that she actually possesses. Therefore, she writes to herself in diary form, a private rather than public form, conscious of the fact that she is only ever writing to herself. For example, at 'Xmas', she writes: 'I shan't write down all the things I got, because I've no time, and besides I know anyhow.'⁶³ However, the irony of this writing is that in becoming a public document it simultaneously became suppressed into a more private realm precisely because of the knowledge it displayed. The knowledge returns to her anonymous self, and to those who might treat her as an object of knowledge for their

professional purposes, rather than circulating among a readership of similarly (un)knowledgeable girls. That a girl should not have such knowledges is made clear by the textual attempts to preserve her anonymity, and the extra-textual attempts to preserve other girls from reading the published diary. The extent of her sexual knowledge was clearly threatening to a sense of what an English girl should be: innocent of sexual knowledge, and her subjectivity defined by more powerful others than by herself or her peers. This writing girl exists in dissonance with the social expectations that are laid upon her. It is partly also the very fact of her writing that is uncomfortable, since a girl should not act/write with authority. Language is problematic for her: everything in language, ultimately, has a second meaning, which can be related to sex, so that she destroys language for her reader, reducing it to meaninglessness. She writes that her sister Dora:

Told me a great deal, especially the names of certain parts, and about *fertilisation*, and about the microscopic baby which really comes from the husband, and not as Hella and I had thought, from the wife. And how one knows when a woman is *fruitful*. That is really an awful word. In fact almost every word has a second meaning of *that* sort, and what Dora says is quite true, one must be fearfully careful when one is talking. Dora thinks it would be best to make a list of such words, but there are such a frightful lot of them that one never could. The only thing one can do is to be awfully careful; but one soon gets used to it. Still it happened to Dora the other day that she said to V.: I don't want any *intercourse*. And that really means 'the utmost gifts of love,' so Mad. told her. But V. was so well-mannered that he did not show that he noticed anything; and it did not occur to Dora until afterwards what she had said. It's really awfully stupid that every ordinary word should have such a meaning. I shall be frightfully careful what I say now, so that I shan't use any words with two meanings.⁶⁴

If all language relates back to heterosexual sexual acts, the girl makes it clear that she and her friends think of these acts as strangely absurd. At the bottom of language lies the absurdity of heterosexuality, and its 'otherness'. The girls of this text function like a Bakhtinian laughing chorus undermining the pomposity of heterosexual masculine culture, as the following extract shows:

June 4th. We understand now *what* Father meant the other day when he was speaking about Dr. Diller and his wife and said: 'But they don't suit one another at all.' I thought at the time he only meant that it looks so absurd for so tiny a woman to go about with a big strong man. But that's only a minor thing; the main point is something quite different!!!! Hella and I look at all couples now who go by arm in arm, thinking about them from *that* point of view, and it amuses us so much as we are going home that we can hardly keep from laughing.⁶⁵

Girls were not meant to look at culture and laugh it into absurdity and meaninglessness. The prerogative of looking and making knowledge claims lay with professional white men, and this piece of writing was a challenge to the seriousness with which the girls should have viewed men and heterosexuality. But it is an uncomfortable thing when positions are reversed: the professional reader who expected his view of the world to hold authority is challenged by a writing subject who makes him, like the girl's Father, an object to be looked at and examined in a search for meaning. This is especially uncomfortable when meaning is made, only to be dissolved in laughter. Even though the girl's sister begins to act more seriously in refusing to discuss sexual matters, the girl herself refuses to collude with patriarchal structures of power since between friends who share equal power relations:

There can be no orders and forbiddings ... All I said last night was: 'Of course Mother has forbidden you to talk to me about *certain things* ; do you call that a friendship? Then she said very gently: 'No, Rita, Mother has not forbidden me, but I recognise now that it was thoughtless of me to talk to you about those things; one learns the seriousness of life quite soon enough.' I burst out laughing and said: 'Is *that* what you call the seriousness of life? Have you really forgotten how screamingly funny we found it all? It seems to me that your memory has been affected by the mud baths.' ⁶⁶

Her analysis of 'orders and forbiddings' as only able to operate within unequal power relationships is ironic given the social 'orders and forbiddings' which operated around the text itself. This highlights the 'girl' as a figure who should be ordered by powers above her and forbidden to speak. Here, the noisome mud which corrupts the young in Mary Allen's account becomes an explanatory mechanism for what the girl perceives as her sister's muddled thinking, in which the absurdity of heterosexuality is the meaningful 'seriousness of life'. But if her sister accepts that heterosexuality is serious, the girl does not, and this is another problematic in the text. What makes life meaningful for her and her best friend, Hella, is their shared love for their schoolmistress, Frau Professor Theyer. Recounting how the school day felt long as they waited to visit her later, the girl wrote:

Still 2 hours, it's awful, Hella is coming to fetch me at 1/2 past 3. In school today we kept on looking at one another, and all the other girls thought it must be something to do with a man. Goodness, what do we care about a man now! ... I'm able to write now: It was heavenly! We had to walk up and down in

front of her house for at least 1/2 an hour, until at last it was 5 minutes past 4. She was so sweet to us ... We talked of all sorts of things, I don't know what, only that I suddenly burst out crying, and then she drew me to her b- - , no, I can't write that about her; she drew me to herself and then I felt *her heart beating!* ⁶⁷

The use of ellipsis in the writing suggests that behind the '*certain things*' which can be written of lies something so forbidden it can only be represented by a blank or an erasure. Clearly, this erasure represents the forbidden eroticism of lesbianism. The text of the diary abruptly ends as Hella divorces herself from an interest in Frau Professor Theyer, leaving the girl with something so unmentionable it cannot even be discussed with her peers.

Evening. Hella may come; it will be splendid! Perhaps we shall try a little skiing. But really Hella is a horrid pig; she said: 'All right, I'll come, if you'll promise not to be continually talking about Frau Professor Th. I'm very fond of her too, but you are simply crazy about her.' It's really too bad, and I shall never mention *her* name to the others any more. ⁶⁸

This is the last entry, and the point at which writing stops, with the girl's unmentionable craziness for another woman.

Just as lesbianism is both displayed and erased in this text, the girl's writing, too, is made public only to be erased. Beyond the challenge of recognising her as a speaking subject, the text also suggests other challenges to patriarchal culture. If the fact of her writing threatens, so too do the things she writes. She knows that in a patriarchal society her brother receives preferential treatment. She does not uphold class boundaries, by being too familiar with the servants, and is reprimanded by her father who sees this familiarity as a corrupting influence. She makes public what other families keep private by writing of the scandal in which her brother is involved, and in this way breaks the pact of family secrecy and its respectability. However, given that the rhetorical figure of 'the schoolgirl' was utilised in arguing both for and against literary censorship, this particular schoolgirl's knowledges affronted both positions in the debate. The 'schoolgirl'/'daughter' was called upon as someone in need of protection from obscene and immoral literature and, conversely, as the figure that it was unfair to make English Literature conform to in terms of appropriate reading matter. Both positions, though, agreed on her innocence. She was a useful figure to

deploy, if, as Fischer and Dubois had stated, women's naturally perverse sexual desires had been let loose by the war. A return to the figure of the supposedly sexually innocent girl who had not yet become 'woman' might allow a new control of a generation of young girls coming to womanhood, who had not yet had their 'perversity' unleashed. However, this girl is clearly not sexually innocent, and as such must be abjected in order to maintain the identity of the 'innocent girl'.

Girls were not the only speaking subjects whose texts came before the law in one way or another. Prostitutes, too, could be freely spoken about as presenting social problems, but not speak for themselves.⁶⁹ Sheila Cousin's *To Beg I Am Ashamed* purported to be the autobiography of a lady prostitute. The family of this young woman included a clergyman, a university reader, a knighted cousin and a woman given an O.B.E. for her war service. The narrator is cultured, going to plays by Shaw and Galsworthy, able to discuss Burns, Gibbon and Jane Austen, and living in a flat with 'books, a couple of goodish pictures and a piano with volumes of music.'⁷⁰ Her writing style is fluent, authoritative and self-reflexive, and her ability to judge the quality of the pictures in her flat puts her into the Leavisite minority, on which

the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is (apart from cases of the simple and familiar) only a few who are capable of unprompted, first-hand judgement. They are still a small minority, though a larger one [than previously], who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgement by genuine personal response... The minority capable not only of appreciating Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Hardy (to take major instances) but of recognising their latest successors constitute the consciousness of the race (or of a branch of it) at a given time... Upon this minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition.⁷¹

So, disturbingly, could the 'consciousness of the race', the 'finest human experience' and the 'subtlest parts of tradition' be held by a prostitute, and indeed a prostitute who mixes with 'pansies', lesbians and those whose sexual activities cross racial barriers? This would go against the grain of all commonly held ordered English social values, and indeed suggests a problem hidden within a Leavisite view. This first-hand judgement of art and literature depends not upon any objective criteria, but instead

upon the person who makes the judgement. Only certain people's judgements count, and those of prostitutes do not count when judging the value of art.

Shannon Bell, in *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, argues that '[m]odernity through a process of othering has produced "the prostitute" as the other of the other: the other within the categorical other "woman".' ⁷² In this way, the prostitute 'was produced as a negative identity by the bourgeois subject, an empty symbol filled from the outside with the debris of the modern body/ body politic, a sign to women to sublimate their libidinal body in their reproductive body.'⁷³ Tracing a rhetoric which links the diseased and polluting body of the prostitute to that of the degenerate lesbian and also that of the mother, she demonstrates the abjection of the prostitute from both a Kristevan and Freudian perspective. The figure of the prostitute leads one to maternal origins which is the place of unboundaried bodies, and where social and cultural order are not yet in place, so that meaning collapses. She represents Freud as:

The first to point out that the conscious mind of the male creates the split between the asexual idealized woman and the sexual prostitute as a defence against the unity of the sexual and the maternal in the unconscious. ⁷⁴

Arguing that Freud, in common with many other writers, describes the prostitute as an ambiguous figure, Bell posits that for:

Freud the whore/mother split has its origin in the Oedipus Complex when a male child represses his desire for his mother and idealizes her. When the child realises that his parents engage in the 'ugly sexual behaviour of the rest of the world,' the mother/whore difference is collapsed: 'the difference between his mother and a whore is ... not so very great, since at bottom they both do the same thing.' Freud constructs both an unconscious unity of the female body (the image of the mother and whore as one) and a conscious splitting of the unified image into a duality of female types: the maternal and the prostitute. ⁷⁵

In order for national social meaning to be made, the prostitute figures both as a line of defence for men and a prohibition for women. For men, she figures to defend them from a lapse into the meaninglessness their association with the maternal entails, and for women, she figures to enforce the reproductive body as opposed to the 'un(re)productive' body. ⁷⁶ The heterosexual woman's body should be caught up in reproduction for the nation, whereas the non-heterosexual woman's body has a

sexuality which belongs to her rather than the nation, and as such represents a national danger.⁷⁷

However, English society, as viewed from the position of the prostitute, is turned on its head by the prostitute speaking from the position of the nationally unproductive. *To Beg I Am Ashamed*, in deploying a speaking subject prostitute, disorders the gender and sexuality relations of Englishness. The narrator is the viewer and producer of knowledge of men, reducing them to a function of their sexual desires, by calling them 'my high-heel man' or 'a button-boot man'; and given that these clients are professional men, such as clergymen, all culture which they might possess by virtue of their education and professional position is reduced to nothing but their own sexual desire.⁷⁸ This makes men like women, in that they become nothing but their own perverse sexuality.⁷⁹

Dialogically responding to masculine views of her, the narrator redescribes both herself and the propriety of an upper middle-class lifestyle. Her mother 'found there was little romantic in being wife, cook and general servant to a man she loathed'.⁸⁰ Orphaned as a young girl, her mother:

Came into a small income of her own and went to live, on her holidays, with guardians who had a large and blank-faced house somewhere on the south side of London. They were respectable people, so respectable that it was difficult to believe that they were really alive. The reading of *The Times* at breakfast was like a second kind of Sunday service.⁸¹

The blankness of the house mirrors the blankness she sees in English culture and the respectability of marriage. She is positioned as having an inheritance which derives from the English Home Counties and its respectable middle-class Englishness, but the text makes clear this inheritance cannot protect the narrator from 'degeneration' into prostitution. Middle-class English decency and respectability cannot ensure its own continuity through its children. However, the narrator refuses the male-defined subjectivity of the prostitute, arguing that:

I don't suppose a doctor is expected, out of his surgery, to give free medical advice to his acquaintances. When he has put down his stethoscope, I imagine, he sheds his profession and becomes a man. The prostitute, in the eyes of the ordinary male, never sheds her profession. For her, he believes firmly, there should be no off-duty hours. He pursues her, in season and out of season, with his needs, as his women do with their contempt.⁸²

Having judged her profession against that of medicine, she then goes on to claim that professional ability for herself. Asserting that 'the prostitute today needs to be half a psycho-analyst', she analyses her clients as:

Incapable of genuine emotion themselves; they need the display of it desperately in others. So they must fight out a cobwebbed battle with their own daydreams over my helpless body. Often enough they are puritans on a holiday from their conscience.⁸³

But her analysis is more than that: it is also couched in a literary language deploying such metaphors as 'cobwebbed battles'. This literariness lies alongside straightforward, short, authoritative and dialogic sentences which examine their own construction, such as 'I cannot be put upon. If you want my body, you must pay for it. However odd the adjective may sound, there is, to me, something clean about that.'⁸⁴ This cleanliness exists in contradiction to the term 'filth' which was applied to both such behaviour and such literature. The text refuses an association of the prostitute with the abject, and as such breaks with an English order which abjects the prostitute to ensure the properly controlled sexual identity of the 'Englishwoman'. Since the text refused to abject itself, its exclusion came from outside, and its banning ensured its exclusion from the national literature.

Like the young girl of the diary who breaks with her family secrecy, the prostitute of this text breaks with her class allegiance, by revealing the sexual secrets of her middle-class clients, those who are held to be pillars of a community. As such, she brings these community underpinnings into disrepute. Since 'respectability' was a key marker of that class, the loss of respectability entailed the subsequent loss of class. The two texts share a way of undermining middle-class culture by revealing the secrets which lie behind it, so that it loses its meaning.

The problem of the loss of meaning is also apparent in Norah C. James's *Sleeveless Errand*. The two main characters in this text, Paula and Bill, are clear that the war has destroyed meaning for them both. Seeing death so frequently, and at such close hand, Bill has stopped believing in god, and in the nation as the 'land fit for heroes and all that bunkum!'.⁸⁵ Paula has found that suffrage offers less

than she expected. That the pair only meet by accident contributes to the general lack of belief in any meaningful force at work in human society and activity. Paula has decided to kill herself because her lover has rejected her, while Bill has just discovered the wife he thought so decent (because he met her at the tennis club) is having an affair with another man. Newspaper reports about the trial involving this book would not allow the reader to believe that morality is a concern of these two, but, in fact, they discuss it and are also self-reflective about drinking and swearing. Talking about their generation, Paula tells Bill in despair:

We sneer at goodness and decency whenever we come across it. We're bored with people who aren't bawdy. We call them prigs and prudes if they don't want to talk about copulation at lunchtime and buggery at dinner. We despise people who don't swill down booze as we do.⁸⁶

But if their generation presents a challenge to the moral ideas of the previous one, Paula is clear that her and Bill's generation has been made immoral by the influence of the one which waged the war, and she tells him regretfully:

As a whole we don't seem to have any moral values left at all - not much wonder, considering the war banged every pre-conceived theory to bits. What chance had we of keeping our heads when all around us we saw the extremes that are a part of it? Excess and intense privation, ruthless discipline and loose living; the highest awards made to men for the destruction of the enemy, and hanging the murderer for the same action of taking human life. Imprisoning men whose conscience would not let them fight, and shouting that war was altogether wrong, and must never again be allowed. The Church, too. What a failure! Crying from the pulpits for men to join up and help exterminate the Germans, and reading from the Gospels commands which said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' How could we keep our heads in that damnable contradictory babel?⁸⁷

Indeed, this text is an indictment of the generation responsible for the prosecution of the war, and it is a matter of interest that court reports neglect this aspect of the text in favour of one which accuses the writer and publisher of immorality.

There are two themes present in *Sleeveless Errand* which refuse tropes and figures of the post-war period as the nation attempted to re-constitute itself. The first is that of the English countryside, and the second that of the literate and literary person holding the Leavisite 'consciousness of the race'. If the English countryside was the figure used to encourage men to have something to fight for during the war, it was also called upon after the war as both the place one judged the war against and the

location which could renew the health and virility of the nation. As such, it represented the site where what the nation meant in the past and present, and what it could mean in the future, was worked out. So, for example, Bill measures the awfulness of his brother's death in the war against a memory of the pair of them playing as boys in a country Rectory garden. However, this same English countryside cannot provide enough meaning for Paula to continue her life. Arriving at the field on the cliff edge where she intends to commit suicide by driving her car over it, she is struck by its beauty:

The mist had vanished from off the sea and the horizon lay a faint purple line in the distance. As she looked ahead, the sky was suddenly split by a golden crack, through which the sunlight poured. The moment this happened, the birds awoke with startling suddenness. A thrush called richly from a tiny wood on her right. A lark shot upwards, its notes falling in a cascade of sound as it rose. Colour streamed back into the hills and trees and sky.

Paula thought,

‘God, it’s so beautiful ! I’m glad I’ve seen it like this at the last.’⁸⁸

Whereas in other contexts this form of beauty in English nature would be meaningful, in this text, even though Paula finds it beautiful and is glad to have seen it, it is meaningless in that it only precedes death: she still commits suicide. The English countryside cannot guarantee enough meaning for Paula. In relation to the sense of cultural despair she identifies, and of which she herself is a symptom, the countryside is too impotent a force to counter this despair. Neither can her immersion in literary culture ward off death. A reader of ‘James Joyce, Conrad, The Week-End Book, Edna St. Vincent Millay, H. G. Wells, Freud, and Liam O’Flaherty ... besides a host of other names’, like Sheila Cousins’s prostitute, she belonged to that Leavisite minority who ‘keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition’, and who provide for the majority a way ‘of profiting by the finest human experience of the past’.⁸⁹ Clearly though, being dead, Paula was incapable of this. Literature, too, is an impotent force in countering her despair. The most powerful tropes of the nation, its literature and its countryside, were inadequate in preserving any meaningful life for Paula. It is this, I would like to suggest, that presented the bigger challenge for the post-war society than the filthy language and immoral characters the text was suppressed for. Since the text makes both the countryside and literature abject, in that

they become meaningless and cannot prevent death, then it presents a real challenge to re-imagining the nation. From where can the latter derive its identity if its land and literature cannot provide an identity for England and Englishness? It seems almost inevitable that the book should be banned, since by making the book itself abject and excluding it from the nation, England could continue to re-constitute its identity as immersed in countryside and literature.

Sharing a similarly problematic relationship between countryside, literature and morality, the three main banned texts which provided an enormous amount of public debate about censorship were James Joyce's *Ulysses*, burnt at Folkestone in 1923, D. H. Lawrence's 1928 *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, famously tried in 1928. What do these texts reveal about land and literature that make them antithetical to Englishness?⁹⁰

In the case of *Ulysses*, it must be remembered, the text was printed abroad and written by a foreigner, an Irishman, so how could it challenge a reconstitution of Englishness? I would like to argue that the challenge to Englishness lay in its narrative form and thematic content. For a society which was attempting to re-make meaning after the loss of national coherence the war had entailed, a narrative form which appeared meaningless was a challenge to this project, but also its thematic content upset the grammar of the nation. So, for example, Buck Mulligan and Stephen Dedalus disturb order by sharing a handkerchief with which Buck 'cleans' his razor as they gaze out to sea:

- Lend us a loan of your noserag to wipe my razor.

Stephen suffered him to pull out and hold up on show by its corner a dirty crumpled handkerchief. Buck Mulligan wiped the razorblade neatly. Then, gazing over the handkerchief, he said:

- The Bard's noserag. A new art colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen. You can almost taste it, can't you?

He mounted to the parapet again and gazed out over Dublin bay, his fair oakpale hair stirring slightly.

- God, he said quietly. Isn't the sea what Algy calls it: a grey sweet mother? The snotgreen sea. The scrotumtightening sea.⁹¹

It is not only the lack of clean boundaries between the dirty handkerchief and razor that is abject, but also the lack of boundary between vision and taste, such that the colour of snot, or snot itself, is almost savourable.⁹² More importantly, though, the

suggestion that bodily fluids might be appropriately elevated to become an emblem of national literature reduces literature itself to the level of the abject by the association of the two. Snot is a particularly abject bodily fluid: existing in a state between clear fluidity and firmness, it contradicts a boundary between wet and dry, between hard and soft. But bodily fluids anyway present a challenge to the notion of inside/outside, the self and other, being neither one thing nor the other.⁹³ If some non-threatening body parts are appropriate to literature, such as arms and legs, the scrotum is not, belonging to the realm of the obscene because of its association with sexual activity.

One of the striking themes in *Ulysses* is Dedalus's haunting by his dead mother: maternal origins are ever-present, as is the presence of the corpse - the final collapse of all meaning, as Kristeva argues. In the following, the corpse and maternal origins are bound together:

Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting.⁹⁴

This corpse does not maintain a boundary between the living and the dead since its breath and its odour can invade the body of Stephen. He can inhale her odour such that she is inside him. However, she can be projected onto the viewed landscape in the form of the sea, making a national landscape/seascape a place where the maternal is inescapable. Her abjection is the landscape's abjection: the bile in her bowl is equivalent to the sea ringed by the bay. The corpse also destroys the certainty of gender, being in this state neither masculine nor feminine. Stephen's mother's body becomes an 'it' in death. If corpses do not uphold gender distinctions, neither do they maintain a boundary between human and landscape. In *Ulysses*, corpses leak into land so that:

The soil would be quite fat with corpse manure, bones, flesh, nails, charnelhouses. Dreadful. Turning green and pink, decomposing. Rot quick in damp earth. The lean old ones tougher. Then a kind of a tallowy kind of a cheesy. Then begin to get black, treacle oozing out of them. Then dried up. Deathmoths. Of course the cells or whatever they are go on living. Changing

about. Live for ever practically. Nothing to feed on feed on themselves. But they must breed a devil of a lot of maggots. Soil must be simply swirling with them.⁹⁵

This particular view of corpses counters a view English society was propagating about the Unknown Warrior. This national hero, who was interred in Westminster Abbey in 1920, stood in for all the war dead, and particularly those who had not been buried, or those who had been buried without any identification. As such, he was emblematic for a nation in mourning - a corpse of enormous cultural importance, since the actual corpse simultaneously did not possess an identity and did possess one as 'unknown warrior'. Instead of an individual or social identity, the corpse had a national one. Out of death, and through him, national identity could be re-made. In him, the meaninglessness of the corpse and the meaningfulness of the nation could be set in dialogue in order to make the corpse become meaningful. Anxieties about whether the war dead were decomposing and dismembered corpses, or whether they were identifiable bodies, was haunting the post-war generation. The attempt to re-constitute the nation became caught up in a desire to re-constitute these dismembered masculine national bodies of the Great War. Writings about this particular corpse were careful not to summon up images of decomposition, instead talking of the various corpses from which the warrior was chosen as distinct and discrete 'bodies'. In 1929, the *British Legion Journal* wrote of the process by which the body came back to England:

The Unknown Warrior was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey on Armistice Day, November 11th, 1920. Somewhere in the vicinity of Ypres there is an empty grave from whence, two days earlier, the poor body was removed to be brought home for this last interment ... The grave was opened secretly, and the body, being reverently taken out, was placed in a deal coffin and transported in a military waggon, by road from the misty plains of Flanders to Boulogne.⁹⁶

The 'empty grave' suggests a distinct space that a body had occupied, a body that did not ooze into its surroundings like the Joycean corpse, so that when removed the earth could collapse in on itself. A gap is left where a body had been. Ten years later, in 1939, another article in the *British Legion Journal* discussed the choice of the Unknown Warrior:

It was the duty of six subalterns to select one unmarked grave upon each battlefield. Sometimes the grim little party stopped beside some solitary cross and started their digging, sometimes they approached those great forest-like clumps of crosses and searched among those till they found one that was nameless. Six corpses were soon laid bare. What there was of these was well-preserved, for the French soil bears the quality of preservation.⁹⁷

If the 'body' of 1929 had turned into a 'corpse' by 1939, then anxieties about its state were put to rest by the remarkably preservative qualities of French soil, so that it could still be seen as a whole entity. Clearly, though, this was an important national question in the interwar years, from the time it was mooted to bring a body back to England soon after the war, until 1939 and the start of the next war. The Joycean focus on the decomposing corpse could only upset the grammar of the nation, as it re-made meaning through exorcising the effects of the Great War.

In contrast to Joyce's refusal of conventions of middle-class decency is Virginia Woolf's embracing of it. Since Woolf's writing is often described as similarly modernist to Joyce's and was not banned, it is interesting to compare the two. Woolf's character and themes, on the whole, were 'nice'. Unlike Joyce, her mainly upper-middle-class characters do not do such things as lend each other their handkerchiefs, look at the snot, and then let their consciousness roam around the subject. Although Virginia Woolf's writing in *Between The Acts*, her novel of interwar England, could be abject, it avoids this through a call on nation. At the beginning, the characters are discussing the council bringing water to the village and where the cesspool is to be situated:

The old man in the arm-chair - Mr Oliver, of the Indian Civil Service, retired - said that the site they had chosen for the cesspool was, if he heard aright, on the Roman road. From an aeroplane, he said, you could still see plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars.⁹⁸

A cesspool for the disposal of excreta and urine and as abject as snot could make the abject break out; however, it is contained by a reference to British history. The abjection of the cesspool is incorporated into the domestic and the landscape so that its meaning is distinct as part of the homeliness of this history, and nothing leaks from its

borders to disrupt this meaning. When built, the cesspool will be as plainly and clearly marked as the other changes on landscape. Kristeva suggests that:

The corpse is cesspool and death ... refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death ... If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything.⁹⁹

It is the meaning made by the nation that allows order to hold in Woolf's piece.

National history provides bordered, distinctly perceivable spaces on the landscape which contain the abject cesspool. The nation is simultaneously both the meaning that the corpse/cesspool would destroy and, in the face of this abjection, the nation is the meaningful identity that re-orders borders. No such national meaning holds in Joyce's piece, which links the nation with the abjection of snot, and whose representation of the decomposing corpse cannot exorcise the effects of the Great War.

The other two texts dealing with the social effects of the Great War which provoked public debate were *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Well of Loneliness*, and an analysis of these two text follows. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* might well have been seen as a central text in the literature of a nation concerned with 'virility', given that Lawrence's work glorified the phallus as a life-giving, reserrectionary force for a post-war society.¹⁰⁰ However, it was only privately published in its entirety in 1928 in Florence, because Lawrence's publishers, Secker, turned it down. Although an expurgated version was published in Britain in the interwar period, the unexpurgated text was not published until the 1960s. Why was this so? What did it contain to upset the virility of the nation?

In 1932, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke about the problematics of fiction, arguing that:

The film and the novel were at the present time sex-obsessed. They could not escape from it; it was the universal theme. In the novel of old-fashioned days the story of the people concerned, after going through various changes, ended in marriage. Now the story began with marriage, and then immediately some third person was introduced who brought in the complications of sex and the problem was set. It was a wholly artificial life conjured up by the imagination of writers, and he firmly believed it had no relationship to the *open-air and healthy* life which he believed the majority of people still led. [My italics]¹⁰¹

Lady Chatterley's Lover does indeed begin with the marriage of Constance and Clifford Chatterley, and the introduction of Mellors brings in 'the complications of sex'. However much Constance lives her 'open-air healthy life', walking in the woods everyday, and however much Mellors, too, living in his isolated country cottage and working out of doors breathes this air, the pair are not inoculated into sexlessness by it, or made moral in a nationally acceptable way. The text posits an alternative morality in which the countryside guarantees and underpins their adulterous cross-class relationship which results in Constance's illegitimate pregnancy. However, in more hegemonic views of the English countryside, this was not meant to be its function. The open-air should have upheld heterosexual marriage relations, as the Bishop suggests.

In many ways, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is very 'English', employing tropes such as the country-house as a vehicle for examining the state-of-the-nation in order to diagnose its lack of virility. The master of the house is dead from the waist down after a war injury, and therefore cannot provide an active phallic masculinity for the nation. It suggests heterosexuality for women as the only way that their lives can have meaning and upholds the importance of white racial identity for the nation. The textually valorised Mellors has a 'slim white back', 'slender white arms', 'pure, delicate, white loins, and 'white, solitary nudity'.¹⁰² Constance has 'ivory-gleaming legs'.¹⁰³ Referring back to Kristeva's theory of abjection, in which identity is derived from expelling the 'not I' from 'the I', it seems that the very Englishness of the text, in conjunction with its abjection through censorship, help to create an identity for England and Englishness that repudiates so-called bad language, explicit descriptions of sexual activity and the breaking of class allegiances by women, and is both anti-lesbian and anti-black. Mellors tells Constance that:

'I thought there was no real sex left: never a woman who'd really "come" naturally with a man: except black women, and somehow, well, we're white men: and they're a bit like mud.'¹⁰⁴

It is this immersion in 'mud' that undermines the virility of the nation, since the national masculine body cannot maintain clear boundaries within the disorder mud

implies, and concomitantly the maintenance of 'the race' relies on reproduction ordered in distinct racial categories by heterosexual women. For Mellors, lesbianism is an outrage against men's 'decency' that undermines his social/sexual self.

Bemoaning the lack of good sexual partners, he tells Constance:

'Then there's the sort that puts you out before you really "come", and go on writhing against your loins till they bring themselves off against your thighs. But they're mostly the Lesbian sort. It's astonishing how Lesbian women are, consciously or unconsciously. Seems to me they're nearly all Lesbian.'

'And do you mind?' asked Connie.

'I could kill them. When I'm with a woman who's really Lesbian, I fairly howl in my soul, wanting to kill her.'

'And what do you do?'

'Just go away as fast as I can.'

'But do you think Lesbian women any worse than homosexual men?'

'I do ! Because I've suffered more from them. In the abstract, I've no idea. When I get with a Lesbian woman, whether she knows she's one or not, I see red. No, no ! But I wanted to have nothing to do with any woman any more. I wanted to keep to myself: keep my privacy and my decency.'¹⁰⁵

On the basis of Mellors's evidence, one might think that England was fairly crawling with lesbians in the interwar period and that one would have been lucky to meet a heterosexual woman. For Mellors, lesbians are abject, representing a national degeneracy against which he works out his own version of Englishness and morality.

In 1921, Parliament considered whether to extend the law against male homosexuality to include acts between women. Speakers debating this in the House of Commons deployed a rhetoric around race, nation and marriage. Mr Macquisten argued that the strength of the nation depended on outlawing lesbianism, saying that:

These moral weaknesses date back to the very origin of history, and when they grow or become prevalent in any nation or any country, it is the beginning of the nation's downfall. The falling away of feminine morality was to a large extent the cause of the destruction of the early Grecian civilisation, and still more the cause of the downfall of the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁶

Part of the problem of lesbianism, besides bringing about the nation's downfall, was that it meant lesbians poached men's wives. He told the House:

Only tonight I was speaking with a man whom I have known for a comparatively short time, and who told me how his home had been ruined by the wiles of one abandoned female, who had pursued his wife, and later some other misconduct happened with a male person which enabled him to get a divorce. But for that he would have been shackled for life to that abandoned person, who had forgotten the dictates of Nature and morality.¹⁰⁷

Lesbianism, therefore, was a crime against men and marriage as much as against the nation. Colonel Wedgwood, agreeing that '[t]his is very objectionable vice', felt that:

You cannot make people moral by an Act of Parliament. To call in the policeman to suppress a vice is the best way to encourage the knowledge of that vice, and the spread of it. This vice, in particular, is obviously one which cannot be suppressed by law.¹⁰⁸

Sir E. Wild responded with the proviso that this was indeed 'a beastly subject', and that whilst it was an unwanted intrusion 'to pollute the House with details of these abominations', nonetheless it was a racial problem and had to be discussed:

This vice does exist, and it saps the fundamental institutions of society. In the first place it stops childbirth, because it is a well-known fact that any woman who indulges in this vice will have nothing to do with the other sex. It debauches young girls, and it produces neurasthenia and insanity. Anybody who is really interested in the punishment of the vice would desire that the law should be clothed with power which can only be exercised if there be proper proof to put down a vice that must tend to cause our *race* to decline. [My italics]¹⁰⁹

If, as a 'well-known fact', women who indulged lesbian tendencies would have nothing to do with the opposite sex, then the testimony of Mr McQuisten is doubtful. The lesbian wife to whom he refers also 'misconducted' herself with a man. In addition, if, as was a 'well-known fact', lesbianism stopped childbirth, then Lieut-Colonel Moore-Brabazon argued against legislation since the best way of dealing with the problem:

Is to leave them entirely alone, not notice them, not advertise them. That is the method that has been adopted in England for many hundred years, and I believe it is the best method now, because these cases are self-exterminating. They are examples of ultra-civilisation but they have the merit of exterminating themselves, and consequently they do not spread or do very much harm to society at large.¹¹⁰

However, if England had been not noticing and not mentioning lesbians for many hundred years, then how was lesbianism self-exterminating if lesbians had a historical continuity within the nation? The debate posits lesbianism as dating back to the origins of history *and* as being a product of ultra-civilisation. It leads to a distaste for relations with the opposite sex *and* an unhealthy, immoral interest in it. It does little harm *and* debauches young girls and leads to insanity. Ultimately, the amendment was not passed, and lesbianism not made illegal, since it was felt that keeping it as a secret was the best way to deal with the 'problem'. To bring it within the realm of the law would

tempt women who had never heard of such a thing into trying it. However, Lawrence's novel made the secret public, and this was one reason that it was unpublishable in its entirety. Whilst in the 1932 authorised British edition it was acceptable to liken black women to 'mud', it was not acceptable to publish Mellors's comments about lesbians, and the previously quoted extracts from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* were excised from the authorised edition.¹¹¹

Radclyffe Hall, too, in writing and having published *The Well of Loneliness*, made the secret public. An unruly 'daughter' of England herself, Radclyffe Hall's heroine, Stephen Gordon, was also a literary representation of one of these daughters who found her war-work enabled her to meet other lesbians. The only child of landed gentry, Stephen lives in the country-house, Morton, of her parents. Like *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this text also utilises the trope of the English country-house as metonymic for the nation. Here, the heterosexual woman fits into the house and English landscape; her potentially procreative and maternal body mirrors the landscape she inhabits as much as the landscape mirrors her. So while pregnant with Stephen, Lady Anna Gordon:

Would sit with her needle-work dropped on her knees, while her eyes turned away to the long line of hills that stretched beyond the Severn valley. From her favourite seat underneath an old cedar, she would see these Malvern Hills in their beauty, and their swelling slopes seemed to hold a new meaning. They were like pregnant women, full bosomed, courageous, great green-girdled mothers of splendid sons! Thus through all those summer months she sat and watched the hills, and Sir Philip would sit with her - they would sit hand in hand.¹¹²

The narrative slides from pregnancy to landscape to hands. Her body and landscape are in union, and the sign of the heterosexual love between Lady Anna and Sir Philip is not in some explicitly described sex acts but in the union of their hands. Their child, as an adolescent, understands something of the imbrication of heterosexuality and the countryside as metaphoric of England:

This love of theirs had been a great glory; all her life she had lived with it side by side, but never until it appeared to be threatened, did she feel she had really grasped its true meaning - the serene and beautiful spirit of Morton clothed in flesh, yes, that had been its true meaning.¹¹³

The spirit of the country-house and its grounds manifests itself in the corporality of the love between her parents. Their flesh is organically connected to place. Thus far, the textual concerns are conservative and acceptable to the grammar of the nation, but what threatens the love of her parents is the growing realisation that their daughter is not like other girls, and her latent lesbianism is a threat to the country house/nation.

Stephen disrupts various moments of heterosexuality. At garden parties, she was always a failure, and fared no better at the county dinner-parties:

They were long, these dinners, overloaded with courses; they were heavy, being weighted with polite conversation; they were stately, by reason of family silver; above all they were firmly conservative in spirit, as conservative as the marriage service itself, and almost as insistent in sex distinction.

‘Captain Ramsay, will you take Miss Gordon into dinner?’

A politely crooked arm: ‘Delighted, Miss Gordon.’

Then the solemn and ridiculous procession, animals marching into Noah’s Ark two by two, very sure of divine protection - male and female created He them! Stephen’s skirt would be long and her foot might get entangled, and she with but one free hand at her disposal - the procession would stop and she would have stopped it! Intolerable thought, she had stopped the procession! ¹¹⁴

An English upper-class inheritance, with plenty of fresh air from hunting in the countryside, cannot prevent her from becoming lesbian and stopping the procession of heterosexuality that guarantees the continuity of the nation through reproduction.

Stephen Gordon will not reproduce, and is only attracted to women. Her first love, Angela, is a married woman whose husband is threatened by their relationship. Lady Anna Gordon is horrified by the situation and exiles Stephen from Morton. But if her parents’ national heterosexuality is valorised, the heterosexuality between Angela and her husband is not:

He climbed into bed with the sly expression that Angela hated - it was so pornographic. ‘Well, old girl, don’t forget that you’ve got a man about the house; you haven’t forgotten it, have you?’ After which followed one or two flaccid embraces together with much arrogant masculine bragging; and Angela, sighing as she lay and endured, quite suddenly thought of Stephen. ¹¹⁵

This ‘arrogant masculine bragging’ suggests that heterosexuality is as much about language as it is about the actions of bodies and their social implications. Given the circumstances of the book’s reception and prosecution on the grounds of obscenity it is ironic that heterosexuality is pronounced ‘pornographic’. Undermining this authority to speak publicly of lesbianism also entailed undermining literature and its

place in re-imagining the nation. Part of the problematics of *The Well of Loneliness* was that both the author and its protagonist were acclaimed writers: Radclyffe Hall had won both the Prix Femina Vie Heureuse and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *Adam's Breed* in 1926, and her heroine, Stephen Gordon, created a sensation with her first novel, *The Furrow*. In *The Well of Loneliness*, the representation of lesbianism is caught up with literariness. When the court ordered that the book be destroyed, James Douglas wrote in the *Daily Express* that he was proud of the contribution his paper had made to the ban. Describing it as an 'insidious perversion of the English novel', he carried on to state that through its destruction, 'English literature is the gainer and nothing but the gainer.'¹¹⁶

After the legal appeal against the book's destruction failed, Radclyffe Hall felt that both England and the Conservative Party had betrayed her, and she briefly found socialism attractive. Addressing the Southend Young Socialists in 1929, without what appears to be the least sense of irony, she called up tropes of nation to tell them that:

Your party is young, courageous, *virile*, it has just arrived at the glory of manhood. Who defended my book within a few hours of the dastardly attack in the *Sunday Express* - what paper leapt to my defence? the *Daily Herald* ... May you sweep the country *clean* at the next election and let some *fresh air* and sunshine into England. If we cannot have a country fit for heroes, if that is too vast an aspiration, at least let us have a country whose air is too pure for this present government to breathe. [My italics]¹¹⁷

Rhetorically, she turned the clean, fresh open-air of England which was meant to stand in opposition to the perversion of her book against the establishment which banned it, in the hope that it would choke them.

So what can banned books tell us about the relation between a re-ordered, post-Great-War England and its literature, preferred English subjectivities, and that which is abjected? How is the identity of interwar England derived from disallowing certain speaking subject positions and topics which mainly concern sex and sexuality? Why were some books banned in the interwar period, whilst others were not? It seems that many of these texts were banned because, although they used general tropes of England and Englishness, the way in which these tropes were used

in effect challenged notions of Englishness. They appeared to exceed the hegemonic view of what constituted being English beyond the limits that hegemony could allow, and produced feelings of disgust and horror in some readers so that they came to be either officially or unofficially disallowed as reading matter for the island nation and race. So, in order to reclaim the nation from the influence of the Great War and from fears that English culture was becoming feminised, the banning and restriction on readership of certain texts helped to form an official English literature which was heterosexual (as long as it did not describe sex acts too readily); could support the virility of the nation; and attempted to put troublesome daughters back in their place in patriarchal hierarchy. The virility of the nation depended upon a construction of woman as reproductive, and as object rather than subject. The un(re)productive woman was abjected. The identity of England and Englishness was derived from abjecting all that was poisonous or polluting in English literature in favour of valorising the clean air of the English countryside. In the process, national literature was being formed through its relationship to the non-national 'other' of abjected books. That representations were perceived to be enormously powerful can be seen in the attention given to prosecutions of representations of practices, such as lesbianism, which were not in themselves illegal. These prosecutions gave as much power to literary representations as to actual behaviours. The force of the law was marshalled in order to make literature conform to an image of 'England' and 'Englishness' into which national subjects were not always legislated, as we have seen with the case of lesbianism. Therefore, literature can be seen to be a crucial force in national imaginings and the project of national renewal. In the identification of categories of people in need of protection from indecent literature, it also identified them as dangerous to national endeavour. In this way, schoolgirls/daughters represented a category which, unless controlled, presented a potential danger to the virility of the nation, whilst simultaneously they were identified as a category in need of protection. Through them, the twin concepts of national purity and national danger played themselves out. But if some people were dangerous to notions of England and

Englishness, others were not; and the next chapter turns to the popular writings of the white middle-class man, H. V. Morton, as he produces a national literature of the 'clean, fresh air' of the English countryside.

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- ¹ 'Seized Novel Condemned: All Copies To Be Destroyed', *The Times*, 5 March 1929, p. 13.
- ² Cate Haste, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain World War One to the Present* (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. 74.
- ³ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 8.
- ⁴ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 279.
- ⁵ Kent, p. 276.
- ⁶ Kent, p. 294.
- ⁷ H. C. Fischer and E. X. Dubois, *Sexual Life During the World War* (London: Francis Aldor, 1937).
- ⁸ Lord Alfred Douglas cited in Kent, p. 280.
- ⁹ R. Brimley Johnson, *Moral Poison in Modern Fiction* (London: A.M. Philpot) [n.d.] (1922?), p. 12.
- ¹⁰ Johnson, pp. 14-15.
- ¹¹ Johnson, pp. 15-16.
- ¹² Johnson, p. 17.
- ¹³ Henry Newbolt, *The Idea of an English Association* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 4.
- ¹⁴ Constitution of the English Association cited in Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 93.
- ¹⁵ Newbolt, p. 10.
- ¹⁶ Newbolt, p. 10.
- ¹⁷ *The Teaching of English in England* (London: HMSO, 1921), p. 15.
- ¹⁸ Baldick, p. 94.
- ¹⁹ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 13.
- ²⁰ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 338.
- ²¹ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 22.
- ²² *The Teaching of English in England*, pp. 252-253.
- ²³ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 257.
- ²⁴ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 340.
- ²⁵ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 335.
- ²⁶ *The Teaching of English in England*, p. 338.
- ²⁷ Frederick Hallis, *The Law and Obscenity* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1932), p. 14. Italics in original.
- ²⁸ Hallis, p. 15.
- ²⁹ George Armitage, *Banned In England: An Examination of the Law Relating to Obscene Publications* [n.p.] (Wishart, 1932), p. 21.
- ³⁰ Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), p. 225.
- ³¹ Bristow, p. 224.
- ³² Wallace Smith, *Bessie Cotter* [1935] (London: William Heinemann, 1972).
- ³³ James Hanley, *Boy* (London: Boriswood, 1931).
- ³⁴ Bernard Causton and G. G. Young, *Keeping It Dark or The Censor's Handbook* (London: Mandrake Press, n.d.) (1930?), p. 59.
- ³⁵ E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).
- ³⁶ James Aston, (T. H. White), *They Winter Abroad* [1932] (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969).
- ³⁷ Armitage, pp. 34-35.
- ³⁸ 'Indecent Books: Home Secretary and Deputation', *The Times*, 6 March 1929, p. 11.
- ³⁹ See, for example the Bishop of London's statement about the difficult work of the Public Morality Council in 'Public Morality Council: Indecent Films and Books', *The Times*, 5 March 1931, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Anon., *A Young Girl's Diary: Prefaced with a Letter by Sigmund Freud* [1921] (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936). All later entries for this text include italics and punctuation errors as in the original.

⁴¹ See Alec Craig, *The Banned Books of England and other Countries: A Study of the Conception of Literary Obscenity* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 80. Other information about banned books can also be found in Anne Lyon Haight, *Banned Books: Informal Notes on Some Books Banned for Various Reasons at Various Times and in Various Places* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), and Michael S. Howard, *Jonathan Cape, Publisher: Herbert Jonathan Cape, G. Wren Howard* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971) has some discussion of the issues from a publisher's point of view.

⁴² Morris Leopold Ernst and William Seagle, *To The Pure....A Study of Obscenity and the Censor* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), p. 100.

⁴³ shown in Bernard Causton and G. G. Young, p. 44. Italics in original.

⁴⁴ Eric Partridge, *The First Three Years: An Account and a Bibliography of the Scholartis Press* (London: The Scholartis Press, 1930), p. 24.

⁴⁵ Partridge, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁶ 'Seized Novel Condemned: All Copies To Be Destroyed', *The Times*, 5 March 1929, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* [1928] (London: Virago, 1997).

⁴⁸ Sally Cline, *Radclyffe Hall: A Woman Called John* (London: John Murray, 1997), p. 243.

⁴⁹ James Douglas cited in Cline, p. 243.

⁵⁰ James Douglas, cited in Cline, p. 243.

⁵¹ Diana Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Virago, 1999), p. 184.

⁵² Archibald Bodkin, cited in Souhami, p. 217.

⁵³ A. P. Herbert, 'Censorship of Books', *The Times*, 19 October 1928, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Peggy Soden, 'Literary censorship', *The Times*, 22 October 1928, p. 15.

⁵⁵ W. W. Greg, 'A Literary Censorship', *The Times*, 24 October 1928, p. 12.

⁵⁶ H. E. Nolloth, 'The Bounds of Freedom', *The Times*, 23 October 1928, p. 12. In this context, 'inoculate' means to infect a body with a living virus, rather than to protect that body through the introduction of a small amount of a virus. In this sense, Arthur Conan Doyle wrote to *The Times* in February 1917 to complain about harpies carrying off lonely soldiers to their rooms and inoculating them with disease.

⁵⁷ See, for example, 'The Primate and Sex Fiction', *The Times*, 7 November 1932, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 1-2. Italics in original.

⁵⁹ Kristeva, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Kristeva, p. 4.

⁶¹ Mary S. Allen, *Lady in Blue* (London: Stanley Paul, 1936), p. 111.

⁶² In this analysis, I am putting aside the question of whether this is the authentic diary of a girl, or a piece of fiction which elucidates psychoanalytic theory, to treat it in the way that it is presented to the reader - as an authentic document. The numerous spelling mistakes, grammatical and punctuation errors in the text function to authenticate it as coming from a young person. The debate about the authenticity of this diary is discussed by Julia Swindells in "'What's the use of books?' Knowledge, authenticity and *A Young Girl's Diary*", *Women's History Review*, 5.1 (1996), 55-66.

⁶³ Anon., p. 84.

⁶⁴ Anon., pp. 110-111.

⁶⁵ Anon., p. 121.

⁶⁶ Anon., p. 144.

⁶⁷ Anon., p. 264.

⁶⁸ Anon., p. 271.

⁶⁹ See, for example, G. M. Hall, *Prostitution: A Survey and A Challenge* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1933), and discussions about prostitution from the point of view of its policing in Mary S. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925) and Mary S. Allen, *Lady In Blue* (London: Stanley Paul, 1936).

⁷⁰ Sheila Cousins, *To Beg I Am Ashamed* (London: George Routledge, 1938), p. 4.

⁷¹ F. R. Leavis cited in Antony Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 3-4.

⁷² Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 2.

⁷³ Bell, p. 72.

⁷⁴ Bell, p. 70.

⁷⁵ Bell, p. 71.

⁷⁶ Bell, p. 41.

⁷⁷ That heterosexual women could think of their pregnancies and children in national terms prior to the Great War can be seen in M. L. Davies, ed., *Maternity Letters From Working Women: Collected by the Women's Co-operative Guild* [1915] (London: Virago, 1978). One woman wrote that our 'children are a valuable asset to the nation, and the health of the woman who is doing her duty in rearing the future race should have a claim upon the national purse' (p. 129), while another wrote that 'if we are going to have a race in the future worthy of England, ... it will not be until the nation wakes up to the need of the mothers of that future race' (p. 90). Although this might be seen as an example of a reverse discourse in which these women used the rhetoric of childbearing for race/nation in their own individual interests, a letter written to Marie Stopes in 1921 suggests the possibility that some women were proud of their achievement in reproducing for the nation. Mrs R. G. M., quoted in Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars 1918-1939* (London: Pandora, 1989), p. 105, wrote to Stopes saying, '[w]hat I would like to know is how I can save having more children as I think I have done my duty by my country by having 13 children - 9 boys and 4 girls and I have 6 boys alive now and a little girl who will be 3 years old in May ... I am please [sic] to tell you that I received one of those willow plates from the News of the World for mothers of ten.'

⁷⁸ Cousins, p. 152.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Bernhart A. Bauer, *Woman (Wie Bist Du Weib?): A Treatise on the Anatomy, Physiology, Psychology, and Sexual Life of Woman with an Appendix on Prostitution* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927). This was introduced as a volume for the medical, legal and educational professions and the intention of the volume was to show 'how sex dominates all her activities from the cradle to the grave' (p. 6). Bauer made the argument about 'woman' that '[s]he lives only for sex, and is essentially nothing but sex. It must be so if she is adequately to fulfill the great task of motherhood which Nature has assigned her' (p. 158). The way the title of the treatise is configured suggests that there might be an inevitable decline for women into prostitution: an alarming prospect that suggests women's sexuality must be controlled to avoid this.

⁸⁰ Cousins, p. 8.

⁸¹ Cousins, p. 7.

⁸² Cousins, p. 4.

⁸³ Cousins, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Cousins, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Norah. C. James, *Sleeveless Errand* (Paris: Henri Babou & Jack Kahane, 1929), p. 106.

⁸⁶ James, p. 206.

⁸⁷ James, pp. 202-203.

⁸⁸ James, p. 215.

⁸⁹ James, p. 72.

⁹⁰ Both *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are now canonical texts, whereas no such status has been accorded the lesbian text, *The Well of Loneliness*.

⁹¹ James Joyce, *Ulysses* [1922] (London: The Bodley Head, 1960), p. 3.

⁹² The razor itself is an instrument used in the production of the clean and proper male body. However, Mulligan's's razor cannot fulfill this function once contaminated with snot.

⁹³ See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp 192-210 for a discussion of the powers and dangers of bodily fluids.

⁹⁴ Joyce, p. 4.

⁹⁵ Joyce, p. 137.

⁹⁶ Herbert Jeans, 'In Death's Cathedral Palace: The Story of the Unknown Warrior', *British Legion Journal*, 9.5 (1929), 118.

⁹⁷ E. E. P. Tisdall, 'How They Chose The Unknown Warrior', *British Legion Journal*, 19.5 (1939), 141.

⁹⁸ Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* [1941] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 7.

⁹⁹ Kristeva, p. 3. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [1928] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960).

¹⁰¹ 'The Primate and sex fiction', *The Times*, 7 November 1932, p. 8.

¹⁰² Lawrence, pp. 68-69.

¹⁰³ Lawrence, p. 233.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence, p. 212.

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence, p. 212. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁶ 'Criminal Law Amendment Bill', *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 August 1921, p. 1799.

¹⁰⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 1800.

¹⁰⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 1801.

¹⁰⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, pp. 1802-1804.

¹¹⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, pp. 1804-1806.

¹¹¹ See D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (London: William Heinemann, 1932), pp. 225-227 for the erasure.

¹¹² Hall, pp. 8-9.

¹¹³ Hall, p. 82.

¹¹⁴ Hall, p. 75.

¹¹⁵ Hall, p. 151.

¹¹⁶ James Douglas, cited in Souhami, p. 213.

¹¹⁷ Radclyffe Hall, cited in Souhami, p. 221.

CHAPTER TWO

H. V. MORTON'S PILGRIMAGES TO ENGLISHNESS

All the time the real adventures are on the way to anywhere, they are in our heads and hearts, they lurk at the edges of little English woods and lie in wait on those straight roads of England which, beginning with the tramp of legions, have borne the weight of history for two thousand crowded years.

I think too that any man has done well if, on his return from a journey, he can truthfully say :

'I have had an exciting time: I have met - myself!' ¹

Why should a man travelling in search of England have had a good journey if he can say at the end that he has met himself? Is it because the journey itself confers national identity on him? Or is it that his search inevitably ends with finding England in himself because the masculine subject is the best representative of Englishness? For a man to search for England and then find himself suggests a clear identification of masculinity with Englishness, and vice versa. What must this travelling man do in order to find his masculinity as coterminous with his national identity? This chapter asks to what extent, and in what ways, Morton's discourse of the rural defined 'Englishness' as masculine and 'Nature' as feminine, in order to examine the hypothesis that such an interwar discourse of the rural located Englishness in a heterosexual bond between a masculine national subject and a feminine nature/ landscape.

If part of the work undertaken by the act of banning 'poisonous' literature was to promote a literature of clean, healthy England, then the work of H. V. Morton constitutes an instance of just such a literature. Michael Bartholomew suggests 'that Morton was among the most widely read inter-war writers, and therefore, was one of the more influential shapers of the English peoples' image of themselves and their country.'² Testimony for this view lies in his sales figures. Although many publishers' records were destroyed in the Blitz, making accurate records hard to come by, Bartholomew has estimated that by '1943 there were 29 editions of *In Search of England* and twelve of the companion volume *The Call of England* in circulation. All of his books went through edition after edition ... one commentator asserts that over a million copies of *In Search of England* were sold in Britain alone.'³ So what can Morton reveal about the grammar of the nation?

When Morton hears 'the call of England', or decides to go 'in search of England', his starting/ leaving point is London. Setting off with belief that England is available to his gaze, and that 'England is one of the easiest countries to see' ⁴, he leaves behind the problematic capital city, which 'no living man has seen' because it has 'ceased to be visible since Stuart days'. ⁵ The problem of locating Englishness in London for Morton is one of both sight and race. London cannot be seen in its entirety, but even if it could there is the tricky problem of the non-Anglo-Saxon inhabitants from the colonies and Jews. To find England, then, one has to leave this degenerate, industrial, and racially impure urban space. Travelling around London inevitably forces an acknowledgement of the presence of the Other, the colonised subjects of the British Empire present in the metropolis. Morton's visit to Limehouse prompts these musings:

As I walked on through dark streets, it seemed impossible that the restaurant I had left, with its elegant women, its discreet string orchestra, its air of assured comfort and well-being, could exist in the same world with these gloomy avenues, like a slum in hell, through which shivering lascars shuffled, hugging the shadows, while Chinamen peered with mask faces and sharp eyes from dim doorways. ... The squalor of Limehouse is that strange squalor of the East which seems to conceal vicious splendour. There is an air of something unrevealed in those narrow streets of shuttered houses, each one of which appears to be hugging its own dreadful little secret.⁶

Here, Englishness is located in class: a visible, white middle class which goes to restaurants. It is open, genteel, ordered, clean and comfortable: everything that the abject shadowy world of the Lascar and Chinaman is not. However, this Englishness is also emphatically masculine: women are peripheral. As decorative background objects, they passively form part of the cultural distinction - the discretion, comfort and elegance of the restaurant.

Unable to use his penetrative vision to reveal the secrets of Limehouse, Morton has to catch a bus 'back to England' from here, just as he does after a visit to Berwick Street, where '[i]f all the Jews in Berwick Street would wear long false beards one day, it would be possible to take a photograph which any short-sighted traveller would swear was Jerusalem.' ⁷ Similarly, a trip to Petticoat Lane, which is the East without flies or lepers, necessitates catching a 'penny omnibus back to

England'.⁸ Positioning his readers as sharing a 'common racial heritage',⁹ Morton suggests that while the 'average city family has disappeared into racial anaemia',¹⁰ racial survival dictates a return to the countryside in order to maintain England as 'a *virile* and progressive nation'. [My italics]¹¹ However, the virility of the nation is firmly rooted in a feminised English soil. Arriving in Glastonbury, which Morton identifies as containing the roots of England, he sees 'the *pregnant* dust of Avalon'. [My italics]¹² Unlike London, Morton's rural space is visible, ordered, knowable and racially pure. This allows the inscription of an homogeneous Englishness in the face of the problematically disordered and diseased capital city. Sitting on top of Pendle to 'survey' the view which encompasses both urban and rural England, Morton describes what he sees in terms (respectively) of invisibility/ visibility and haziness/whiteness:

In the valley of smoke I could see little gasworks, little streets of houses, mills, high stacks, now and then a puff of smoke from the railway, sudden and white as a bursting shell, and reservoirs shining like silver spoons in the haze. A grim panorama of effect, made more effective by the shadowy high outline of the Pennines Over these hills was another, fainter blanket of smoke which suggested the distant, invisible chimneys of Leeds, Halifax, Huddersfield, and Sheffield.

And the other side of this picture? To the left of me was old Lancashire - old England! The lovely green valley of the Ribble, bounded by the wild fells of Lancashire and the blue moors of Yorkshire, lay comfortably, little field against little field, bridges, white threads that were roads, little white farms, church spires among trees.¹³

Racial categories, it appears, are being projected onto the landscape. The grim, shadowy, 'invisible' industrial landscape in which whiteness appears momentarily only to be then lost seems to speak to anxieties about racial degeneration in the cities. 'Old England', however, offers a purity of vision in which uncontaminated whiteness can be seen. Here, the presence of greenness and blueness do not contaminate the whiteness of the roads and farms: in this rural place, colour distinctions are firmly maintained. There is no blending or blurring of colour: blue does not blend into white and change it. Miscegenation is not a rural problem.

Identifying the myths of the origin of whiteness, Richard Dyer looks at those of Aryan and Caucasian mountain origins.¹⁴ Both these sources of whiteness suggest that Europeans first came from high places. He argues that these places have

certain virtues which could be seen to have formed the white character. They include a certain cleanliness of air in which all things are clearly able to be seen, a greater nearness to god, and the continual presence of the whiteness of snow. Morton's occupation of the high ground of Pendle can call upon such myths of origin. It gives him both the authority to speak from whiteness, a speaking position of privilege, and also having that authority to legitimate the landscape of 'old England' as white, whilst still maintaining his own whiteness as an invisible racial category. This white landscape Morton finds himself in, however, is devoid of people. When people enter Morton's rural landscapes they are always gendered, but unlike Englishmen, Englishwomen are in a difficult relation to Englishness.

In a rhetoric which valorises women for the reproduction of more national subjects, Morton simultaneously suggests that women cannot ever really be national subjects themselves. He finds himself thinking 'of great ladies lying in great beds with their heirs, while the genius of English history brooded happily upon the scene.'¹⁵ These children, though, are not the possession of women, but of men, as Morton makes clear when he says, 'the first time a man sees a woman look at *his* child...something trembles inside him.' [My italics]¹⁶ In his gendered grammar of the nation, 'a lone man is transitory and a woman is permanent: she means a home and a whole lot more men': her womb guarantees the continuation of Englishness.¹⁷ Women here are the conduit for nationhood, but only via the production of more men. They are furthered denied national identity by Morton's view of them as an international commodity that can be sold or traded. Although acknowledging racial differences between men of different nationalities, in Wales Morton concludes that 'Welshwomen are no different from the women of any other nationality'.¹⁸ In Ireland, he muses that 'other nations commit murder for women, but the Irish commit murder for a potato patch'.¹⁹ This slippage between nation and men, such that 'nation' can stand in for men, reveals the masculinity of the nation. Conversely, the opposition between nation and women shows the exclusion of women from the nation. The idea of women as commodities can be also seen in his view of London,

which is populated by markets 'where you could sell an elephant, a werewolf, or your second best aunt'.²⁰ The suburbs can be characterised by the way '[e]ach house contains the same lounge hall, the same Jacobean dining-room suite, the same (to all appearances) dear little wife who, now that the weather has changed, goes out shopping in a nutria coat.'²¹ This positioning of women as shoppers is no throwaway comment, but central to the formation of Morton's women. Shopping has two main implications for Englishwomen's subjectivity. Firstly, women do not really enjoy rural spaces:

Women don't like solitary places. While an old soldier can settle down and make himself at home almost anywhere, a woman grows restless and begins to sigh for shops and cinemas and crowds. It's only natural, after all ...²²

This desire to shop is, for Morton, troublingly paradoxical since 'to desire' implies a subjectivity, and it offends Morton's logic and sensibility so much that women must be both restrained and blamed. Secondly, women's uncontrolled shopping habits can be seen to bring ruin to Englishmen since their fashions change. Making men heroic and women absurd, he states that:

From the reign of Elizabeth to the middle of the last century the whalers of Hull faced the perils of the Arctic seas in order to corset the women of England and to uphold the dignity of the crinoline.²³

However, just as the crinoline is no longer in use, so the industry is in decline in Morton's time, but the actions of these heroic masculine Hull whalers in over-fishing the stock until they had destroyed the industry do not bring forth any cutting remarks. He is neither interested in the history of women whalers, nor in the varied uses to which whale products were put, and from which men also benefited. One might believe, from him, that the entire industry was organised around the production of the whale-bone corset. Women are also to blame for the decline of the jet-carving industry in Whitby, where in 1853 a thousand men were employed, but with the change of fashion, unless it 'revives jet - and it merits a revival - the working of it will become another of England's dead handicrafts.'²⁴ The Birmingham gold industry, too, has been '[s]lain by women all over the world'.²⁵ Morton ascribes enormous

power here to women, but it is surely a distaste for what he views as their unregulated desires, and an implicit call to regulate women more thoroughly.

Rachel Bowlby, in her work on shopping and modernity, *Shopping with Freud*, examines the tensions in the production and reproduction of the subject as consumer. The consumer is necessarily 'feminised' in the process, since consumers are made passive in order to persuade them to consume. However, making a distinction between the classical and romantic consumer, Bowlby shows how masculinity can be recuperated from this feminisation. The classical and romantic modes correspond respectively to:

The mature, masculine saver determined to avoid a loss and the infantile, feminine spender, unregulated in her desires. In terms of the forms of advertising address, the first mode involves the suggestion of fears and needs. The buyer must identify himself as lacking and so purchase the product in order to put things right or protect what is vulnerable. The second mode is in the form of an invitation to pleasure or excess: to have or to be something more, something else, something new.²⁶

Morton himself travels with a shopping-list mentality of places to visit, using his motor car, an item for which he has presumably been a shopper/consumer. The rise of the use of the motor car could be seen as having destroyed older crafts, such as that of the blacksmith, but this occasions no concern for Morton. The presence of the car in which he travels is naturalised, and is part of the logic of his gendered order in which women's shopping is dangerous and the implications of men's shopping are made invisible. Morton's car, in enabling him to visit rural places with ease, seems to make him more English. His possession of a consumer item that will take him to 'England' clearly has more value than the possession of a nutria coat that will only take women out shopping again.

These points have certain implications for women in Morton's discursive formulation of Englishness. If authentic Englishness is to be found in the rural rather than the urban, to position women as naturally wanting the urban in order to be able to shop associates them with degeneracy, un-Englishness, and the possibility of miscegenation. Also, women's uncontrolled desires, manifested in their whimsical shopping habits which destroy men's jobs and the craft industries of 'old England',

suggest a treacherousness to certain social ideals of Englishness, characterised as organic communities organised around craft production. Women's unregulated desires can lead to the destruction of Englishness rather than its production. In the annihilation of material products that are English, women are also destroying the immaterial, cultural notion of 'England' that these products signify.

Even so, it is in Morton's London that women are at their most uncontrollable and abject. Watching a street fight between a woman who has discovered her husband with another woman, instead of censuring the behaviour of the adulterous husband, he is prompted to muse:

An uncontrolled woman is as terrible as the spirit of vengeance. I watched her and wondered how many calm women boil like this yet never spill over, never show it, never allow themselves the luxury of this. How many gentle women have this tiger hidden in them? ²⁷

His answer seems to be, 'probably all women', and that it is only ownership and regulation by men that prevents the terrifying slide into non-feminine grotesqueness and vagrancy:

Dull, mercifully comatose, Nobody's Women drag themselves about the streets at night looking for a place to rest their unwanted bones. Sometimes you see them creeping like ghouls round the galvanised tins which the restaurants put outside in the streets in the small hours of the morning, digging into the foul rejections of other people's dinners with poor, claw-like fingers which once - who knows? - were lovely and white round the stem of a champagne glass. ²⁸

Why does Morton appear to ignore the ideology of the domestic in which the woman in the home is romanticised, for he appears to hate the housewife? Alison Light argues that the interwar period saw a redefinition of Englishness which entailed a rejection of the heroic imperial male and a view of Englishness as more feminine and therefore more domestic, ²⁹ and Deirdre Beddoe suggests that 'the single most arresting feature of the interwar years was the strength of the notion that woman's place is in the home.' ³⁰ The simple answer could be that he is travelling, staying in hotels, and not often meeting people in their own homes. However, this would not explain the vehemence of his anti-housewife statements. Looking at the writings of Mrs Miniver in *The Times*, Light argues that Mrs Miniver's columns represented a strain of thought in English middle-class life which both suggested that

'it was private life that constituted the real and important life of the nation' and that Mrs Miniver made home look like a good space for women to be in.³¹ Home is presented as woman's space, in which the Victorian paterfamilias no longer has authority. Morton's writing seems to respond to fears about the domestication of Englishness, and women's control of the home. What place for an 'old soldier'? Where is men's place and what sorts of masculinity are possible? If men cannot be at home in domestic space, what might outdoors offer masculinity? Morton's way of dealing with these shifting historical difficulties seems to be to show the dangers of uncontrolled women, to disallow women from his Englishness, and to show masculinity at its best in the countryside.

In contrast to Morton's women, his men are not in need of control and ownership because when a man is unowned, when '[n]o woman ruffles his smooth life', it is then that English masculine 'Good Form' can be achieved.³² It is in a state of rural solitude that an Englishman becomes most heroic: 'How much of Hamlet, how much of Quixote, how much of Robin Goodfellow is in him never appears until a man finds himself alone in the country.'³³ However, within Morton's rhetoric, a man never does find himself alone in the country, because his masculinity is always counterpointed against a feminised, and often pregnant or maternal, natural landscape. This femininity, though, is more easily controllable than that of women, since it can be landscaped or farmed, for example, without talking back.

Morton organises what he sees in his English travels into foundational categories of masculine and feminine, and cannot seem to envisage a non-heterosexualised space. His writings on 'cities' or 'cathedrals' thus frequently describe them as 'married' to each other, or bound together in some other heterosexual familial relationship. Land, too, or soil, can be pregnant with, or a mother to, Englishness. In a formulation which excludes women except as metaphor, Morton ends *In Search of England* with a description of his masculine love for England as soil, as a summation of his search for 'England'.

The rich earth had borne its children, and over the fields was that same smile which a man sees only on the face of a woman when she looks down at the child at her breast.

I went out into the churchyard where the green stones nodded together, and I took up a handful of earth and felt it crumble and run through my fingers, thinking that as long as one English field lies against another there is something left in the world for a man to love.³⁴

However, in among this heterosexual love-scene is a profoundly lesbian moment in which one (feminine) English field lies against another one. No matter how hard Morton tries to heterosexualise Englishness, the repressed will return.

Dyer suggests that at the heart of white culture is an anxiety that 'white sex is queer sex.'³⁵ There are three sources for this anxiety. Firstly, the idea that sex is 'inherently perverse' for white people.³⁶ Imagined as they are as pure and transcendent of their bodies, to have sexual desires and act upon them endangers the purity of whiteness itself. Although the racial category of white relies on heterosexuality to ensure its reproduction, heterosexual sexual acts entail a loss of whiteness. Secondly, the worry that white sex is non-reproductive sex can link it to queer sex. (Morton was writing as worries about the degeneration and extinction of the white race were debated. Other races, supposedly acting as their bodies dictated and unable to control their bodily desires, were seen to be overbreeding.) The third anxiety concerns the discursive linkage between whiteness and death. Dyer argues that:

White identity is founded on compelling paradoxes: a vividly corporeal cosmology that most values transcendence of the body; a notion of being at once a sort of race and the human race, an individual and a universal subject; a commitment to heterosexuality that, for whiteness to be affirmed, entails men fighting sexual desires and women having none; a stress on the display of spirit while maintaining a position of invisibility; in short a need always to be everything and nothing, literally overwhelmingly present and yet apparently absent, both alive and dead.³⁷

This linkage of death and whiteness can be most easily seen in Western culture's veneration of the form of a dead white male body on a cross. This endlessly represented body of Christ is paradigmatic of the white male subject: more than body, it extends itself into spirit. Given that Morton's Englishness is also Xtian one might argue against the extent to which Benedict Anderson suggests that the nation comes to replace god in a secular society.³⁸ After all, it is in a church graveyard that Morton

takes up his handful of earth, and his travels assume that visiting cathedrals is more important than, for example, shops.

The origins of Morton's England lie within a religious history. In a suggestion 'that if a man were looking for the roots of England' he would find the roots of Church and State in Glastonbury and he talks of the pregnant dust there:³⁹

I hear the click and thrust of the labourer's spade in the earth, and it seems to me as each spadeful of Glastonbury soil falls on the mound that a spadeful of English history is stirred; in the brown dust that flies over the trench I seem to see the faces of anchorites, saints, priests, and kings; and in this *pregnant dust* of Avalon is drawn two of the greatest epics that have come from the English mind: one is of the Holy Grail and the other of a wounded king.[My italics]⁴⁰

Having prefaced *The Call of England* with a quotation from G.K.Chesterton -

'An island like a little book
Full of a hundred tales.....'⁴¹

- Morton deftly signals a relationship between the geographical nation space/place, writing and reading. If the island can be likened to a little book, so too can his book be likened to the island. Here one can see the links between literature and soil: literature comes out of the soil. So what the earth is pregnant with is English history, which is a history of men, and literary epics of the (male) English mind. However, these are only brought to light by the penetrative thrust of the labourer's spade into this earth. Does this suggest that Englishness can only be revealed through a metaphoric heterosexual act of penetration, in which a masculine Englishman bodily relates to a feminine soil? Morton's Englishness certainly suggests this: he reaches satisfaction in this bodily relationship to soil, running it through his fingers, or planting his feet in it, and this satisfaction can be seen to correspond to Dyer's argument about the sexuality of whiteness. The bodily satisfaction Morton derives from touching earth is not sexually orgasmic, but sublimated and transposed to the non-sexual. In this way, his whiteness is protected. Just as *In Search of England* ends with a final expression of an Englishman relating to English earth, so too does *The Call of England*:

And there will come a time in any tour of England when most men from a city will feel that no matter how life disappoints them there can always be one thing worth while at the end of the journey: the sight of the wind moving over their own wheat field; the moon rising over their own home; the knowledge that they have fought their way back to the country and have planted their feet in the splendid sanity of English soil.⁴²

The sanity of his feminine soil is in sharp contrast to the insanity of his shopaholic Englishwomen. The femininity of earth is under masculine control. The use of the word 'fought' here in relation to men returning to a rural space may suggest a certain nostalgia for the trenches of World War One, and a prior men's world that has been lost in the post-war domestication and feminisation of English culture and character. Just as man roots himself in soil, so too does soil root itself back into 'the hearts of men', making nationalism a warm thing in the face of internationalism, because, he asks, '[h]ow can we achieve a cold internationalism when to each one of us there is a little piece of the world so dear that we would not exchange the wide earth for it?' ⁴³ Again, women are excluded from this version of national identity as a bonding of man and earth, because women are international commodities. However, the question still remains: if the soil is pregnant, who has impregnated her?

Clues can be found in Morton's view of the 'pregnant dust' containing a masculine history and an epic literature made from an English mind. So who makes history and who makes literature? Taking him to a cathedral, Morton explains to an American tourist he meets that men make history:

I tried to explain - leaving out all architecture - that these great churches are the urns which hold the ashes of England's history. The dim aisles are sacred to a Past which is the splendid mother of the Present, for in them are gathered the men whose lives shaped, through stress and storm, through the dense drive of arrows and the smoke of conflict, through a war of words, and through victories, and defeats and losses more magnificent than gains, the destiny of the English people. ⁴⁴

In Ireland, watching a 'sullen countryman with a pitchfork ... a member of an inferior race', Morton makes clear that the lack of a true novel of Ireland, and a properly national writer, ensures that the man will never find a representational subjectivity that will enable him to become real. ⁴⁵ Proper national literature lies in such books as Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* and Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selbourne*, because, as 'unique creations of the English mind', both writers have managed to make small things important and have painted 'an intimate portrait of themselves.' ⁴⁶ It is partly through this representation of themselves that their literature derives its national identity. Just as Morton travels in search of England and finds

himself, so too do these male writers achieve a status within English literature through a portrayal of themselves. Masculinity's representation of itself is national in a way that representations of women are not. For Morton, Englishness also lies in the small rituals of daily life; so, for example, he believes that no other nation sets a table as well as the English. However, it is membership of a 'superior' race that enables men to represent themselves as national. Morton's Irishman will never quite achieve it, because his formulation of the Irish is that, essentially and inherently inferior, they are unable to produce such a literature. The English, though, are priorly constituted to do such a thing.

If Englishmen make literature and history, and Englishness is formed out of an English masculine subject's relation to a feminine soil, it is no surprise that an historic English building which has become a girls' school can no longer be a primarily 'national shrine'. The presence of girls destroys that possibility, in a way that boys at Eton would not:

Only in England perhaps could Battle Abbey become a girls' school. Indeed it might seem to a foreigner one of the baffling inconsistencies of English life that the place where the future of England was changed should be devoted to the education of young ladies; for here, if anywhere, is a sacred national shrine. But when you approach the fine gateway of Battle Abbey it is soon made clear to you that Battle is a girls' school first and a national shrine a long way after.⁴⁷

In Cornwall, however, in the margins of England, Morton seems to lose the grammar of the nation. In this strange liminal place, which is more like Celtic fairyland than England, his act of writing takes on major and conscious importance. Unusually, he tells the reader, 'I am writing', as if the act of writing can reconstitute him as English in face of a troubling, dreamy, lying, Celtic place which could destroy his Englishness.⁴⁸ Indeed, all his journeys are concerned with finding meaning that the nation can provide. Here, his writing can be seen as such a journey.

Morton's journeys have to be understood as symbolic rather than actual, based as they are on a journey of the soul. *In Search of England* describes how, when faced with his own possible death as an exile in Palestine and experiencing a 'religious moment', he took a vow that if he survived he would go

home in search of England.⁴⁹ His journeys then become meaning-creating experiences in the face of death where, for him, the nation can provide the meaning that death would destroy. As he journeys, he never again meets death in contemporary time on English soil. The only deaths encountered have happened in the past history of England, so his contemporary England exists in a timeless moment which cannot be destroyed. Although *I Saw Two Englands* deals with the differences between interwar England and an England about to go to war again, these differences are minor in the sense that internal change is part of the great continuity of England and Englishness. Any historical change takes place within the stability of the continuing reality of a geographical place imagined as a nation. The fact that England can manifest itself as a discrete identifiable place through historical changes is paradoxically testimony to the fact of its timeless continuity. The Depression, for example, is not explicitly included in his narratives. Beyond that, we have to understand his narratives as mythical rather than actual accounts, given that some journeys are privileged as constituting 'A Journey', while others are not. The journey that Morton embarks on prior to the outbreak of World War Two, in order to glimpse what might be the second pre-war England of his generation, is to Kent and Sussex, places which he says he has missed out in his previous journeys. However, arriving in Canterbury, he tells the reader he stayed there three years before. So it would appear that if the journey has no existence in writing, it has no status as 'a journey'. This implies that the writing of the journey is deeply implicated in the secular pilgrimage to find 'England', just as the modern place of pilgrimage becomes Stratford-on-Avon, the birthplace of a writer, rather than a religious shrine such as Walsingham. In another timeless, ahistorical moment when Morton goes to Stratford 'on a real pilgrimage', it seems to him that this is a place 'where you will meet Shakespeare'.⁵⁰ In Morton's England, writers and writing have an important national status.

Victor Turner's anthropological work on pilgrimage, which Benedict Anderson draws on, offers a framework through which Morton's journeys can be understood.⁵¹ Analysing the status of the pilgrimage, the pilgrim and the sense of

‘communitas’ which the journey produces, Turner identifies the pilgrim as being in a liminal space. Generally, pilgrimage is undertaken in performance of some previously made vow and the journey is undertaken voluntarily, often with some symbolic or ritual object.⁵² The structure of pilgrimage is one in which the pilgrim leaves the familiar, moves through the unfamiliar, to return back to the familiar as a changed person. Indeed, Morton suggests that a good journey entails a man returning to say that he has met himself. This raises the question as to where he was whilst journeying if he was not meeting himself. Turner suggest that the pilgrim is in an ambiguous state, exiled from the familiar, and in transition between two social positions: that which s/he came from, and that to which s/he is going. This liminal space is potentially dangerous as the existence of the pilgrim calls into question the whole normative order and the pilgrim is therefore potentially polluting. Without the status normative order bestows, allows the pilgrim, Morton, to be read as Everyman. This offers the masculine reader the possibility of imaginatively undertaking the same journey, and becoming part of the communitas, the friendship community in liminal space. However, the dangers liminality poses to established order must not be underestimated, Turner argues. Gender categories can be troubled. In liminal space, the non-human can be part of communitas, and this can be the earth/dirt with which the transitional person is often identified. Turner shows that liminality can be symbolised as a grave which is also a womb.⁵³ This suggests something of the force of the heterosexualising imperative found in Morton’s writings. In order to use the journey as a meaning-creating experience, order has to be re-established, and the illogic and disorder of the liminal banished, through the orderly writing of heterosexual subjects and the wrenching of earth out of its associations with dirt and death to become a meaningful womb. Turner says that as the pilgrim ‘approaches the holy of holies the symbols become denser, richer, more involuted - the landscape itself is coded into symbolic units packed with cosmological and theological meaning’ and the pilgrim will touch the holy objects there.⁵⁴ It is precisely this touching of

holy English soil which ultimately Morton does, in acts which give ordered meaning both to himself and to the earth.

In Morton's texts, we catch him in the act of composing the nation in the face of anxieties about masculinity and femininity, Jews and colonial Others, the urban and the rural. One might think of these works as text-books with instructions for how to make the nation 'virile'. In his discursive formulation, this is achieved by already having a nation which has an important historical and literary past. By calling on this past, the nation can be made by national masculine men who plant their feet, or some other part of their anatomy, into a feminine soil, which is pregnant and maternal which is the matrix of both the past and the future. In turn, this soil roots itself back in the hearts of men, and because the rural is privileged as the site of authentic Englishness, men become heroically and nationally masculine in this space. The soil is pregnant with English history, which has been made by men forming the destiny of the English people. True warmth lies in this national bond between a masculine subject and a feminine soil. However, women are outside this pact of heterosexual Englishness, representing a 'cold internationalism'. As natural 'shoppers' they are linked into an un-English urban degeneracy, and also, as more internationalist than men, women are in a precarious relationship with Englishness.

Morton's formulation of Englishness involve, in the main, the articulation of two gendered and heterosexualized constitutive elements. The first concerns men and masculinity, and leads the present thesis to examine, in the next chapter, whether this national relation between men and earth as a bond of Englishness is apparent elsewhere in literary and other interwar culture. The second concerns women and femininity, dealt with in chapter five, and prompts the question as to what relationship women are allowed with national earth in other texts.

¹ H. V. Morton, *The Call of England* [1928] (London: Methuen, 1933), p. 3.

² Michael Bartholomew, 'H. V. Morton's English Utopia', in *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in Inter-War Britain*, ed. by Christopher Lawrence and Anna-K. Mayer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p. 28.

³ Bartholomew, p. 28.

⁴ Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 203.

⁵ H. V. Morton, *In Search of England* [1927] (London: Methuen, 1930), p.5.

- ⁶ H. V. Morton, *H. V. Morton's London: Being The Heart of London, The Spell of London and The Nights of London in one volume* [1925 and 1926] (London: Metheun, 1941), p. 335.
- ⁷ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 216.
- ⁸ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 12.
- ⁹ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. viii.
- ¹⁰ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. x.
- ¹¹ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. ix.
- ¹² Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 132.
- ¹³ Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 140.
- ¹⁴ Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- ¹⁵ H. V. Morton, *I Saw Two Englands: The Record of a Journey Before the War, and After the Outbreak of War, in the Year 1939* (London: Metheun, 1942), p. 20.
- ¹⁶ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 64.
- ¹⁷ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 50.
- ¹⁸ H. V. Morton, *In Search of Wales* [1932] (London: Metheun, 1949), p. 87.
- ¹⁹ H. V. Morton, *In Search of Ireland* [1930] (London: Metheun, 1961), p. 101.
- ²⁰ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 43.
- ²¹ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 195.
- ²² H. V. Morton, *In Search of Scotland* [1929] (London: Metheun, 1984), p. 222.
- ²³ Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 20.
- ²⁴ Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 85.
- ²⁵ Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 196.
- ²⁶ Rachel Bowlby, *Shopping with Freud* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 101.
- ²⁷ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 169.
- ²⁸ Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 232.
- ²⁹ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991).
- ³⁰ Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Pandora, 1989), p. 3.
- ³¹ Light, p. 145.
- ³² Morton, *H. V. Morton's London*, p. 171.
- ³³ Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 2.
- ³⁴ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 280.
- ³⁵ Dyer, p. 220.
- ³⁶ Dyer, p. 220.
- ³⁷ Dyer, p. 39.
- ³⁸ I use the terms, 'xtian' and 'xtianity' rather than the more familiar terms 'christian' and 'christianity', in order to problematise the cultural authority which xtianity has. Christianity, as a term, has become so naturalised as part of the 'English' order that it is hard to see it anew. My use of 'xtian' and 'xtianity' represents an attempt to defamiliarise the terms, and their cultural hold.
- ³⁹ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 131.
- ⁴⁰ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 132.
- ⁴¹ Morton, *The Call of England*, title page.
- ⁴² Morton, *The Call of England*, p. 204.
- ⁴³ Morton, *In Search of Ireland*, p. 266.
- ⁴⁴ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 224.
- ⁴⁵ Morton, *In Search of Ireland*, p. 126.
- ⁴⁶ Morton, *I Saw Two Englands*, p. 143.
- ⁴⁷ Morton, *I Saw Two Englands*, p. 98.
- ⁴⁸ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 77.
- ⁴⁹ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 3.
- ⁵⁰ Morton, *In Search of England*, p. 260.
- ⁵¹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) and Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).
- ⁵² Morton's car might be understood as such a ritual object.
- ⁵³ Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 259.

⁵⁴ Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 210.

CHAPTER THREE

MEN-IN-EARTH: A TROPE OF ENGLISHNESS

That corpse you planted last year in your garden/ Has it begun to sprout? ¹

In this chapter, I want to return to the cultural significance of the First World War in interwar literature, and investigate a recurrent trope in literary and cultural figurations of Englishness at this time - that of the 'man-in-earth'. In the last chapter on the popular work of H. V. Morton, I delineated the ways in which his grammar of the nation suggested that Englishmen's national subjectivity is formed out of a heterosexual relationship in which a masculine national subject has a metaphoric bodily relationship with the feminine soil of England. This relationship recalled the trench warfare experience of World War One. Although women were involved in this war, doing such jobs as ambulance driving and nursing, and were therefore present in the war zone, the trenches were an area forbidden them. The trenches were an entirely masculine space, accessible only to the few women who cross-dressed and masqueraded as men.² This nostalgic theme of men-in-earth offered a re-inscription of a male homosociality untroubled by the postwar upheaval between men and women which suffrage, amongst other things, represented. Since women had not been in the trenches, then to recall this experience discursively, and to posit national identity as relating to men in the trenches, was a way of excluding women from a national identity of which they could have had no memory. To make the trenches a literary site of national identity formation is to allow women only a second-hand relationship to the nation. Even Flora Sandes, one of the cross-dressing women, agreed that trench experience was *the* war experience, arguing that:

If anyone at home begins asking me to describe the War I shall tell them to go into their back gardens, dig a hole and sit there for anything from three days and nights to a month, in November, without a thing to read or do, and they can judge for themselves ... ³

The 'protracted periods of immobility and lack of agency' for those in the trenches suggests that although it was a masculine space, nonetheless those who occupied it were feminised.⁴ If indeed English manhood had been feminised by trench experience

this would help explain the force of the imperative to renew the nation's virility through the trope.

However, this literary theme of men-in-earth was not entirely new. Novels such as Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind In The Willows* (1908) used the trope to figure the relations between different English class positions, through the vehicle of animals representing Englishmen who inhabited burrows, or holes in the riverbank.⁵ This book was continuously in print in the interwar period, selling approximately half-a-million copies. Grahame's account of the countryside configures literature, rurality and heterosexuality in a close relationship, similar to that in the work of H. V. Morton. When Rat and Mole think back on their summer, it is couched in terms of a book-chapter/ pageant which shows the awakening of a feminine nature awaiting the arrival of the masculine in order that something should be born and spring out of earth:

Such a rich chapter it had been, when one came to look back on it all! With illustrations so numerous and so very highly coloured ! The pageant of the river bank had marched steadily along, unfolding itself in scene-pictures that succeeded each other in stately procession. ... one knew, as if string-music had announced it in stately chords that strayed into a gavotte, that June at last was here. One member of the company was still awaited; the shepherd-boy for the nymphs to woo, the knight for whom the ladies waited at the window, the prince that was to kiss the sleeping summer back to life and love. But when meadow-sweet, debonair and odorous in amber jerkin, moved graciously to his place in the group, then the play was ready to begin.⁶

By the time men went to war in 1914, the idea of men-in-earth as a trope of Englishness was already available to be called on and refigured under differing social conditions. It may be that since this trope was already present in discourse it affected cultural memory of the Great War so that trench experience came to be the privileged experience through which that the War was re-imagined.

The trench experience had a profound impact on culture. War novels published after the war, such as *Tell England* and *Her Privates We*, routinely showed the horrors of this form of warfare through the vehicle of the man-in-earth. Bourne, in *Her Privates We*, returns after battle to his dug-out thinking that the 'world seemed extraordinarily empty of men, though he knew the ground was alive with them.'⁷ Becoming 'almost indistinguishable from the mud in which they lived', dead and live

soldiers mingled in this same mud.⁸ The oozing and viscous mud of the trenches destroyed any sense of order in which men and objects could be recognised as distinct and discrete from one another. Boundaries between the human and non-human broke down, as did the boundaries between the living and the dead. Similarly, the boundary between nationalities could not necessarily be upheld. One of the patients that W. H. R. Rivers treated was:

That of a young officer who was flung down by the explosion of a shell so that his face struck the distended abdomen of a German several days dead, the impact of his fall rupturing the swollen corpse. Before he lost consciousness the patient had clearly realised his situation and knew that the substance which filled his mouth and produced the most horrible sensations of taste and smell was derived from the decomposed entrails of an enemy.⁹

In the face of this disorder, language seemed to lose any meaning. In *Her Privates We*, Bourne's friend, Weeper, brings Bourne's injured and dying body back from battle to the trench, 'stumbling over the shell-ploughed ground through that fantastic mist, which moved like an army of wraiths'.¹⁰ This landscape, which mixes reality and fantasy, in a way that the two become indistinguishable to the men inhabiting it, leads to incoherence. As Weeper arrives in the trench with Bourne, he attempts to tell the Sergeant what has happened. The Sergeant's response is: 'What are you gibbering about?'.¹¹ Those soldiers who suffered most from incoherence, and an inability to either use language by retreating into silence, or to carry on living in a socially acceptable ordered and meaningful way, were characterised as suffering from 'war neurosis' or 'shell-shock'.¹² Those treating shell-shocked soldiers reported that many of them had been buried alive in earth, and this seemed to be a causal factor in their illness. Two symptoms of shell-shock were an inability to speak and obsessive behaviour. One soldier, who had not been buried, was described by his physician:

In walking he must mark each flagstone and touch each post. He had the impulse to count and to arrange things in patterns; counting on his fingers or the panes of windows in the rooms and arranging them in sets of twos, threes, &c.¹³

It appears he was engaged in an obsessive project of reorganising and categorising his world after having experienced the disorder of war. For some, treatment consisted of writing, with some men writing under hypnotic suggestion. Doctors reporting to The

War Office were not convinced that Freudian analysis was a beneficial treatment, and Dr. Hurst thought it 'dangerous in setting up sexual ideas'.¹⁴ Sexual thoughts were clearly antithetical to good national health. One soldier for whom hypnosis had not cured his terrors, 'left his relatives and *buried himself in the heart of the country*, where he saw no-one, read no papers, and resolutely kept his mind from all thoughts of war' [my italics].¹⁵ It is this metaphorical masculine 'burial' in the country as a cultural response within general discourse and literature to trench warfare that is the subject of the present chapter. For soldiers, it offered the possibility of re-imagining men as discrete, ordered subjects, and to re-imagine the earth also as having a firm body, unlike trench and battlefield mud. Formulating the earth as substantial offered a way of making meaning in the face of its loss from the war, given that earth appeared foundational to the grammar of the nation.

However, it was not just soldiers who were affected by war in this way. Families of the dead and non-combatants were haunted, too, by the dismembered male body of the battlefields, and their desire for the re-membered male body, the whole body, could be accommodated within this trope. Although many families had wanted their dead returned to them for burial, the War Office had disallowed this. To the distress of many families, it became clear that the dead bodies belonged not to them, but to the War Office. Joanna Bourke points out that, 'after the cessation of hostilities, the War Office retained significant powers over the corpses of dead ex-servicemen and bereaved civilians were forced to seek new ways to lay their dead to rest.'¹⁶ Literature was one of those forms in which the dead were laid to rest. Jay Winter has described how alongside more obviously material 'sites of memory' of the dead, such as war memorials and war cemeteries, literary texts also became both 'sites of memory' and 'sites of mourning'.¹⁷ Writing itself bears a particular relationship to memory in that it has the power both to 'aid memory, to be memory'.¹⁸ In memorialising the dead, literature and writing obliquely brought the dead back to life by bringing them into the present.

Although this war-time relationship with earth was shared by men of different nationalities, it became a powerful trope of Englishness in the interwar period. As such, it became a vehicle to examine questions about masculinity, femininity and the state of the nation. Cultural evidence for its power can be seen in the ritual surrounding the burial of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey in 1920. This masculine body, which represented national identity without personal identity, was actually buried along with one hundred sandbags of French earth.¹⁹ It seems as if the masculine body alone could not signify national identity without it being in a relationship with the earth. As the earth can symbolise both tomb and womb, this literary trope also became a way in which resurrection could be discussed: both the resurrection of dead soldiers, and the resurrection of a previous England which these writings mourn. One question obliquely articulated by texts which utilise the trope of men-in-earth is whether the corpse can be re-animated.

The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen at Luxor in 1923 suggested its possibility, and may have contributed to the vogue for Egypt and Egyptian artefacts that it engendered. According to Robert Graves and Alan Hodge:

Cambridge students staged an Egyptian rag, raising from the dead Phineas, the purloined mascot of University College, and awarding him an honorary Blue. A secret tomb (a subterranean public lavatory) was prepared in Market Square, and undergraduates appeared at the appointed hour, wearing towels like Egyptian slaves. At the cry of 'Tut-and-Kum-in', the dead Phineas arose.²⁰

The previous year, 1922, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* had been published.²¹ This anthropological work, which came from his work at Cambridge, was characterised by Graves and Hodge as 'a key book of the period',²² and promoted what Page DuBois posited as 'the Cambridge school myth of the dying god who is sacrificed to the mother goddess.'²³ However, this dying god was also a resurrecting god, which Frazer argued was a common myth throughout the world. It is possible that the work became so popular because it argued for the universality of resurrection in a culture which had many dead 'young gods'.

There were, in particular, two pieces of war writing which utilised the image of men-in-earth and that proved to have a profound impact on interwar culture.

Rupert Brooke's poem 'The Soldier' talks of the Englishman's dead body in a foreign field whose presence makes a foreign space forever England:

If I should die, think only this of me:
 That there's some corner of a foreign field
 That is for ever England. There shall be
 In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
 A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
 Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
 A body of England's, breathing English air,
 Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.²⁴

This suggests both that the English masculine body in earth is enough to confer nationality on that earth, and that the earth itself need not necessarily be nationally English prior to the presence of the Englishman. However, the Englishman's body is itself made from a dust/earth which England gave birth to, and nourished through its national landscape.²⁵

The second piece of war writing is an erotic description of a live German soldier's relationship to earth from Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* :

From the earth, from the air, sustaining forces pour into us - mostly from the earth. To no man does earth mean as much as to the soldier. When he presses himself down upon her long and powerfully, when he buries his face and his limbs deep in her from the fear of death by shellfire, then she is his only friend, his brother, his mother; he stifles his terror and his cries in her silence and her security; she shelters him and releases him for ten seconds to live, to run, ten seconds of life; receives him again and often for ever.

Earth ! - Earth ! - Earth !

Earth with thy folds, and hollows, and holes, into which a man may fling himself and crouch down. In the spasm of terror, under the hailing of annihilation, in the bellowing death of the explosions, O Earth, thou grantest us the great resisting surge of new-won life. Our being, almost utterly carried away by the fury of the storm, streams back through our hands from thee, and we, thy redeemed ones, bury ourselves in thee, and through the long minutes in a mute agony of hope bite into thee with our lips !²⁶

This earth, with her folds, hollows and holes, suggests a female body, addressed in a sacred language, with which the soldier has a sexual relationship. The spasm of terror, and the bellowing explosive death followed by a surge of new life, could be as much a description of orgasm as of being shelled and seeking refuge. However, what mostly comes across from this piece is the sense of the enormous sexual importance of earth-as-woman to the soldier. Remarque received many letters from English soldiers and officers who thought the novel accurately described their own war-time

experiences, both in terms of the outward experience of warfare and the inner, more personal, experience. General Sir Ian Hamilton, President of the British Legion, corresponded with Remarque, praising the work, and in their correspondence the latter told of how his readers felt regenerated/resurrected by his work.²⁷ This erotic relationship with earth was not uncommon. Theodore Van de Velde's *Ideal Marriage*, which, according to Cate Haste, 'ran through forty-two editions with sales of 700,000 copies in four years'²⁸, whilst stating Van de Velde's intention 'to keep the Hell-gate of the Realm of Sexual Perversions firmly closed',²⁹ also asserted that '[a]n appreciable number of perfectly normal people experience sexual stimulation in contemplating a lovely landscape.'³⁰ Similarly, Rupert Brooke wrote a short story about a young man discovering that the war had begun, who realises that his love for English earth corresponds to the romantic and sexual feeling he has for a young woman, 'A-':

With a sudden tightening of his heart he realised that there might be a raid on the English coast. He didn't imagine any possibility of it succeeding, but only of enemies and warfare on English soil. The idea sickened him. He was immensely surprised to perceive that *the actual earth of England* held for him a quality which he found in A-, and in a friend's honour, and scarcely anywhere else, a quality which, if he'd ever been sentimental enough to use the word he'd have called 'holiness'. His astonishment grew as the full flood of 'England' swept over him from thought to thought. He felt the triumphant helplessness of a lover. [My italics]³¹

This relationship between men, earth and resurrection carried on textually after World War One and provided a potent trope for a variety of writers, even those concerned with farming and the condition of the soil.³² So, for example, the project of G. C. Watson's *The Soil and Social Reclamation* is to renew the fertility of the earth in order to renew the virility of the nation. His rhetoric combines a discussion of the condition of the soil as the skin of a body inextricably linked with the virility of the nation and national defence. The skin of the body must be kept fertile in order to secure defence through virility since 'the soil is the most powerful bulwark of defence of any country. When that is lost to a nation ... then that nation disintegrates.'³³ However, the state of agricultural England is such that her defences have been weakened by the neglect of the soil. Not enough people are employed in

agriculture, compared to industry, he argues, although when the balance between employment in farming and industry favoured agriculture the nation was in a better state. Therefore, according to Watson, 'true patriotism and defence means love and care of the soil.'³⁴ Interestingly, the use of the word 'love' suggests that it is not just a practical care that should be taken of the soil, but that the patriot should enter into an emotional relationship with it in order to secure the nation.

However, although miners are people who have an intimate relationship with the earth, entering it daily, their relationship to this national soil is problematic, and thus their own relationship to the nation unstable:

To the miner, for instance, the soil is the 'overburden' of earth, something to be got rid of, which he must remove to recover the hidden 'wealth' below - of gold or other precious metal.³⁵

The actions of their industrial rather than agricultural relationship to soil means that they injure irreparably the skin of earth, and therefore national defences. Perhaps they go 'too far' into earth. There is a region beneath the soil, the chasm or the abyss, which seems less able to be discursively recuperated for the life of the nation, and is more connected with the death of the underworld. Robert Graves wrote of miners he knew in the war as joking with corpses, shaking hands with them, and generally making merry with the dead in what he felt to be a clearly inappropriate manner.

Constructing them as non-English, he wrote in *Goodbye to All That* :

Of course, they're miners, and accustomed to death. They have a very limited morality, but they keep to it. It's moral, for instance, to rob anyone of anything, except a man in their own platoon. They treat every stranger as an enemy until he proves themselves their friend, and then there's nothing they won't do for him. They are lecherous, the young ones at least, but without the false shame of the English lecher.³⁶

J. R. R. Tolkien shares a similar attitude toward miners. Although his protagonist lives in earth, he clearly suggests that the reader should not imagine Bilbo Baggins to share any similarities with the miner, as it is a 'low' occupation.³⁷ Bilbo does not actually have an occupation: he lives on inherited wealth. In writing *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*, Tolkien said that he:

Had a mind to make a more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogenic to the level of the romantic fairy story - the larger founded on the lesser, *in contact with the earth*, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast

backcloths - which I could dedicate simply: to England; to my country. [My italics]³⁸

His war experience as a signalling officer had been both trench-based and hospital-based. At the end of the Great War, all but one of his close male friends were dead. The impulse to write came from a feeling that there was something wrong with industrial, mechanised England. The right-wing Tolkien believed that 'touching your cap to the Squire may be damn bad for the Squire but it's damn good for you.'³⁹

Although *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* was not published until 1937, he had been working on it during the war. In his project of creating a mythology for England, the first line of the hobbit's story is: 'In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.'⁴⁰

This hobbit-hole recalls the winding trenches, but rewritten with bourgeois comforts.

As such, it sounds like a soldier's trench fantasy of cleanliness, of the wide availability of food, and the chance to wash and change into clean, dry clothes:

The door opened onto a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats - the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill - The Hill, as all the people for many miles around called it - and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage.⁴¹

However, the text makes clear that occupying comfortable space is not the answer to national problems. The inhabitant of this space must change, and it is through the journey of the hobbit/ Englishman who leaves this hole in the ground, only to return to it transformed, that the difficulties about England and Englishness that Tolkien perceived can be examined.

Although hobbit society is partially traced through matrilineal descent, and we are told about the mothers and grandmothers of various characters, there are no female characters in this story. Tolkien seems to have a problem inscribing femininity, first displaying it then erasing it. As he begins to describe Bilbo's mother, he starts and stops: 'The mother of our particular hobbit - what is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the

Big People as they call us.’⁴² The women are long dead, and femininity is in the past, while the male characters act out their journeys and adventures to reclaim a magical world for themselves which does not include the presence of women. Part of Bilbo Baggins’s problem is that his home in the Shire is too comfortable. He is too smugly bourgeois and far too domesticated, worrying about washing-up and dusting instead of taking on dragons. The domestic life of the Shire has feminised him; he wears an apron and cleans his mantelpiece daily. However, the wizard, Gandalf, ensures that Bilbo should reclaim some of the adventurousness of his ancestors, and sends him off with a party of dwarfs who want to reclaim their treasure from the dragon, Smaug. Bilbo is worried about leaving home without enough handkerchiefs. Just as Tolkien believes he can induce a better English subjectivity in his readers by writing this mythology, Bilbo, too, is enabled to change through reading. He needs to adopt the subjectivity of a burglar in order to get the treasure back from Smaug, and knows how to do this from his reading: ‘[h]e had read of a good many things that he had never seen or done Of the various burglarious proceedings he had heard of, picking the trolls’ pockets seemed the least difficult.’⁴³ As he picks the pockets, he learns this new subjectivity which he puts to full use in his later adventures. Bilbo, however, is not a criminal burglar, but a good one who returns to his friends their rightful property which is as much in the treasure that Smaug has, as in that which is restored to all at the end of the narrative. If Bilbo was a slightly cautious domestic individual at the beginning, by the end he is transformed into a communally-minded masculine creature, deeply bonded with the dwarfs he has adventured with. Together, they have achieved a male homosociality untouched by homo-eroticism or homosexuality and untroubled by femininity or respectability.⁴⁴ The Shire is now a place where the returning hobbit in his earth can provide a model of the heroic masculinity that Tolkien would like to provide for England. Bilbo can now describe himself as a resurrector, telling Smaug: ‘I am he that buries his friends alive and drowns them and draws them alive again from the water.’⁴⁵

If Tolkien's man-in-earth anti-modernist mythology for England excluded the miner in the search for resurrection, so too did the modernist writer, D. H. Lawrence, even though he appeared to valorise the man-in-earth.⁴⁶ His poem 'Ego-Bound' suggests the ego-bound man is:

pot-bound
in the pot of his own conceit,
and he can only slowly die.

Unless he is a sturdy plant.
Then he can burst the pot,
shell off his ego
and get his roots in earth again,
raw earth⁴⁷

In 1926, writing to Rolf Gardiner, who was engaged in the project of renewing the nation through community work, Lawrence imagined a utopian space that England needed where there would be:

A heart of darkness ... We'll have to establish some spot on earth, that will be the fissure into the underworld, like the oracle at Delphos, where one can always come to And then one must set out and learn a deep discipline - and learn dances from all the world, and take whatsoever we can make into our own.⁴⁸

Clearly, his utopian vision featured both a man with his roots in earth, and some gap or fissure in that same earth, and yet the miner is not his preferred national masculine subject. In fact, Gardiner worked with unemployed miners hoping to re-engage them in an agricultural relationship with the soil.

Gardiner's *England Herself: Ventures in Rural Restoration* tells of his interwar work with agriculture and mythology, in which he hoped to create a new England by setting up the Springhead community in Dorset, and organising various work-camps where Englishmen would learn a new relationship to earth.⁴⁹ Gardiner and Lawrence influenced one another, and shared a common belief in the magnificence and importance of the phallus to the nation. Gardiner's community both ploughed to farm and ritually re-enacted ploughing in public folk-dance displays, and he mounted pilgrimage walks for groups of men to the Cerne Abbas Giant. This representation of a man-in-earth, being cut from the chalk hillside, was (and is) notable for its massive erect penis. They introduced a 'Plough Monday' celebration to

Dorset where men with swords mythologically killed another man and resurrected him through a ploughing action. However, Gardiner's aggressively phallic masculinity appeared to need no feminine earth:

The plough whose neglect was deplored and whose veneration we invoked by word and rite on Plough Mondays in the years preceding the war, has wrought a great change. But the plough is not only a giver of bread, the breaker and changer of the dead, inert land, it is the loosener of fertility.⁵⁰

His view of the land recalls the Greek debate as to whether the woman's body had an active role in reproduction, or whether she was merely the passive receptacle for the man's seed. The dead, inert land of 'England Herself' is brought to fertility by the action of the plough/penis. The land has no active part in reproduction. Plough is all: Masculinity 'loosens fertility'. Gardiner's England, although it included a man-in-earth, was so masculinised that the feminine appeared barely to exist, or existed as a frigid form which needed the masculine to 'loosen' it. His elevation of the plough/penis was matched by a corresponding decline in the femininity of both his earth and the culture he hoped to provide for England's renewal. Working with the belief that 'England must become agricultural again or die', Gardiner wrote of experiments where unemployed miners were placed in land-settlement schemes to learn rural, agricultural skills.⁵¹ But:

The miner families loathed being transferred from their home environment to a strange unfamiliar district. The womenfolk in particular rebelled against transference, and their stubbornness often led to the return of the settler even after he had become successful on his holding.⁵²

Clearly, according to Gardiner, the miner might just be recuperated for agricultural England if it were not for the stubborn women they were allied with. Once again, women are problematic for the nation. D. H. Lawrence, as a fellow ideologue of Gardiner, also dealt with the miner and mining communities in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

The country house, Wragby Hall, where Sir Clifford and Lady Chatterley live, is next to the Tevershall pit and village, which invade this English house by bringing in the smell of earth's excrement and blackening it:

And when the wind was that way, which was often, the house was full of the stench of this sulphurous combustion of earth's excrement. But even on

windless days the air always smelt of something under-earth: sulphur, iron, coal or acid. And even on Christmas roses the smuts settled persistently, incredible, like black manna from the skies of doom.⁵³

To Lady Chatterley, Tevershall 'sounded really more like a Central African jungle than an English village.'⁵⁴ It is a black and ugly place with 'blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements wet and black'.⁵⁵ To Sir Clifford, the miners are 'objects rather than men, parts of the pit rather than parts of life, crude raw phenomena, rather than human beings along with him.'⁵⁶ These men are not made of the earth of England. Instead, 'iron and coal had eaten deep into the bodies and souls' of the miners:⁵⁷

Creatures of another reality, they were elementals, serving the elements of coal, as the metal-workers were elementals, serving the element of iron. Men not men, but animas of coal and iron and clay. Fauna of the elements, carbon, iron, silicon: elementals. They had perhaps some of the weird, inhuman beauty of minerals, the lustre of coal, the weight and blueness and resistance of iron, the transparency of glass. Elemental creatures, weird and distorted, of the mineral world! They belonged to the coal, the iron, the clay, as fish belong to the sea and worms to dead wood. The anima of mineral disintegration!⁵⁸

Such elemental people cannot carry the burden of representing Englishness, because their bodies do not relate to English earth, nor can they represent a racial whiteness, being contaminated by blackness and Africa; but perhaps more importantly, they cannot represent Englishness because they suggest disintegration without resurrection.

A resurrection is needed within Wragby Hall. It is threatened with destruction from the inside as much as it is threatened with contamination from the black pits outside. The war has left Sir Clifford dead from the waist down, unable to have children to provide an heir for Wragby Hall. Resurrection of the body is a constant theme throughout the text. Lady Chatterley walks in the woods thinking to herself, 'Ye must be born again! I believe in the resurrection of the body!', as she wonders whether to have a child by someone other than her husband.⁵⁹ Sir Clifford hopes for the return of his potency by rekindling his interest in the mines, and begins to feel, 'when he had his periods of energy and worked so hard at the question of the mines, as if his sexual potency were returning.'⁶⁰ However, the testimony of Mrs Bolton, Sir Clifford's nurse/companion, made clear that there is no resurrection from

the mines. Her husband was killed in an explosion at Tevershall pit, and although she kept expecting him back after his death, she tells Lady Chatterley that 'it took me a thousand shocks before I knew he wouldn't come back, it took me years.'⁶¹

Similarly, Sir Clifford's body does not regain potency/resurrection: the pits cannot provide this for him.

England is too split between industrial and old, rural England. Potency and resurrection are not present or possible in either place. Dukes, a dinner-party guest at Wragby, provides the clue to the future:

Our old show will flop; our civilisation is going to fall. It's going down the bottomless pit, down the chasm. And believe me, the only bridge across the chasm will be the phallus!⁶²

This landscape is a feminised one with its 'chasm', and if civilisation should fall it will be into the chasm of femininity which cannot guarantee the future of civilisation. The future lies with masculinity, but '[t]he metaphor', as Kate Millett wittily puts it, 'is an unhappy one; in respect of penile length, the future hardly seems promising.'⁶³

Mining is, perhaps, an activity that penetrates too deep into the earth, causing a chasm to appear - a bottomless pit, bridgeable only by a phallus that will restore civilisation. However, if the miner is one of the forces making this enormous chasm appear, how does he manage this task? Could there be uncomfortable fears here that perhaps the working-class man, who is allied to the black African, has an enormous tool at his disposal? This seems to contradict a preferred Englishness where the masculine subject penetrates only lightly into earth, rather than too deeply.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, it still represents a bodily masculinity within landscape in the form of the phallus reconciling the two Englands in a metaphorical landscape of the chasm. Again, virility is presented as the force that will renew and resurrect England. This renewal via masculine potency is not achieved through either the miner or the owner of the stately home/ old England, but instead through the penetration of Lady Chatterley, a 'country-looking girl', by Mellors, Sir Clifford's gamekeeper, who is an ex-officer/gentleman and agricultural worker, and as such can cross class positions.⁶⁵ Their relationship would seem to provide new meaning to the term 'agricultural

worker', working as Mellors does at his sexual relationship with Lady Chatterley. This, however, is not surprising given the textual message that in a 'tragic' and post-cataclysmic age meaning has to be re-made through an aggressive heterosexuality that can compensate for any previous loss of meaning.⁶⁶ What this text does is to shift the feminine countryside with which the man makes meaning into the body of a woman which is 'country-looking'. When Connie looks in the mirror, she sees that her:

Breasts were rather small, and dropping pear-shaped. But they were unripe, a little bitter, without meaning hanging there. And her belly had lost the fresh, round gleam it had had when she was young, in the days of her German boy, who really loved her physically. Then it was young and expectant, with a real look of its own. Now it was going slack, and a little flat, thinner, but with a slack thinness. Her thighs, too, that used to look so quick and glimpsy in their female roundness, somehow they were going flat, slack, meaningless.

Her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance.⁶⁷

Her body only has meaning, or becomes 'real', when it is heterosexually and physically loved, and her 'chasm' is bridged. After Mellors has made love to her (if it can be thus called), she:

Wondered, just dimly wondered why? Why was this necessary? Why had it lifted a great cloud from her and given her peace? Was it real? Was it real? Her tormented modern-woman's brain still had no rest. Was it real? And she knew, if she gave herself to the man, it was real. But if she kept herself for herself, it was nothing. She was old; millions of years old, she felt. And at last, she could bear the burden of herself no more. She was to be had for the taking. To be had for the taking.⁶⁸

Her prehistoric age signals a concomitant lack of civilisation. Even though modern, she is archaic, primitive and meaningless until masculinity and heterosexuality confer meaning on her. The future of England cannot rely on the modern woman because she does not recognise her archaic nature, but her archaic nature is also that which will prevent England from having a civilised future. Either way, femininity by itself will not renew the nation.

T. H. White concurs that the future of England lies with masculinity, in his utilisation of the trope of man-in-earth. Born in 1906, he was still a boy when the war ended, and had had no direct experience of warfare. In the 1930s, he published books with such suggestive names as *Earth Stopped*, *Gone to Ground*, *England Have My Bones*, and perhaps more obliquely referring to a man-in-earth,

The Sword in the Stone. These works combined state-of-England writings with the hunting, fishing, shooting genre which has had a long history in English literature. *Farewell Victoria*, a novel which presented a retrospective view of the Victorian era and its ending, shows a vicious view of miners as inauthentically English, through Mundy, the protagonist:

[He] was a countryman, although he had been bred among the agriculturalists (who are the true blood of England and have for a hundred years been cheated even of their small security; so that coalminers and factory hands, and the brood whose bloody vehicle is the motor bicycle, possess the rights of citizens, while their brothers are allowed to starve) ...⁶⁹

However, White's next novel, *Earth Stopped or Mr Marx's Sporting Tour*, discarded the didactic tone of *Farewell Victoria*, to be written in the form of a spoof on the state of English politics and subjectivities.⁷⁰ The Mr Marx of the title finds himself at a shooting-party in a country-house where he falls for Miss Mary Springwheat. She enjoys hunting, so Mr Marx suspends his repugnance for hunting in order to win her. The eccentric group with whom they hunt includes a queer man called Pansy - The Fairy Queen -, flappers, and various aristocrats. Together they argue the various merits of socialism, capitalism, communism and free love. In this text, the earth which has been stopped is metaphoric for marriage not taking place. Marriage is both duty to one's country and to the land, and like the fox who cannot go to earth, neither can marriage assure the land if it does not take place. The narrative ends as a bomb is about to fall on the hunting-party's heads.

However, in his next work, *Gone to Ground: A Novel*, the characters of the previous novel do indeed go to ground.⁷¹ Set in 1935, world-historical events overtake them while out hunting. The end of the world has come, and they are about to be bombed:

*When a round lid opened in the middle of the field in which they were standing. It had a shining underside, like aluminium, and the turf grew on top of it in a circle, as if it were a green iced cake.*⁷²

They escape destruction by climbing into this 'dug-out', which, like Bilbo Baggins's home, sounds like a soldier's fantasy world:

At the far end there was a sort of bar, with glasses of every shape and colour; venetian porpoises supporting crimson dishes for champagne, scandinavian

troll-shapes of smoky texture for the longer drinks, alchemical crystal goblets, like bulbous aquaria, to cherish the viscous urbanity of encouraging brandy. This end of the dug-out looked like a booth at a Fun Fair. ⁷³

In this dug-out, characters find their patrilineage and literature. Both the Countess and the Professor discover that their long-lost fathers are in this hole in the ground.

Whiling away the time until the outside air is breathable, the group tell each other stories. It is their immersion in earth which allows this; above ground they do not tell stories. This storytelling allows for a discussion on which stories can be told. Does modern life allow for the telling of the supernatural/ghost story or has modernity destroyed the form? Linking storytelling and literature to the natural world, Pansy suggest this is impossible.

In the old days we could think and feel and love and exercise our imaginations. Later, we could only get into trains and motor cars and aeroplanes. We could only rush about the surface of the globe, scorning any velocity which rose to less than sixty miles an hour, hastening fruitlessly on unprofitable errands. Look at Jane Austen. In the old days, before nature had gone material, in the days when human beings moved in horse-drawn vehicles, and so had time to think, Jane Austen was read. But who would read her yesterday? What was her air speed, her oil pressure, her maximum revs. per minute? None, absolutely none. And so we didn't read her. Nature, the modern nature, didn't give us time. We had to have something snappy, something full of purple patches, which could be wolfed and thrown away in spare half hours, in a few minutes even, between our dashes in the Bentley or the Moth. ⁷⁴

Having said this, Pansy challenges the others 'to tell a ghost story about a car or an aeroplane.' ⁷⁵ Mr Sponge tells a convincingly ghostly story about a friend of his, Andy, who had flown in the RFC during the war. After the war he had committed suicide whilst flying, leaving a power charge behind him since there is a 'principle of existence' which is not 'perishable'. ⁷⁶ As I have argued before, this trope of men-in-earth offered the idea of resurrection for dead soldiers to the culture that mourned them. This underground story of the airman posited a continuity after death through the 'less perishable principle of existence.' Given that two of the characters find their own missing fathers in the dug-out, this trope also offers the possibility of finding the missing (they were underground after all), and to find history in earth rather than above ground. ⁷⁷ Above ground, the group is oblivious to the history of the present because of its obsession with hunting. But if missing soldiers might be found in earth along

with both history and literature, that offers a possibility of their continued presence *in* history and literature. Indeed, the text seems to argue nature *is* literature. Pansy's discussion suggests their linkage, and within each of the tales frequent reference is made to contemporary and previous writers, such as George Bernard Shaw, Compton Mackenzie, Kenneth Graham (sic), Jane Austen, and Shakespeare. One fishing tale describes the countryside in which the hero is fishing.

[A]ll the lambs were playing in the opposite fields: absolutely lovely. Thirteen or fourteen of them charging up and down their special playground, whilst a nannie sheep looked on, like a nurse in a poem by Blake.⁷⁸

Here, it is literature which makes the viewer perceive the natural world. Literature constructs perception rather than nature constructing literature. The world looks like Blake said it did. White was obviously so taken by this extract that he also included it in *England Have My Bones*.

This text has no resolution, in the sense that the underground people come back into the air and create a new world, but ends rather with a story of Pan. The ground above may be destroyed and unable to support life, and no-one knows whether there is - in the words of E.M. Forster - 'panic and emptiness'. The ambiguous Pan, 'the destroyer and the preserver', has the last words, and as such the text is open-ended as to whether England is destroyed or preserved.⁷⁹

England Have My Bones was written in the same year as *Gone to Ground*. In the face of later events in White's life, the title turned out to be an irony. During the Second World War, he fled to Ireland to avoid fighting, leading his biographer Sylvia Townsend Warner to comment '[s]o much for the England of his bones'!⁸⁰ Written in the form of a diary, spanning the year, 1934, that White spent in the countryside, the title-page shows the unattributed quotation:

'God keep my soul
And England have my bones'.⁸¹

Believing that the real England is to be found in sporting activities performed by real Englishmen, this journal maps the killing of various animals: snipe, pheasant, hare, rabbit, weasel, fox, duck, goose, salmon and trout. Alongside this are the descriptions of pub games, and the new sport of flying. This is a celebration of a

physically competent and non-intellectual masculinity, constructed because, as White says, 'in a shifting world, I want to know where I am', such that he can declare 'I am an *Englishman*, and I live in the *shire*.' ⁸² This Englishman avoids the danger of emotional relationships. 'Falling in love', he states, 'is a desolating experience, but not when it is with a countryside.' ⁸³ This relation to countryside allows for belief in resurrection against all known facts.

At Walter Lovell lived the Reverend John Mason, who believed himself a new Elias and announced the second coming. His followers called the village Mount Sion. On the occasion of the end of the world they dwelt in tents, stood on top of a rise to watch the surrounding countryside destroyed, sang, danced, jumped and frantically clapped their hands to the sound of violin, pipe and tabor. The world continued, and some time afterwards Mr. Mason left it. He prefaced this event by prophesying his resurrection after three days. The succeeding vicar was forced to open his coffin, in order to prove that he was still there; yet the village continued to affirm that he had risen, and that many had spoken to him after death. ⁸⁴

But if White is scathing about the villagers, he nonetheless provides a strangely illogical account of his hunting activities as providing creation out of death.

When it is difficult to kill the thing, when skill and achievement come into it, I find that the killing is worthwhile. You forget the dead salmon in the ecstasy of creation: you have perfected something yourself, even more perfect than the dead fish. ⁸⁵

Women, though are incapable of this very English form of killing and creation, death and resurrection, doing not sport but 'butchery'. ⁸⁶ As such, White's women cannot carry national identity in the way that his men do. Discussing arguments about fox-hunting, White makes a ridiculous 'spinster in Bognor Regis' carry the argument against fox-hunting. ⁸⁷ In contrast, White makes a cult of the masculine body when it is untainted by intelligence: 'I don't like intelligence', he says, 'I have never been in love with an intellectual person.' ⁸⁸ Sexuality and intellect are antithetical for White, as indeed are intellect and Englishness: a surprising argument from a man who had a First in English from Cambridge. The real man 'lives on true terms with the pleasures of his own body.' ⁸⁹ This is something intellectuals and communists are incapable of doing.

It is astonishing to see the intellectuals, who know all about communism and the European situation, trying to live their own lives, even indoors. They lean against the mantelpiece at the wrong angle, and the fender slips, and bang goes one of the candlesticks - broken. They can't cope even with their own centres

of gravity. I saw a presumably 'modern' boy the other day, who was so little conscious of the position of his own body that he fell backwards off a chair while thinking of something else.⁹⁰

The following passage about Karl Marx's supposed incapacity for hunting reads ironically in the face of the knowledge that White avoided conscription in the Second World War.

How safe would Karl Marx have been, I wonder, walking in a line of guns. Would he have mooned along star-gazing, and left a loaded gun against the wall at lunch, and shot his own foot off climbing over a stile? It is useless to retort with the obvious query about my average sportsman's usefulness in economics.⁹¹

But if the real Englishman inhabits a country space that he falls in love with, a countryside which can be apprehended through English literature, then the sport of flying represents a difficult place for English masculinity. This movement away from earth endangers this particular masculinity, engendering a sort of queerness. Flying is too modern. There is no historical literature to refer one's experience to, and to construct it from, and the usual tropes of Englishness do not apply. Seen from above, 'Middlehampton was a pool of quicksilver towards the sun. Towns cease to be horrible when you are well above them.'⁹² Masculinity has to change, as one relates to air and wind rather than earth. White's flying instructor remarks,

'Don't be so strong. No good being a strong man in the air. In bed, yes; but in the air, no good at all.' ... 'If you land across wind like that on a windy day, you'll get a gust and go right over. Then where will you be? Where shall I be? Both of us: gone to ---'⁹³

The blankness into which they might go is both ground/earth and death, but it could also represent heterosexuality. The space in which White and his instructor fly is one that demands a light masculinity and one in which they mingle with clouds that White masculinises in his descriptions. All varieties of cloud are called 'he' by White.⁹⁴ In the air, these men are not strong heterosexuals relating to a feminine earth, but light men relating to masculine clouds and wind: a more homosexual space. Indeed of the various male characters that float through these journal entries, Johnny the flying instructor is the only one who is suggested to be homosexual. After a flying lesson and '[a]t tea Johnny spilled his cup over his trousers and said: "Down my legs again.

What a naughty girl I am!”’⁹⁵ This description of Johnny as a ‘girl’ mixed with the general wetness of spilt tea suggests that Johnny does not maintain the firm, dry, clean and proper body of heterosexual masculinity, dissolving instead into a wet girlishness. In this text, earth seems to guarantee men’s heterosexuality whilst leaving it for the air endangers it.

The Sword in the Stone, when published in 1938, was not thought of as a children’s book as it is now. In this text the boy hero, Wart, who later becomes King Arthur, is instructed by the magician Merlyn. Wart’s education from Merlyn is precisely the sort of education that White had proposed in *England Have My Bones*. This education would make men of boys by ensuring their competence in country crafts such as fire-building: competencies which would prevent intellectualism or communism. Besides learning hunting and sporting activities, part of Wart’s training entails shape-shifting, so he spends time as a fish in water, a bird, and a badger in earth. From a snake he learns that history resides in earth. But Wart’s knowledge is incomplete without him going to earth. In earth as a badger he meets another bachelor badger who instructs him:

So Merlyn sent you to me ... to finish off your education. Well, I can only teach you two things, *to dig, and to love your home*. These are the true end of philosophy. [My italics]⁹⁶

This unmarried badger/man-in-earth has been writing a treatise on why Man is master of the animals. He shares this with Wart as ‘just the thing to top off your education. Study birds and fish and animals: then finish off with Man.’⁹⁷ As such, in earth, Wart comes to knowledge of Man in a way that he has not in any other environment. It is through the conjunction and culmination of these various knowledges that Wart is enabled to pull the sword from the stone that proves him the rightful King. This action gives Wart mastery over heterosexuality, landscape and women, such that he can claim sovereignty over the land: the sword represents a phallic penetration, and the stone represents a dangerous-to-men aspect of feminine landscape.

In a study of ancient representations of woman, Page DuBois has analysed several aspects of ancient Greek representations, or metaphors, of the female

body: those of the field, furrow, oven, stone and tablet. These representations still have resonance in contemporary culture. Arguing that 'if earth is the mother, then the stones of the earth are her bones' DuBois went on to state that the:

Connection with the womb, with intercourse, with procreation is less evident in the case of stone than in the metaphors of earth and oven. Stones are an extension of earth, but they are hard and unyielding. A man cannot penetrate a stone; he can fill an oven or plough the earth. Stone is associated with virginity, as in Antigone's case, or with the end of fertility, as in Niobe's. Yet there is a desire to work stone, to make it yield, to force it into spaces not of productivity but of receptivity[.]⁹⁸

'At the most general level', she says, 'the metaphor of stone seems to represent an inversion of the fertile earth.'⁹⁹ Wart does not penetrate this stone with his sword, but instead removes the sword from the stone. Since the stone has obviously been previously penetrated, it has yielded, otherwise the sword could not be in the stone. The fact that the sword has become stuck may speak to male fears of petrification in the face of women's sexuality. However, Wart, with all the knowledge he has gained in earth, is able to have mastery over petrification. He can act heterosexually with earth/stone and remain uncontaminated by the interaction. It does not petrify him. His masculinity is not endangered, but ensured, by his relationship to stone/earth such that he can become the supreme figure of national coherence - the King. If he can overcome petrification, then the earth may subsequently yield fertility to him. The remarkable thing about the sword in the stone standing in for England is that England shrinks to stone-size in this metaphor.

Similarly, in *I Saw Two Englands*, H. V. Morton suggests that at the outbreak of World War Two England shrinks, as people prepare to defend their own villages. He writes:

It comes to me that one of the most remarkable things about this war is the quiet way England has ceased to be a country or even a county for many of us, and has become a parish ... I, who once thought of England as a whole, and was in the habit of going to Cornwall or Cumberland on the spur of the moment, have not left my parish for months. Neither do I wish to to so; my parish has become England.¹⁰⁰

Just as England shrinks to the size of the parish, paradoxically the parish itself becomes enlarged in the sense that it signifies not just itself but the whole of England.

Geoffrey Household's masculine adventure, *Rogue Male* (1939), pushes the two themes of a man-in-earth and a shrinking England to their ultimate conclusion.¹⁰¹ The nameless narrator buries himself in earth in an underground burrow where he can defend his safety, shrinking his universe to no more than a few feet in the soil. Although he becomes more animal than human he still remains an Englishman. Ultimately he becomes trapped there by an agent of either Hitler or Stalin, Major Quive-Smith, although the text refuses to name who his trapper is working for. The narrator's own masculine body buried in English earth becomes a metaphor for the nation under attack.

As well as writing his story on paper when in earth, the narrator also writes across the landscape, leaving the tracks of his wounded body and erasing them, so they might be read as a text by his pursuers, who would then be misled in their interpretation. When Household described his own writing style as using a pencil to 'drive a sort of pilot tunnel through the underground darkness of the imagination', he shows how his view of writing and authorship owes something to the trope of man-in-earth. Here, the masculine writing hand penetrates underground where the imagination is to be found.¹⁰² Writing and landscape are allied, but so, too, is reading allied to a penetrative relationship. Writing off to his solicitor, the narrator asks for some books to be sent to him to pass the time in earth. What he wants, he says, is 'meaty stuff which I could re-read throughout the winter, *penetrating* with each reading a little further into what the author actually meant rather than what he said.' [My italics]¹⁰³ The narrator's manipulation of the landscape in the building of his earth, too, writes and erases; he changes the landscape to accommodate his burrow, digging and re-arranging vegetation to hide it, such that his writing on landscape is a simultaneous act of producing and concealing.

What, though, might be produced or revealed in this writing? I would like to suggest that this writing shows links between masculine penetration of national feminine earth and the act of writing itself, following the thesis of Page DuBois. She argues that in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. writers started to 'establish a new

metaphorical nexus - a link between intercourse and writing. The body of the woman, no longer the productive, parthenogenetic earth, is rather a blank surface, a *tabula rasa*, a field not for plowing but for inscription.' ¹⁰⁴ Since Household's narrator is writing on landscape, what can this text reveal about the grammar of the nation and the imbrication of land, gender and writing?

Firstly, it reveals the man-in-earth as not only metaphoric for the entire nation, but also that this man is the potential saviour of England once he resurrects himself from his earth. A central claim of the text is that in the course of going to earth and writing about himself in this earth, the narrator comes to self-knowledge. The knowledge produced by his writing-body-in-earth is that the narrator had in fact loved his fiancée and that he had previously intended to kill 'the great man' in order to avenge her death. Having discovered this, he decides he must leave his earth in order to carry this out. To murder the great man will supposedly prevent the next war from taking place, and will therefore protect and secure England's future and all the relations of Englishness.

Household's grammar of the nation shares many similarities with that of Morton. The narrator has a hatred of indoor domesticity. After murdering his first pursuer/spy by pushing him onto a live line at Aldwych underground, the narrator recalls 'the sound of his steps and his scream and the hideous, because domestic, sound of sizzling.' ¹⁰⁵ This phrase 'hideous, because domestic' suggests either that domestic cooking is ironically counterpointed with the horror of murder, or that domesticity itself is hideous. For the man who makes clear that his safety and comfort is to be found outdoors, one has to believe that it is the latter view which the narrator favours. After this murder he flees to Wimbledon Common to hide.

The Common turned out to be ideal. I spent the night in a grove of silver birch where the fine soil - silver, too, it seemed to me, but the cause was probably the half-moon - held the heat of the day. There is for me, no better resting place ... ¹⁰⁶

Part of the problem of domesticity for the narrator is the presence of women, just as women are a problem for him outdoors. Although romanticising his dead fiancée, other women he meets are unpleasant and ruin the English countryside for him.

A hideous word - hiker. It has nothing to do with the gentle souls of my youth who wandered in tweeds and stout shoes from pub to pub. But, by God, it fits those bawling English-women whose tight shorts and loose voices are turning every beauty spot in Europe into a Skegness holiday camp.¹⁰⁷

Other women he writes of are a 'dry-faced spinster',¹⁰⁸ a 'bloodthirsty maiden lady' who 'had feet so massive that I could clearly see them at two hundred yards - great brogued boats navigating a green sea',¹⁰⁹ and a 'competent little bitch of seventeen'.¹¹⁰ Yet he describes his dead fiancée very differently.

Impulsive, spiritual, intelligent, all at such energy she seemed to glow. A boy who saw such things told me that sometimes there was a visible halo of light around her. To that I am insensible. But, as I remember her, life extended beyond her body; neither touch nor sight could quite surely say - here she begins and here she ends. Her skin was not a surface; it was an indefinite glory of the palest rose and orange that chose to mould itself to those tense limbs.¹¹¹

This romantically apprehended woman is disembodied, beyond categorising through touch and sight, a woman of spirit rather than materiality until one reads of her 'tense limbs'. Given the infrequency with which limbs are used to signify womanliness when other body parts such as breasts or rounded hips can be deployed, this suggests both that the narrator's object of desire is not actually a woman at all. If the narrator is repulsed by live women, preferring the dead, the femininity of nature appeals to him. His love for land is prior to his love for his fiancée. When hunting the great man he conceals himself under a 'mother tree' where he is brought back to life by the healing powers of this feminine tree.¹¹² His fiancée's limbs may have recalled the limbs, or branches, of this motherly tree.

Even though nature is feminised, Englishness is derived through patriarchal lines of inheritance. The aristocratic narrator, who can trace his ancestry back fifteen generations, describes his English lineage without any reference to his mother, or other women. Major Quive-Smith has a foreign father and an English governess mother, but his mother does not pass on her Englishness to him.

She felt socially inferior and morally superior to his father - a horrid combination - and had tried to make her son a good little Briton by waving the Union Jack and driving in patriotism with the back of a hairbrush - with the natural result that his affection for his mother's country never rose higher than the point of contact.¹¹³

The reader is given to understand that Quive-Smith's affection for his mother's country is through his bottom, as being the point of contact. There is an insinuation here that love of one's mother's country might be linked with homosexuality.

The narrative continually places men who celebrate manhood close to one another. *Rogue Male* calls upon the tradition of the imperial homo-erotic adventure such as the stories of Rider Haggard, who metonymically assures his readers that a 'petticoat' is not to be found in his tales.¹¹⁴ The narrator of *Rogue Male* seems to think that the only good 'petticoat' is a dead 'petticoat'. The murder of his former fiancée offers a kickstart to the narrative. It is her death that allows the narrator his adventures. Although he romanticises their relationship, one cannot help but feel that she provides the motor force for him to engage intimately with other men. Her death is a convenience. What sort of marriage would have been possible for a man who found domesticity hideous?

The danger of homo-eroticism is that it may threaten to turn into homosexuality, but the narrator makes a clear distinction between his masculinity and that of the 'nancy-boy'.¹¹⁵ This allows him to admire the physique of a young boy guard whilst still maintaining his own heterosexuality. Similarly the narrator and Major Quive-Smith live in very close physical proximity, close enough to suggest homosexuality, but the thin layer of earth between them through which they mediate their relationship keeps the barrier of heterosexuality in place. If we read this earth as feminine and representing women, we might understand the position that women are culturally placed in as the thin layer which prevents men from becoming too close. Throughout the narrative men are placed in close proximity. The narrator finds himself inches away from men bathing naked together in a river as he hides in a bush. Stowing away on the ship back to England, a thin piece of metal separates him from the bathroom of the ship's captain, and finally Quive-Smith, who has penetratively 'read' the narrator's tracks in the landscape and therefore found him, is separated from him in his hide by a few inches of earth. Although he cannot see him he has penetrated

what the author/narrator 'actually meant'. He has read the writing in the landscape and found the narrator's burrow.

However, pushing the trope of man-in-earth to its logical conclusion shows its limitations. Although in earth the narrator comes to some partial kind of self-knowledge, his position there is ultimately unsustainable. The burrow is becoming a tomb because he is running out of oxygen. Staying in earth cannot necessarily protect a man from homosexuality. Any other man is just as likely to come along and penetrate the earth-and-man without noticing the original man there. Hiding out in a muddy field, the narrator muses that if 'the owner of that vile field had been planting, he'd have stuck his dibber into me before noticing that I wasn't mud.'¹¹⁶ He has to leave earth, and resurrect himself. While earlier texts appeared to offer a relation with earth as a way of guaranteeing a man's heterosexual identity, this text suggests its lack of a guarantee. However, it focuses more on the necessity of resurrection. The narrator must resurrect himself from the tomb which is his earth, in order to kill the great man. He will murder the great man as an act of revenge. This will supposedly prevent the next war from taking place, and will therefore protect and secure England and all the relations of Englishness. However, it will also allow the narrator to uphold his heterosexual identity. No longer will he be lying in earth close to Quive-Smith, or vulnerable to a farmer's dibber, but instead he will be actively asserting his heterosexuality by focusing on his relationship with his fiancée, such that he has to avenge her death. This text does reflect something of the historical tension and uncertainty of the time just prior to World War Two. So, by the end of the interwar period a formulation of Englishness as man-in-earth appears more shaky, offering fewer certainties than those textual formulations closer in time to the First World War.

In conclusion, the man-in-earth trope of Englishness recalled the trench experience of World War One. In the re-formulation of the nation in the interwar period, this trope simultaneously allowed the metaphorical burial of the war dead and their resurrection. The trope allowed the masculine body to be re-membered into an entire body after its disintegration in the mud and disorder of the battlefields. The

feminine earth it generally posited was a stable earth, unlike that of the trench and battlefield mud. This offered coherence and meaning to the incoherence and loss of meaning the war generated. The earth was particularly important in this, in that the nation was imagined as an earth-based entity. When earth became disordered so too did the nation, such that it needed re-ordering. Earth was profoundly important in national imagination and national subjectivity, such that the Unknown Warrior - a hugely significant national figure - was buried in Westminster Abbey with sandbags of earth. However, only certain men could be this national man-in-earth figure. The miner was excluded because of his working-class position, his links with the blackness of the African and the fact that he penetrated too far into earth. The preferred penetration was a light one - one that did not provoke the opening of a chasm or abyss which might threaten England. Going too far might lead into another place where meaning was lost. Given the feminisation of earth, this meaningless abyss could speak about male fears of being lost in illimitable woman, and about the dangers of being overwhelmed by femininity, or petrified by it, in heterosexual intercourse. An analysis of texts which use the trope of men-in-earth shows a relationship being posited between masculinity, reading, writing, literature and earth, the book and earth, and history and earth.

¹ T. S. Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead' in *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 53.

² For accounts of this see Dorothy Lawrence, *Sapper Dorothy Lawrence: The Only English Woman Soldier, Late Royal Engineers, 51st Division, 179th Tunnelling Company, B.E.F.* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1919), Flora Sandes, *An English Woman-Sergeant in the Serbian Army* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), and Flora Sandes, *The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier: A Brief Record of Adventure with the Serbian Army 1916-1919* (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1927).

³ Sandes, *The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier*, pp. 29-30.

⁴ See Anne Whitehead, 'Open to suggestion: Hypnosis and history in Pat Barker's *Regeneration*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 3.44 (1998), 674-694 (p. 692).

⁵ Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind In The Willows* [1908] (London: Methuen, 1940).

⁶ Grahame, pp. 39-40.

⁷ Frederic Manning, (Private 19022) *Her Privates We* [1930] (London: Readers Union/Peter Davies, 1965), p. 1.

⁸ Manning, p. 202.

⁹ W. H. R. Rivers, 'The Repression of War Experience', *The Lancet*, 2 February 1918, p. 174.

¹⁰ Manning, p. 273.

¹¹ Manning, p. 273.

¹² War Office, *Report of the War Office Enquiry Into "Shell-Shock"* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 3 and pp. 18-19. Naval officers reported to The War Office that although sailors were in difficult and

frightening circumstances in submarines they did not suffer from shell shock. Similarly, sailors being shelled in ships infrequently suffered. This suggests that a disordered earth is more distressing than a disordered sea, and that cultural meanings are based on a certain order on earth, whereas the sea does not have to carry the burden of representing national meanings because it is already a place of instability.

¹³ M. D. Eder, 'Psycho-Pathology of the War Neuroses', *The Lancet*, 12 August 1916, p. 267.

¹⁴ War Office, p. 129.

¹⁵ Rivers, pp. 174-175.

¹⁶ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), p. 211.

¹⁷ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Canto, 1998).

¹⁸ Page DuBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) p. 141.

¹⁹ Bob Bushaway, 'Name Upon Name: The Great War and Remembrance' in *Myths of the English*, ed. by Roy Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993) p. 154.

²⁰ Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend; A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* [1940] (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 126.

²¹ James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* [1922] (London: Macmillan, 1983).

²² Graves and Hodge, p. 197.

²³ DuBois, p. 70.

²⁴ Rupert Brookes, 'The Soldier' in *1914-1918 in Poetry*, ed. by E. L. Black (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p. 26.

²⁵ Indeed, attestation of the power of this trope is its appearance across a variety of genres: poetry, children's literature, novels, memoirs and the spy thriller. The following is an extract from Sir Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent: Being an Account of the Author's Early Life in Many Lands and of his Official Mission to Moscow in 1918* [1932] (London: Putnam, 1938), p. 121, and demonstrates the routine way in which a discourse of men, earth and nation could be configured: 'As a chief Sir George Buchanan was delightful - a man in whom all thought of self was submerged in the highest conception of duty. He was worshipped by his staff, and, when he took his daily walk to the Russian Foreign Office, his hat cocked on one side, his tall, lean figure slightly drooping under his many cares, every Englishman felt that here as much as the diplomatic precincts of the Embassy itself was a piece of the soil of England.'

²⁶ Erich Marie Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* [1929] (London: The Folio Society, 1966), pp. 39-40.

²⁷ E. M. Remarque, letter to Sir Ian Hamilton, cited in *The Penguin Book of First World War Prose*, ed. by Jon Glover and Jon Silkin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 607. Remarque quotes his readers as saying: 'We have been unable, because we did not know that our lethargy, our cynicism, our unrest, our hopelessness, our silence, our feeling of secession and exclusion arose from the fact that the regenerative power of our youth had been dissipated in the war. But now we will find the way, for you in your book have shown us the danger in which we stand, the danger of being destroyed by ourselves. But the recognition of a danger is the first step towards escape from it. We will now find our way back, for you have told us what it was that threatened us, and thereby it has become harmless.'

²⁸ Cate Haste, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain World War One to the Present* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 79.

²⁹ Theodore van de Velde, *Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique* [1928] (London: William Heinemann, 1944), p. 126.

³⁰ van de Velde, p. 39.

³¹ Christopher Hassall, ed., *The Prose of Rupert Brooke* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1956), p. 199.

³² The link between war and soil can also be seen in Siegfried Sassoon's recollection of Wilfred Owen who, while recovering at Craiglockhart, gave a paper there 'on the classification of soils, soil air, soil water, root absorption and fertility'. See Glover and Silkin, p. 341.

³³ Geoffrey Clement Watson, *The Soil and Social Reclamation* (London: P. S. King, 1938), p. 15.

³⁴ Watson, p. 19.

³⁵ Watson, p. 1.

³⁶ Robert Graves cited in Glover and Silkin, p. 309.

³⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* [1937] (London: Unwin, 1988), p. 34.

³⁸ Tolkien cited in Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1977), pp. 89-90.

- ³⁹ Tolkien cited in Carpenter, p. 128.
- ⁴⁰ Tolkien, p. 13.
- ⁴¹ Tolkien, p. 13.
- ⁴² Tolkien, p. 14.
- ⁴³ Tolkien, pp. 43-44.
- ⁴⁴ The term 'homosociality' comes from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
- ⁴⁵ Tolkien, p. 212.
- ⁴⁶ D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [1928] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960).
- ⁴⁷ D. H. Lawrence, 'Ego-Bound' cited in Linda Ruth Williams, *D. H. Lawrence* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), p. 21.
- ⁴⁸ D. H. Lawrence cited in D. J. Schneider, 'Alternatives to Logocentrism in D. H. Lawrence' in *D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by Peter Widdowson (London: Longman, 1992), p. 166.
- ⁴⁹ Rolf Gardiner, *England Herself: Ventures in Rural Restoration* (London: Faber & Faber, 1943).
- ⁵⁰ Gardiner, pp. 84-85.
- ⁵¹ Gardiner, p. 52.
- ⁵² Gardiner, pp. 54-55.
- ⁵³ Lawrence, p. 14.
- ⁵⁴ Lawrence, p. 105.
- ⁵⁵ Lawrence, p. 158.
- ⁵⁶ Lawrence, p. 16.
- ⁵⁷ Lawrence, p. 166.
- ⁵⁸ Lawrence, p. 166.
- ⁵⁹ Lawrence, p. 87.
- ⁶⁰ Lawrence, p. 153.
- ⁶¹ Lawrence, p. 170.
- ⁶² Lawrence, p. 77.
- ⁶³ Kate Millett, cited in Widdowson, p. 74.
- ⁶⁴ Is this light penetration linked to an imagined English penile length which is moderate? Evidence for this moderate penile length to represent English masculinity might be seen in the reaction of the governors of the BBC, who, on seeing Eric Gill's stone carving of Prospero and Ariel over the entrance to Broadcasting House 'asked Gill to make the organs more diminutive'. This is mentioned in Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989). Similarly, the 1932 complaint from the Bishop of Salisbury to the Home Office that the 26 foot long 'indecent pubus' of the Cerne Abbas giant be made 'less objectionable' suggests the same. See A. Barnett, 'Bishop tried to cover up giant penis' *The Observer*, 5 March 2000, p. 14.
- ⁶⁵ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, p. 6.
- ⁶⁶ Lawrence, p. 5.
- ⁶⁷ Lawrence, p. 72.
- ⁶⁸ Lawrence, p. 121.
- ⁶⁹ T. H. White, *Farewell Victoria* [1933] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1945), p. 36.
- ⁷⁰ T. H. White, *Earth Stopped or Mr Marx's Sporting Tour* (London: Collins, 1934).
- ⁷¹ T. H. White, *Gone to Ground: A Novel* (London: Collins, 1935). All italics as in original.
- ⁷² White, *Gone to Ground*, pp. 6-7.
- ⁷³ White, *Gone to Ground*, p. 9.
- ⁷⁴ White, *Gone to Ground*, pp. 33-34.
- ⁷⁵ White, *Gone to Ground*, p. 35.
- ⁷⁶ White, *Gone to Ground*, p. 77.
- ⁷⁷ Jay Winter suggests that across Europe approximately six million children were deprived of their fathers by the Great War (p. 46) and that since about half of the men killed had no known grave many carried on doubting that their loved ones were actually dead (p. 31).
- ⁷⁸ White, *Gone to Ground*, p. 159.
- ⁷⁹ White, *Gone to Ground*, p. 258.
- ⁸⁰ Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape with Chatto & Windus, 1967), p. 124.
- ⁸¹ T. H. White, *England Have My Bones* [1936] (London: Futura, 1981), title page. The quotation is from William Shakespeare, *King John*, iv.3.10.
- ⁸² White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 4. Italics in original.
- ⁸³ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 22.
- ⁸⁴ White, *England Have My Bones*, pp. 40-41.
- ⁸⁵ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 223.
- ⁸⁶ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 224.

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- ⁸⁷ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 238.
- ⁸⁸ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 195.
- ⁸⁹ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 196.
- ⁹⁰ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 193.
- ⁹¹ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 196.
- ⁹² White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 120.
- ⁹³ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 100.
- ⁹⁴ White, *England Have My Bones*, pp. 155-159. These clouds, even though all are masculine, 'couple with each other and breed off-spring'.
- ⁹⁵ White, *England Have My Bones*, p. 138.
- ⁹⁶ T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone* [1938] (London: Collins, n.d.), p. 272.
- ⁹⁷ White, *The Sword in the Stone*, p. 275.
- ⁹⁸ DuBois, pp. 86-87.
- ⁹⁹ DuBois, p. 87.
- ¹⁰⁰ H. V. Morton, *I Saw Two Englands: The Record of a Journey Before the War, and After the Outbreak of War, in the Year 1939* (London: Methuen, 1942), p. 288.
- ¹⁰¹ Geoffrey Household, *Rogue Male* [1939] (London: Michael Joseph, 1982).
- ¹⁰² Geoffrey Household, *Against the Wind* (London: Michael Joseph, 1958), p. 210.
- ¹⁰³ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 88.
- ¹⁰⁴ DuBois, p. 130.
- ¹⁰⁵ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 62.
- ¹⁰⁶ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 64.
- ¹⁰⁷ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 67.
- ¹⁰⁸ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 75.
- ¹⁰⁹ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 100.
- ¹¹⁰ Household, *Rogue Male*, pp. 172-173.
- ¹¹¹ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 150.
- ¹¹² Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 17.
- ¹¹³ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 155.
- ¹¹⁴ H. R. Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* [1885] (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1958), p. 12. Italics in original.
- ¹¹⁵ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 21.
- ¹¹⁶ Household, *Rogue Male*, p. 104.

CHAPTER FOUR

ALL AT SEA

*A serious book read at sea may possibly be of greater value morally than if read ashore.*¹

How is the reading of a book of more moral value at sea than on land? What happens to the national masculine subject who cannot touch earth because he is at sea? Does this latter question bear any relation to books and their differing locational moral values? In the interwar period, the question of what sailors read became a matter of public discussion. In this chapter, I will argue that the debates about sailors' reading habits were actually a debate about how to ensure the Englishness of the national masculine subject when he was unable to touch earth in the ways I have delineated in previous chapters. These debates about the reading matter of sailors were articulated in various pamphlets published by the Seafarers' Education Service, at a conference at Cambridge, and in the national press.

On May 13th, 1929, the *Manchester Guardian* headed up an article about a sermon preached by the Bishop of Durham with the words 'Authors "Sailing Near The Wind": Dr. Henson on Licentious Literature.' Through a metaphor of sailing, this headline neatly tied up the relations between the dangers of sailing and the dangers/powers of literature. The report of Dr. Henson's discussion of licentiousness in literature showed something of the fragility of the boundary between the acceptable and the non-acceptable when one gets too 'near the wind' when at sea. The author is likened to the sailor who goes too far. Like the sailor, the author needs to navigate a steady line between the acceptable and the unacceptable, that which is licensed and that which exceeds licence. Dr. Henson pleaded with his audience 'as men and nations to set themselves steadily in their places in the world to do what they could to strengthen the forces which made for a religious recovery.'² This plea for steady 'setting' carries on the sailing metaphor by recalling the use of the word 'set' in the phrase 'setting sail'. As sails can be steadily set, so too can they be unsteadily set. 'Men and nations' seem to be unsteady in their setting, so that Dr. Henson has to plead for something

more steady for xtianity. Adjacent to this article is one which recounts the banning of a woman from trawler voyages. Mrs Carter, who had already accompanied her husband on five fishing voyages, was told by the trawler's owners that their insurance company disallowed women on trawlers. Reportedly, she was no idle traveller, and on 'her last voyage donned her husband's sea clothing and was learning how to steer the trawler'.³ Nonetheless, she was barred, and sailing was preserved for masculinity. If men could be responsible for setting a steady sail in national xtian interests, clearly women were unable to be called upon rhetorically to act nationally in a similar way.

Although seafaring was seen as an exclusively masculine occupation, it is masculinity which comes to be troubled when at sea. The dangers posed to men 'at sea' appear to fall into three interlinked categories: those of immorality, homosexuality and racial impurity.⁴ These dangers threaten the grammar, or logical ordering, of a nation based on the maintenance of white heterosexuality through marriage, with a national masculine subject having a relationship with a feminine earth which grounds both his Englishness and his heterosexuality.

Inspired by the work of the Adult Education Movement, the Seafarers' Education Service was set up in 1920 to promote education for sailors, but it also ensured, through research and publishing, that the question of sailors' morals and education became a matter of public debate.⁵ Given that the Royal Navy was well provided with reading matter through its Victualling Division, the SES concentrated on the needs of the Merchant Navy, with the startling statement shown at the beginning of this chapter that 'A serious book read at sea may be of greater value morally than if read ashore'. That the Royal Navy provided books as victuals, or food, and the SES proposed that greater moral value could be obtained from them at sea, suggests that something measurable can be bodily ingested by reading.

In the 1929 pamphlet, *Libraries for the Merchant Navy*, the SES presented its project thus:

The vital importance of the Merchant Navy to the life of our island is slowly being recognised by the public. The sea is a calling where above everything there is a need of high character. Nowhere is there greater need than in a ship of a sense of civic discipline. The sailor is a national representative who goes

into the ports of the world and gives foreign people their idea of Englishmen. Frequently enough in these ports their baser allurements are dangled before him, which are best resisted by minds disciplined by some intellectual interest. Nothing, we believe, can make a more *solid* contribution to the well-being of the seafaring population than a *moderate* expenditure on such things as ships' libraries. [My italics] ⁶

Reading good books appeared to offer a diversion from immoral sexual activity and to ensure the correct Englishness of the sailor as a national representative. The debate slides from national identity to the baser allurements of sexual activity as an un-English representation of national character to libraries as support for correct Englishness. Much hinges on two words within this quotation: 'solid' and 'moderate'. In the fluid space of the sea, a 'solid contribution' can be made to sailors' well-being by 'moderate expenditure'. If the sea is a place of excess, instability and licence, solidity can be founded on and guaranteed by moderation. To spend immoderately on books would be to defeat the purpose: sailors must learn moderation in order to be properly national. Therefore, there must be no reckless spending on stocking ships' libraries. All the written material emanating from the SES presupposes a Navy consisting of white Englishmen who might enjoy reading the works of Shakespeare, John Buchan, Joseph Conrad, Rider Haggard, and imperial fictions. It is overtly to these men and boys that the work of the SES was directed, rather than, for example, Chinese or West African sailors.

Joseph Bristow's *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* provides an analysis of these fictions and their relationship to the formation of masculine identity. ⁷ His work traces debates about popular literature, boys' reading and masculinity from about the 1880s until the 1930s. Early debates about the 'penny dreadfuls' drew upon metaphors of dangerous waters and ships to discuss these issues. In 1887, B. G. Johns wrote about such literature in the *Edinburgh Review*, suggesting that 'the fountainhead of the poisonous stream is in great towns and cities, especially in London itself'. ⁸ Freeman Wills discussed the dangers that the ignorance of working-class boys posed to empire:

These are the future electors who will exercise so much influence on the world's destiny. The constituents of an imperial race, they ought to be educated with a view to the power they will wield. Every Englishman ought to

know something about the dependencies of England, as one of the heirs of such a splendid inheritance; he should understand English interests, something about her commerce, her competitors, the productions and trades of other lands. He ought to know his country's historical as well as her geographical position. He cannot, with safety to the empire, be allowed to be so ignorant as to be unfit for his political trust, *like loose ballast in a vessel*, liable, in any agitation that may arise, to roll from side to side and so to destroy national stability. [My italics]⁹

Bristow himself is not immune from the use of sailing metaphors, claiming that the adventure story 'would take the boy into areas of history and geography that placed him at the top of the racial ladder and at the *helm* of all the world' [my italics].¹⁰

Bristow argues that the moral of many of these imperial fictions is that 'sexual temptation stands as the greatest sign of weakness in men'; indeed, Kipling's *Kim* reaches manhood as he turns down the sexual advances of the woman of Shamlegh.¹¹ If *Kim* could provide the message that masculinity is formed through resisting women's sexuality, then other imperial fictions could provide an idea that the landscape of earth is coterminous with women's bodies. So, for example, the heroes of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* play out their quest across the landscape of a female body.¹² Travelling through Sheba's Breasts down Solomon's Road they arrive at a pubic triangle of mountains known as the Three Witches and penetrate a pit in the earth to find the treasure they seek. The SES seemed inclined to share Kipling's views on sexual activity as weakness. However, discursive and displaced sexual activity in relation to the landscape was clearly acceptable.

So what were the problems the SES identified and sought to solve?

For the SES, sailors fell into two categories: the older seaman whose problems have already been identified, and boys between the ages of fifteen and twenty who were in training. According to a Cambridge Dean in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*, schoolboys were officially not normal and therefore had to be the objects of regulation.¹³ This, too, was the case at sea. The task of the SES was to ensure that these boys in their passage to adult masculinity reached a high standard both morally and physically. Their education at sea was more difficult than that of boys on land since boys on land were educated 'in an atmosphere of tradition and of the robust commonsense which is the heritage of Englishmen in the mass.'¹⁴ Problems posed to this correct growth to

masculinity without the presence of a 'mass of Englishmen' were apparent both aboard ship and in foreign ports. Although the SES coyly tried to avoid openly discussing immorality on-board ship, it still flagged the issue:

In ships carrying a number of boys, they will often sleep and mess together; in others boys will be in the fore-castle. It is necessary here to make some brief allusion to allegations of corrupting and immoral influences. Although there has been some mention of these in evidence, our deliberate conclusion is that there has been a vast improvement in the last generation. The language and conversation of the older men is no longer of a kind which was prevalent in the past, and we have been assured that a young fellow aboard ship is no more liable to contamination nowadays than a boy of the same age ashore.¹⁵

In reading this, no matter how much the SES wished to deny it, it can be seen that boys at sea were at risk of some mysterious 'contamination' from sleeping with other boys and hearing the bad language of older men. However, the problem of the boy in foreign ports is given more serious consideration.

The problem of the boy who goes ashore, especially in foreign ports, is difficult and serious. One of the most experienced of all those engaged in training boys for the sea thus describes it. 'A boy finds himself in a very narrow atmosphere in his ship and when he gets ashore in a foreign port there are people who want to show him the vices of the natives. I often wonder how he keeps himself such a jolly good chap, but I am afraid many fall by the wayside.'¹⁶

Clearly, the temptations of native vices were more attractive than repulsive, since the writer wonders how these 'chaps' manage to avoid them. These 'jolly good chaps' reportedly complained to the SES that the work done by the Institute of the Mission to Seamen actually overdid entertainments of the 'virile' type for them. So the SES argued that the Institute needed a spacious room where boys could read and be quiet, and argued that 'if there were only one man in a port of the smallest kind willing to offer hospitality to boys from ships, the SES might well make arrangements to keep him supplied with a small library.'¹⁷ It seems as if the homosexuality of the sailor was an open secret: open to the extent that it could possibly be referred to through the previously quoted 'brief allusion to allegations of corrupting and immoral influences', but closed enough to locate any vice abroad in 'natives', rather than in other Englishmen, or indeed in British ports. But if the SES recommended the use of libraries to ensure official Englishness in its men and boys, it did not discuss the way

in which the intellectual pursuit of reading, or the provision of books, could actually ensure this. It took for granted that books were capable of doing this.

The enormous powers attributed to books and reading were more clearly delineated elsewhere. In his introduction to the report on the position of the education of boys at sea, Professor Clarke, an SES committee member, thought that books could bring sailors into a reproductive relationship with nature, asking:

Does not the seafarer, then, share with the countryman the duty of reflecting upon an experience gained in such close contact with Nature, so as to fertilise it by his thought and fructify it in a philosophy ?¹⁸

These books potentially offered a relationship with a tamer 'nature' than the indifferent 'nature' sailors found at sea. Without reading, the experience of nature at sea could not be fructified into a philosophy. How can literature ground the man at sea in order that his heterosexual national identity is secured?

The equation between reading and morality is further clarified by the work of Arnold Bennett. Bennett had been in the British Government's War Propaganda Bureau in its Literature and Art Department, and in 1918 he became the Director of British Propaganda in France. As such, he had theorised the relations between the perceived national good, literature and its political effects.¹⁹ *Literary Taste: How to form it, with detailed instructions for collecting a complete library of English Literature* was first published in 1909, but remained in print in the interwar period. Here, Bennett attempts to explain the mystery of literature, and obliquely argues that good literature could heterosexualise his imaginary masculine reader:

I will tell you what literature is! No - I only wish I could. But I can't. No one can. Gleams can be thrown on the secret, inklings given, but no more. I will try to give you an inkling. And, to do so, I will take you back into your own history, or forward into it. That evening when you went for a walk with a faithful friend, the friend from whom you hid nothing - or almost nothing.....! You were, in truth, somewhat inclined to hide from him the particular matter which monopolised your mind that evening, but somehow you contrived to get on to it, drawn by an overpowering fascination. And as your faithful friend was sympathetic and discreet, and flattered you by a respectful curiosity, you proceeded further and further into the said matter, growing more and more confidential, until at last you cried out, in a terrific whisper: 'My boy, she is simply miraculous!' At that moment you were in the domain of literature.²⁰

Just as literature can be thought of through the metaphor of a man's heterosexual attraction for a woman, so too, Bennett suggests, literature can communicate

heterosexual attraction to others. Bennett tells this reader who is in love with the 'miraculousness' of a girl that:

You were producing literature. You were alive. Your eyes were unlidded, your ears were unstopped, to some part of the beauty and the strangeness of the world; and a strong instinct within you forced you to tell someone. It was not enough for you that you saw and heard. Others had to see and hear. Others had to be wakened up. And they were! It is quite possible - I am not quite sure - that your faithful friend the very next day, or the next month, looked at some other girl, and suddenly saw that she, too, was miraculous! The influence of literature! ²¹

Literature seems in this formulation to heterosexualise, and be the force which stops male homosociality turning into male homosexuality. Instead of the male friends becoming close through literature, literature turns their thoughts and emotions to heterosexual. This view both supports and extends Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of the male homosociality of English literature. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, she highlights the ways in which such devices as the structure of plot and the content of literary texts display male bonding happening over the body and soul of a woman; in other words, men bond homosocially through the vehicle of a woman. ²² Whilst she focuses on analysing the workings of canonical texts by men, the way in which Bennett formulates literature and its effects suggests that literature itself can function as the 'woman' between two men. As such, literature is constituted as feminine, and allows men to bond homosocially rather than homosexually. But if literature is feminine, what does the book as a material object signify? At sea, it appears, the book itself becomes a fetish object of Englishness.

We have seen in Chapter Two how Morton prefaces *The Call of England* with a quotation from Chesterton which likens England to an island, and the island to a book. ²³ Morton also proposes that English literature is revealed as coming from the earth of England when a labourer thrusts his spade into earth and turns it over. For Morton's man to find England and become heroically masculine necessitates that he should have a bodily penetrative relationship with feminine English earth. The sailor, as a member of this 'island race' to which the SES refers, cannot touch the earth of the island when at sea. In Morton's formulation of Englishness, masculine national identity could not be guaranteed at such a moment, and for the SES, too, the

sailor's national identity is imperilled at sea. But if an island is like a book, the reverse also holds: a book is like an island. Therefore, for the sailor, the possession of a book enables possession of the body of the island. As such, the book comes to be a fetish object, magically standing in for the island. However, just as Englishness is not only formed out of possession of the island, so holding this fetish object is not on its own enough to re-make the Englishness lost at sea. How can one possess the island through the book and become heroically, masculinely English? If one thinks of the literary content of the book in the way that Morton does, then literature is part of the earth of England. So the book as object provides the island, while the content of this object provides the English earth. While holding this fetish object, the sailor has in his possession both island and earth.

To then read this book is to go further into a relationship with Englishness. Using a model of 'traditional nineteenth-century beliefs in meaning as something that has to be prised from its container', the SES seemed to work with Victorian rather than modernist ideas.²⁴ Joseph Bristow suggests that, '[f]or Victorians, given the amount of philological research they undertook, the meaning of meaning itself was associated with concepts of depth or deep-rootedness (like the roots of words).'²⁵ These views were not lost in the interwar period but can be seen to surface repeatedly in the commentaries offered by a range of texts about the powers of reading. The narrator of *Rebecca*, for example, suggests that even in exile from England, by reading one can be brought into a bodily relationship with it: when reading old copies of the *Field*, she can actually 'breathe the air of England', and the 'smell of wet earth comes to [her] from those thumbled and tattered pages'.²⁶ Morton, too, in a preface to *In Search of England*, writes that 'the smell of English meadows' might be found in his book.²⁷ The narrator of *Rogue Male* favours a method of reading which he describes as 'penetrative'. He wants 'meaty' reading which allows 'penetrating with each reading a little further into what the author actually meant'.²⁸ To read the book, then, is to be able to have a bodily, penetrative relationship to that which one reads. As such, to read these fetish objects of English earth is to penetrate

them. Reading offers the sailor another metaphoric way of being English when he is at sea. He has the island in the form of a book, the English earth in the form of its literary content, and by penetratively reading the book, he can metaphorically become the masculine heterosexual national subject that Morton describes when he finds 'England'. This will only work when it is 'English Literature' that the sailor reads.

So far I have used the term 'fetish' to mean a magical object of power, but bringing a Freudian perspective to bear can also explain something about the powers of the book as fetish. Freud explains the fetish as both 'a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it. It also saves the fetishist from becoming a homosexual'.²⁹ In this way, the earthy book fetish would appear to guarantee heterosexual identity while 'penny dreadfuls', or similar reading, were not recommended for sailors. Licentious literature is seen as coming from water rather than earth. Bad literature was routinely spoken of as flowing like a poisonous stream through English cities, or running like an open sewer, so it could not ground the sailors' national identity by rooting it in earth.

The sailor, as someone who is meant to guard national interests in terms of defence or trade routes, guards the nation from outside the boundaries of the island and in the liminal space of the sea. 'At sea' himself, the sailor guards the island from this threatening liminality which could destroy national order. Occupying this liminal space threatens a sense of Englishness founded on a relation to earth, but the sailor is at sea precisely in order to protect this same earth. Therefore the sailor is in an ambiguous position; as national hero who protects, he also imperils the idea of Englishness as earth. Both sailors and the sea could represent a danger to ideas of the nation, just as much as some pieces of literature were perceived to endanger Englishness. Since the sailor is a potentially dangerous character, who himself leaves the order of national earth for the dangers of the sea, these dangers which imperil the morals of the sailor, more than any other national subject, it was suggested, can be ameliorated by the reading of serious books. Perhaps the sailor needs to be recuperated because, firstly, he is in more danger than other land-based Englishmen,

such as miners, but secondly, because he is more worthy in that he provides national protection.

The anxieties expressed within the hegemonic discourses of the SES concerning masculinity, nation, sea/water and sexuality are put to rather different, more unsettling, and sometimes subversive, ends in the following fictional works. In E. M. Forster's *Maurice*, the sea is able to erase heterosexuality; David Garnett's *The Sailor's Return* deals with the subject of how an English village can or cannot accommodate the presence of an African married to the returning white sailor of the title; and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* uses the figure of the solitary woman sailor to signal Rebecca's refusal of conventional heterosexuality, and what the sea washes up to shore as showing the unnameable lesbian body divorced from all familial relationships. The work of the sailor/writer, James Hanley, shows how being at sea can undermine all certainties, especially those concerning the 'natural' status of England.

E. M. Forster's *Maurice* is an interesting example of what both homosexuality and literature could know in the period, but could not publicly speak. Although *Maurice* was written in 1913, Forster worked on the text in 1919, 1920 and again in 1932. It is these interwar revisions of the novel which I believe entitle me to consider it as a novel of the period. In fact, it was only published after his death in 1971. Forster believed it was unpublishable 'until my death and England's' because of its homosexual content.³⁰ Clearly, he saw homosexuality and Englishness as antithetical. In his Terminal Note to the text, Forster wrote:

A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it in the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense *Maurice* and Alec still roam the greenwood. I dedicated it 'To a Happier Year' and not altogether vainly. Happiness is its keynote - which by the way has had an unexpected result: it has made the book more difficult to publish. Unless the Wolfenden Report becomes law, it will probably have to remain in manuscript. If it ended unhappily, with a lad dangling from a noose or with a suicide pact, all would be well, for there is no pornography or seduction of minors. But the lovers get away unpunished and consequently recommend crime.³¹

So how does Forster inscribe homosexuality so that Maurice and Alec can roam the greenwood deep in the heart of an England which legislates against such acts? The sea has a crucial role, as does 'abroad', where, against convention, Forster refuses to locate homosexuality.

The first chapter starts with the young Maurice's last day at prep school, and the master Mr Ducie deciding to walk with him beside the sea in order to have 'a good talk' on 'a certain theme'.³² They walk together on the beach where Mr Ducie draws diagrams in the wet sand to show Maurice what happens in heterosexual marriage relations. After their talk had ended and they had moved on:

Mr Ducie stopped and held his cheek as though every tooth ached. He turned and looked at the long expanse of sand behind.

'I never scratched out those infernal diagrams,' he said slowly.

At the further end of the bay some people were following them, also by the edge of the sea. Their course would take them by the very spot where Mr Ducie had illustrated sex, and one of them was a lady. He ran back sweating with fear.

'Sir, won't it be all right?' Maurice cried. 'The tide'll have covered them by now.'

'Good Heavens ... thank God ... the tide's rising.'³³

It is this formal erasure of heterosexuality at the shoreline by the sea that begins to allow homosexuality to be written in a fictional England. As the anthropologist, Mary Douglas argues in *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*, 'all margins are dangerous' and any 'structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins.'³⁴ Therefore, if one idea of Englishness is founded on it being related to the clearly delineated form of the island, its social structure neatly boundaried by water, and its internal social relations as ordered, the island and its ordered social relations are dangerously challenged by the sea. Unlike land in general, the sea does not stay still. It may be conceptually imagined as fixed when in map form, but the actuality of the sea is that it moves backward and forward, in and out of the island, disordering any patterns made on the sand. Unlike land, the sea is not amenable to 'landscaping'. Humans cannot change the pattern of the sea and impose much human culture on it. However, there is both power and danger here, as Forster recognised. Mary Douglas argues that, although:

Disorder spoils pattern; it also provided the material of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no definite pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. That is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.³⁵

The disorder and uncontrollability of the sea are both dangerous to heterosexuality, as English order, and powerful to homosexuality as offering potential new patterns.

Indeed, as Forster said, since '*Maurice* was written there has been a change in public attitude here: the change from ignorance and terror to familiarity and contempt'.³⁶

Having removed heterosexuality through the sea washing away the diagrams on the sand, Forster's discursive task was to move homosexuality away from the margins, inland to the greenwood, overcoming other obstacles that oppose Englishness to homosexuality. So, for example, when Clive Durham declares his love for Maurice at Cambridge, Maurice:

Was scandalized, horrified. He was shocked to the bottom of his suburban soul, and exclaimed, 'Oh, rot!' The words, the manner were out of him before he could recall them. '*Durham, you're an Englishman. I'm another. Don't talk nonsense. I'm not offended because I know you don't mean it, but it's the only subject absolutely beyond the limit as you know, it's the worst crime in the calendar, and you must never mention it again. Durham ! a rotten notion really -*' [My italics]³⁷

Here, Englishness is defined through an opposition to nonsense - language without meaning; is defined in a grammar which cannot accommodate Englishness and love between men; and is therefore 'beyond the limit' which defines this same Englishness. However, the call on Englishness did not protect either Clive or Maurice from homosexuality. They both knew of its existence, but it seemed to be elsewhere, part of some historical past and some other cultural tradition. After a Greek translation class, where the Dean had said 'in a flat toneless voice: 'Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks', Clive tells Maurice that the 'Greeks, or most of them, were that way inclined, and to omit it is to omit the mainstay of Athenian society.'³⁸ This is a transformative moment for Maurice because he had 'never mentioned it to any living soul. He hadn't known it could be mentioned, and when Durham did so in the middle of the sunlit court a breath of liberty touched him.'³⁹

This talk of homosexuality brings the greenwood to Cambridge, in the sunlight and inspired by the 'breath of liberty'. Nonetheless, what Maurice knows in theory he finds hard to put into practice. It is not just Englishness that prevents homosexuality, but also the way that religion, medicine and the law are implicated in the ordering of heterosexuality, and the location of homosexuality 'abroad' in countries which have adopted the Napoleonic Code, such as Italy. However, in order to bring homosexuality into deep England, Forster has to wrench it away from its associations with Greece and the Greeks and find a way to associate it with a native Englishness - that of the greenwood.

Clive Durham is under pressure to marry in order to produce a family to inherit his country estate, Penge. Planning a trip to Greece/homosexuality, his mother argues against it, asking Maurice to persuade Clive to visit America, since she believes Greece to be for play and America for reality. However, later, Clive does go to Greece, after he and Maurice have been Platonic lovers for many years, and while there, contrary to expectation, disavows homosexuality by becoming 'normal'.⁴⁰ Sitting in the theatre of Dionysus, Clive 'saw barren plains running down to the sea', 'he saw only dying light and a dead land.'⁴¹ In Greece, the sterility he sees in both land and sea reflects his view of homosexuality:

Well, he had written to Maurice at last. His letter was journeying down to the sea. Where one sterility touched another, it would embark and voyage past Sunium and Cythera, would land and embark, would land again. Maurice would get it as he was starting for his work. 'Against my will I have become normal. I cannot help it.' The words had been written.⁴²

In this way, the conventional association between Greece and homosexuality is undermined. For Clive, homosexuality's sea-like formlessness now signifies not potential, but a sterile block to the marriage and children he begins to desire to ensure continuity for his English estate.

A key biblical phrase for Forster is 'Male and female created He them', which appears in both *Howards End* and in *Maurice*.⁴³ Mr Ducie explains 'the mystery of sex' to Maurice.⁴⁴ 'He spoke of male and female, created by God in the beginning in order that the earth might be peopled, and of the period when the male

and female receive their powers.' ⁴⁵ Forster's attempt to undo the imbrication of heterosexuality, Englishness and religion led him to argue 'out of the mists of theology: Male and Female created He not them'. ⁴⁶ By describing homosexuality as religion, in a way that the two did not act in opposition to each other, enabled the description of Maurice's boyhood desire as making 'a religion of some other boy.' ⁴⁷ Describing the homosexual young Clive as '[d]eeply religious, with a living desire to reach God and to please Him, he found himself crossed at an early age by this other desire, obviously from Sodom': ⁴⁸

He wished Christianity would compromise with him a little and searched the Scriptures for support. There was David and Jonathan; there was even 'the disciple that Jesus loved'. But the Church's interpretation was against him; he could not find any rest for his soul in her without crippling it. ⁴⁹

So Clive parts with xtianity. But just as xtianity supports heterosexuality, so too does medicine. Maurice's neighbour, Dr. Barry, tells him medical 'facts' couched in the language of the bible: 'I'm a medical man and an old man and I tell you that. Man that is born of woman must go with woman if the human race is to continue.' ⁵⁰ Averse to homosexuality, Dr. Barry:

Endorsed the verdict of society gladly; that is to say, his verdict was theological. He held that only the most depraved could glance at Sodom, and so, when a man of good antecedents and physique confessed the tendency, 'Rubbish, rubbish!' was his natural reply. ⁵¹

Dr Barry cannot see homosexuality in Maurice since he has good antecedents and physique. His medical view locates it in criminal morbidity. But Maurice veers between the desire to be accommodated within social life, thinking that it 'would be jolly certainly to be married, and at one with society and the law', whilst also yearning to be an outlaw in the greenwood with another man. ⁵² The force of the law against homosexuality comes across strongly: Maurice fears being blackmailed and ruined after sleeping with Alec Scudder; men barely dare to speak to one another of their homosexual desire for fear of the law. If the law will not allow it, then Maurice imagines it in a space of lawlessness symbolised by the greenwood:

He was an outlaw in disguise. Perhaps among those who took to the greenwood in old time there had been two men like himself - two. At times he entertained the dream. Two men can defy the world. ⁵³

At other times, he tries not to turn his head towards the greenwood. Unlike Morton's Englishman, who, alone in the countryside, finds Robin Goodfellow in himself and becomes heroically English, Forster's greenwood allows a place for men together to be homosexually un-English. The romantic English myth of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest can allow this, since this version of Englishness is based on the Merry Men having an outlaw status at the same time as being culturally condoned. The fresh air and exercise offered to Maurice as a cure for his homosexuality are the very things which enable it. Ironically, nature allows the 'unnatural'.

The places in which homosexual desire is inscribed are marginal and connected with water, since the discursive construction of landscape is intimately connected with the representation of desire. In order to place homosexuality, a different national landscape has to be imagined. If Morton's landscape is heterosexualised, then Forster's is homosexualised at the places which recall the sea's erasure of heterosexuality. Clive and Maurice acknowledge their desire for one another and become Platonic lovers as they leave Cambridge for a trip to the fens. Immersing themselves in the deep waters of a dyke, they experience a perfect day in their love, moving between grassy embankment and water. Theirs is a love deeply connected with water: 'If Maurice made love it was Clive who preserved it, and caused its rivers to water the garden.'⁵⁴ Maurice's love seems more freely given, without any heterosexual idea of outcome, whereas Clive takes this love to turn it metaphorically to some capitalistic saving for future profit in the form of a watered garden. This posits a different model of heterosexual and homosexual love, based on homosexual production and heterosexual reproduction. The waters pour from Maurice while Clive does not reciprocate. Clive had made a vow never to act on his desire in a physical way. In his desire for children to continue his country estate, he ends their relationship.

However, later Maurice and Alec Scudder, Clive's gamekeeper, become lovers. Alec falls for Maurice as a dinner party at Penge is broken up by rain leaking through the ceiling onto the piano. It is this water that enables Alec's presence

in the drawing-room; as gamekeeper, it would not normally have been his place, but the indoor servants need help in moving the piano. The following night, Maurice leans out of his bedroom window while rain sprinkles his hair. In this liminal space, he surprises himself by calling out 'Come' into the darkness to some mythical lover of his own imagination. Alec Scudder is there watching him, and when on the following night Maurice again calls from his window, Alec does come.⁵⁵ They have a sexual relationship with each other. Scudder, though, is due to emigrate: his ship leaves soon. This occasions concern for the local clergyman, who 'should be glad to see that particular young man settled with a helpmate before he sails.'⁵⁶ Sailing represents some sort of danger which can be averted through pairing Scudder off with a woman, and christianising him more thoroughly. Ironically, though, the danger the clergyman wants to prevent has already happened. Scudder and Maurice have spent the night together, and Scudder does have a helpmate of a sort. Three of the servants at Penge have not been confirmed, but to the clergyman, 'Scudder is the serious case because I have not had time to prepare him properly before he sails'.⁵⁷ In the end, Scudder does not turn up to sail for Argentina, preferring instead to make a life with Maurice. In a formulation which excludes a relationship with earth, Maurice realises that:

They must live outside class, without relations or money; they must work and stick to each other till death. But England belonged to them. That, besides companionship, was their reward. *Her air and sky were theirs*, not the timorous millions' who own stuffy little boxes, but never their own souls. [My italics]⁵⁸

For 'men under that star', the trajectory is upward, rather than down to earth: water and sky signify rather than earth.⁵⁹ In his platonic homosexuality, Clive is described as taking Maurice upward: 'He led the beloved up a narrow and beautiful path, high above either abyss.'⁶⁰ The word 'Uranian' that male homosexuals used for themselves, after Edward Carpenter's coining, means 'heaven' and refers to the Muse of astronomy, so perhaps it is no surprise to see that the skies signify more than earth for the homosexual man. However, the final happy moment of two men falling in love and staying in it 'in the forever that fiction allows' occurs in the marginal space of the

lakeside boathouse of Penge. This cross-class, on-land, beside-water space is where the lovers, Alec and Maurice, decide never to be parted.

This knowledge that homosexuality had of its own construction through the imbrication of sea, water, and a trajectory upward toward the stars rather than down to earth was a knowledge that hegemonic heterosexuality also had, but only spoke of in code, as can be seen in the work of the SES. The English Uranian poets wrote of loving boys through a metaphoric recourse to the sea, Greek mythology, the stars and planets. Horatio Forbes Brown's poetry collection, *Drift*, concerned itself with his love of boy sailors.⁶¹ Bradford's *The New Chivalry and Other Poems* of 1918 included a poem, 'The Kiss', which tells of a man and boy kissing for the first time on a beach; Fabian Strachan Woodley's 1921 'A Crown of Friendship' tells of Uranian love thus:

Then - so near
Was your loved presence that my soul's still deeps
Trembled to tempest; like a barque I rode
Helpless upon the waves of that passionate sea - ⁶²

Given that the Uranians' practice was to be near boys, especially at places where they were likely to see them undress for swimming, it is not surprising that the beach, sea and water should figure so prominently in their writings. So, for example, in his 1911 collection, *A Garland of Ladslove*, John Nicholson wrote:

There is a Pond of pure delight
The paidophil adores,
Where boys undress in open sight
And bathers banish drawers. ⁶³

But if the seashore signified homosexuality, so too did the sailor.

James Hanley's *Boy* recounts the tale of a young boy who runs away to sea only to be utterly debauched by the experience.⁶⁴ He is homosexually raped by the steward, forced to have sex with a prostitute while other sailors watch, catches incurable syphilis, and is murdered by the ship's captain. Hanley himself was a young sailor who turned to writing of the sea, and was generally supposed to have written from experience. The directors of his publishing company, Boriswood, were served with a summons accusing them of 'unlawfully ... publish[ing] an obscene libel in the form

of a book entitled BOY, against the peace of Our Lord the King, His Crown and Dignity, contrary to the Section 8 of the Accessories and Abettors Act 1851.' ⁶⁵

However, the case never came to court, since the publishers decided to plead guilty and pay a fine.

For sailors, the loss of land and the new relationship to the sea produces in them a subjectivity where national identity loses importance. Hanley's collection of essays on the sea, *Between the Tides*, shows how going to sea entails a loss of certainty:

You will yourself away, you are no longer a person, only a tool You are gradually slipping away from your own, the last anchorage; you have become depersonalised; you are, in fact, nobody. You are something, a thing. ⁶⁶

Not only does the sailor lose human identity, but the sea itself cannot be known: 'The land in a mirror is only a reflection of itself,' Hanley writes, 'but the sea in a mirror remains a thousand miracles.'⁶⁷ Towns, cities and countries can be understood, but the sea holds secrets and is utterly indifferent to human feelings and aspirations. This sea is figured in such a way that it is impossible to have a warm loving relationship with it in the way that Morton loves the English earth. From the vantage point of the sea, all countries become the same, so that there can be nothing special about England and Englishness:

Far countries were a vision, pure and beautiful, but time will soon render them to the dead level of commonalty. All cities will be like your own, from which you have now lifted your common being, and all security, changing it for the watery world, and all unrest and ceaseless coming and going. ⁶⁸

Instead of a downward relationship to earth, the sailor, like the homosexual, will look up in order to 'divine position by sun and stars'.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the sailor who returns to land, but is no longer occupied with the sea, still presents a threat to the ordered English certainties founded on earth/land.

David Garnett's *The Sailor's Return* deals with the disorder the returning sailor brings when he comes back into the space of the English village.⁷⁰ From the start of the narrative, gender and race boundaries are troubled. William Targett is returning to England with his 'negro' wife and child. In the opening passages, the reader is persuaded by the grammar of the narrative that this 'negro' is

actually a man, and is the father to Sambo, who has been smuggled ashore in a basket. In order to get to England by sea, since women and children were not allowed on board, a disguise was necessary for Targett's wife, Tulip. However, she does not transform herself into a woman on safely reaching land when disguise is no longer necessary, but instead stays in an inn with her sailor husband as if she were a man accompanying him. The inhabitants of Poole are fooled by her disguise, and shocked to discover she is a woman. Her continuing masquerade as a man, however, long after there is logical reason for it, permits the text to make an oblique comment on the sexuality of sailors. Although officially heterosexual since married, it is William Targett who determines the moment when Tulip will 'become a woman'; it is he who decides to spend the night with her as a man; and it is he whose heterosexuality is questionable in the liminal space of the seaport. It is the decision to move inland to Dorchester that precipitates his choice that Tulip should don the clothes of an Englishwoman, as if gender boundaries can be undermined beside the sea, but should not be when deeper in the countryside. Nonetheless, when they settle in the public house they buy with Tulip's money, it is William who manages the 'feminine' side of household work:

But it must not be imagined that Tulip was idle. No indeed, she took off the fine clothes that Targett had bought for her at Poole, and wearing nothing but her old sailor's jumper and a petticoat, worked all day, fetching and carrying, polishing the pewter mugs till they shone like silver, and cooking the dinner, though at first she made some laughable mistakes in that art ...

But however hard she might work, at the best it was but doing what she was bid, whereas if she had been an Englishwoman she would have managed a whole province of the household, and taken it so completely off her husband's shoulders that he would never need to know it had existed, and might all his life long believe that the beds made themselves each morning and changed their linen every Saturday of their own accord.⁷¹

The reiteration of the word 'but' suggests something of the instability of gender and race boundaries within the household. Tulip is not just one thing, but also something else: a woman who wears a sailor's jumper along with a petticoat, a woman who can don the clothes of an Englishwoman, and yet still not be English. But if their household unsettles Englishness, the naming of the landscape they inhabit orders English heterosexuality and earth. The hamlet in which they live is Maiden

Newbarrow; the barrow, or earthwork, is feminine and virginal, not yet penetrated. The next hamlet is Newbarrow Boys. Here, 'boys' emerge from the barrow, out of earth, and attempt to destroy the Targetts. Gender distinctions are inscribed within landscape; the earth, in the form of barrows, is feminine and produces boys.

Naming is an important activity sanctioned by the church. The village people are worried by the fact that Sambo has not been baptised, and that William and Tulip's marriage is not named as such and sanctioned by the church. A group of men set upon Sambo shouting, 'Drown the little bastard in the stream, Jemmy. We won't have them breeding black babies in England.'⁷² Sambo unsettles familial relations because of his race: he is neither one thing nor the other, and cannot be neatly categorised. Does he exist within English familial relations or not? The aunt who reminds the rest of the family that Sambo is their nephew is told by William's sister, Lucy, that 'I don't think we have much reason to call that little black boy a relative of ours'.⁷³ Realising that it would make their lives easier in the village if they were xtian, William tells Tulip that since they are no longer in Africa, they will have to 'live according to the English religion':⁷⁴

He told her, too, that here in Dorset there was only one God; and that He had written a book in which He had set down the early history of the world, which was called 'The Holy Bible'. There was a second part of it, called 'The New Testament' which contained the life of Jesus Christ, Who was the Son of God by a virgin, and that all our sins had been taken over by Christ, provided always that we believed in Him.⁷⁵

In order to describe this religion to a Dahomean with a polytheistic cosmology, William can only make xtianity sound ridiculous. His own irreligiosity arises from his past as a sailor: he was 'by his habit of life naturally indifferent to religion'.⁷⁶ But, ironically, the xtian church becomes the vehicle through which their family can be legally harassed. Lucy wants her brother's disreputable household out of her neighbourhood, and is thought to be behind the letter which arrives from the brewery giving notice on the lease of the public house. Couched in the language of xtian morality, the brewer's letter reads:

It has been brought to my knowledge that you are living with a woman to whom you are not married - a coloured woman. Very strong representations have been made to me by respectable residents in Newbarrow and district

against my continuing to let premises to a man of loose character. I may say I fully concur with this view, and should never allow any of my tenants to set a bad example in matters of Christian duty and morality to the villagers amongst whom they live ... I consider however that it is my duty to give you notice, as from next Ladyday, unless you terminate your unfortunate association with this female.⁷⁷

In response, although having married in Dahomey, William decides to marry Tulip in a xtian ceremony, and their second child, Sheba, born in England, is also baptised.

This pleases Mr Cronk, the clergyman, since it allows him to imagine himself as a missionary, 'though one who had not to endure the hardships of a tropical climate.'⁷⁸

Tulip tells William that Mr Cronk had already frightened her by suggesting that Sambo could not be named 'unless he was washed in the church, and after that was done he would be as white as snow. And unless we had him washed white Sambo would be burnt in a fire with devils.'⁷⁹ These xtian threats lose their force when the couple marry and their children are baptised. However, this metaphoric whitening through becoming acceptably xtian does not make them racially white, and so the villagers resort to threats of other sorts: attacking the house with fire, racist name-calling, and physical violence. Clearly, there is no place in England for the non-white xtian and the man who betrays his race origins. Neighbours suggest that 'our English girls aren't good enough for him' and that 'he must have picked up the habit abroad, and when once a habit gets hold of a man there is never any breaking him of it.'⁸⁰ There is no happy resolution for this family in England. William is murdered by a boxer. Sheba, the black English-born child, dies and so 'no black babies are bred in England'.

Sambo returns to Africa on his own since the ship's captain will not allow Tulip on board as she is a woman. Strangely, she does not attempt to disguise herself as a man in order to return to Africa with Sambo, which suggests that her previous disguise was intimately connected with her husband's desire. Without money, Tulip returns to the public house which has now been taken over by another couple and lives there in cast-off clothes as a drudge. No longer 'too saucy' and wanting 'a touch of the whip',⁸¹ 'she had learned her station in life, and she did her duty in it very well.'⁸²

Neither the agents of the one God of Dorset, nor the English villagers, can accept the unsettling presence of the sailor and black woman in their midst.

If *The Sailor's Return* suggests that the masculine sailor who returns from the sea will unsettle gender and race distinctions of Englishness, Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is a text which deals with the disturbance provoked by an unnameable and culturally unassimilable woman's corpse which the sea washes up onto land. In this context, it is interesting to note Morton's visit to a battleship where he is confronted by a corpse. This he found an 'uncomfortable presence', because the dead sailor 'had ceased to obey' and follow orders.⁸³ Clearly, the corpse can be used to signify something beyond the boundaries of the laws of human culture to which it is no longer obedient. Du Maurier had problems inscribing lesbian desire whilst simultaneously romancing an Englishness which she rooted in the figure of a country-house, Manderley. *Rebecca* was written in Egypt during the early years of her marriage, and 'Cairo' became a key word for du Maurier to signify heterosexuality, whilst the watery city, 'Venice', and 'Venetian tendencies', signified lesbian desire. However, this imaginary placing of sexualities abroad became problematic when du Maurier attempted to work out the possibilities for a woman's autonomous sexuality within an English context.

The novel asks the question: if women's participation in the nation is through heterosexuality and reproduction, then what happens when a woman desires national identity but not heterosexuality? The womb is the site of the reproduction of more national subjects, and the means by which a nation can imagine its future. However, possession of a womb does not guarantee women citizenship or national identity. It is through heterosexual relationships with men that women get a second-hand relationship with Englishness. Neither Beatrice, Max's sister who was born at Manderley, nor the narrator can gain entry to ownership of Manderley/England on their own account. It is the narrator's modest sexuality, and the possibility that she may bear a male heir to ensure patriarchal succession, that allows her to occupy Manderley/England, while the wilder Rebecca, who taunts de Winter with her autonomous sexuality and the possibility that she could bear a child which is not biologically his, ends up murdered. The tomb, or 'sepulchre', that is Manderley is

also the womb of the narrator.⁸⁴ Her dream of the boys she will have to inherit Manderley comes to nothing: her womb is a tomb from which nothing resurrects, as is Rebecca's. The heterosexual Englishness of Manderley has no future; it can only be dreamed about in its past glory. Similarly, the Englishness which Rebecca attempts for herself, in which she offers an outward show of conventional heterosexuality for the de Winter family name whilst enjoying her own sexual freedom, leads her to a watery tomb, a resurrection and a re-interment. The body of Rebecca is figured as degenerate, having 'a certain malformation of the uterus ... which meant she could never have had a child'.⁸⁵ Although on the surface the text appears to be a conventional heterosexual romance, these non-reproductive wombs within it suggest that Englishness and heterosexuality may both be dead forms, incapable of reproduction.

The tomb, or crypt, and the idea of resurrection are key symbols in *Rebecca*. The notion of encryptment can point two ways, and is particularly useful for reading lesbian texts which often conceal their lesbian content through cryptic textual strategies. Firstly, it can be used in relation to the nameless woman's body entombed/ encrypted in place of Rebecca; but secondly, it can also be used in relation to the idea of encryptment as secret, hidden writing. Just as a body is buried in the crypt, so too is a secret hidden in the text. So how do encryptment and resurrection function in *Rebecca*? How does the text invite the reader to resurrect or raise the corpse into discourse?

There are two ways in which this happens. Firstly, the text says that there are forbidden knowledges hidden in writing. Max de Winter tells the narrator that there is a certain type of knowledge he prefers her not to have:

'Listen my sweet. When you were a little girl, were you ever forbidden to read certain books, and did your father put those books under lock and key?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Well then. A husband is not so different from a father after all. There is a certain type of knowledge I prefer you not to have.'⁸⁶

Perhaps, too, an author is not so different from a father or a husband, preferring to keep certain knowledges from the reader. Some words are so forbidden that they may

not even be spoken, such as 'that frightful word of six letters' which the reader is meant to understand as 'murder'.⁸⁷ However, there was another six-letter word in du Maurier's repertoire that she had difficulty with - 'Venice' - that which, for her, signified lesbianism. Writing to Ellen Doubleday about her relationship with Mlle. Yvon in which they had loved each other in 'every conceivable way', du Maurier says, 'by God and by Christ if anyone should call that sort of love by the unattractive word that begins with "L", I'd tear their guts out.'⁸⁸ Nonetheless, difficult things can still be inscribed. By shaking her 'bent nib',⁸⁹ Rebecca manages to inscribe her non-acceptability, making a little blob of ink mar the white page.⁹⁰ In this way, the reader is given to understand that the forbidden secret in the text might be discoverable. How can it be deciphered and resurrected?

Secondly, the text tells the reader that resurrection is possible, and the dead can come to life. Englishness itself, in the form of Manderley, is resurrected.

- Although the narrator says that the 'house was a sepulchre ... [t]here would be no resurrection', she actually performs this resurrection by bringing Manderley to textual life.⁹¹ The novel starts with her dream of the dead and abandoned house and garden. Although it no longer exists, the narrative brings the reader to understand it as having a present reality although it has been burnt down. Rebecca, too, is resurrected and brought back to life by the narrator's interest in her. The prophetically named boat, 'Je Reviens', in which Rebecca is entombed is brought up from the sea-bed and returns her until she is reburied in the de Winter family crypt. By imaginatively forcing the reader into performing acts of resurrection as the narrator makes them, a trail is laid which invites the reader to perform an act of resurrection on that which the text refuses to do: that is, to raise the other corpse in the crypt into discourse and to understand what comes from the sea.

So how does the text encrypt a method by which the corpse might be resurrected? The reader is offered a character who stands between the living and the dead in the form of the housekeeper, Mrs Danvers. She is constantly referred to as having a white skull's face and a dead skull's face, and her voice and hand are lifeless

and cold. Various textual moments suggest that one may be able to speak to the dead through Mrs Danvers. The narrator sees the 'diabolical smile on her white skull's face' and remembers that 'she was a living and breathing woman ... made of flesh and blood. She was not dead like Rebecca. I could speak to her but I could not speak to Rebecca'.⁹² Much is hinted at through the figure of Mrs Danvers. She herself can perform an act of resurrection: for it is at her suggestion that the narrator wears the same fancy dress to the ball that Rebecca had previously worn. In a shocking moment, all who see the narrator descending the staircase also see Rebecca. She provides information about Rebecca to the narrator, telling her that heterosexual relationships were 'like a game'⁹³ to Rebecca, something which Max de Winter backs up by describing her as 'not even normal'.⁹⁴ He had 'found her out' five days after they were married, and she had told him things about herself, things so shocking that he would never 'repeat to a living soul'.⁹⁵ Is it only the dead that can bear the burden of knowledge? Given these textual clues about Rebecca's sexuality, and the description of Mrs Danvers as a 'black sentinel', one wonders what she might be guarding.⁹⁶ What might escape from the crypt?

At one level, the mystery of Rebecca is solved. Max de Winter never loved her, she behaved badly so he murdered her, and by a stroke of fortune he gets away with it. However, the reader is presented with no such neat solution with regard to the body of the other woman in the crypt. When her body was washed ashore, de Winter had identified it as that of Rebecca, but when the real Rebecca is brought up from the sea, no solution to the identity of this first body is offered. The narrative makes no neat disposal of her by, for example, having some long-lost family fortuitously come to claim her. Just as the lesbian is seen to be outside patriarchal heterosexual familial relations, the corpse also appears to be detached from any family claim on her. Rebecca's body is interred with the body of the woman, and the reader is left with the image of two dead women lying together in the crypt. Given that this text invites acts of resurrection, this open ending allows a reading where the dangerous figure of the lesbian can be resurrected from this image of two woman

lying together. The naming of the corpse as 'a mistake, a ghastly mistake' suggests that not only was Max de Winter's first identification of her a mistake, but also that somehow the woman herself is a mistake, wrong, perhaps not a proper woman.⁹⁷

Terry Castle's work on the discursive appearance of the lesbian suggests that within homophobic Western culture the lesbian first appears as a discursive void in which she is displayed. This display only happens in order that she can be discursively erased. There is a movement in which display and erasure happen together so that this shaky discursive void is maintained. This is a useful theory for understanding the unidentified corpse, because at the same time that she is displayed in the crypt, she is erased through death and unknowability. However, there is no textual triumph for either heterosexuality or lesbianism. The lesbian is erased as she is displayed. The heterosexual wombs that might have provided heirs to Manderley are non-reproductive. The English heterosexuality which gets lived out after the fire at Manderley happens in a dreary foreign exile. Englishness becomes displaced from place to text, so that only through reading old copies of *The Field* can the narrator actually breathe the air of England.

These fictional texts I have discussed present a discursive world in which both the sea and the sailor pose dangers to heterosexual Englishness. The sea and its marginal shoreline act to trouble or destroy heterosexuality, certainties of identity, and render any national identity the same as any other, such that England and Englishness become untenable. The sailor himself loses his English relationship to earth which grounds his heterosexuality, and becomes homosexual or sexually profligate, so that when he returns to land he unsettles relations of Englishness based on strong gender and race distinctions. The sailor and the homosexual look up to the sky rather than down to earth. Also, as *Rebecca* shows, the sea can wash up to shore something far outside the possibility of assimilation into English ground, and even suggests that Englishness is not in a geographical place but instead is only present in text. Together, these fictional texts show something of what can be known about

homosexuality but not publicly said, what can be said but becomes banned and what is deeply encrypted and yet clearly speaks.

Given the the dangers the sea and the sailor can pose to the heterosexual, racially white grammar of the nation explains why the SES was concerned with the sailor's (im)morality, and how this might impinge on national identity. Serious reading at sea, accessed through a moderate provision of books for sailors' libraries, was credited with greater moral value than any reading done on land. This was because both the sea and the sailor threatened a national identity founded on earth. Since literature could be credited with the power to heterosexualise, serious reading could prevent male homosociality sliding into male homosexuality. Beyond that, the book itself as a fetish object offered the possibility of re-enacting a land-based masculine Englishness, by allowing the sailor a metaphorically penetrative relationship with national earth. This was seen as able to guarantee his heterosexual English identity when he was unable to touch earth from the liminal space of the sea.

But if sailors were a category of national subject who could not actually touch English earth, what of the category 'woman'? Morton's Englishness locates women as troublesome subjects within England. 'Naturally' disliking the rural because of her predilection for shopping and the urban, what relationship can 'woman' have with an Englishness founded on a masculine love of feminine English earth? The next chapter examines the relation between woman and earth.

¹ Seafarers' Education Service, *Seafarers' Education Service Report of Sub-Committees on Boys at Sea* (London: Seafarers' Education Service, 1931), p. 21.

² 'Authors "Sailing Near The Wind": Dr. Henson on Licentious Literature', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 May 1929, p. 14.

³ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 May 1929, p. 14.

⁴ The phrase 'all at sea' means 'to be in a total muddle'. In this way, it can be seen to be linked with the disorder of mud, rather than the order firm earth is meant to guarantee.

⁵ From this point on The Seafarers' Education Service will be abbreviated in the main body of the text as SES.

⁶ Seafarers' Education Service, *Libraries for the Merchant Navy* (London: Seafarers' Education Service, 1929), p. 13.

⁷ Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: Harper Collins, 1991).

⁸ B. G. Johns, cited in Bristow, p. 12.

⁹ F. Wills, cited in Bristow, p. 19.

¹⁰ Bristow, p. 21.

¹¹ Bristow, p. 141.

¹² Henry Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* [1885] (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1958).

- ¹³ E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 75.
- ¹⁴ Seafarers' Education Service, *Seafarers' Education Service Report of Sub-Committees on Boys at Sea*, p. 8.
- ¹⁵ Seafarers' Education Service, *Seafarers' Education Service Report of Sub-Committees on Boys at Sea*, p. 13.
- ¹⁶ Seafarers' Education Service, *Seafarers' Education Service Report of Sub-Committees on Boys at Sea*, p. 14.
- ¹⁷ Seafarers' Education Service, *Seafarers' Education Service Report of Sub-Committees on Boys at Sea*, p. 25.
- ¹⁸ Prof. F. Clarke, *Education and the Seafarer* (London: Seafarers' Education Service, 1936), p. 11.
- ¹⁹ See Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 87.
- ²⁰ Arnold Bennett, *Literary Taste: How to form it, with detailed instructions for collecting a complete library of English Literature* [1909] (Harmondsworth: Pelican Special, 1938), pp. 16-17.
- ²¹ Bennett, pp. 18-19.
- ²² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
- ²³ H. V. Morton, *The Call of England* [1928] (London: Methuen, 1933), title page.
- ²⁴ Bristow, p. 157.
- ²⁵ Bristow, p. 157.
- ²⁶ Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* [1938] (London: Arrow, 1992), pp. 10-11.
- ²⁷ H. V. Morton, *In Search of England* [1927] (London: Methuen, 1930), p. xi.
- ²⁸ Geoffrey Household, *Rogue Male* [1939] (London: Michael Joseph, 1982), p. 120.
- ²⁹ Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1977), pp. 353-4.
- ³⁰ E. M. Forster quoted in R. N. Furbank's introduction to *Maurice*, p. 8.
- ³¹ Forster, p. 218.
- ³² Forster, p. 16.
- ³³ Forster, p. 20.
- ³⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 121.
- ³⁵ Douglas, p. 94.
- ³⁶ Forster, p. 221.
- ³⁷ Forster, p. 56.
- ³⁸ Forster, p. 50.
- ³⁹ Forster, p. 50.
- ⁴⁰ Forster, p. 104.
- ⁴¹ Forster, p. 104.
- ⁴² Forster, p. 104.
- ⁴³ E.M. Forster, *Howards End* [1910] (London: Edward Arnold, 1947), p. 222.
- ⁴⁴ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 18.
- ⁴⁵ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 18.
- ⁴⁶ E. M. Forster quoted in Furbank's introduction to *Maurice*, p. 9.
- ⁴⁷ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 27.
- ⁴⁸ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 67.
- ⁴⁹ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 68.
- ⁵⁰ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 30.
- ⁵¹ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 140.
- ⁵² Forster, *Maurice*, p. 140.
- ⁵³ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 120.
- ⁵⁴ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 91.
- ⁵⁵ Scudder is aptly named given the association between water and homosexuality. A scudder is a shower of rain.
- ⁵⁶ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 163.
- ⁵⁷ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 164.
- ⁵⁸ Forster, *Maurice*, pp. 208-209.
- ⁵⁹ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 91.

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- ⁶⁰ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 91.
- ⁶¹ See Timothy D'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writing of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) for information on these poets.
- ⁶² Fabian Strachan Woodley, in D'Arch Smith, p. 144.
- ⁶³ John Nicholson, in D'Arch Smith, p. 171.
- ⁶⁴ James Hanley, *Boy* (London: Boriswood, 1931).
- ⁶⁵ Summary-Report of the Police Proceedings against the Directors and the firm of Boriswood Ltd. in Regard to the book entitled 'Boy' written by James Hanley: Press Report from the Manchester Guardian 21.3.35. Presented to the British Library by Alec Craig.
- ⁶⁶ James Hanley, *Between the Tides* (London: Methuen, 1939), p. 2.
- ⁶⁷ Hanley, *Between the Tides*, p. 10.
- ⁶⁸ Hanley, *Between the Tides*, p. 4.
- ⁶⁹ Hanley, *Between the Tides*, p. 4.
- ⁷⁰ David Garnett, *The Sailor's Return* [1929] (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964).
- ⁷¹ Garnett, p. 24.
- ⁷² Garnett, p. 124.
- ⁷³ Garnett, p. 152.
- ⁷⁴ Garnett, p. 57.
- ⁷⁵ Garnett, pp. 57-58.
- ⁷⁶ Garnett, p. 57.
- ⁷⁷ Garnett, pp. 87-88.
- ⁷⁸ Garnett, p. 93.
- ⁷⁹ Garnett, p. 56.
- ⁸⁰ Garnett, p. 97.
- ⁸¹ Garnett, p. 143.
- ⁸² Garnett, p. 163.
- ⁸³ H. V. Morton, *Blue Days at Sea and Other Essays* [1932] (London: Methuen, 1935), p. 77.
- ⁸⁴ du Maurier, p. 7.
- ⁸⁵ du Maurier, p. 383.
- ⁸⁶ du Maurier, p. 211.
- ⁸⁷ du Maurier, p. 315.
- ⁸⁸ Margaret Forster, *Daphne du Maurier* (London: Arrow, 1994), pp. 221-222.
- ⁸⁹ du Maurier, p. 47.
- ⁹⁰ du Maurier, p. 37.
- ⁹¹ du Maurier, p. 7.
- ⁹² du Maurier, p. 251.
- ⁹³ du Maurier, p. 256.
- ⁹⁴ du Maurier, p. 283.
- ⁹⁵ du Maurier, p. 284.
- ⁹⁶ du Maurier, p. 98.
- ⁹⁷ du Maurier, p. 296.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN AND EARTH

*To dig I cannot, to beg I am ashamed.*¹

When Wart, the boy hero of *The Sword in the Stone*, is in the badger's earth completing his education he is told that 'the true end of philosophy' is 'to dig, and to love your home.'² It is woman's exclusion from 'digging' - and the resultant exclusion from national identity - that Sheila Cousins obliquely refers to in the title of her banned book about prostitution, *To Beg I am Ashamed*.³ Although the quotation primarily signals an economic relation, the use of this biblical reference can also be interpreted to mean that since women are not allowed a 'digging' version of national identity, they will not beg for it, but will instead find another subjectivity to suit their purposes - in this case that of a prostitute, an occupation which allows economic autonomy. The present chapter examines literary texts which attempt to inscribe the difficult national relationship between women and earth. Compared to the number of texts which routinely configure men, nation and earth, there is a relative paucity of those which deal with women-in-earth. However, the texts that do include this figure of a woman-in-earth utilise it to represent monstrosity, disorder and dismembering, rather than the ordered re-membering that the man-in-earth represents to national imaginings.

A novel published prior to the Great War, Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), represents a woman-in-earth as monstrous. Like *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), which made available the trope of the man-in-earth, *The Lair of the White Worm*, which dealt with English national and colonial identity before the Great War, made available that of the woman-in-earth. Lady Arabella March, the shape-shifting woman who can change into the White Worm of the title, lives in a house in Diana's Grove. Her crimes and monstrosity appear to lie in the fact of her womanhood, and the possibility that her femininity might overwhelm masculinity. In many ways, she is a 'good' Englishwoman, in that she does not break with white

racial identity. Meeting a neighbour returning from Africa, Lady Arabella is recognised as a creature of the swamp by the neighbour's African servant, Oolanga. Although they are similarly abject, in that they cross the boundaries of what constitutes the human by being formulated as both human and inhuman, human and animal, Lady Arabella does not team up with him as another swamp creature, but kills him. When he declares his love for her, she laughs:

Lady Arabella was not usually a humorous person, but no man or woman of the white race could have checked the laughter which rose spontaneously to her lips. The circumstances were too grotesque, the contrast too violent, for subdued mirth. The man a debased and primitive specimen and of an ugliness which was simply devilish; the woman of high degree, beautiful, accomplished.⁴

Oolanga's master gives her permission to kill him, since 'the law doesn't concern itself much about dead negroes.'⁵

When it becomes clear to her neighbours, and in particular Adam, that the White Worm herself must be killed, Adam's problem in carrying this out is one of legality.

There were all sorts of legal cruxes to be thought out, not only regarding the taking of life, even of a monstrosity in human form, but also of property. Lady Arabella, be she woman or snake or devil, owned the ground she moved in, according to British law, and the law is jealous and swift to avenge wrongs done within its ken.⁶

Property ownership, and the law concerning it, has more national importance than a woman's life. It is hard to discover precisely what her ostensible crime is that deserves the death penalty. Although a property-owner herself, the men of the neighbourhood seem to think that she uses her feminine attractions unfairly to entice men into marriage in order to get their money. In other contexts, this is hardly a capital crime. She is also suspected of causing various strange goings-on in the district, such as sheep-worrying and wounding, the disappearance of some people, and the death of a child. What seems more to irk the neighbours is that she is a woman, and when in earth she is at the height of her powers.⁷ Her crime might be that even when married she was uncontrollable, and that her own woman's body is foul. Perhaps her manifestation as the White Worm is too phallic, too much occupying men's space. As the phallic White Worm, she enters a hole in the ground, and does not differentiate

herself clearly enough from masculinity in order to maintain her feminine difference. As such, she could represent the awesome parthenogenetic mother who can reproduce without the need of the male. Her male neighbours' strategy in the battle against her is: 'as we have to *protect ourselves and others against feminine nature*, our strong game will be to play our masculine against her feminine.' [My italics] ⁸ To fight her is to feminise her; to bring out her femininity, which can be overcome by masculinity, is their object.

Her house stands above a series of underground rooms, in the middle of which is a deep well-hole and it is through this hole that the Worm/Lady is reputed to come and go. The description of the well-hole seems to speak to masculine anxieties about woman's bodies, particularly anxieties about the vagina as an illimitable, devouring space - perhaps like the chasm or abyss previous writers, such as D. H. Lawrence, feared.⁹ This 'black orifice' is surrounded by an 'extremely slippery'¹⁰ floor, notable for the '[q]ueer smell ... [l]ike bilge or a rank swamp' which arises from it.¹¹ The smell makes Adam nauseous, and he:

Compared it with all the noxious experiences he had ever had - the drainage of war hospitals, of slaughterhouses, the refuse of dissecting rooms. None of these was like it, though it had something of them all, with, added, the sourness of chemical waste and the poisonous effluvium of the bilge of a water-logged ship whereon a multitude of rats had been drowned.¹²

Adam's solution to the problem of the Lady/Worm is to obtain mastery over her by plugging the hole in earth. His reticence to act against the property of another, no matter how vile they may be, has a happy outcome. Lady Arabella puts the house up for sale, which enables Adam to buy it, and as the rightful owner he feels free to plug the hole. Gathering mountains of sand, he supervises a group of workmen to fill it with sand and dynamite. The hole, the Worm and Lady Arabella are so destroyed in the resultant explosion that there is no hope of her resurrection. Proper heterosexuality, where men are men and women are women, triumphs as the text ends with Adam and his new bride departing on honeymoon. In order that heterosexuality should be ensured, this woman in earth has had to be destroyed.

A post-Great War novel which also deals with the relations between earth and heterosexuality is E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, which utilises many of the themes found in other works which deal with men-in-earth.¹³ This text, though, deals with the consequences of women going to earth, and its motivating force is heterosexuality and its failure. Adela Quested arrives in colonial India to see if it would be possible for her to marry Ronny Heaslop. However, the consequences of her going to earth in the Marabar Caves make that marriage an impossibility. The trip that Adela and Ronny Heaslop's mother, Mrs Moore, take to these caves by invitation of Dr. Aziz leads to the accusation that Aziz has raped Adela. Rather than the social order that men-in-earth seem to produce, the entry of these two women into the caves provokes rioting and civil unrest, as the Indian communities and English colonisers divide along racial lines over the question of Aziz's innocence or guilt.

As the group watches dawn come over the Marabar Hills, the failure of sunrise to be magnificent is understood through a metaphor of failed heterosexual marriage:

They awaited the miracle. But at the supreme moment, when night should have died and day lived, nothing occurred. It was as if virtue had failed in the celestial fount. The hues in the east decayed, the hills seemed dimmer though in fact better lit, and a profound disappointment entered with the morning breeze. Why, when the chamber was prepared, did the bridegroom not enter with trumpets and shawms, as humanity expects? The sun rose without splendour.¹⁴

Part of the problem with the Indian city of Chandrapore, where the protagonists live, is that it defies expectation, being devoid of culture and meaning:

There is no painting and scarcely any carving in the bazaars. The very wood seems made of *mud*, the inhabitants of *mud* moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life. [My italics]¹⁵

Chandrapore bears a resemblance to the monotone trenches and their 'muddy' inhabitants who live side by side with rotting corpses: a world that has rendered all human culture meaningless. Unlike the soldier of Rupert Brooke's poem, whose body consigned to earth can render meaning and order to that earth through its

presence and make that foreign earth 'forever England', the women in this text cannot confer national order and meaning on this disordered, Indian, foreign earth.

The central moment is Adela and Mrs Moore's entry into the caves of the Marabar Hills. This earth is both humanised and feminised. The hills are formed where 'a group of fists and fingers are thrust up through the soil.'¹⁶ Outside Chandrapore, when travelling toward the hills, the Englishwomen notice that:

Life went on as usual, but had no consequences, that is to say, sounds did not echo or thoughts develop. Everything seemed *cut off at its root*, and therefore infected with illusion. For instance, there were some mounds by the edge of the track, low, serrated, and touched with whitewash. What were these mounds - graves, breasts of the goddess Parvati? The villagers beneath gave both replies. [My italics]¹⁷

Without a rooting in soil, meaning is indeterminate. Nonetheless, this soil, like English soil, provokes the common question as to whether the earth is tomb or nurturing womb (in the form of Parvati's breasts), and whether resurrection might come from earth. However, the Marabar Caves themselves are nothing: 'Nothing, nothing attaches to them', the reader is told, '[n]othing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil.'¹⁸ For a place which is 'nothing', it seems a paradox that the women's visit should have such a profound effect on all local society.

However, although the place is nothing, it is at the same time something:

There is little to see, and no eye to see it, until the visitor arrives for his five minutes, and strikes a match. Immediately another flame rises in the depths of the rock and moves toward the surface like an imprisoned spirit: the walls of the circular chamber have been most marvellously polished. The two flames approach and strive to unite, but cannot, because one of them breathes air, the other stone. A mirror inlaid with lovely colours divides the lovers, delicate stars of pink and grey interpose, exquisite nebulae, shadings fainter than the tail of a comet, or the midday moon, all the evanescent life of the granite, only here visible. Fists and fingers thrust above the advancing soil - here at last is their skin, finer than any covering acquired by the animals, smoother than windless water, more voluptuous than love. The radiance increases, the flames touch one another, kiss, expire. The cave is dark again, like all the caves.¹⁹

In these caves, it is a heterosexual relation, figured through the union of difference in air-flame and stone-flame lovers, that is brought about by the male visitor striking a

match. It is a fleeting heterosexuality, one that cannot last, but can only be re-triggered by the arrival of the next masculine visitor. The feminine visitor has a pathetically different effect. In this case, 'the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle'.²⁰ The first cave they visit brings Mrs Moore to the point of madness because of the 'terrifying echo'²¹ which:

Began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life. Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur, 'Pathos, piety, courage - they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value.' If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same - 'ou-boum'.²²

This is a very different effect from the revelation of something which exceeds the voluptuous love the male visitor produces. It is so distressing to Mrs Moore that she decides to forgo the visit to a second cave, sending Adela in with Aziz and a guide.

As they walk up to the caves, Adela's mind is on her forthcoming marriage, and whether she can make a satisfactory one without love. Without thinking about the implications, she asks Aziz how many wives he has. The question appals and shocks him, so Aziz plunges into a cave to recover his equilibrium. Adela, too, goes into the cave, and a mysterious muddle follows. Entry into the caves, far from uniting them, divides them. Man and woman do not meet there, but the experience leads to Adela running to a woman, and Aziz running to his friend Mr Fielding. Instead of entry to earth producing heterosexuality, it leads the couple, momentarily, to their own sex. Adela seems to believe that Aziz has attacked her in the cave, and he is arrested for 'insulting' her. Believing in Aziz's innocence, Fielding 'foresaw that besides being a tragedy, there would be a muddle' arising from the arrest.²³ Adela's going to earth in the cave, instead of producing order, makes thing 'muddy'. Her body cannot produce the sort of order which re-members the masculine body destroyed in battlefield mud, but instead only produces more disordered and uncertain boundaries.

Relations between people which have been upset in the course of the arrest, trial and release of Aziz, are only finally repaired years later in the third part of the text, when Aziz has left British India for an Indian state and where Fielding and

his wife visit him. Central to this is the Hindu festival of the birth of Shri Khrisna, and a display at the hour of his birth:

Three minutes before it was due, a Brahman brought forth a model of the village of Gokal (the Bethlehem in that *nebulous story*) and placed it in front of the altar. The model was on a wooden tray about a yard square; it was of *clay*, and was gaily blue and white with streamers and paint. [My italics] ²⁴

As Fielding and Aziz attempt a rapprochement, the god/child Khrisna is born from this clay. However, as long as the earth they are on does not have its own national identity, the pair are unable to be friends while India is still colonised: the earth itself divides them, 'sending up rocks' to make them swerve apart. ²⁵ Part of the problem with making meaning through this earth is that it has no prior national identity. The combination of Englishwomen, who can barely represent their own nation because of their gender, and an earth which has no identity and can only provide nebulous literature, leads to disorder. But if women in foreign earth cannot make ordered social meaning, what of women who try to go into English earth?

Mary Webb's *Gone To Earth* was written during the Great War, published in 1917, and was characterised by her biographer, Gladys Mary Coles, as one of the most expressive examples of a literary art which showed 'the tragic spirit of those war years when multitudes, slaughtered, were indeed "gone to earth"'. ²⁶

Webb's brothers were in the trenches, and she was disconcerted by her mother's belief that the trenches would protect them from harm. A nature mystic, and more of a pantheist than a xtian, Mary Webb wrote rural novels based in Shropshire. Although she died in 1927, *Gone to Earth* was in print during most of the interwar period, partly due to Stanley Baldwin's interventions. As Prime Minister, Baldwin's views were widely published, and he had already eulogised authentic England as rural. Speaking at the Annual Dinner of the Royal Society of St George in 1924, he argued: '[t]o me, England is the country, and the country is England', and his speech, in print in both the 1920s and the 1930s, carried on to describe this England: ²⁷

The sounds of England, the tinkle of the hammer on the anvil in the country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone, and the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill, the sight that has been seen in England since England was a land, and may be seen in England long after the Empire has perished and every works in England has

ceased to function, for centuries the one eternal sight of England. The wild anemones in the woods in April, the last load of hay being drawn down a lane as the twilight comes on, when you can scarcely distinguish the figures of the horses as they take it home to the farm, and above all, most subtle, most penetrating and most moving, the smell of wood smoke coming up in an autumn evening, or the smell of the scutch fires: that wood smoke that our ancestors, tens of thousands of years ago, must have caught on the air when they were coming home ...²⁸

Webb's rural writings appealed to Baldwin's notion of an authentic England. His secretary had given him Webb's *Precious Bane* for holiday reading, and Baldwin later wrote the introduction to its 1928 edition.²⁹ However, his more powerful promotion of her novels was in a speech he was invited to give to the Royal Literary Fund Society in 1928. He praised her work as 'of absolutely first-class quality', and quoted J. M. Barrie's and John Buchan's opinions that Mary Webb was 'one of the three best writers of English today'.³⁰ His tribute appeared in newspapers the following day, and ensured that all her novels remained in print and that the public read her work.

Mary Webb wrote with a belief that:

The hero of a country story must be instinct [sic] with the countryside: it is in his very bones. So it must always be in a novel that attempts the interpretation of earth through character. For the dwellers in mountain and forest are under this burden, that they must unconsciously express those dumb masses and forces that have no other voice but theirs. No novel of the countryside can attain greatness unless it *unifies its character with the earth*, half frustrate, half triumphal. [My italics]³¹

Her friend, the novelist and Member of Parliament, John Buchan, found that *Gone to Earth* provoked a strong response 'at a time when everything that concerned the soil of England seemed precious'.³² In his 1928 introduction to *Gone to Earth*, Buchan wrote that the central character, Hazel Woodus, 'is at once the offspring of the mysterious landscape and the interpretation of it.'³³ If she is the interpretation of this particularly English landscape, it is a matter of interest that the narrative kills her off while still not much more than a girl. Her age and gender seem to disallow her as an interpreter of the English landscape and the earth appears to have no space for her. As a young woman who is the quarry of men, the quarry of earth cannot offer her safety: she will always be a hunted object. If Hazel dreads the quarry, it could be because of the ambiguity present in the term, representing as it does both a place dug out of earth

as well as the object of the hunt. Ironically, Webb's unification of her character with the earth is frustrated rather than triumphant, for, although her heroine's countryside is metaphorically in her bones, she is not a man/hero and therefore becomes tragic rather than ultimately heroic in the country.

The text deals with the story of a young and free girl's movement into womanhood and heterosexuality, whilst repudiating the laws of man in favour of a morality which believes in the protection of all living things. Her most constant companion is a little fox-cub, Foxy, with whom she has her deepest relationship. The theme of the possibility of Hazel Woodus's sexual freedom under patriarchal law is entangled with the question of fox hunting. Webb herself had grown up in a hunting family: the terrible noise the hounds made at their meal-times could be heard in her house, and stories were told of the mythical Black Huntsman and legendary phantom hounds crossing the countryside at night in search of their prey. Like many women of her time, she found hunting repugnant. Although the text attacks hunting, in fact neither the fox nor the heroine reach earth. The narrative ends with the death of both Hazel and Foxy. Discovering that Foxy has escaped from safety while the Hunt is out, the pregnant Hazel attempts to find and rescue Foxy before the Hunt finds her. However, being pregnant, Hazel cannot run as fast as she needs, and holding the struggling cub in her arms she does not reach the safety of earth before the hounds rip both her heterosexual, pregnant body and Foxy apart, and presumably eat them. The ironic cry goes up: 'Gone to earth ! Gone to earth!'.³⁴ These last words of the narrative do not mean safety in earth has been reached: earth here is a metaphor for death, and there is no resurrection. It seems that the grammar of the nation cannot accommodate the presence of a female, maternal body in earth.

Just as *The Lair of the White Worm* and *Gone to Earth* concern themselves with women's potential uncontrollability, even in marriage, David Garnett's *Lady Into Fox* deals with the particular problem posed by a married woman, Silvia Fox, gone feral. This tongue-in-cheek tale of a woman turned vixen won both the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Hawthornden Prize. The

woman as fox is less trustworthy than a dog, and smells bad. A partial solution to her 'rank odour' is arrived at through making her eat quantities of grapes.³⁵ Her husband engages in the task of trying to prevent her complete transformation to foxiness, and at first they manage a life which resembles that of any other married couple, apart from the fact that his wife is a fox in woman's clothes. He keeps her indoors, for fear that the Hunt will kill her, but she becomes more fox-like, hunting and eating raw animals, and communicating less with language. She desires the freedom of the open air, as he begins to fear she will contaminate him and turn him into a beast also. If she contaminates him, all culture and civilisation will be lost to the country-house they inhabit. He allows her into a walled garden, but he discovers she has dug a hole in the ground under the wall and is attempting to go to earth. He pulls her out of the hole in the ground and fills it with stones to prevent her re-entry. Nonetheless, she escapes him, and goes wild in the countryside, having a family of cubs with another fox. He finds her earth and becomes a sort of father to her cubs. This effects a resurrection for him, because having felt hopeless about his married life, he finds new meaning in it when his vixen/wife produces her cubs out of earth for him. However, the peaceful time the fox/woman-in-earth enjoys is short: the hunting season returns. In a similar ending to that of *Gone To Earth*, the vixen-wife leaps into her husband's arms and both are mauled by the hounds. The wife dies but the husband recovers. Femininity, again, does not reach the safety of earth.

In The Radical Twenties: Aspects of Writing, Politics and Culture

John Lucas looks at the position of women in the after the Great War and maintains that few men in the period felt comfortable with the new political powers women had gained through enfranchisement, and that '[a] deep anxiety underlies or is to be found in much writing by men during this period, and one of the ways it shows is in the depiction of women gone feral.'³⁶ Characterising men's writing about women as showing them as feral when not familial, he argues that:

Silvia Fox gains her freedom and is eventually killed by hounds, hunted to her death like Hazel Woodus. But there is a difference. Garnett's tale suggests that lady-into-fox leads inevitably to tragedy. Webb's novel, on the other hand, makes plain that Hazel's death comes about because men won't grant her her

freedom. Contented domesticity would in both cases have averted tragedy; but *Gone to Earth* does at least outline how such domesticity is a kind of prison cage. *Lady into Fox* implies that the real prison cage is the feral nature in which women are trapped and from which they perhaps can't be freed, no matter how solicitous their menfolk happen to be.³⁷

How this 'contented domesticity' that Lucas suggest would avert tragedy could be achieved is difficult to ascertain from his account. To whose 'contented domesticity' does he refer - men's or women's? Women are precluded from domestic contentment, either on account of their feral nature or because domesticity can never be equated with contentment. Perhaps it is men's contentment he refers to, and this could, presumably then, only ever be achieved without the presence of women. Nonetheless, as Lucas says, both texts share a common discussion about women and domestic life.

It is possible that David Garnett's story owed something to *Gone To Earth*. David Garnett's father, Edward, was familiar with Mary Webb's work as publisher's reader for Jonathan Cape. Both texts have similar thematic content: the fox as metaphor for women's sexuality that is beyond the control of church or state, illegitimate pregnancy and birth, a distinction between the civilised house and garden with wild woods lying beyond, the hunt as a ghostly, threatening presence, and ultimately the impossibility of woman-in-earth. However, these texts are not so similar as to render *Lady Into Fox* nothing but a parody of *Gone To Earth*. *Lady Into Fox* is improbably fantastic and witty, whereas *Gone To Earth* is more realistic and devoid of humour. Lucas explains the use of fantasy by Garnett as a way of not displeasing Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group, since he could not publicly promote the view that the 'husband was opposed by a wife whose savage unreasonableness alone explained her desire for freedom.'³⁸ Fantasy allows Garnett to 'register [his] claim to be a modern; and also it allows for the expression and probing of anxieties which in any other form would stand exposed as decidedly unmodern.'³⁹

D. H. Lawrence's *The Fox* also probes anxieties about the relation between women and earth. What if women should take over controlling earth's fertility? In this short story, Lawrence suggests that the earth will only flourish where

there is masculinity and heterosexuality, and in consequence renders an exclusively feminine relationship to earth barren. The two women, March and Banford, run their smallholding without the presence of a man in what is hinted at as a lesbian relationship. On this land nothing flourishes: hens will not lay; the heifers run away; a fox keeps taking the chickens. This continues until a soldier, Henry, returns from the war and provides a masculine counterforce on the farm. One of his first statements to the women is that '[t]here wants a man about the place'.⁴⁰ The fox, whose arrival has awakened March's heterosexual desire, becomes subsumed within the soldier through their shared mesmeric masculinity. Henry's hunting of the fox is paralleled by his pursuit of March, but the relationship between Banford and March stands as a barrier to Henry and March's marriage. Banford meets a violent death as the tree felled by Henry fells her. Despite its indeterminate ending, suspended between the small holding and the colonies, with March and Henry sitting on a cliff gazing out to sea thinking of their imminent move to Canada, the authorial voice makes clear that women farming together cannot make fertility, or meaning.

Although neither March nor Banford attempt to go to earth in *The Fox*, the use of the trope of the fox, as in previous narratives in which women attempt to go to earth, is striking. This suggests a link between fox-hunting and a gendered national identity. Both E. M. Delafield's *The Diary of a Provincial Lady* and Jan Struther's *Mrs Miniver* present hunting as a routine topic of conversation which women tried to avoid. Presumably, given the nature of these satirical pieces of writing, their readers recognised themselves and their social activities in them, otherwise the satire would not have worked. The rurally-based provincial lady, for instance, writes:

February 24th. - Robert and I lunch with our Member and his wife. I sit next elderly gentleman who talks about stag-hunting and tells me that there is Nothing Cruel about it. The Stag *likes* it, and it is an honest, healthy, thoroughly *English* form of sport. I say Yes, as anything else would be a waste of breath ...⁴¹

Hunting was not only a topic of rural conversation. The Londoner, Mrs Miniver, was also drawn into such discussions:

'And what,' said the Colonel, turning to Mrs Miniver, 'is *your* opinion of all these blood sports?'

'I think they are indefensible, but irresistible,' she answered. She had found through long experience that this remark usually closed the subject pretty quickly. It left very little to be said.⁴²

It is men in these satires who defend hunting as a national sport, but this is, perhaps, not surprising given the way hunting is used as a method for boys to become national men. Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* relates the entry into adult masculinity, through fox-hunting, of a young upper-class boy.⁴³ His national and masculine identity is formed in opposition to the floralised, fussy interior of his aunt's house and is supported by his working-class groom who introduces him to the powers of hunting. Here, the Hunt has mastery over the rural landscape, riding wherever it desires in a ritual display of its English identity. Hunting can, indeed, be seen as a performance of Englishness by the way it enacts gendered national relations. Upper-class men have domination over the rural, and chase their feminised quarry to prevent the quarry from going to earth. The locational identity offered to masculinity in earth is not similarly offered for femininity.

Two examples of lesbian-authored narratives which attempt to inscribe a woman-in-earth are Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes or the Loving Huntsman* and Radclyffe Hall's short story, *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself*. In Warner's text, the huntsman is not a figure who pursues women for marriage, and in this way she reverses the trope of the hunt Mary Webb uses which makes women its object or quarry.⁴⁴ How does the Englishwoman, Lolly Willowes, go to earth, given that it appears this space is reserved for masculinity under the grammar of the nation? This is a text that attempts to lesbianise Englishness by undoing the relations of male homosociality which are sanctioned by a xtian god, causing the text to turn to Satanic relations in order to inscribe lesbian desire.⁴⁵ If women officially derive Englishness through heterosexuality, then the English lesbian is an oxymoron. How can the nationally incoherent figure of the lesbian be inscribed? How does the text go about disturbing Englishness enough to begin to inscribe another subjectivity for women and lesbian desire? I would like to suggest three main ways in which *Lolly Willowes* disrupts Englishness. Firstly, in terms of form: the plot configurations and

reconfigurations undo the male homosociality of Englishness which supports the construction of the Englishwoman's heterosexual subjectivity. Secondly, in terms of characterization: authentically rural, homogeneous Englishness is disrupted to make the village full of witches, warlocks and gender-bending Satanists. Thirdly, in terms of locational politics: the text refuses to locate Englishness in geographical place, but instead locates it in cultural value and in language.

Terry Castle summarises Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's thesis from *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* thus: ⁴⁶

Just as patriarchal culture has traditionally been organized around a ritualized 'traffic' in women - the legal, economic, religious, and sexual exchange of women between men (as in the cherished institutions of heterosexual love and marriage) - so the fictions produced within patriarchal culture have tended to mimic, or represent, the same triangular structure. ⁴⁷

Kinship systems lie in an exchange of women between men, with marriage as the most basic form of gift exchange. Women are the gift, transacted between the men who give and take them, so that women are a conduit for a relationship between men, rather than a partner to it. So if women belong to men, this becomes Laura Willowes's problem. How can she dispose of herself within an English kinship system in which, on the death of her father, she is passed between brothers, and in which even her young nephew believes he has the right to occupy the private space she carves out for herself in the village of Great Mop?

Formally, the text is split into three parts. The first is concerned with Laura Willowes's childhood and young adulthood in the Dorset countryside. As her father's housekeeper in their country-house, Lady Place, he has no desire to give her away in marriage because her company is convenient to him. When he dies, she is disposed of between her brothers, as much a piece of family property as the furniture. Moving to London to live with one brother's family to help with their girl children, she resists family attempts to marry her off. At this point, she resists marriage, but not the homosocial triangle in which one brother gives her to the other.

The second part of the text is concerned with Laura's attempt to dispose of her own life as an older woman spinster, whereby it is through privacy

rather than political power that she seeks to escape her oppression as a woman. When her nieces are grown, she begins to live a secret life in London and, significantly, through her sense of smell, which is sensual yet invisible to any onlooker, she experiences an epiphany whilst buying chrysanthemums. At this moment, her thoughts and desires turn not to men, but to women as occupying a glorious space where she might find her freedom:

Laura looked at the bottled fruits, the sliced pears in syrup, the glistening red plums, the greengages. She thought of the woman who had filled those jars and fastened on the bladders. Perhaps the greengrocer's mother lived in the country. A solitary old woman picking fruit in a darkening orchard, rubbing her rough fingertips over the smooth-skinned plums, a lean wiry old woman, standing with upstretched arms among her fruit trees as though she were a tree herself, growing out of the long grass, with arms stretched out like branches. It grew darker and darker; still she worked on, methodically stripping the quivering taut boughs one after the other.⁴⁸

It is at this point that lesbian desire begins to be inscribed. The shift in Laura's imagination in which the woman working on the tree becomes a tree, suggests that the quivering boughs which the old woman strips could be another woman. Against all convention, an older woman is described as beautiful, and a different erotic economy is offered in which one woman views and touches another with pleasure. Out of this imaginary scene, Laura decides to move to the country on her own in order to know, or become, this woman. In this, she attempts to reconfigure the triangular relationships in her life by putting herself in central place, and refusing men the power to dispose of her. In *Great Mop*, she makes a relationship with another woman (her landlady, Mrs Leak) central. Spending long days wandering through the countryside and thinking back over the miserable life she has led, she experiences another great change by smelling cowslips. Through their scent, all her misery is released, and she decides that her family is not to blame for the oppressive life she has lived and that:

If she were to start forgiving she needs must forgive Society, the Law, the Church, the History of Europe, the Old Testament, great-great aunt Salome and her prayer book, the Bank of England, Prostitution, the Architect of Apsley Terrace, and half a dozen other useful props of civilisation.⁴⁹

All these things are implicated in her oppression as an Englishwoman. However, even in *Great Mop* she cannot escape the patriarchal family, as the second part of the novel

ends with the news that her nephew, Titus, sole male heir to Lady Place, has decided to come and live in the village with her.

The third part of the novel is concerned with Laura's attempt to reconfigure her relationships by getting rid of Titus with the help of Satan. Titus has re-made a triangular relationship by inserting himself between Laura and Mrs Leak. This spoils both Laura's relationship with Mrs Leak, who will no longer talk to her, and her relationship with the land, as the 'spirit of the place' withdraws from her. To secure her freedom, all social relations have to be shaken up, and the witches' Sabbath, to which Mrs Leak finally invites Laura, is central to this. All classes from the village participate in a ritual in which the rules of English polite behaviour are jettisoned; heterosexuality also no longer applies, since it does not matter whether one's partner is male or female, upper or lower class. Laura, who has never enjoyed dancing at County Balls with upper-class men, finds it thrilling to dance with a lower-class woman. This rejection of heterosexuality also appears to lead to a rejection of class distinctions:

Laura liked dancing with Emily; the pasty faced and anaemic young slattern whom she had seen dawdling about the village danced with a fervour that annihilated every misgiving. They whirled faster and faster, fused together like two suns that whirl and blaze in a single destruction. A strand of red hair came undone and brushed across Laura's face. The contact made her tingle from head to foot. She shut her eyes and dived into obliviousness - with Emily as a partner she could dance until the gunpowder ran out of the heels of her boots.⁵⁰

Emily and Mrs Leak present Laura to someone whom she believes to be Satan. These two women give her as if a gift exchange in which they bond as women witches. This represents a reversal of the male homosocial bonding in which Laura is given as a gift between brothers. Moreover, this 'Satan' is neither particularly masculine nor English, even though he shares similarities with the old English god, Herne the Hunter. At first glance, Laura thinks he looks like a Chinaman in his mask, and his movements suggest a certain effeminacy:

Mincing like a girl, the masked young man approached her, and as he approached the others drew back and left her alone. With secretive and undulating movements he came to her side.⁵¹

However, his touch is repugnant to her, unlike the touch of Emily, and she leaves the Sabbath. After all the social relations of Englishness have been disturbed, Satan helps Laura to get rid of Titus, and the third part ends with the formation of a new triangular relationship between Mrs Leak, Laura and Satan. All the old male homosocial relations are also destroyed. So the first way in which lesbian desire begins to be inscribed is through the destruction of English relations of male homosociality, so that Laura and Emily can whirl and blaze into obliviousness together, and women can bond with one another. The second way that Englishness is disturbed enough to write the figure of the lesbian is through a refusal of dominant ideas of the rural as authentically English. This is central to my third point: that the text refuses to locate Englishness in place, but instead locates it in language.

Although the text does not use experimental language, Laura's language does shift, and the text is wry on the subject of naming and definition. The village named Great Mop, with all its connotations of liquidly messy, feminine, domestic work, is valorised above the genteel country-house, Lady Place. In Great Mop, a woman may become god-like: the living-room fire casts shadows so that '[w]hen Mrs Leak smoothed her apron the shadow solemnified the gesture as though she were moulding an universe'.⁵² In Lady Place, a woman counts for very little, unless she is ensuring patriarchal inheritance through sons: here, she is placed as a 'lady'. As a non-reproductive spinster, Laura cannot inherit that version of England. But Laura is two people, in that the narrator and Satan call her 'Laura', whereas her family refer to her as 'Lolly'. These two referents are productive of different subjectivities and in this way 'when Laura went to London she left Laura behind and entered into a state of Aunt Lolly'.⁵³ However, the text makes clear that simple re-naming will not achieve freedom for women, nor allow the lesbian to be 'written'. Language does not necessarily correspond to woman's reality, and the map and guide book which have led Laura to Great Mop are ultimately useless to her in producing knowledge of the village. She throws them down a well in order to apprehend the village directly without any mediation through language. For Laura, it is not just the

The goods yard at Paddington, for instance- a savage place! as holy and enchanted as it had ever been. Not one of those monuments and tinkering of all the neat human nest-boxes in rows, Balham and Fulham and the Cromwell Road - he saw through them, they went flop like cardhouses, the bricks were earth again, and the steel girders burrowed shrieking into the veins of the earth, and the dead timber was restored to the ghostly groves.⁵⁸

Englishness is not located in a mythical countryside, but in the cultural relations played out through language and discourse. Laura's salvation, and the possibility of inscribing lesbian desire, thus lies in reconfiguring that which the nation values. In this way, Englishness is destroyed, since it depends for its existence on empire, church, state, the architect of Apsley Terrace, and heterosexuality. By the end of the novel, the nation is dead for Laura, because it literally has *no place*, neither geographically nor in the language system. Being older than the nation, Satan is witness to this:

His memory was too long, too retentive; there was no appeasing its witness, no hoodwinking it with the present; and that was why at one stage of civilisation people said he was the embodiment of all evil, and then a little later on that he didn't exist.⁵⁹

Satan has helped Laura to demolish the tropes of the virile nation of the kind we have seen celebrated by Morton, by acknowledging her as a human subject with agency. Morton's women are not subjects, but objects. The fact that a non-reproductive older woman is valuable disrupts his grammar of the nation. As the Cromwell Road houses 'go flop' when Satan sees through them, so, too, do the gender, class and race distinctions of Morton's England. There is no locating of the countryside as 'authentically English', and possessed by men because women want the urban for shopping. In fact, when Christmas comes, Laura finds the few things available in the village shop quite adequate as presents. Morton's valorisation of the countryside is undermined by Satan's vision, which helps Laura to understand the city as correspondingly holy. Unlike Morton, Satan is uninterested in regulating women; he is indifferent to what Laura might do. She is neither obliged to maintain class and race distinctions, nor to act heterosexually to please him. Satan's earth is ungendered, and his relationship to it non-possessive. This refusal of a masculine possession of a feminised earth, such as Morton utilises, has corresponding effects for women in this

Satanic world-view. Divorcing national earth from femininity entails a concomitant dissociation of women from conventional national and heterosexual 'femininity'. This Satan can be queerly imagined. At the village Sabbath, he ritually appears in the form of a masked human man, and the villagers are happy to conceive of him as a mincing Chinaman. But he is not the real Satan, only a performance of him. The real Satan is far behind the mask, appearing to Laura variously in the guise of gamekeeper, gardener and gravekeeper, but still queerly refusing any categorisation.

By the end of Warner's text, the nation is dead for Laura through Satan's help. The narrative ends with her deciding to 'go to earth' and sleep in a ditch, undisturbed by Satan, in the context of 'his satisfied but profoundly indifferent ownership'.⁶⁰ Laura has achieved this relation to earth by both refusing national identification as an Englishwoman, by destroying the heterosexual grammar of the nation so that it no longer exists, and by becoming lesbian.

In Radclyffe Hall's *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself*, written in 1926, a different textual move is made to enable the woman to go to earth.⁶¹ Miss Ogilvy, who has always felt herself to be 'queer', is helped by the war to become less queer. Going to the capital to volunteer for the war effort, she finds herself 'quite at her ease, for many another of her kind was in London doing excellent work for the nation.'⁶² The narrative starts as Miss Ogilvy's ambulance unit is being dismantled in Calais at the end of the war. But if the war helped her to find herself, with her 'queer' capabilities being nationally recognised, its end means a loss of self. As she returns to London on the Dover train, '[t]he soft English landscape sped smoothly past: small homesteads, small churches, small pastures, small lanes, with small hedges; all small like England itself, all small like Miss Ogilvy's future.'⁶³ Whereas for Morton, England only becomes small under the threat of the Second World War, for Miss Ogilvy, peace means smallness. Her sisters try to persuade her to grow her cropped hair because it would please the vicar and make her less odd in a 'small place'.⁶⁴ Like many a returning soldier, she finds it hard to settle into feminine domesticity and so packs her kit-bag and heads off for an island off the coast of Devon, to try and find

herself again. Having never visited this island before, she is surprised that she 'remembers' a large cave on it. Her hostess, Mrs Nanceskivel, shows her the skull and bones of some ancient man, dug up when the hotel was sinking a well. The local doctor tells Mrs Nanceskivel that the bones 'ought to belong to the Nation'.⁶⁵ But if this man-in-earth is a national treasure, Mrs Nanceskivel is clear that she does not want experts in, digging up her island. However, the sight of the bones induces an inexplicably furious rage in Miss Ogilvy against Mrs Nanceskivel, and so Miss Ogilvy takes herself off to her room, wondering if she is suffering from shell-shock. Her mind wanders off into the island's ancient past, where she finds herself walking on the turf with 'a glorious sense of physical well-being' and a girl companion at her side.⁶⁶ Miss Ogilvy now discovers that she is actually a man, and the girl tells her that she is 'surely the strongest man in our tribe'.⁶⁷ The pair are in love, and go off into the cave, where:

Abruptly, he [Miss Ogilvy] set the girl on her feet, and she knew that her days of innocence were over. And she thought of the anxious, virgin soil that was rent and sown to bring forth fruit in season, and she gave a quick little gasp of fear.

'No ... no ...' she gasped. For divining his need, she was weak with the longing to be possessed, yet the terror of love lay heavy on her. 'No ... no ...' she gasped.

But he caught her wrist and she felt the great strength of his rough, gnarled fingers, the great strength of the urge that leapt in his loins, and again she must give that quick gasp of fear, the while she clung close to him lest he should spare her.⁶⁸

It is hard, nowadays, to read this piece of purple prose as a straight piece rather than as a satire on heterosexuality. But, nonetheless, this is a significant moment in which Miss Ogilvy does indeed 'find herself' again. If this appears only to have happened in a dream, the narrative makes clear that she actually was in the cave in present time, since the story ends:

They found Miss Ogilvy the next morning; the fisherman saw her and climbed to the ledge. She was sitting at the mouth of the cave. She was dead, with her hands thrust deep into her pockets.⁶⁹

It is not a woman who has entered the earth through a cave, but a heterosexual man who has gone in to 'rend the virgin soil' of his woman. It seems that possessing masculinity in some form allows a woman to enter earth. But the last words are

unclear as to who has actually been in the cave. Was it Miss Ogilvy as a man, or was it Miss Ogilvy as a lesbian? In the period, hands thrust deep into pockets were routinely used as a sign to suggest a woman's inversion or lesbianism. Instead of finding herself in the countryside in the way that Morton does, by physically relating to earth as the culmination of the search both for himself and England, Miss Ogilvy finds herself by thrusting her hands in her pockets, and, even though dead, this signifies her lesbianism. Just as the corpse in *Rebecca* is simultaneously displayed and erased as lesbian, so, too, is the corpse of Miss Ogilvy.⁷⁰ She may have entered earth, but does not live beyond that moment.

Given the variously gendered and sexualized relationships with earth that have been previously outlined, it is a matter of interest that a lesbian should have been authoritatively connected with practice in, and discussions of, national earth. Eve Balfour, the first president of the Soil Association, was both farmer and writer. Born in the eighteen-nineties, she was encouraged in her ambitions by her aunt, Nora Sedgwick, a principal of Girton College, and was one of the first women to qualify with a diploma in agriculture from Reading University. After qualifying, she started farming with her sister and another woman. Never married, throughout her life her most important relationships were with other women. Because of her relationship with Kathleen Carney, with whom she lived for fifty years until Carney's death, she has been claimed for lesbian history.⁷¹ Beside writing on agriculture and soil, Balfour wrote three novels with her friend Beryl Hearnden under the pseudonym Hearnden Balfour. Unlike her crime fiction, long out of print, her *Living Soil: Evidence of the importance to human health of soil vitality, with special reference to post-war planning*, became, according to Rose Collis, 'a huge success - it was reprinted nine times - and prompted an enormously enthusiastic international response.'⁷² Attestation to the more general interest shown in it is the fact that the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewed it. Based on, and revised from, a pamphlet Eve Balfour wrote in 1939, *The Living Soil* describes the experiments made by herself and others with earth fertility, composting and farming from about 1910 onwards.⁷³

Some of the tropes she deploys in *The Living Soil* are similar to those of other writers who deploy the man-in-earth. Dating the problematics of soil erosion as arising from 1914, Balfour seems to concur with other state-of-the-nation writers that the First World War brought about profound social, cultural and agricultural change. Her soil, too, seems a place of death and resurrection. Humus gives soil life-giving nature:

Humus is 'a product of the decomposition of animal and vegetable residues brought about through the agency of micro-organisms' ... but it is far from dead in the sense of having returned to the inorganic world from which all life originally sprang. It is still organic matter, in the transition stage between one form of life and another. Once the inorganic passes into the organic, and this is a constant process, it is subject to continual change within the organic cycle, the variety in the forms of life through which it might pass being almost endless.⁷⁴

Quoting a paper given to the Farmers' Club in 1939 by Sir Bernard Greenwell, she masculinises the earthworm, recalling the trope of man-in-earth:

I am afraid very few of us realise what a good friend this little fellow is to the farmer, and if we can only increase the population of the earthworm in the soil he will do a lot of our deep cultivation for us and aerate the soil gratis.⁷⁵

She also draws a distinction between soil and sub-soil: the level that one works with, and the level beyond that. Her soil is an unstable and shifting thing, unlike the stable, non-changing earth previous writers posit, and it is in an 'ever recurring cycle of birth, growth, reproduction, death, decay passing once more into life'.⁷⁶ This could be seen as a 'queer' view in the sense that it can tolerate uncertainties and instability in its categorisation of the world, not relying on the heterosexual grammar of the nation that provides stable and gendered taxonomies.

For Lady Balfour, national lack lies both in men and soil. The English body is a lacking, sick body, as is the body of soil. Soil needs the introduction of good-quality humus which should penetrate earth, preferably by the horse-drawn plough rather than any mechanical one. Her solution to national lack is not to put the man in earth, but to put the earth in man, because:

Society, like a house, does not start at ground level, but begins quite literally beneath the surface of our planet, within the soil itself. For out of soil are we fashioned, and by the products of soil is our earthly existence maintained. If we destroy our soil - and it is not indestructible - mankind will vanish from the earth as surely as has the dinosaur.⁷⁷

Society, soil and people are co-constructed, each relying on the others in a cycle of mutual dependency. Good-quality soil will produce good-quality food which will nourish the national body. Unlike other condition-of-England writers, 'virility' is not a key term for her. Instead, her concern is fertility - fertile soil which gives nourishing food to produce healthy bodies which are not necessarily reproductive bodies. Neither men nor women should go to earth, but instead earth should be returned to earth through the introduction of composted earth products. For Eve Balfour, the excesses of the nation lie in the wrong sort of 'marriage'. The introduction of industrial chemicals to land has led to the depletion of soil fertility and sickness in the national body. She argues that this 'marriage of agriculture to a foreign partner, chemistry, was a mistake.'⁷⁸ Given that we have seen Morton's Englishness as a heterosexual relation between man and earth, the use of the trope of marriage is apposite. Her solution is one in which the 'marriage' of ungendered samenesses produces fertility through the interactions of soil and soil products. By implication, she is arguing against a heterosexualised conception of the relation of national masculine subjects and earth in favour of a homosexualised earth/soil which will nourish the national body. Since she argues that everything - society, culture, knowledge, bodies and health - is ultimately based on or comes from the soil, logically her homosexualised soil could lead to a homosexualised nation which can tolerate the uncertainties inherent in an unstable shifting earth founding it. Without a stable earth founding the grammar of the nation, the nation's heterosexual grammar is upset. But, even though in Balfour's formulation compost provides health for the nation, within an eugenicist discourse that argues for selective breeding in the national interest, compost becomes a metaphor for national destruction. 'Compost' can present a danger to the nation. So, for example, the sexologist, Magnus Hirschfield, discussed 'the common dread that racial crossing will lead to the production of a "homologous racial compost".'⁷⁹ This would suggest that Balfour's 'divorce' of earth from heterosexuality could also break down taxonomies of race.

In conclusion, national identity was partly being recreated discursively through the trope of man-in-earth but the paucity of texts which deal with women-in-earth suggest that women could not be national figures. The exclusion of women from this version of national identity could be hypothesised as productive of lesbian subjectivity, in that since women could not be national, those women who searched for a way of inclusion in national processes had to find another female subjectivity that might allow them the authority to speak and make interventions concerning national earth space. That the woman who became President of the Soil Association should be a lesbian is notable, and possible evidence for such a thesis. It appears that a formation of Englishness as man-in-earth is actually productive of lesbian subjectivity and discourse, in that women are actively excluded from that trope of Englishness. Since it was an important national trope, this pushed women to a peripheral national place rather than a central one. Similarly, given that 'virility' was a key term in national renewal, with this virility enacted against and upon a generally feminised earth, such a heterosexually formulated relationship of the nation left women little place to be located. Earth was occupying a feminine space which might have been the discursive place women could occupy. If women attempted their own relationship to earth, it was described variously as monstrous, impossible, destructive and non-reproductive. The only way it appeared that a woman could go to earth was to destroy England and the grammar of its nation in favour of lesbian identity. If earth was reformulated as homosexual, though, this could allow for the homosexualisation of the nation and would allow for the emergence of alternative sexualities. However, since this was not the only discourse concerning women, lesbians and nation in the interwar period too great a claim cannot be made for its power. Clearly, women were also being discouraged from lesbianism, as something like the trial of the publication of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* shows. The next chapter will examine the fluctuations of the status of the lesbian in relation to England and Englishness, by discussing her contradictory positioning in national culture.

¹ Luke 16.3.

- ² T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone* [1938] (London: Collins) [n.d.], p. 272.
- ³ Sheila Cousins, *To Beg I Am Ashamed* (London: George Routledge, 1938).
- ⁴ Bram Stoker, *The Lair of the White Worm* [1911] (Sussex: Pulp Publications, 1998), p. 91.
- ⁵ Stoker, p. 107.
- ⁶ Stoker, p. 133.
- ⁷ Stoker, p. 158.
- ⁸ Stoker, p. 135.
- ⁹ See my discussion of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Chapter Three.
- ¹⁰ Stoker, p. 148.
- ¹¹ Stoker, p. 110.
- ¹² Stoker, p. 117.
- ¹³ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* [1924] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).
- ¹⁴ Forster, p. 136.
- ¹⁵ Forster, p. 9.
- ¹⁶ Forster, p. 11.
- ¹⁷ Forster, p. 139.
- ¹⁸ Forster, p. 124.
- ¹⁹ Forster, pp. 124-125.
- ²⁰ Forster, p. 145.
- ²¹ Forster, p. 145.
- ²² Forster, p. 147.
- ²³ Forster, p. 172.
- ²⁴ Forster, p. 282.
- ²⁵ Forster, p. 317.
- ²⁶ Mary Gladys Coles, *The Flower of Light: A Biography of Mary Webb* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 171.
- ²⁷ Stanley Baldwin, *On England* [1926] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), p. 20.
- ²⁸ Baldwin, pp. 20-21.
- ²⁹ Mary Webb, *Precious Bane* [1924] (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928).
- ³⁰ Coles, p. 322.
- ³¹ Webb cited in Coles, pp. 160-161.
- ³² John Buchan cited in Coles, p. 180.
- ³³ Buchan cited in Coles, p. 118.
- ³⁴ Webb, *Gone to Earth*, p. 288.
- ³⁵ David Garnett, *Lady Into Fox and A Man in the Zoo* [1922 and 1924] (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), p. 12.
- ³⁶ John Lucas, *The Radical Twenties: Aspects of Writing, Politics and Culture* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 1997), p. 71.
- ³⁷ Lucas, p. 75.
- ³⁸ Lucas, p. 75.
- ³⁹ Lucas, p. 76.
- ⁴⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *Three Novellas: The Ladybird, The Fox, The Captain's Doll*. [1923] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p. 97.
- ⁴¹ E. M. Delafield, *Diary of a Provincial Lady* [1930] (London: Virago, 1984), p. 36. Italics in original.
- ⁴² Jan Struther, *Mrs Miniver* [1939] (London: Virago, 1991), p. 13. Italics in original.
- ⁴³ Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* [1928] (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).
- ⁴⁴ Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Lolly Willowes or the Loving Huntsman* [1926] (London: Virago, 1995).
- ⁴⁵ See Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). The chapter entitled 'Sylvia Townsend Warner and the counterplot of lesbian fiction' has provided a model for my reading of *Lolly Willowes* as a lesbian fiction through the example of *Summer Will Show* that Terry Castle provides.
- ⁴⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1985).
- ⁴⁷ Castle, p. 68.
- ⁴⁸ Warner, p. 83.

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- ⁴⁹ Warner, p. 150.
- ⁵⁰ Warner, pp. 192-193.
- ⁵¹ Warner, p. 200.
- ⁵² Warner, p. 118.
- ⁵³ Warner, p. 61.
- ⁵⁴ Warner, p. 220.
- ⁵⁵ Warner, pp. 237-238.
- ⁵⁶ Warner, pp. 57-58.
- ⁵⁷ Warner, p. 199.
- ⁵⁸ Warner, pp. 230-231.
- ⁵⁹ Warner, p. 245.
- ⁶⁰ Warner, p. 247.
- ⁶¹ Radclyffe Hall, 'Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself', in *Women's Writing on the First World War*, ed. by Agnes Cardinal, Dorothy Goldman and Judith Hattaway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- ⁶² Hall, p. 346.
- ⁶³ Hall, p. 343.
- ⁶⁴ Hall, p. 347.
- ⁶⁵ Hall, p. 351.
- ⁶⁶ Hall, p. 352.
- ⁶⁷ Hall, p. 352.
- ⁶⁸ Hall, p. 356.
- ⁶⁹ Hall, p. 357.
- ⁷⁰ See the discussion of the corpse in *Rebecca* in Chapter Four.
- ⁷¹ Rose Collis, *Portraits to the Wall: Historic Lesbian Lives Unveiled* (London: Cassell, 1994), pp. 139-156.
- ⁷² Collis, p. 151.
- ⁷³ Evelyn Balfour, *The Living Soil: Evidence of the Importance to Human Health of Soil Vitality, with special reference to Post-war Planning* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943).
- ⁷⁴ Balfour, p. 18.
- ⁷⁵ Balfour, p. 113.
- ⁷⁶ Balfour, p. 18.
- ⁷⁷ Balfour, p. 13.
- ⁷⁸ Balfour, p. 192.
- ⁷⁹ Magnus Hirschfield, 'Racism (1938)' in *Sexology Uncensored: the Documents of Sexual Science*, ed. by Lucy Bland & Laura Doan, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 230.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LESBIAN AND THE NATION

*[A] point has a position but not magnitude. In other words, if a given point were not in a given place it would not be there at all.*¹

When the missionary in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Mr. Fortune's Maggot* attempts to give his 'convert' a mathematics lesson, his words inadvertently suggest an analogy for the place of the lesbian within the nation: a lesbian cannot be accorded any 'magnitude' or mass, unless perceived within a specific location. Place, then, is needed to confer substance on the lesbian, as it has on those with other sexual identities. But if national earth is associated with heterosexual masculinity, feminine heterosexuality associated with domestic interiors and the urban, and water mainly associated with masculine homosexuality, then where can the lesbian be placed within the nation in order to become substantial? Are there any ways in which the concept of 'lesbian' does have a place in the grammar of the nation? If so, what or where might that place be? Is it a geographical place? Sylvia Townsend Warner suggests in *Lolly Willowes* that England and the lesbian are categories that cannot co-exist, but do other texts suggest the lesbian *can* be reconciled with England and Englishness? Following the argument in *Lolly Willowes*, is lesbianism accorded a national dimension, not through its geographical location, but instead through a cultural value within a language system? Might it then be possible that the lesbian has a rhetorical place rather than a geographical one? If so, what writing strategies are deployed in order to write the lesbian into the nation? Informed by theories of both narratives of nation and narratives of lesbianism, these are the questions this chapter seeks to examine in order to further elucidate the conjunction of nation, sexuality and writing.

As I said in the introduction, Hobsbawm and Ranger have argued that there is a paradox in the formulation of the nation where its modernity is set against its timelessness. They contend that '[m]odern nations generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so "natural" as to require no other definition other than

self-assertion.’² The lesbian shares a similar quality with the nation in that she is a hidden subjectivity caught between modernity and primitivism. The Parliamentary debates about criminalising lesbianism, discussed in Chapter One, show that there was no clear and generally accepted definition of the lesbian, just as there was no clear definition of ‘England’ that was not contested. On the one hand, it was suggested of lesbianism and lesbians that such ‘moral weaknesses date back to the very origin of history’, whereas on the other, ‘[t]hey are examples of ultra-civilisation’.³ If England had been not noticing lesbians who had nonetheless existed for many hundreds of years, as Lieutenant-Colonel Moore-Brabazon stated in Parliament, they clearly had a historical continuity alongside that of the nation.⁴ If, as Bhabha says, we are obliged to forget that the nation is not naturally given, we are also obliged to forget that ‘nature’ is not naturally given. So when Mr. Macquisten spoke in the Commons debate, he argued of the lesbian that she ‘has forgotten the dictates of Nature and morality’.⁵ But, if ‘nature’ can be forgotten, then its power to determine the nature of woman is clearly not very forceful. As Wittig argues, ‘by its very existence, lesbian society destroys the artificial (social) fact constituting women as a “natural group”.’⁶ By calling ‘nature’ into question, the lesbian also calls the ‘natural’ status of the nation into question.

Therefore, when Homi Bhabha asks ‘[w]hat might be the cultural and political effects of the liminality of the nation?’, one answer could be that a subject position which expresses the liminality of the nation is itself created in the process of narrating the nation - and this subject position is that of the lesbian.⁷ Bhabha argues that national narratives interpellate their subjects through their discursive address, so perhaps it is not surprising that in the process of narrating the nation that which has been repressed might also be expressed. Kristeva’s argument concerning the derivation of identity through abjection maintained that this process of identity formation is never complete. Identity is always vulnerable to the destabilising return of the repressed, precisely because what is abjected is already an unwanted part of the identity. Not fully ‘other’, the abject always returns to remind us of its existence. In

order to keep identity stable and intact, the abject has to be continually re-repressed. This would suggest that the lesbian, once 'expressed' in national culture, would have to be re-repressed in order to maintain the heterosexual identity of England and Englishness. Veering between existence and non-existence, she expresses the uncertainty of cultural meanings.

Suggesting that 'national narrative is a site of an ambivalent identification; a margin of the uncertainty of cultural meaning that may become a space for an agonistic minority position', Bhabha provides a potential way of understanding the place of the lesbian in the nation.⁸ Occupying a space of 'uncertain cultural meaning', she publicly contests the nature of all meanings the nation provides. In expressing nationally repressed terms, she shows the limits of the nature of gender and the limits of the nation as naturally given. So when Terry Castle argues that the lesbian 'has been "ghosted" - or made to seem invisible - by culture itself', one might ask: which aspects of culture produce the lesbian as a ghost?⁹ Is it in part the *national* aspects of culture which work to make her appear as 'a ghost effect ... elusive, vaporous, difficult to spot - even when she is there, in plain view'?¹⁰

In what ways might the lesbian - a figure both ghostly and yet also condensing some of the complexities of national identity - be inscribed? One writing strategy adopted in order to write the lesbian into the nation was to find a history within England for this subjectivity. In other words, the figure of the lesbian was rendered substantial through an assertion of her continuity or longevity. Like the nation, she had always been there. The pioneer woman doctor, Mary Gordon, wrote one such text: *Chase of the Wild Goose: The story of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, known as the Ladies of Llangollen*.¹¹ These eighteenth-century 'Ladies' had fled their native Ireland and were living in a Welsh border town. Arthur Ponsonby had included extracts from the Ladies' diaries in his 1922 *English Diaries*, and this allowed Gordon to skirt the issue of their national identity by making immediate reference to Ponsonby's book in the foreword. In this way, the Ladies could be claimed as part of English history, having a historical continuity with English women

who choose to live together rather than marry. The first words of Chapter One set up this continuity:

The two heroines of this story, the Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, have a remarkable history. They achieved fame at a stroke. They made a noise in the world which has never since died out, and which we, their spiritual descendants, continue to echo.¹²

The text immediately calls up: notions of history, past and present; ghostliness signalled through the call on the spiritual; and the contemporary 'we', constituted through a similarity to the Ladies, obliquely signalling that this 'we' the text speaks to, the preferred reader, is a lesbian within a community of lesbians. As the narrative progresses, this becomes clearer when the narrator describes the convenience of the eighteenth-century term 'romantic friendship' as protecting the Ladies from others having full knowledge of the relations between them: 'And since no terrible scientific names were in existence to describe phenomena of the kind, the escapade remained romantic, to the entire peace of the subjects themselves.'¹³ However, at the same time as invoking her historical continuity, the call on 'terrible scientific names' still leaves the lesbian as a 'ghost' or 'echo' not a fully articulated subjectivity, since it only suggests rather than describes what is meant by this, and relies on the reader having sexological knowledge to elucidate the meaning. But if this reader is herself a lesbian, then to read this text is to also produce herself as a 'ghost' or an 'echo', of the Ladies themselves. The narrator and the Ladies conceive of themselves as ghosts, and appear as apparitions to each other. The style of the first part of the narrative is one which imaginatively reconstructs conversations between the Ladies, and the narrator comments that:

In their tranquil talks their ideas seemed to coincide and fit together, and it was curious how they dropped the artificial style of their day and education. In the spiritual company of many other unknown women, they were slipping forward into another social epoch of which they were entirely unconscious.¹⁴

Just as the past can haunt the present, the past in which these Ladies exist is haunted by a future which is less artificial and enables them to behave differently than they would in their own epoch. Even though they are unconscious of the present moment

of the text, nonetheless they are aware of their own ghostliness. Eleanor and Sarah discuss this:

‘I have a feeling, Sally, that when we have gone away we may be ordered back to come here.’

‘As ghosts?’

‘Something of the kind.’

‘Well, there couldn’t be a lovelier place to haunt ... we should be a sort of double ghost!’¹⁵

If the ghost undermines the logic of identity, then its doubling further undermines it.

The last part of the text deals with the narrator’s encounter with the ghosts of the Ladies, when she appears as a ghost to them just as they appear as ghosts to her.

This is the irony of *Chase of the Wild Goose*. Mary Gordon’s use of the rhetorical figure of the ghost as enabling a dialogue between past and present undermines the literalisation of the lesbian. Instead, she is constructed as a historical haunting. In 1973, when Elizabeth Mavor published her biography of the Ladies she used the fact that Mary Gordon had deployed the trope of the ghost to call Gordon’s text ‘abounding in wild embellishments’.¹⁶ Lesbianism was one such wild embellishment. Mavor’s preface makes clear that she believes the Ladies were certainly not sexually active lesbians, but ‘romantic friends’. In this way, the ghost that the lesbian is in culture guarantees her own textual demise. Produced as a ghost, her own ghostliness becomes the reason to deny her existence.

However, one aspect of the power of the ghost is that it can transcend at once the limitations of gender (generically, ghosts are not gendered in the way that, for example, dogs are gendered masculine whilst cats are gendered feminine), the limitations of time, and therefore those of place. In both *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, the protagonists defy easy location in gender or time systems, moving as they do through different historical periods.¹⁷ As such, the ghostly lesbian is a time-traveller: as she is written, she is erased from her contemporary moment. This view of the lesbian as traveller, defying a stable location, is reproduced in such literary criticism as Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*, where he mentions ‘middle-aged lesbians in tweeds’ as being a common sight at railway stations interwar.¹⁸ As this is his only reference to lesbians, his own

literary criticism in this way reproduces an interwar notion of lesbian subjectivity as occupying a liminal space (the railway station), and circulates it in 1970s critical discourse.

Since the lesbian appears to be liminal and ghostly within some English history and literary criticism, it is perhaps not surprising that the island motif figures strongly in writing which inscribes the lesbian, as it seems to offer another space outside of England and Englishness. Although in one sense another island is always 'abroad', it is nonetheless written from an English perspective. So while it offers some possibilities for registering different social relations, these relations are still constrained by their reference to England and Englishness. Consequently, while the island of Storn and its castle in Vita Sackville-West's *The Dark Island* are 'curiously un-English', and its people 'rather foreign', the fact that it lies only a couple of miles off the English coast ensures that its Englishness is always in dialogue with its foreignness.¹⁹ This is realised by the constant trips characters take to and from the metropolitan centre. Shirin, who is married to the 'Ranger of Storn', has her most intense relationships with three other women in the text, and it is in these relationships that the lesbian sub-text emerges.²⁰ Her first relationship is with Mrs Jolly, significantly an ex-prostitute, the landlady of the seaside boarding-house the young Shirin visits yearly with her family. We have already seen in Chapter One Shannon Bell's analysis of the discursive linkage made between the body of the prostitute and that of the lesbian.²¹ This linkage allows the text to make indirect comment on the advantages of lesbian sex as opposed to heterosexual sex. When visiting the island with Venn, who is due to inherit it, Shirin is thrown down on the ground by him, as he demands that she should recount to him that she is a 'dirty worm of earth'.²² Her association with earth makes her 'dirty' rather than ennobled. Telling her 'you look nice there on the ground, you look as though you belonged to it', he attempts to rape her.²³ Returning shocked to the boarding-house, she is consoled by Mrs Jolly. In this obliquely lesbian passage, the latter massages Shirin's body under the bedclothes as Shirin enjoyably shrinks, shudders and undergoes a

tremor which shakes her whole body.²⁴ Later, Mrs Jolly becomes housekeeper on Storn when Shirin has married Venn. But if Shirin has married, it is not at all for love of Venn but because of her desire for Storn, and also to be brought into a relationship with Venn's grandmother who lives on the island. Meeting Madame, the grandmother, for the first time at sixteen is a pivotal moment in Shirin's life, as she discovers:

*What a depth and richness there is in women! ... This old woman, beautiful and wicked and good, with a power of charm beyond reason, holds more danger and wickedness, beauty and goodness and wisdom in her than anyone I have ever met.*²⁵

Shirin's marriage is not a way of ensuring heterosexuality, but more a way for women to be able to bond with one another. As the island is figured as woman - with the two breast-like towers of its castle silhouetted against the sky and its secret wooded coves and the 'sleepy sensuality of ... earth' mirroring Shirin's own sensuality - then this marriage also offers Shirin the possibility of a same-sex relationship with the land/island of Storn, whose photograph she has carried with her in a talismanic way through her youth and young adulthood.²⁶ Storn itself is that which she desires, and Venn is the conduit through which Shirin can form relations both with other women and with feminine earth. This, however, is what Venn denies her, by telling her on their wedding night that Storn will never be hers, so there is no point in loving the island. But if Venn forbids her desire for land, he also forbids lesbian desire for her sculptor friend, Cristina, who comes to live on the island. Although dying himself, he is determined that his death will not allow the women's relationship to flourish and murders Cristina in what is set up to look like a boating accident. A lesbian relationship between Shirin and Cristina is not explicitly realised in the text; although lesbianism is suggested through Cristina's 'passionate devotion' to Shirin.²⁷ On the latter's first night on the island, at Shirin's suggestion, she plays a moonlit game of 'It' with Shirin, Venn and their children. While none of the others is able to catch Shirin, Cristina is possessed by:

The determination that if anyone were able to catch Shirin it should be herself and not Venn. *She'd be safer with me*, she thought ... ; then it seemed to her that Shirin slackened her pace a little, offering herself to be overtaken, and the

next moment the soft, warm, supple, breathing body was in her arms, bending backwards, while the eyes of Shirin laughed up into her own.²⁸

Heterosexuality is dangerous in this text, whereas lesbianism offers safety. This is a highly charged moment for the adults, who see this game as symbolic of who can possess Shirin and in which way. So, when Venn decides to frighten Cristina by taking her sailing into dangerous seas, he thinks to himself:

If the boat upsets in the gybe, then I shall know that Shirin minds about Cristina. I shall know that Cristina really caught Shirin, that night, as I have never caught her.

The boat, for all Venn's symbolism, refused to behave symbolically: without any upsetting, she came round perfectly though perilously, and resumed her reversed course towards Storn.²⁹

In this oblique way, the reader is told that Cristina, not Venn, is the one who 'has' Shirin. Lesbianism is textually hidden, and has to be teased out of the language in which it is indirectly stated. The reader has to ask of the text - what does it mean that the boat did not 'behave symbolically'? The answer is that Cristina possesses Shirin, not Venn. In a circuitous manner, the text displays and erases its lesbian content in both the relationship between Shirin and Mrs. Jolly, and that between Cristina and Shirin.

This display and erasure occurs even in one of the interwar texts in which the lesbian is most clearly and unequivocally identified. Compton Mackenzie's satire on lesbian life, *Extraordinary Women: Theme and variations*, set on the island of Sirene, made air more important than earth as a locational signifier of subjectivity. On the island, where 'many ordinary people of divers nationalities ... let themselves go on that air',³⁰ an Englishwoman comments that '[e]verybody immoral in Sirene [sic]. It's the air. Dogs. People. Can't help it poor dears'.³¹ The textual mingling of air and lesbianism inevitably produces an immoral subjectivity which is insubstantial, unlike a masculine heterosexual subjectivity produced in conjunction with an earth that confers materiality. Even though the lesbian characters' emotional and sexual lives are made explicit within this text, the English lesbian, Rory, can only imagine representing her love for Rosalba through an airy ghostliness:

And as Rory looked out of the window she saw walking along the clustered cypresses the two white peacocks she had bought to symbolize herself and

Rosalba. The quality of their plumage gave to them from whatever angle the sun caught it a lightness that humanity could not keep. Their tails trailed along the ground like smoke - no, hardly so opaque as smoke, but like a creeping mist. The crests upon their delicate and contemptuous heads glistened like thistledown. They seemed indeed all plumed with thistledown, those vain imponderable birds, those wraiths stepping so delicately and contemptuously beside the cypress-trees darkly clustering.

"Ah, look," Rory cried. "Look, dearest, there are the white peacocks that will walk here always like our two ghosts, when perhaps sometimes we are not together here."³²

Again, the lesbian couple is produced as a double ghost. If Rosalba is 'a portent', the narrative voice asks '[o]f what is Rosalba the portent? What signifies this boy-girl ...? What signifies she in the curve of a civilization?'³³ Without providing an answer to this, it breaks in occasionally to comment on the characters and instruct the reader on how their actions should be thought of. So, for example, the reader is told of Rosalba that '[w]e have noted her lack of humour, her capacity for intrigue, her childish vanity, her egoism, and her insincerity.'³⁴ The partial answer to what she signifies as a lesbian is that she signifies a narcissistic insubstantiality devoid of any real importance, and a wraith-like ghostliness, located in the margins of an(other) island.

This ghostliness recurs in other texts where the reader is directly called upon to notice or comment on the lesbian. Naomi Royde-Smith's *The Island: A Love Story*, for example, introduces the apparitional figure of the lesbian girl in a marshy landscape:³⁵

If there had been anyone to watch her as she made her way along the dykes that chequered the marsh, the tall girl who moved so slowly towards the farmhouse would have seemed to walk waist-deep in the shimmer of heat that covered the surface of the earth as if with a layer of liquid steam.³⁶

Since there is no-one within this fictional landscape to see the ghostly figure of Goosey, she is revealed to the reader but not to other characters in the text.³⁷ Goosey falls in love with Almond, a summer boarder at her family's farm, while seeing her in a state of undress. However, it is the reader who is the first to have an intimate and eroticised vision of Almond's body and underwear:

It was so hot under the low roof that the girl who stood barefooted on the strip of carpet beside the bed looking at the frilled cambric dress she intended to put on, was using a towel to dry her forehead and her armpits and the back of her neck under the knot of her dark hair, from the moisture that had gathered there while she slept.

Her stays - a small, ridiculous affair of pink satin - with ribbon bows and long pink laces and frills of imitation valenciennes, its two little suspenders dangling from each side of the short busks that clasped it, was flung over the bed-rail with her two black lisle-thread, open-work stockings one on each side of it.³⁸

The textual address brings the reader into collusion with a lesbian eroticism before any of the textual characters actually look at Almond. When Goosey also begins to look at Almond dressing, the textual address further lesbianises the reader since the reader is brought into collusion with Goosey's lesbian gaze. In a ten-page passage involving torn lace and its repair, chemise straps falling off shoulders and frail lace ripping under urgent fingers, Goosey's lesbian identity is built from an attraction to a middle-class extreme form of femininity.

Goosey's aunt, seeing that 'there *was* something a little odd about the friendship'³⁹ between the girls, is relieved to hear that Almond is due to get married because, as she tells her husband, '[g]irls and girls is bad, Evan. I won't have it in my house.'⁴⁰ Almond does marry, but continues throughout her life to use and abuse the lesbian love that Goosey has for her. As such, this is not the usual story of the predatory lesbian, but more the story of the predatory married woman who lives off lesbian energy for her own ends. Even so, the text does end with a happily married pair watching the now old Goosey on an opposite hill:

Grey against the glow on the hill-side there towered and wavered the dim, gigantic, but unmistakeable shadow of the woman on the ridge behind the summit. The substance that had seemed a bird when they were turned towards it was a monster now that they faced its shade.⁴¹

If Goosey begins as a girl in shimmering heat, visible only to the reader, she ends as a shadowy monster to the heterosexual married characters and 'a public nuisance, one of those miserable problems it was useless to attempt to solve.'⁴² In the opening pages, it is the part of her below the waist, hidden by the heat, which cannot be seen, whereas in the closing pages she is subsumed in the shadow/bird and monster so that none of her is visible. In this way, it appears that the lesbian is better revealed textually within the reading process, both to the reader and by the reader, than by the other characters. So perhaps the lesbian should be looked for within particular kinds of literary inscription, rather than for her association with a particular place.

Some writers quite clearly used literature to signal lesbianism. Mary Gordon quotes a letter from the late 1790s in which Anna Seward writes to a friend of her visit with the Ladies. Describing them as the Shakespearean 'Rosalind and Celia of real life', she wrote:

My destined week of elevated situation past, I sought the vale, and swiftly flew three days of high gratification, scenic and intellectual, with the charming Rosalind and Celia of this lovelier Arden.⁴³

Well over a hundred years later Winifred Holtby and Jean McWilliam also corresponded with each other as Rosalind and Celia. An edited version of their letters was published in 1937, and included an incident where:

On a ship going to South Africa in 1926 Winifred met a Miss Graham who had been taught by Jean. The two women held 'pleasant communion on the nature of our loves - as did those charming youths in the Platonic dialogue whose name I forget, but which is staged in a gymnasium, with nice little boys cooling themselves after the games, and blushing at the mention of their lovers' names'.⁴⁴

The tone of Winifred Holtby's words suggests, not that she and Miss Graham are discussing their mutual loves, who are gay men, but that 'our loves' signifies their mutual love of women which includes a sexual element signalled through the boys' 'lovers' mentioned in Platonic literature.

In Mary Renault's 1939 *Purposes of Love*, Shakespeare is again called upon to signify lesbianism.⁴⁵ At the nurses' pyjama party that Colonna and Vivian attend as a couple, Colonna flirts with another lesbian, Valentine, by burlesquing a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. In Renault's work, whilst heterosexual characters can reproduce, the ways in which lesbian or homosexual characters reproduce themselves are literary, in that they write for posterity, and the ways in which the lesbian or homosexual are signalled are literary. For the knowing reader any mention of Gautier would have signalled this. In this period, a reference to Gautier's *Mademoiselle du Maupin* became a code between literary lesbian characters in which they could identify themselves to one another.⁴⁶ Vivian's male lover, Mic, whom other nurses think of as a 'pansy', asks her: 'Do you know that *conte* of Gautier's about a man who took possession of another man's body for purposes of his own?'⁴⁷ Seeing Colonna naked in the bath, Vivian quotes Marlowe's *Edward the Second* to her -

'sometimes a lovely boy in Dian's shape' - signalling both knowledge of the homosexuality of the king, as well as rendering Colonna's lesbian body partially intelligible.⁴⁸ After this literary signal, Colonna and Vivian start a sexual relationship. The single sex space of the nurses' home that convention had offered as productive of lesbianism, could not function in this way without the addition of literature to enable the characters to flag their desires to one another. Place on its own was not enough to allow lesbian desire. So, Vivian's gaze at Colonna's naked lesbian body can only render it intelligible through literature, as a boy in a woman's shape. Both the use of the national poet/playwright Shakespeare, and the use of Marlowe to give a homosexual history to England, subvert the heterosexual Englishness which such 'great literature' was supposed to guarantee to the nation, as we have seen in the chapter on banned and restricted books.

Literature figured, too, in law courts during oblique discussions of lesbianism. The *Manchester Guardian* reported on the case of the suicide of a schoolgirl who had apparently killed herself when letters from her favourite woman teacher failed to arrive. The court tried to make the girl's action, and the relationship between the two, intelligible by calling on literature. In the coroner's summing up, he said:

We all know that when we were at school we had got heroes, and girls, I suppose, had got heroines. It might be a boy in an older class. You may remember the play 'Journey's End', in which a boy named Raleigh has a hero in another class called Stanhope, and later in life they meet in France. Of course that is only fiction, but it is a very good example of what does occur in real life. That may well have been the position of this young girl and Miss Lee. There is no doubt about the fact that she was extremely fond of her.⁴⁹

It seems the coroner could only understand this emotional relationship between women by imagining men he has known in fiction. That, too, seems to have been the teacher's problem. In her correspondence with the girl that was read out in court she was asked what was meant by the following:

Your feelings for me and your mother cannot be contrasted. They stand on two different planes ... I can never approach the position your mother holds in your life. It must needs be that other loves come into our lives. Think of David and Jonathan. In some special cases we must love one another especially. We are to be classed as special ones.⁵⁰

To refer to one's homosexuality through the Biblical story of David and Jonathan was routine in the period. The reiteration of the 'special' nature of the two and their love is overstated, and clearly the court found enough ambiguity in the letters to wonder, without directly articulating it, whether this was indeed a lesbian relationship. However, Miss Lee's reply was that the extract only meant that they 'were extremely fond of one another and were friends'.⁵¹

If lesbians are ghostly and located within marginal spaces, such as islands other than Britain, then their existence through literary reference suggests they have a discursive rather than geographical location. Given the various cultural difficulties of writing the lesbian because of the lack of a clear way of articulating the her and lesbian desire without calling upon a rhetoric which renders her invisible, ghostly, or hidden behind masculinity, Radclyffe Hall's attempt in *The Well of Loneliness* to inscribe a substantial lesbian within notions of England and Englishness was daring.

In *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, Rob Shields argues that 'the physical body and geographical spaces are never entirely separable.'⁵² Therefore, '[s]ites are never simply locations. Rather, they are sites for someone and of something.'⁵³ This can be clearly seen in *The Well of Loneliness*. Here, the heterosexual woman fits into an English landscape: her potentially procreative and maternal body mirrors the landscape she inhabits as much as the landscape mirrors her. Lady Anna Gordon can look at landscape and see her own pregnant, heterosexual body reflected back to her in a way which makes it meaningful, as we have seen in Chapter One. In this way, the English landscape is a site for heterosexuality. The lesbian is not in such a fortunate position with regard to her bodily relationship to the land: she is a 'blot' on the landscape, and as such feels herself to stand both outside the peace and beauty offered by the natural world and a relationship to Englishness which is mediated through landscape.⁵⁴ In Chapter Four, I discussed how places on the margin allow the inscription of homosexuality, and how the fluidity of water figures in this. After Lady Anna has exiled Stephen from

Morton, it is in a flat on the Chelsea Embankment which overlooks the river that Stephen sets up house with her old governess, aptly named Puddle, an allusion to water and through water to homosexuality. Puddle's homosexuality is obliquely referred to in her empathy with Stephen's situation, coyly described as having suffered similarly in her youth. Outside their Chelsea window:

A pale glint of sunshine devoid of all warmth lay over the wide expanse of the river, touching the funnel of a passing tug that tore at the water like a clumsy harrow; but a field of water is not for the sowing and the river closed back in the wake of the tug, deftly obliterating all traces of its noisy and foolish passing.⁵⁵

This river waterscape cannot be made fruitful like the earth-based landscape can. The water can neither be sown nor harrowed, and any ploughing swiftly disappears. Cultural traces cannot be left on this waterscape; neither is heterosexual meaning ascribed to it in the way that the Malvern Hills are likened to pregnant women and the mothers of sons. However, Stephen can look out at the Thames as a reflection of her lesbian body: a body which is not for the sowing since it is conceived of as a body with a sterile womb. Nonetheless, the lack of warmth in this waterscape suggests that Stephen has not as yet found herself a place she can inhabit comfortably as a lesbian. The pale glint of sunshine does not touch the water, and although living in a lesbian household, Stephen does not have a lover and this lack of warmth in the waterscape is a comment on her household.

Stephen Gordon is never fully sexually active with another woman whilst she is living in England. Having been exiled from Morton, and then finding a river location unable to allow the expression of lesbian desire, it is on Teneriffe that she and Mary finally make love. But although Teneriffe is Spanish, the African quality of its landscape is brought to the fore, through constant mentions of the Africanness of the night when they make love, as opposed to the day when they go to the hills. Their first night there, as they walk by the sea:

Had a quality of glory about it, the blue glory peculiar to Africa and seen seldom or never in our more placid climate. A warm breeze stirred the eucalyptus trees and their crude, harsh smell was persistently mingled with the thick scents of heliotrope and datura, with the sweet but melancholy scent of jasmine, with the faint, unmistakable odour of cypress.⁵⁶

In this landscape of 'black, volcanic dust'⁵⁷ where the frogs sing 'prehistoric love songs', Mary's skin loses its paleness and becomes brown.⁵⁸ Indeed, when Stephen examines her own hated inverted body in the mirror, it is the fact of its whiteness that marks its problematic. She wants to maim it because it is 'so white': its white racial identity seems to disallow the expression of inverted desire.⁵⁹ However, on Teneriffe Stephen and Mary seem to have slipped back in history to the more primitive, sensual crudeness that Africanness has figured in European thought. The colour of their bodies approaches that of the African, and the figure of Africa allows the expression of their sexuality.

Anne McClintock suggests that in European culture 'sexuality itself had long been called "the African sin"' and that colonies had become a 'porno-tropic' of European fantasy.⁶⁰ Using various historical examples of the association between Africa and sexuality, McClintock argues that, '[b]y the nineteenth century, popular lore had firmly established Africa as the quintessential zone of sexual aberration and anomaly'.⁶¹ Contemporary with Radclyffe Hall's life, theories about homosexuality were fraught with ambiguity. Rudi C. Bleys identifies how homosexuality could be represented:

As both a degenerative syndrome *away from* an original, heterosexual drive, and a regression *into* an original "polymorph" sexuality. A Darwinian perspective would permit documenting how modern homosexuality could be retraced to its "primitive" antecedents. Degeneration theory on the other hand, was conducive to a nullification of "genuine" homosexuality in primitive contexts, for this was connected exclusively to modern civilization as a symptom of decadence.⁶²

Playing with the idea of a primitive Africa which allows Mary and Stephen not to be 'divided', a dual impulse appears in the text. If Stephen no longer has a divided self by aligning her sexuality with Africa and making herself one with her sexuality, then this is an uncomfortable position for her.⁶³ On the one hand, the Africanness of the landscape allows Stephen and Mary sexual love in a way that the English landscape does not, but on the other, the text is troubled by the new 'Africanness' that this attributes to Stephen, and clings to a white racial privilege in order to ensure that the modern invert should not be mixed up racially with the African.

There are several ways the text reinscribes these racialised distinctions. Whilst the couple unite in the African night, by day they ride up to the mountains. According to Richard Dyer, as we have seen in chapter two, mountains hold particular significance in the Western imagination for whiteness. White genealogy, in both the Aryan and Caucasian myths, posits an origin in mountains which determines white racial formation. Drawing on the arguments of Martin Bernal, Dyer argues that:

Such places had a number of virtues: the clarity and cleanliness of the air, the vigour demanded by the cold, the enterprise required by the harshness of the terrain and climate, the sublime, soul-elevating beauty of mountain vistas, even the greater nearness to God above and the presence of the whitest thing on earth, snow. All these virtues could be seen to have formed the white character, its energy, enterprise, discipline and spiritual elevation, and even the white body, its hardness and tautness (born of the battle with the elements, and often unfavourably compared to the slack bodies of non-whites), its uprightness (aspiring to the heights), its affinity with (snowy) whiteness.⁶⁴

It is possible to read the geographical movements that Stephen and Mary undertake on Teneriffe, while they ascend the mountains by day and descend by night, as both a movement to and from whiteness, as much as a descent into a 'primitive' sexuality and an ascent into spiritual life. Snow-covered Tiede, the mountain they climb, is described as 'clothed in her crystalline whiteness.'⁶⁵ Down by the sea is a sensual, prehistoric African landscape full of crude smells. In the mountains, however, a sovereign gaze over the landscape allows them to share in the scopic regime of white heterosexuality, unencumbered by any crude primitivism. In this way, they journey up and down through history and evolution. If their inversion is to be brought back to Europe, it has to appear without any taint of Africanness or primitivism. When two 'negroes' studying at the Conservatoire come to sing at a Parisian party, the narrative voice, although suggesting they share a similar queerness with the invert, simultaneously marks their difference by describing Lincoln as having 'eyes [which] had the patient, questioning expression common to the eyes of most animals and to those of all slowly evolving races.'⁶⁶ His brother, Henry, is described as '[a] crude animal ... just a primitive force rendered dangerous by drink, rendered offensive by civilization.'⁶⁷ This similar queerness cannot unite the groups of 'negroes' and

inverts: their racial differences constitute a clear demarcation line between them, which functions to divide them and to rescue only *one* kind of queerness for Englishness.

Krafft-Ebing's theories, which Stephen and her father had both read in the locked study, suggests an historical evolutionary movement toward monogamous heterosexuality, and it is this problematic which appears when Stephen and Mary return to their Parisian home from Teneriffe. Are invert primitive or civilized? Are they a part of evolutionary history? As soon as the two women make love, the question of creation and sterility arises:

A strange, though to them a very natural thing it seemed, this new and ardent fulfilment; having something fine and urgent about it that lay almost beyond the range of their wills. Something primitive and age-old as Nature herself, did their love appear to Mary and Stephen. For now they were in the grip of Creation, of Creation's terrific urge to create; the urge that will sometimes sweep forward blindly alike into fruitful and sterile channels. That wellnigh intolerable life force would grip them, making them a part of its own existence; so that they who might never create a new life, were yet one at such moments with the fountain of living... .⁶⁸

At this point, the question of reproduction enters the equation of relating nation to lesbianism. Stephen has found a woman with whom she can have a sexual relationship, but given the textual concern with sterility and fruitfulness, how can this relationship manifest itself in national culture and reproduction? Valerie Seymour remarks to Stephen that she 'had heard that in England many such women had taken to breeding dogs in the country' and that '[d]ogs were very nice people to breed.'⁶⁹ From the beginning of Stephen's life of inversion, dogs play an important part. When Stephen thinks of the life she might have with the housemaid, Collins, it is imagined 'even to the red china dogs that stood one at each end of the high mantelpiece.'⁷⁰ It is watching the way Stephen plays with dogs in the garden that prompts her father, Sir Stephen, to hide himself in his study to read Ulrichs. His first understandings of her inversion are linked to her relationship with dogs. Later, it is through a dog-fight that Stephen meets Angela Crossby, her first adult love. Stephen herself is often likened to a dog and Ralph, Angela's jealous husband, makes their dog, Tony, stand in for Stephen. He shouts at Angela:

'But now you're forever racing off with that girl. It's all this damned animal's fault that you met her!' He would kick out sideways at the terrified Tony, who had lately been made to stand proxy for Stephen.⁷¹

However, it is the dog, David, who signifies the most strongly. Mary finds him in Paris and brings him home to live with her and Stephen, and 'so it suddenly came to pass that they who had lately been two, were now three. There were Stephen and Mary - there was also David.'⁷² It becomes clear, though, that this nuclear family will not last, primarily because it is not heterosexual, and secondly because Mary is represented as a fundamentally normal woman who needs a child. Stephen cannot provide heirs for her country estate, Morton, since David the dog does not share their blood or soil. It is at the wedding of their Parisian servants that this becomes clear:⁷³

Adele and Jean, the simplicity of it ... they loved, they married, and after a while they would care for each other all over again, renewing their youth and their love in their children. So orderly, placid and safe it seemed, this social scheme evolved from creation; this guarding of two young and ardent lives for the sake of the lives that might follow after. A fruitful and peaceful road it must be. The same road had been taken by those founders of Morton who had raised up children from father to son, from father to son until the advent of Stephen; and their blood was her blood - what they had found good in their day seemed equally good to their descendant. Surely never was outlaw more law-abiding at heart than this, the last of the Gordons.⁷⁴

This profoundly conservative passage pays homage to notions of blood and soil, and the patriarchal lineage of Englishness of which Stephen cannot be part. Mary and Stephen are outside this social scheme evolved from the creation story: Mary because she has chosen to love an invert, and Stephen because she believes the womb of the invert sterile. For her, the feminine lover of the invert is capable of being heterosexual and having children, and so Mary's womb is a problem between them.

Although Mary herself never speaks of her desire for a child, people around her make reference to the fact that under heterosexual circumstances she would have one to occupy her time. Mary, 'so fruitful of passion yet so bitterly sterile', is tricked into believing that Stephen is having an affair with Valerie Seymour so that she can be persuaded into a heterosexual relationship with Martin Hallam, an old friend of Stephen's.⁷⁵ This is represented as an act of nobility on the part of Stephen: to give up Mary because she cannot give her children or a respectable life. However, what it will

also do is allow Stephen to return to Morton/ England. While she is with Mary, Lady Gordon will not accept them there together, but Morton/ England is as much a part of Stephen's identity as is her inversion. In this way, there is a recompense for Stephen in giving up Mary. If Stephen had not desired both national white identity and her privileged class identity so much, her inversion would be more possible. These other desires indicate that sexuality is not a totalising mechanism in her identity. Clearly, her sexuality is not ultimately privileged in her identity, but inflected by its racial, class and national positioning. Therefore, the text does not attempt to destroy heterosexual relations of Englishness. Instead, it conservatively upholds the idea of nation, and with it the womb.

If dogs are people, as Valerie Seymour suggests, then many such women have reconciled themselves to national life by breeding dogs in the country, displacing national reproduction from human wombs onto those of dogs. This will not do for Stephen Gordon, who ultimately upholds patriarchal authority. She is a law-abiding outlaw, who wants to be accommodated within patriarchal law rather than to demolish it. Her desire for English identity conflicts tragically with her lesbian sexuality, and the text is unable to write the lesbian into England. Stephen's lesbianism is sacrificed on the altar of her Englishness.

In addition to previously discussed textual exclusions and negations of the lesbian, however, there are texts which work to make the lesbian more central in national imaginings. Virginia Woolf's novel, *Between the Acts*, for example, is characterised by a lesbian address to its readership through which a new understanding of the nation is formulated. Published in 1941, Woolf's retrospective look at England between the two 'acts' of war is set in a village where the yearly ritual of the pageant of English history is being performed outdoors. These ritual performances of Englishness through a pageant were common in the interwar years. This particular pageant has been written, directed and produced by Miss La Trobe, and the fact of her 'hand deep stuck in her jacket pocket', the 'cigarette in her mouth',⁷⁶ and her 'abrupt manner and stocky figure; her thick ankles and sturdy

shoes', ⁷⁷ all combine to signify her lesbianism, along with the mention of 'the actress who had shared her bed and her purse'. ⁷⁸ Appearing in the village with little personal history attached to her, Miss La Trobe:

Was always agog to get things up. But where did she spring from? With that name she wasn't presumably pure English. From the Channel Islands perhaps? Only her eyes and something about her always made Mrs Bingham suspect that she had Russian blood in her. 'Those deep-set eyes; that very square jaw' reminded her - not that she had been to Russia - of the Tartars ... Very little was actually known about her. ⁷⁹

Despite the ambiguity of her national status, it is nonetheless she who directs the revelation and performance of English history. The pageant starts with a young girl declaring '*England am I*', and covers various scenes from English history and literature, such as Chaucer's pilgrims going to Canterbury. ⁸⁰ Again, the nation is figured through literature. However, the pageant ends not with literature, but with an attempt to break down the distinction between text and reader, cast and audience, past and present through the use of mirrors. The entire cast hold up mirrors and reflective surfaces to the audience so that they should see themselves as England in the present. The effect is to shatter any coherent vision of present time, to 'shiver into splinters the old vision'. ⁸¹ If the purpose is to re-make England, this is not achieved. All that is caught in this plethora of reflection of the present is '[s]craps, orts and fragments'. ⁸² 'Here a nose ... There a skirt ... Then trousers only ... Now perhaps a face.' ⁸³ Prior to directing the cast to hold up mirrors, Miss La Trobe has written a period of ten minutes into the play where nothing happens, intending the audience to experience the present moment as it is. However, unable to understand the meaning of the silence, they are not able to do this as Miss La Trobe had intended. The present becomes a worryingly meaningless time that the audience attempts to evade. The lesbian who has appeared from nowhere in the village has directed a coherent understanding of the national past for her audience, but has insisted that the old vision is splintered into fragments in the present. What to make of this lesbian direction and performance of national identity? Her arrival in the village seems to be a metaphor for the arrival of a new subjectivity within England that will destroy the prevailing and comfortable account of an older unified vision and yet still allow continuity within Englishness, a

subjectivity that is alien or 'foreign' to older ideas of heterosexual England. The continuity of England lies in the silence and difficulty of the pageant's contemporary moment. These moments are as much a part of the performance of England as the more obviously historical parts, since under Miss La Trobe's direction this ten-minute silence is integral to the pageant of England.

This problem of determining meaning is one the text plays with. The audience cannot always read the meaning of the pageant, but they share a common theory that meaning resides not in the pageant, but in Miss La Trobe herself. They ask themselves and each other whether they get her meaning, not what the pageant means.⁸⁴ She is thus the origin and author of the meaning of this representation of English history, and this places a lesbian as central to the revelation of both historical England and its newer form. One member of the audience discusses the local rector's, Mr Streatfield's, summary of the play, saying:

He said she meant we all act. Yes, but whose play? Ah, that's the question! And if we're left asking questions, isn't it a failure as a play? I must say I like to feel sure if I go to the theatre, that I've grasped the meaning ... Or was that, perhaps, what she meant?⁸⁵

But just as Miss La Trobe's intentions can elude her audience, so too does she evade them physically. Continually in hiding behind trees and bushes, she is the only person not to be revealed. The cast are revealed to the audience; the audience is revealed to itself through mirrors; but when Rev. Streatfield comes to speak after the play has ended, 'La Trobe was invisible.'⁸⁶ Wanting:

'To propose a vote of thanks to the gifted lady ...' He looked round for an object corresponding to this description. None such was visible. '...who wishes it seems to remain anonymous' he paused. 'And so ...' He paused again.

It was an awkward moment. How to make an end? Whom to thank? Every sound in nature was painfully audible; the swish of the trees; the gulp of a cow; even the skim of the swallows over the grass could be heard. But no one spoke. Whom could they make responsible? Whom could they thank for their entertainment? Was there no-one?⁸⁷

The question of whether anyone is behind the pageant to thank, or not, is especially pertinent. When the audience ask themselves what Miss La Trobe means, there is an ambiguity present in the question. They are asking both what she means as author of the pageant and what she means as a barely visible person who is not quite revealed to

them. It is only in the ten-minute silence that she is just glimpsed by Mrs Mayhew, who whispers: '[t]here she is, behind the tree'.⁸⁸ What might be signified by this absence and silence? Terry Castle argues that:

In contrast with male homosexuality ... lesbianism has seldom been prohibited or proscribed in so many words. Yet this seeming obliviousness should not deceive us. Behind such silence, one can often detect an anxiety too severe to allow for direct articulation.⁸⁹

The discomfort the audience experiences at this moment might also be the discomfort of a silence which could reveal the lesbian in their midst. They could thus be seen to be asking what is it that Miss La Trobe signifies as a subjectivity not understood from their heterosexual standpoint. Ironically, Miss La Trobe herself is troubled by what the pageant has meant:

At last, Miss La Trobe could raise herself from her stooping position. It had been prolonged to avoid attention. The bells had stopped; the audience had gone; also the actors. She could straighten her back. She could open her arms. She could say to the world, You have taken my gift! Glory possessed her - for one moment. But what had she given?⁹⁰

She cannot answer her audience's question about what the pageant had meant.

Neither, it seems, can she answer their question about what she herself signifies. The audience cannot understand her, and the only place in which she is more fully revealed is to the reader by a narrative strategy that withholds some knowledge from the other characters, but imparts it to the reader. While the textual characters search for Miss La Trobe, the reader knows where she is. Again, just as Goosey in *The Island* is more fully shown to the reader than to the other characters, this suggests that somewhere within the process of reading the lesbian may be disclosed. After all, while Goosey is only seen as a shadow/monster by the married couple who view her at the end of the narrative, to the reader she is a complete person whose life-story can be understood through her love for Almond.

How, then, might the lesbian, or lesbianism, come into existence through reading? Arnold Bennett's description of literature discussed in Chapter Four, although appearing to propose the fundamental heterosexuality of literature, reveals anxieties about this formulation. His writing style is simultaneously authoritative about literature whilst undercutting both his own argument and his authority to speak

and define it. Both avowing and disavowing, he says: 'I will tell you what literature is! No - I only wish I could. But I can't. No one can. Gleams can be thrown on the secret, inklings given, but no more.'⁹¹ If what constitutes literature is a 'secret', it is interesting that he goes on to discuss how the secret of literature might be revealed through the metaphor of men walking together with a secret hidden between them. There is some quality in literature which men keep as a secret between themselves, and for ease of reference, Bennett's passage is repeated here:

That evening when you went for a walk with a faithful friend, the friend from whom you hid nothing - or almost nothing....! You were, in truth, somewhat inclined to hide from him the particular matter which monopolised your mind that evening, but somehow you contrived to get on to it, drawn by an overpowering fascination. And as your faithful friend was sympathetic and discreet, and flattered you by a respectful curiosity, you proceeded further and further into the said matter, growing more and more confidential, until at last you cried out in a terrific whisper: 'My boy, she is simply miraculous !' At that moment you were in the domain of literature.⁹²

What might this secret about literature be? What is hidden in Bennett's metaphoric description of it? Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has proposed that English literature reveals male homosocial desire, and that this would be on the edge of slipping into the dangerous space of homosexual desire if it were not for a homophobia which prevents this and ensures heterosexuality. Drawing on the work of Gayle Rubin, she argues that 'it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men' which provides a primary plot device for English literature.⁹³ However, in Bennett's passage, 'she' is both a plot device in his narrative that cements the bonds between men *and* the gender of literature. What is revealed is more the desire between men, written of in a language of fascination, sympathy and flattery, where their emotions are attuned to one another. The woman is virtually non-existent. She is not desiring, or in any way active in the narrative. 'She' functions as that which prevents male homosociality becoming homosexuality, the third term in the erotic triangle of man/man/woman. Like the thin layer of feminine earth in Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* which keeps a boundary between the narrator and the Major, this 'she', this literature, keeps the boundary of heterosexuality in place between the two male friends. Bennett's passage

reveals the hidden secrets of the extent of desire between men, and the femininity of literature rather than its virility. If the repressed terms on which the nation is founded might allow the expression of the lesbian subject, so, too, might the nationally repressed knowledge that literature is feminine play a part in the expression of lesbianism. We have seen a great national insistence on the virility of national literature, but what if this literature was, in fact, feminine? What then happens to destabilise the grammar of the nation?

When Terry Lovell argued that 'literary production is gender ambiguous', and suggested 'that there is no strong association among the population at large, of creative writing with "manliness" - quite the opposite in fact', she made explicit one of the anxieties present in the 1921 Newbolt Report.⁹⁴ This Report had noted that one of the difficulties which faced the project of bringing about a national unity through English literature and language was that the really virile men of the working classes despised literature because of its association with the domestic and feminine.⁹⁵ By avoiding this discussion about the gender of literature, the report was able to maintain that literature was, in fact, virile, even though writing had traditionally taken place within the feminine domestic space rather than the public space more traditionally associated with the masculine. As Terry Lovell says, '[n]ovel writing is a form of domestic production. Here, home and workplace have never been separated.'⁹⁶ A corollary of this is that '[f]ictional worlds have been largely restricted to the sphere which is conventionally and ideologically assigned to women, or for which women are assumed to have a special responsibility - that of personal relations.'⁹⁷ This could help to explain the interwar rhetorical focus on literature as arising from the national earth/landscape since this is the arena associated with the masculine.

Through reference to the work of H. V. Morton, I argued in Chapter Two that the 'outdoors' was taken to equate with masculinity, and 'indoors' with the domesticity of femininity. Morton's focus on the origins of literature in landscape

wrests it away from its feminine associations with the domestic space of its production. This is an important rhetorical move for the project of making the nation virile. Since literature was a prime force in this project, the nation could not have been made more virile through a feminine literature. Femininity could not produce virility for the nation, since the femininisation of national culture was seen to be the problem that needed to be solved: literature needed to be seen to be virile in order to bring its virility into the national project. Similarly, it had to be seen as national. Therefore, its derivation from the earth of England provided literature with both English nationality and virility.

However, the Newbolt Report, sliding over the questionable status of literature as masculine, carried on to argue that reading was an essentially passive process in which the reader is a tablet written on by the writer, and that reading can even ensure or support heterosexual married 'character'. The report argued that:

All reading is experience - an indirect form of experience, but a particularly powerful one, and for many minds the most varied and fruitful in the whole of life. The ordinary human destiny consists of playing, fighting, marrying, managing a household, bringing up children, pursuing a lifelong vocation. All these are experience, but of a kind tending more towards habit than reflection. Book reading cannot replace these acts, but it can add almost infinitely to their effect upon character.⁹⁸

So reading can make the reader experience the 'ordinary human destiny' of masculine heterosexuality and then act it better. This 'ordinary human destiny' is marked as masculine in that girls and 'fighting' are antithetical, and women did not generally pursue 'a lifelong vocation'. Implicit in the Report was an argument that writing should only cover normative masculine human experience, otherwise 'character' could not be added to the reader. This masculine heterosexuality exists in contradiction to Newbolt's concept of human mind as tablet:

Any written words, whether in books or periodicals, which are the result of a formative process in the mind of the writer, must make in their own degree a formative impression upon the mind of the reader. If the reader's mind is the stronger the impression will be slight, or very possibly negligible, but if the tablet to be impressed is soft and still undinted the mark made will be proportionately deeper and more lasting.⁹⁹

This view of reading as passive suggests that a certain feminisation of the reader occurs, since it is unlikely the reader is stronger than the writer, given that the purpose

of reading is to 'have intercourse with those whose view of life is deepest and most virile.'¹⁰⁰ It is in this bond, or relationship, between the femininity of literature and the feminised reader that I would like to suggest lies a version of lesbianism at the heart of the renewal of the nation. Lesbianism can be found in this model of reading where a feminised reader relates to a feminine literature. But what features might characterise this relationship between reader and literature?

Lynne Pearce has argued for an understanding of 'the reader as lover',¹⁰¹ in which ' "the will-to-relationship" is the fuel of text-reader interaction'.¹⁰² Arguing that to draw on 'the discourse of romance' as 'better suited to the model of text-reader relations ... than a *narrowly* psychoanalytic articulation of reading-as-desire', Pearce demonstrates a way of understanding the emotions in play while reading.¹⁰³ However, if one looks at theories of reading from the interwar period, a different picture emerges. Here, emotions are virtually forbidden and reading presented as a skill only acquired through arduously demanding, and probably boring, hard work. Might the possibility of an emotional lesbian relationship developing between feminine literature and feminised reader present a threat to national heterosexual subjectivity such that these theorists protest too much about the lack of pleasure in reading? Is this why they instruct the would-be-reader of the difficult processes involved?

Founded in 1889, the National Home-Reading Union aimed 'to assist and guide the reader toward the best use of his or her faculties and the best methods of reading the best books on any subject.'¹⁰⁴ In 1910, the Union argued that:

The faculty of reading is not the same thing as the love of books. It may be paradoxical to say so, but the love of books may interfere with reading itself.¹⁰⁵

Reading was meant to lead to sanity rather than the intoxication of desire. Therefore, reading in war-time, the Union later implied, could be seen as a serious part of the war effort:

Our thoughts, our hopes are with those who are in danger for their country. But in order that we may help them to the best of our strength and wisdom, we must keep our minds fresh and sane. And this rest from useless worry we may find in reading something which is remote from the association of the war.¹⁰⁶

The view that reading could produce sanity was still apparent in the 1925 first issue of the journal, *The Reader*, where the editorial stated that 'the more good books are read, the greater will be the common store of sanity and understanding.'¹⁰⁷

In his reading instruction manual for girls - a nationally problematic group as we have already seen in Chapter One - Coulson Kernahan warns that, '[i]n poetry most of us have a first love and it is not always our destined mate with whom we first think ourselves in love.'¹⁰⁸ In case the girl thinks there is a relationship between loving and reading, Kernahan problematises this possibility by pointing to the example of Robert Louis Stevenson and his good reading practice which the girl should emulate:

He set himself tasks, and toiled at them, as if reading up for an examination, taking notes, annotating, comparing passages, and sparing himself nothing to master his subject.¹⁰⁹

Clearly, Stevenson was not one of the 'slovenly' readers Kernahan cautions against, who pleurably and delightfully 'skip, scamper through, or dip into a novel'.¹¹⁰ If the girl is to derive any pleasure from this reading process, it should be manifest within the family in the interests of family unity.¹¹¹ By reading aloud to her family and educating them in the process, 'she draws the home circle closer by shared pleasures, and so cements family life.'¹¹² If reading naturally drew a girl into the heterosexual family, one might suppose there was no need to argue for it, or to present a reading method devoid of pleasure as the privileged method of reading. This betrays some anxieties about what reading may do to the girl: might it give her a pleasure which leads away from familial heterosexuality and lesbianises her through a bonding with feminine literature?

The year after Coulson Kernahan published *The Reading Girl*, Mrs Coulson Kernahan published *The Secret of Home Happiness*, in which she devotes a chapter to 'Reading in the Home'. She, too, argues that home reading of the right books, rather than 'pernicious literature',¹¹³ can bring the family together and prevent girls from becoming silly, since girls 'are frequently led astray by reading sickly love stories - stories which stimulate a taste for romance at any cost.'¹¹⁴ Of course, reading

aloud in the family is an effective way of disallowing the girl her private thoughts about the text, or indeed any privacy. However, in her novel of 1919, *Christopher and Columbus*, Elizabeth von Arnim charts the failure of girls reading aloud to bring family unity. Orphaned twins whose mother was English and father German come to live in war-time England with their maternal aunt and her husband, Uncle Arthur, who does not like foreigners, especially in his own home. The girls attempt to secure their position in the household. One of the twins, Anna Rose:

Who was nothing if not intrepid, at first tried to soften his heart by offering to read aloud to him in the evenings when he came home weary from his daily avocations, which were golf. Her own suggestion instantly projected a touching picture on her impressionable imagination of youth, grateful for a roof over its head, in return alleviating the tedium of crabbed age by introducing its uncle, who from his remarks was evidently unacquainted with them, to the best productions of the great masters of English literature.

But Uncle Arthur merely stared at her with lack-lustre eyes when she proposed it, from his wide-legged position on the hearthrug, where he was moving money about in trouser-pockets of best material. And later on she discovered that he had always supposed the *Faery Queen*, and *Adonais*, and *In Memoriam*, names he had heard at intervals during his life, for he was fifty and such things do sometimes get mentioned, were well-known racehorses.¹¹⁵

This passage suggests that reading aloud within the family is itself part of an unobtainable romance of familial unity. Part of the problem with obtaining this unity is the mixed nationality of the girls.¹¹⁶ Their German patrilineage precludes their uncle, who sees himself as 'the most immensely British of anybody', from accepting this offer, whilst his own version of being British - and more pertinently, English - repudiates an intellectual life in favour of a sporting one.¹¹⁷ Von Arnim's view of girls' reading problematises those views advanced by the National Home Reading Union and the Coulson Kernahans, by suggesting that familial reading only strengthens bonds which pre-exist. Like Morton's suggestion that the English landscape can only be properly seen by those who are already constituted as English, this national home-reading can only work when national gender relations are already in place. If not in place, they could bring the reading girl into a pleasurable lesbian relationship in which she bonds with feminine literature. This also suggests that heterosexuality is an unstable form which has continually to reproduce itself, and that for the heterosexual there is always a danger of sliding into homosexuality. This,

perhaps, is what the working-class man who reputedly feared for his virility whilst reading literature understood. Although Uncle Arthur's form of sporting middle-class Englishness is as much a block to national unity being achieved through English literature as that of the working-class man who despises literature for its femininity, his 'sportiness' does nonetheless maintain his virility and his national identity, as does his refusal of reading. It seems, then, that behind the theories of the Newbolt Report and those of the National Home-Reading Union is something that Uncle Arthur and the working-class man know: that literature can feminise the reader; that literature itself is feminine; and that to read may be to adopt a lesbian subject position in relation to the text. Similarly, the Coulson Kernahans' texts appear to 'know' this, since they deal with the potential dangers the girl might face in reading by suggesting reading is not pleasurable, and the best way a girl should read is within the family to cement familial heterosexual bonds.

Henry Guppy, in his *The Art of Reading* (1929), considered why books and reading are important to 'civilized' societies. He posited that the purpose of books 'is to satisfy ... cravings for immortality', that books provide a bridge to the past and the future, and that when reading in the present moment, the book has the power 'to annihilate time and space'.¹¹⁸ The way we have seen lesbian subjectivity to be discursively formulated - as that of a ghostly time-traveller who spanned present and past which made her an immortal, and her virtual obliteration in present time - shared the features of books and reading Guppy identified. Similarly, her lack of national location meant that just as reading could annihilate space or place, so too could she. But if the lesbian is like the book and the act of reading, she also shares characteristics with the nation.

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that Bhabha's theories of national narrative could provide a way of understanding the position of the lesbian with regard to the nation. According to him, the nation occupies a liminal space because of its paradoxical formation between modernity and antiquity. The modernity of the nation is not in doubt; but its mythical ancient origins are, and its fictional

antiquity and 'naturalness' have to be maintained through a range of national discursive addresses. As we have seen, within this national address the figures of the lesbian and of lesbianism loom. The Newbolt Report had to repress the idea that literature was gendered feminine in order to make the nation virile, whilst reading theory repressed the idea that romantic pleasures might be obtained from reading. Similarly, the anxiety within the Report as to whether the reader was feminised whilst reading was repressed before a full discussion about the implications of this could take place. However, hidden within this national address is a lesbian relationship between feminine literature and a feminised reader. In order that the pleasures in this relationship should not come into being, instruction manuals on reading suggested the correct way to read was to labour at it. As my analysis of the uses of literature show, it was possible to subvert the heterosexuality that English literature was meant to guarantee to the nation, by using that same national literature to signal lesbianism.

Nonetheless, the way that English landscape was formulated within national literature worked to preclude the lesbian from being written into it. Since, as we have seen, heterosexual masculinity was offered a rural, earth-based locational identity, and heterosexual femininity was offered an urban and domestic one, with male homosexuality being enabled by both sea and water locations, there was little national space left in which the lesbian could be situated. Her location in airiness simultaneously gave her a site for an identity, whilst precluding this, as air was not figured as national in a way that both the rural and the urban were. The lack of a national dimension to air meant that this locational identity could not be national. Therefore, in the process of narrating the nation, the lesbian was produced as an identity without a concrete geographical location.

In both *Between the Acts* and the reading methods suggested by the Newbolt Report, the National Home-Reading Union and the Coulson Kernahans' texts, the figure of the lesbian and lesbianism is hidden in national processes. She appears as what Terry Castle calls a 'ghost effect'.¹¹⁹ She is either erased, or revealed only through conditions which are without materiality or substantiality - such as a

particular reading process, or within 'literature'. However, when one turns to literature to find her, only a ghost is revealed. But if, as I have argued, the paradoxical formulation of the nation is complicit in her construction, then there is an inevitability to her apparitional appearance. If she makes explicit the limits of the nation, and its fictive quality, then national address cannot tolerate this undermining of its authority, and has to repress her in order to salvage itself. The lesbian is a subjectivity which expresses in culture the repressed terms of the nation itself. Since she expresses the repressed terms of the ambiguity within national address she too must be repressed, in order that the nation should not be brought into disrepute. Therefore the simultaneous display and erasure of the lesbian, identified by Castle, happens in and through the process of narrating the nation. In this way, her place within the grammar of the nation is secured through a rhetorical location rather than a geographical one. Her 'magnitude', which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is indeed accorded through being assigned a place, but her ghostliness within culture generally can be understood by this being a discursive rather than a material one.

¹ Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Mr. Fortune's Maggot* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1927), p. 173.

² Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 18.

³ 'Criminal Law Amendment Bill', *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 August 1921, p. 1799, and pp. 1804-1806.

⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, pp. 1804-1806.

⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 1800.

⁶ Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 9.

⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation' in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 298.

⁸ Bhabha, p. 317.

⁹ Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 4.

¹⁰ Castle, p. 2.

¹¹ Mary Gordon, *Chase of the Wild Goose: The Story of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, known as the Ladies of Llangollen* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1937).

¹² Gordon, p. 17.

¹³ Gordon, p. 137.

¹⁴ Gordon, p. 38.

¹⁵ Gordon, p. 206.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Mavor, *The Ladies of Llangollen: A Study in Romantic Friendship* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 210.

¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* [1928] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).

¹⁸ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 316.

¹⁹ Vita Sackville-West, *The Dark Island* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1934), p. 53.

²⁰ *The Dark Island* is a prefigurement of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, and Du Maurier may well owe something to it. In both, the non-heterosexual woman is murdered by drowning; both have a lower middle-class woman marrying into landed gentry; both have this woman carrying a postcard or photographic representation of Manderley/Storn with them throughout most of their lives prior to marriage. Both have houses in which the heroine sits on a window-seat gazing out to sea from her bedroom and a housekeeper who loves the Lady of the house. Both narratives also include a visit to a doctor in London, a scene in a coroner's court where the local landed gentry collude with patriarchal structures of power, and both make clear that the woman is an exile in her own home. Marriage cannot guarantee either of them a feeling of 'homeliness' within their country estates because ultimately men own them.

²¹ Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). See my discussion pp.46-47.

²² Sackville-West, p. 76.

²³ Sackville-West, p. 78.

²⁴ Sackville-West, p. 90.

²⁵ Sackville-West, pp. 66-67. Italics in original.

²⁶ Sackville-West, p. 82.

²⁷ Sackville-West, p. 230.

²⁸ Sackville-West, p. 201. Italics in original.

²⁹ Sackville-West, p. 220. Italics in original.

³⁰ Compton Mackenzie, *Extraordinary Women: Theme and variations* [1927] (London: Macdonald, 1953), p. 22.

³¹ Mackenzie, p. 138. If 'everybody immoral in Sirene', their immorality also includes the loss of grammar, or logical order of language.

³² Mackenzie, p. 88.

³³ Mackenzie, p. 29.

³⁴ Mackenzie, p. 83.

³⁵ Naomi Royde-Smith, *The Island: A Love Story* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1931).

³⁶ Royde-Smith, p. 12.

³⁷ The trope of the 'goose' recurs in lesbian fictions of this period. The title of Mary Gordon's *Chase of the Wild Goose*, could be read as saying if one looks for the lesbian she will not be found. Goosey's name recalls the nursery rhyme Goosey Goosey Gander who, significantly, wanders upstairs into 'my Lady's chamber' and throws out the man found there. Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* uses the figure of a wild goose which flies overhead as Orlando arrives in the present moment. The goose is associated, too, with Halloween, when the ghostly dead can mingle with the living. In *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth* [1946] (London, Faber and Faber, 1961), Robert Graves identifies the goose month as Oct 29 - Nov 25. At this time, the tame goose was brought in from pasture to be fattened up for the midwinter feast while the wild goose mourned the loss of their companionship.

³⁸ Royde-Smith, pp. 34-35.

³⁹ Royde-Smith, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Royde-Smith, p. 86.

⁴¹ Royde-Smith, p. 285.

⁴² Royde-Smith, p. 287.

⁴³ Gordon, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁴ Pam Johnson, ' "The Best Friend Whom Life has Given Me". Does Winifred Holtby have a place in lesbian history?' in Lesbian History Group, *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985* (London: The Women's Press, 1993), p. 145.

⁴⁵ Mary Renault, *Purposes of Love* [1939] (London: Longmans, 1968).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Naomi Royde-Smith, *The Tortoiseshell Cat* (London: Constable, 1925), p. 39.

⁴⁷ Renault, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Renault, p. 23.

⁴⁹ 'Schoolgirl's Suicide: Teacher's Evidence', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 September 1932, p. 3.

⁵⁰ 'Schoolgirl's Suicide: Teacher's Evidence', p. 3.

⁵¹ In a personal communication I had with Alison Oram, she noted that 'the special ones' was a phrase used in Germany at the time by a major gay male organisation and its journal, *Der Eigene*. One can only speculate as to whether Miss Lee was aware of this.

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- ⁵² Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 4.
- ⁵³ Shields, p. 6.
- ⁵⁴ Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* [1928] (London: Virago, 1997), p. 102.
- ⁵⁵ Hall, p. 209.
- ⁵⁶ Hall, p. 311.
- ⁵⁷ Hall, p. 313.
- ⁵⁸ Hall, p. 311.
- ⁵⁹ Hall, p. 188.
- ⁶⁰ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 113.
- ⁶¹ McClintock, p. 22.
- ⁶² Rudi C. Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion: Male-to-Male Sexual Behaviour outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination 1750-1918* (London: Cassell, 1996), p. 189.
- ⁶³ The lesbian lovemaking between Stephen and Mary is implied by the now famous words 'and that night they were not divided'. See Hall, p. 316.
- ⁶⁴ Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 21.
- ⁶⁵ Hall, p. 313.
- ⁶⁶ Hall, p. 366.
- ⁶⁷ Hall, p. 367.
- ⁶⁸ Hall, p. 317.
- ⁶⁹ Hall, p. 413.
- ⁷⁰ Hall, p. 21.
- ⁷¹ Hall, p. 151.
- ⁷² Hall, p. 336.
- ⁷³ One could speculate that by naming the country estate of Stephen's family 'Morton', Hall is providing a critique, tinged with admiration, of H. V. Morton's England.
- ⁷⁴ Hall, p. 400.
- ⁷⁵ Hall, p. 431.
- ⁷⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* [1941] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 45.
- ⁷⁷ Woolf, p. 48.
- ⁷⁸ Woolf, p. 146. Some critics argue that Miss La Trobe is modelled on the lesbian theatre director Edith Craig, illegitimate daughter of Ellen Terry. See Katharine Cockin, *Edith Craig (1869-1947): Dramatic Lives* (London: Cassell, 1998), pp 9-11.
- ⁷⁹ Woolf, p. 45.
- ⁸⁰ Woolf, p. 58. Italics in original.
- ⁸¹ Woolf, p. 128.
- ⁸² Woolf, p. 132.
- ⁸³ Woolf, p. 128.
- ⁸⁴ Woolf, p. 67, p. 87 and p. 122.
- ⁸⁵ Woolf, p. 139.
- ⁸⁶ Woolf, p. 133.
- ⁸⁷ Woolf, p. 135.
- ⁸⁸ Woolf, p. 125.
- ⁸⁹ Castle, p. 6.
- ⁹⁰ Woolf, p. 145.
- ⁹¹ Arnold Bennett, *Literary Taste: How to form it, with detailed instructions for collecting a complete library of English Literature* [1909] (London: Pelican Special, 1938), pp. 16-17.
- ⁹² Bennett, pp. 16-17.
- ⁹³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 25.
- ⁹⁴ Terry Lovell, 'Writing Like A Woman: A Question Of Politics', in *The Politics of Theory: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1982*, ed. by Francis Barker and others (Colchester: University of Essex, 1983), p. 17.
- ⁹⁵ *The Teaching of English in England* (London: HMSO, 1921), pp. 252-253.
- ⁹⁶ Lovell, p. 17.
- ⁹⁷ Lovell, p. 17.

⁹⁸ *Teaching of English in England*, p. 336.

⁹⁹ *Teaching of English in England*, pp. 337-8.

¹⁰⁰ *Teaching of English in England*, p. 338.

¹⁰¹ Lynne Pearce, *Feminism and the Politics of Reading* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 6.

¹⁰² Pearce, p. 20.

¹⁰³ Pearce, p. 21. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁴ George Radford, *The Faculty of Reading; The Coming of Age of the National Home Reading Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Radford, p. 77.

¹⁰⁶ M. E. Sadler, *Reading in War Time* (London: National Home-Reading Union, 1914), p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ 'Editorial', *The Reader*, 1, (October 1925), p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Coulson Kernahan, *The Reading Girl: Saunters in Bookland & Chats on the Choice of Books & Methods of Reading* (London: George G. Harrap, 1925), p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ Kernahan, p. 106.

¹¹⁰ Kernahan, p. 64.

¹¹¹ Penny Tinkler argues in *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing Up in England 1920-1950* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995) that popular magazines for girls also promoted domesticated heterosexuality, and that if girls were naturally disposed toward this then why did they need persuading to adopt such subjectivity. The unspoken answer to her question is that familial heterosexuality is not natural.

¹¹² Kernahan, p. 133.

¹¹³ Mrs. Coulson Kernahan, *The Secret of Home Happiness* (London: The Epworth Press/ J. Alfred Sharp, 1926), p. 64.

¹¹⁴ Mrs. Coulson Kernahan, p. 65.

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth von Arnim, *Christopher and Columbus* [1919] (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 15-16.

¹¹⁶ In this way, von Arnim prefigures Paul Gilroy's criticism of the centrality that Benedict Anderson gives to reading as conferring national identity. In *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), pp 44-45, Gilroy argues that there are limits to the powers of literature in according the reader national citizenship. One cannot, for example, read one's way into becoming English. Other legal processes are also involved.

¹¹⁷ von Arnim, p. 16.

¹¹⁸ Henry Guppy, *The Art of Reading* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1929), pp. 4-6.

¹¹⁹ Castle, p. 2.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has concerned itself with three main research questions. Firstly, to what extent did the dominant discourse of the rural in the interwar period define Englishness as masculine and Nature as feminine? Secondly, if women were excluded from this discursive heterosexual relationship, can it be seen paradoxically to have opened up a space for alternative sexualities to emerge; and if lesbianism was an instance of the latter then what writing strategies were adopted in order to articulate a relationship between Englishness and lesbianism? Thirdly, what can censored texts of the period reveal about the relations between such an English masculine national subject, the meaning and powers attributed to literature, and forbidden sexualities and subjectivities? These questions were posed in order to test the hypothesis that interwar hegemonic discourses of Englishness located it as originating in the heterosexual bond between a masculine national subject and a feminine nature/landscape. Discursively, this left little space for women to insert themselves into such a cultural formation of Englishness. However, a paradox of this heterosexualising cultural matrix may have been to give a voice to lesbian subjectivity; that is, if women might not be English, could lesbians be? Thus, the relationship between differently inflected constructions of 'books', 'the bucolic' and 'bodies' constitutes the focus of the study.

The first chapter dealt mainly with the first of these elements, and with the third research question, and comprised an examination of banned and restricted books. The Newbolt Report, as an indicator of the national importance placed on the post-Great War renewal of the nation through English literature, argued that through the study of a literature which was native to the soil, readers would profit from intercourse with authors who held a virile view of life. In this way, two key terms were articulated as fundamental to national renewal - that of 'soil' or 'earth' and that of 'virility'. Although the Report argued against the need for literary censorship, censorship, nonetheless, did take place. In the process of banning, or restricting the readership of, certain books, Englishness was being constructed through a rejection of

texts which were deemed unacceptable for the national canon. Literature was called upon as a force to preserve and maintain the healthy, 'virile' character of the nation. An analysis of these banned texts and the rhetoric surrounding them showed that the virility of the nation was to be achieved and maintained through valorising the English countryside and abjecting maternal origins. Literature of the healthy open air was to provide a counterpoint to an unhealthy and un-English obsession with sex that had been caused by the breakdown of order that the Great War had unleashed. The texts which were subject to censorship threatened to reveal the limits of the terms on which the virility of the nation depended. In these, the status of the open air and the rural were challenged by their suggestion that the open air, far from guaranteeing heterosexual respectability, could make one adulterously immoral or lesbian, while the rural myth was challenged by an argument that its force did not have enough strength to make life meaningful. The respectability of the English middle-class family, too, was challenged by being viewed from the perspective of the prostitute. From her standpoint, middle-class men's healthy virility was undermined by revealing the secrets of their hidden sex-lives. Also, the cultured and literate prostitute signified a refusal of proper class, race and sexual distinctions, because of her mixing with people who miscegenated and with homosexuals. An immersion in English literary culture was not sufficient to prevent her from becoming disreputable, so the powers of literature in maintaining Englishness were also undermined in this way. In the process of book censorship, a category of subject was unexpectedly identified as posing a danger to the nation - the category of schoolgirl/daughter. Whilst she was seen as in need of protection from indecent literature, she was also seen to be one of the people writing this same literature. As she wrote, she revealed herself as beyond the nationally acceptable stereotype. Girls were not as innocent as their fathers would have liked them to be, and the extent of their sexual knowledge threatened the patriarchal relationship between them. They revealed both the absurdity of heterosexuality and the possibility of love between women. Since the virility of the nation was partly to be derived from ensuring women's heterosexuality, in order that

they should reproduce racially white bodies for England while also reproducing the cultural values of Englishness, girls' views on heterosexuality and lesbianism posed a threat to the grammar of the nation. Books, then, were constituted both as a promise and a threat: they promised the textual valorisation of a particular model of Englishness, but also threatened to undermine this version.

Chapter Two turned to 'the bucolic', through an example of the clean and healthy, fresh-air literature of England, in order to explore the first research question, concerning the extent to which the dominant discourse of the rural defined Englishness as masculine and nature as feminine. The works of H. V. Morton were examined to provide an analysis of how the grammar of the nation was formulated in a nationally valorised set of texts. Morton's pilgrimages to England and Englishness posited the nation and white, heterosexual, middle-class masculinity as coterminous. Since the city family was seen as racially anaemic, and London as contaminated by the presence of non-white peoples and Jews, a return to the English countryside was proposed as a way of ensuring England's continuation as a virile and progressive nation. Morton's rural earth was feminised as pregnant and maternal, and Englishmen were seen to be at their most heroic when relating to this earth. Indeed, in metaphorically heterosexual acts, Morton's journeys to find England culminate in his bodily penetrative relationship with this same feminine earth. Since earth can be figured as both tomb and womb, in Morton's grammar of the nation earth is wrenched from its associations with death, and death's attendant meaninglessness, and associated with a meaning-creating womb. From this womb was produced the literature and history of England, which in turn created the nation as a meaningful entity. Since English literature and English history originated in earth and were masculine, the meanings the nation made were derived from masculinity. Although feminine earth was national, women, however, were not national, but only the vehicle through which Englishmen reproduced history, culture and more national bodies. Women were a problem for England, being 'international' and more interested in urban pleasures such as shopping. In this way, they represented a force which must

be controlled in the national interest. Since their whimsical shopping habits could lead to the destruction of English craft industries, they needed to be contained in order to safeguard a notion of Englishness as based in organic communities organised around craft production. Nonetheless, although Morton located women as belonging to the urban, even in this location they could represent the abject. Without men's control, they were likely to slip from their class and race allegiances into a degeneracy which no longer cared to maintain these distinctions. In Morton's England men and boys could represent this England, but neither women nor girls could. His England was most fully revealed at the point when an Englishman bodily related to earth. His books, then, identified 'the bucolic' as an indispensable element in, and arena for, the constitution of the masculine national subject.

The third chapter brought 'bodies' into much closer proximity with 'the bucolic', through an investigation of the genders of Englishness and earth, and examined whether the ways in which Englishness and earth were formulated worked to exclude women from this discursive heterosexual relation between men and earth. Here, the main argument was that the trope of the man-in-earth became an important cultural figuration of Englishness. Since it recalled the experience of trench warfare, and since the trenches represented a war-zone forbidden to women, the use of this trope excluded women from this version of Englishness as they could have had no memory of the trenches to call on. Literary representations of trench warfare highlighted the breakdown of the boundary between men and mud, between the human and the inhuman. This mud destroyed any sense of rational and logical order in the world, and often led to an incoherence in which language itself also broke down. However, the post-Great War metaphoric masculine burial in the country, as a response to the disorder the trenches represented, enabled a re-ordering of the world, such that men could become discrete subjects and earth could become firm and distinct. Since earth was foundational to the grammar of the nation, this formulation of earth as substantial offered a way of re-making national meanings. In order to be fully national, a man had also to be in a loving, erotic relationship with earth. The figuration

of earth as both tomb and womb enabled an oblique discussion of the resurrection of dead soldiers. More than this, it also offered the possibility of the resurrection of a pre-war England that these writings mourned.

An analysis of a range of texts which utilised the trope of the man-in-earth showed that not all men who went to earth could represent Englishness. Miners were a category of men who threatened the nation through too deep a penetration of earth. Below the layer of earth which was English lay a dangerous chasm of femininity which acted against the civilized virtues of Englishness. However, in the top layer of earth, both patrilineage and literature could be found. The association of earth/nature and literature was so strong that it was possible to posit nature as literature, and vice versa. This trope found fullest expression in *Rogue Male*, where the masculine body in earth was also a writing body, producing literature from this same earth. Here, the man-in-earth, once resurrected from earth, could become England's potential saviour. However, the loss of a relationship to earth endangered men's heterosexuality. Flying represented a dangerous sport for masculinity in that leaving earth for air enabled homosexuality. While earth could provide a thin layer between men to prevent them from becoming too close, women, too, could be culturally placed as a barrier between men that prevented homosexuality.

Women in these texts were variously erased, ridiculed or positioned as meaningless unless heterosexual. Their presence in the countryside ruined the countryside for men. These particular formulations of women's connection to the rural worked to exclude women from this discursive heterosexual relationship men were having with earth, and disallowed women a relationship with the place that was posited as the most authentic England. So, in the construction of Englishness, masculine bodies needed to enter 'the bucolic' by establishing a relationship with the earth, whereas feminine bodies were excluded.

The fourth chapter turned to a different configuration of books, bodies and the bucolic to examine the relationship that men or women were allowed with a different form of nature - that of the sea - and investigated the powers attributed to

literature at sea rather than on land. Reading books at sea was accorded greater moral value than the reading of books on land. This was because the sea and the sailor posed dangers to the racially white, heterosexual, earth-based grammar of the nation. Even though the sea was a place for masculinity rather than femininity, it still troubled masculinity through offering the possibilities for sexual immorality, homosexuality and racial impurity. In foreign ports, the sailor was a national representative of England, but his sexual behaviour there was in danger of being profoundly un-English. This was seen to be amenable to correction through the provision of shipboard libraries. This chapter examined how books and reading were credited with the power of ensuring official Englishness in the sailor, and argued, through an analysis of Arnold Bennett's work, that literature could be credited with the power to heterosexualise the reader. At sea, the book itself could become a fetish object of Englishness in the unstable and licentious space of the sea. Books could ground the national identity of the sailor by rooting it in earth, through the process of reading, since earth could be seen to be in the literary content of the book. As the sailor penetratively and bodily read the book, he could act out another metaphoric way of being English while at sea, mimicking the penetrative relationship to earth the land-based Englishman discursively used to consolidate his national identity.

This chapter went on to examine the powers and dangers attributed to the sea and the sailor in literary texts, and found that the sea could be credited with the power to erase heterosexuality in the liminal space of the shoreline. Watery, marginal spaces within England which recalled the sea's erasure of heterosexuality could allow the inscription of the homosexual subject. For male homosexuality as much as for the sailor, the trajectory was upwards toward the stars rather than down to earth, such that water and sky signified in a homosexual economy. For sailors, the loss of land and new relation to the sea and stars produced a subjectivity in which national identity lost importance, so the sailor who returned to land could trouble the gender and race distinctions on which the grammar of the England was founded. However, England and Englishness could be seen to be as present in text as in place, and at times more

present - and perhaps more reliably present - within the text than in place. To read, therefore, could bring one into a bodily relationship with England.

Moreover, just as the earth was formulated as having a dangerously non-English space deep beneath the earth's surface, so, too, did the sea have the power to wash up from the deep something which was unassimilable in the grammar of Englishness. The sea had the capability to produce, consume and reveal the corpse, in all its meaninglessness. Since the corpse would not obey the rules of national culture, it was beyond the reach of Englishness. One literary instance of such a corpse was, I argued, a lesbian. In this way, this particular lesbian was seen to be outside national processes and nationally uncontrollable.

The fifth chapter explored more closely the dynamic between the feminine body and the bucolic, through an examination of the relations between women and earth, in order to analyse the ways in which women were disallowed the version of Englishness as a bond between national subject and earth. This was in order to address the question of whether this exclusion paradoxically opened up a space for alternative sexualities to emerge. Few texts included the figure of a woman-in-earth, but those that did used this figure to represent monstrosity, disorder and dismembering. This stood in stark contrast to the ordered re-membering that the man-in-earth represented in the national imagination. While the masculine national body could confer a national identity on the foreign earth it entered, the body of the woman could do no such thing. She provoked civil disorder and makes things 'muddy'. An analysis of a text, *Lolly Willowes*, in which a woman attempted to go to earth, revealed that this was only possible when Lolly refused national identification as an Englishwoman and became lesbian, and by the textual destruction of the heterosexual grammar of the nation, so that the nation no longer existed. However, the attempt to write a lesbian going to English earth was even more problematic. Possessing a form of masculinity allowed her to enter earth in order to have heterosexual sex with her female lover, who viewed her as a man. But the time in which this happened was ambiguous, spanning both the past and the present moment of the text. The ambiguity about the time in

which this happened - past or present - was mirrored by an ambiguity about who actually went to earth - a man or a lesbian? Given that this lesbian died immediately after entering earth, she was simultaneously displayed and erased.

However, the work of Eve Balfour, first president of the Soil Association, showed a way in which earth could be formulated without recourse to a heterosexualising imperative. Her earth was an unstable, shifting form in an endless process of interaction with other earth products. This earth was actively productive, but since her soil was homosexualised rather than heterosexualised, this allowed the possibility of the homosexualisation of the nation, still founded on earth, but not heterosexually so. This re-formulation of earth would have allowed for alternative sexualities to emerge, but since other disciplinary forces were also in operation in English culture, its force was relatively weak.

The last chapter turned its attention specifically to the ways in which books configure the lesbian body in relation to the bucolic, by looking at the writing strategies that needed to be adopted to articulate a relationship between the lesbian and the nation. Since earth was associated with masculine heterosexuality, feminine heterosexuality associated with urban domesticity, and water associated mainly with masculine homosexuality, where could the lesbian be placed within the national landscape in order to become substantial? This chapter argued that the location which was accorded her, outside of time and in air, worked to preclude her from having a national locational identity. However, one effect of the processes of narrating the nation was to produce a subject position which expressed to the nation the categories it had to deny in order to maintain the ontological status of England as 'real'. I argued this subject position was that of the lesbian. In these textual examples, she veered between being a national and a non-national subject since the nation was complicit in her construction as non-national. Even though literature appeared to 'ghost' her, some texts suggested that the lesbian could be revealed through the process of reading. My analysis of interwar theories of reading showed that a lesbian relationship could be seen to characterise the relation between reader and text. In this way lesbianism was

hidden at the heart of the project of renewing the nation through literature. This gave her a rhetorical location in the grammar of the nation rather than a material one, and would suggest that it was not women's exclusion from the national bond between man and earth that paradoxically produced the lesbian as an alternative sexuality, but that she was produced in the process of narrating the nation.

Narratives of the nation showed that England relied on heterosexuality to maintain its classed, gendered and raced grammar. Homosexuality threatened class and race distinctions in its refusal of heterosexual femininity or masculinity. Just as middle-class Maurice made an outlaw relationship with working-class Scudder, so too did Lolly Willowes cross class and race relationships at the witches Sabbath. Xtianity could therefore be seen as one of the conservative forces within the grammar of the nation which worked to maintain heterosexuality in national interests. English xtianity was also implicated in the project of ensuring reproduction did not cross race lines, as could be seen in the way xtianity was used to harass the family of William and Tulip in *The Sailor's Return*. However, a return to a pre-xtian past could allow homosexuality by calling up older myths. Lolly Willowes's Satan was modelled on the pre-xtian god, Herne the Hunter, and Maurice and Alex mythically returned to the pagan greenwood where men could be outlaws together.

One of the problems with homosexuality for the nation, it seemed, concomitant with the refusal of conventions of heterosexuality was a repudiation of other national taxonomies of race and class. National heterosexuality, then, was a force which ensured racial distinctions. Nonetheless, as Richard Dyer suggested in *White*, whiteness fears that white sex is actually queer sex, in that to act in a bodily sexual way undermines the category of 'white' since it is conceived of as category which transcends the body. To act sexually, then, is to 'queer' the category of whiteness. However, what this thesis reveals in its examination of the relation between men and earth is that this discursive sexual/erotic relation allowed for the maintenance of a whiteness which could be lost through actual heterosexual sex with women. In the grammar of the nation, feminine earth occupied a more valorised

position than women did. Although women were associated with nature through their reproductive capacities, nonetheless, their form of 'nature' was less valued than that of the rural landscape. The disallowal of a relation to this feminine earth for women was one of the discursive exclusionary practices which ensured masculinity's identification with nation, and England's identification with masculinity. Similarly, the refusal to allow miners a matching relation to earth was another exclusionary practice which ensured the masculinity which represented England was both white and middle-class.

Just as not all forms of masculinity could represent the nation, so some forms of earth were excluded from this symbolic function. It was the topmost layer of earth which was national; beyond that level lay a dangerous abyss which could threaten the nation, as it represented a primitive and uncivilised space. In the same way that women were seen as a force which, unless controlled, could pose a danger to the values of civilisation, being primitive and barely civilised, so, too, did earth have its own disruptive powers. Like women, on the surface earth was under control; however, to delve too far into earth threatened a disruption of Englishness and its values. Nevertheless, as the work of Eve Balfour showed, there was nothing inevitable about earth's construction as in a heterosexual relation to masculinity. Her re-formulation of earth as an unstable shifting category, produced through a 'marriage' of earth and earth products, suggested a way in which the grammar of the nation could be homosexualised. In this relation of sameness, where earth and earth products interact, a new grammar of the nation could be proposed which would allow for the homosexualisation of England.¹ Since masculinity's abjection of its own maternal origins allowed it to claim itself as the origin of the nation through its reproductive relation with maternal earth - a union which produced the literature and history of England - then Balfour's earth would threaten this connection. Masculinity could not then claim itself to be the origin of the nation, if feminine earth was acting parthenogenetically to produce the nation. This threatened to make masculinity irrelevant in the grammar of the nation, and would cause the abject to break out in the

form of the awesome parthenogenetic mother who reproduces without the need for men.

This thesis highlighted the importance of location for identity. If, as I have said in the introduction, Jeremy Paxman, Judy Giles and Tim Middleton conceived of Englishness as a 'state of mind', then this thesis has offered another view of Englishness as embodied and located. The locations accorded various identities had clear implications for their differing values in the nation, as some locations were accorded greater national value than others. Earth was accorded the greatest value as a location for national identity. However, the 'island race', which occupied a position surrounded by sea, was threatened by this same sea. Leaving earth for sea or air could threaten masculinity's heterosexual identity. In this way, the grammar of the nation *did* offer a locational identity for homosexuality, but a far less privileged and a non-national one than that which was offered heterosexuality. But if rural earth offered a location for England and Englishness, so too did literature.

Various texts suggested that England could be found as easily in the pages of a book as it could be found on land. *Lolly Willowes* argued that England was not in geographical place but instead in the cultural values in language. Consequently, the literary values found in official 'English Literature' could function as an alternative location for England and Englishness. The power attributed to literature in the grammar of the nation suggested that it had at times more importance as England's location than the earth did. Nonetheless, its imbrication with earth, and its derivation from earth, worked to attribute Englishness to it. England and Englishness, then, I would ultimately suggest, were located in text as much as territory. In this suggestion, the work of Robert Colls, Philip Dodd and Alun Howkins, discussed in the introduction, is extended. While they argued that the interwar period was characterised by a dichotomy between the rural as a symbol of authentic England and the urban as a lesser symbol of England, this thesis has shown that not all rural locations could confer national identity. Whilst rural earth could confer this on white middle-class masculinity, neither waterscapes nor airy locations

could, even if they were rural. Femininity's exclusion from a relation to earth and rural-life complicated the dichotomy between town and country by showing how this division was gendered. A simple dichotomy between the urban and the rural could not be upheld, because this equation is further complicated by the argument of this thesis - that England also had another location in literature. This contention expanded the work of Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson, who showed how English literature was central in shaping a version of rural Englishness, by revealing how literature's centrality worked precisely because it was a site of England. Textual interventions concerning the nation were, therefore, a viable political project, and the disciplinary attention given to English literature in the interwar years attested to this.

Now, as then, the nation is a site of contestation. As I was writing this conclusion, debates about what could be said about race during the run-up to the General Election filled the media. One Conservative M.P., John Townend, described the English as in danger of becoming a 'mongrel race'. This thesis is dedicated to all those mongrels who refuse racial national identifications, and cross class and gender categories. I eagerly await our meeting in that queer mongrel space that Zulus call Zonkiziziwe - the place where all nations are welcome - a place that might be called home.

¹ The implication for the sexuality of national identity that Balfour's work proposes is perhaps one of the reasons why the Soil Association has had so little success in changing national agricultural policy over the last century.

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