

**PERSPECTIVES OF ESTRANGEMENT:
ENGLAND AND ENGLISHNESS IN THE
NOVELS OF JUSTIN CARTWRIGHT**

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis consists of my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety, or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Justin Cartwright's perspective on Englishness, as a South African-born writer living and writing in England, is played out in his novels. Four of Cartwright's novels with English settings are analysed: *In Every Face I Meet* (1995), *The Promise of Happiness* (2004), *To Heaven by Water* (2009) and *Other People's Money* (2011). Cartwright's position as a self-conscious observer of English life is revealed as eliciting a nuanced critique of Englishness. It is argued that Cartwright adopts something of an anthropological approach towards his English subjects, and that this troubles the traditional gaze of the Western anthropologist upon the "other". At the same time, his protagonists are represented with humane sympathy, though this is often tempered with irony. Drawing on Paul Gilroy's ideas about race and multiculturalism in England and Robert J.C. Young's *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, this thesis discusses Cartwright's presentation of Englishness as both potentially inclusive and exclusive. Cartwright also sets England against America, and more significantly, against Africa. Cartwright's portrayal of Africa is shown to reveal his somewhat ambivalent attitude towards his birthplace. Throughout the thesis, Cartwright's novels are discussed with an awareness of the influence that the social philosopher Isaiah Berlin has had on the author, particularly with regard to his critique of idealism and his espousal of value pluralism and liberal humanism. Yet it is also suggested that Cartwright's liberal humanism may be intertwined with his complex and ambivalent attitude towards Africa. Moreover, the ironic tone and postmodern, metafictional elements of these novels perform Cartwright's belief in value pluralism in interesting ways. The relationship between literature, art and national fictions is furthermore discussed, in conversation with Benedict Anderson's ideas about nationalism. This thesis provides a close-reading of the works of this under-researched author and examines the complexity of his "estranged" position towards Englishness.

Abstrak

Hierdie tesis verken hoe Justin Cartwright, Suid-Afrikaans gebore skrywer woonagtig in Engeland, se die siening van Engelsheid (Englishness) in sy romans weerspieël word. Vier van Cartwright se romans met 'n Engelse agtergrond word ontleed: *In Every Face I Meet* (1995), *The Promise of Happiness* (2004), *To Heaven by Water* (2009) en *Other People's Money* (2011). Dit word onthul hoe Cartwright se posisie as self-bewuste waarnemer van Engelse lewe hom staat te stel om 'n genuanseerde critique van Engelsheid te lewer. Daar word aangevoer dat Cartwright 'n ietwat antropologiese benadering tot sy Engelse onderwerpe inneem en dat dit die tradisionele siening van die Westerse antropoloog van die "ander" ondergrawe. Terselfdertyd bied hy sy protagoniste met menslike erbarming aan, hoewel dit dikwels met ironie getemper word. Deur gebruik te maak van Paul Gilroy se opvattinge oor ras en multikultuur in Engeland en Robert J.C. Young se *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, bespreek hierdie tesis hoe Cartwright Engelsheid voorstel as sowel potensieel inklusief as eksklusief. Cartwright stel ook Engeland teenoor Amerika, en meer belangwekkend, ook teenoor Afrika. Daar word aangetoon dat Cartwright se uitbeelding van Afrika sy nogal ambivalente houding teenoor sy geboorteplek verrai. Regdeur die tesis word Cartwright se romans bespreek met in agneming van die invloed van die sosiale filosoof Isaiah Berlin op die skrywer, veral ten op sigte van sy critique van idealisme en sy omhelsing van waardepluralisme en liberale humanisme. Tog word daar ook gesuggereer dat Cartwright se liberale humanisme verweef mag wees met sy verwikkelede en ambivalente houding ten opsigte van Afrika. Daarbenewens is die ironiese toon en postmoderne, metafiktiewe element van hierdie romans op interessante maniere 'n bevestiging van Cartwright se onderskrywing van waardepluralisme. Vervolgens word die verhouding tussen literatuur, kuns en nasionale fiksies bespreek in samehang met Benedict Anderson se idees oor nasionalisme. Hierdie tesis bied 'n noukeurige ondersoek van die werke van hierdie onderverkende skrywer en ondersoek die kompleksiteit van sy "vervreemde" houding teenoor Engelsheid.

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Introduction: Justin Cartwright: An “Outsider” to Englishness?

Justin Cartwright’s novels have achieved a considerable amount of popular acclaim and critical success, particularly in Britain. In the reviews of his novels in the British media, one theme is noticeably repeated: Cartwright’s construction as an “outsider” in relation to English culture, due to his South African background. A reviewer from *The Observer*, for instance, commented: “Perhaps it takes a South African novelist to describe an English middle-class family in such compendiously unironic detail” (Kellaway). A review in *The Telegraph* suggested that “Cartwright, born in South Africa, has always had an outsider’s beady eye on English life” (Feay), and in a recent interview with Cartwright, a journalist from *The Independent* asserted that “Cartwright comes to his England as an outsider” (Tonkin). These comments infer that Cartwright, because of his non-English birthplace, occupies an objective, detached, almost omniscient, surveillant position, removed from English society, which allows him to write about its idiosyncracies in such detail. Comments of this nature are of course made specifically about his novels that are set in England.

The assumption that Cartwright is an “outsider” to England culture is a problematic one. After all, the author has lived and worked in England for more than forty years. Yet, as in the examples above, his alienation rather than assimilation is invoked in praise of his ability to observe English society. Despite the somewhat problematic nature of Cartwright’s construction as an “outsider” in reviews of his novels, I shall attempt to demonstrate that there are significant ways in which Cartwright – and the characters in his novels – can be said to occupy an estranged standpoint from their environments. Rather than simply perpetuating the media portrayal of Cartwright as an observant and unironic “outsider” in relation to English culture, I shall focus on these more subtle and potentially enriching perspectives of estrangement, that are imbued with gentle irony.

Cartwright himself has commented that the literary world’s difficulty in locating him nationally has had an impact on his success as an author. An interviewer reported: “[Cartwright is] happy to classify himself as ‘essentially a British writer’ although he concedes that confusion over how to categorise him may have limited his sales in the past” (Robinson). Cartwright has also suggested that he purposely inhabits dual national roles, playing up a certain side of his identity depending on his whereabouts. In a response to a question on whether he sees himself as an English or South African writer, he admitted that he

is a “bit South African” and conceded, “I work both sides of the street. When I’m there [South Africa], I’m fabulously South African and when I’m here [England] I probably play it down a bit” (Cartwright, “Justin Cartwright on Family and Future”). Cartwright’s ambiguous position as (to borrow from but change a quote from J.M. Coetzee in *White Writing*) “no longer South African, not yet English”, will be the starting point of my thesis.

In my discussion of Cartwright’s depiction of Englishness, and his relationship towards it, I shall draw on Robert J.C. Young’s *The Idea of English Ethnicity*. Young, in his exploration of English “ethnicity” and identity, claims that the idea of Englishness developed in the colonies, rather than in England itself: it “paradoxically became most itself when it was far off” (2). He argues that:

Englishness was created for the diaspora – an ethnic identity designed for those who were precisely not English, but rather of English descent – the peoples of the English diaspora moving around the world: Americans. Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, even, at a pinch, the English working class. (1)

He writes further that “Englishness was translated from the national identity of the English living in England into a diasporic identity beyond any geographical boundaries which included all the English who had now emigrated all over the globe” (231). In the same vein, Young argues that:

This dialectic of attachment to England, yet distance from it, of continuity and rupture, similarity and difference, became the dominant characteristic of Englishness itself – not Englishness in the sense of a local identity of the English, but Englishness as a diasporic identity around the world which simultaneously asserted a grounding in the past and continuity with the centre, and the distance of rupture, displacement, migration and colonisation. (7)

I would argue that although Cartwright may have been labelled in the English media as an “outsider” to Englishness, he actually identifies strongly with Englishness “as a diasporic identity” (7). At the same time, he self-consciously occupies a slightly estranged position which affords a critique of Englishness. I would argue, therefore, that Cartwright’s writing illustrates what Young calls the “dialectic of attachment to England, yet distance from it, of continuity and rupture, similarity and difference” (7).

The difficulty that critics have in placing Cartwright might be associated with their difficulty in placing him within what Pierre Bourdieu calls a “literary field” (163). Critics do not know in which national literary field Cartwright should be placed, due to his South

African birth and his identification with – and residence in – England. Perhaps this is why, although Justin Cartwright’s work has been widely read and reviewed, especially within the United Kingdom, his novels have not received much academic attention. An exception to this trend is the work of Mike Marais – three journal articles by this South African scholar concentrate on Cartwright’s *White Lightning* (2002), which is set primarily in South Africa. Cartwright’s novels set in England, however, have received no substantial academic consideration. This is hopefully why this thesis does important work, in that it seeks to redress the gap in academic writing about Cartwright’s novels set in England. It also deals with the illuminating and complex ways in which Cartwright’s transnational position affects his writing.

In terms of Cartwright’s transnationality, and how this affects his writing and position in relation to national literary fields, I would also like to draw on Pascale Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters*. In this study, Casanova discusses various strategies that authors from the “margin” may deploy to enter into the literary realm. I would argue that the strategy which most closely resembles Cartwright’s position is that of assimilation, but the kind of complex assimilation that Casanova describes. Casanova argues that assimilation can be viewed as a positive strategy that authors from marginal spaces use in order to resist becoming icons of national identity:

Assimilation [...] is the lowest level of literary revolt, the obligatory itinerary of every apprentice writer from an impoverished region having no literary resources of its own [...] But it is also an option for writers from dominated spaces that are nonetheless relatively well-endowed with resources [and] who can thus refuse the fate of becoming a national writer – what the Polish novelist Kazimierz Bandys (1916 – 2000) called the “patriotic duty” of the writer – and begin by almost clandestine means to appropriate the literary heritage of the centres for themselves [...]. (208)

Partly, it can be argued that Cartwright emigrated to England to seek out a more liberal educational and literary environment, as he left South Africa in the late 1960s initially to study at Oxford. Here it is worth calling to mind J.M. Coetzee’s 1983 article, “The Great South African Novel”, which questions whether it is possible for a “great national novel” to emanate from South Africa. Coetzee asks: “[C]an we find anyone who *knows* South African society well enough to present it in the depth and fullness that we (and our descendants and the outside world) would – legitimately – demand from a Great National Novel?” (“The Great South African Novel” 75). Significantly, Cartwright was quoted in an interview as commenting that he will “never write the great South African novel” (Cartwright, “A life in writing: This stuff matters”), a possible allusion to Coetzee’s article.

Two of Casanova's examples of "assimilated" authors could be seen as relevant in relation to Cartwright. The first is Trinidad-born writer V.S. Naipaul, "who, in the absence of any literary tradition in his native country, had no other choice but to try to become English" (Casanova 209). Despite extreme efforts to achieve complete assimilation, "he inevitably found himself stranded in a sort of no-man's land: neither completely English (despite being knighted by the queen) nor completely Indian" (209). Cartwright also partially embodies this "no-man's land"; however, his incomplete assimilation is not so much a failure (except, perhaps, given the little critical attention focused on his work thus far) as an opportunity to deepen his writing with his unique sense of observation. The second of Casanova's relevant examples is the Belgian poet Henri Michaux, who is perhaps aligned more closely with Cartwright's position, as a "foreigner" who nevertheless shared linguistic and cultural qualities with his "host" country, France. Casanova explains Michaux's "emphasis on distance and discrepancy, the division of the world into countries and peoples, foreigners and natives" (213) as deriving from his "outsider" viewpoint:

Only a very near neighbour to France, whose accent, manners, and way simply of being betrayed his status as an odd sort of stranger – someone who was a foreigner without quite being one and whose very proximity prevented him from blending in, even though nothing set him apart – could imagine dividing up the world into natives and nonnatives. (213)

Cartwright as an English-speaking South African of British heritage, living in Britain, shares this quality of being "a foreigner without quite being one", and it is this shifting balance between alienation and assimilation – between estrangement and belonging – that is the central point of my thesis.

The Influence of Isaiah Berlin: Value Pluralism and Liberal Humanism

The theorist who has most influenced Justin Cartwright is without a doubt the British social theorist, philosopher and historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, whose ideological imprint is evident in various guises in Cartwright's novels. I wish to provide a brief summary of Berlin's ideas on value pluralism and liberty, and shall then discuss Cartwright's interpretation and expression of Berlin's theories in his writing, while drawing attention to the ways in which Cartwright's affinity with Berlin's liberal humanism may be intertwined with his positionality vis-à-vis England and Africa.

Berlin's most famous theory and the concept which I would argue has most influenced Cartwright is his idea of value pluralism. Berlin vehemently opposed the idea of a rationalist

“single true solution” (*Two Concepts of Liberty* 37), and argued that:

One belief, more than any other is responsible for the slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals [...]. This is the belief that somewhere [...] there is a final solution. This ancient faith rests on the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another. (52)

He suggested that positive values or ideals are not compatible, and that “the belief that some single formula can in principle be found whereby all the diverse ends of men can be harmoniously realized is demonstrably false” (54). Rather, he proposed the idea of value pluralism, in which positive values can co-exist. Absolute values or monisms are therefore false, as well as dangerous and limiting of freedom, according to Berlin – an idea that is acknowledged to have contributed to postmodern perspectives. In order to illustrate this idea, he used Immanuel Kant’s saying that “Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made” and interpreted it thus: “And for that reason no perfect solution is, not merely in practice, but in principle, possible in human affairs, and any determined attempt to produce it is likely to lead to suffering, disillusionment and failure” (Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ch. 2).¹

Before outlining Cartwright’s deployment of Berlin’s ideas in his novels, I would like to explain briefly my designation of Berlin’s philosophy as “liberal humanist” in this thesis. Some might argue that Berlin, although he defended human liberty, was not liberal humanist as such, since he in fact subtly critiqued Kantian liberal humanism in *Two Concepts of Liberty* for being overly rationalist (23). I would, however, argue that his philosophy does indeed conform to certain tenets of liberal humanism, especially in its reliance on so-called “universal”, “human” principles. Berlin, for instance, argues that

there does exist a scale of values by which the majority of mankind – and in particular western Europeans – in fact live, live not merely mechanically and out of habit, but as part of what in their moments of self-awareness constitutes for them the essential nature of man. (*The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ch. 6)

This might seem to contradict his abhorrence of absolutes, and in fact critics of Berlin have pointed out the strange marriage of his moral liberal humanism and his value pluralism. Morton J. Frisch comments that: “It would seem to us [...] that his moral pluralism cannot

¹ Some of the sources which I use have been accessed as Kindle e-book versions. In these cases the parenthetical reference will refer to the chapter number rather than the page number, as set out in the MLA referencing guide.

exist without an absolute basis, a maximum level of opportunity for choice below which human activity ceases to be free” (421). This reliance on universal “human” values means that Berlin’s outlook does, in some ways, resemble what is generally known as liberal humanism. Furthermore, and more importantly, I shall argue, particularly in my chapter on *Other People’s Money*, whether or not Berlin is specifically liberal humanist, Cartwright portrays his characters through a humane and humanist gaze.

Rather than focusing on the intricacies of Berlin’s philosophy, it is more important, for the purposes of this thesis, that I look at how Cartwright interprets Berlin’s work and demonstrates that interpretation in his novels. Cartwright has confessed his affinity for Berlin’s ideas widely, most notably in his book *Oxford Revisited*, which is almost more about Isaiah Berlin than about this university city. His 2007 novel *The Song Before it is Sung* is a fictionalisation of the relationship between Isaiah Berlin and Adam Von Trott, an Oxford friend of Berlin’s who was one of the conspirators in the Claus von Stauffenberg-led assassination attempt against Adolf Hitler. In *Oxford Revisited* Cartwright paraphrases the main thrust of Berlin’s philosophy thus: “Berlin understood with penetrating clarity that people who seek an all-embracing theory in religion and philosophy are deluded” (ch. 2). This is perhaps a simplification of Berlin’s value pluralism, but in any case it summarises what Cartwright frequently critiques in his novels: the pervasiveness and simultaneously deluded nature of ideals and absolute values.

It is also worth noting that Isaiah Berlin, like Cartwright, was a transnational who had a complex relationship with Englishness, as he was Jewish and born in Latvia. Robert Young, significantly, places Berlin in his list of “Anglophile characters masquerading as Englishmen” (3), along with T.S. Eliot and Joseph Conrad, in order to demonstrate how Englishness has historically been an inclusive ethnicity.² Cartwright also points out Berlin’s strong identification with Englishness. In *Oxford Revisited* he quotes William Waldegrave as saying: “If you had asked me to show you what I meant by the ideal of Englishness, I would have taken you to see a Latvian, Jewish, German, Italian mixture of all the cultures of Europe. I would have taken you to see Isaiah Berlin” (Cartwright, *Oxford Revisited*, ch. 2). Cartwright furthermore notes how Berlin’s Englishness is entwined with his liberalism, commenting that Berlin “attributed many of his values to England” although he admits that he had a “perhaps

² Young does not intend the word “masquerading” in the sense of “pretending”; rather: “The point [...] is not that they were inauthentic Englishmen masquerading as authentic ones: rather, that in their time, authentic Englishness was itself transformed into a mode of masquerade that was best performed far from home, a global identity into which others could always translate themselves, however distant from England their place of birth” (3).

exaggerated respect for the liberal aspects of British life” (“Berlin my Hero”).

Like Cartwright, Berlin thus occupied a slightly estranged position in relation to England, due to his Latvian heritage and Jewish cultural identity. Berlin commented as follows on his Jewish cultural identity and Zionism in an interview:

I realized quite early in my life that Jews were a minority everywhere. It seemed to me that there was no Jew in the world who was not, in some degree, socially uneasy. Jews feel uneasy even if they are well treated, even if they are genuinely “integrated” and have friends everywhere. There always remains some small sense of social uneasiness. I do not think there is a country where Jews feel totally secure, where they do not ask themselves: “How do I look to others?”, “What do they think of me?” [...] There must be somewhere, I felt, where Jews were not forced to be self-conscious – where they did not feel the need for total integration, for stressing their contribution to the native culture – where they could simply live normal, unobserved lives. The purpose of Zionism is normalization; the creation of conditions in which the Jews could live as a nation, like the others. (*Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, ch. 24)³

Berlin therefore occupied the paradoxical position of being to some extent integrated into Englishness, embodying the “ideal of Englishness” and “masquerading” as an Englishman, while simultaneously feeling slightly estranged from English society because of his Jewishness. Berlin’s perspective on the seeming impossibility of full integration for Jews in English society intersects in an interesting way with Cartwright’s depiction of the Trevelyan-Tubals in *Other People’s Money*. Although the Tubal family was originally Jewish, and Julian Trevelyan-Tubal thinks that his ancestor Moses Tubal must have been “driven by the ferocious desire of the outsider to belong” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 106), he knows that now “the Tubals are safely on the inside. They are woven into the fabric. Their bums are deep in the butter” (106). Cartwright, unlike Berlin, presents total integration of Jews as a real possibility, perhaps more in line with Young’s belief in the inclusivity of Englishness. Yet despite this apparent deviation in their attitudes towards the interface between Jewishness and Englishness, it is possible that Cartwright is particularly attracted to Berlin’s writing because of the philosopher’s apparent “outsider” position as well as his interest in English liberal humanism. Cartwright writes in his article for the *Jewish Quarterly*, for instance, of Jewish history’s “unmatched defiance of the dual imperatives of time and place” (“Berlin My Hero”), pointing subtly to the transnational attributes of Jewishness. He also explains in that article how Berlin’s value pluralism was “inseparable from his Jewishness” (“Berlin my Hero”). I

³ One might argue that Berlin’s Zionism is one of his ideological blind spots, as liberal humanism is perhaps Cartwright’s blind spot. Certainly, one might suggest that Zionism, as a strongly held belief, contradicts his rejection of absolute values. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that Berlin has criticised the current nationalistic tendencies of Zionism, saying that “Zionism has unfortunately developed a nationalistic phase” (*Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, ch. 30).

would furthermore argue that perhaps Cartwright is particularly critical of idealism because, as Berlin explains in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, idealism and Utopian conceptions are historically European ideas, and Cartwright, South African-born and raised, is especially positioned to critique them.

Cartwright's interest in Berlin's ideas is due to intellectual affiliation, but might also be prompted by his South African background and his identification with Englishness. In this dissertation I shall also show how this reliance on Berlin is subtly caught up in Cartwright's ambivalent attitude towards his birthplace. Cartwright himself comments on two occasions on the intersection between his attraction towards Berlin's ideas and his South African origins. In "Berlin my Hero", Cartwright explains:

As a student in South Africa I came across *Two Concepts of Liberty* by Isaiah Berlin. When I saw and heard him in Oxford later, I believed, and I still believe, that he was the greatest exponent of a broadly liberal, pluralist politics there has ever been. What he saw [...] is that fixed credos and closed systems of belief invariably lead to disaster. ("Berlin my Hero")

Berlin's influence on Cartwright was intensified as he was lectured by the philosopher during his time at Oxford, but as Cartwright goes on to explain, this influence had a great deal to do with his reaction to anti-apartheid efforts in 1960s South Africa:

To my immense relief he confirmed that there are essentially only two freedoms; the first he called 'freedom from' which is the freedom to be left alone as far as possible to do what your inclinations tell you — essentially liberalism — and the other, very dangerous kind of freedom, is 'freedom to' which means that you achieve freedom only by total surrender to a state or closed system of belief. In South Africa we who were opposed to the apartheid state were supposed to want the alternative of Marxism, the path chosen by the ANC. ("Berlin my Hero")

The first part of this extract is a paraphrase of Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty*, and it is interesting that Cartwright interprets Berlin's essay as denigrating "positive freedom", or "freedom to" – the desire for self-assertion which Berlin associates with revolutionary and nationalist movements. A careful reading of *Two Concepts* will reveal that Berlin does not place "positive" freedom in any hierarchical relationship to "negative freedom" or "freedom from", and furthermore that "positive freedom" is not necessarily bound up with "total surrender to a state or closed system of belief" (Cartwright, "Berlin my Hero"). Berlin clarified this distinction in an interview, saying:

The only reason for which I have been suspected of defending negative liberty against positive and saying that it is more civilized is because I do think that the concept of

positive liberty, which is of course essential to a decent existence, has been more often abused or perverted than that of negative liberty. (*Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, ch. 13)

Perhaps Cartwright's motivation for his acceptance of his version of Berlin's philosophy is revealed in his assertion that "[i]n South Africa we who were opposed to the apartheid state were supposed to want the alternative of Marxism, the path chosen by the ANC" ("Berlin my Hero"). His erroneous characterisation, shared with many white liberals, of the African National Congress as Marxist rather than as a nationalist movement led by an elite, is perhaps evident in *In Every Face I Meet*, in which he suggests, through the protagonist Anthony Northleach, that Nelson Mandela, as a young revolutionary, would have believed in the ideals of Marx (Cartwright, *In Every Face*, 176). Cartwright elaborates on his rejection of totalitarian ideologies, exemplified by Marxism, in *Oxford Revisited*:

I could see now that I could both loathe apartheid and fear the ideologues who believed that Marx and Lenin or Mao had the answers, that they had broken the code or discovered an incorrigible proposition. In fact it was these dirigistes, Berlin suggested, who were the true enemies of freedom, by their insistence on 'freedom' through the state. (ch. 2)

Cartwright goes on to explain why Berlin's ideas came as such an "immense relief" to him as a white South African:

I passed those years happily free from the heavy burden of being a white South African, secure in the knowledge that liberalism was not a wishy-washy form of self-delusion, and that political quietism is perfectly acceptable. I cling to this belief all these years later. (ch. 2)

Cartwright therefore used Berlin's value pluralism in order to cast off "the heavy burden" of white South African identity, as he was able to maintain his liberal anti-apartheid stance without embracing what he saw as the dogmatic ideals of Marxist and nationalist movements. I would like to suggest, however, and I shall elaborate on this particularly in my chapter on *Other People's Money*, that Cartwright's willingness to identify with liberal humanism is possibly caught up in his somewhat ambivalent attitude towards his birthplace. I shall also explore Cartwright's troubled relationship with Africa in my discussion of the depiction of the Kalahari in *To Heaven by Water*.

Art and (Meta)fiction

A significant aspect of Cartwright's Berlinian-tinted liberal humanism is his conception of art, and particularly literature, as potentially transformative. As Cartwright notes in a recent interview about his take on the artist character in *Other People's Money*, Artair MacCleod: "There are different ways to salvation and I am with Artair: art is transformative" ("Justin Cartwright, author of *Other People's Money*, in conversation with Janet van Eeden"). It is interesting that Cartwright frames his belief in art's significance in spiritual terms, associating it with a kind of "salvation". He is specifically interested in the potential of literature to provide understanding and even transcendence. This focus on literature makes sense, not only because Cartwright is of course a writer, but also because liberal humanism originated as a mode of textual analysis. Although he eschews any other absolute values, Cartwright believes that literature "increases the human understanding" (*Oxford Revisited*, ch. 3), a liberal humanist outlook which focuses on literature as enhancing life and transmitting values and knowledge. In the chapters to follow I shall discuss how Cartwright's attitude towards art, and literature specifically, is manifested in his novels.

Another significant way in which Cartwright includes writing and reading in his novels is through his deployment of metafictional references. I shall attempt to demonstrate how apparently postmodern strategies serve to foreground the importance of literature and also play a role in Cartwright's rejection of clear-cut, monistic beliefs or grand narratives. By drawing attention to the fictionality of his own texts, Cartwright destabilises his narratives, thus illustrating the partial nature of the truth and the falsity of absolute values. His playful use of metafictional elements also intersects with his often ironic and humorous tone. I shall explore how Cartwright's ironic perspective offers a slight distance from which he can provide a humane critique of his characters' ideas and beliefs.

Overview

In the chapters to follow, then, I shall illustrate, through close readings of Justin Cartwright's novels set in England, how the author's position as a South African-born author living in – and writing about – England manifests in concerns of nationhood and estrangement.

My first chapter discusses Justin Cartwright's 1995 novel, *In Every Face I Meet*, which brings to bear an awareness of the faultlines of race and class within early 1990s England. My discussion of Cartwright's representation of race politics in early 1990s England draws on Paul Gilroy's study of the development of "new racism" in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. Gilroy's observations on the nature of racism in English society are particularly relevant

to the way in which Jason, the black pimp, is perceived by society, and to the manner in which the protagonist Anthony's subtle racism plays itself out. Gilroy's arguments about race and Englishness are counterpoised with Robert Young's theory about Englishness as an incorporative identity. Furthermore, since Anthony is Swaziland-born, Young's discussion of how Englishness was invented for colonials is specifically relevant. Cartwright's deployment of intertextuality – and particularly a reference to the work of Sarah Gertrude Millin – as well as metafiction to raise concerns about the partial nature of truth is particularly evident in this novel.

My second chapter deals with *The Promise of Happiness*, published in 2004. Cartwright uses references to reading and writing in a different manner in this novel, mainly to emphasise the connection between reading and nationhood. I draw on Benedict Anderson's famous study, *Imagined Communities*, in order to discuss this intersection. Furthermore, I examine the diverse intertexts evoked in this novel, with a particular focus on the text's references to poet laureate John Betjeman, which illustrate his representation as an icon of Englishness. I also look at the writer characters in the novel, Sophie Judd and Davis Lyendecker, and what their writing says about national identity. I explore the role of the media and literature in forming our ideas about nations, by discussing the triple settings of the novel: London, Cornwall and America. Finally, I examine how art and religion are dealt with in the novel in relation to Englishness and idealism.

Cartwright's 2009 novel *To Heaven by Water* is the subject of my third chapter. In this chapter I explore the contrast between the chapters set in the Kalahari, and those set in London. I argue that the chapters set in Africa evoke, in part, J.M. Coetzee's critical text, *White Writing*, and I question why Cartwright does not take up Coetzee's challenge to people the landscape of Africa. Through discussion of the novel's intertexts, including *White Writing*, I suggest that Cartwright's difficulty in scripting the African "other" may be in part due to his ambivalent attitude towards his homeland. At the same time, I argue that in this novel Cartwright occupies the slightly estranged perspective of a cultural anthropologist towards English society, and that he provides an ironic, humorous critique of Englishness. I also look at the subject of "necessary fictions", both in terms of Cartwright's illumination of ideals and myths, and also in relation to his veneration of art and literature.

The final chapter deals with Cartwright's most recent novel, *Other People's Money*. In his depiction of the upper-class banking family, the Trevelyan-Tubals, Cartwright critiques myths and delusions once more, particularly focusing on the idealism around family, economic systems and Englishness. Expanding on some of the concerns that emerged in the

previous chapter, I examine how Cartwright's critique of Englishness is coloured by his complex attitude towards Africa. Furthermore, I question whether liberal humanism is an effective approach to adopt when portraying unscrupulous bankers who have caused international upheaval and extreme hardship. I discuss in some detail the character of playwright Artair MacCleod, particularly focusing on his relationship with Englishness and on how his transnational identity is portrayed. I also point out how the sections devoted to Artair include significant metafictional references, particularly in their intertextuality with Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

In my conclusion I recap the thematic concerns which can be seen across all four novels. I particularly evaluate whether Cartwright's position of estrangement towards Englishness enriches his critique of English society or whether it rather evinces his problematic attitude towards Englishness. I furthermore suggest areas for future research.

Chapter One: Social Commentary and Meta-Commentary in *In Every Face I Meet*

In Justin Cartwright's novel *In Every Face I Meet* (1995), a black man is killed in a scuffle with two white men. Despite this focal point of interracial violence and the author's childhood in South Africa, the action of the novel takes place in England, not South Africa. Evoking William Blake's poem "London" in its title, the story is set in London, with a South African-born author bringing to bear on this context an awareness of the faultlines within British society. Just as Blake's poem provided a social critique of British urban life of the late eighteenth century, so Cartwright's novel offers critical perspectives on the social conditions of early 1990s London, particularly regarding race and class. In this novel, Cartwright comments on the "woe" (Blake, "London" 4) evident "in every face" (3) by scripting the seemingly hopeless lives of London's underclass, drawing our attention to the presence of race and class conflict in the UK, i.e. not only in South Africa, on which the world's media was concentrating in 1990. The elements of social commentary in *In Every Face I Meet* are perhaps motivated by Cartwright's estranged point-of-view in that, as a South African-born author, one might argue that he is especially aware of issues of race, class, national identity and their intersections. In this chapter I shall argue that Cartwright uses irony and intertextual references (particularly to Sarah Gertrude Millin's work and to the theories of the Swedish philosopher Emmanuel Swedenborg, who influenced William Blake) to offer a subtle, humane critique of English society in *In Every Face I Meet*. I shall also explore how Cartwright destabilises narrative certainty in the novel through metafictional strategies, and shall discuss the tension between reading the novel as social commentary and reading it as metafiction.

English Ethnicity and Racism in early 1990s London

Much of the text of *In Every Face I Meet* is narrated in the third person and focuses on the thoughts of Anthony Northleach – a former rugby player turned middle manager, born and raised in Swaziland but living in London – over the course of one day that ends with his arrest, along with his friend, Mike Frame, for the killing of a black youth, Jason Parchment. In the sense that it focuses on the inner wonderings and *flaneur*-style wanderings of Anthony over one day, the text evokes James Joyce's classic text *Ulysses*. While *Ulysses* displaces the metropole from the centre of the empire to Dublin, however, in *In Every Face I Meet* a white middle-class member of London's population is himself displaced when he encounters the

city's underbelly: "a place so notorious that it had been featured in a weekend supplement as the most dangerous place in Britain, with a mortality rate only slightly better than the slums of Kingston, Jamaica" (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 200). The narrative is made even more complex because Anthony, like much of London's population, is from elsewhere.

In this novel Cartwright also writes from the perspective of three other characters, using a third-person narrative viewpoint, but focalised through one character at a time. A story focalised through prostitute Chanelle Smith alternates with Anthony's narrative from chapter 2 of section "Two" onwards (evoking "the youthful Harlot" in Blake's famous poem ("London" 14)), and in chapters 7, 13 and 15 of "Two" we glimpse the thought-life of Anthony's wife, Geraldine. In the very short section entitled "Three", Anthony is in hospital recovering from a gunshot wound, and framing the entire narrative, at its beginning and end respectively, are two sections, "One" and "Four", set a few months later. These are devoted to the perceptions of Julian Capper, a writer who serves as a juror on Anthony's murder trial. Cartwright's use of different perspectives, which criticise, comment on and contrast with each other, is more than just a narrative device. By destabilising the narrative point-of-view, Cartwright raises important concerns not only about the role of the author, and the impossibility of narrowing down a definite truth, but also about race and class in the UK of the early 1990s. The concept of Englishness is interrogated through the contrast between Chanelle and Anthony's narratives, and is further complicated by Capper's thoughts on the role race plays in Anthony's trial. The polyvocality of the novel also serves to reinforce Cartwright's interest in Isaiah Berlin's concept of value pluralism. These issues are especially evident in the final section of the novel, titled "Four", which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

My discussion of race politics and ethnicity in *In Every Face I Meet* is informed partly by Paul Gilroy's influential book, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, which studies the ways in which the concepts of race and nation have historically interacted in British society, but also by Robert Young's *The Idea of English Ethnicity*. Central to the work of each theorist is an acknowledgement of the ways in which "Britain's long experience of convivial post-colonial interaction and civic life has, largely undetected by government, provided resources for a functioning, even vibrant multicultural" (Gilroy, "Melancholia and Multiculture") and of the ways in which England – and London specifically – emerged historically as a cosmopolitan metropole "bristling with the people and goods of empire" (Young 7). A significant aspect of Gilroy's argument in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, on the one hand, however, lies in his discussion of racism and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined*

Communities. Anderson asserts that racism is not linked to nationalism and that it rather “erases nation-ness” (Anderson 135). Gilroy, however, argues that Anderson’s separation of racism and nationalism “simply does not apply in the English/British case” (*There Ain’t No Black* 44), as “the politics of ‘race’ in this country is fired by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction between ‘race’ and nation, but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect” (44). What Gilroy means here is that English national identity has been welded to the idea of English ethnicity. Gilroy goes on to outline the characteristics of “new racism”, a term referring to the discourse around immigrants in the 1980s. Gilroy argues that “[t]he new racism is primarily concerned with mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion” and that it “specifies who may legitimately belong to the national community and simultaneously advances reasons for the segregation or banishment of those whose ‘origin, sentiment or citizenship’ assigns them elsewhere” (*There Ain’t No Black* 45). Young, on the other hand, is more positive about the inclusiveness of Englishness, claiming that:

Though it is anachronistic to use the term “ethnicity” [...] the English definition of themselves in terms of an English race was so elastic as to have only a tangential relation to biological racial science. This is not to say that English ethnic or racial identity did not involve forms of racism, racist assumptions of superiority, both of which increased in the late nineteenth century. To affirm the liberal tradition does not require the denial of its residual racism. It does help explain, however, why, in the second half of the twentieth century, it was comparatively easy to transform it in a positive way. (xii)

Young further points out that Englishness has historically been a concept fashioned by “a long-distance nationalism”, by a “far-off diasporic community” of those “who were precisely not English, but rather of English descent: the peoples of the English diaspora moving around the world: Americans, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and even, at a pinch the English working class” (1). As I shall demonstrate, *In Every Face I Meet* delves into the dilemmas of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, racism, class and gender oppression in interesting ways that may be put into conversation with some of the points made by Gilroy and Young.

Though the positions of Young and Gilroy may be seen as contradictory, there is a sense in which they may be read as complementary. Englishness may have been a flexible category as Young suggests, but from the fifties onwards it did not extend to black and Asian immigrants, even while such immigrants were allowed to be British citizens. Yet English identity in the latter half of the twentieth century certainly became a field of contestation. The

beginnings of this movement can be traced in the character of Jason in Cartwright's novel, who clearly identifies with black American hip hop culture that is being taken up within the UK. In section "Two", chapter 2, Chanelle thinks about Jason:

He's bought himself a new LA Raiders jacket and cap and new sunglasses to go with the car. He looks great, in fact he looks ready to be in a video, with one of those rap groups he likes. Big clothes with plenty of pockets. The black boys don't want to look like they have financial worries. Jason always has nice new trainers and big jackets or hoodies. When they walk down the High Road together they are telling all the little white people that they are big and loose and free. They want respect. That's what they are saying. Chanelle wonders if they can win this one, but she never tells Jason that. Jason has started calling his mates his homies, or homeboys. He likes these American words. (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 80-81)

There is a parallel take on this in Anthony's narrative. Watching a rap group on MTV, Anthony speculates: "Rapping was a word for chatting once. Now it seems to be about scaring whitey" (114).

Through Chanelle's characterisation of Jason, Cartwright comments astutely on how young black Britons attempt to form a sense of ethnic identity by identifying themselves with American rap and gangster culture. Jason's robbery of Anthony is motivated by his desire to purchase a BMW, the ultimate gangster car. Although there may be an element of empowerment in Jason's identification with hip hop culture, Cartwright also makes us aware of the way in which it is interwoven with the globalisation of American mass culture, and consumerism: one has to have the right clothes, music and car in order to achieve this sense of identity. As Gilroy comments about contemporary British society, "an America-centred, consumer-oriented culture of blackness has become prominent" (*There Ain't No Black* xvi). There is also something quite absurd, which Chanelle comments on, in the way in which Jason puts on an American drawl, and uses American slang, as if "he's in a video or something" (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 140) which sometimes slips to reveal his Birmingham "Brummie" accent, "which doesn't sound cool at all" (156). Chanelle also suggests that it is the connection between gangsterism and hip hop which influences Jason's purchase of a gun: he buys the firearm because "he doesn't want to be left out" (77).

In Every Face I Meet evokes Gilroy's comments about "the new racism" most notably in the final section of the novel that deals with the trial of Anthony, with Capper as juror. Ironically, the defence presents Anthony as being "from the bedrock of [English] society," and the sceptical Capper, even as he reveals his own prejudices about "rootlessness" or cosmopolitanism, does not entirely question that Anthony is "from" England: "[Anthony and

Mike] were from that unassertive, rootless – to Julian Capper, somewhat sinister – group of people who inhabit southern England” (204). Capper at the same time reflects on how “the defence has tried to suggest [...] that Jason Parchment was not quite British” by producing evidence that his father was from Sierra Leone (201). Ironically, Anthony is the one who is an immigrant to England, because of his birth and upbringing in Swaziland, but his immigrant status is not marked because of his whiteness and English ancestry, and he is represented by the defence as epitomising “the bedrock of society” (204), while Jason is constructed as coming from “a racial group inevitably sucked into drugs, prostitution and crime” (214). Also, Capper notes that the defence is using crude strategies to represent Jason as a ruthless criminal due to his race:

The defence has also insisted on passing around [...] pictures of Jason Parchment’s clothes placed on a dummy without a face. These are supposed to make it easier to understand the sequence of events, but they are obviously designed to make him look sinister. In the pictures he is wearing a capacious hooded jacket, voluminous trousers, dark glasses and a baseball cap with “Los Angeles raiders” written on it. Round his neck is an ANC badge. He is wearing giant black Nike trainers. (202)

Ironically again, Anthony is himself African by birth and an idealistic ANC supporter, as he was born and raised in Swaziland, and much of his narrative focuses on his obsession with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, an important point that I shall return to later.

Some of the characteristics of “new racism” mentioned by Gilroy, as well as Robert Young’s suggestion that the idea of English ethnicity is often formed by those marginal to it, are clearly played out through the character of Anthony and the attitudes of his colonial parents. The section of the novel focalised through Anthony begins in a train station in London, a setting that evokes what Young would call the “dynamic identity of Englishness”, whose origins “rested in a terminus, a place of departure, in ‘the energy of perpetual motion’” (7). Anthony’s thoughts begin with a reflection on Englishness as he notes mentally that “English people are growing taller”, but we are then told that he is even taller than average (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 11). Although he could pass for English on account of being white, his height seems to suggest that he does not quite fit. Later it is revealed that he was born in Swaziland and lived there for his early childhood. When he discusses going to Cape Town to witness the release of Mandela with his friend Mike, he says: “Perhaps we can go to Swaziland where I was born,” and Mike replies, “[a]nd raised until you were an ankle-biter” (70). Following his reflections on height at the station, Anthony admits to feeling “plumped up”, with the reasons for this being firstly, that “England have beaten France 26-7 in Paris”,

and secondly, that “the government in South Africa has announced that Nelson Mandela will be released soon” (11). Despite being drawn into sympathy with his perspective through focalisation as a narrative technique, and despite the fact that he is, like Cartwright himself, an African-born colonial living in London, Anthony’s priorities are clearly to be questioned at this early point of his narrative. Pleasure in his life is generated through identification with the English national rugby team (even though he is “not quite” English), and behind the ordering of his thoughts – that rugby comes first as a source of pleasure and the release of Nelson Mandela second – one detects the subtly ironic narrative distance of Cartwright.

Anthony’s awareness of race also becomes apparent as he “marks” the black Britons on the train: “The blacks dress with verve. He admires it, although the young men in their hoodies and track suits, who seem to be more numerous by evening, frighten him [...]. He doesn’t think of them as English, although of course they are” (12). One wonders whether his “of course they are” is anything more than a politically correct afterthought, and the irony, of course, is that he himself is not English in the sense of being “from England”. We note here how, as Gilroy argues, “the distinction between ‘race’ and nation” (*There Ain’t No Black* 44) becomes blurred in English society. Anthony’s uncertainty as to whether the black men are “English” is motivated only by their physical appearance. He does not comment upon the white train passengers at all: it is almost as if whiteness is invisible.

Anthony’s mother could be read as expressing even more noticeable aspects of what Gilroy calls the “new racism”, but ironically, again, she is not actually “English”, but a colonial born in Lucknow, India. Her idea of Englishness is thus a colonial one, marked by nostalgia for Empire where certain people apparently knew their place. Struggling to deal with a rapidly changing multiculturalism in which divisions of class are also less immovable, she is particularly concerned about the presence of “black people and Oriental people” in the news:

Nobody told her that black people and Oriental people and people with funny accents were going to come shouldering their way on to her news. Even newsreaders are black. She has nothing against them [...] but she feels uneasy that people who don’t have good accents are allowed to read the news, never mind the importance given to them on the news. You can’t have a country where everybody is valued equally. (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 20)

One thinks here, of course, of Benedict Anderson’s idea that national identity is fostered through news media. Anthony’s mother sees the media as having so important a bearing on her life that she actually thinks of it as “her news,” and at the same time she wishes it to

confirm to her a sense of English identity as ethnic purity. Although the media is both representing a changing English society and actually playing a role in the creation of a multicultural nation, Anthony's mother does not accept the move towards a new society in which "everybody is valued equally" (20).

Englishness and Africa: Swedenborg, Nelson Mandela and Sarah Gertrude Millin

Anthony's upbringing in Swaziland has clearly influenced his attitudes towards race and ethnicity, though his attitude differs from that of his parents. Anthony idolises Nelson Mandela, whom he sees as offering a kind of Messianic hope, not just to South Africa but also to the rest of the world, and he compares Mandela to the Swazi king, Sobhuza, whom he met as a child. He believes that both Mandela and Sobhuza epitomise unspoiled nobility and wisdom, and that Mandela will therefore be able to provide a solution to the world's problems. Significantly, Anthony is also obsessed with the work of the Swedish scientist and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), whose influence on William Blake is well known. As Richard Rix points out, Blake was drawn to and influenced by Swedenborg's thought in many key respects, and one of these related to Swedenborg's view of Africa and Africans. Speaking of Africans as "a more Interior people than any other of the Gentiles" (qtd. in Rix 113), Swedenborg claimed that the African and the child both have uncorrupted insight and that both live in a state of "*Regnum innocentiae*" (114). As Rix argues, this idea may be found in Blake's poem "The Little Black Boy" from *Songs of Innocence*, which suggests that the black boy is better prepared for Heaven than the white English boy. Blake also apparently became interested in the adoption of Swedenborg's ideas about Africa and Africans into a discourse of abolition, and Swedenborg's ideas about Africa were taken up by radical Masonic members of the New Church who published a pamphlet – with which Blake would have been familiar – entitled "Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa under the Protection of Great Britain; but Intirely Independent of All European Laws and Governments". The pamphlet described a plan for establishing a colony on the coast of Sierra Leone founded and run on Swedenborgian principles according to which slavery would be abolished and the European and the Negro should coexist harmoniously. Notably, Chanelle's black pimp and boyfriend Jason Parchment (named on his birth certificate as Jason Ndongo) in *In Every Face I Meet* has family origins in Sierra Leone, and like Anthony, has certain lofty hopes about what Mandela will provide for the world at large, claiming Mandela as "[o]ur man [...] coming out to lead us home" and calling Mandela "*the Lion of Judah*", "*Emperor of Africa*" and "*my Haile Selassie*" (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 81). This evocation of Rastafari

culture actually ties up with radical Swedenborgianism as a “back to Africa” movement.

For the radical Swedenborgians, there were two types of slavery to be abolished: the slavery forced on the African, and the “Civil slavery” forced upon the European by the monarchy (Rix 111). This twinning – by which the European becomes the equally dark mirror image of the enslaved African – recalls not only, as Rix suggests, Blake’s statements about the French Revolution: “The millions of spirits immortal were bound [...] / To wander enslav’d; black, deprest in dark ignorance, kept in awe with the whip [...] Till man raise his darken’d limbs out of the caves of night” (qtd. in Rix 111); but also, of course “the mind-forged manacles”, and oppressive “Church” and “Palace” of Blake’s poem “London”. In other words, there is something of a reversal in the ideas expressed by both Blake and Swedenborg in relation to Africa: Africans are more in touch with the divine, and Europe, rather than Africa, is a place of darkness that enslaves its subjects. As I argue in this chapter, this same reversal may be seen to apply to Cartwright’s *In Every Face I Meet*. But Cartwright also gently critiques the Swedenborgian and Blakean idea of “the noble savage” through the character of Anthony. Anthony’s belief in Mandela as a Messianic solution is evident, with gentle humour on Cartwright’s part, in the conversation between Mike and Anthony:

*Nelson is our man, he says to Mike.
What position does he play?
Utility player. (Cartwright, In Every Face 69)*

Using sports jargon, Anthony jokes that Mandela can take on whatever role is required of him in the “game”. What does Anthony believe Nelson Mandela will provide? The answer is formulated very vaguely as some kind of knowledge and wisdom. He naively compares, for instance, the somewhat dubious “judgements” of politicians, with the more meaningful knowledge that Mandela will confer: “Nelson, he believes, will have picked up some more basic wisdom while he was breaking stones in the lonely beauty of Robben Island. We need it. Mike needs it” (69). Evoking here the image of the holy man who enters a state of isolation in order to attain enlightenment or commandments from God, Anthony decides that Mandela’s isolation from society on Robben Island will have nurtured his “wisdom”:

Maybe he was freer out there. [...] Islands are introspective. They are defiant. They have self-esteem. [...] [H]e is sure that Nelson will be bringing back from there, like Moses from the mountain, essential knowledge. [...] Nelson has been set free of all the humiliation and reverses that ordinary people suffer. (87)

Firstly, considering that it was never Mandela’s choice to be imprisoned, there is a certain

deluded Romanticism in Anthony's suggestion that Mandela was possibly "freer out there" and also that on the island Mandela has "been set free of all the humiliation and reverses that ordinary people suffer" (87). It is a mark of Anthony's geocentricism, relative privilege and cultural difference that he cannot imagine that, as a political prisoner kept in a small cell for twenty-seven years, Mandela was certainly not "freer" nor exempt from "humiliation".

Anthony's belief that both Mandela and Sobhuza have access to some sort of arcane wisdom seems to touch on ideas of the noble savage, of Romanticised primitivism. Amongst his nostalgic remembrances of Swaziland, some of the most vivid are Anthony's memories of Sobhuza's Ncwala (king-renewal) ceremony. These passages convey an uncomfortable exoticism in their focus on the dances, the slaughtering of the bull, and the suggestions of the hidden rites "they won't show to Europeans" (112). Anthony in fact asserts that Mandela, as a "Thembu prince" will have been "thinking about the meaning of this sort of ritual on the island" and will be "in a position to update King Sobhuza's beliefs" (175). Apart from his idea that Mandela will have gained some "previously undiscovered truth about humanness" (97) through his isolated position on Robben Island, Anthony is also hinting that Mandela, partially because of his ethnicity and association with a more "primitive" culture, is outside of so-called civilised society and therefore has obtained a form of illuminating knowledge through this. The connection with Swedenborg is made clear in the novel when Anthony, who appears to be going through some sort of mid-life crisis and is looking for "cryptic clues to the meaning of infinity", has been trying to read a pamphlet on Swedenborg (from the Swedenborg Society) which he finds quite dense, and muses that he "wants Nelson to answer Swedenborg's questions in plain English" (98). That he wants Mandela to speak "*plain English*" seems purposefully ironic, revealing how Anthony thinks Mandela will speak to *him*, personally, in his own language.

The sense of racism within the metropole as a legacy of colonial domination comes across in the passages that refer to Anthony's deceased father. Some of the most important insights we are given into Anthony's father's ideologies about race are provided through a significant intertext. In section "Two", chapter one, Anthony remembers how his mother sent him a poem, written by his father, which she says was enclosed in a book called *Three Bucks Without Hair*: "*Your father left this in a book he was reading. It was in a book called Three Bucks Without Hair. Funny title. Gives me the creeps, I thought you would like the poem*" (34). This short story collection by the now notoriously racist South African author Sarah Gertrude Millin, published in 1957, is in fact called *Two Bucks Without Hair and Other Stories*. The title story from the collection is set in Swaziland and the phrase "two bucks

without hair” refers to the supposed Swazi euphemism for a person, a “buck without hair”, who becomes a human sacrifice. In the narrative, two human sacrifices are made, a woman and a man, supposedly to help a chief, Sibane, retain his position of power, and a third character, an old counsellor, is also killed, in order to conceal the original crime. The murders are then investigated by the police and the witchdoctor who incited the crimes is imprisoned, evoking the homicide trial in *In Every Face I Meet*. Millin’s story is undeniably racist in its focus on the supposedly grisly, superstitious customs of the Swazi people. Yet not only was this text published in London by Faber & Faber, but her work was generally lauded in the United Kingdom and the United States. By providing this short story as an intertextual reference, Cartwright points to the kind of racist ideologies that were disseminated and reinforced in the metropole through colonial literature.

The subject-matter of the poem written by Anthony’s father interacts in interesting ways with the text in which it is enclosed, and with the novel as a whole. In the poem, Anthony’s father addresses an adolescent Anthony, wistfully musing on the end of his son’s childhood:

A Poem for Anthony

A blemish
 On your porcelain nose
 Your childhood’s gone
 After my youth.
 You are me.
 I am you.
 Without you
 I do not exist.
 Your flight has begun.
 Stay awhile.
 I am you.
 And you are me. (34)

On its surface, the poem is somewhat banal (“Your flight has begun/ Stay awhile”), and lacking in literary merit. Yet it is especially significant that Anthony’s father comments on his son’s child-like “porcelain” skin, on Anthony’s movement into adolescence through the appearance of blemishes. The image of a blemished whiteness here seems to be a symbol of nostalgia for childhood and innocence, which contrasts with the morally dubious behaviours and motives attributed to the “natives” in Millin’s short story. Once again, one senses Cartwright’s ironic perspective, and we are encouraged to occupy a position that is estranged from and critical of Anthony’s father. Anthony himself finds the narcissistic recognition claimed between father and son in the poem problematic and oppressive: “Anthony feels

leaden. His father's presumption drags him down: *I am you. You are me*. Did he really feel this?" (34). His interest in Swedenborgianism, and in the liberation of Mandela and the "abolition" of apartheid, may be read as an attempt to escape his parents' conditioning.

In *In Every Face I Meet*, Anthony's mother mistakes the number of "bucks" in Millin's story's title, changing it from "two" to "three". One could read the change in title as part of the social commentary in Cartwright's novel. Anthony's mother makes a mistake, but in Millin's story there are three deaths. Moreover, the "three bucks" could be read as referring to the three deaths in Cartwright's novel: Jason and Mike shoot each other, and Chanelle's son, in an accident strikingly similar to those occurring frequently in South African "township" and shack life, dies in a fire in her mother's home in London. Cartwright thus seems to suggest that so-called civilised society still retains "human sacrifice", which is clear in the suffering that Chanelle and Jason experience, and which results in the three deaths in the novel. In other words, in British society, the underclass is "sacrificed" in order for the middle- and upper-classes to prosper. Significantly, Anthony mentions anthropologist Hilda Kuper's book on Swaziland, *An African Aristocracy* (1947), which countered negative representations of African culture such as those scripted by Millin, in relation to the role Anthony sees Mandela playing in updating Sobhuza's beliefs (175). In *In Every Face I Meet*, one could say that Cartwright is reversing the gaze by turning an anthropologist's eye on British culture, challenging the ways in which it sees itself as civilized and Africa as barbaric.

Feminine Perspectives

The narrative of nineteen-year-old prostitute Chanelle/ "Carole" Smith plays a crucial role in Cartwright's commentary on class and race politics in early 1990s Britain. In the sections focalised through Chanelle, we are made privy to her thoughts and experiences, as well as some of the experiences of Jason, her black pimp and boyfriend. This in itself is an important social statement. If we think of Anthony's mother's conservative viewpoint that there are some people whose experiences should not be represented, it is significant that Cartwright chooses to narrate a sizeable section of the novel from the perspective of a member of the underclass. Chanelle is very aware of how others see her. She knows, for instance, that the "old ducks" who live in her block of flats blame its dilapidated state on "her kind" (118). Even more significantly, she notices their fear of Jason, whom they see as a "black devil" (118). The fact that it is old, white women who are expressing their fear of Jason is pertinent. As Gilroy points out, the image of an elderly white woman, beleaguered by intimidating immigrants, is a particularly charged trope in racist discourse (*There Ain't No Black* 49).

In Every Face I Meet expresses a theme common to many of Cartwright's novels, namely the concept of human striving for an unattainable idealism. As discussed in the Introduction, this sense of human striving towards an ideal is caught up in Cartwright's preoccupation with the value pluralist ideas of political theorist and philosopher Isaiah Berlin. Anthony clarifies this thought with reference to Mandela:

And now he sees clearly at last: Nelson is going to reveal that human striving – *My life is the struggle* – is the human condition. He sees now that to be human is to be compelled to seek the ideal, without any expectation of achieving it. (Cartwright, *In Every Face* 165)

We notice here how Anthony has appropriated and misquoted Mandela's words for his own purposes. In this case Mandela's manifesto, "The struggle is my life" (included in his 1961 press statement), is inverted. Anthony thus takes the word "struggle", denoting the organised struggle against apartheid, and uses it in a broader, more philosophical sense. This epiphany, however, is achieved in the misogynist setting of a strip club, which undercuts Anthony's philosophical realisation. As he observes a stripper bending over in a unique "defenceless posture" (164) to pick up her shoes at the end of the act, he reflects on how we strive to achieve "unforeseen" (164) moments, and realises that our "notion of perfection must correspond in some way to the nature of being human" (165).

Sexism is woven through Anthony's narrative. On his visit with Mike to the strip club, he comments on the physique of the dancer (160). He also recalls fondly a woman who followed his rugby team around as a kind of sexual mascot (45). His misogynist tendencies are revealed in his attitude towards Mike's physical abuse of his ex-wife Babette: "It pains him – not, he's ashamed to admit to himself, on Babette's account, but on Mike's. There's a certain honour in being hit, a vindication, but there's nothing but shame for a man who hits a woman" (145). Although he does express that hitting a woman entails "shame", he nevertheless does not sympathise directly with Babette. Soon after this, Anthony actually laughs along with Mike about the fact that Babette was "asking for it" (159) as she "literally" challenged Mike to hit her in order to prove his masculinity. Anthony realises the inappropriateness of reacting to this situation with laughter: "He could never defend it, but then, he thinks, why should I have to?" (159). Ironically, of course, he does end up having to defend his involvement in a violent incident in court, where he is not only interrogated on the subject of the shooting incident, but also by a feminist lawyer on his behaviour before the incident:

And so, just let me get this straight, while Mrs Babette Frame was trying to summon an ambulance at number 7 Jellicoe Terrace, and your wife was waiting for you at number 4 High Woods, South Godstone, Surrey, you were in the pub watching women strip naked?

Believe me it wasn't quite like that.

Just answer yes or no.

Yes. (211)

Apart from Chanelle and Julian Capper, the other character whose point of view contrasts with Anthony's is that of his wife, Geraldine, through whom three chapters are focalised. The first chapter from her perspective occurs after the domestic violence incident at Babette's house, and in this chapter we see Geraldine preparing dinner. The structured, domestic order of Geraldine's activities is set against both Anthony's unproductive and increasingly chaotic day, and the unpredictability of Chanelle's life. The contrast between Anthony and Geraldine's mode of being is made explicit when we learn that "[s]he's become more organised since she took the course [she is training to be a special needs teacher] while Anthony seems to be less and less interested in his job" (122). While Anthony is following an obtuse mental trajectory in order to counter his feelings of alienation, Geraldine is clearly concerned with the details of the here-and-now, and admits that she is "living a full life" and is "empowered" (126). Geraldine's second chapter comes after the section detailing Anthony and Mike's experience in the strip club, which is significant, as her viewpoint provides a contrast to Anthony's philosophising in that setting. Most of this chapter deals with her thoughts about their son, Fergus, whom she watches while he sleeps. The innocence of the sleeping boy and the peaceful, almost idyllic nature of the domestic setting contrast markedly with Anthony's rather debauched day, with the violence of the incident with Babette and with the later scuffle with Jason. Geraldine also comments in this chapter on Anthony's friendship with Mike, suggesting that his motives for maintaining the friendship are not entirely pure: "There's a certain conspiracy there: it helps to have a completely clueless friend because it paints you in a good light" (167). These thoughts cast doubt upon the way in which the nature of Mike and Anthony's friendship is presented by Anthony, and causes the reader to begin to see their relationship, and even Anthony's final misguided attempt to defend the honour of his dead friend by sacrificing himself, in a dubious light.

Social commentary versus Meta-commentary

In the incident that results in Anthony's trial, Anthony is driving home from the strip club, with Mike drunk in the back of his car. He comes across Chanelle, who claims that she has been raped and asks Anthony to drive her home, where Jason is waiting to abduct him and force him to draw money from an ATM. Mike suddenly comes back to consciousness and tackles Jason. In the epilogue, we learn that Anthony is on trial for Jason's murder, and Capper himself believes Anthony to be guilty. It finally emerges, however, through the revised statement of Chanelle/ "Miss Carole Smith", that Mike and Jason shot each other, and that a bullet passing through Mike hit Anthony.

The framing chapters of the novel, particularly the epilogue, focus the metafictional elements of the novel. Julian Capper, through whom these chapters are focalised, is a writer who shares his initials with Cartwright, causing the reader to question whether this character is an alter ego for the author. Capper, however, freelances for rather banal trade publications and is currently working on an article about mozzarella for *The Grocer*. Despite his apparent connection with Cartwright, Capper's perspectives are revealed to be limited and partial and his opinion of himself shown to be over-inflated: "Julian Capper is sure that his own summing up will be both concise and decisive. He is, after all, the only one among [the jurors] who has to marshal his thoughts systematically, almost daily, even if these thoughts, for example, on whether the new popularity of mozzarella is consumer- or trade-led, are not in the same category as arguments about society and its instruments of control" (216). Capper's name also suggests some of the functions of the framing sections of the novel: not only do these sections "cap" the novel, but "Capper" is also close to "caper", which has a set of meanings denoting a playful leap or dance, a game or frivolous escapade or prank as well as an illegal plot or enterprise, especially one involving theft. In the Capper narratives Cartwright playfully raises questions about limited perspectives and the partiality of truth – about the interface between truth and fiction – such that Capper's epilogue prevents us from forming a simple viewpoint about the narrative we have just read. Apart from Capper, some of the other characters' names point to a focus on writing, fiction and textuality. Jason has taken on the surname Parchment, probably as a way of trying to fit into a racist society, but through his surname the text also alludes to the parchment/ pages of Cartwright's novel itself, and compares Jason to a blank piece of paper on which the agendas and ideologies of different characters and groups mentioned in the novel are "written".

The denouement of *In Every Face I Meet*, with the seeming *deus ex machina* of Chanelle's confession and the final twist of Capper's realisation that Anthony was protecting

Mike's memory by standing trial, provides a false sense of closure. We cannot really be happy about Anthony's release when we learn of the horrific death of Chanelle's son, and, given Capper's and Geraldine's opinion of Mike and Anthony's friendship, the novel's last line, "[t]hat's how it is with friends: you don't dishonour their memory" (218), is certainly not unironic. Cartwright consciously uses a well-worn literary technique, the sudden plot twist that resolves the novel's problems, but subverts it and prevents closure through the presence of irony. Thus, while *In Every Face I Meet* provides the social commentary that its Blakean title promises, it does so in a complex, open-ended and metafictional manner, one that proposes the idea of truth as partial, and that also questions restricting the meaning of a literary text simply to a specific political or social manifesto.

Just before the novel's conclusion, Capper, echoing the role of a reader or even that of a literary critic, actually "reads" the case as "symbolic" and his listing of the themes raised by the incident in which Anthony is shot and Mike and Jason killed serves to destabilise and even resist critical analysis of the novel:

[H]e sees that this is a case which has important resonances. But there is a sense – he wipes his fingers to write down some bullet points – in which the case is symbolic.
The shucking off of responsibility for the weak and defenceless.
The contempt for the unsuccessful and under-privileged.
The promotion of business and market values above individualism.
The attempt to preserve the status quo.
The nostalgic belief in an earlier golden age.
Racial innuendo. (214)

Here the themes of the novel are made into "bullet points" that critique early 1990s British society. But there is also a clear pun on the gun violence at the centre of the novel, implying that oversimplifying analysis of a literary text may be violent, or at least harmful, in a sense. I would like to suggest that there is a connection between Cartwright's destabilisation of the narrative through metafictional strategies and his affinity with Isaiah Berlin's value pluralism. In the same way that Berlin critiques the ideological "grand narratives" of totalising philosophies or belief systems, so Cartwright uses metafictional techniques to prevent his text from being read in a unified, incontestable manner. Although Cartwright is making a subtle social commentary in this novel, he thus prevents his critique from resembling a political manifesto or fixed credo through his use of these postmodern techniques. As suggested earlier, the novel's diverse and contrasting narrative perspectives also contribute to the destabilisation of its narrative. Cartwright's use of postmodern, metafictional elements in *In Every Face I Meet* therefore complements his subtle critique of idealism in the novel. I shall

further explore this nexus between postmodernism and Berlinian value pluralism in my chapter on Cartwright's later novel, *Other People's Money*.

Chapter Two: “Proud, Ironic and Ridiculous”: Englishness in *The Promise of Happiness*

In *The Promise of Happiness* (2004), an omniscient narrative voice describes a group at a wedding in Cornwall as “held in place [...] by Englishness, which makes them proud, ironic and ridiculous all at once” (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 303). The novel is, on one level, a family drama and has been described as “a reinvention of that much-maligned genre, the Aga-saga” as it deals with “a quintessentially middle-class English family trying to cope with crisis and strained relationships” (“Reading Guide for *The Promise of Happiness*” 1). “Aga-saga” is a slightly derogatory term referring to English middle-class family sagas, which are often set in the countryside. The term was coined in 1992 by novelist Terence Baker to refer to Joanna Trollope’s early novels. In some ways *The Promise of Happiness* does include characteristics of the “Aga-saga”, as it focuses on the Judds, a typical middle-class English family, and some of the novel is also set in rural Cornwall. The Judds have had to cope with the imprisonment of their brilliant oldest daughter, Juliet, an art expert who has been tried for facilitating the sale of a stolen Tiffany stained-glass window in New York. The novel begins as Juliet is about to be released from prison in America, to join her family in Cornwall. *The Promise of Happiness* slips between first and third person narration and is focalised through the five Judd family members: Juliet, or “Ju-Ju”; the youngest daughter Sophie; the son Charlie; the mother Daphne and the father Charles. It is not only a family story, however. Cartwright subverts the expectations of the Aga-saga in this novel, in that he questions the ideas of family and nation which would be at the centre of such English family narratives. Cartwright uses this small-scale drama to explore broad concerns of national identity, critique idealism and interrogate the relationship between fiction and reality, and between literature and Englishness. Although part of the novel takes place in the United States (where Cartwright studied for a year), Cartwright’s main interest in this novel is with English culture. His position as a South African-born author allows him to comment on and critique Englishness and the way in which it is played out in and through the family unit. In this chapter I shall discuss how Cartwright explores the connection between reading and nationhood, and examine the intertexts that the novel evokes, particularly focusing on John Betjeman. The novel’s three settings of London, Cornwall and America will be discussed, looking at the role that fictions have in forming concepts of national identity. Lastly, I shall deal with the role of art and religion in relation to idealism and national identity.

Englishness, Intertextuality and Scenes of Reading

What the characters choose to read in *The Promise of Happiness* is revealing. Charles, for instance, reads Bernard Williams' *Morality: An Introduction*, because he is troubled about his own morality or lack thereof, and his wife Daphne reads about angels, which reveals her somewhat kitsch interest in spirituality. Since *The Promise of Happiness*, like most of Cartwright's novels, is mostly concerned with the inner, psychological journeys of the characters, rather than with external events, the insight provided into their reading matter helps us to understand their mental trajectories. More importantly though, Cartwright also uses acts of reading to reveal and critique the role of literature in forming ideas of nation. Benedict Anderson's influential ideas on how the written word historically gave rise to nationalism are worth invoking here. In his famous study, Anderson is particularly concerned with how the concept of simultaneity, as represented in the plots of novels, allows people to imagine themselves as existing as part of an "imagined community": Anderson argues that the "novel and the newspaper" were the forms that "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). Anderson argues that the growth of book publishing gave rise to "reading publics" (40) which to him formed "the embryo of the nationally imagined community" (44). Drawing attention to the significance of *mise en abyme* scenes of reading in the formation of national communities, Anderson refers to a tale in which a young man finds a newspaper account of a destitute man dying in a street: "the imagined community" here is "confirmed by the doubleness of our reading about the young man reading" (37).

Robert Young, in *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, also traces the important role that literature has played in the formation of concepts of Englishness:

So it was that during the course of the nineteenth century, Englishness was translated from the national identity of the English living in England into a diasporic identity beyond any geographical boundaries which included all the English who had now emigrated all over the globe. 'England' was no longer attached to a particular place, but rather to imaginative identifications such as the countryside, Shakespeare and sport – an England that could always be recreated elsewhere, so long, in the words of Seeley, as 'Englishmen in all parts of the world still remembered that they were of one blood one religion, that they had one history and one language and literature'. (231)

In this passage, Young traces how Englishness came to be embodied not in one's origin from England, but in "imaginative identifications" that took place partly through reading English literature. Young also foregrounds the role which literature plays in the "recreation" of Englishness both at home and abroad, a theme which is highlighted in *The Promise of*

Happiness.

The writer who is read by characters and quoted more than any other in the novel is the twentieth-century poet laureate John Betjeman. Betjeman's grave is at Trebetherick, the Cornish village to which Daphne and Charles Judd have retired. In fact his grave is actually in the church yard of the village's St Enodoc, and the church figures strongly in the novel. Several of Betjeman's poems, such as "Trebetherick" and his blank verse autobiography *Summoned by Bells*, are set in the village. The characters' responses toward Betjeman are telling of their attitudes towards a certain kind of middle-class, patriotic Englishness. For instance, Charles Judd urinates on Betjeman's grave, and Frances, a friend of his wife, wonders whether this is a form of "literary criticism" (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 182). He denies that there was a specific reason he chose Betjeman's headstone as a place to urinate, but one might ask whether Cartwright includes this humorous incident as a sly criticism of Betjeman's place in the canon of English poetry.

The younger Judds, in particular, are aware of how Betjeman's poetry and persona are caught up in a specific kind of elitist, exclusive, middle-class Englishness. Sophie, for instance, reflects that "Betjeman was [...] a raging snob, who spoke in a sort of code that made him the authentic voice of middle England" (197). Charlie, despite claiming to his lawyer that he detests Betjeman, decides that he does not hate his poetry as such, but concludes: "What I hate is Betjeman as part of the code: Betj and sea bathing and sand in the sandwiches and looking at churches and not owning a television and believing abroad is too hot and valuing ineptitude and plain cooking" (245). It is not so much Betjeman's poetry which Charlie critiques, but rather his invocation as part of a specific kind of stereotyped, old-fashioned Englishness. The nostalgic and patriotic aspects of this idea of Englishness often elide its potentially exclusive and class-prejudiced characteristics.

Cartwright, through his characters' responses, does not suggest that Betjeman necessarily espouses stereotyped ideas of Englishness in his poems, but that he has rather been constructed by the English literary field to represent certain national values. It is true that some of Betjeman's poems, such as "Slough", bemoan the habits of the urbanised working classes, criticising the men who "talk of sports and makes of cars/ In various bogus Tudor bars" (29-30). On the other hand, some works, for example "In Westminster Abbey", equally poke fun at the upper middle-classes, and at Englishness, which Betjeman parodies as standing for "Free speech, free passes, class distinction/ Democracy and proper drains"(23-24). He even sends up a mock prayer, in that poem, to "protect the whites" (18), thereby satirically criticising nationalism and racism in English society. In fact, the equation of

Betjeman with undiluted patriotism and snobbishness which, as Sophie and Charlie realise, points to how the ideological diversity of his oeuvre has been simplified as part of a nationalist outlook.

Betjeman's role as an icon of Englishness is subverted during the wedding at St Enodoc, when the guests are walking past his grave: "The poet laureate is buried right here: his grave buzzes with significance, as though bees are swarming down below. The message is one of Englishness, although as a boy Betjeman was terrorised because of his German-sounding name" (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 302). The poet's family's name was changed from the German sounding "Betjemann" to "Betjeman" during the First World War. Betjeman evokes Englishness, but this is immediately made ironic by Cartwright's allusion to the fact that Betjeman was not seen as embodying Englishness as a child, due to his German-sounding name.

In the same vein of destabilising Betjeman's iconic Englishness, Sophie Judd thinks of writing a "comic novel set in a bagel shop called *The Betjeman's Kosher Kitchen*" (151), which, very humorously, will be about the unknown fact that the "*poet laureate loved lox and bagels*" and "[a]s a break from the drudgery of writing royal poetry, in 1958 he opened a bagel shop in Bacon Street" (151). This imaginary novel is a playful critique of Betjeman's role as a hero of Englishness: Betjeman, the quintessentially English poet (with a Germanic-sounding surname), is recreated as a Jewish baker, operating out of multi-cultural Hoxton. Sophie's re-imagining of Betjeman makes this stalwart of Englishness seem rather ridiculous, and once more questions the authenticity of English national identity.

Cartwright's novel reveals how literature can both facilitate a sense of a belonging, to a national community, for instance, but also how it can play a role in expressing a sense of estrangement. This is particularly evident in the character of Charles Judd. Charles bears similarities to several of Cartwright's other major characters, for instance David Cross from *To Heaven by Water* or Anthony Northleach from *In Every Face I Meet*, in that he is going through some sort of mid-life crisis or post-mid-life crisis or crisis of faith, and feels detached from his existence, looking to various sources to stabilise his identity. His sense of estrangement, although represented as more abstract, is attributed to several factors. Firstly, his age causes him to feel isolated: "He's experiencing the pain of being one of those Englishmen who knows he is out of time" (64). Note here the emphasis on his national identity: perhaps he feels that his old fashioned English identity is out-of-date in the cosmopolitan society of contemporary England. Secondly, he has been isolated from the world of business through his forced resignation from his accounting firm. Thirdly, his

detachment is attributed to his boarding-school upbringing:

If you are sent off to boarding school at seven, as I was, as Daphne was, you never belong anywhere. He's come to think that his anxious, rootless feeling is a characteristic of Englishness of a certain vintage. It's why we talk in cheerful platitudes and avoid questions. It's pre-emptive. (95)

Ironically, although he sees himself as representing a “certain vintage” of “Englishness”, one of the main characteristics of this cultural identity is a sense of rootlessness. Drawing on Robert Young’s ideas about the non-essential, displaced qualities of Englishness, one might argue that Charles’s sense of rootlessness may be ascribed, in fact, to his Englishness. As Young argues: “Being English was always about being out of place, about displacement from an earlier point of origin” (19). He also points out that “we can put a finger on the secret of the curious emptiness of Englishness so remarked on in recent decades. It was never really here, it was always there, delocalized, somewhere else” (235-236). Charles is identifying with a concept so vaguely conceived that it provides little sense of stability or belonging.

Charles’s family notice his lack of engagement and his dissatisfaction with the world around him. Charlie says to Sophie: “Dad doesn’t want to be happy, Soph. There are some people who don’t believe in the promise of happiness” (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 22). This statement echoes the title of the novel, which in turn references Stendhal’s aphorism “[b]eauty is nothing other than the promise of happiness” (Stendhal 34). This phrase derives from Stendhal’s theory of “crystallisation” in *De L’Amour*; which details the process of falling in love. It is used more generally in the novel, however, to express an expectation of fulfilment. One might ask whether Charlie’s assessment of Charles is correct, however. He seems to be desperately trying to search for happiness, or at least for some kind of meaning, but he does not find it present in the here-and-now, which results in his feeling of detachment. We learn this when he reflects on how Daphne sees him: “Daphne doesn’t really think he ever engaged fully with the world [...]. Daphne’s suspicions are well founded. He has never at any time felt that the world he was in was the right one” (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 61). Charlie later describes Charles’s detachment in this way: “In his mind he is way above fish and flowers and socks; he’s Ovid on the Black Sea, dreaming of a return to Rome” (176). Once more, a reference to literature, in this case the poems written by Ovid during his exile from Rome, is used to express Charles’s sense of estrangement. Charles’s feelings of detachment and discontentment are linked to a sense that there is another, better world somewhere else. This is connected to his reading of literature, which helps him to express his

detachment, and also perhaps provides the impetus for his idealism and preoccupation with an ideal world. When looking out of the train window on to a rural English scene, Charles reflects:

It looks idyllic in the true meaning of that word. There's a poem they learned at school called 'The Wild Swans of Coole'. You always think the grass is greener, Daphne has said to him, and it is true that he is hoping there's more, which has led to a little nagging discontent all his life. When he was with Fox and Jewell he had a sign behind his desk, small of course, reading: *Somos mas*, We are more than this, the cry of the Chilean pro-Allende opposition. (95)

The word "idyllic" is significant in this passage, and it is noteworthy that Charles says he means it "in the true sense of the word" (95), as in, evocative of a poem describing rustic life – hence the comparison to William Butler Yeats's "The Wild Swans at Coole", which has a rural setting. Yeats's poem is also about ageing and change, as figured through the contrast between the speaker's evanescent life and the constancy of the swans whose "hearts have not grown old" (Yeats, "The Wild Swans" 22). One could argue that Charles thinks of this poem because he is concerned with his own ageing and mortality. Ironically, although Charles's recollection of the poem is inspired by his view of the English countryside, Yeats was of course an Irish poet, and Coole is an Irish setting. In fact, many of the intertexts evoked by *The Promise of Happiness* are not texts written by writers who were English in ethnicity. By referencing these authors, Cartwright is perhaps pointing to the way in which texts included in the canon of "English literature", those texts which are seen as having shaped "English culture", are often not originally from England. As Young points out, the "incorporative" nature of Englishness meant that "it offered an identification for many who responded to the push-pull rhythm of its circulating dynamic", including many transnational writers "as well as émigré intellectuals" (238). This incorporation of non-national English writers into the canon therefore destabilises the idea of Englishness as purely originating from England. One could even argue that perhaps Cartwright evokes these writers in order to place himself within the tradition of those not from England, who nevertheless write in English, often about Englishness, for a mostly English readership. Charles's recollection of the Yeats poem allows him to think about the concept of an "idyll", a place where "the grass is greener", which represents the "more than this" of the utopian dream. Charles seems to desire a world out of time, which could be associated with either a utopia in the future, or a kind of Eden or pastoral Arcadia in the past. Throughout his novels, Cartwright presents this desire to live in another world as an inherent human characteristic.

While the peaceful Arcadian idyll that Charles imagines is certainly a pervasive literary trope, so too are tropes of wilderness and barbarism. In *The Promise of Happiness*, these are invoked in subtle references to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad was, of course, not English by origin, but rather Polish, and *Heart of Darkness* is subtly referenced when Juliet Judd describes her fellow prison inmates as having a "lack of restraint" (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 103), a characteristic assigned to Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. She even more explicitly evokes Conrad's novel when she says to Charlie: "*Heart of Darkness* [...] was about Kurtz regressing, turning into a lesser form of evolution" (129). Juliet then compares Kurtz's experience to her horrific experiences in prison: "*That's what I felt like, Charlie. Maybe I have somehow become something else*" (129). The "something else" that Juliet feels she has become is a person lacking hope and a belief in the transforming power of art, as will be discussed further. Readers may, however, find the Darwinian reference here to "a lesser form of evolution" problematically racially-charged, and it is possible that Cartwright is also making us aware that Juliet does feel a certain sense of racial, class and cultural superiority to her mostly black, working-class fellow inmates. She comments in detail on the physical characteristics of black women. For instance, while reflecting on the suffering she endured in prison, she thinks: "I have seen the screaming pinkness of black women's mouths" (51). Juliet marks her fellow inmates as "black" and comments on their physical characteristics, in a rather disturbing sense, as if they were part of the horror of the prison experience.

Ironically, however, the "Heart of Darkness" here is the American prison, not Africa, so Cartwright could also be critiquing the discourse around geographical centres and margins. It is also worth noting that intertextuality with *Heart of Darkness* extends throughout Cartwright's novels. Three of Cartwright's earlier novels, which deal with colonialism more closely, namely *Interior*, *Look At It This Way* and *Masai Dreaming*, all have the same principal character called Timothy Curtiz, after Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. Curtiz has a clearly symbolic, troublesome, relationship with a woman called Victoria, who represents England and may also be compared to Kurtz's Intended.

In terms of the characters' attitudes towards literature, and the stories that they themselves create, Sophie is both an aspirant reader and writer. She is motivated to go to Oxford to study literature because, she thinks: "I need to read, to be told what to read. I believe there is some truth in literature" (274). She is thinking of writing a novel about her own experiences of life in Hoxton, or a short story about her experience in the advertising world (77). There is a sense in which we read both the content of the short story and part of

the novel, as we are provided with details of both parts of her life. The reason that Sophie gives for choosing these subjects, is that: “Writing, everybody says, should be about something you know” (77). This is perhaps an ironic self-reference on Cartwright’s part. Many aspects of his novels draw on some of his biographical details. In describing Sophie’s job, for instance, he is drawing on his own experience of working in the advertising industry.

Just as Sophie believes that reading is a powerful experience, so she thinks that writing is potentially transforming: “So many people seem to think writing is a way of changing their lives. And maybe I do too” (77). Her stories, which appear to be unwritten, and only exist in her mind, have not changed her life yet, but they certainly help her to make sense of her existence. She sees her life in terms of literature: for instance, she thinks she is living in a “chick-lit novel” (191) when she is cleaning her flat before her mother arrives. The chapter in which this occurs begins with what are presumably the opening lines of this imagined novel: “A day in the life of young, single, Sophie Judd, unemployed writer, in London’s Hoxton. Her mother is coming to stay. She is super-stressed. She has to clean the flat and have her nose ring removed” (190). Sophie realises the gap between reality and literature though. She knows that although her mother will see the dirt in her flat, “she won’t don a pair of Marigolds and a pinny, as chick-lit would demand” (193). Later, she returns to this mental chick-lit novel, when she thinks of herself in the third person: “*Sophie Judd hasn’t had much sleep. She’s tired after a one-night stand*” (267).

Sophie thinks about writing two other novels. Firstly, “*Hard-Wired in Hoxton*, Jane Austen re-written” (194) will be “about people who believe they have some choice, but are in fact programmed” (194). This is perhaps a commentary on part of some of the characters’ actions in the novel. The Judds all appear to be playing certain roles within the family, and are “hard-wired” in that sense. Secondly, as mentioned, she thinks of writing *The Betjeman’s Kosher Kitchen* (151). It is worth noting how both of these novels reference the English setting. Interestingly, *Hard-Wired in Hoxton* is “Jane Austen re-written”: Sophie aims to take elements of an iconic English writer’s style and subject-matter, perhaps including the wry tone, domestic settings and social commentary of Austen’s works, and rewrite them for a contemporary audience. This project is perhaps a parallel of Cartwright’s intention to “reinvent the Aga-saga”. This points once more to the role that literature plays in forming ideas of national identity, a sense of an “imagined community”, to reference Anderson: Sophie sees a thread of continuity linking her proposed novel to those of Jane Austen.

The other writer figure in the novel is Davis Lyendecker, Juliet’s ex-lover, who has written a critically acclaimed novel, and who teaches creative writing. Davis has, like Juliet,

lost his faith in the power of art, and specifically in literature. Juliet knows that Davis once believed in “the transcendent power of art” (109). More specifically, she sees that: “Through literature, he believed, understanding is possible, although the nature of that understanding is necessarily limited” (110). This is an interesting way of putting it, as this implies that literature, unlike other sources of meaning, for instance religion or political beliefs, does not insist on complete understanding, but allows for diversity and imperfection.

Davis writes a short article on his relationship with Juliet, which is included in full in the novel. The inclusion of Sophie and Davis’s writing in the novel makes one aware, in a metafictional manner, of the fact that we are reading a piece of fiction, by foregrounding the mechanics of writing. The references to writing in the novel also relate to another, more complex theme: the fact that stories, whether in the form of the media, literature or film, make us see the world in a specific way, and that we use stories to make sense of reality. Several of the novel’s characters seem particularly perceptive of the way in which our identities are constructed in ways that are similar to the creation of fictional narratives. Davis’s story includes a number of comments on the way in which stories and “real life” intersect and interact. He quotes from Philip Roth’s *The Facts*: “And as he spoke I was thinking, the kind of stories that people turn life into, the kind of lives that people turn stories into” (210). He goes on to say that: “My own life has turned into a story. The woman I loved had her life turned into a story” (210). Davis proceeds to tell the story of his relationship with Juliet and the reason that he did not appear on the witness stand to defend her, beginning his narrative with: “This is how it happened: these are THE FACTS in as far as I am able to describe them. They seem to come, nevertheless, from a fiction” (210). The thin line that exists between the real and the imagined, the truthful and the fictional is frequently emphasised in this novel. When Juliet reads this article, a significant *mise-en-abyme* moment occurs: we are reading her reading the article, which is about the nature of writing.

Davis is frequently compared to American modernist author William Faulkner: so repetitively that one cannot help perceiving an underlying intertextual link between *The Promise of Happiness* and Faulkner’s novels. Davis is described as “Faulkner obsessed” (109) and he speaks in a manner replete with what Juliet calls “Faulkner folkiness” (167). Not only does Davis seem to model himself – in an almost parodic way – on the figure of Faulkner as a typically Southern author, but the Judd family could possibly be compared to the families of the Old South in William Faulkner’s novels. *The Sound and the Fury*, for instance, narrates the decline of a family, whose Southern values are shown as vulnerable to corruption. In the same way, the supposed English middle-class values which the Judds are seen as upholding

do not protect them from the trauma of Juliet's arrest and imprisonment. One can detect the intertextual link between these two novels in more specific plot elements, too. In *The Sound and the Fury*, the characters incestuously name their children after themselves: Mr Compson senior is named Jason, as is his second son, and Caddy names her child after her brother Quentin. In *The Promise of Happiness*, Charlie is likewise named after his father. Juliet is also called "Ju-Ju", a similarly childish nickname to Candace's "Caddy" in *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin's obsession with Caddy in the Faulkner novel also has an intertextual parallel in the incestuous overtones of the Judd family dynamics. Charles, for example, is described as having sent Juliet a "love letter" (9) and Juliet sees that "fathers and daughters" have a kind of "love affair" (44). These references to Faulkner not only contribute to Cartwright's depiction of the Judd family as a flawed microcosm; they also play a role in the novel's constant comparison of the English and American contexts.

Londoners in Cornwall; Englishmen in New York

The three major settings in *The Promise of Happiness* are America (New York, and the prisons in New York State), London and Cornwall. As suggested above, the relationship between America and England is particularly significant in terms of contrasting and comparing the two contexts. Cornwall, on the other hand, a location which significantly re-appears in *Other People's Money*, is represented as epitomising nostalgia for a certain kind of white, middle-class English village life. This is interesting, even ironic, as some Cornish "nationalists" see Cornwall as actually not part of England at all. The Judds are not in fact Cornish, but come to Trebetherick to retire, because they used to spend their summer holidays at the seaside village. The village represents a nostalgic idyll of the English seaside, a type of rural retreat for middle-class people from the hubbub of the cities.

Daphne reflects on the way in which she saw Cornwall when first moving there: "When they first came to live here she thought of herself as living out on the fringes of a map. Now she sees herself at the centre of her own world. The map has changed, so that it's London which is remote and unreal" (16). Cartwright is very perceptive, perhaps due to his own transnational position, about the relative nature of the centre and margin. Here it would be enriching to refer to Robert Young's discussion of the relationship between London and the rest of England. Young quotes Henry James (significantly an anglophile American) on London:

It is perfectly open to him [the London-lover] to consider the remainder of the United

Kingdom, or the British empire in general, or even, if he be an American, the total of the English-speaking territories of the globe, as the mere margin, the fitted girdle. (Qtd. in Young 4)

Young discusses James's comment as follows:

Not only Britain itself, therefore, but the entire English-speaking world exists, according to James, in suburban relations to the capital: on the one hand its 'mere margin', but on the other, a girdle, centred on the capital, that has been fitted around the globe. London becomes the navel of the world, the terminus from which all English people originate, and to which, in spirit if not in body, they return. (4 -5)

London, as in Daphne's original thought-map, is at the centre, with the rest of England and the world radiating out of it, or encircling it. Yet this relationship is reversed when she has lived in Cornwall for some time.

Sophie, on the other hand, thinks of England as more properly represented by the urban landscape of London than by rural settings. Yet this is not the "historical" and mythological capital, but rather a place marked by the banalities of modern life. As she looks out of the production studio window, she reflects:

People think of England as historical, green, thatched. I don't know what all, but this is England too: a car park full of pointless little four-wheel drives [...] and behind them a blank brick building, an alleyway full of rubbish, two giant bins overflowing, a sodium light, not so much illuminating as staining the area around. (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 28)

The setting which Sophie is looking at is opposed to the apparently innocent, scenic countryside. This implicit contrast is also clear when Sophie's flat and its surroundings in Hoxton are described. The multiracial, cosmopolitan, economically downtrodden Hoxton is contrasted with the posh golf course, club and restaurants of Trebetherick, a contrast which is heightened when Daphne visits Sophie. When Daphne and Sophie go to a Thai restaurant in Hoxton, Sophie notices: "The waiters seemed to recognise something English in Mum that had been lost forever in Hoxton – if it ever existed – and they were very attentive to her" (198). It is interesting that the waiters see Daphne as "English" as if they, and their fellow Hoxton residents, are outside of Englishness, whereas Daphne, simply because of her whiteness and more formal dress and manners, is seen as embodying English identity. While Young argues that Englishness is by its nature an inclusive, multicultural "incorporative identity" (238), Cartwright reveals that this depends on what you see as "English". While Sophie may see her cosmopolitan, urban environment as completely English, the waiters and Daphne see Englishness as something that although intangible, has to do with middle-class

values, whiteness, the countryside and poets such as John Betjeman. In fact I would reiterate, as I have hinted at in the discussion on Betjeman, that Cartwright is specifically critiquing an idea of Englishness which reads “English” as a synonym for “white, middle- or upper-class, and born in England”. Even if, as Young argues, “Englishness was created for the diaspora – an ethnic identity designed for those who were precisely not English, but rather of English descent” (1), Cartwright reveals how whiteness and middle-class values are still frequently associated with Englishness.

The way in which aspects of Englishness are aligned with whiteness and class-aspiration is also evident in how the Judd family constructs as foreign and “other” Charlie’s Latin American fiancée, Ana. She is described as exotic, dark and sensual. Even Charlie realises that “Ana will always be, at some level, a stranger” (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 135). Sophie contrasts herself with Ana directly: “Ana is dark and voluptuous. Ana – Mum said – has smouldering beauty, as if beauty on this scale can only mean trouble. Sophie feels pale, drained of colour, when she is near Ana” (151). Soon after this Sophie also wonders, “[p]erhaps she’s an Inca” (153), and Ana is also described as “animal” and “primal” (153). In this description, where she is seen as coming from an ancient tribe, Ana becomes racially “other” in some deep physical and primal sense. Sophie is aware of how she, and her family, set themselves apart from others. Prompted by her own mental description of Ana, she reflects: “My God, we are a terrible family. We’re clannish and critical. Even Mum believes we are from some natural aristocracy. And Dad is pulling up the drawbridge against the barbarians” (157). Sophie’s mental critique of this racial othering and of English patriotism comes across in her humorous reflections on Charlie and Ana’s wedding. As she sits in a traditional English pub with Daphne and Ana, she mentally describes the message that she thinks the wedding is sending:

[L]ook, Charlie Judd and his Jennifer Lopez have come to old England for a blessing; look, Juliet Judd, so cruelly treated, has returned for atonement; look, the Judds are where they belong, after a few glitches. Englishness has healed them all! Jerusalem! (157)

The ironic, somewhat parodic tone of Sophie’s words prevents us from reading the conclusion as either celebratory atonement, or as a vindication of Englishness. She concludes this reflection with: “I am pissed. I am turning into a discount William Blake” (157), obviously referring to her exclamation of “Jerusalem!” which references Blake’s patriotic poem beginning: “And did those feet in ancient time”. Blake’s elevated style and his patriotic

subject-matter are evoked here in a parodic manner, so as to question the idea of Englishness and the role of the wedding as a means of emotional and narrative closure.

The relationship between England and the colonies, and the way in which it worked historically to develop ideas of Englishness, is also foregrounded in the novel. Daphne notes how the strict rules imposed by her parents' generation ("*You must eat up; you must sit up straight*" (97)) were in place due to the fear of the "other": "It was as if moral chaos was always threatening. Charles said it was the effect of having had an empire: the unknowable was lurking beyond the firelight; the fuzzy-wuzzies were ready at any moment to reclaim the wilderness" (98). The family, with its boundaries and rules, is represented as protecting Englishness from attack. Notable here is the mention of the "wilderness" which the racial "others", the "fuzzy-wuzzies", are seen as promoting. Tropes of the wilderness and the garden have historically been associated with colonialism, as has been briefly mentioned in the discussion of the novel's intertextuality with *Heart of Darkness*. In imperial thought, the colonies are seen as the wilderness, in which chaos and moral dissolution must be domesticated by the colonisers. England, on the other hand, is represented as a garden, which is neatly cultivated, symbolic of its supposed civilisation and moral uprightness. This idea of England as a cultivated garden under potential siege by the wild "other" is ironically evoked in the novel, in that the Judd's garden is being besieged by literal "fuzzy wuzzies" in the form of the rabbits which are destroying their lawn. In the flashback detailing Charles and Daphne's reaction to Juliet's arrest, the moment of greatest chaos, confusion and shock in the novel, the rabbits make a significant appearance. As Daphne watches Charles after they have learnt the news, she notices that "[o]utside the bunnies are advancing boldly with the night, or perhaps in anticipation of the collapse of order" (57). This is an ironic and humorous image, as the same bunny rabbits which epitomise the pretty, quaint English countryside are depicted as ominous harbingers of disorder. It also perhaps suggests that the perceived threat of the "other" was absurd.

The novel's characters, particularly Juliet, who is a transnational, having settled in America, often compare England with America. These comparisons, in which America is played off against England, contribute to Cartwright's commentary on Englishness. Juliet compares English snobbishness and American entrepreneurship in the following passage:

In America you don't just travel to get somewhere, you travel in the expectation of reward and fulfilment. When Ruskin said that the railway had allowed the fools of Buxton to visit the fools of Bakewell, and vice versa, he had missed the point. Typically English and snobbish too. Although – as Dad liked to say – the English are

losing the restraints that once bound them. (68)

This passage reveals both Cartwright's ideas on the difference between American and English outlooks, as well as how both Juliet and Charles see the two national cultures. Juliet believes that Americans are focused on achieving "the promise of happiness" – "the expectation of reward and fulfilment" (68) – and that this pursuit often involves the journey rather than the destination. By referencing Victorian art critic John Ruskin's "snobbish" (68) comment about the Derbyshire railway which allows "every fool in Buxton" to be "at Bakewell in half-an-hour, and every fool in Bakewell at Buxton" (Ruskin 5), she is not so much revealing that the English look down on travel, but rather that class prejudice can prevent social mobility. Ruskin presumably uses "fool" as a synonym for "uneducated working-class person". A working-class person can leave Bakewell, and go to Buxton, with no hope of changing their status, whereas the optimism and social fluidity of the so-called American dream means that even a simple train journey is charged with expectations of betterment. Because of her transnational position, Juliet is more aware of these differences. She does suggest, however, that the old class prejudices of England are being eroded, and that the English are losing their "restraints" (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 68), which is perhaps another slightly ironic reference to *Heart of Darkness*, but also evokes the idea of Englishness as opening up in the inclusive sense analysed by Young. In this passage Juliet is echoing her father's ideas, and significantly, after he has fallen into a river and almost drowned, Charles thinks about the growing lack of restraint he sees around him: "[H]e sees that other worlds were once beyond the imagination. Now you are free to fall in a stream or fuck a Vietnamese hooker or steal a Tiffany window. This is the age of possibility" (186). Although his examples are intentionally absurd (surely it is possible to fall into a stream in any era), his anxiety about the world around him not conforming to his expectations is certainly connected to the changes he witnesses in English society.

Another factor which destabilises the idea of Englishness as the preserve of a certain class of person living in England is the way in which Englishness can be assumed. As with the canonization of English writers who are not from England, the ease with which Englishness can be put on by those not from England questions its validity as a strictly *national* concept. Young argues that "authentic Englishness was itself transformed into a mode of masquerade that was best performed far from home, a global identity into which others could always translate themselves, however distant from England their place of birth" (3).

This idea of performed Englishness applies both to colonials who take on Englishness, and also to those born in England who travel elsewhere. Cartwright is also perceptive of the way in which one's national identity appears heightened, even performative, in a foreign context. Juliet realises, when she meets Richie, an English art gallery owner in New York, that: "In New York Englishmen adopted the manner of Englishmen in films; there were really only two kinds, the good-looking, slightly foolish public-school boy in suede boots or the cocky hard man, short spiky hair and leather" (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 69). The American context seems to cause Englishness to become a parody of itself, which reveals the way in which national identity is constructed and performed, and also draws attention to the presence of national stereotypes, projected onto one nationality by another.

Significantly, Cartwright has his characters recognise that Englishness is performed, not only abroad, but also within England itself. Sophie thinks that Chelsea is "a part of town where Englishness still survives, but in a pantomime costume" (152). This is perhaps because Chelsea's upper-class accoutrements have been so denigrated and parodied in literature and the media so as to seem absurd and out-of-place. Charles likewise sees their life in Cornwall as a kind of "pantomime" (14), filled with farcical and predictable characters. Daphne points out that he saw their London life in the same way. Later, Charles uses the same term when their neighbour Frances brings him a sponge cake in a floral-decorated tin, while he is wearing his striped dressing gown: "We're stuck in a fucking pantomime, he thinks" (226). It is worth bearing in mind that a pantomime is not just a performance, but one that includes parodic, exaggerated elements. Perhaps this has to do with Charles's sense that a "real" England exists somewhere else – that there is an essence upon which the fluid and unstable idea of Englishness is based. However, as Young points out, this is a faulty conclusion, as there was never such a thing as a "homogeneous traditional Englishness". Rather:

[B]eing English is something that you can 'put on': it is a perpetual process of becoming, a pursuit of authenticity in which the copy is allowed to be as authentic as any original. Being English was always about being out of place, about displacement from an earlier point of origin. (19)

As suggested previously, then, Charles feels "out of place" precisely because he feels authentically English, not because he is living in a world that is not somehow real or meaningful.

Simulacra and Stories

In the sense that literature and the media have a role to play in the characters' feeling that they are living in an existence that is not quite real, I would argue that Cartwright's novel could be put into conversation with Jean Baudrillard's philosophies as set out in *Simulacra and Simulation*. According to Baudrillard, signs no longer only represent reality – they create a simulated reality, while reality becomes an imitation of the sign. Baudrillard argues that simulation is “the generation by models of a real without origin: a hyperreal” (1). He further explains: “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real” (2). In other words, representations become so involving that we do not just see the world as represented by signs, we actually see ourselves as existing in the world of signs. I am not arguing that Cartwright's novel directly plays out Baudrillardian theory, but the novel does draw attention to the way in which we see reality as if it is already coming to us second-hand, mediated through a world of media and cinematic images and fictional narratives.

Juliet realises that her “crime” was turned into a narrative by the court that has created a reality even in her own mind. The following passage is worth quoting in full, as it outlines exactly what she thinks this narrative consisted of:

Americans, and not only Americans, are increasingly prone to see events in the real world through the infantile syllogisms, of television and film. In this case three lovable wise guys from Queens [...], just goodfellas, minor criminals in a long and honourable tradition, knock off a cemetery in Flatbush. They have no idea what they are stealing, until a highly educated Upper East Side broad, from Old England, from Oxford no less, where ole Bill Clinton was a student, where another slippery customer, Jay Gatsby, claimed to have studied, makes the honest endeavours of these chumps into a major crime. That's how it plays. And the judge understands her part: it's payback. Her words, addressed to the fidgety, obese, absurd jury, crudely suggest whose side they should be on. She offers them the opportunity to strike a blow for the little guy. And they do. They place Juliet Judd at the centre of the crime. They have, with a little help, turned the events from something complex into something familiar: A STORY. And she is led away in manacles because a story needs a recognisable ending. (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 162)

We see here that Juliet is perceptive as to how the prevalence of stories, particularly the more “infantile”, simplified stories of American film and television, cause us to retell events in a certain way. Her references change from the gangster stories in film and on television, to political stories in the news media through the mention of Bill Clinton, and then to literature in the form of *The Great Gatsby*. Cartwright is demonstrating how narratives garnered from

different semiotic sources are used to read events in a certain way, often to push forward a certain agenda. These are particularly cultural and national stereotypes. The “goodfellas” are the heroes of American crime films, while Juliet is compared to duplicitous Jay Gatsby, who put on Englishness (claiming to have studied at Oxford, calling people “good sport”) as a disguise. As Charlie reflects: “The way the trial was arranged she was given the role, familiar from the funny papers, of evil genius. It helped that she had a hoity-toity accent, in American movies usually an indication of duplicity” (35). Despite Cartwright’s insistence in the novel on the transforming power of literature, here he presents the negative potential of a fictional narrative, as a simplifying and flattening trajectory. The way in which Juliet’s life is destroyed by this simplification is clear when Charlie reflects on the trial: “Her life was being turned into a travesty. It was a cartoon with distorted joke voices and comic characters – loony toons – giving evidence” (33). Cartwright is perhaps presenting, in accordance with his critique of overarching “grand narratives”, the danger of limiting, oversimplified narratives.

Significantly, Juliet also recreates her own, fictional version of the theft, and puts herself at the centre of the crime itself, even though in fact she was only connected to the supposed theft of the window insofar as she helped to organise its sale:

In prison she sees herself as supervising this operation, actually present at the heist as three wise guys hack out the Uma Stimhouse Memorial Window. In her waking hours she wonders, although she has no interest in dream theory, why she is constantly replaying the evidence in her sleep. The feeling that she is in a cheap crime novel – an owl hooting, a police siren sounding on Flatbush Avenue, the damp cold of the mausoleum – is stronger than her rational mind can accept. Dreams seem to choose this mode, the simple narrative. And when she plays the events again, if play is the word, events which took place two years before she arrived in New York, when the grave-robber and budding comic, Anthony Agnello, with two of his friends, stole a nine-foot Tiffany window [...], she is always there in the damp, overgrown grass and nettles and seedlings, standing to one side as the three clowns get to work on the window [...]. (161)

She sees herself, in her dreams, as part of “a cheap crime novel” (161), but even when awake she recreates this scene with herself present. When it is revealed that she was not only uninvolved in the theft of the window, but that the window was not even stolen and the circumstances of the supposed theft were fabricated, the court case, with its narrative of stock characters, is exposed as a harmful fiction. The fiction falls apart, in a slyly metafictional way, because Juliet, on finally visiting the graveyard, observes that the trees in the graveyard “are far too small for owls” (204), whose hooting played an important role in Agnello’s narrative. Agnello’s story’s illusion of verisimilitude is fractured, and so its realism collapses. Juliet

realises, paradoxically, that she “was present at a fictional heist” (287).

Cartwright also comments on how America is seen through the expectations set by films, as if, in a Baudrillardian fashion, the signs supersede the reality. Charlie thinks that the American landscape passing him by as he drives along the highway is “like back projection in old movies, unfurling in an artificial but pleasing fashion” (31). He extends this use of film imagery, reflecting: “In a way it’s like American life: comforting, flattering and strangely unreal, as though you have entered not just a familiar landscape, but a film you have seen many times” (31). Because Charlie has seen America in so many films, when he sees the real country he perceives it as both “unreal” and familiar. Later Juliet reflects on this too: “[T]his is something about America [...], that your first sight of it is familiar, a country you have travelled before you ever arrived there” (265). Sophie similarly thinks that Juliet and Charlie are “in their own little road movie” (159), transferring the expectations of a filmic genre on to their experiences. Juliet, in a flashback, recalls meeting Richie in New York and commenting: “I sometimes think I have strayed into a Woody Allen film” (70). It is as if the quirky people she meets in the New York art scene are copies of film characters, rather than the other way around. Richie replies: “Life imitating art, et cetera. We don’t know the difference here” (70). Fictional representations of a country, whether in literature or film, play an important role in forming ideas of national identity.

Art and Religion: Critiquing Idealism

Some very important commentary about American culture derives from Juliet’s discussion of the Tiffany windows, which were the subject of her book and the cause of her imprisonment. Juliet significantly thinks “that you could understand a country and its people through art” (73). She specifically views the Tiffany windows as representing an attitude of “self-congratulation” (51). She sees the windows as representing both a Protestant doctrine of election, a sense of hope associated with American nationalism, and a more abstract idealism. As she says of one of Tiffany’s windows: “The glass itself was infiltrated with the express promise of happiness” (51). We see here the same characteristics associated with the expectations that Juliet says Americans have about travel. Later on, we learn that “Juliet believed that she understood the hunger for success and beauty and Arcadia and salvation, all of which Tiffany catered for” (75). The idea of Arcadia obviously has deep resonances with the novel’s wider use of the trope of a pastoral utopia. In the stained-glass windows, Juliet sees the evidence of idealism and a striving towards a future perfect state, literally, a prosperous nation-state. Later in the novel, she reinforces some of these statements

concerning the Tiffany windows: “They had American qualities which she quickly came to recognise: competitiveness and a lack of inhibition. The self-abnegation of Old Europe was gone. The Bible and its images were not, it turns out, admonition but congratulation for the elect (67)”. Here we see how Juliet realises the ability of art to reflect, and even create, a sense of national identity. The American characteristics are significantly contrasted with those of “Old Europe”, which highlights how Europe/England and America are played off against one another. Juliet also perceives, though, how the idealism contained in these windows comes up short in the face of “real” life. For instance she sees this “self-congratulatory” spirit as being particularly evident in New York, but comments that “[a]s a consequence it also had a large number of bitter, disappointed people” (67). The failure of the American expectations of fulfilment is also expressed through the fate of many of Tiffany’s beautiful windows, which are often stolen and vandalised. Juliet finds one broken window in a church that has become a crack den. This contrast reinforces the sense in the novel that idealism, although an inherent part of human aspirations, is not a viable state of achievement. It is significant that the failed idealism here is linked to an American spirit, pointing to the fragility of idealised national identity.

Although Cartwright seems to give a great deal of credence to the idea of art as potentially containing truth, Juliet’s attitude towards art is questioned in the text. As touched on above, her idealism, although it is an idealistic belief in the purpose of art, rather than a totalising, unified belief, is undercut by the injustice of her imprisonment. Believing in the truth of art did not prevent her from being affected by the lies of the “real” world. Charles thinks: “Ju-Ju had wanted to live in a world of beauty, but look where it has got her” (63). Juliet echoes this sentiment when she thinks: “André Malraux said that art is a revolt against fate: *l’art est un anti-destin*. That’s what I believed, but somehow fate got me by the throat anyway. Art was no help” (286).

Art and beauty are contrasted in a broader sense with the “chaotic and arbitrary world” (51). Part of Juliet’s personal trajectory in the novel lies in her having to regain faith in art again, because her ability to see truth and value in art has been shattered by her horrific experiences in prison. Juliet’s family give us insight into her former faith in art, and the word “faith” is appropriate here, as her love for art is often described in Romantic or quasi-religious terms. Charles remembers that “Ju-Ju had once said to him that beauty was redemption, and he had said arty nonsense, but he understood what she meant” (62). Daphne reflects that: “[F]or Ju-Ju, art and imagination were real and true” (91). Juliet’s loss of faith in art is reiterated throughout the novel. For instance, she thinks: “I have lost sight of the beating wings

of art” (51), comparing art, in a striking simile, to some kind of elusive, angelic being. In a more straightforward way she thinks: “In prison I lost faith in painting. I lost faith in the truth of art” (103). Yet eventually Juliet is able to say to Davis that, although she learnt in prison that her beliefs were “fragile”, she concludes: “I see that you can’t give up. There isn’t anything else” (238).

In the same way that Juliet’s ideals about art are gently and subtly held up to the light, so Cartwright critiques idealism in this novel, influenced as in his other novels by Isaiah Berlin’s critique of strongly held beliefs. There are several examples of disillusionment in the novel: for instance the failure of the “American dream” as imaged in the broken Tiffany windows, and also in Juliet’s belief in art not protecting her from the suffering of the “real world”. We also see a specific drive towards utopian thought in Charles’s outlook, in his belief that “the grass is greener” and that “[w]e are more than this” (95). The negative consequences of belief in a perfect world elsewhere become apparent as Charles is not content and is also estranged from his family members, particularly from Daphne and Juliet, because they do not conform to his expectations of perfection. As has been touched on in the discussion of the twin tropes of wilderness/garden, and pastoral idyll, utopian thought is frequently caught up in nationalist discourse.

Another way in which Cartwright critiques idealism in this novel is through his portrayal of religion, specifically the Church of England, as represented by St Enodoc. As its name suggests, this denomination of Christianity is ideologically entangled with English nationalist discourse. Young outlines the historical interaction between church and nation:

[M]any English men and women avoided crises of faith [...] by identifying Church and nation, indeed by turning the nation into their Church and their religion. The Church of England became in both senses the religion of England, and to some extent continues to fulfil this function today [...]. As John Wolffe observes, by the end of the nineteenth century many English people no longer separated their beliefs and loyalty to the Church from those to their country: Gothic architecture and choral evensong came to be valued as pillars of “Englishness” even by those sceptical of Christianity. (168)

We see in the novel how St Enodoc is shown as standing for Englishness, and how the religious aspects are almost overshadowed by these national and cultural associations. Daphne notes of her friend and fellow church flower-arranger: “For Frances the church has very little to do with God; it’s more a shrine to Englishness: flowers, history, familiar – if meaningless – hymns, your own kneeler and a sort of bracing draughtiness, long out of favour” (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 12). Englishness is shown to be a kind of a religion to which the

church is a “shrine” (12). The church also plays an important role in the novel’s conclusion, as it is the location of Charlie and Ana’s wedding. This venue is strategically chosen by Daphne. Charlie realises even before he is to get married that Daphne desires a kind of family reunion at the church:

Mum thinks that there can be some sort of resolution – the vicar has used the word “closure” and she has adopted it – if they can all get together in Cornwall [...]. She hasn’t said it, but he guesses she wants them to go to the church together [...]. She wants them – four and a half atheists – to go to the church for closure. They won’t be going to St Enodoc to ask forgiveness for Ju-Ju or to call vengeance on Richie, but to creep back into the fabric of life. The cool silence of Enodoc is a sort of Narnia, which will show them the way. (32)

I would argue that it is specifically the Englishness represented by St Enodoc which Daphne believes will result in a sense of “closure” (32) for the family. The use of literary terms like “closure” and “resolution” (32) to describe this event is, I would suggest, intentional, as Cartwright emphasises throughout the novel how we view the world through the frameworks of narratives. St Enodoc, which marries religion and Englishness, is in Daphne’s view the ideal place to help the family “creep back into the fabric of life” (32); in other words, to become conventionally middle-class and English once more. Eventually this scene of supposed closure takes place at Charlie and Ana’s wedding. Charles realises the symbolism of the venue: “St Enodoc, with its interesting dunes and its golf course and Betjeman’s grave and its sand-in-the-sandwiches-wasps-in-the-tea promise, was stuffed with barely suppressed symbolism” (120). “Sand-in-the-sandwiches-wasps-in-the-tea” refers to a famous line from Betjeman’s nostalgic poem “Treberick”, which describes memories of quintessentially English seaside holidays. When we reach the novel’s conclusion though, we have absorbed enough of Cartwright’s critique of Englishness to make us doubt the novel’s end as a moment of closure.

In the final chapter, in which the wedding occurs, the mode of narration changes from third-person focalised to a more detached perspective. This narrative perspective creates an expansive, almost mock-grandiose tone, which suits the culmination of Cartwright’s ironic critique of Englishness in this novel. Viewed from a narrative distance, the wedding guests, walking towards St Enodoc, are compared to “the prisoners on the River Kwai, held in place, however, not by an enemy, but by their Englishness, which makes them proud, ironic and ridiculous all at once” (303).

Chapter Three: “I Have Beliefs but I Don’t Believe in Them”: *To Heaven by Water*

In *To Heaven by Water* (2009), Justin Cartwright provides an estranged, gently ironic perspective on another dysfunctional English family. Despite the fact that its characters are English, however, the novel begins in Africa. This geographical beginning is significant, as England is subtly set off against Africa throughout the novel. In this chapter I argue that the novel’s chapters set in the Kalahari, as opposed to London, are infused with intertextual references to J.M. Coetzee’s critical text, *White Writing*. If there is an intertext with *White Writing*, however, one has to ask why Cartwright does not take up Coetzee’s challenge to people the landscape of Africa and why the narrative frequently emphasises the emptiness of the landscape, something Coetzee argues has been a typical trait of “white writers” in Africa. Why produce more “white writing” about the empty landscape? Aside from the characters’ attempts to understand Africa from a perspective outside of Africa, this complex novel touches on other themes that have resonances with the rest of Cartwright’s oeuvre. For instance, there is the idea of the “necessary fictions” of English ethnicity, and a subtle class commentary, as well as references to the possibility of transcendence through art or literature.

Irony and Humane Critique

One of Cartwright’s most noteworthy characteristics, across much of his oeuvre, but particularly evident in this later novel, is his slightly estranged, ironic perspective. His irony never becomes cynical, however, and retains an element of forgiving, gentle humanity. If we look at the life of the protagonist, David Cross, for instance, his behaviour is objectively potentially shocking and his character dubious, yet he is presented sympathetically in the novel. David is a retired television reporter whose dark secret is that he drowned his girlfriend in order to save himself back in the 1960s. We also learn that he frequently cheated on his (now-dead and also adulterous) wife. He eventually impregnates his infertile son’s wife, and then flees to the Kalahari with his eccentric brother for a few months to avoid the consequences of this action. Yet, through Cartwright’s adoption of a gently ironic tone and a narrative that is focalised through its main characters, including David, we as readers feel sympathetic towards David while simultaneously being very aware of his faults. His son, Ed, is likewise not objectively a sympathetic or morally-admirable character: he is a bored lawyer, cheating on his lovely, childless wife, Rosalie. The reader is nevertheless invited to empathise

with Ed, despite his flaws. This identification on the part of the reader is achieved through Cartwright's use of humour along with his often very moving and subtle depictions of human emotions and relationships.

Cartwright's use of irony also serves to undercut any moral certainties in the novel. People's beliefs about the world and themselves are questioned through a subtle distance between author and focaliser (and between reader and focaliser), thus contributing to Cartwright's general questioning of idealism across his novels, and to this novel's concern with delusions and myths. Even moments of the novel that could have been epiphanies are put into question, subtly, by the ironic perspective in which they are framed. Through his adoption of this perspective towards the characters of *To Heaven by Water*, Cartwright is able to present an English family humanely, with all its flaws. In doing this, he continues his preoccupation with presenting "the crooked timber of humanity", out of which "no straight thing" can be made. As was discussed in detail in the Introduction to this thesis and in *In Every Face I Meet*, this metaphor, derived from Immanuel Kant and re-interpreted by Isaiah Berlin, refers to Cartwright's insistence that flawed human beings cannot rely on totalising or uncontested ideals.

Cartwright's gentle irony is especially evident in his treatment of English people and of Englishness as a concept. I would argue that in this novel he further develops an anthropological perspective towards Englishness. One of the novel's epigraphs derives from the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and I would suggest that just as Bede attempted to trace the origins of the English church, so Cartwright seeks to outline the idiosyncrasies of English culture.⁴ A slight distance from his subjects, even though Cartwright has been immersed in English culture for decades, assists Cartwright to analyse Englishness, just as an anthropologist may benefit from a position of estrangement from the subjects he or she lives among and observes. One could argue that, in adopting this attitude towards Englishness, Cartwright may be doing something quite radical, since anthropology has historically focused its gaze on the non-European "other". Cartwright makes Englishness visible in his novels, and in doing so, reveals the fictions of national identity.

Interestingly, one of the characteristics Cartwright ascribes to Englishness is irony itself. Cartwright is perceptive as to how irony and humour help English people to deal with emotions, anxieties and even trauma. While reflecting on the intimacy amongst his group of

⁴ In Robert J.C. Young's *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, he touches on the role that Bede played in the history of English nationalism, by asserting that he "sought to create a unified English Church and English people" (168).

friends, who are known as “the Noodle Club”, David thinks of how: “[T]he English of our age [...] keep that sort of stuff at a distance with little ironic asides and jokes, a difficult habit to break” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 17). David also sees irony as a way of coping with ageing. While listening to his friend Adam’s jokes, he thinks that “there are various ways of dealing with approaching old age: the Anglo-Saxon way is to be ironic” (16). David’s daughter, Lucy, also sees irony as an important part of English social mores. When she goes on a date with her soon-to-be boyfriend, Nick, she thinks that “if they are talking like people in a British comedy – brittle and ironic – that’s OK with her: it’s undemanding and even restful, a familiar gambit” (169).

David is aware of how irony and humour can undercut idealism. When he thinks about the possibility of transcendence, of moving on to a “higher plane”, he considers that: “You couldn’t actually use that phrase: his children are attuned to all the ironies, so that almost any phrase can be derided: higher plane would fare very badly” (61). While David is thinking idealistic thoughts about living on a different plane of existence, he nevertheless sees himself through an ironic perspective – that of his children – and partly derides his own idealism. Another illuminating comment on irony within the novel appears when Ed, thinking of the weak jokes told by his colleagues, reflects that: “[I]t’s not human to lack a sense of humour” (162). Ed considers that his colleagues are “unaware of what somebody called the cleansing baptism of irony” (162). He goes on to explain: “This person, someone like Kant or Kierkegaard, said – approximately – that anyone who has no ear for irony lacks what is indispensable to being human” (163). This reference is to Søren Kierkegaard’s *On the Concept of Irony*, in which he argues that:

Irony is a disciplinarian feared only by those who do not know it, but cherished by those who do. He who does not understand irony and has no ear for its whispering lacks *eo ipso* what might called the absolute beginning of the personal life. He lacks what at moments is indispensable for the personal life, lacks both the regeneration and rejuvenation, the cleaning baptism of irony that redeems the soul from having its life in finitude though living boldly and energetically in finitude. (339)

One could see, in Kierkegaard’s argument, a validation of Cartwright’s ironic narrative distance. Irony prevents a life lived in “finitude”. Kierkegaard argues that irony is “indispensable for the personal life” (339) because it compels people to abandon unquestioned beliefs or answers, and forces them to take responsibility for their own claims about knowledge and truth. One could argue, as I have already mentioned, that Cartwright does the same thing; that his use of irony is part of a larger project of questioning idealism

and beliefs. This viewpoint itself is challenged, however, by Ed's realisation that his mother never understood irony and regarded it as "a silly artifice", but "in her own way she was the most human of us all" (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 163). Eventually Ed seems to reject irony, too, as he considers that he should leave London for Switzerland because it is "far too complex and ironic and racked a place for family life" (201). Even an affirmation of the purpose of irony is challenged in the novel, such that no certainty, ideal or belief – even irony itself – goes unquestioned.

It is perhaps already evident from the discussion above that, in drawing attention to the irony supposedly inherent in English social relations, Cartwright is both pointing out, as a type of cultural anthropologist, one of the characteristics of Englishness, and is also referring, in a metafictional manner, to his narrative's use of irony. He shows how irony provides distance and undercuts idealism: two functions which his narrative strategy of gentle irony achieves. This subtle metafictional strategy plays into the other metafictional aspects of *To Heaven by Water*, such as the novel's concern with the significance of fictions and literature.

England and Africa: National Fictions and "White Writing"

Cartwright also provides more overt commentary on the fiction of Englishness, in the same vein as the comments on national identity in *The Promise of Happiness*. The mythical nature of certain stereotypical ideas of Englishness is foregrounded when David listens to the aggressive complaints of a woman in the gym and thinks: "This is the authentic voice – one of many – of the people, this welling of grievance, obscenity and self-pity. England's golden age of politeness and deference and honesty was brief and probably mythical" (142). Cartwright recognises that fictions of England which propose that Englishness is synonymous with politeness, deference and honesty are motivated by the idea of a Golden Age, an Arcadian state when Englishness was unsullied by modernity, socialism and, presumably, by immigration.

Lucy, David's daughter, reflects on the way in which London, particularly, has been fictionalised. She observes tourists on the underground transport system, and reflects that:

[They are perhaps] wondering about the exact nature of this city with its innumerable secrets and compromises and illusions, and one of the illusions – widely accepted – is that Londoners know something – that this city has a kind of savvy and irony and tradition, not available (or wanted) anywhere else. (223)

Lucy reflects on how Londoners have been fictionalised as ironic and as somehow having a kind of arcane knowledge. The reference to "secrets" (223) of the cities also echoes the

prevalence of secrets within the novel. One of Lucy's most meaningful reflections on Englishness appears after she has experienced the trauma of witnessing the mock-suicide of her ex-boyfriend, Josh. She realises, because of the incident, that she is "not immune in any way to life's realities" (262). She reflects:

They may be killing each other casually with knives and guns down in South London, but here, in the still-living radius of her mother, most of us are terrified of randomness. We don't want to know about every awful thing. The other day, leaving Green Park station, she saw some tourist photographing the picturesque but unused red phone boxes. Picturesque on the outside; inside they were full of bottles, cans, prostitutes' cards and – in one – a huge human turd. She felt sick with anxiety. (262)

Firstly, it is worth drawing attention to the novel's ironic touch in Lucy's claim that "they" (the generalised "other" of the underclass) are "killing each other casually with knives and guns down in South London". The social commentary in this novel is less overt compared to that of *In Every Face I Meet*, but we do get a sense here that Cartwright, and even Lucy herself, may be gently critical of her class prejudice, and of her assumption that violence, or the threat of violence, does not disturb those who are not middle-class. We learn that she feels removed from the chaos of the world (262), and one could argue that part of this sense of detachment derives from her economic and class position within England. Secondly, the image of the iconic red London telephone box, filled with excrement and litter, is a telling image that demonstrates the fiction of Englishness. Like London buses and black cabs, the red telephone boxes became a symbol, especially for outsiders and tourists, of London, and even of England as a whole. The telephone box, however, has become outdated, forced out of utility by modernisation, and has itself become a place for the discarded and abject items of society. For Lucy, the littered telephone box represents randomness and elicits anxiety. In a larger sense, it suggests the degradation of Englishness as a meaningful category.

Other national fictions are also ironically challenged by the text. Before Ed moves to Switzerland, the kind of life that he hopes to enjoy there is almost absurdly Romanticised, as he thinks of it as consisting purely of husky racing and ski-ing. A revealing moment occurs when Lucy mishears Rosalie's abbreviation of the Swiss ski resort "Chamonix – Cham" as "Sham" (220), which is an ironic criticism of Rosalie and Ed's idealised vision of Switzerland. More significantly, however, fictions of England are contrasted with fictions of Africa in *To Heaven by Water*.

Fictions of Africa are particularly foregrounded in the two chapters set in the Kalahari, where David travels with his dying brother, Guy. I would like to propose that J.M Coetzee's

critical text, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* is evoked as an intertext in these chapters. Cartwright, because of his South African upbringing, shares the concerns of the “white writers” whom Coetzee calls “no longer European, not yet African” (*White Writing* 11), and Coetzee’s discussion in *White Writing* of the white English writer’s relationship to the landscape is particularly relevant to the chapters set in the Kalahari. Coetzee argues that:

The dominating questions, particularly in poetry, and most of all in English-language poetry, become: How are we to read the African landscape? Is it readable at all? Is it readable only through African eyes, writeable only in an African language? Is the very enterprise of reading the African landscape doomed, in that it prescribes the quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment? Behind these questions, in turn, lies a historical insecurity regarding the place of the artist of European heritage in the African landscape [...] – an insecurity not without cause. (62)

I am not suggesting that Cartwright directly displays this “insecurity” in his novels. Rather, *To Heaven by Water* self-consciously references *White Writing*, and explores the way in which “white writers” attempt to “read” the landscape, through the perspectives of its characters. Cartwright is evidently familiar with Coetzee’s *White Writing* and said in an interview:

Some people deny there’s any such thing as “white writing” but in fact there clearly is. White writing is a phrase used by John Coetzee [...]. It’s about the predicament of the white person in Africa – people who have been dropped down, willingly or unwillingly, in an alien environment, and who try to make an accommodation with it. (“Justin Cartwright on White in Africa”)

Cartwright’s self-proclaimed familiarity with Coetzee’s *White Writing* supports my argument that he is using *White Writing* as an intertext in a self-conscious way, though this is apparent from the text without necessarily having the confirmation that Cartwright has read *White Writing*.⁵

We see a parallel of the “white writer’s” endeavour to “read the landscape” in David’s attempts to interpret the African environment by comparing it to European landscapes and architecture, and in his brother Guy’s quest to elicit a kind of spiritual meaning from the landscape. David reflects on Guy’s relationship to the African environment: “His brother believed that the landscape and the wildlife out there were speaking to him: the message was never completely clear, that was the problem, but he never ceased from looking to the

⁵ Mike Marais, in his article, “Reading against Race: J.M Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, Justin Cartwright’s *White Lightning* and Ivan Vladislavić’s *The Restless Supermarket*” also notices coinciding themes between Cartwright and Coetzee’s work. He points out that Cartwright’s 2002 novel, *White Lightning*, like Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, deals with “[a] tension between the individual’s implication in relations that have been discursively inscribed in history, and a pastoral desire for transcendence” (275).

Bushman paintings to yield up the answer” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 287-288). Guy attempts to read in the “landscape and the wildlife” some vague “message”, however Africa is revealed as unreadable, or as imperfectly readable. Significantly, Guy puts the “landscape and wildlife” in the same category as the “Bushman paintings”, as if they are all natural, non-human artefacts. This coincides with his belief that the Bushman is “both in and of nature” (227). His problematic and Romanticised categorisation of a group of human beings will be interrogated in greater detail later on.

It is soon evident that David reads the African landscape through the prism of Europe. This Eurocentric attitude towards Africa is one of the characteristics that Coetzee ascribes to many “white writers.” Coetzee writes that:

What we encounter in Pringle and Dugmore is the first and most cautious stage in a self-defeating process of naming African by defining it as non-Europe – self-defeating because in each particular in which Africa is identified to be non-European, it remains Europe, not Africa that is named. (*White Writing* 164)

Both David and Guy compare the African landscape to English architectural or geographical features. In many of these comparisons, Africa is not described as “non-Europe” but is rather referred to in terms of the similarities some of its geography bears to certain European features. This kind of comparison is equally as “self-defeating” as the Europe/ Africa oppositions that Coetzee describes, as it is still Europe that is named, and not Africa. David, for instance, perceives that the rocks have “striations, ferrous red veins like those in a stick of Blackpool Rock” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 226), and we learn that “they remind David of urns in country-house gardens” (233). He calls the mountain a “rock cathedral” (226), and it seems that in this he is echoing Guy’s metaphors, as Guy says slightly later that the mountain “was to Bushmen what Chartres would have been to the locals in 1220” (231). Later, Guy continues the cathedral metaphor by comparing each part of the mountain to an architectural feature of a cathedral. A comment is made on this, presumably by David, although it is provided in the third person: “He clearly sets some store by the cathedral comparison, as if to say look, it’s not just in Europe that true spiritual values can be found” (234). Guy wants to assert that “it’s not just in Europe that true spiritual values can be found” but what he ends up describing is not “African” spirituality, but European forms of worship.

Guy also uses Wales as a reference point to describe the size of the Kalahari salt flats (272). This is followed by a comment on the comparison:

It's curious how very large areas of the wilderness are routinely described as being bigger than Wales; Wales has become a handy yardstick. In his career David found that countries were often described as the breadbasket of Africa if they could grow anything at all, or the Switzerland of Africa if they had a functioning currency. (272)

Here David's train of thought traces how European locations – be they Wales or Switzerland – are used as yardsticks to describe Africa's geography or economy. Guy, who is a writer (albeit not a poet, but an pseudo-academic writer of papers on Bushmen and Hopkins), attempts to make sense of the African landscape in the same way that “white writers” have historically done, by “reading” Africa through a European perspective, and of course, though European language.

Immediately after the above passage, Guy names Africa more explicitly as “non-Europe”, when we learn that he “has a mission to impress on his brother the spiritually expansive possibilities of open spaces and the limitations of life in a small wet country; he has in mind England” (272). Although in this formulation, Africa is seemingly validated as a “spiritually expansive” place in comparison to “small wet” England, Guy can only describe Africa's positive attributes by comparing its “open spaces” to England's lack of space. The problematic nature of designating Africa as a place of “open spaces” will be discussed in further detail shortly. Guy goes on to ask David whether he sometimes feels “cramped” in England (272) and although David answers “[n]ot especially” (272), when he returns to London we learn that “[h]e feels that England is unnaturally cramped” (287). This suggests that David imbibes some of Guy's views on the “spirituality expansive” possibilities of Africa, and also that he continues to compare England to Africa.

Although Guy seems to be trying to find spiritual meaning through the African landscape and Bushman paintings, it is interesting that he uses the ideas of an English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, in order to interpret the landscape. The novel begins in Africa, but it is Hopkins' “The Windhover” that is quoted in the prologue (1), with its reference to British wildlife and the British landscape.

One of the novel's most overt moments of intertextuality with *White Writing* occurs near the beginning of the first Kalahari chapter. As Guy is explaining to his brother the connection between the “Bushman sacrament” (227) and Hopkins' “real presence” (228), David interrupts him by pointing out a Cape cobra, which Guy promptly kills with his stick. In *White Writing*, Coetzee mentions a similar incident when he discusses Guy Butler's poem “Myths”, in which the speaker kills a cobra. The fact that Cartwright has a character called “Guy”, who kills a cobra, alerts the reader to a nexus of intertextuality between *White Writing*, “Myths”

and *To Heaven by Water*. Coetzee references “Myths” in his discussion about how Butler’s poems manifest his feelings of alienation towards the African landscape: “In moments of alienation recurring again and again, Butler’s memory throws up – and his poems relive – “spots of time” that force on him an unsettling realization of his alienness in Africa, perhaps in the world” (*White Writing* 169). Coetzee goes on to discuss how this sense of alienation is expressed in “Myths”:

For instance in “Myths” he kills a cobra [...]; and at once the landscape ceases to a comfortable environment: aloes, boulders, lichens, clouds erupt into separateness, “all insisting on being seen”. This moment of alienation in which the world establishes its distance from the subject is also the moment at which the landscape announces its resistance to language. Specifically, in Butler’s formulation, it is the moment at which African landscape announces its resistance to European language. (169)

An interesting characteristic of “Myths”, in relation to *To Heaven by Water*, is that in order to emphasise the speaker’s feelings of alienation in Africa, the speaker refers to the strangeness of reading English poetry in an African setting:

[...] Reading
Keats’s *Lamia* and *Saint Agnes’ Eve*
beneath a giant pear tree buzzing with bloom
I glanced at the galvanised windmill turning
its iron sunflower under the white-hot sky
and wondered if a Grecian or Medieval dream,
could ever strike root away from our wedges of green. (Butler, “Myths” 23–29)

The speaker in this poem considers whether “a Grecian or Medieval dream” could ever have meaning in the African landscape. In other words, he questions whether the myths and literary heritage of Europe are out of place in Africa, and by inference, whether he is therefore alien in this place. The phrase “our wedges of green” (29) refers to the areas of Africa settled and made “fertile” through agricultural methods by European settlers, and the possessive pronoun “our” (29) specifically points to supposed relationships of ownership, and of belonging, between certain groups of people and the South African land. In a similar way, Guy’s reading of Hopkins in the African setting makes one aware of the difficulties that “white writers” in Africa have of reconciling the literary and mythical sources which have shaped their identities and perspectives, with the reality of Africa. When Guy dies, however, David thinks that he sees a “falcon” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 288) hovering above, although he acknowledges that it may be a “hawk” (288), as a falcon is not a quintessentially South African bird. The falcon references Hopkins’ “The Windhover”, which Guy recites in the

novel's prologue. By having David imagine a falcon in the South African setting, perhaps Cartwright is suggesting, unlike Coetzee, that it may indeed be possible to reconcile an English literary tradition with Africa.

The cobra-killing moment in *To Heaven by Water* serves a twofold function in the novel. Firstly, through its intertextuality both with *White Writing* and with Butler's poem, it links Guy very clearly to the tradition of "white writers" who try to find meaning in the African landscape, but through the prism of European culture. Secondly, the killing of the snake, although it opens into an intertextual moment, is also an ironic moment in the novel. Because it occurs just as Guy is holding forth, rather pompously, on his beliefs about the sacredness of nature, the reader can easily find humour in David's question after Guy's killing of the cobra: "What happened to the sacramental presence in nature?" and in Guy's response, "Look, I hate fucking snakes, all right?" (228). Guy's patched-together, Romanticised ideas on nature and Bushmen are undercut by his actions, and by the humour that attends the dialogue. This undercutting of Guy's ideas alerts the reader to the fact that Cartwright does not intend us to take Guy's ideas completely to heart, and reveals again Cartwright's attitude of gentle ironic distance from his characters.

One of the most significant characteristics that Coetzee attributes to "white writers", particularly poets, is that they are preoccupied with the "interiority of things, with the heart of the landscape, its rocks and stones, rather than with what decks its surface" (*White Writing* 9). Coetzee goes on to argue that this is an inherently fruitless preoccupation:

What response do rocks and stones make to the poet who urges them to utter their true names? As we might expect, it is silence. Indeed, so self-evidently foredoomed is the quest that we may ask why it persists so long. The answer is perhaps that the failure of the listening imagination to intuit the true language of Africa, the continued apprehension of silence (by the poet) or blankness (by the painter), stands for, or stands in the place of, another failure, by no means inevitable: a failure to imagine a peopled landscape, an inability to conceive a society in South Africa in which there is a place for the self. (9)

We see in *To Heaven by Water* how both Guy and David perceive the landscape as blank, silent and empty. Although Guy in particular looks to the landscape to provide some kind of meaning or message, his "apprehension" of its "silence", evident in his constant assertion of its emptiness, means that his quest is "foredoomed". He emphasises its unpeopled nature and its inhospitality to human life. David sees the Kalahari as a "vast nothingness" (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 226) and the salt flat is again called "vast" and "barren" (271). David again overtly refers to the Kalahari as a place of nullity when his brother asks him to consider the

African landscape in contrast to the English environment, and he responds with: “What, this nothingness?” (272). The landscape is also referred to as “stark” and “magnificently dead” (273). David understands the allure of the “empty” space, though, and we learn that:

He can see why this could well have been a place of special importance to wandering Bushmen, stepping ever so lightly on the vast plains, where not a single road or building had ever existed. Even now there are miles and miles of nothing, and it is this nullity in which David is happily losing himself with his crazy brother [...]. (233)

The emphasis, in this passage, on the uninhabited nature of the landscape is overwhelming, emphasised by the profusion of terms indicating expansiveness, emptiness and nothingness: from the “vast plains” where “not a single road or building had ever existed” to the “miles and miles of nothing”, of “nullity” (233). Although David does recognise that the landscape once was inhabited, these past inhabitants, the Bushmen, are described as “stepping ever so lightly” (233) on the earth’s surface as if they did not even really live there. When Guy is trying to persuade David to do a kind of walking meditation on the salt flat and David expresses concerns about the presence of lions, Guy replies: “There’s nothing here. No insects, no plants. Absolutely bugger-all” (273). Although the salt flat is a particularly “dead” environment, Guy’s assertion of nothingness echoes the other references to the emptiness of the Kalahari landscape. Guy obviously wants his brother to have some kind of spiritual experience by walking across the salt flat with his eyes closed, but David concludes that the nothingness of the environment can yield no meaning: “His brother’s mistake, he thought, has been to look for meaning out there, when in fact all around them is an unmistakable demonstration of meaninglessness and nullity” (273). For David, the desert environment actually comes to symbolise “meaninglessness” because the uninhabited landscape cannot be read; no meaning can be elicited from the nothingness of the desert.

Coetzee argues that the challenge to white writers in Africa is not just to recognise (as David does) that rocks and deserts cannot speak, but rather to people the landscape, to find meaning not in the landscape itself, but in the inhabitants that dwell on its surface. The following lengthy passage from *White Writing* is worth quoting in its entirety:

In all the poetry commemorating meetings with the silence and emptiness of Africa [...] it is hard not to read a certain historical will to see as silent and empty a land that has been, if not full of human figures, not empty of them either; that is arid and infertile, perhaps, but not inhospitable to human life, and certainly not uninhabited. From William Burchell to Laurens van der Post, imperial writing has seen as the truest native of South Africa the Bushman, whose romance has lain precisely in his

belonging to a vanishing race. Official historiography long told a tale of how until the nineteenth century of the Christian era the interior of what we now call South Africa was unpeopled. The poetry of empty space may one day be accused of furthering the same fiction. (177)

I wish to draw out a number of points from the above passage in relation to *To Heaven by Water*. Firstly, it is worth noting that Guy holds a primitivist, Romanticised view of the Bushmen (which reminds us of Anthony Northleach's ideas about Mandela and Sobuza), even though he mocks the commercialisation of Bushmen lore in local tourism (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 232). Guy starts off one of his homilies on the Bushmen by saying: "Take the Bushman, for example. He's out here in this vast, apparently empty landscape" (227). We might ask how the landscape can be "empty" if the Bushman is in it. It is worth, however, noting the word "apparently", which does seem to express a subtle distance from this idea that the landscape is empty. Guy goes on to explain that the Bushman is "both in and of nature" (227). This statement holds the implication that the Bushman is part of the landscape and therefore does not occupy, inhabit or change it as Europeans do. Guy goes on:

The Bushman is our link to a time when none of us could separate himself from nature. When we walked around digging for grubs and gathering berries or snaring small animals. I call this the Bushman sacrament, what Hopkins called the real presence. For Hopkins it was just as much in nature as in the traditional sacraments. (227-228)

Guy is attracted by the idea of the Bushman communing with nature, because he also desires some kind of connection with nature. He also sees the Bushman as part of a prehistoric world. I would argue that the novel invites the reader to take a critical view of Guy's obsession with the Bushman. It does this by a slightly ironic attitude towards Guy's theories, as is evident in the cobra incident, and through the intertextual evocation of Coetzee's argument of how the Romanticised idea of the Bushman plays a role in the fiction of the unpeopled interior of South Africa. David notes that the Bushmen, despite Guy's frequent mythologizing of them, are actually an absence, rather than representing a kind of "sacred presence": "The strange thing was, although Guy talked about them all the time, they never met any Bushmen, apart from one silent family gathered in a few makeshift huts outside a small town of stunning inconsequence" (292). Not only does David remark here on the absence of Bushmen, but this silent family are a far cry from Guy's Romanticised vision.

The second point that I would like to draw from the *White Writing* passage quoted above, is Coetzee's accusation of white writers as having a "historical will" to see South

Africa as “silent and empty” and “inhospitable to human life”, and his argument that the “poetry of the empty space” may further the “fiction” of the “unpeopled” South African interior (*White Writing* 177). One may ask whether, by emphasising the emptiness and silence of the Kalahari landscape, and by not providing any alternative representations of Africa, Cartwright may be accused of furthering the same fiction. If Cartwright is using Coetzee’s *White Writing* in a self-consciously intertextual way, as I believe he is, then one might ask why he does not take up Coetzee’s challenge to people the landscape and to represent an alternative to the fiction of the empty landscape. Firstly, I would argue, as has been mentioned repeatedly, that Cartwright adopts an ironic attitude towards his English characters and their perceptions. Although the Kalahari chapters are written in the third-person, they are focalised through David, and we are also witness to a great deal of Guy’s perceptions. Thus when the landscape is described as “empty” and “barren”, these are Guy and David’s adjectives. As we have seen through the way in which Guy’s views on the Bushmen are presented, Cartwright does not necessarily agree with or validate what his characters think. Cartwright represents an English ethnicity as marked by a colonising gaze that fails to imagine or conceive of a peopled Africa. I would also argue that Cartwright’s invocation of *White Writing* as an intertext, through his replication of the modes of description criticised by Coetzee, forms part of his insistence on the power of national fictions. Even Guy, who has lived in South Africa for decades, is so influenced by fictions of Africa deriving from Europe, that he insists on spending time in an “empty” landscape and on seeing an absent, Romanticised race of people as a locus of meaning. In Guy and David’s comparisons between Africa and Europe, Cartwright is also emphasising how national fictions are constructed around opposition. One could argue that, in order to deepen his “anthropological” exploration of Englishness, Cartwright had to show how English national identity is constructed in relation to Africa, and significantly in relation to a specific colonial fiction of Africa’s “empty” interior.

Nevertheless, Cartwright’s refusal to people the landscape is still potentially problematic. After all, while the Kalahari is literally a barren (although not utterly uninhabited) landscape, Cartwright could have chosen to represent other locations in South Africa as well as the desert. We learn that, after Guy’s death, David goes to Cape Town in order to set Guy’s affairs right, but this all takes place off stage. Cartwright could have provided other perspectives on Africa in order to counter the depiction of the empty landscape. This, however, raises another question: How would Cartwright script the African “other”? As Gayatri Spivak argues in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” the representation of the “other” by Western intellectuals is a problematic project. She concludes that “[t]he subaltern

cannot speak” because the subaltern “cannot be heard or read” in hegemonic representations (308). Coetzee himself had the same problem of finding a voice for the African “other” – in *Foe*, his rewriting of Robinson Crusoe, Friday is mute, his tongue has been cut out. Perhaps by making the lone Bushmen family “silent” (*To Heaven by Water* 292), Cartwright is making us aware that he experiences a similar difficulty in giving a voice to the African “other”.

It may also be the case that Cartwright’s representation of the African landscape as vast and unpopulated, and his inability to script the African “other”, can be attributed to his ambivalent attitude towards his place of birth. Even if one allows for Cartwright’s employment of irony, if *To Heaven by Water* is analysed in conjunction with his some of his other works, particularly *Other People’s Money*, I would suggest that part of his difficulty in writing about Africa lies in what Coetzee called in his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech “a failure of love” for Africa (“Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech” 97). Cartwright’s ambivalent attitude to the African landscape in particular is revealed in a 1996 article he wrote for *The Times*, which is interestingly titled: “Africa - the white man's other Eden; Why have generations of Europeans been so seduced by the Dark Continent?” Cartwright writes of his “deep attraction to Africa” about which he admits he has “deep misgivings” (“Africa”). He explains that his attraction is directed towards the landscape: “[A]lthough I have lived more than half my life in Britain, I am still deeply imbued with the idea that the African landscape is more real, more vibrant, more significant” (“Africa”). He realises, however, that this mythologizing of the African landscape possibly does not reflect well on him; he confesses: “[I]t worries me that I seem to share this pastime with so many other white people” (“Africa”). In this article Cartwright demonstrates an awareness of the Romanticised notion of Africa held by white colonials, and mentions, for instance, a particular landscape in Kenya “which, while at first acquaintance wild, is in fact settled and populated” (“Africa”). While admitting that the supposedly “wild” African landscape, while “apparently empty” (to use Guy’s phrase) is in fact peopled, Cartwright also reproduces Guy and David’s conception of Africans when he comments: “we [white people] like the things that existed before the white man came along and messed them all up. Africans, by and large, used to rest quite lightly on the surface of the earth” (“Africa”). Echoing David’s imagining of “the Bushman, stepping ever so lightly on the vast plains” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 233), Cartwright likewise sees Africans as not really altering or making a mark on the landscape. In both this article and Cartwright’s novels, particularly *To Heaven by Water*, one can perceive the tension between his critique of racially-charged myths concerning Africa, and his simultaneous difficulty in ultimately identifying with Africa, or of entirely rejecting stereotyped tropes relating to the

continent of his birth.

Necessary Fictions and the Necessity of Fiction

Cartwright's concern in *To Heaven by Water* with fictions of national identity forms part of his larger concerns with fictions. He deals with "necessary fictions", but also with the necessity of fiction. In other words, Cartwright reveals how fictions, myths or delusions serve to help us to form our identities and cope with reality at the same time as they limit us, but he also celebrates the expansive and even redemptive function of literature and other forms of imaginative art.

One of the major fictions that the novel takes on is the myth of the stable nuclear family as the building block of national identity. Despite the Cross family's dysfunctional nature, it is mythologised as a stable unit, mainly due to the influence of Nancy, David's wife. After Nancy's death, David, Lucy and Ed start to question the idea of the perfect family. David, particularly, feels burdened by the expectations of his role in the "ideal" family. He realises that "families have unreal expectations of their blood relations; the family is a sort of Platonic ideal, floating way above the real facts, the facts on the ground" (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 9). It is in one of David's reflections on the mythologizing of the family that the term "necessary fictions" first appears in the novel:

Nancy spun little myths around the family, and he didn't try to resist them, but now he is released from his contract. You don't understand the notion of necessary fictions when you are young, but it is one most people embrace fervently when they know they are dying. (143)

It is interesting that David sees fictions as a way of asserting meaning in the face of the seeming randomness of death. This phrase recurs near the end of the novel, when Adam, one of the members of the Noodle Club, tells David about the embellished eulogies spoken at the funeral of their friend, Julian. Adam says: "We were celebrating a total fiction" and David responds: "The necessary fictions" (290). David recognises that the types of fictions spoken at a funeral help people to deal with the idea of death.

Lucy also sees how the fictions of family gave a sense of meaning and stability to her life. Following her mother's death, she sees herself as "isolated", as well as "wary and abandoned" (43). She recognises how her mother gave form to her life through family rituals:

She misses the Sunday lunches Mum produced, attendance virtually compulsory, even with the underlying tensions and pretence. In retrospect, she sees these lunches as

beacons in her featureless landscape. Dad shows no sign of introducing any kind of form into their lives, and really, why should he? (43)

While she releases her father from any obligation to provide the same kind of family structure, she nevertheless recognises how the “pretence” of the Sunday lunch ritual gave “form” to “their lives” (43). Later, Lucy considers the purpose of these family rituals, and how they intersect with the roles that different family members take on:

In families you take up positions to distinguish yourself from the others, but also to cement the family rituals. Rituals in families – she thinks – are no different from religious rituals: they dispel anxiety with repetition. Dad has become something of an Islamophobe – although of course he sees himself as part of the liberal elite – but he doesn’t understand that fear and anxiety are what are driving Muslims to the rituals of Islam. (91)

Just as David realises how “necessary fictions” may stave off the fear of death associated with ageing, so Lucy recognises that rituals, be they family customs or religious observances, are motivated by “fear and anxiety” (91). David also compares domestic rituals to religious rituals when he reflects that, for Nancy, “the domestic detail was a kind of litany that needed diligent recital” (179). Cartwright is also making a comment in this passage about the prevalence of Islamophobia in England after September 11th and the 2005 terrorist attacks in London. Islamophobia is caught up in English identity formation, as although many Moslems are British citizens, they are often not recognised as English.

Cartwright, while pointing out the myths around the Cross family, nevertheless does not adopt a cynical attitude towards the family members’ relationships with each other. This is evidence of Cartwright’s mixture of sympathy and irony towards his characters. Lucy sees that she and Ed have been “handed the responsibility for tending the family flame” and she thinks that this flame “is love” (50). We also witness David’s deep love for his brother, despite his eccentricities. In the prologue we learn that “[h]e feels a rushing, unstoppable love for his older brother” (2), which is compared to the “love that moves that sun and other stars” (2). In the christening scene near the end of the novel, as well, David thinks of his deep, inexpressible love for his children (298). Despite the family’s flaws, pretences, lies and secrets, we as readers have no difficulty believing that there is authentic love present in their interactions. This is testament to the delicacy and subtlety of Cartwright’s critical and ironic perspective, and also aligns with his insistence that some fictions are “necessary” – they actually serve to enhance human relationships rather than destroy or falsify them.

Besides the more general ideals and rituals of family, other secrets and fictions are

prevalent throughout the novel. David created a “necessary fiction” of a functional marriage by withholding his knowledge of Nancy’s affair, while Nancy contributed to this fiction by pretending to be the grounded, ideal wife and mother. Ed’s wife Rosalie similarly reproduces this fiction of a happy family, when she keeps secret her knowledge of Ed’s affair, and Ed also hides the fact that he knows that Rosalie knows about his affair. David attempts to redress the hypocrisies and compromises of his past, and seems to be happy to be free of myth-making, but he ends up recognising that some fictions or delusions are in fact necessary. It is David, after all, who advises that Rosalie hide her knowledge of Ed’s affair from him, and David who creates another secret to be kept when he creates a child with Rosalie.

I would argue that the novel as a whole is concerned with the opposition between secret lives and keeping up appearances, between interior and exterior lives. Not only do the novel’s characters have secrets, but Cartwright’s novels generally put a great deal of emphasis on the interior life as opposed to life as experienced in the physical and public realms. David, for instance, believes that “the personal realm” is “where we live” and that “in the privacy of your own consciousness you can say and think whatever you want to” (185). Ed realises that there is a sense of freedom associated with thinking, when he considers ideas of irony in relation to his banal work environment and “is cheered by these musings, because they give him the hope that he is not yet enslaved” (163). The third-person narrative that moves between different characters as focalisers also foregrounds the characters’ thoughts.

Another way in which *To Heaven by Water* deals with fictions is by focusing on how the media works to construct a certain version of reality and to provide references through which we “read” reality. As a former television presenter, David was involved in this process of meaning-making. Because he has been involved with the procedure of news production, he is fully aware of the multiple factors that influence the supposed representation of objective “truth”. He believes that “his position as senior anchor was a fraud” (99). Interestingly, he finds fictions and delusions not only within the operations of television news, but also within the events he covers. He asks himself what wisdom he can “squeeze” from the subjects of his news stories, and concludes: “Not much, except perhaps the understanding that people everywhere are in thrall to delusion” (144). The sorts of illusions set up by the media, then, are subtly critiqued. There is also another journalist figure in the novel: Lucy’s boyfriend, Nick. While thinking about his career, Lucy reflects that: “Journalists cobble together meaning from whatever is at hand, a chimera. It’s not real meaning, built to last [...]. She understands better than most that, while what appears in the media is not absolutely true or

real, it acquires a reality of its own” (171).⁶

Lucy’s understanding of the way in which fictions work to construct reality is significant. It is clear how film and media references shape the way she sees reality. For instance, at the moment of Josh’s mock-suicide, when Josh appears while she is having a bath and puts a pistol in his mouth, Lucy thinks that “[s]he is about to be showered with human bits and the bath water will turn pink, as in movies, where terrible things happen to women in water” (224). In this dramatic moment, Lucy perceives the potential moment of violence through the expectations set by horror films such as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho*. Later she references another great film director when we learn that she “imagined a fine Tarantino mist hanging in the air above the bath, composed of blood and capillaries and bone fragments” (260). Lucy is cataloguing ancient Roman coins as part of her work at an auction house, and is fascinated by the histories of Constantine and his mother Helena. Significantly, Helena ordered Constantine to murder his wife, which he achieved by boiling her in a bath. We learn that, until the incident with Josh, Lucy thought of this violent incident as being “like a horror movie” (260). This is an ironic moment, as Lucy continues to use film references in order to distance herself from reality, even as she is saying that incidents of violence now seem less like a horror film to her. We see in this the role that fictions play in helping us to make sense of reality, which echoes Baudrillard’s theories of simulation as discussed in *The Promise of Happiness*: just as America is seen through the lens of media representation in *The Promise of Happiness*, so Lucy places herself within a fictional narrative in *To Heaven by Water*.

Ideals and beliefs in general are cast, by Cartwright, as kinds of fictions, as having no definite truth or stability. After returning from the Kalahari, David reflects on his difficulty in conveying what he has learnt there to Lucy:

He can’t explain to her just yet that under the Kalahari stars you see things differently. You don’t, as Guy imagined, find the core of things, but you understand that many of your assumptions have no absolute truth. If the Bushmen believed that trance dancing put them in touch with the spirits, that was fine by him: it was as valid an explanation as anything he believed. In truth he is not sure exactly what he believes: I have beliefs but I don’t believe in them. (292)

The sentence, “I have beliefs but I don’t believe in them” echoes strongly a statement made in J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*. In the concluding section of that novel, the protagonist undergoes a Kafkaesque trial, in which she must state her beliefs as a kind of confession or

⁶ It is worth noting that Cartwright’s father was a journalist at *The Rand Daily Mail* in Johannesburg, and that Cartwright himself worked in advertising for a number of years.

manifesto. “I have beliefs but I don’t believe in them” is her eventual response to the jurors (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 200). Costello believes that she cannot have beliefs because she is a writer: it is her responsibility to record the beliefs and lives of others, not to express her own beliefs dogmatically. Perhaps Cartwright uses this statement to represent more than just the predicament of the writer, but rather to preclude the advisability of having dogmatic beliefs altogether. As David comes to realise, “many of your assumptions have no absolute truth” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 292). It is significant that this realisation comes to him in the Kalahari. As Guy points out, deserts have, in religious and literary tradition, been figured as places that facilitate spiritual insights, visions and epiphanies: “The point was that hermits didn’t want anything or anyone coming between them and their God” (272).

Ironically, it is not a spiritual truth which is revealed to David in the desert – he does not get at the “core of things” (292) – but rather a lack of spiritual truth, or of truth at all. One might also argue that David’s tendency to see the Kalahari as a place devoid of meaning could have caused him to think about his “assumptions” of meaning and truth generally. Significantly, adopting the aphorism from *Elizabeth Costello* allows Cartwright both to question beliefs and simultaneously not completely to dismiss them. David, like Costello, does have beliefs, but they are not strongly held, and he recognises that they are paradoxically often based on fictions. Of course this in itself does not mean they are meaningless, as the novel’s concern with the “necessity” of fiction demonstrates.

Besides his concern with “necessary fictions” that are maintained in personal relationships and ideals, Cartwright also represents literature, actual fictions, as meaningful and even as potentially facilitating transcendence. One of the most important writer figures in the novel is Adam, an old friend of David’s. David reflects on how Adam, as a writer and reader, has a special understanding of the world:

[H]is apparent defencelessness hides a very shrewd understanding of how things work. It’s not given to many, not even captains of industry or lawyers, to really understand how things work, the important things like art and politics and love, but Adam understands. This understanding comes mostly from books, but then, that is what books are for, although many people believe that books, like politics, are there to confirm their prejudices or to flatter them. (17)

David recognises that books contribute to Adam’s understanding of “how things work” and how literature generally expands one’s interaction with the world. It is through the character of Adam that much of the novel’s commentary about literature is made. In this way Adam bears some similarity to Artair McLeod of *Other People’s Money*, who is also an artist figure

who serves as a vehicle for Cartwright's thoughts on the significance of stories.

One of the most lengthy and humorous sections about literature is Adam's tirade about the kind of literature that he hates (22-23). He declares that he "hates all novels written since 1940" and goes on to detail exactly which type of novels he despises. Adam's hyperbolic and hilarious diatribe contains references to "popular" fiction; for instance, "novels about a mysterious legacy of papers found in a trunk which may explain the meaning of the Gnostic gospels" (23) is clearly a reference to Dan Brown's potboilers. It also, ironically, includes descriptions that could apply to *To Heaven by Water*, and possibly to some of Cartwright's other novels. For instance, Adam says "I hate novels of suspense where the writer withholds from the reader details that he knows perfectly fucking well in order to make it suspenseful" (23). Cartwright, who began his writing career with such thrillers as *Deep Six*, deliberately withholds several pieces of vital information for suspense and narrative purposes at different stages in *To Heaven by Water*, the most obvious being the chapter break between Josh's supposed suicide and the revelation that his gun is a toy gun. Adam also says that he hates "novels where everyone says that family is a tyranny" (23). In *To Heaven by Water*, family is not exactly represented as tyrannous, but they are portrayed as controlling and restraining. Adam also hates novels in which "people go on a long journey and discover they are somebody else" (23): David's sojourn in the Kalahari does not have quite so simplistic an outcome, but his travels are definitely transformative. Through this and other reader- and writer-focused sections, Cartwright draws the reader's attention to the textuality of the novel, and places *To Heaven by Water* in the midst of literature's attempt to achieve transcendence and make meaning. By including aspects of his own work in the "novels I hate" passage, Cartwright is also perhaps opening up his work to criticism and debate with a sense of postmodern, metafictional playfulness.

The novel's most moving passage about literature appears in its concluding chapter, in which Adam gives a talk at a book shop. In his speech, he says:

I sometimes feel that those of us who love books, and I mean real books with long words, are a dwindling band. We're like the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert that David was telling me about on the way here, marginalised, despised, as though we have a secret vice, or carry a contagion. My friends, I am here this evening to tell you that a country without a respect for its own literature is a country going to hell in a fucking handcart. We, the readers, are now like monks in the dark ages, keeping alive our culture. We are living in a new dark age, an age of mass ignorance; we are squeezed in the embrace of triviality and infantilism [...]. We readers have a sacred duty, to keep alive our literary tradition, to save our language from the barbarians, to read until our eyeballs burst. (303)

This is certainly an emphatic affirmation of the significance of literature, which brings together Cartwright's emphasis on literature throughout the novel as a whole. I would argue, though, that these commendable sentiments nevertheless contain touches of irony. Even in the most emotionally climatic and epiphanic moments of this novel, irony is present, although it remains a light ironic touch which does not compromise the validity of Adam's argument about literature. Firstly, there is an ironic slant in his statement that readers are "like the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert" (303). It is problematic to compare the upper middle-class English readers at the bookshop to an ethnic group which has suffered dispossession, poverty and genocide. Even if readers are "marginalised" and "despised" (303), as Adam claims, that prejudice surely takes the form of nothing more than subtle social ostracism, rather than the threat of physical violence, poverty or slavery. Of course, Adam is employing the comparison of readers to the Bushmen in a hyperbolic way, but I would argue that the novel offers a gently ironic cultural critique here, by drawing attention, subtly, to the cultural imperialism that runs through English society.

Secondly, this passage contains a suggestion of a critique of nationalism. Adam refers to "our culture", "our literary tradition" and "our language" (303) as if they are fairly unified, easily defined concepts. Given the context in which he is speaking, and the texts from which he reads during his presentation – T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" and Hopkins' "The Windhover" – we assume that he means white, English-speaking British culture, and the Western English literary tradition. This view does not take into account that for many English citizens, this may not be their heritage, their culture or their language. Even the fact that Adam reads from the "The Wasteland" contributes to Cartwright's critique of the unshakeable idea of "English literature", as T.S. Eliot, although an anglophile, was American. Eliot is also one of the writers Robert Young cites in his list of "Anglophile characters masquerading as Englishmen" (3).⁷ The way in which Adam affirms reading as having the potential to "save our language from the barbarians" (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 303) is surely also problematic. Cartwright, while he does not diminish the significance of literature and the role of the reader to keep the art of reading alive, nevertheless makes this statement slightly ironic by having his reader question who "we" are, and who "the barbarians" are; in other words, who is English and who is a threat to Englishness and English culture. We cannot but notice the colonial and racial discourse implicated in the word "barbarians". After he has finished his

⁷ Young also quotes from Eliot's "The Four Quartets" in order to make his argument about the "impossible paradox" of the delocalisation of Englishness: "the intersection of the timeless moment/ Is /England and nowhere. Never and always" (238).

speech, the narrative tells us that: “A hundred English men and women rise to him” (303). The fact that it is their Englishness which is remarked on is surely significant, prompting the reader to ask: “Why are they English? What makes them English? Is it their whiteness, their language, or their culture?” Once more, this is not to say that the significance of this moment, or Cartwright’s affirmation of literature, is at all diminished by the underlying cultural critique, which is testament to his subtle and effective use of a gently ironic tone. The presence of ironic critique at this moment also reminds us that Cartwright does not allow any ideal or belief to go unchallenged, even when it something as praiseworthy as a belief in the importance of literature.

The last line of the novel is Adam’s assertion to David: “We saw the face of God” (304). This is a reference to Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, in which the demon Mephistopheles refers to himself as “I, who saw the face of God” (Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* 1.3.78). Considering that this reference is made after Adam’s speech about literature, one could see it as referring to the transcendent power of literature, which culminates in intertextuality between the novel and *Doctor Faustus*. David and Adam spent time in Italy on the set of the film adaptation of *Doctor Faustus*, starring Richard Burton.⁸ To David, Burton’s acting ability represented the power of art to achieve transcendence. David remembers how, while watching Burton act, “he found himself shaking: a forty-two-year-old Welsh miner’s son had dissolved the barriers between the immanent and the transcendent worlds” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 59). Not only does David see Burton as achieving some form of transcendence through his acting – he also sees Burton as somehow living out a “morality play” (60) in his life, taking on the role of a Faustus-like figure. Like Faustus, Burton had “unimaginable, almost supernatural, power” (60) through his powers as an artist. David also recognises that forms of art other than acting and literature may facilitate transcendence. David is uncertain at first as to whether ballet is a serious art form, but when he sees Darcey Bussell (the principal ballerina of the Royal Ballet) dance, he is moved:

But when Darcey Bussell danced, skipping away en pointe, and the soprano moaned the last line, “For ever ... for ever,” he recognised the power of art and accepted that it could be found in ballet [...]. More and more David sees in art a desperate urge to fix ourselves in the universe – which he finds moving. (13)

David’s idea of art as representing the human desire to achieve some kind of fixed state or permanence mirrors Anthony’s sentiments in *In Every Face I Meet*: Anthony thinks of art as

⁸ Cartwright himself spent a summer in Rome “with Richard Burton’s Oxford film of *Doctor Faustus*” (Cartwright *Oxford Revisited*, ch. 9).

representing “blind human striving” and the human “desire to be fixed in the void” (Cartwright, *In Every Face I Meet* 51). *To Heaven by Water* thus continues Cartwright’s preoccupation with how art and literature reveal certain human characteristics – both the desire for transcendence and the longing to create something lasting.

In *To Heaven by Water* Cartwright traces the implications of different types of fictions, while employing a humane, ironic tone throughout the novel. Adopting an anthropologist’s gaze, he critiques Englishness. Through the Kalahari chapters he also explores how Africa is seen through an English perspective, although we may question why he does not challenge the stereotype of Africa as “empty” by peopling the landscape. In this novel, Cartwright also deals with the role that fictions, in the form of secrets and lies, play in maintaining personal relationships, and touches on how we see the world through the prism of media representations. Works of imaginative art are shown as potentially enabling transcendence. Significantly, Cartwright’s adoption of an ironic, slightly estranged attitude towards his characters causes the reader to question the characters’ beliefs and opinions. *To Heaven by Water* reveals that “necessary fictions” are an inherent part of human nature, but at the same time the text suggests the inadvisability of believing too dogmatically in one’s beliefs.

Chapter Four: ***“It’s all a Sham”:*** **The (Too?) Gentle Critique of Idealism in *Other People’s Money***

Justin Cartwright’s *Other People’s Money*, published in 2011, has frequently been referred to as a “state-of-the-nation novel” as it addresses the economic fallout of the credit-swapping and mortgage-dicing by British financial institutions. The novel focuses on Tubal & Co., a family-owned London bank, which is on the verge of collapse due to some unwise and unethical hedge-fund investments – a fact only known to the heir-apparent, Julian Trevelyan-Tubal, and his closest colleagues. Meanwhile, in Cornwall, visionary playwright Artair MacCleod is writing a script based on the ideas of Irish novelist Flann O’Brien, and Melissa Tregarthen, a young newspaper reporter, starts a blog, the contents of which will expose the corrupt dealings of Tubal & Co. In *Other People’s Money* Cartwright once more explores idealism, myths and delusions in conversation with Isaiah Berlin’s liberal humanist perspective. I shall show, however, how a critique of Englishness in this novel is complicated and troubled by Cartwright’s ambivalent attitude towards Africa. I shall also explore how elements of metafiction and postmodernism are interwoven with commentary on English ethnicity, particularly through the character of Artair MacCleod.

Other People’s Money in the Media

The international reception of this tightly-plotted and widely-read novel is worth considering. While many of the reviews and coverage in the print and online media take a rather superficial, plot-driven approach to the novel, one of the most interesting comments is in an interview with Cartwright about the novel, in which the interviewer writes that “Cartwright comes to his England as an outsider” (Tonkin), thus re-inscribing Cartwright’s representation as a writer estranged from Englishness. One American reviewer, Katherine A. Powers, wonders whether Cartwright’s relative lack of popularity in the United States may lie in “American deafness to irony and a national tendency toward moral absolutism” and also in “the quality, perplexing to us, of this [...] South African-born Londoner’s fascination with Englishness, a fascination part yearning, part mistrust” (Powers). Powers interestingly ascribes Cartwright’s yearning to the appeal of the liberal humanist viewpoint deeply embedded in English culture, and his “mistrust” to his critique of idealism.

In the South African media, a number of interviews were conducted with Cartwright about *Other People’s Money*, during his visit there in early 2011. These interactions are

particularly interesting as, without fail, the South African interviewers questioned Cartwright on his perspective as a South African/ English writer. One South African journalist asked Cartwright whether his South African/ British identity gives him “a different perspective on both places” (Cartwright, “Other People’s Stories”). Cartwright’s response echoes Tonkin and others’ construction of him as a writer granted a certain illuminating distance due to his “outsider” position:

I’ve had this conversation with William Boyd, who grew up in Ghana, and we both feel that if you live among the British and you’ve come from somewhere else you see them more keenly, or at least we kid ourselves that we do, but I do think an outsider notices little foibles that English people might take for granted. (Cartwright, “Other people’s stories”)

Another South African interviewer, Janet van Eeden, asked Cartwright whether he finds himself “drawn to write about this country [South Africa] anymore” or whether his “creative focus” is “wholly in Britain”, to which Cartwright responded: “Complicated. *White Lightning* was my South African novel. I am perhaps more Brit than South African as a writer these days” (“Justin Cartwright, author of *Other People’s Money*, in conversation with Janet van Eeden”). Van Eeden further asked Cartwright: “Do you miss this country and do you visit it at all? What parts of you, if any, will remain quintessentially South African?” Cartwright’s response to this question is revealing: “I don’t think you ever forget the landscape and the feel of the place. But I don’t want to live there, because I wouldn’t want to spend the rest of my life discussing corruption and other familiar issues” (“Justin Cartwright, author of *Other People’s Money*, in conversation with Janet van Eeden”). Cartwright’s assertion that he will never “forget the landscape” provides a slightly disturbing echo of David and Guy Cross’s responses to the Kalahari in *To Heaven by Water*, and of Coetzee’s discussion of white writers in *White Writing*. One recalls here also his confessions about his attraction to the landscape in *The Times* article, “Africa – the white man’s other Eden”. Moreover, Cartwright’s declaration that he will never live in South Africa because he would be forced to talk and write about “corruption and other familiar issues” is more troubling and even ironic, especially since *Other People’s Money*, which is set in England, is a novel precisely about economic corruption. It seems remarkable that Cartwright thinks that he could find nothing else to write about in South Africa. His dismissive tone (“other familiar issues”) is somewhat concerning, and may be attributed to what I would argue is his ambivalent attitude towards South Africa. This is a point to which I shall return later.

Critiquing idealism: a liberal humanist perspective

As Powers touched on in her review, Cartwright's critique of myths and idealism figures strongly in this recent novel, as it does throughout much of his work. In *Other People's Money* Cartwright's gently critical perspective is aimed at the delusions of the super-rich, who use their money to create a separate, perfect world for themselves. Julian reflects on the idyllic setting of his tennis club: "I have always lived in these private spaces separated from the world by money" (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 80). This isolation leads to delusion. Julian is critical of his family and colleagues' "belief that this money production is a superior form of activity and those who deal in it are superior people" (70). This delusion about their own moral superiority is provided as a potential cause for the financiers' reckless actions. The novel's title itself is a critique of the bankers' thoughtlessness: Melissa remembers reading "that in the dealing rooms they [the financiers] would shout 'OPM' gleefully as a deal went bad: *Other people's money*" (158).

The credit-swapping scandal in which Tubal & Co. and many real-life financial institutions were involved was literally based on myths, on derivatives of no value. Cartwright melds the make-believe nature of these derivatives into his larger critique of mythical ideals. For Julian, the matter of the non-existent money is an "existential matter" rather than a "banking question" (103). Julian compares the credit-swaps to "chimeras" and reflects: "These derivatives were related to no assets, to no worth, to no human endeavour. They turned out to be imaginary. It's almost bewildering that a huge industry was in thrall to fables" (80). Cartwright presents the global economic crash partly as a kind of ironic morality play about the potentially harmful effects of mythologizing.

Julian is similar to Anthony Northleach of *In Every Face I Meet*, Charles Judd of *The Promise of Happiness* and David Cross from *To Heaven by Water*, in that he seems estranged from life, and especially from his work. Julian's estrangement derives from the fact that, while he realises the kind of hypocrisies, delusions and myths surrounding the Tubal family and business, he nevertheless is trapped in his position. After his father has died, for example, he gives a confident and inspiring speech to the staff about his father and the bank's values, and then thinks to himself: "What a load of tosh. Hypocritical crap" (117).

Because Tubal & Co. is a family-owned bank, the idealism surrounding the bank's activities is caught up in the ideal of the family. The connection between idealism and family life was also explored in *The Promise of Happiness* and *To Heaven by Water*. While Julian appears to have a deep love for his own nuclear family, he is burdened by the ideals of his parental family: "I'm living for an ideal of what this family apparently stands for. But I don't

know what that ideal is” (40). Julian seems desperate to be rid of the taint of the bank and his class and family’s idealism. In the following inner monologue, he reflects on the variety of delusions he sees around him:

I don't want any of this for my children. This rotten crumbling industry resting on greed and half-truths; this pretence that Tubal's itself is somehow special, that the people who work in banking are particularly talented, that the government is principled, that the old country still possesses ancient wisdom and deeply bedded human standards.

It's all a sham: the ludicrous royal family in their castles and palaces, the Army pounding away hopelessly at mud houses in recalcitrant villages far away, the wretched government with its desperate determination to save its skin by issuing more and more ineptly populist statements of intent and benchmarks and guidelines and tables and unenforceable laws. And worst of all, we, the bankers, believing we could produce money out of thin air. (103)

We see here again Julian’s insight into how wealth makes people believe that they are “superior people” (70). Julian also realises how this delusion intersects with ideas about the way in which Englishness supposedly conveys some kind of integrity and honesty on its subjects: “*that the old country still possesses ancient wisdom and deeply bedded human standards*” (103). Echoing the critique of the military, monarchy and religion in Blake’s poem “London”, in the second paragraph of the above passage Cartwright provides a particularly incisive critique of England’s institutions: the royal family is “*ludicrous*”, the army’s actions are “*hopeless*”, the government is “*desperate*” and the bankers are “*worst of all*” (103). As in *The Promise of Happiness*, in which the English are described as both “proud” and “ridiculous” (303), we see how Cartwright uses adjectives denoting absurdity and uselessness in order to critique Englishness and idealism.

Although Julian is depicted as having insight into the delusions that are embedded in his English, wealthy, upper-class society, Cartwright also presents him as a flawed character. Just as Anthony Northleach’s ideas and actions are critiqued in *In Every Face I Meet*, so Cartwright subtly depicts Julian’s weaknesses. While Julian looks down on the myth-making of the bank, he is of course deeply implicated in its hypocrisies. He is literally committing fraud by trying to hide the bank’s bad debts, even though he delicately cannot say the word “fraud” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 139). He never fully confesses his involvement in the hedge-fund debacle and his siphoning of funds from a shady Lichtenstein account, keeping with the official line that “there was never any intention to defraud” (252) and that it was merely a case of “misreporting” (252). Although he says that he does not “*want any of this for [his] children*” (103), we know that this is not a revolutionary statement, and that he in

the end does not renounce his wealth or privilege. He escapes from the leadership of the bank, and from England, but he nevertheless will live out a comfortable existence in a newly remodelled house in Martha's Vineyard, presumably sustained by family trust money. Although inwardly critical of wealth and privilege, he continues to benefit from his position. Cartwright's perspective of gentle irony allows us to sympathise with Julian, who loves his children and wife, lost his mother at a young age, and dreams about ponies, but does it hold him adequately accountable for his actions as a banker and his blindness towards his continued assumption of privilege?

As was discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation, Cartwright's critique of idealism is deeply influenced by the value pluralism espoused by Isaiah Berlin. The extent to which Berlin's approach to idealism is aligned with liberal humanism accounts for the gentleness and subtlety of Cartwright's critique. Cartwright said in an interview with Sue de Groot about the bankers depicted in *Other People's Money*: "I think they were deluded. I think we all were [...]. I don't think all the bankers were as evil as they were later made out to be" (Cartwright, "Other people's stories"). By depicting people as "deluded" rather than "evil", however, one could argue that Cartwright does not really make them accountable for their actions. Furthermore, as discussed in depth in the chapter on *To Heaven by Water*, Cartwright uses subtle irony and rich character development in order to both reveal the characters' delusions and simultaneously make them sympathetic to the reader.

Cartwright critiques the system to some extent by showing its effects on ordinary people. Young journalist Melissa Tregarthen, for instance, loses her job at the *Cornish Globe and Mail* and is forced to work as a freelance reporter due to the paper's "steep decline" (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 58). Her editor, Edward Tredizzick, attributes the paper's circumstances directly to the actions of the London financiers, explaining to Melissa that: "Revenues have fallen twelve percent over the last year thanks to our capitalist geniuses in the City of London" (58). The paper is therefore forced to "cut staff costs by fifteen per cent" (58) and Melissa's job becomes a casualty of this cost-cutting. Melissa notably makes a link between the closure of the paper and the mass lay-offs in major financial institutions during the height of the global economic crisis. As the staff pack their possessions into cardboard boxes, she reflects that "the boxes are similar to those Lehman Brothers' staff took out of their front door, before the television cameras, on the day that capitalism almost went down in September 2008" (245). Melissa thus sees a clear connection between the origins of the recession in the actions of financiers, and the closure of a small Cornish newspaper. Tredizzick eventually dies waiting to provide evidence in a hearing about Tubal and Co.,

presumably from a heart attack, as his poor health is mentioned (214), and there is a suggestion that the stresses of the newspaper's demise have exacerbated his condition.

The effects of the recession on the arts are also shown through the playwright Artair MacCleod, who is not provided with his grant from Tubal & Co. due to the bank's financial difficulties. Artair has been receiving a "quarterly grant" (26) from Tubal & Co., but when he goes to draw the money, it is revealed that "Tubal and Co. have refused payment" (27). Since his ex-wife, Fleur, is Lady Trevelyan-Tubal, Artair believes that this is a "legally enforceable contract, if you like, a sort of alimony" (28). There is some doubt as to whether he does not receive the grant due to the bank's bankruptcy alone. Fleur claims that the payment was simply not "set up properly" (223), and therefore lapsed when Sir Harry Trevelyan-Tubal fell ill. Either way, however, the negligence of the bankers affects Artair's livelihood. Furthermore, it is the sudden withdrawal of Artair's funding which triggers the exposure of the Trevelyan-Tubals' other errors of judgement. Melissa mentions Artair's funding woes in her blog, prompting an anonymous tip-off from a former Tubal & Co. employee, which leads to further investigation by the *Globe and Mail*.

Showing the effects of the global financial recession on these ordinary people may perhaps be Cartwright's way of critiquing the corrupt banking system. However it is a fairly restrained critique. Melissa seems to bounce back quickly from the closure of the *Globe and Mail*, as she acquires a job in London. Artair soon manages to secure more money from the Tubal family. Thus one could argue that the effects of the recession were and are in reality much more widespread and devastating than Cartwright depicts. In 2009, the number of people out of work in the UK had risen to 2.4 million ("UK jobless total climbs to 2.4 million"). These job losses particularly affected young people, who found it more difficult than any other sector of the working population to maintain or find jobs ("Youth bear brunt of recession"). In this environment, it may be slightly improbable that the young, inexperienced Melissa would be snapped up by a London publisher, even if it is a "free newspaper" (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 250). Disturbing statistics furthermore revealed that the number of suicides in the UK rose sharply since the recession began (Bowcott). The only person who contemplates suicide in the novel is ironically Julian, one of the bankers (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 254). While Cartwright certainly does show some of the consequences of the recession for ordinary people, it can be argued that his depiction of its effects is somewhat downplayed and unrealistic.

The liberal humanist perspective that informs Cartwright's gentle critique in the novel is also troubled by ambivalent attitudes towards Africa. As was mentioned in the Introduction,

Cartwright reveals in *Oxford Revisited* how Berlin's ideas and the liberalism he encountered when studying at Oxford University helped him to cast off his feelings of guilt as a white South African who did not want to embrace dogmatically political anti-apartheid ideologies. After being exposed to Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty* he found himself "happily free from the heavy burden of being a white South African, secure in the knowledge that liberalism was not a wishy-washy form of self-delusion, and that political quietism is perfectly acceptable" (Cartwright, *Oxford Revisited*, ch. 2). Yet I believe that Cartwright's liberal humanist approach is enmeshed with deeply ambivalent attitudes towards Africa. Cartwright elides, for instance, the historical link between liberal humanist discourse and racism, and this is problematic for an African-born author. The historical connection between liberal humanism and racism has been widely theorised. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, points out that, despite the apparent contradiction between them, racism and humanism have historically co-existed. He claims that the oppressed black subjects speak back to the colonisers, saying: "You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart" (8). Furthermore, he clearly points out the consistency between racism and humanism in the following passage:

Chatter, chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honour, patriotism and what have you. All this did not prevent us from making anti-racial speeches about dirty niggers, dirty Jews and dirty Arabs. High-minded people, liberal or just soft-hearted, protest that they were shocked by such inconsistency; but they were either mistaken or dishonest, for with us there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters. While there was a native population somewhere this imposture was not shown up; in the notion of the human race we found an abstract assumption of universality which served as cover for the most realistic practices. (22)

Sartre provides two explanations for his bold assertion that "there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism" (8). Firstly, European/ Western civilisation has only been able to "progress" due to the oppression and exploitation of the "other", and secondly, European/ Western values alone were seen to be "human"; a particular ethnographic viewpoint was made to seem universal.

It is also worth pointing out that liberal humanism is deeply enmeshed with the history of literary criticism. Liberal humanism was developed as an approach to reading texts, as well as a way to "read" the world. Proponents of liberal humanist literary analysis looked for universal "human" qualities in the text, and were interested in building the canon of "great

literature". Many critiques of liberal humanism are thus directed at its use in textual analysis. Toril Moi, for instance, critiques textual liberal humanism from a feminist viewpoint, pointing out that, while liberal humanism purportedly aims for universality, it is in fact deeply embedded in patriarchal, Western values. She argues that:

The humanist believes in literature as an excellent instrument of education: by reading "great works" the student will become a finer human being [...]. The literary canon of "great literature" ensures that it is this "representative experience" (one selected by male bourgeois critics) that is transmitted to future generations, rather than those deviant unrepresentative experiences discoverable in much female, ethnic and working-class writing. (78)

I would like to propose that, despite the subversive aspects of his novels, Cartwright's failure to recognise the problematic elements of his liberal humanist perspective, particularly in regards to racism, is caught up in his generally ambivalent attitude towards Africa.

In fact, Cartwright seems to hold a complex attitude towards Africa that is akin to the speaker in Roy Campbell's "Rounding the Cape", who looks back on the mountains of Cape Town and reflects that he is leaving behind "[a]ll that I have hated and adored" (16). Roy Campbell is actually evoked in *Other People's Money* through his translation of Baudelaire's "L'invitation au voyage". The poem is referenced when Artair, inspired by Fleur's opulent house, recites some lines to her and comments in passing on Roy Campbell's "[r]idiculous" translation of the poem (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 223). The description of an ideal, beautiful, walled-off space in the poem serves as an apt image to encapsulate the novel's concern with idealism and delusion, but the connection with Roy Campbell is also an interesting aside, given Campbell's, and Cartwright's, complex attitude towards Africa.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, J.M. Coetzee refers to "a failure of love" ("Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech" 97). Of white South Africans, Coetzee claimed here that "their talk, their excessive talk, about how they love South Africa has consistently been directed toward the land, that is, toward what is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers" (97). Can we see this focus towards the land both in Guy's attitude towards the landscape in *To Heaven by Water* but also, in a more troubling way, in Cartwright's assurance to his South African interviewer that he will "never forget the landscape and the feel of the place" ("Justin Cartwright, author of *Other People's Money*, in conversation with Janet van Eeden")?

Unlike *To Heaven by Water*, *Other People's Money* does not include Africa as a major setting, but the way in which it is depicted recalls some of the continent's problematic

representation in the earlier novel's Kalahari scenes. Africa appears in *Other People's Money* through the activities of Julian's bohemian younger brother, Simon, who is travelling around the world, and is in Botswana when the novel begins. Simon is depicted as a kind of "voyager" (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 76), traversing the African wilderness. Julian speaks to Simon on his mobile telephone while standing in his club's garden, and he remarks on the contrast between the English and African settings: "*I have always lived in these private spaces separated from the world by money. Simon is out in Botswana with his canoes in a real wilderness. He's hiding in the great expanses because he hated life here*" (80). While Julian's setting is represented as a walled garden, Simon is depicted as escaping to "*the great expanses*" of Africa. This echoes much of the language used to describe Africa in *To Heaven by Water* which focuses on England's contrast to the African landscape's vastness, and which could be seen as perpetuating what Coetzee calls "the poetry of empty space" (*White Writing* 177). There may be an element of irony in this contrast, though, as Cartwright draws on the trope of the garden, representing England, and the "great expanses" of the wilderness, representing Africa. He could perhaps be subtly commenting on how Englishness has been historically defined in opposition to Africa. On the other hand, I would suggest that this garden-wilderness opposition is not sufficiently challenged by Cartwright in his novels. In fact, drawing on this type of imagery, his book *Oxford Revisited* was originally titled *This Secret Garden*. Although Cartwright's adoption of a liberal humanist perspective illuminates the dangers of idealism, it is thus also possibly implicated in problematic attitudes towards Africa.

Englishness: Both Inclusive and Exclusive

As in Cartwright's other novels set in England, *Other People's Money* incorporates some illuminating commentary on the concept of Englishness. I have already mentioned above some of the ways in which institutions of Englishness are shown to be absurd and delusional through Julian's point-of-view. Cartwright also explores, in this novel, the ways in which Englishness has the potential to be both an exclusive and inclusive category. *Other People's Money* includes several characters who are on the fringes of or outside of Englishness, yet there are also characters who, although not originally seen as representing "true" Englishness, have become incorporated into this ethnic identity.

The Trevelyan-Tubals and their upper-class set are seen as representing a certain historical concept of English ethnicity. For instance, Julian reflects on his family picnicking in the gardens of his tennis club: "If you saw them sitting there [...] you would think what an

idyllic little scene this was. And it is. It's shot through with Englishness, which has nothing much to do with reality" (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 78). The use of the word "idyllic" is noteworthy here, particularly if we recall its use in *The Promise of Happiness*, in which it refers to the Arcadian ideal of an agrarian or pastoral Golden Age. Although Englishness is represented here as "having not much to do with reality" (78), it is nevertheless a category that is ascribed to a certain class of people, carrying out certain activities, such as belonging to country clubs and picnicking. Later, when Julian sees a man practising fly-fishing along the banks of the Thames, he uses semiotics to deconstruct upper-class Englishness:

What is it about the English upper classes that it is still so important to associate themselves with the countryside? Lurchers, rabbits, tweed, Vivella shirts, caps – flat caps are back – and those Dijon mustard trousers. Signifiers. Signifying that these people are the true people of England. (107)

Julian realises that "signifiers" of the countryside work to construct both a class and an ethnic identity. Even in urban London, trappings of the country are used as a marker of class, perhaps harking back to the tradition of the landed gentry, and also perhaps to an idea of England as an idyllic (in the "true" sense in the extract above) land of gardens and fields.

Cartwright is perceptive, however, as to how class gradations in England are not oppositional or necessarily clear-cut. Although he shows how the wealthy are able to separate themselves from the rest of society, and maintain a delusional sense of superiority, he does not idealise the middle and working classes either. Tredizzick, the *Globe and Mail's* editor, believes that the exposure of the Treveylan-Tubals' fraudulent dealings represents a kind of victory for the small man, yet this belief is undercut through the third-person narrative commentary:

Both J.D and the editor knew that the four sheets from the Tubal's computers revealed something very important in their close script and that was the traditional arrogance and contempt of the high-altitude financial classes for ordinary people. What they were forgetting, perhaps, is that the people as a coherent and decent group with shared values has never been anything more than a convenient myth, and now it has, anyway, gone for ever, lost in a world of compulsive gratification and trivialisation, where culture and art and learning are no longer the goals of this once decent class – if it ever existed. Now the whole country longs for celebrity and easy money and exemption from all forms of restraint. (226)

The way in which the English are depicted as desiring "exemption from all forms of restraint" recalls the loaded use of the word "restraint", and its echoes with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*,

in *The Promise of Happiness*. Although Charles Judd in *The Promise of Happiness* finds the removal of “restraint” in society anxiety-provoking, Juliet Judd associates it with a movement away from the snobbishness of class prejudice towards a more fluid society. She reflects that “the English are losing the restraints that once bound them” (Cartwright, *Promise of Happiness* 68) when commenting on the snobbish Buxton quote about travel. I also suggested in the chapter on *The Promise of Happiness* that losing “restraint” may evoke the potential inclusivity of Englishness as analysed by Robert Young. In the *Other People’s Money* passage, however, it seems to be used in a critical sense, both undercutting a unified concept of the working class, and also critiquing what Cartwright sees as the increasingly philistine, late-capitalist, celebrity and wealth-focused nature of English culture. Melissa realises, after Tredizzick’s death, that he was “fighting a different battle for a different England, an England that no longer exists – if it ever had. Nobody now thinks about reaping the blessings of freedom; instead they hope to win the Lottery or become celebrities” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 252). One form of delusion, nostalgia, is thus being replaced by another, namely the trappings of neo-liberal consumer culture.

The potentially inclusive and fluid nature of Englishness as an ethnic identity is, however, also evident in *Other People’s Money*. The Trevelyan-Tubals have not always been on the “inside” of Englishness, and were originally Jewish immigrants. Artair knows that “[t]he man who took his wife, Sir Harry Trevelyan-Tubal, comes from a family which once spoke Yiddish, although insulated from the shtetl by generations of Eton and Oxford and foxhounds” (29). Julian knows that the family, far from being outsiders, “are the establishment now: *from Estonia to Etonia* as some wag put it” (102). He surmises that the bank’s founder, Moses Tubal, must have been “driven by the ferocious desire of the outsider to belong” (106). However he knows that now “the Tubals are safely on the inside. They are woven into the fabric. Their bums are deep in the butter” (106). This inclusive nature of Englishness will allow the American Cy Mannheim to take on English attributes by purchasing the bank: “Tubal and Co., the repository of all that make-believe Englishness, is as good as an honorary knighthood for Cy Mannheim from Coney Island” (198). It is not that Mannheim will be masquerading as an English person, but because Englishness is “make-believe” to begin with; as Young puts it, Englishness has been “transformed into a mode of masquerade that was best performed far from home, a global identity into which others could always translate themselves” (3). Cartwright could also, more critically, be suggesting that Englishness is a kind of theme-park cultural identity, and a commodity that can be bought by rich foreigners.

The characters of *Other People's Money* living in Cornwall have a complex relationship with Englishness. As in *The Promise of Happiness*, Cartwright comments on how Cornwall is seen as a marginal location and an escape from the city. Melissa recognises that:

The truth is nobody gives a rat's arse about Cornwall, except as a place for the impoverished young to surf and get stoned when it's raining, which it often is, or as a place where the oldies want to recapture a mythical time when as children they went around in flannel shorts and sun hats picking up shells or sea glass or diverting streams to make doomed lakes, or having their toes pinched by crabs. Good, cheap, wholesome fun. (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 60-61)

When Melissa goes to London, her marginal position is highlighted, as she feels “even more like a foreigner than the tourists” (142). London is definitely the centre in Melissa's view, and she interestingly frames this dialectic in filmic imagery: “All the energy of the country seems to have congregated here along this river. The rest of us are just the extras, without speaking parts, just filling in the blank spaces in the frame” (147). It is as if, in Melissa's eyes, true Englishness is aggregated in London. As Young argues, “London becomes the navel of the world, the terminus from which all English people originate, and to which, in spirit if not in body, they return” (4). Melissa's perspective on the positions of London and Cornwall in relation to a centre/ margin schema echoes the passage in *The Promise of Happiness* in which Daphne reflects on how she initially saw her residence in Cornwall as “living out on the fringes of a map” (Cartwright, *The Promise of Happiness* 16).

Artair MacCleod: Celtic Identity and Postmodern Play

This centre/ margin dichotomy is also evoked in the character of Artair MacCleod. His move to Cornwall is explained thus: “He has gradually moved towards the edges of the country as if centrifugal forces are pulling him there: in fact the force is the availability of grants in the regions, places that are thought to need help with the arts, because life there is culturally thin and can only be sustained by subsidy” (Cartwright, *Other People's Money* 20). Cartwright provides a revealing commentary on the politics of art when he reveals that Artair's residence in Cornwall is partly motivated by the availability of funding. Artair is perhaps one of the most interesting characters, due to his relationship with Englishness. Although we learn that he lived in Dublin as a child with his anti-English father (90), his name is Scottish and he resides in Cornwall. Artair, like Cartwright, is a transnational figure. The other, perhaps more noble, reason that he lives in Cornwall is that he has come to be known as a Celtic or Gaelic playwright, keeping a transnational Irish/ Scottish/ Cornish/ Breton culture alive. Cartwright

presents Artair's habitation of this role in a gently parodic manner, however. Far from putting on epic productions, Artair and his theatre company stage "children's plays, done with a nod towards Gaelic or Cornish" (20).

Artair wants to change this by writing and producing an epic play based on the life of Irish writer Flann O'Brien. Before he has even finished writing the work, he already anticipates how it will be perceived as a performance. Cartwright draws our attention once more to the way in which art, although transformative, is also caught up in politics of reception:

Artair believes that this play will be his masterwork, combining the appeal of a great – and to some extent – forgotten Irish novelist with the nostalgic appeal to the Gaelic/Celtic past. He can see it attracting interest (and grants) in Galway and Dumfries, in North Wales and down here in Cornwall – Kernow in the old tongue – and even in Brittany where they are keen to keep alive the Brezhoneg language. (22)

While Artair's production seemingly has the noble aims of promoting Irish literature and keeping alive the Gaelic/ Celtic languages and history, he is also motivated by "grants". Artair uses his estranged position towards Englishness to carve out his own niche theatre market. Flann O'Brien in fact adopted a similarly complex attitude towards Gaelic folklore and history, something which Artair himself recognises. In a letter to the actor Daniel Day-Lewis, whom he hopes will star in his production, Artair explains O'Brien's perspective: "*As you know, he was a wonderful, protean character, brought up speaking the Gaelic as I said, and steeped in the romance of ancient legend, but keenly aware, from his seat in the snug of the Red Swan, of the parodic possibilities of the Gaelic nostalgia*" (24). Artair's preference for Daniel Day-Lewis to play Flann O'Brien is significant: as a real-life actor Day-Lewis is also a transnational figure, like Artair and like Cartwright. Artair reflects that "Daniel is English, but he lives in Ireland and feels a deep kinship – Artair is sure – with the Irish prehistory that Flann O'Brien both loved and parodied" (22-23). Daniel Day-Lewis's father, the English poet laureate Cecil Day-Lewis, was born in Southern Ireland to a Church of Ireland priest father.⁹ Although Daniel Day-Lewis was born and raised in England, he has an Anglo-Irish father, lives in Ireland and has frequently played Irish characters. Like Artair, he perhaps uses his transnational heritage to his advantage as an artist.

There are layers upon layers of narratives evoked through Artair's play. As Artair

⁹ Cartwright reminds the reader of Daniel Day-Lewis's background when the poet laureate is invoked in the novel, through one of his translations: Julian, looking at a summer house while rowing in the Antibes, "thinks of it as the building in Valéry's poem: 'Ce toit tranquille, où marchent des colombes/ entre les pins...' absurdly translated by C. Day-Lewis, father of Daniel, as 'This quiet roof, where dove-sails saunter by, between the pines'" (*Other People's Money* 39).

explains to Day-Lewis, his play will be on “*the life and works of Flann O’Brien*” (23). In the sections of the play that Artair recites or references, however, it becomes clear that the script is more of a “cut and paste job” (20) of O’Brien’s 1939 novel, *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Ironically, the sections which Artair cuts and pastes from the O’Brien novel provide an argument for how a work of literature should be pieced together from existing narratives. The narrator of *At Swim-Two-Birds* declares that: “The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before – usually said much better” (O’Brien, ch. 1), and this is quoted in a long passage taken straight from *At Swim-Two-Birds* and inserted into Artair’s play (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 21). Another noteworthy characteristic of Artair’s play is that O’Brien appears in the narrative alongside his characters. For instance, Artair has O’Brien speaking to a character called Lamont in the Red Swan Hotel (66), yet this is a scene taken straight from *At Swim-Two-Birds*, in which Lamont is the narrator’s friend. To make matters more complex, Artair also never directly acknowledges that “Flann O’Brien” is a make-believe persona, in a sense, because this was one of several pen-names of Irish novelist Brian Ó Nualláin.¹⁰

At Swim-Two-Birds is in itself a postmodern, metafictional game of a novel; as Declan Kiberd puts it: “Such a book has ‘several planes and dimensions’, all of which intersect upon one another in its bizarre, trellis-like structure” (503). The narrator of the novel is a Dublin student, who is writing a novel. One of the characters in the student’s novel is a writer, Dermot Trellis, who sleeps for twenty hours a day, which is unfortunate, as his creations take over his narrative while he is asleep. Trellis ends up impregnating one of his characters, resulting in a son, Orlick Trellis, who in turn writes a story about his father. *At Swim-Two-Birds* is a polyvocal mesh of narratives which draws on genres as diverse as Celtic legend and cowboy novels, and which in many ways prefigured postmodernist literature.

Artair self-consciously wants to make his play postmodern. He thinks of his script as exploring “O’Brien’s idea that fictional characters do exist and can resist the author who tries to make use of them in his fiction. He recalls a film about John Malkovich, and perhaps he should have mentioned that to Daniel, to demonstrate that he is not just talking about hoary old myth and creaking theatre, but postmodernism” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 26). Artair goes further in his postmodern vision by later deciding that he is going to make his script into a film that will foreground its own fictionality:

¹⁰ Declan Kiberd argues that “Ó Nualláin multiplied his own pseudonyms (Brother Barnabas, Myles na gCopaleen, as well as Flann O’Brien) in order to confess to a default in authorship” (Kiberd 510). Ó Nualláin’s uncertainty about the authority of the author led him to take on certain roles, making authorship a kind of performance.

[T]he screenplay is, following O'Brien, going to demonstrate its own artificiality. There will be shots of the filming taking place, and the whole concept of a movie as a contained reality will be exploded; it will be a self-evident sham, and the viewer will be offered the opportunity to distance himself, or herself, from the illusion with which film-goers willingly collaborate. He, Artair, will participate in the film, although the viewer will know that he is also the writer and director. He will strive to contain his characters. He will demonstrate that there is no such thing as a single objective reality. (211)

This is an intriguing passage, as in a sense Artair aims to do precisely what Cartwright achieves through his metafictional strategy: the text “demonstrate[s] its own artificiality” and becomes “a self-evident sham”, demonstrating that “there is no such thing as a single objective reality” (211). The tone of these statements, however, is playfully ironic, as if they come from a textbook on postmodernism, and Artair seems a little over-excited about foregrounding the illusory nature of his film, something which he even confesses has been done before in films like Spike Jonze’s *Being John Malkovich*. I would suggest that Cartwright may be lightly parodying his own use of postmodernist and metafictional techniques. As in *In Every Face I Meet*, Cartwright’s deployment of metafiction in *Other People’s Money* destabilises narrative certainty and contributes to his overall concern with myths, “necessary fictions” and delusions.

One could argue that Artair’s interest in postmodernism can be attributed to his transnational identity. Declan Kiberd suggests that the polyvocality of Flann O’Brien *At Swim-Two-Birds* was motivated by O’Brien’s experience of dislocation and stagnation in 1930s Ireland and his struggle to locate an authoritative authorial identity: “Confronted with such an uncertain situation, the writer is often less anxious to say some something new than to find a self that is capable of saying anything at all” (510). In the same way, Artair’s play, and his “play” on certainties, may be influenced by his complex relationship to Englishness and by his dislocated sense of national identity.

The Trouble with Liberal Humanism?

One may ask whether the novel’s metafictional or postmodern games mesh in any way with Cartwright’s liberal humanist perspective. Firstly, one could argue, as explored in the chapter on *In Every Face I Meet*, that Cartwright’s use of postmodernism is a way of destabilising the narrative, and that this is an analogy for his rejection, influenced by Berlin’s value pluralism, of any totalising ideals or ways of reading the world. Cartwright’s metafictional strategies serve to destabilise narrative certainty, which correlates with his critique of any ideological

“grand narratives”.

Cartwright’s use of postmodernism to emphasise the impartiality, rationality and critical elements of his liberal humanist outlook may also, however, point to a larger problem with his adoption of Berlin’s philosophy. While Berlin may claim that holding any overarching ideal, ideology or belief is irrational and even inhumane, this is to assume that liberalism or humanism are not in fact culturally-implicated ideologies in themselves, not to mention that discourse around liberalism and humanism have been used to perpetuate racist strategies, as discussed in detail above.

The novel’s epilogue (self-consciously titled “The End”) is interspersed with quotations from O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds*, as the outcome of each major character is revealed. While the *Cornish Globe and Mail* is closed down by its owners and Edward Tredizzick dies, the bankers seem to suffer few consequences for their actions. Julian and his colleague Nigel are only reprimanded and fined a relatively small amount, and Melissa’s informant, the hedge-fund manager, is given a short, suspended sentence. The novel does not end with these perhaps disappointing conclusions, however, but with the dramatic entrance of Daniel Day-Lewis, who is seen sitting in Artair’s house reading a script: the Oscar-winning actor has clearly agreed to star in Artair’s epic production. Despite the gentle parodying of Artair throughout *Other People’s Money*, the visionary artist is given the last laugh.

While this is certainly a pleasing outcome for those who believe, as Cartwright does, in the transformative power of art, one could perhaps argue that the financiers do not really suffer the consequences of their actions in the novel’s conclusion, that Cartwright’s critique of the bankers and their delusions and ideals is too moderate in *Other People’s Money*, and that the gentle irony of Cartwright’s liberal humanist approach – no-one is a villain or a hero – is perhaps unsuited to examining the dire consequences of neo-liberalism. Although we see some of the real-world effects of the credit-crunch as discussed above, the Treveylan-Tubals are largely cushioned from any suffering by their wealth, as has been explored in the discussion of Julian’s outcome. Although I am not suggesting that all characters should get what they deserve as in a contrived novel of moral instruction, one may question whether a liberal humanist outlook is an appropriate perspective to adopt in critiquing the ravages of neo-liberalism and irresponsible bankers whose real-life counterparts caused massive economic upheaval and suffering. There is thus a troubling paradox in Cartwright’s stance: Cartwright may be repelled by the “corruption” he perceives to be at large in South Africa, but he seems to provide only a gently critical portrayal of corrupt English financiers.

Conclusion:

The aim of this thesis has been to trace the ways in which Cartwright's perspective as a South African-born author living and writing in England is reflected in his novels set in England. I saw this project as important, since Cartwright's novels, particularly those set in England, have not been the subject of any substantial academic writing. The four novels discussed in this thesis have revealed a number of complex thematic concerns.

Cartwright's adoption of a position of slight estrangement from his English subject-matter may be attributed either to a self-conscious occupation of an "outsider" role, or it may be due to an actual distance from Englishness because his South African heritage. As Cartwright himself realises, he may "kid" himself that "an outsider notices little foibles that English people might take for granted" ("Other people's stories"), but in any case his occupation of this perspective results in an observant critique of Englishness. I suggested in the chapters on *In Every Face I Meet* and *To Heaven by Water*, particularly, that one could see Cartwright as adopting an anthropological perspective on Englishness, due to his carefully-observed commentary on the characteristics of English people. This could be seen as a radical reversal of the traditional anthropological gaze, which has historically been focused on the "third-world other" rather than the inhabitants of the so-called "centre".

I explored how Cartwright presents Englishness as both potentially inclusive and exclusive. The inclusive nature of Englishness was particularly discussed in conversation with Robert Young's *The Idea of English Ethnicity*. Young's ideas are discussed alongside Paul Gilroy's theories about the exclusive nature of "new racism" in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. Chapter One, on *In Every Face I Meet*, for instance, discussed Cartwright's critique of how Anthony, a white colonial, is seen as English, whereas as Jason, a black, English-born man, is excluded from English ethnicity. In this chapter, the effect of colonialism on the concept of Englishness was also discussed, in relation to the characters of Anthony and his parents. In Chapter Two, which dealt with *The Promise of Happiness*, I explored how Cartwright particularly critiques the exclusive and conservative qualities of a certain type of old-fashioned Englishness associated with nostalgia, whiteness and middle-class values, especially through his ironic take on icons of Englishness, such as the poet laureate John Betjeman. In Chapter Four I looked at how Cartwright's most recent novel, *Other People's Money*, depicts another mode of Englishness, that of the super-rich upper class. Even in that novel, however, Cartwright presents Englishness as a dialectic between inclusion and exclusion. While the privileged and rarefied existence of the upper classes is

described in great detail, Cartwright also shows how the Jewish Tubals were originally integrated into English society, and how the American businessman Cy Mannheim is able to “buy” Englishness as a kind of performative identity, through his purchase of the English bank.

In both Chapter Two and Chapter Four I examined how London, the English metropole, is contrasted with Cornwall, in a relation of centre to margin. These are also shown to represent different types of Englishness. While London is represented, for instance through Sophie’s perspective in *The Promise of Happiness*, as modern, banal and cosmopolitan, her mother Daphne, originating from the countryside (although originally a Londoner) is seen by Sophie’s fellow Hoxton residents to represent “true”, old-fashioned Englishness.

Complicating this opposition, however, is Daphne’s mental mapping of London as the centre and Cornwall as the margin. In other words, she originally sees London as the centre of Englishness, although she significantly changes this view after living in Cornwall for a while. In *Other People’s Money*, Cornwall resident Melissa feels “even more like a foreigner than the tourists” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 142) when she visits London, suggesting that London, to her, also represents something at the heart of Englishness, or at least a different type of Englishness from that of Cornwall. I put these views in conversation with Young’s discussion of the “suburban relations” that the “entire English-speaking world” has to the capital (Young 4). The other Cornish character in *Other People’s Money* is playwright Artair MacCleod, who uses his estranged position towards Englishness as a Celtic and Cornish artist in order to carve out a niche market for himself, but whose transnationality is also arguably evident in his writing.

Although the novels which I discuss are all set predominantly in England, Cartwright draws on his background as an African-born writer, in that he frequently compares England to Africa, and deploys references to Africa, or even a few chapters set in Africa, as in *To Heaven by Water*, in order to provide commentary on Englishness. In Chapter One I looked at how *In Every Face I Meet* draws on a significant intersection between the ideas of eighteenth century philosopher Emmanuel Swedenborg and William Blake, in order to explain the Romanticised notions the protagonist, Anthony, has about Africa and Africans. That chapter also examined how Cartwright depicted racism within the metropole as a legacy of colonial domination in *In Every Face I Meet*, particularly through the novel’s intertextual invocation of notoriously racist South African writer Sarah Gertrude Millin. The chapter on *To Heaven by Water* focused more than any other section on representations of Africa, due to its two chapters set in the Kalahari Desert. I argued that these chapters self-consciously draw on J.M. Coetzee’s

White Writing in that they depict the “historical insecurity regarding the place of the artist of European heritage in the African landscape” (Coetzee, *White Writing* 62), through the way in which the characters, Guy and David, encounter the African landscape and attempt to “read” it. I focused particularly on those elements of Guy and David’s encounters with the African landscape which correlate with Coetzee’s generalised characteristics of white writers’ texts about Africa, particularly the desire for the African landscape to “speak” to one, the comparison of Africa to England, a preoccupation with the emptiness of the landscape and its concomitant meaninglessness, and the Romanticisation of the Bushman. While suggesting that Cartwright invokes *White Writing* partly in an ironic fashion, in order to show Englishness as marked by a colonising gaze, I also questioned why Cartwright does not accept Coetzee’s challenge to present an alternative to the fiction of the empty landscape. I furthermore suggested that Cartwright may be performing – or simply demonstrating – his difficulty in scripting the African other. Considered in conjunction with his other writings, however, it is possible that Cartwright’s shying away from depicting Africa as a peopled land in *To Heaven by Water* may be attributed to his generally ambivalent attitude towards his place of birth. In this same vein, I argued in the chapter on *Other People’s Money* that Cartwright’s suggestion in the media that he does not want to write about South Africa due to the “corruption” he finds in South African society may be linked to his problematic attitude towards Africa.

I also looked briefly at how Cartwright highlights the characteristics of Englishness through comparisons between England and America in *The Promise of Happiness*. The more inclusive, fluid nature of American culture was contrasted against the historically class-prejudiced mores of Englishness. In that novel, however, there is also a suggestion that Englishness is a changing category, and that English society is not as “restrained” as it once was. In the same way, in *Other People’s Money*, the editor of *The Cornish Globe and Mail*, Edward Tredizzick, is aware that the class gradations which were once so rigid in English society are being eroded and that English people now desire “exemption from all forms of restraint” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 226). In *The Promise of Happiness* in particular, I noticed how Englishness is presented by Cartwright as a kind of performative identity, particularly when the English person is abroad, for instance in America.

Cartwright’s critique of myths of national identity is interwoven with his adoption of Isaiah Berlin’s value pluralism and liberal humanism, as was discussed in detail in the Introduction and as was highlighted at certain points in each chapter. In the chapter on *The Promise of Happiness*, for instance, I discussed how art and beauty are contrasted with the

arbitrariness of “real” life, through the character of Juliet. In this way Cartwright draws attention to the dangers of idealistic, utopian thought. In *To Heaven by Water* David concludes, after his journey to Africa: “I have beliefs but I don’t believe in them” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 292), evoking J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*. David is expressing a value pluralist stance by saying that it is wise not to have any strongly-held, unified, all-encompassing ideals. In *Other People’s Money*, the idealism of the bankers is overtly critiqued; however, as I pointed out in my chapter on that novel, the fact that Cartwright takes a liberal humanist approach means that his critique is moderate. The bankers are therefore represented as deluded rather than evil.

I argued in that chapter how Cartwright’s affinity with a liberal humanist approach could be seen as problematic. Firstly, Cartwright’s portrayal of the effects of the recession on ordinary people is not perhaps entirely realistic or wide-ranging. Secondly, liberal humanism is unavoidably caught up in racist discourse and is a Western-focused ideology. I drew on the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Toril Moi to contribute to my discussion about the cultural history of humanism. I furthermore argued in Chapter Four that Cartwright possibly elides the way in which liberalism and humanism are culturally implicated ideologies. I again suggested that his willingness to adopt this philosophy and his steering away from its racial and cultural implications may be associated with his complex attitude towards Africa.

Despite my criticism of liberal humanism, I nevertheless traced how Berlin’s value pluralism is played out in interesting ways in Cartwright’s novels. I argued, for example, that his use of an ironic perspective in *To Heaven by Water* is not only another “perspective of estrangement” but that it also contributes to his undercutting of certainties and beliefs in that novel. Due to his liberal humanist slant this irony is humane and gentle, but it does contribute towards Cartwright’s critique of Englishness in that novel. One of the characters in *To Heaven by Water*, Ed Cross, quotes Søren Kierkegaard’s ideas about irony, which led me to use Kierkegaard’s take on irony to explain how irony prevents a life lived in “finitude” (Kierkegaard 339). In other words, irony prevents certainty, which correlates with Cartwright’s adoption of value pluralist ideas.

A significant way in which Cartwright performs his espousal of value pluralism in his novels is through his deployment of postmodern, metafictional strategies. I demonstrated how the playful, metafictional elements of Cartwright’s works, which draw attention to the textuality of the novels, also serve to destabilise narrative certainty. I then linked this to his broader destabilisation of certainties of all kinds, particularly totalising beliefs and ideals. In *In Every Face I Meet*, the framing chapters seen through the perspective of juror and writer

Julian Capper are particularly replete with metafictional moments, for instance, the list of “themes” of the trial which Capper formulates, which mimics a strategy of literary criticism. Another way in which Cartwright arguably destabilises the narrative is through his use of various narrative perspectives, mostly in the form of a third-person focalised viewpoint, which comment on one another. *Other People’s Money* also includes postmodern elements in the sections about playwright Artair MacCleod, who is writing a play that is a “cut and paste job” (Cartwright, *Other People’s Money* 20) of Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds*, itself a protean postmodern novel. What is more, the play, which is also envisioned as a film, will be self-consciously metafictional. It will “demonstrate its own artificiality” (211) and be a “self-evident sham” (211). Cartwright’s use of metafictional strategies is also intertwined with his broader concern with fictions and literature throughout these novels. Not only does he critique the “fictional” nature of ideals, myths and delusions, but he celebrates the power and transformative nature of literature. In *The Promise of Happiness*, there are several reader and writer characters. What the characters are reading not only gives us insight into their psyches, it also helps to show what their relationship is to Englishness; for instance, the different characters’ views of poet laureate John Betjeman are revealing. In my discussion of what characters read in *The Promise of Happiness*, I drew on Benedict Anderson’s famous study of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, focusing on his ideas about how reading intersects with national identity. I also pointed out how Cartwright touches on the connection between imaginative art and national identity through Juliet’s ideas about how Tiffany stained-glass windows evoked certain attributes of the American dream. In *To Heaven by Water* especially, literature and art are shown to be transformative, particularly through Adam’s speech at the novel’s conclusion, in which he pleads with his audience to read until their “eyeballs burst” (Cartwright, *To Heaven by Water* 303).

Cartwright’s concern with the prevalence and purpose of fictions is also conveyed through the way in which characters “read” the world through the expectations of the media. I drew on the general premise of Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* in order to discuss this element of Cartwright’s novels. In *The Promise of Happiness*, for example, Juliet considers that she was charged with her crime because she fit a specific role in a pre-determined story, which is influenced by the narratives available in popular American culture. Charlie similarly sees America through the prism of the media representations which he has consumed. Likewise, Sophie in *To Heaven by Water* experiences her boyfriend’s mock-suicide as if it were a Tarantino film. *The Promise of Happiness* particularly presents the more negative aspect of fictional narratives, in that they are shown to be potentially simplifying and

flattening. The complexities of “real” life are subsumed into a stereotyped narrative, which results in tragic consequences for Juliet. In this way, the novel’s lack of closure perhaps enacts the inadvisability of limiting narratives. This once more correlates with his wider critique of “grand narratives”.

Cartwright is constructed, and constructs himself, as an outsider to Englishness, and this estranged positionality allows him to provide a thorough, illuminating and complex critique of English society, influenced by his affinity towards Berlinian value pluralism. His novels set in England provide commentary not only about Englishness, but also by implication about Africa, and they furthermore evince the ambivalent relationship between this South African-born English writer and his birthplace.

One might suggest that one of the limitations of this thesis is that it only deals with four novels by this prolific writer. Cartwright has written other novels set in England, for instance *Look At It This Way* (1992) and *Half in Love* (2001). These four novels were chosen because I found them to be most fruitful in terms of the parameters of this thesis. Several of Cartwright’s other novels, not set in England, provide an interesting commentary which could be related to my analysis of these four novels. *The Song Before It Is Sung*, for example, provides unique insights into Cartwright’s reliance on the philosophy of Isaiah Berlin, while *White Lightning* enacts his complex relationship with Africa. There is certainly much room for research on these novels, as well as on other themes across Cartwright’s oeuvre. I hope to carry out future research on Cartwright’s work, particularly concerning how his position as a South African-born writer, living in and writing about England, can be put into conversation with texts by other South African-born authors of English “ethnicity”. This thesis will, I hope, provide an invitation to other scholars who may find fertile ground for academic writing on the novels of Justin Cartwright.

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