Spectres of Thatcher: Narratives of National Identity in Contemporary Britain

MULLEN, ANTONY

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Antony Mullen

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ABSTRACT

What do we mean by Thatcherism? In answering this question, this thesis forges a new interdisciplinary framework, drawing upon recent debates in political science and political history, for reading contemporary British writing in relation to Thatcherism. In doing so, it highlights the problems with some literary critics' deployment of the concept in recent years, such as reducing it to a mere synonym for neoliberalism or neglecting to define it at all.

Thatcherism is, in this thesis, primarily defined as a mode of nationalism. Using newly-available archival material, I contend that Margaret Thatcher's political project should be understood – above all else – as one focused upon the restoration of 'true' Britishness and British values. This nationalist aspect of Thatcher's politics had the potential to contradict her more neoliberal rhetoric and policies, and thereby render 'Thatcherism' entirely incoherent – but it did not. This, I argue, was because Thatcher's adoption of, and reliance upon, a narrative framework allowed her to present the various ideological strands that constituted her eponymous -ism as a coherent political vision rooted deep in British history.

It is through the prism of this framework that the (hitherto overlooked) influence of Thatcherite ideas of Britishness on the literature of, and since, the 1980s is most clearly exposed. The (literary) period covered by this study begins with Martin Amis' *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984) and ends with Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016). Following an initial chapter dedicated to defining 'Thatcherism', my argument develops over three subsequent chapters: these, in turn, deal with questions of nationhood in relation to individualism, society, and history. By examining how British writers like Alan Hollinghurst, Hilary Mantel and Jonathan Coe have recognised (and, more importantly, challenged) the development of a distinctly Thatcherite idea of Britishness, this study offers a unique understanding of how contemporary British fiction has charted the legacy of Thatcherism – and the implications of that legacy – as well as providing a new way of conceptualising 'Thatcherism' (that is, in relation to a narrative about nationhood).

CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

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"Legislators of ancient times […] sought ties that would bind the citizens to the fatherland and to one another" – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

"The life of nations, no less than that of men, is lived largely in the imagination" – Enoch Powell

"If we are to act in the name of patriotism […] we must define the patria" – Keith Joseph

"All across the country, people called each other cunts" – Ali Smith

INTRODUCTION

Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that nationalism had the potential to forge communal bonds between citizens. By contrast, Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) frames British nationalism as the cause of a divided society in which citizens reject communal bonds and call each other cunts instead. This thesis is about how fiction has charted (and challenged) the extension of distinctly Thatcherite ideas about national identity and citizenship into the 21st century. It culminates in findings which are articulated in the opening sentences of this paragraph. That is to say, the writers included in this study challenge what they perceive to be Thatcherite ideas of 'Britishness' and British national identity by representing a nation which is divided along social, economic, cultural and (sometimes) racial lines. They contest the notion that 'Britain' has a singular, coherent identity – as Thatcher's rhetorical construction of Britishness suggested – and undermine claims that its citizens belong to a shared heritage. This study is intended to offer a contextual history in which key themes and tropes that emerged in British fiction in the 1980s, in response to Thatcherism, are identified in writing published this side of the millennium. It provides an interdisciplinary framework for reading the continuity of these political trends in literature, rejecting the more reductive approaches to studying political fiction that, as we shall see, have marred recent literary criticism. The continued presence of these political themes and tropes, I argue, reflects the continuation of the political, social and cultural conditions which inspired their emergence in the first place and, particularly, the endurance of a Thatcherite notion of Britishness.

Having stated what this thesis is, it remains equally briefly for now to clarify what it is not. What follows does not aspire to be an exhaustive history of all British fiction published since 1980, nor will the thesis suggest that all or even most of British fiction since that time is about Thatcherism: there are of course examples of British fiction which are not remotely influenced by Thatcherism. Indeed, it is difficult to argue that even some of the more recent work by authors included in this study is about Thatcherism. How, for example, is Martin Amis' writing on the holocaust about Thatcherism? I would not attempt to argue that it is. What matters is that there is a distinct strand of contemporary British fiction that *is* still influenced by Thatcherism – and it is that with which I am concerned. Similarly, this study does not seek to offer a detailed history of policymaking, political events or social attitudes in, or since, the 1980s. Though this thesis draws

upon political science and political history to offer an interdisciplinary perspective, it is not intended to be a 'pure' political science or history project. It is, instead, a contextual history which sets out to disrupt established scholarly debates surrounding British fiction and Thatcherism. It offers, in place of what has come before, an account of British fiction which is not so much unambiguously anti-Thatcherite as concerned with the ideological complexities (and contradictions) of Thatcherism and its status as a, if not *the*, dominant prism through which recent British history has been viewed. That is not to say that the writers I discuss are not anti-Thatcherite (most of them have stated that they are in quite explicit terms), but their fiction offers a more nuanced perspective than this – and that is not always reflected in literary criticism, as my literature review reveals. It is, similarly, not a comprehensive 'biography' of the literary or cultural landscape of the period c.1980 – present, nor is it an attempt to analyse all the fiction influenced by Thatcherism. The former approach has already been adopted with much success by Joseph Brooker in *Literature of the 1980s: After the Watershed* (2010), while the latter is too great in scope for any one study to achieve. Instead, this thesis prioritises depth over breadth and illustrates, using a narrow but diverse collection of literary texts, the intricate and complex relationship between Thatcherism and fiction. In many respects it is not so much the discussion of the specific texts which is most significant: these have changed over the course of the project. Rather, the significance lies in the originality of the interdisciplinary framework adopted in my analysis of them and the observations about narrative and national identity emerging from that approach.

This Introduction serves three purposes: to chart the wider cultural influence of Margaret Thatcher beyond fiction, intended to give a sense of the scale of Thatcher's impact on popular culture in, and since, the 1980s; to offer some critical observations of the existing scholarly literature on Thatcherism and contemporary British fiction in order to contextualise my own work; and to explain the methodological approach I have taken and how the thesis is structured.

Thatcher's Cultural Influence

Despite Margaret Thatcher's death in 2013, it is difficult to maintain that she is 'gone'. References to Thatcher and Thatcherism are frequently found in contemporary British (and, indeed, international) political discourse, in journalism, in literature, in film and television, in theatre, in political cartoons, in comedy and in academic debates, including – as this study proves – those

taking place outside of political science and political history. Since her death, the words "Margaret Thatcher" and/or "Thatcherism" have appeared in a news publication, somewhere in the world, almost every day.[1] Moreover, as the title of this study indicates, Thatcher's influence – cultural, political or otherwise – is often conceptualised in relation to the notion of the spectre. This imagery was associated with Thatcherism during Thatcher's lifetime but much more so since her passing. Peter Jenkins' reference to "the spectre of Mrs Thatcher" in 1977 was used to foreshadow an impending change and the increasing likelihood that Thatcher would become Prime Minister. Sunder Katwala's 2009 essay – written to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1979 General Election – states that a "spectre is haunting British politics: the shadow of Thatcherism" (2013, n.p.). Katwala uses the image of the spectre to illustrate his argument that Thatcherism continues to shape contemporary British politics through continued reactions to it and ongoing efforts to adapt to it. Though her successors were not all Thatcherites, he says they were nonetheless unable "to escape the consequences and contradictions of the post-Thatcher inheritance" (Katwala, 2009, n.p.). George Eaton's adoption of the same spectral image in 2019 serves much the same purpose as it does in Katwala's essay: to reflect on how "both left and right continue to wrestle with Thatcherism's consequences" (2019, n.p.). It is this common idea of Thatcherism's inescapability – for both right and left – which justifies the concept of the spectre as a metaphor for Thatcherism's legacy in these essays. Except for a discussion of the 2012 film *The Iron Lady* in Chapter Three, my primary focus is upon how this seemingly unavoidable spectral legacy casts its shadow over contemporary British writing. Yet, Margaret Thatcher's influence on popular culture reaches far beyond contemporary literature.

In *Harvest of the Sixties* (1995), Patricia Waugh outlined the challenges of writing about the fiction of a political moment which is, arguably, not yet over. Waugh cautioned that to do so is to attempt "to define a legacy whose implications and ramifications are far from clear" (p.1). I am, in writing this thesis, conscious of the ongoing commentary about the nature of Thatcherism. The UK's vote to leave the European Union in 2016, for example, led to assertions from some that Brexit (a portmanteau meaning 'British exit' from the EU) marked the end of Thatcherism, while

[1] This statement is based on notifications generated by 'Google Alerts' which I have monitored daily since Thatcher's death in 2013. The publications listed by Google are not always what one might consider 'quality' outlets and can sometimes include websites not universally considered 'news' sources, such as the hard-left *Canary,* rather than more reputable sources. Similarly, the publications can also include local press articles – such as those in the *Liverpool Echo* – rather than national publications. Nonetheless, my main point is that "Margaret Thatcher" and "Thatcherism" continue to appear in some variety of news or current affairs publication on an almost daily basis. The days on which they have not has not yet exceeded single figures.

others argued that it signalled a revival of Thatcherism. Moreover, there have been debates about whether Theresa May's premiership represented the continuity of, or a departure from, neoliberalism and/or Thatcherism.[2] The implicit assumption in much of this commentary is that 'Thatcherism' exists as a homogenous ideological block which is only ever capable of being wholly present or totally absent. As I show in Chapter One, it is it much more appropriate to think about Thatcherism in terms of strands of thought which exist side-by-side (with some overlap) under the collective banner of an -ism. Thinking about Thatcherism in this way allows for meaningful consideration of how specific elements of its legacy have been dealt with in fiction. Yet, one aspect of Thatcher's legacy is clear to us: its cultural impact. Much in the same way that there has been a sustained academic interest in Thatcherism since the 1970s, it has – to varying degrees – also inspired the imaginations of writers, songwriters, satirists and others within the arts and cultural industries across that period.

Thatcherism's influence on the British film industry of the 1980s was demonstrable and significant. John Hill (1999) has masterfully analysed a range of cinematic texts in the context of the decade's social and economic climate. He notes that British film often "incorporated a number of conservative elements" while also criticising some elements of Thatcherism (especially its nationalism) but ultimately demonstrating an ambivalence towards it (Hill, 1999, p.28). Overall, though, Hill concludes that – when surveying the films of the period – it is "much easier to identify an anti-Thatcherite cinema than a pro-Thatcherite one" (1999, p.29). British cinema capitalised on the growing preoccupation with national heritage (discussed in more depth in Chapter One). Merchant Ivory Productions became a leading producer of costume dramas, including *A Room with a View* (1986) and *Maurice* (1987). Both films were directed by the American filmmaker and screenwriter, James Ivory, and based on adaptations of E.M. Forster novels. While many of the films in the 'heritage canon' were adapted from literary works (including those by William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and Evelyn Waugh), Forster's work was adapted more than any other author during this period. Other Forster adaptations, though not directed by Ivory, included *A Passage to India* (1984), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1991) and *Howards End* (1992). These films presented cinemagoers with a pastoral vision of Englishness in the early twentieth century, often focusing upon the English aristocracy or upper classes. This vision of national heritage is in tune

[2] Chapter One demonstrates that the terms 'Thatcherism' and 'neoliberalism' are used interchangeably and explains why it is wrong to see them as synonyms; Chapter Four offers specific examples of those who have made claims regarding Brexit and/or Theresa May representing the end of Thatcherism.

with Stuart Hall's suggestion that Thatcher's ideas of Britishness was, in fact, a specific (and exclusive) expression of Englishness.[3]

Andrew Higson observes that the heritage cinema of the 1980s and 1990s was not pro-Thatcher but "ambivalent" and demonstrated a "tension between visual splendour and narrative meaning in the films" (2006, p.93). Their ambivalence, he says, was not just towards Thatcherism but to the image of the past it presented (Higson, 2006, p.108). Higson's identification of heritage cinema's ambivalence resonates with Hill's similar reading of the films as ideologically ambivalent (1999, p.28). It is perhaps because of its political and ideological ambivalence that heritage cinema enjoyed, as Claire Monk identifies, a surprising degree of transatlantic (and often international) critical and commercial success (1995, p.116). The on-screen portrayal of English heritage, twinned with seemingly politically neutral narratives, proved to be internationally popular: the critical acclaim of these films is demonstrated by a string of Academy Award nominations, including those for *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *A Passage to India* (1984) (with the former winning Best Picture). However, heritage cinema – as Higson (2006) also observes – was only one strand of filmmaking in the British film industry during the 1980s: other films, set in the present, focused on a much less pastoral image of the nation and told stories of working-class life. Such films included *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), both of which were written by Hanif Kureishi.[4] In more recent years, Thatcherism has also figured in films similar to these, such as *Billy Elliot* (2000), set against the backdrop of the 1984-85 miners' strike, and Ken Loach's *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) which offers a portrait of Thatcherism's legacy through the lens of life on a council estate in Scotland. Aside from the films about Thatcherism, there are also (albeit fewer) examples of Thatcher herself being represented in films. *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) sees British secret agent James Bond receive a phone call from Thatcher who intends to congratulate him for recovering the UK's Automatic Targeting Attack Communicator. Bond, preferring instead to pursue sexual exploits with the film's 'Bond girl', hangs up the phone beside a parrot. That Thatcher is unknowingly engaged in conversation with a parrot, thanking it for its service to Britain, is less remarkable than the depiction of Thatcher herself: other political and military figures in the Bond franchise, British or

[3] Ben Wellings (2007) documents how this notion of Englishness as Britishness went on to shape the Conservative Party throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s. Wellings suggests that Scottish and Welsh devolution in the 1990s led to a revival of English nationalism: the Conservatives dealt with this not by addressing Englishness explicitly, but by aligning "English consciousness with categories whose boundaries were greater than that of the political entity 'England'" (Wellings, 2007, p.411).

[4] Kureishi is also the author of the 1990 novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* which retrospectively examines the social and cultural undercurrents of Britain in the 1970s which led to the election of the first Thatcher government.

otherwise, are invariably fictional – including all other instances of a British Prime Minister appearing in the Bond films. The 2011 film, *The Iron Lady*, discussed in Chapter Three, represented a much more serious attempt to tell the story of Thatcher's life. Meryl Streep's performance as Thatcher earned her, among other accolades, the Academy Award and BAFTA in both organisations' 'Best Actress' category.

The long-running television sitcom *Only Fools and Horses* (1981-96) reflected the Thatcherite ideals of self-help and enterprise, contrasting earlier programmes like *On the Buses* (1969-73) which had focused on unionised labour. The television drama series *Howards' Way* (1985-90) also reflected a culture of enterprise and aspiration in a society defined by consumerism and wealth. The series *Boys from the Black Stuff* (1980-82) – about unemployment in Liverpool – was broadcast during the 1980s and widely cited as a commentary on Thatcherism (though, in reality, it was mostly written before Thatcher came to power).[5] The BBC's output reflected an anti-Thatcherite sentiment: sitcoms like *The Young Ones* (1982-84) were against what that particular series called the "Thatcherite junta", while the Corporation withdrew Ian Curteis' *The Falklands Play* when it transpired it was pro-Thatcher.[6] Commissioned in 1983 (for broadcast in 1986), it did not appear on TV and radio until 2002. One of the most distinctive and enduring portraits of Thatcher during the 1980s, though, was in *Spitting Image*, where she appeared as a puppet and was voiced by Steve Nallon (who also sometimes dressed as Thatcher for TV appearances). This characteristically satirical take presented Thatcher as a masculinised leader who dominated her cabinet ministers, manifestly treating them as inferior to herself: she implies in one episode that they are 'vegetables' and, in another, she joins them at the urinal. A recurring joke in the series sees Thatcher taking advice from her neighbour, Herr Von Wilcox, who is (unbeknownst to Thatcher) an elderly Adolf Hitler. The show also featured the "Grantham Anthem", sung by a piano-playing Thatcher, which offered a satirical account of the origins and influence of Thatcherism. The lyrics convey the idea of Thatcher

[5] Alan Bleasdale, author of *Boys from the Blackstuff*, has stated in an interview that the series was not written about Thatcherism, or during Thatcher's premiership, while acknowledging his own anti-Thatcher politics: "That battering [Thatcherism] hadn't occurred while I was writing it" (qtd. in Lewis, 2016, p.113). John Doyle's (2013) article on Thatcherism and television is guilty of making the incorrect assertation that the series was about Thatcherism, as is Roger Luckhurst's (2005) "British science fiction in the 1990s". Paul Johnson (2015) explains that this view was widely held because the series appeared amidst a plethora of other anti-Thatcherite programming.

[6] Patricia Holland and Georgia Eglezou (2010) note how a reorganisation of the BBC, including the introduction of an "internal market" and the producer choice policy were among the controversies which caused a number of disputes between the BBC and the Thatcher governments. Part of the BBC's response, they note, was to "irritate the establishment" by satirising free market ideology and broadcasting programmes which, among other things, examined the small print in contracts in the private healthcare sector (2010, p.42). Holland and Eglezou write that this kind of documentary came as a shock to those viewers who were brought up with the NHS (2010, p.42).

learning of her father's thrifty approach to housekeeping in his Grantham corner shop, then applying those principles in her god-like creation of the universe:

> "I will sing the Grantham Anthem,
> Which I learned at my father's knee,
> As I helped him in his corner shop,
> In Nazareth, Galilee, […]
> I sang the Grantham Anthem,
> While I made the universe!"

Though an obvious exaggeration, the song nonetheless reflects the notion of Thatcherism having its roots in Alf Roberts' local business and Thatcher applying those principles, like a good housewife, to the nation.[7] Thatcher was also presented in two BBC television dramas, *The Long Walk to Finchley* (2008) which explores Thatcher's efforts to become an MP and *Margaret* (2009) which focuses upon her downfall. The latter event was also the subject of *Thatcher: The Final Days* (1991). The 2006 television adaptation of Alan Hollinghurst's Booker Prize-winning *The Line of Beauty* (2004) features Thatcher, while the 1986 adaption of Jeffrey Archer's 1984 novel *First Among Equals* renames Thatcher (as she is referred to in the book) Hilary Turner.[8]

Some of the most explicit (and vitriolic) anti-Thatcher sentiment can be found in the songwriting of the 1980s. In Pink Floyd's "Fletcher Memorial Home" (1983), Thatcher is described as an "incurable tyrant" to whom the Final Solution (the Nazi plan for the extermination of the Jews) should "be applied". No less graphic were Morrissey's "Margaret on the Guillotine" (1988), which described the "wonderful dream" of beheading Mrs Thatcher, or Elvis Costello's "Tramp the Dirt Down" (1989) in which the singer prayed he would live long enough to be able to stamp on her grave and laugh. Subtler, less graphic songs were also deployed in protest to the Thatcher governments. In 1980, The Specials released a cover of Bob Dylan's "Maggie's Farm", substituting the reference to the National Guard in Dylan's original for a timelier reference to the National Front. Billy Bragg's "Between the Wars" (1985) and "Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards" (1988)

[7] Sally Abernethy (2018) has noted that the feminine discourse of 'good housekeeping' – which presented Thatcher as a 'housewife', managing the economy as she would a household budget – was key to winning over female voters "who related to it more strongly" than men did, even though Thatcher had intended it to appeal to men and women in equal measure (p.17).

[8] My concern here has primarily been content, but the Thatcher governments' impact on the television industry was also notable. For more on this, see Alexander Beaumont's (2010) essay on "New Times Television".

both firmly opposed the Thatcher governments, with the former sung from the perspective of a miner and the latter defending the political activism of left-wing popstars. Bragg's "Thatcherites" (1996) made an explicit promise to 'take back' what had been privatised by the Thatcher governments. Paul Weller, of The Jam and The Style Council, formed the Red Wedge collective in 1985 with the (ultimately failed) plan to oust Thatcher by using music to mobilise support against her. Multiple others – from The Larks' "Maggie Maggie Maggie (Out Out Out)" (1984) to Pete Wiley's "The Day That Margaret Thatcher Dies" (2013) (not to be confused with Hefner's "The Day That Thatcher Dies" (2002)) – all expressed clear anti-Thatcher messages.

Thatcher and her politics also inspired comics and graphic novels. Steve Bell's "Maggie's Farm" comic strip appeared from 1979 to 1987 (first in *Time Out* and later in *City Limits*). Grant Morrison's *St Swithin's Day* (1989-90), published by Trident Comics, caused fury among Conservatives in the House of Commons because it depicts the planned assassination of the then Prime Minister. Thatcher also appeared in Morrison's short-lived, four-part comic series *The New Adventures of Hitler,* published first in *Cut* (1989) and reproduced in *Crisis* (1990). Alan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* – initially serialised in *Warrior* (1982-85) then republished by DC, which also published new editions (1988-89) – was a cautionary tale of Britain's turn rightwards under Thatcher. Issue number 3 of *DC's* "Hellblazer" (1988) is set against a backdrop of the Conservatives' third General Election win under Thatcher. Perhaps most prescient of all though, Judge Dredd, who first appeared in *2000 AD* in 1977, was born out of writer John Wagner's sense of an emerging "right-wing current" in British politics during Thatcher's time as Leader of the Opposition (Anonymous, 2002, n.p.).[9] The comic captured the more morally-authoritarian element of Thatcherism even before the Conservatives, led by Thatcher, had entered government.

Playwrights joined novelists and screenwriters in expressing a distinctly anti-Thatcherite sentiment. Caryl Churchill's 1982 play *Top Girls* explores the relationship between femininity and success, equating the seemingly Thatcherite 'career woman' Marlene with ambitiously ruthless selfishness. Five years later, in *Serious Money* (1987), Churchill turned her attention to the emergent finance and enterprise culture of the late 1980s. John Wells' *Anyone for Denis*? (1981) was based on a series of letters (purporting to be written by Denis Thatcher) published in the satirical magazine *Private Eye*. The play is set in Chequers, the Prime Minister's country retreat, and parodies the

[9] I am indebted to Stuart Wilks-Heeg's paper on Thatcherism and Judge Dredd at the 2018 Thatcher Network conference for drawing my attention to Thatcher's substantial impact on the comic books of the 1980s.

Thatchers' relationship. David Edgar's *Maydays* (1983) explored the phenomenon of the socialist-turned-Conservative, while David Hare focused upon Thatcherism's impact on personal relationships in *The Secret Rapture* (1988) and Labour's failure to defeat the Conservatives in *The Absence of War* (1993). More recently, Thatcher has been portrayed in *The Audience* (2013), Peter Morgan's play about the Queen's weekly audience with her Prime Ministers. Morgan's play was the inspiration for the Netflix series *The Crown*, which – it is reported – will see Gillian Anderson play Thatcher opposite Olivia Coleman as the Queen in a future series (Dibdin, 2018, n.p.). The comedy cabaret *Margaret Thatcher, Queen of Soho* (2014-present), directed by Jon Brittain and co-authored by Brittain and Matt Tedford, explores the events which led the Thatcher government to support the controversial Section 28 legislation. The depiction of Thatcher here is unusually sympathetic, emphasising the pressure she faced from backbench MPs – particularly Jill Knight, who features as a pantomime villain – and her declining popularity. The show suggests that Thatcher does not wish to support Section 28 – the move to ban the promotion of homosexuality in schools – but she is forced to do so to save her leadership. Tedford, who plays Thatcher in the show, encourages the audience to boo Jill Knight and offers an alternative vision of how history might have unfolded: Thatcher, walking through London, becomes lost and finds shelter in a Soho gay club. There, she sings through the night and is persuaded to return to the House of Commons the next day to vote against Section 28. Even when recounting such a counter-factual version of events, the performance maintains Thatcher's association with qualities of strength and leadership, while divorcing her from her own politics. Tedford's interpretation exaggerates Thatcher's social liberalism and recasts her as a camp drag act. In conversation with Tedford about his performance, he stated that his *Queen of Soho* act aims to be balanced and not overly critical of Thatcher because explicitly anti-Thatcher comedy and satire "has been done": by depoliticising Thatcher, Tedford is able to offer a more distinct take on the Iron Lady persona while moving away from older satirical representations, such as the masculinised Thatcher of *Spitting Image*.[10]

Beyond all of these examples (which are by no means exhaustive) we can also add to the list: at least 25 biographies, including the multi-volume authorised biography by Charles Moore; several statues, one of which is in the House of Commons and another of which is on the campus of Hillsdale College in the USA; a waxwork in Madame Tussauds London; a 1980s-themed nightclub on Fulham Road, London, called Maggie's Club; and a plethora of political cartoons

[10] Comments made in discussion with author on 9th August 2018 at Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

which, in recent years, have included multiple depictions of Thatcher's ghost visiting Theresa May. Each of these cultural representations – intended for mass public audiences in a way that academic assessments of Thatcherism are not – have no doubt contributed to, and continue to contribute to, a wider public perception of who Margaret Thatcher was and what she believed in.

Literature Review:
Why Pamper Life's Complexities?

Although this study's interdisciplinary nature led me to draw extensively upon scholarly work in political science and historical studies, the review in this introductory chapter of existing scholarly literature is focused exclusively upon perspectives from literary studies, which remains the main disciplinary focus of the thesis.[11] There has been a scholarly interest in Thatcherism and literature among literary critics and literary historians since the 1980s, with a vast number of articles, monographs and chapters dedicated to considering British fiction in relation to contemporary politics. It is not my intention to offer a chronological overview of that work, but to explore several key issues emerging from it as a prelude to developing what is my own, often contestatory, relationship with them that will ground the original contribution of the thesis to the field of Thatcher studies.

As the subtitle of this section – borrowed from The Smiths' "This Charming Man" (1984) – suggests, my main criticism of much of what has been published on Thatcherism and contemporary literature is that it overlooks some of the more complex ways that authors have engaged with Thatcherism, viewing them simplistically as anti-Thatcher. There are, however, some analyses of contemporary fiction and Thatcherism, such as Waugh's *Harvest of the Sixties* (1995), that are limited not so much by the quality of the argument but more by the passing of time: the monograph deals with paradigms, such as the 'postwar consensus', which permeated academic discourse at the time but have since become outmoded and discredited. Even more recent volumes, such as Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho's *Thatcher and After: Margaret Thatcher and Her Afterlife in Contemporary Culture* (2010), are at risk of becoming outdated because of more recent scholarly

[11] This is largely because Chapter One's purpose is to offer a comprehensive definition of Thatcherism and, in doing so, it acts as a de facto literature review of the work on Thatcherism by political scientists and political historians.

developments.[12] The editors' identification, for example, of the absence of a consideration of "the memory of a 'global Thatcher"' (p.13) appears dated now, especially given the recent work of Martin Farr (2017) on the 'internationalising' of Thatcher(ism) which I develop in Chapter Three.

The first major problem with the existing body of work on Thatcherism and literature arises from the erroneous use of political concepts as a framework for contextualising contemporary fiction. Katy Shaw's work on the period primarily takes the form of focused studies on either the literature of the miners' strike or that of the author David Peace. In her book *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984-85 UK Miners' Strike* (2012), Shaw dedicates her first chapter to offering an overview of the political context of the strike and proceeds to read literary texts through the lens of that account. This is a logical approach and not unlike the one taken in this thesis. The issue with Shaw's book is one which is present in the work of numerous literary critics who draw upon political concepts and engage in political debates. Shaw's description of the Thatcher government's policies and intent is objectively factually inaccurate, relying upon frequently misused terms and offering an over-generalised account of the twentieth century and might have benefitted from peer review by experts in in political science. She writes that the Thatcher government:

> hoped that through this process [privatisation] they would release *laissez faire* capitalism, unravel post-war reforms and, in doing so, reverse the socialist progress of the twentieth century. (2012, p.29)

The Thatcher government's policies – in theory and practice – cannot, however, be described as "*laissez faire*". The influence of neoliberal thinkers like Friedrich Hayek (whom Shaw quotes on the same page) should surely have flagged up that Thatcherism was not an example of *laissez faire* capitalism: indeed, neoliberalism was, as I explain in Chapter One, born out of an opposition to *laissez faire* capitalism and 19th-century classical liberalism. David Willetts too has written how Thatcher corrected his assertion that Thatcherites favoured a *laissez faire* approach, insisting subsequently that her approach should instead be described as "Ordered liberty" (2017, p.16). Further, the notion that Thatcher simply unravelled the "post-war" reforms and displaced "socialist progress" is wrong on two levels. First, Thatcher's governments did not, as Shaw suggests, represent a total break with 'consensus' politics (itself a term which should be used with caution, for reasons I have stated): the welfare state, for example, grew under Thatcher despite the rhetoric

[12] Though, as I explain later, their 'Thatcher' and 'After' structure is loosely adopted in this thesis.

surrounding the 'rolling back' of the state's 'frontiers'. Second, the postwar period cannot be accurately considered "socialist" nor was the "growing culture of individualism" (to which Shaw refers) down to Thatcherism, as explained in Chapters One and Two respectively.

Shaw is not alone in offering this kind of historical account or in using political concepts loosely or reductively. The work of Philip Tew defines 'Thatcherism' in ways which are questionable. What is more, his publications often reflect his own thinly-veiled opinions. This is clear, for example, in his "Critical Introduction" to *Jonathan Coe: Contemporary British Satire* (2018). Here, he declares that *What a Carve Up!* (1994) is to be read through the prism of "the worst excesses of Thatcherism and the ruling elite" (2018, p.xii). It is not clear what he means by 'Thatcherism' in this instance, and even less clear what is meant by 'the ruling elite' or how this equates with Thatcherism. The (co-authored) "Critical Introduction" to *The 1980s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* (2014), states concerning Thatcher's paraphrasing St Francis of Assisi in 1979: "Retrospectively, her words appear bleakly comic" (Horton, Tew and Wilson, 2014, p.1). There is no explanation as to why they appear thus, or to whom. Instead, the assertion rests on the unexamined assumption that Thatcherism is universally acknowledged as 'bad'. There is, here, a personal judgement of her legacy rather than a scholarly assessment of it. Continuing in this vein, her policies – we are told – were imposed rather than, say, implemented (Horton, Tew and Wilson, 2014, p.1). Further, the opening sentence of the introduction – "To an unparalleled extent in the history of post-war Britain, the 1980s were dominated by one political figure and one political ideology, Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism" (Horton, Tew and Wilson, 2014, p.1) – makes grand assertions with little to back them up. Was Thatcherism an ideology? That is at least questionable, as is the idea that its facets were unique to the 1980s as this suggests.[13] Nonetheless, there is an assumption here that readers will share the authors' negative view of Thatcherism. Moreover, this sentence contributes directly to a well-established (but flawed) historical narrative of the 1980s in which Thatcher is *the* driving force of the decade: this is a position which contemporary historians, as discussed in Chapter Four, have criticised for lacking nuance. Implicit in Tew's work, then, is a framework which is predisposed to viewing Thatcherism from a subjective, personal viewpoint and carries a series of unexplained, lazy assumptions about what Thatcherism is. Retrospectively, the description of these introductions as 'critical' appears bleakly comic.

[13] My first chapter is dedicated to exploring this in sufficient depth to avoid this kind of over-generalisation.

To say this is not simply to signal a disagreement with Tew's political views. The historian Richard Vinen (2009) has warned that historical accounts of Thatcher too often display a "partisan nature" and a "sneering tone" (p.9). Vinen, though insisting that he opposed Thatcher in the 1980s and has never voted Conservative, calls for "a little humility" from the anti-Thatcherites writing about Thatcherism to achieve a fairer, more balanced assessment of a political project which was, at least on its own terms, successful (2009, p.9). The particular problem that such partisan approaches cause in literary criticism is that readings of novels are set against a left-wing historical narrative about a progressive politics' displacement by a cult of selfishness which served only the rich and was hated almost universally. This, in turn, leads to readings of contemporary fiction which overlook the ways that British writers have sought to capture the complexities, contradictions and electoral appeal of Thatcherism. Instead, they are framed as a series of unambiguously anti-Thatcherite polemics. We see this in Tew's work where the (un)critical introductions establish Thatcherism as simply 'bad' and then proceed to view fiction through this non-evidenced evaluative lens. That is why it is one of the primary aims of my thesis to bring literary studies into dialogue with the work of political historians and political scientists, both to add nuance to my own arguments and to make relevant the contribution of literary studies to analyses of contemporary political culture.

There is a tendency within literary studies to talk about 'the literature of the 1980s'. Brooker's *After the Watershed* (2010) and Tew, Leigh Wilson and Emily Horton's *The 1980s* (2014), along with others like Daniel Cordle's *Late Cold War Literature and Culture: The Nuclear 1980s* (2017) and Malcolm Bradbury's *The Modern British Novel* (1993), view the decade in isolation. The 1980s is not alone in being treated this way: the Edinburgh series to which Brooker's book belongs also features an equivalent for the 1920s, 1940s, 1950s and 1990s. Similarly, Bloomsbury's 'The Decades Series' consists of collections dedicated to each decade from the 1950s to the 2000s. As a general approach, there is merit to this for multiple reasons: it is a marketable collection, from a publisher's perspective, while it enables authors to work within a clearly-defined scope. However, as will become clear, this is not an approach that works for thinking about Thatcherism and literature. There is a need to look beyond a single decade to see, at once, where 'Thatcherism' came from and how it developed. Waugh recognised this and, accordingly, *Harvest of the Sixties* deals with a 30-year period. So too have Richard Bradford (2007), Nick Bentley (2008), Dominic Head (2008) and D.J. Taylor (1993, 2016) – all of whom take a more thematic approach to writing about Thatcherism's

relationship with literature. Bentley's approach in *Contemporary British Fiction* (2008) perhaps best mirrors my own. Bentley opens with a historical overview of the period 1975-2005 and then assigns each subsequent chapter a distinct theme (such as 'ethnicities' and 'cultural space'). In each, he draws upon fiction from across the period, teasing out textual examples relating to the overarching theme.

Finally, there is a distinct body of work on Thatcherism and literature which falls neatly into the category 'postcolonial studies'. It is the academics working in this field who have paid most consideration to ideas of nation and nationalism in relation to Thatcherism. Graham MacPhee is one such critic. His *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (2011) recognises that Thatcherism was not just neoliberal economics (though his explanation of what it otherwise was is limited to a mere nine lines, and he repeats the discredited 'postwar consensus' displacement narrative) (p.117). Others in this area include James Procter and Lucienne Loh. Procter's work on Stuart Hall (2004), the Marxist cultural theorist, provides the lens through which he interrogates the literature of the 1980s. It is, for example, primarily drawing on Hall's concept of 'new ethnicities' that Procter considers the changing nature of British writing in relation to demographic changes taking place during the decade (Procter, 2006). Loh's work primarily considers the place of heritage and rurality in the fiction of the period. Her 2016 article on Julian Barnes and Kiran Desai, for example, thinks about Thatcherism primarily in terms of the heritage industry, globalisation and the end of empire. Generally, though, it would not be fair to say that Thatcherism is at the forefront of these critics' thinking. Instead, it features as a means of thinking about other themes and, consequently, appears peripheral in comparison to, for example, Brooker's 2010 study. My own work seeks to consider questions of nation and national identity while maintaining Thatcherism as a central element of the study (and, indeed, emphasising the importance of the former to the latter).

Methodology and Structure

Deciding which texts to approach, and how to approach them, is something I have considered and revised during the time spent working on this thesis. I initially decided that it would focus on several key authors – Amis, McEwan and Hollinghurst – but realised that to do so would limit the extent to which I could make claims about 'narratives' more broadly. This would also have led me to write

a thesis on two authors – Amis and McEwan – who have already received much critical attention. Equally, though, to try and focus on a vast range of authors in depth, given the number that have written about Thatcher's Britain, would result in an analysis which was, at best, diluted. The number of texts which are in some way about Thatcherism is too great for one thesis alone to cover. Therefore, it was my decision to structure it in such a way that each chapter has a discrete theme, an introductory section which establishes the social and political conditions which give context to that theme, and two subsequent 'case studies' in which key texts are discussed (that is, except for Chapter One which focuses not on fiction but on the nature of 'Thatcherism'). In each subsequent chapter, the first of the two sections considers how the specific theme at hand was dealt with in the fiction of the 1980s and, in one case, the 1990s; the second considers the theme's relevance to more recent fiction as a means of exploring Thatcherism's continuities beyond 1997. In this sense, I am loosely drawing upon the 'Thatcher' and 'After' structure used in the Hadley and Ho collection.

The authors covered include those who frequently appear in discussions of Thatcherism and literature (Amis, McEwan), as they are significant figures of the literary period. Moreover, what I argue in relation to them significantly differs from what has already been said. The thesis also focuses on authors such as J.G. Ballard and Ali Smith who are not overlooked in literary studies in general, but who are overlooked or considered only in passing in debates about Thatcherism and literature. Authors such as Alan Hollinghurst and Kazuo Ishiguro are moved out of the now thoroughly ploughed frameworks of queer studies and postcolonial studies, respectively, and analysed using the new framework developed here which also encompasses white, heterosexual authors without seeking to homogenise these writers into any kind of convenient group or movement.[14] The historical period upon which this study focuses was under radical revision even as the thesis was being researched. To demonstrate the continuity of Thatcherite ideas into the present, and the related continuity of certain literary tropes, it was essential that my project did not simply consider the fiction of the 1980s. My focus, originally, was to be on the period spanning 1984 to c.2010, with the emphasis being on the continuity of Thatcherism into the New Labour years. This, however, was revised after the 2016 EU referendum, which introduced new questions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging. Margaret Thatcher's legacy (and how Thatcher herself

[14] It is for this reason that *The Swimming-Pool Library* by Alan Hollinghurst is discussed in two separate chapters. There is much to be said about this novel that has not been said in the existing scholarship on Hollinghurst.

would have voted) was much debated during the referendum campaign. Discussions about Theresa May, the UK's second female Prime Minister, furthered these debates when some declared her politics to be "post-Thatcherite". Whether or not she is "post-Thatcherite", the debate itself highlights that Thatcherism is still – rightly or wrongly – a major framework used to understand contemporary Britain. Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) became the first novel to engage explicitly with the Brexit issue, bringing these debates into the literary realm. Expanding the scope of my thesis in this way allowed me to situate fictional texts alongside recent cutting-edge research in political science about social attitudes and values. Although the debates about Britishness after Brexit are ongoing, my discussion of *Autumn* engages with these debates (rather than not acknowledging them at all) and makes the overall thesis timelier as a result. No doubt there is potential for a future project on Brexit and literary culture but, as Robert Eaglestone's collection *Brexit and Literature* (2018) proved, it is still too early to make meaningful observations about Brexit's broader implications for contemporary literature.[15] Eaglestone and others have, in this sense, failed to heed Waugh's warning about attempting to define the legacy of a political moment that is not yet over (or even at the time of writing, in some senses, begun).

This selection of authors – discussed in relation to national identity – may raise questions relating to diversity. Except for Kazuo Ishiugro, the writers included in this study are white British. This is despite authors like Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi writing about Thatcherism, Britishness and nation. The decision not to include authors such as these was a conscious one based on two factors. Firstly, and specific to Rushdie, it had originally been my intention to write about *Midnight's Children* (1981) but much has already been said by literary critics in relation to how the novel is shaped by, and engages with, Thatcher's Britain. It was my view that a discussion of Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and Brexit had the potential to be timelier and more original. Second, and more substantial, is that – over the course of the study – I became more concerned with how authors (but more specifically narrators) who are unambiguously British experience Britishness. As

[15] Contributors to this collection, at times, offer a political analysis which is basic at best. In "Brexlit", Kristian Shaw describes Brexit as "a sudden and violent shift towards right-wing populism" and considers the referendum outcome a form of "political isolationism unimaginable at the turn of the millennium" (2018, p.15). These comments overlook the findings of academics like Matthew Goodwin who, as I discuss in Chapter Three, have identified long-term drivers behind the vote to leave which undermine Shaw's 'out of the blue' account. Later, Bryan Cheyette crudely describes the National Front as "a nastier version of UKIP" (2018, p.71) There is a risk with emerging work on Brexit and literature that literary critics will, as with Thatcherism and literature, forge their own narrative of why the UK voted to leave the EU and read fiction in that context, ignorant of the swathes of recent analyses by political scientists (also discussed in Chapter Three). This should be of particular concern if, as Eaglestone says, literary studies' aim is to 'supplement' and 'deepen' the social sciences (2018, p.1).

reflected upon in the Conclusion, the texts included in the corpus deal with narrators who are 'outside insiders' – people who feel marginalised by Thatcher's Britain despite being British – and their efforts to articulate an alternative feeling of Britishness. Despite migrating to Britain at a young age, Ishiguro matches this description because the protagonists of *Never Let Me Go* are not migrants, but British children who attend a seemingly English boarding school. While this decision underpins the *fictional* corpus, the study does not ignore the fact that a diverse range of (non-white) writers and critics were concerned with Thatcherism during the 1980s and have been since. Stuart Hall's work on Thatcherism, Homi K. Bhabha contributions to literary and cultural theory, and Rushdie's non-fiction all play a major part in shaping the overall framework through which the works of fiction included in the corpus are read. I have, throughout the thesis, foregrounded their work and acknowledged the significance of their contributions to debates about Thatcherism.

I have analysed the novels included in this study by coding sections which related to key, overarching themes such as 'nation', 'individualism' and 'historical narrative'. I subsequently listed the quotations relating to each theme under relevant headings and compared how the texts deal with these themes. This approach allowed me to tease out specific literary devices used by authors to engage with Thatcherism, such as the appropriation of pornographic tropes in Amis and Hollinghurst (discussed in Chapter Two). The framework with which I have approached the novels is developed in Chapter One, where I work on a definition of Thatcherism which places nationalism and national identity at its heart. My research into the nature of Thatcherism draws upon archival work conducted at Churchill College, Cambridge and using the materials digitised by the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, thus making this the first literary study to make substantial use of Thatcher's archive. Much of this archival research is explicitly referred to throughout, but other aspects of it simply provided a context for developing the ideas reflected in Chapter One.

In Chapter One, I define Thatcherism by breaking it down into three constituent parts: neoliberalism, nationalism and narrative. Much has already been written about Thatcherism and neoliberalism, but it is necessary to explore that relationship further for two related reasons. The first is that much has been published in recent years, in political science, sociology and historical studies, on neoliberal thinkers' influence on Thatcherism. It is not possible, therefore, to talk about Thatcherism without acknowledging these developments. The second is that literary critics (with a few exceptions) have failed to draw upon the work of political scientists and historians in their own work. The consequence is that literary critics often deploy 'neoliberalism' in a way which is

meaningless; it is intended instead to simply act as a pejorative term, while gesturing broadly towards some form of right-wing politics. The uses of 'neoliberalism' that I am referring to would not be acceptable in other academic discourses but find themselves at home in the work of literary critics. It is one of the main contentions of my thesis that contemporary fiction has exposed Thatcherism's reliance upon a narrative about British national identity and what it means to be British. It is for this reason that the second and third parts I explore are 'Nationalism' and 'Narrative'. In doing so, I will first explore – drawing upon archival materials – the importance of nationalism and nationalist thinking to the Thatcherite project, outlining the recurring tropes in Thatcher's rhetoric used to justify her policy platform. Then, having established the relationship between the two, I turn to how Thatcher deployed narrative. I will look, in this third section, at how viewing Thatcher's account of the twentieth century and her campaigns as part of a broader narrative allows us to think about Thatcherism itself as a narrative or, at least, as an ideological project reliant upon a narrative framework. This, I suggest, answers questions posed by political scientists and historians about how Thatcherism was able to make coherent its contradictions and how it managed to present itself as *the* driving force of the 1980s. Moreover, this chapter also establishes the overall theoretical framework through which I read the novels discussed in the subsequent chapters. As I will demonstrate, exposing Thatcherism's reliance upon narrative allows us to understand the extent to which contemporary British authors saw in Thatcherism the construction of a narrative and deployed the novel as vehicle through which to articulate a 'counter-narrative'.

In Chapters Two, Three and Four I turn my attention to fictional narratives. In looking at texts from the 1980s ('Thatcher era') alongside those from more recent years ('after Thatcher'), I am interested in establishing a sense of continuity across the decades: that is, in identifying how Thatcherism's legacy in the 21st century shapes the fiction of the 21st century. Underpinning all of this is an ongoing focus on nation, national identity and citizenship – and how writers have sought to articulate, challenge or problematise a Thatcherite notion of Britain and Britishness. It does so by exploring Britishness (and experiences of it) through the prisms of 'the individual', 'society' and 'national history'.

Chapter Two is concerned with the idea of individualism. In the first section of the chapter, I consider how pornographic tropes in Martin Amis' *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984) and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) are used to expose the apparent contradictions

between individual liberty on the one hand and a moral authoritarianism masquerading as 'national values' on the other. An integral part of Thatcher's nationalism, as I will show, was how she conflated her principles with the notion of 'Britishness'. One such principle was the celebration of the self-reliant, aspirational individual. The second part of this chapter, therefore, thinks about how Thatcherite ideas of individualism and aspiration continue to inform British citizenship in the New Labour era. Focusing on Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), I explore how these authors exposed the limits of Thatcherite individualism by setting it against biological, rather than social, factors which influence the construction of our identities. Both Thatcher's nationalism and aspirational individualism are reliant upon individuals' ability to imagine themselves as part of, or belonging to, a narrative trajectory: *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go* explore how biological limitations prevent one's ability to feel such a sense of belonging.

The UK's vote to leave the European Union has resulted in multiple analyses of British social attitudes about national identity and values which implicitly highlighted the endurance of an identifiably Thatcherite expression of nationalism. Chapter Three considers how this new body of research can be used to read fictional representations of such social and cultural divisions and how they are attributed to Thatcherism. In the first section, I consider how Malcolm Bradbury's *Cuts* (1987) and J.G. Ballard's *Running Wild* (1988) reflect upon a society in which elites enjoy exclusive lifestyles cut off from the rest of their fellow countrymen. Both novels satirise Thatcher's Britain, contrary to her rhetoric about national revival, as a country becoming increasingly fractious. Then, turning to the 21st century, I consider how similar social divisions have been explored in Abi Morgan and Phyllida Lloyd's *The Iron Lady* (2012) and Hilary Mantel's "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" (2014). This chapter considers how more recent (perhaps commercially driven) representations have contributed to what Martin Farr (2017) calls the internationalising of Thatcherism, a process whereby Margaret Thatcher is divorced from her own politics and she is presented as a symbol of female strength, leadership and determination. Here I suggest that even a writer like Mantel, who is explicitly anti-Thatcherite, cannot write about Thatcher without (perhaps unknowingly) contributing to this process.

Finally, Chapter Four considers how the concept of history and the formation of a historical narrative about the nation, which were central to Thatcher's distinctive rhetoric about Britishness, have been challenged by fiction. In doing so, it draws upon recent developments in narrative theory – particularly Homi K. Bhabha's 'right to narrative' – to consider how fiction

writers have sought to give a voice to those who have been marginalised within accounts of British history. The first section of the chapter returns to Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* and considers it alongside Jonathan Coe's *What a Carve Up!* (1994) to think about how the notion of 'history' can impose upon individual liberty and suggests that these novels expose the tension between individuals' right to self-narration and the historical narratives which are imposed upon them. In the final section of the thesis, I use Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) to reflect upon the legacy of Thatcherism in our current political moment. Smith's novel deals explicitly with Brexit and my analysis demonstrates how the novel highlights a continuity of Thatcherite nationalism in the present.

CHAPTER 1

THATCHERISM

In July 1945, Winston Churchill suffered a surprise electoral defeat at the hands of Clement Attlee's Labour Party. This was the first of two General Election victories for the man who had served as Churchill's Deputy Prime Minister for part of the Second World War. Attlee subsequently won a narrow majority at the 1950 General Election, enough to command the confidence of the House of Commons, before losing to Churchill and the Conservatives in 1951. It was during Attlee's six years as Prime Minister that the foundations of what would become known as the 'postwar consensus' were laid. Many of the policies which Attlee's 1945 government implemented had been recommended in the 1942 Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services. Other characteristics of the postwar consensus were also introduced during this time, such as a Keynesian economic policy, a drive towards full employment and Rab Butler's 1944 Education Act, which raised the school leaving age. These major policies were agreed upon by the leadership of the major parties; this political consensus between Labour and the Conservatives endured until the mid-to-late 1970s, at which point the rise of Thatcherism set British politics on a radically new path. Social democracy gave way to the neoliberal order which formed a new ideological consensus which continues to dominate British politics to this day.

At least, as Peter Kerr observes, this – despite its inaccuracies and lack of nuance – has become the "conventional storyline" of the postwar period (2001, p.2). Kerr suggests that this narrative (of a postwar consensus displaced by a neoliberal revolution) was born in the early 1980s out of a desire among historians "to portray the Thatcher governments as radical" (2001, p.1).[16] He suggests that, in reality, the postwar political landscape in the UK was far more fractious than this account acknowledges or allows for.[17] It is certainly true to say that Margaret Thatcher (eventually) argued that a consensus had existed between the Labour Party and her Conservative predecessors and sought to represent herself as a break with the past, as I will explore in the 'Narrative' section of this chapter. Bernard Porter, in response to her identification of a consensus,

[16] Ben Pimlott had already made a similar case in 1989, stating that the "postwar consensus could be defined, not entirely flippantly, as the product of a consensus among historians about those political ideas that should be regarded as important" (Pimlott, Kavanagh and Morris, 1989, p.13).

[17] Chapter Four explores in greater depth the recent attempts by contemporary historians to develop accounts of recent decades which are not 'Thatcherism-centric'.

wrote that, in Thatcher, Britain had "a Prime Minister with a very pronounced sense of history" which was "simplistic, at best" but which nonetheless served "a purpose: to encourage emulation, point dangers or teach lessons" (1994, p.249).[18] In Thatcher's own terms, consensus was "the process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies in search of something in which no-one believes, but to which no-one objects" (1981d, n.p.). She, by contrast, counted herself "among those politicians who operate from conviction" (1981d, n.p.). But the existence of an actual consensus has been in doubt since the 1980s; questions about the accuracy of this notion emerged almost immediately after it was first put forward. That Thatcher was markedly different from her predecessors is clear: her gender and social background are both indicators of this. But how true were her claims of a consensus?

Thatcher scholars at the "Rethinking British Neoliberalism" conference, which took place at University College London in September 2017, emphatically rejected the notion of the postwar consensus. Many argued that the metanarrative used to account for the postwar period, namely the account of social democracy's displacement by neoliberalism, is highly inaccurate.[19] They contended that there are too many identifiable continuities in government policy between the 1945 and the present day to consider this metanarrative a useful way of characterising the postwar period. Further, they also argued that the persistence of liberalism throughout the twentieth century undermines claims that the period 1945-79 was truly one defined by social democracy. These are not the first academics to reject the notion of a consensus. An earlier intervention from Ben Pimlott suggested that the consensus narrative was mainly upheld by a group on the right who believed that other politicians (including some in the Conservative Party, such as Edward Heath) had demonstrated an "ostrich-like refusal to accept hard economic facts [and] a wrong-headed conventional wisdom that led to the crisis of the 1970s" (Pimlott, Kavanagh and Morris, 1989, p.12). Pimlott states that Harold Macmillan, the Conservative Prime Minister from 1957-63, was seen to be the "high priest" of consensus politics. Macmillan and Thatcher certainly appeared to have public disagreements: when Macmillan gave his maiden speech in the House of Lords, for

[18] This is a crucial point. What Thatcher did, as Porter rightly acknowledges, was to forge a narrative which was politically and electorally useful, even if it consciously ignored historical nuances. Thatcherism's reliance upon a narrative framework is developed in greater depth later in this chapter and explored throughout.

[19] These scholars included Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, James Freeman and Ben Jackson among others.

example, it was widely interpreted as criticism of Thatcher's handling of the 1984 miners' strike.[20] According to Hansard, the official report of proceedings in parliament, Macmillan said "A terrible strike is being carried on by the best men in the world. They beat the Kaiser's army and they beat Hitler's army. They never gave in. The strike is pointless and endless." (Macmillan, 1984, n.p.) *The New York Times* reported that Macmillan's speech received an "all but unprecedented" standing ovation (Apple, 1984, n.p.). Yet, Thatcher retained a close relationship with Macmillan until his death. Letters from Thatcher's personal archive (held at Churchill College, Cambridge) show that she consulted Macmillan on issues of national security and economic stability. In one letter, dated 20th August 1980, Macmillan offered Thatcher advice (at her request) on the challenges of implementing monetary policy. Macmillan's letter expressed concern at the sharp rise in unemployment and called for "a return to 'consensus' politics, sneered at by some, but the essence of Tory democracy" (1980, n.p.). That Macmillan quotes the word consensus implies that he was borrowing the term rather than using it in earnest. His explicit acknowledgement that the political philosophy with which he was so closely associated was "sneered at" by the Tory right perhaps indicates disagreements between Macmillan and Thatcher, but these were clearly not so great that she did not look to him for guidance in implementing her own policies. Nonetheless, what these comments highlight is that the notion of a consensus among all postwar Prime Ministers before Thatcher, whether true or not, had entered the popular vernacular and taken hold. Tim Bale acknowledges this, asserting that Thatcher's "largely discredited" consensus narrative has had lasting influence despite various interventions from academics (including Bale himself) arguing against it (2016, p.27).[21]

The criticism of the scholarship which affirms the consensus narrative raises valid points about the differences between the two main political parties during the period 1945-79. Pimlott argued that one key reason that there was not a consensus was because "there is little sign of the main political actors" of the period "regarding themselves as part of a 'national consensus' at the

[20] Significantly, Macmillan's maiden speech as Earl Stockton in the House of Lords undermines the concept of a postwar consensus. In it, he discussed how, as a minister, he disagreed with others in his party and joked that he had become so unpopular with the leadership that he was only "able to deal with the matter […] by becoming the leader" himself. In addition, he stated that "the so-called neo-Keynesian system" had not worked and acknowledged that the cuts made by Thatcher's first administration "had to be done" (1984, n.p.). Evidently the idea that Thatcher and Macmillan represented two opposing philosophies, constantly in disagreement, is too simplistic an account.

[21] That political scientists like Bale recognise the power of persuasive narratives in shaping the public's understanding of historical events, in spite of evidence to the contrary, highlights why it is necessary to study the relationship between Thatcherism and narrative more closely.

time" (1989, p.13) (and this is clearly true of Macmillan). Turning to the party's intentions for government, Bale indicates that the Conservative Party's 1945, 1950 and 1951 manifestos evidently indicate that it did not have the same policies as Labour: even then, the Conservatives promoted "rather more free enterprise, tax-cutting, and anti-collectivist rhetoric" than Labour did (2016, p.27). Martin Holmes argues that a consensus did exist but that it began to unravel from 1972 onwards: his argument identifies a crucial factor which undermines the notion of a long period of 'consensus' suddenly displaced by Thatcherism. Holmes states that from Churchill to Harold Wilson, there was a clear trend of decentralisation with an emphasis on economic efficiency: this trend, he argues, was "disrupted" by Edward Heath's government (1970-74) which "extended both formal and backdoor nationalisation" (Holmes and Horsewood, 1988, p.25). This complicates the suggestion that an unhindered consensus existed before Thatcher: rather, it implies that it was Ted Heath, and not Thatcher, who bucked the established trend in postwar policy making (albeit moving in the opposite direction to the one Thatcher took). The notion of a consensus, then, is more tentative than some historical accounts have suggested, including Thatcher's own. Despite this, there are still some distinct similarities between the Labour and Conservative governments before Thatcher's own. These similarities may not amount to an overall consensus, but they give a sense of what it was that Thatcher defined her own politics against (even if she overexaggerated the extent to which they amounted to an overall consensus).

The suggestion that Thatcher represented nothing distinctive from her predecessors, however, does not hold true. One common trait that bound Labour and the Conservatives together was a general, broad acceptance of Keynesianism (even if, as Bale suggests, some Conservatives may have, in theory, preferred other economic approaches).[22] Indeed, Eric J. Evans argues that Thatcherism rebelled against "Britain's growing economic troubles during the period of the so-called Keynesian consensus" (2013, p.11). Thatcher herself stated that the economic crises of the postwar period had been caused by a misinterpretation of Keynes, adding that "I do not think he would recognise some of the proposals put forward today in his name" (1981d, n.p.). Like Holmes, Evans suggests that the endpoint of this Keynesian 'consensus' was during Heath's premiership, not Thatcher's. He adds that Thatcher was not the first to move from Keynesianism to monetarism,

[22] Keynesianism is an economic concept which was developed by John Maynard Keynes in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936). The theory promotes a mixed economy, low unemployment and state intervention to stabilise the economy. Keynesians typically criticise the free market because it has "no self-balancing mechanisms that lead to full employment" (Jahan, Mahmud and Papageorgiou, 2014, p.53).

but that this was Denis Healey, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1974-79 Labour government. Healey, according to Evans, oversaw "stringent reductions in expenditure, wage restraints and moves towards a balanced budget" (2013, p.13).[23] However, Healey's adoption of monetarism must be distinguished from Thatcher's in one significant way. Thatcher, influenced by key neoliberal thinkers and neoliberals in her own party, was more ideologically committed to monetarism: Healey's monetarism was not motivated by choice but by necessity. As Evans describes, "the first post-war moves towards deflation and sound money came not from Thatcher or her new-right gurus, but from a hard pressed Labour government" which had taken a loan of $3.9 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with "deflationary strings attached" (2013, p.13). For Thatcher, tackling inflation was not simply a necessity to weather the economic storm of the 1970s, but part of a broader philosophy of freedom that has its roots in early neoliberal thought. But this was not radically new for a Conservative. Jim Tomlinson (2012) records that the Conservative Party had taken a critical stance on high inflation since before the First World War. The key difference was that, for all that Conservative leaders before Thatcher "gave a high priority to defeating inflation", they "had not developed a coherent doctrine about its causes or how to combat it" (Tomlinson, 2012, p.64).[24] For Thatcher, the doctrine which underpinned her monetarist policy was one of enterprise, self-reliance and individual freedom. In 1975, she said that inflation "strikes at the family, at enterprise and at choice", "creates a single or one-generation society" of people with "no real self-reliance" and who "cease to think of the future or of their children" (1975, n.p.) Thus, the prevailing narrative about a 'consensus' being displaced by Thatcherism is more nuanced than some (influential) historical accounts have suggested by focusing broadly on economics. However, it is also necessary to understand how Thatcher defined her political project early in her premiership with regard to ideas of individualism and freedom.

In 1981, Thatcher was invited to give the Sir Robert Menzies Lecture at Monash University, Australia. Robert Menzies founded Australia's Liberal Party in 1945 and served as Prime Minister

[23] Monetarism is closely associated with the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Milton Friedman. Monetarism advocates governments controlling the money supply, lowering inflation and maintaining price stability. Monetarists also adopt the view, unlike Keynesians, that the market is inherently stable. Thatcher's monetary policy was successful in so far as she had halved inflation by 1983, reducing it to below 5% (Jahan and Papageorgiou, 2014, p.39).

[24] Tomlinson states that Thatcherites did not discuss economic events as "specific policy failings" but instead articulated a narrative of long-term failures (2012, p.62). That Thatcherism relied upon creating and sustaining narratives once again appears in the scholarly literature on Thatcherism, this time in economic history. It is useful to think about Thatcherism in general as being a "coherent doctrine", to borrow Tomlinson's phrase, which brought together ideas within the Conservative Party and presented them as solutions to ongoing failures within an overall narrative of decline.

of Australia twice.[25] In the opening of her address, Thatcher recalled hearing Menzies speak at an event in London in the early 1950s, shortly after she had graduated from the University of Oxford. That Thatcher was influenced by an Australian politician is less commonly documented than the influence she derived from think-tanks, neoliberal thinkers, and British politicians like Enoch Powell and Keith Joseph. Nonetheless, Thatcher described Menzies as a "true leader" and a "great Commonwealth man" whose "memory remains a guiding star" (1981d, n.p.). Thatcher met Menzies when she was Leader of the Opposition and reflected upon how he encouraged her to talk about her "philosophy of life and the principles which should govern public policy" (1981d, n.p.). This is what she set out to do in her lecture and, accordingly, she mapped out a blueprint of her own political vision. At the heart of her political philosophy was the "right to choose": choice, she said, is the "foundation of personal liberty" and "the basis of ethics" (1981d, n.p.). However, Thatcher also acknowledged the need, in a liberal society with individual freedom at its heart, "to protect the weak against the freedom of the strong" (1981d, n.p.): this view, as we shall see, can be traced back to the political philosophy of Edmund Burke, often credited as the first modern conservative. In justifying the authoritarian aspect of her (apparently) otherwise liberal vision, Thatcher said it was necessary for "families, neighbourhoods and communities" to be bound by laws which "enable them to live together harmoniously" (1981d, n.p.) and outlined the role that the state should play in ensuring this:

> Order, in a free society, means the ability of ordinary men and women to go about their business and their leisure pursuits in freedom and without fear, so long as what they do does not harm or damage others. The first task of the State is to defend its citizens against attacks from within and without. It is in this sense that the libertarian insists that government must be strong. Strong to uphold the rule of law. Strong to maintain order. Strong to protect freedom. This was the truth which our ancestors knew well, but which some of our generation have managed to unlearn. What is freedom if it does not include freedom from violence and freedom from intimidation? Government must secure the conditions for freedom to prevail. People must live their lives within these laws. That is their right and their duty (1981d, n.p.)

[25] 1939-41 as Leader of the United Australia Party; 1949-66 as Leader of the Liberal Party.

Thatcher's description of the relationship between the individual and the state is broadly congruent with that of early neoliberal thinkers like Friedrich von Hayek. Nonetheless, her own (albeit not often repeated) suggestion, in the Menzies lecture, that she was a libertarian was not widely shared: Stuart Hall considered Thatcherism to be fundamentally authoritarian in nature (1979, p.15). Indeed, Thatcher's own definition of Thatcherism, as set out above, may not prove sufficient in terms of understanding the origins of the ideas at the heart of her political philosophy (if it is, indeed, a philosophy at all), the historic circumstances by which they entered the Conservative Party mainstream, and the extent to which Thatcherism continues to influence British politics today.[26] This chapter aims to establish an interdisciplinary theoretical framework through which contemporary British fiction can be read as a response to Thatcherism and its ideological legacy. In doing so, I examine the precise nature of what 'Thatcherism' means, as far as is relevant to this thesis. This is established in the two discrete sections which follow entitled "Neoliberalism" and "Nationalism". A third section, entitled "Narrative", offers an original perspective on Thatcherism's relationship with (and reliance upon) narrativisation. It also provides a comprehensive explanation of the theoretical framework which underpins the 'case studies' in subsequent chapters. In exploring Thatcherism in relation to narrative, I am interested in analysing how Thatcher made her views coherent and presented them to voters. What this chapter does not do, or intend to do, is offer a comprehensive history of conservative thought, of nationalism, or of the specific thinkers mentioned.

Neoliberalism

Thatcherism did not simply draw upon nationalist ideas and rhetoric to exist as a discrete -ism. To fully understand Thatcherism's character, and to contextualise its emergence and development in the late 20th century, it is also necessary to consider the influence of neoliberal thinkers of the early 20th century, particularly Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek. Both Friedman and Hayek defined their 'neo-liberalism' against the economic conditions of the 19th century (namely *laissez-*

[26] Ben Jackson (2017) claims that Conservative MPs did not make a full conversion to 'neoliberalism' but simply selected parts of it that reinforced what they already believed and used the language of neoliberalism to repackage old ideas as new ones. Lawrence Black affirms this point astutely when he says that the Conservative Party has always been ideological, though it did not think itself as such, and that "Thatcherism did not hijack the Party with some alien creed, but was the product of an ongoing debate *within* Conservatism more than a novel postwar commitment to monetarism […] the New Right was hardly new." Thatcherism, as Black argued, simply foregrounded and made explicit ideas which had long been held within the Conservative Party (2014, p.90).

faire capitalism and socialism).[27] Thatcherism is commonly offered as a synonym for their ideas: that Thatcher was influenced by these neoliberal thinkers is widely accepted. Indeed, Thatcher herself made this clear when she made Hayek a Companion of Honour in 1984 for "services to the study of economics" (Ebenstein, 2003, p.305). What is not universally agreed, however, is the precise ways that it influenced Thatcher's policies: there are those who see Thatcherism as neoliberalism in practice.[28] However, to use Thatcherism and neoliberalism synonymously is to overlook the extent to which neoliberal theories were often contradicted by, or existed uneasily within, a broader 'Thatcherite' doctrine. It is my intention to demonstrate here that Thatcherism and neoliberalism are not directly synonymous (largely because of the morally authoritarian aspects of Thatcherism, as well as the nationalist element), but that neoliberal ideas are nonetheless vital to understanding Thatcherism. Before doing so, though, it is also necessary to acknowledge the (mis)uses of 'neoliberalism' in recent years in order to make clear what it does not mean in the context of my work.

The term neoliberalism has not simply been abused in contemporary political discourse, it has become a term of abuse. It has been abused in that it is used to encompass a range of (often different) centrist and right-wing political views: the meanings attributed to it are too plural for the term to be clear.[29] It is a term of abuse because to refer to something or someone as (a) 'neoliberal' is to suggest it is or they are morally reprehensible and empower rich elites.[30] The former point has been adequately demonstrated by the journalist Paul Mason who, responding to the notion that neoliberalism is a specific strand of liberalism which emerged from the likes of Mises and Hayek, said:

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[27] One notable difference between Ludwig von Mises and his younger colleagues, Hayek and Friedman, is that he, as Nicholas Gane states, showed "the strongest commitment" to *laissez-faire* economics and expected others in his circle to share this view. Hayek and Friedman did not share the same commitment: this often led to conflict with Mises, who they considered to be dogmatic and inflexible (Gane, 2014, p.6)

[28] It is not my intention to explore Thatcher's economic policy here, but to consider how neoliberalism influenced the Thatcherite project more broadly, demonstrating that it was twinned with other ideological strands and that the two (neoliberalism and Thatcherism) are not mere synonyms.

[29] As James Freeman (2017) notes, neoliberalism was not always married to the New Right in Britain and, in the 1970s, it could have potentially become aligned with the New Left as there was overlap between neoliberals and left-wing thinkers at that time. Though, for reasons stated later, this did not materialise.

[30] An April 2016 article in *The Guardian* is a typical example. George Monbiot's hyperbolically-titled "Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all of our problems" suggests that neoliberalism enjoys an "anonymity [which] is both a symptom and cause of its power" (2016, n.p.). Among the social ills caused by neoliberalism, Monbiot lists child poverty, tax evasion and "the epidemic of loneliness" (2016, n.p.). For Monbiot, "So pervasive has neoliberalism become that we seldom even recognise it as an ideology" (2016, n.p.). Here the author's inability to articulate a meaningful definition of neoliberalism leads him to attribute to it stealth capabilities which it does not possess.

> That is true—but this is not how I use the term primarily in the book [*Postcapitalism*]. By neoliberalism I mean the global capitalist system shaped around a core of neoliberal practices and institutions, themselves guided by a widespread and spontaneously reproduced ideology, and ruled by an elite which acts in a neoliberal way, whatever conflicting and moderating ideas it holds in its head. (2015, n.p.)

Mason wilfully misuses the term, offering a critique of neoliberals on the basis, not of their worldview, but of his own inaccurate (re-)definition of it. As Nicholas Gane points out, neoliberalism emerged in the early 20th century, not to empower elites at the expense of the poor as Mason suggests, but as an attempt to "redefine the liberal project against the political economy of the late 19th century and, in particular, against the threat of socialism" (2014, p.3).[31] The central aim of neoliberalism was to enable individual freedom and protect it from the state – and its key proponents agreed that a free-market economy was the best way to achieve this. Mises stated that it was liberals' views that "the task of the state consists solely and exclusively in guaranteeing the protection of life, health, liberty, and private property against violent attacks. Everything that goes beyond this is an evil" (2005, p.30). Neoliberalism, however, was not simply a rebranding of classical liberalism. Mises outlined the difference between the two thus: classical liberalism begins from a position of assuming all individuals are equal, neoliberalism holds that nothing is "as ill-founded as the assertion of the alleged equality of all member of the human race" (2005, p.9). Unlike Mises, Hayek saw the state as having an important role to play. If neoliberals, to borrow Thatcher's phrase, wish to 'roll back the frontiers of the state', then their end goal is not to create a stateless society but, in Hayek's words, to enable "the proper function of the state" while acknowledging "the limits of state action" (1960, p.54).[32] Hayek viewed this position as true to the tradition of English liberalism and suggested that the *laissez-faire* approach of 19th-century figures like Jeremy Bentham owed more to French liberalism. Hayek also distanced his neoliberal vision from French rationalism and, in doing so, articulated a similar distinction between Burke and Rousseau to that which I offer later in the chapter. His distinction between the two Enlightenment thinkers forms part of a wider definition of 'true' and 'false' individualism. True individualism, of which Hayek said Burke was a proponent, is "a theory of society" which suggests "that there is no other way toward an understanding of social phenomena but through our understanding of human

[31] It was Mises' view that John Stuart Mill's liberalism was influenced too much by socialism.
[32] Thatcher was not the first to draw upon this rhetoric of a 'limited state'. We can also see clear criticism of state control of individuals' lives in Ted Heath's 1968 speech to Conservative Party Conference.

actions directed toward other people and guided by their expected behaviour" (1948, p.6). This differs from false individualism, with which he associated Rousseau, as it represents a form of "socialism or collectivism" (1984, p.4). This thinking about individualism and personal liberty certainly influenced Thatcher, and was particularly reflected in her rhetoric, but the neoliberal theories of Hayek and Friedman did not simply become Thatcherism, nor was Thatcherism just Hayek's and Friedman's theories put into practice. Moreover, the influence of these neoliberals on Thatcherism had less to do with Thatcher than an -ism sharing her name might imply.

The Conservatives (and, in particular, Thatcher) did not simply find themselves persuaded by the arguments of neoliberal thinkers or stumble across their works by accident. Instead, neoliberals associated with the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) launched a sophisticated operation to influence key figures in business, the media and politics.[33] Ben Jackson maps out how neoliberal thinkers in Britain disseminated their ideas through think-tanks which "mobilised and connected four important elite groups: business, sympathetic intellectuals, journalists and politicians" (2012, p.45). These think-tanks "drummed up the business sponsorship required to translate the abstract and uncompromising academic thinking produced by members of the MPS into a more digestible form" (2012, p.45). Geoffrey Howe (Thatcher's first Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Enoch Powell were among the Conservative members of the MPS, while Keith Joseph had attended meetings of the Society. All three were also closely associated with the Institute of Economic Affairs, the neoliberal think-tank established (at the recommendation of Hayek) by the businessman Antony Fisher and run by members of the MPS.[34] Powell was seen as a potential future leader who might carry the IEA's thinking into government, but his fallout with the Conservative Party in the Heath years meant that he "was not destined to be the bearer of their ideas into government" (Jackson, 2012, p.58). Ralph Harris (who headed the IEA from 1957 to 1988) and Arthur Seldon (the Institute's Editorial Director in the same period), who were both

[33] The MPS was developed as a discussion group for likeminded neoliberals. Founded by thinkers including Hayek, Friedman and Karl Popper in 1947, the Society invited academics, businessmen and journalists to discuss economic policies which would promote free markets and individual liberty. It took its name from its first meeting place in Switzerland and, in 1959, it held its first UK meeting at Christ Church, Oxford. The Society's mission statement reflected that so many neoliberals, including the MPS' founders, had fled from communism and authoritarian oppression: the individual, they stated, was threatened by the increasing power accumulated by those who wish to use it for suppression (Anonymous, 1947, n.p.). Thatcher's own anti-communist views were not insignificant in her developing a sympathy for this school of thought.

[34] Other think-tanks formed with the intention of promoting neoliberalism around this time included the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) – which was founded by Thatcher and Joseph – and the Adam Smith Institute. All three of these think-tanks remain active today.

members of the MPS, worked closely with Howe and Joseph throughout the sixties and seventies and had, as Jackson notes, a hand in changing the direction of Joseph's thinking in particular (2012, p.59). Alfred Sherman (whose role in developing Thatcher's 'anti-consensus' narrative is discussed in the 'Narrative' section), the journalist Samuel Brittan (brother of future Home Secretary Leon Brittan) and Alan Walters (later economic advisor to Margaret Thatcher) were all influential in shaping Joseph's increasingly neoliberal speeches in the mid-1970s. However, any hope that the IEA and assorted neoliberals invested in Joseph as an alternative to Powell as their standard bearer was lost when Joseph, on 19th October 1974, gave a speech at Edgbaston in Birmingham. The speech articulated views which were, at times, clearly in line with Thatcherite values: Joseph, for example, attacked "absolute liberty" as a cover for "irresponsibility", compounding the notion of freedom twinned with responsibility that Thatcher often articulated in her criticism of the 'permissive society' (1974, n.p.). The speech also contained the warning, though, that "our human stock is threatened", which he attributed to the number of children born to women unfit to have them (Joseph, 1974, n.p.). The controversy and subsequent fallout undermined any attempt he would make to replace Ted Heath as the Conservatives' leader. Thatcher had proposed herself as his campaign manager, with support and encouragement coming from MPs such as Norman Lamont, Norman Fowler and Ian Gow (Denham and Garnett, 2001, pp.264-266). After Edgbaston though, even his supporters, such as Howe, concluded that Joseph's judgement was too erratic for a potential leader (Denham and Garnett, 2001, p.271). With Powell out of the party and Joseph out of the picture, it was Thatcher who eventually became the neoliberals' figurehead within the party. But, as Jackson points out, her engagement with the IEA and the neoliberal intellectuals was not as intense as Joseph's, and there is "little archival evidence of the Thatcher of the 1970s as a neo-liberal ideologue" (2012, p.59). Indeed, Thatcher's advisers (such as Walters) and some of her cabinet (like Howe) were more ideologically neoliberal than her. This became apparent when, in government, Thatcher disappointed the neoliberals: the more ideologically-inclined Joseph and Howe were supporters of the neoliberals' ideas for reforming the welfare state, but Thatcher was more inclined to follow her own political judgement about how voters would see these proposed reforms and did not pursue some of them. Jackson rightly summarises the relationship between neoliberalism in theory and Thatcherism in practice thus: "Thatcherism as it evolved in government drew ideological sustenance from neo-liberalism, but was not co-extensive with it" (2012, p.60).

James Freeman has also identified the difference between the ideas of neoliberal thinkers and what Thatcher believed, noting that "neoliberal theory appeared to sit uneasily alongside [Thatcherism's] moral-authoritarian streak" (2017, n.p.). Freeman identifies Andrew Gamble's seminal monograph *The Free Economy and the Strong State* (1988) as the first to begin to recognise this uncomfortable relationship between neoliberal ideas and other aspects of Thatcherism. The tension between neoliberalism and other elements of Thatcherite thinking are exposed in much of the fiction that is discussed in this thesis and informs the contradictions which we see foregrounded in, for example, Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* or Martin Amis' *Money*. Freeman identifies how Thatcherism's ideological contradictions led the Thatcher governments, in practice, to represent a "backlash against the 1960s' cultural revolution" while they also "rewarded the individualistic materialism […] associated with that revolution" (2017, n.p.). In *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, Gamble avers that the "highly contradictory" nature of Thatcherism means its coherence must be "constantly reasserted and re-forged" (p.23). This being the case, he concludes: "In analysing Thatcherism the key problem is to decide what gives it coherence" (1988, p.23). In a later section of this chapter, I will explain why I think Thatcherism derives its coherence from a narrative framework. For Freeman, though, the (equally valid and agreeable) answer to this question lies in neoliberalism's route into the Conservative Party mainstream which, he says, was via Quintin Hogg. Hogg served as the Shadow Home Secretary in Ted Heath's shadow cabinet and had previously served in the cabinets of Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home. He twice served as Lord Chancellor, first under Ted Heath and subsequently for the majority of Thatcher's time as Prime Minister. Freeman identifies in Thatcher's rhetoric an intentional conflation of socialism and left-wing economic ideas with a perceived moral crisis, both of which she attributed to the so-called permissive society. It is, he says, through this conflation of economic and moral decline (for which neoliberal ideas were proposed as a solution, to the former at least) that neoliberalism became linked with the New Right. However, Thatcher simply used this rhetorical conflation, but it was Hogg who invented it (Freeman, 2017, n.p.). The meeting of Heath's shadow cabinet at the Selsdon Park Hotel in January 1970 led to the creation of a manifesto with more explicitly free-market ideas – some of which, as Robert Ledger (2018) notes, were delivered not by Heath but, eventually, by Thatcher. The reason for this was that, though Heath had approved of the ideas agreed in Selsdon (later collected under the umbrella term 'Selsdon Man'), these ideas "were not reflected in practice" when he was in government (Freeman, 2017, n.p.). Freeman is clear that "Selsdon Man was not a pivotal moment for neoliberal policy" (2017,

n.p.) in spite of Thatcher's celebration, in 1999, of the 1970 manifesto as "one of the best the party ever produced" (White, 1999, n.p.). However, the Selsdon Park Hotel meeting of 1970 did mark the moment at which the groundwork for Thatcherism was laid. Hogg, as Freeman says, had campaigned throughout December 1969, leading up to the Selsdon meeting, on the theme of 'law and order'. In doing so, he developed a discourse in which "the definition of freedom" was manipulated to "stress its reliance on authority and morality" (Freeman, 2017, n.p.). This, in turn, was adopted by other Conservatives, including those more ideologically inclined toward neoliberalism like Keith Joseph. The emergence of what Freeman calls "the combination of neoliberal rhetoric and moral indignation" is what he says allowed Thatcher to win in 1979 (2017, n.p.).

Freeman and Gamble are not the only critics to recognise that Thatcherism was not 'pure' neoliberalism. Mark Hayes' (1994) work identifies the influence of neoconservatism on Thatcherism, particularly surrounding the emphasis on law and order mentioned by Freeman. What is more, Hayes emphasises that while Thatcherism "set the ideological pace" of the 1980s, its neoliberal and neoconservative strands were not new: Thatcherism had "merely adapted and updated perennial conservative themes" but these ideas – though not original – were "no less powerful for that" (1994, p.104). Hayes writes that the New Right is not so much 'new' as a reappearance of a "much older radical right-wing tradition" which is only 'new' by virtue of its return in the postwar period (1994, p.3). The New Right is defined here as the coming together of a "neo-conservative social authoritarian strand" and a "neo-liberal free-market strand" which have so much in common that they are not always fundamentally incompatible (though there is still the potential for contradiction) (1994, p.3). For Hayes, the crossover between neoconservatism and neoliberalism, brought together under the banner of 'Thatcherism', is best described as "identifiably separate yet related" (1994, p.3). One of the possibilities of fiction, as I will show in subsequent chapters, is that it allows writers to dramatise, through narrative, imagined scenarios where these ideas – though compatible in theory – are contradictory in practice. The notion that authority is needed to defend order and enable liberty may appear logical in the theoretical context of neoliberal and neoconservative ideology or rhetoric, but novelists like Hollinghurst and J.G. Ballard present Thatcher's authoritarianism as a barrier to true liberty. More recently, Stephen Farrall (2017) – who sees Thatcherism in much the same way as Hayes – has argued that the 1980s saw rising crime rates because of neoliberal-inspired economic and welfare changes, but that the

response of the Thatcher government to this rise in crime was markedly neoconservative. Farrall, in fact, offers a sophisticated breakdown of Thatcherism's tenets, categorising them as either neoliberal and neoconservative outlooks.[35] Thatcherism's emphasis on low taxation, free trade and enterprise, for example, are part of the neoliberal strand of Thatcherism, whereas the moral principles like being pro-family, anti-sexual permissiveness and being 'tough on crime' are elements of the neoconservative strand.

Neoliberalism, then, is a term which is increasingly used in popular commentaries (like George Monbiot's article in *The Guardian* and Paul Mason's commentary) as a synonym for Thatcherism. Such accounts do not acknowledge the extent to which Thatcherism was not simply neoliberalism by another name and, in doing so, overlook the more nuanced nature of its influence as outlined here. Neoliberal thinking certainly informed key aspects of Thatcherite economic policy and was echoed in the rhetorical emphasis on liberty and personal freedom – but Thatcherism was not simply that alone. There was also a strong influence of neoconservative thinking which – as Farrall, Freeman and Hayes demonstrate – manifests as authoritarianism in terms of both a moral outlook and an approach to law and order. What is more, Thatcher's focus on the individual was also balanced with her pronouncements about a collective identity, namely, 'we, the British'.

Nationalism

The relationship between the nation and the individual, of central importance during the 18th century – particularly surrounding debates about the French Revolution (1789-99) – had a fundamental impact upon conservative thought. The debates which occurred at this time offer a historic context for understanding the relationship between nationalism and the Conservative Party: a relationship which, in my view, Thatcherism went on to strengthen rather than weaken. The key political figures at the heart of these 18th-century debates were the political philosophers Edmund Burke, the Irish-born parliamentarian and member of the Whig Party, and Thomas Paine, the English-born political activist who promoted American independence. Burke and Paine had

[35] In the latter category he includes nationalism which is vital to understanding much of what follows in subsequent chapters: as I will demonstrate, the contradictions of Thatcherism explored by writers of fiction are often between her nationalist values or rhetorical construction of national identity on the one hand and the more individualistic and liberty-orientated rhetoric on the other. In Farrall's terms, what the authors included in this study expose may be understood as the contradictions between neoconservatism and neoliberalism, which Farrall describes as a "sometimes uncomfortable mix" (2017, n.p.).

fundamentally different perspectives on the French Revolution. For Paine, it was an opportunity to replace corrupt regimes with democratic governments and reinstate individual rights. He arrived in France several months prior to the start of the revolution, already well acquainted with some of those who led it. Across Britain, America and France, Paine took on a promotional role, writing pamphlets which championed the revolutionary case for American and French independence from Britain. By contrast, Burke opposed the French Revolution not least because of a fear that revolutionary forces could emerge elsewhere. Yuval Levin describes how a 1789 speech by the prominent English revolutionary Richard Price led Burke to fear the "contagion of such philosophies" and the "spread of revolutionary sentiment into Britain in particular" (2014, p.27). In the following year, Burke published *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) outlining the reasons for taking the stance he had. Paul Cliteur has claimed, unconvincingly, that Burke is considered "the founding father of conservatism" because he saw the French revolution as a "totalitarian revolution" (1988, pp.452-54). There is a strong case for labelling Burke the founder of modern conservatism, but to suggest that his opposition to revolution was motivated by a fear of totalitarianism overlooks the ideas which have earned him such a title.[36] Julie Murray has provided a more considered perspective. Murray argues that Burke cannot simply be seen as the anti-revolutionary equivalent of Paine and that "there are problems with aligning Burke so simply with traditionalism" (2007, p.58).[37] According to Levin, Paine was unaware that Burke's perspective on the revolution "was very different from his own" and wrote to Burke in an attempt to recruit him to the cause (2014, p.26). There is no evidence to suggest that Burke ever replied directly to Paine's letter, but Burke made clear his (hitherto unknown) views in a speech in the House of Commons in February 1790. Burke's case against the revolution was not just contrary to Paine's, but contrary to those of some other Whigs too. For Burke, the French "had undone both the balance of their politics and the freedom of their people" (Levin, 2014, p.28) by damaging the

[36] A more convincing argument for describing Burke as the founder of modern conservatism is made by Jesse Norman in *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative* (2013). Norman sees Burke's views on the constitution, free markets and responsible government among the principles that modern conservatives have inherited from Burke. Like Julie Murray (2007), Norman represents Burke as forward thinking as opposed to a mere traditionalist.

[37] Robert E. Sullivan recalls a meeting of philosophers at which Hayek and Russell Kirk were present. Kirk argued, in *The Conservative Mind* (1953), that modern conservatism existed in "the shadow of Burke's creation". Friedrich von Hayek publicly rejected this, in Kirk's presence, and argued instead that Burke was a "forefather of progressive individualism" (2015, p.194). It is necessary to remember this when considering the apparent contradiction in Thatcher's politics: the seemingly incongruent notion of a conservative politician delivering radical change.

institutional foundations upon which their society was built. By stark contrast, as Levin states, Paine's case for revolution was based precisely on disrupting the status quo:

> Paine was no advocate of mob rule, to be sure, but his case for revolution – that it directly applied the political philosophy of Enlightenment, seeking to instantiate the ideals of an individualist egalitarianism – was precisely the sort Burke feared most for its corrosive effect on people's reverence for their society's political institutions and traditions. (2014, p.27)

While taking account of the different political contexts, it is in light of this distinction between Burke and Paine that it is relevant to consider Thatcher. Does she belong to the conservatism of Edmund Burke, or should we view her as a radical individualist like Thomas Paine? Thatcher has been represented by some critics as somebody who shared Thomas Paine's dedication to radical individualism but having little regard for a broader sense of community. Among those critics of this persuasion is Phillip Blond, the conservative intellectual who called for David Cameron to abandon Thatcherism in favour of "red Toryism" or "communitarian civic conservatism" (2009, n.p.). For Blond, Thatcherism has led to a "disempowered and isolated citizenry" (2009, n.p.) which can only be alleviated by a political philosophy committed to restoring communal bonds. The likes of Blond hold the view that Thatcher was not a conservative but belonged to a school of thought which owed more to Thomas Paine than to Edmund Burke. However, my view is that this is not the case and that Thatcherism represents a continuity of more traditionally conservative ideas of nation than Blond suggests. What Blond and others overlook is Thatcher's commitment to strengthening communal ties through nationalism: to understand how this is so, it is necessary to first turn to another Enlightenment figure, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and consider how his philosophy of nationalism can offer a new perspective on Thatcherism's relationship with nationalism.

Rousseau is largely credited with being the first theorist of nationalism.[38] He analyses the relationship between individuals and wider communities in *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) and *Emile: or, On Education* (1762), proposing that the psychology of individuals changes when they become

[38] For evidence of this see Arthur Melzer's "Rousseau, Nationalism, and the Politics of Sympathetic Identification" (2000), Mads Qvortrup's *The Political Philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Impossibility of Reason* (2003) and Steven T. Engel's "Rousseau and Imagined Communities" (2005). Qvortrup avers that "Rousseau was, in fact, the founder of the modern doctrine of nationalism (arguably the most successful of all the modern ideologies)" (2003, p.xi).

part of a wider society. Individuals who live outside of society, he concludes, experience *amour de soi* (love of self) while individuals who are integrated into a community develop *amour-propre* (self-love). In *Emile*, Rousseau states that "the source of our passions, the origin and the principle of all others, the only one born with man and which never leaves him as long as he lives is *amour de soi"* (1979, pp.212-213). Steven T. Engel suggests that *amour de soi* can be best understood as a "natural and noncompetitive" quality akin to a survival instinct; individuals "directed by it have no concern for other beings as long as their self-preservation is unaffected" (2005, p.519). "Amour-propre", on the other hand, "is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in Society, which inclines each individual to have a greater esteem for himself than anyone else" (Rousseau, cited in Engel, 2005, p.519). So, while those who live outside of a wider society are not motivated by others (or, specifically, by their comparison of themselves with others), Rousseau proposes that the individuals who join a wider community define themselves against their fellow citizens. As Engel puts it, individuals in society are "constantly concerned with others [and] fuelled by competition and comparison" (2005, p.519). The latter position is of concern to Rousseau because he believes that the element of competition will encourage in people desires which they cannot achieve: this, subsequently (and, if we consider this model in the context of Thatcherism, perhaps ironically) leads to a loss of freedom. This concern is most explicit in *Emile*, when Rousseau says: "The real world has its limits; the imaginary world is infinite. Unable to enlarge the one, let us restrict the other, for it is from the difference between the two alone that are born the pains which make us truly unhappy" (1979, p.81). Engel summarises Rousseau's thesis thus: we "feel unfree when we are unable to satisfy our wishes. It is imagination that furls the desires and make us think we have needs which outstrip our abilities […] His ideal would be to restrict or stifle the imagination. It too easily leads to inflated opinions about what is possible" (2005, p.520). It is easy to see how Engel's interpretation of Rousseau might form the basis of a critique of Thatcherism: that competition among individuals fosters a society in which many are not free precisely because they cannot achieve that which they desire. On the other hand, the Thatcherite retort to this might logically be that to restrict imagination and to limit desire based on a perception of ability represents an assault on aspiration. Many of the novels which I focus on in this thesis explore conflicting ideas of individual freedom such as this one.

In light of his reservations about *amour-propre*, Rousseau set out to find a resolution for the problems he perceived. It is in his proposed solution that we begin to see a more developed

philosophy of nationalism, and it is here that comparisons can be made between Rousseau's philosophy and Burke's. The starting point of Rousseau's solution to *amour-propre* is the family. He suggests that the competitiveness and desire to stand out from others which characterise those possessed by self-love is instinctively regulated within the family unit: parents do not wish to compete with their children, rather they seek to nurture them in order to enable their success. This is how Rousseau believed society should operate, suggesting that the family unit itself is already "a little Society" (Rousseau, cited in Engel, 2005, p.520). My discussion of *What a Carve Up!* and *The Swimming-Pool Library* in Chapter Four shows how fictional responses to Thatcherism deploy the family unit as a microcosm of wider society, but that they do not always support Rousseau's egalitarian vision of the family (seeing it instead as a constraint on individual identity). What Rousseau is suggesting here is an early critique of a society which promotes unrestrained individualism. Rather than exist in competition with other citizens, Rousseau proposes a communitarian model of society in which citizens feel that the bonds between them are equal in strength to those which hold families together. He believed that this could be achieved through what we would now recognise as nationalism. Rousseau believed that nationalism would direct citizens' attention towards communal life and away from individual desire. As we will see, Thatcher's critics do not believe her nationalist discourse achieved this, or even shared this intention.[39] Rousseau offered a more rounded theorisation of how he believed nationalism functions in his last major work, *The Government of Poland* (1782):

> All these legislators of ancient times [Moses, Lycurgus of Sparta and Numa Pompilius] based their legislation on the same idea. All three sought ties that would bind the citizens to the fatherland and to one another. All three found what they were looking for in distinctive usages, in religious ceremonies that invariably were in essence exclusive and national, in games that brought the citizens together frequently, in exercises that caused them to grow in vigor and strength and develop their pride and self esteem; and in public spectacles that, by keeping them reminded of their forefathers' deeds and hardships and virtues and triumphs, stirred their

[39] See Stuart Hall's analysis of Thatcherism in which he says: "We have never been so close to an embattled defensiveness of a narrow, national definition of Englishness, of cultural identity. And Thatcherism is grounded in that. When Thatcherism speaks, frequently asking the question, 'Are you one of us?' Who is one of us? Well, the numbers of people who are not one of us would fill a book. Hardly anybody is one of us any longer." (1997, p.26). In the introduction to Chapter Four, I outline how Hall is one of several black British commentators who see Thatcherism as a racially exclusive endeavour.

> hearts, set them on fire with the spirit of emulation, and tied them tightly to the fatherland. (1985, p.8)

Here, Rousseau not only sets out the function of nationalism (ties which bind individuals to the nation and to one another), but the means by which it operates (that is, the emotional appeal to individuals to be bound by their own will). His description of public spectacles which serve to remind citizens "of their forefathers' deeds and hardships and virtues and triumphs" allows for a direct comparison with Burke's thinking.

Burke's *Reflections* outlines, in similar language, his theorisation of society. Burke posits that society exists as "a contract", "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born" (2004, p.194-5). Not only do Rousseau and Burke propose a similar theory of a social contract, but each theory also foregrounds the role of national heritage as the basis of societal relations.[40] Certainly there are differences between Burke and Rousseau: John Gray points out that while Rousseau believed that institutions can be founded upon the principles of a society, Burke believed that our understanding of our society is based on the conservation of existing institutions (2013, n.p.). Significantly though, for both Rousseau and Burke, the citizens' ancestors play a crucial role: it is in their memory that individuals are invited to bind themselves to the nation, on the basis that the nation embodies the values for which they stood and represents the sacrifices they made. At this moment, it is clear that the individual, the family and the nation are all inextricably bound within nationalist discourse. The historical account of the nation's past is not simply an abstract concept of national heritage, but one from which individuals are directly descended and to which their forefathers contributed. Rousseau's suggestion that citizens would emulate the spirit of their ancestors (because of their pride in their forefathers' achievements and sacrifices) positions the family as the stepping stone between the individual and the nation; it is because of this stepping stone that the emotions individuals feel in response to their own family's heritage can be projected onto the abstract concept of the nation. But what does this dialogue between Burke and Rousseau mean for Burkean conservatism? Does it support the claim made by Paul Barry Clarke and Joe Foweraker (2001)

[40] I am not setting out to explore all the similarities between Edmund Burke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau here, but to use their ideas to underline the place of civic nationalism in the history of conservative thought. For a more in-depth comparison of Burke and Rousseau, and to understand how and why Rousseau shares Burke's conservatism, see Mads Qvortrup (2003).

among others that Burke was a communitarian? David Bromwich argues against the notion that Burke was a communitarian. He cites Burke's statement that "I certainly have very warm good wishes for the place of my birth. But the sphere of my duties is my true country" as evidence to support his view that Burke did not favour "local or national loyalties" (2014, p.396). However, there are two issues with Bromwich's case. The first is that he quotes Burke out of context, failing to point out that Burke's place of birth was Ireland (not his Bristol constituency to which his comments were directed). Indeed, as Frederick Dreyer observed, Burke "became an Englishman by choice [and] acknowledged that he owed duties to both England and Ireland" (1979, p.52). The second issue with Bromwich's position is that he falls short of acknowledging that Burke's comments were made in 1780, 10 years before the publication of *Reflections*. This somewhat undermines Bromwich's point as *Reflections* is Burke's most prominent work, and the one in which his conservative philosophy is most pronounced. Nevertheless, Clarke and Foweraker's argument for describing Burke as a communitarian is tentative. Their reasoning amounts to the fact that Burke stood in opposition to "the rootless revolutionary society of cosmopolitans" and that this is "typical of conservative communitarianism" (2001, p.87).[41] This may be typical of early conservatives like Burke, but there is no reason why it should be viewed as exclusively, or specifically, communitarian. Though nationalism and communitarianism share common ground, such as a belief in the family unit, the differences between them are significant. In particular, it is important to understand their compatibility (or otherwise) with individualism in order to see the ideological lineage from Burke to Thatcher. Gene Glass and A.G. Rud distinguish individualism from communitarian beliefs. They say that "individualism stands for the freedom from interference by any group or organization, including government, in the individual's quest to achieve his or her own goals" (2012, p.96). Communitarianism, by contrast, inhibits individualism by burdening individuals with a responsibility towards various other groups to which they belong. Kok-Chor Tan (2004) offers a similar distinction. In his analysis of John Rawl's theory of justice, Tan contrasts individualism and communitarianism on the same grounds that I have presented here. He suggests that individualism is compatible with nationalism as it exists in liberal democracies (though not the nationalism of totalitarian and ultra-authoritarian regimes). For Glass and Rud, these "start with family, then on to neighbourhood, and extending to school, city, and beyond" (2012, p.96). In both accounts, then, nationalism is a collective identity which individuals willingly embrace, for those

[41] Chapter Four highlights that Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May both subscribe to a conservatism which foregrounds a commitment to the nation and which is critical of the kind of rootlessness described here.

reasons posited by Rousseau, but not one which is seen to inhibit individual freedom. Burke's stance is entirely compatible with the argument I have made for viewing him as a nationalist (not unlike, but not entirely identical to, Rousseau) and, by extension, seeing this reflected in his conservatism. Indeed, framing Burke as a nationalist in this way allows us to see Margaret Thatcher's own nationalism as having roots in the emergence of the Conservative Party and that Thatcherism is, in that respect, not a radical break with Conservative Party thinking but a re-assertion of it.[42]

In more recent years, theories of nationalism have been shaped by Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities* (1983). Like Rousseau, Anderson also here presented the imagination as the means by which individuals cast themselves as – and understand themselves to be – part of a wider collective (whether that be society, nation or other forms of community). This process of imagining oneself to be part of a wider collective has implications for both individual and communal identity: individuals project their own values onto the nation that they see themselves to be part of. Individuals imagine that their fellow citizens largely share the same values because, as Anderson puts it, "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (2006, p.7). This, he says, is an assumption which goes unchallenged "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members […] in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (2006, p.6). To an extent this is true: assertions of 'British values' or Thatcher's 'Victorian values' (which she often framed as the same thing) are imagined to be widely shared by others who identify themselves as part of the same communion. However, as several of the novels discussed in subsequent chapters demonstrate, individuals are also aware that conflicting ideas of national identity exist. Anderson's suggestion that the nation is *always* conceived in terms of comradeship overlooks those who articulate an entirely different idea of, for example, Britishness. This is exemplified by, among others, far-right nationalist movements such as the National Front (NF) or the more recent English Defence League (EDL).[43] These groups certainly

[42] A significant figure in this nationalist genealogy within the Conservative Party is Benjamin Disraeli. Disraeli's One Nation conservatism was, as Thatcher saw it, fundamentally a nationalist endeavour to bind citizens together using a common identity (to draw upon Rousseau's language). Chapter Four explores Thatcher and Theresa May's similarly nationalist interpretations of the 'One Nation' tradition.

[43] That the EDL purports to represent a specifically English identity also challenges Anderson's assertion. Insurgent political groups like the EDL, or mainstream political parties like the Scottish National Party (SNP), represent a nationalism which is specific to citizens within one of the four UK nations. They define themselves as being separate to, rather than as part of, a broader British national identity, such as the one upheld by the unionist-orientated Conservative Party. To add nuance to this, Richard Hayton finds that the UK Independence Party (UKIP) takes an ostensibly unionist stance, but exists as a "space for the celebration of English identity rather […] than of other substate national identities" (2016, p.400).

do not see themselves as the comrades, so to speak, of mainstream political parties like the Conservatives or Labour. As Rob Ford and Matthew Goodwin have it, the NF was a "minor insurgency" which was "openly racist and less than keen on liberal democracy" (2014, p.23). Thatcher articulated concerns about immigration and British culture becoming "rather swamped" in a television interview in January 1978 (1978, n.p.). But in the same interview, as Gill Seidel recalls, Thatcher also "castigated the National Front" (1988, p.131). She declared that it was the Conservative Party's aim to prevent voters from gravitating to such an extremist group.

Evidently Anderson's theory needs to be expanded to accommodate these insurgent groups who present their own complex visions of national identity. Nonetheless, the act of imagination remains an important one in constructing a national identity – and the role of narrative is central to this act of construction. This is perhaps best illustrated by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith's definition of nationalism, in which present day imagined communities are presented as being reliant upon an understanding of their historic emergence:

> Nationalism was, first of all, a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. The people must be liberated – that is, free from any external constraint; they must determine their own destiny and be masters in their own house; they must control their own resources; they must obey only their own 'inner' voice. But that entailed fraternity. The people must be united; they must dissolve all internal divisions; they must be gathered together in a single historic territory, a homeland; and they must have legal equality and share a single public culture. But which culture and what territory? Only a homeland that was 'theirs' by historic right, the land of their forebears; only a culture that was 'theirs' as a heritage, passed down the generations, and therefore an expression of their authentic identity. (1994, p.4)

Implicit in Hutchinson and Smith's definition is the instrumental function of narrative in shaping identities. When they say that nationalism is the coming together of a territory and a culture which are passed down to, and therefore belong to, citizens by historic right and heritage, it raises questions of how this 'passing down' is achieved and where the sense of ownership gains legitimacy. I would suggest that narrative functions as the framework through which this occurs: the passing down of values, customs and traditions is also the passing on of a narrative about those values, customs and traditions. We saw this in Thatcher's discourse when she described how traditional

British values – covering everything from self-reliance to familial relations – were lost as a result of the permissiveness of the 1960s and 1970s. Thatcher often linked Britain's economic decline and its diminished international reputation to a crisis of heritage. In a speech to Conservative Central Council about the decline of self-reliance and discipline, she declared that "we are reaping what was sown in the sixties" (1982a, n.p.). That Thatcher perceived permissiveness to be a problem that not only occurred in, but which originated in, the sixties underlines how she contrasted her account of her own values. The latter, described as "old virtues", were passed on through family ties but had deep roots in national culture; the former, by contrast, was the "fashionable" product of "a society in which the old virtues of discipline and self-restraint were denigrated" (1982a, n.p.). Ultimately, then, heritage is understood and passed on through narrative(s). Certainly, institutions and symbols help to support an understanding of a nation's heritage and identity: this idea is central to Burke's thinking and to Anderson's.[44] Anderson gives the example of an unmarked grave and asks why it is that the Unknown Soldier, who is ultimately unidentifiable to anybody, is nonetheless afforded "public ceremonial reverence" (2006, p.9). He concludes thus: "void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings" (2006, p.9). Anderson's proposal that the graves symbolise an aspect of national heritage is true, but I would suggest that the ghostly imaginings he outlines rely upon more than just symbols. They also draw upon a narrative framework of war and sacrifice not unlike the one Rousseau describes in his original theorisation of nationalism (wherein citizens are invited to forge emotional ties to the fatherland in honour of their forefathers' sacrifices). Joseph Brooker also recognises the relationship between heritage and war narratives. He suggests that, in her response to the Falklands invasion, Thatcher cast herself in the role of other iconic political leaders during naval conflicts: "Elizabeth I in the age of the Armada, Churchill and D-Day" (2010, p.144). These

[44] The articulation of national identity through such an explicit narrative differs from, for example, the conservatism of T. S. Eliot. Central to Eliot's conservatism was the notion of what Michael Polanyi, in *Personal Knowledge* (1958), called tacit knowledge – that is, knowledge which cannot be easily shared by written or verbal modes, but which draws upon intrinsic strands of knowledge (some of which is not explicitly known) to perform tasks such as acquiring and speaking a language. Much in the same way, Eliot understood national identity to be embedded within traditional practices and rituals rather than in an explicit narrative. In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), Eliot identified the development of a more explicit narrative in this regard but maintained that this was dependent upon tacit aspects of everyday habits and religious practices. Russell Kirk also notes that Eliot saw liberalism as the relaxation of discipline (a diagnosis not dissimilar to that articulated by Thatcher some decades later) and believed in imposing order through a class system as a means of protecting tradition from a "new elite" drawn from a "mob of the spiritually impoverished" (1953, p.494). While Thatcher may have had sympathy with the need to restore order, she did not seek to impose this by reinforcing a class hierarchy.

symbols belong to, and simultaneously reinforce, long-established narratives about the identity of the nation and the values, culture and heritage of its people.

Indeed, Thatcher herself made clear that the central aim of her political mission was the restoration of national identity. Her own sense of success in this regard is reflected in the Conservative Party's 1987 campaign slogan 'Britain is Great Again' (which is discussed in the "Narrative" section of this chapter). In 1999, in a speech given in the presence of Ted Heath and the then Leader of the Conservative Party, William Hague, Thatcher acknowledged the influence of neoliberalism on her thinking, but asserted that Thatcherism was much more a reflection of the nature of the British character than an economic theory:

> Commentators sometimes talk as if the policies that turned Britain from the sick man of Europe to the model for Europe – indeed for more than Europe – were based on an economic formula. And I willingly grant the influence of free market economists, like Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. But the root of the approach we pursued in the 1980s lay deep in human nature, and more especially the nature of the British people. If you really believe, as a matter of passionate conviction, in the talents and character of your nation, of course you want to set it free. And we British have a true vocation for liberty – all our history proves it. (Thatcher, 1999, n.p.)

In this segment of Thatcher's speech, we can see several elements of Thatcherism that are expanded upon in this thesis: the framing of Thatcherism as an expression of 'true' Britishness; the linking of Britishness with key elements of the Thatcherite project, like liberty; and the selective, highly-politicised recounting of a national history as confirmation that Thatcherism is fundamentally British in character.[45] Here, the restoration of what Thatcher saw to be true Britishness – lost during the years of the 'permissive society' and replaced by a "society in which the old virtues of discipline and self-restraint were denigrated" (Thatcher, 1982b, n.p.) – is the driving aim of the Thatcherite

[45] All of these themes are made explicit in her 1979 speech to the Conservative Political Centre Summer School, appropriately entitled "The Renewal of Britain", which made declarations such as "The Conservative Party is proud of our national past", but that there is now "a crisis in the nation" and that "British patriots have […] had cause […] to feel ashamed of the way the nation has been directed" (1979c, n.p.). In this speech, Thatcher also explicitly conflates the "collectivist" approach of socialism and left-wing economists with the crisis of national identity that she described. Compounding the point made in this section most of all, though, is her declaration that "Our decline has not only been economic" (1979c, n.p.).

project, not economic reform.[46] The conflation of Britishness with these virtues and principles shows how Thatcher inherited the rhetorical style established by Quintin Hogg. This was not simply a one-off remark in retrospect. Thatcher consistently articulated at various points through her premiership that her mission was a nationalist one, not an economic one. In a 1981 interview with *The Sunday Times*, Thatcher criticised the direction of politics over "the last 30 years is that it's always been towards the collectivist society" (1981a, n.p.) and argued instead for a society in which people felt valued as individuals.[47] It was with this in mind that she declared:

> And therefore, it isn't that I set out on economic policies; it's that I set out really to change the approach, and changing the economics is the means of changing that approach. If you change the approach you really are after the heart and soul of the nation. Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul. (1981a, n.p.).

Some have (mis)quoted this passage of Thatcher's interview to suit their own agenda. The epigraph of Eliza Filby's *God and Mrs Thatcher* (2015), for example, quotes "Economics is the method; the object is to change the heart and soul" to set the scene for the argument that "Thatcherism needs to be set within the context of Britain's economic and industrial decline, so too does it need to be analysed within the context of the country's religious decline" (2015, p.xvii). Filby is selective in how she presents Thatcher's words: she interprets 'soul' as having religious connotations and reinforces this in her book's subtitle *The Battle for Britain's Soul*. The sentence prior to the one Filby quotes, though, is clear: Thatcher's intention was to fundamentally change the nation – and economic ideas borrowed from neoliberal thinkers were merely the means by which this could be achieved.

In 1985, Thatcher once again confirmed that her "vision" was the restoration of a British national identity that she perceived to have been lost during the era of the 'permissive society'. Asked by interviewer Michael Charlton if winning the Falklands War was just as important to her as "restoring sound money", Thatcher responded: "Of course!" (1985a, n.p.). This was because, as

[46] The significance of the fact that Thatcher conflates morally-authoritarian principles like self-restraint with Britishness is explained by my discussion of James Freeman's (2017) work in the previous section.
[47] As we will see in Chapter Four, Francis Fukuyama's (2018) work on identity politics is strikingly similar to Thatcher's message here: he too proposes that nationalism can help to give individuals a sense of self-worth, not just a sense of belonging. Fukuyama, though, proposes a nationalism based on creed rather than race or heritage which, as Chapter Four also shows, is not how Thatcher's nationalism was viewed by her critics.

she stated, Thatcherism was about "restoring the very best of the British character to its former preeminence" (1985a, n.p.) and that was as much about changing the idea and image of Britishness as it was economic reform. In this response, we can see how Thatcher brings together the disparate facets of Thatcherism – economic liberalism on the one hand and the more nationalistic image of Britain as a global power on the other – within a broader message about restoring the nation to its former glory. When challenged by Charlton, who said that Thatcherism was "radical" and "populist", Thatcher retorted that Thatcherism struck "a chord in the hearts of ordinary people. Why? Because they are British" (1985a, n.p.) Here, her equation of Thatcherism with true Britishness further emphasises that nationalism, not economics, is key to understanding the character of Thatcher's political project. The "Narrative" section of this chapter offers as an example the development of Thatcher's anti-consensus narrative. In exploring that, I will show that equating Thatcherism with Britishness was a conscious, oft-repeated rhetorical device used to give coherent, uniform identity to Thatcher's -ism.

Thatcher inherited historic ideas about nation from within the Conservative Party which undoubtedly moulded both her and the party, but her own views must also be placed in the context of more contemporary debates. Enoch Powell was a significant influence on Thatcher in broader terms and a prolific commentator on matters of nationhood, immigration and national sovereignty. Camilla Schofield argues that there is "no doubt that Powellism helped to produce Thatcherism, or that Powell contributed both to the New Right's political and economic thinking and to Thatcher's rhetorical style" (2012, p.95). Powell acknowledged that Thatcher's electoral appeal was "in a single word … 'nation'." (qtd. in Schofield, 2012, p.107). Importantly, though, Powellism and Thatcherism were not two sides of the same coin. Powell's influence on Thatcherism was limited and Thatcher and Powell disagreed over fundamental issues. He opposed the UK's entry into the European Economic Community (which Thatcher supported) on the grounds of protecting parliamentary sovereignty. Even when Thatcher gave her more notably eurosceptic Bruges speech in 1988 (an event which led Powell to consider re-joining the Conservatives), this was less a case of Thatcher articulating a Powellite case for parliamentary sovereignty and more about her seeking to maintain the political and economic order (Schofield, 2012, p.108). Schofield also states that while, for example, the British Nationality Act might have had Powellite features, it "does not give a complete picture of Thatcher's views on race and nationality" (2012, p.109). She specifies that Powell's idea of nation was fundamentally more about race while Thatcher's was about the

adoption of values and, particularly, "one's orientation towards capital" (2012, p.109). This, as a later paragraph illuminates, is significant when considering how Thatcher's notion of Britishness was not simply about who 'we, the British' are, but about what 'we' are not: namely, communists.

Though Keith Joseph, as I have shown, was more ideologically neoliberal than Thatcher, he too – as a key influence on Thatcher's thinking – compounded the importance of nationalism. In his 1975 paper for the shadow cabinet entitled "Notes Towards the Definition of Policy" – a title which unquestionably and unsubtly gestures to T. S. Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* – Joseph set out how, in his view, the Conservative Party in opposition, now under Thatcher's leadership, could renew itself in preparation for a return to government.[48] Joseph, like Powell, warned of a social decline in which moral standards had been lost. The 'Background' section of his paper highlighted that the "nation, the community and the family have all been weakened" (1975, n.p.). The "destruction of the family as an economic, business and social unit" had accelerated conflicts which were, by this point, "tearing society apart" while the nation, he said, had become a "mere residence qualification" (1975, n.p.). The challenge for Thatcher's Conservatives was therefore "to define and present a vision of the kind of Britain we should like to see emerge" out of the social decline he had diagnosed. In the specific section of the paper dedicated to 'The Nation', Joseph warned of "the growing threat of communism" (a threat which, as I will show, Thatcher was already well aware of) and the need to emphasise this threat to the electorate (1975, n.p.). Much of the initial discussion of nation in this section of his paper was about the UK's relationship with the world. He underscored the importance of maintaining the UK as a major player within the anti-communist Western alliance and, to do this, he encouraged "giving defence some priority in spending" (1975, n.p.). In turning to fragmentation and immigration, Joseph declared that "If we are to act in the name of patriotism, as our party has traditionally been respected for doing, we must define the patria" (1975, n.p.). He expressed concerns that failure to acknowledge the national sentiments of the Scottish and Welsh who wished to have a new relationship with England could lead to similar events and sectarian splits to those seen in Northern Ireland. Moreover, he worried that the British public had experienced mass immigration into the

[48] The influence of T. S. Eliot on Joseph and, by extension, on Thatcherism is one which is worth further exploration (but which is beyond the scope of this thesis). In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, for example, Eliot expresses similar views about 'superior individuals' which are remarkably similar to the views of Joseph, as expressed in Edgbaston (discussed in the 'Neoliberalism' section of this chapter). Furthermore, Christos Hadjiyiannis (2018) has declared that Eliot held views similar to Isaiah Berlin about "the dangers of substituting positive for negative freedom" (p.96). The significance of Berlin to Thatcherism is explored in the final chapter.

UK over which they had no say – and that this had the potential to cause further separation and societal splits. His solution was to "minimise future immigration" while maintaining a "humane stance", but also suggested that a future Conservative government should consider revising "citizenship rights" of "East African Asian immigration" (1975, n.p.). For those immigrants already in the UK, Joseph proposed that they should be encouraged to understand "the need for self-reliance and self-help" (1975, n.p.). In this sense, we can see that Thatcher's notion of Britishness in the context of immigration as Schofield saw it (that is, orientated around values rather than race) is more in line with Joseph's thinking than with Powell's. Moreover, Joseph's call for Thatcher to articulate a vision of the Britain she wished to see emerge by the end of the century and to define the patria are significant in demonstrating the extent to which the Thatcherite project was not just about economics, but also (and, arguably, primarily) about nation. Joseph should not just be understood as an economic influence, but as someone who encouraged Thatcher to develop a narrative of 'Britishness' too.

Definitions of Thatcherism which privilege economics over culture fail to recognise, perhaps beyond anything else, the symbolic importance of the legislation passed by her first government relating to national identity, heritage and citizenship.[49] The National Heritage Acts of 1980 and 1983, and more so the British Nationality Act 1981, made clear Thatcherism's commitment to articulating its values and intentions, in government, through a restoration and protection of a specific image and idea of Britain. Stuart Hall concluded that this Britishness was not reflective of the entire nation, but that it equated to an exclusive Englishness (1997, p.26). This was despite the fact that, as Richard Vinen notes, the Thatcher governments said very little about English nationalism: another factor which set Thatcherism quite apart from Powellism in nationalist terms. For Vinen, Thatcherism's critics were wrong to describe it as racist, or to say that it conceived of Englishness only in terms of whiteness: rather, he says, the Thatcherites were simply not able to agree what was meant by 'Englishness' (2009, pp.225-6). The National Heritage Acts of 1980 and 1983 led to greater investment in the restoration and conservation of historic

[49] The notion of 'High Thatcherism', for all its merits, risks dismissing the first Thatcher government as not fully or truly Thatcherite on economics grounds. The suggestion here, upheld by the likes of Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (2012, p.7), is that Thatcher had to compromise with the 'wets' in the party who were sceptical of her economic agenda during her first term. While this is true, the heritage and citizenship legislation was less controversial among the 'wets' and reflects a central and defining aspect of what Thatcherism is. Jackson and Saunders' claim that Thatcher's "first term was dominated by economic policy" (2012, p.5) overlooks the importance of the National Heritage Acts and British Nationality Act in setting the 'tone' of Thatcherism.

properties and landmarks, with the intention of them being available for public consumption.[50] This, John Corner and Sylvia Harvey suggest, foregrounded the image and aesthetic of national heritage (with the country house being a prime example of 'heritage' iconography) but entwined it with a commercial philosophy (1991, p.48). The result, as Robert Hewison records, was that there was twice as many museums in Britain by 1987 than there was in the 1960s: in 1990, the year which marked the end of Thatcher's premiership, these museums and galleries welcomed 74 million visitors (1987, p.88). The heritage industry, in that sense, perfectly embodies both the spirit of Thatcherite enterprise culture and the emphasis placed on the nation's past and its traditions within Thatcherite discourse. The British Nationality Act 1981 restored the link between British citizenship and right of abode – that is, the right to unrestricted citizenship – in the UK, granting this right automatically to all British citizens (including those in Crown Dependencies). The Act also allowed mothers (as well as fathers) to pass on British citizenship to their children, while also giving the people of Gibraltar British citizenship. It was perhaps most controversial, though, in its modification of the centuries-old *jus soli* principle. This change meant that those born in the UK were no longer automatically entitled to British citizenship, as had previously been the case, but that citizenship could only be inherited from at least one parent. The Act also removed the right of abode from non-British citizens. Here, then, we see the first Thatcher government attempting, in Joseph's words, to define the patria in a particular way. There is, in a literal sense, a move to define exactly whose homeland the UK is but, in the case of the Heritage Acts, there is also an attempt to curate an image of Britishness which complemented Thatcher's rhetorical construction of British national identity.

Thatcher's nationalism was not just a product of domestic economic or moral concerns. Thatcher grew up during the Second World War and lived throughout the entirety of the Cold War. Fundamental to Thatcher's nationalism, therefore, is her anti-communism. Indeed, when Thatcher equated her own values and ideals with those of Britain and Britishness she did not simply define British national identity in her own likeness, but consciously presented Britishness in opposition to communism. Schofield adds that in "Thatcher's speeches, Britishness appears as an

[50] In terms of thinking about Thatcherism's continuities into the 21st century, we can observe that New Labour's own National Heritage Acts of 1997 and 2002 did nothing to significantly modify the Thatcher governments' legislation. Indeed, New Labour only extended the scope of the previous legislation: for example, the 2002 Act broadened the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission's jurisdiction to include underwater sites located within the UK's territorial waters. A notable shift was that 'National Heritage' (the government department created in 1992 by Prime Minister John Major) was renamed 'Culture, Media and Sport': the rhetorical focus on 'heritage' was dropped but the substance of the National Heritage Acts remained intact.

antidote. Britain and 'true Britishness' appear, then, as a Cold War belief" which emerges as a response to "a society of encroaching socialism and collectivism" (2012, p.96). Also noting the significance of the Cold War, Vinen (2012) records that "the whole notion of Thatcherism was born out of the communist/anti-communist divide" (p.199), citing that it was the Soviet armed forces journal, *Red Star*, which branded Thatcher the 'Iron Lady' and that Stuart Hall, in the pages of *Marxism Today*, gave the first full academic definition of the term. In Vinen's view, the influence of Thatcher's anti-communism on the character of Thatcherism proved that it was more of a responsive phenomenon than an ideologically coherent doctrine: the Falklands victory was important to Thatcher not just because of the imagery of a triumphant Britain congruent with her rhetoric leading up to that moment, but because – as Vinen suggests – it was a reminder to the Soviet Union that NATO was united behind a key member (2012, p.204).[51] This, in turn, allowed Thatcher to contrast herself with Michael Foot's Labour Party which had, by this point, committed itself to unilateral nuclear disarmament. There was, overall, no "particularly distinctive Thatcherite policy with regard to defence" (Vinen 2012, p.202) and the same is largely true of foreign policy. Indeed, Thatcher's governments represented more of a continuity with postwar policymaking on issues of defence and foreign affairs: the Conservatives, under Thatcher, introduced the Trident nuclear deterrent while Labour's new leadership broke with the established consensus (since Attlee) and opposed it. Her appointments to the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence underscored this point. Peter Carrington (never actually a member of the Conservative Party) became Foreign Secretary, while Francis Pym and later Michael Heseltine both held the defence brief under Thatcher: none of them was especially Thatcherite but there was no distinct Thatcherite doctrine to be advanced in these roles.[52] Indeed, as Vinen points out, the application of 'Thatcherism' to defence exposes its contradictions, noting "a potential conflict between a commitment to free market economics and a reduction in public spending" and "traditional British defence policy" which was "expensive and prone to foster a protected sector of the economy" (2012, p.202). Of the two, the latter won out: the Conservatives in government delivered the 3% increase in defence

[51] Polling analysis by David Sanders et al. in 1987 indicated that the Falklands conflict provided the Thatcher government with a polling boost for a period of just 3 months. This increase "merely coincided with a jump in government popularity" following Chancellor Geoffrey Howe's 1982 Budget (Sanders et al., 1987, p.281). Nonetheless, it is of symbolic importance. Rousseau talked of nationalism being expressed through public spectacle: though he had in mind sporting events, the celebrations following the Falklands victory represent the most appropriate form of public spectacle that encapsulated Thatcher's own political vision.

[52] We can also extend this point to say that the Heritage Acts and the British Nationality Acts were, respectively, introduced by Michael Heseltine at the Department of the Environment and Willie Whitelaw at the Home Office – neither of whom were hardcore Thatcherites in economic terms.

spending per annum (in line with its NATO allies) that some Conservatives had been concerned about during their time in opposition. Though, as Joseph's 'Notes…' policy paper showed, neoliberals like him were confident that this was the right thing to do in the name of opposing the perceived Soviet threat.

Thatcherism, as I have argued earlier, was not simply neoliberalism by another name. Acknowledging neoliberalism's influence on Thatcherism is vital if we are to understand it, but there are distinct examples of nationalism and considerations of national identity that took precedence in Thatcher's thinking. Both, of course, are important and contributed to the formation of the distinct -ism. There is, in that sense, a coming together of various strands of thinking within the Conservative Party under a single banner with a new leader to articulate their place in a unified project.[53] Farrall has said of these two potentially contradictory strands that Thatcherism "was able to manage at a narrative level […] a flexible synthesis of these 'instincts'" (2017, n.p.). Critics often recognise that Thatcherism was, in some broad respect, reliant upon some form of 'narrative', but they tend not explore how this is so in any depth. In the final part of this chapter, I take up this challenge and demonstrate why understanding Thatcherism's reliance upon a narrative framework is crucial to understanding how Thatcherism existed and operated as a coherent -ism in practice.

Narrative

Sally Abernethy (2018) has written about the narrative strategies deployed by the Thatcher government when seeking re-election in 1983. Abernethy's work, though, does not fully define what she means by 'narrative': indeed, her use of the term appears primarily to serve the purpose of describing "how Thatcherism was packaged and presented to the electorate" (2018, p.2). There is no consideration, for example, of how this narrative was structured or what story the Thatcher government told to 'repackage' Thatcherism at this time. Nonetheless, the article raises several astute points about the purpose of having a narrative and its impact. Abernethy notes, for example, that the changes in policy direction towards the end of the first Thatcher government were extremely limited (2018, p.1): it was Thatcher's team's intention simply to change the story they

[53] Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders write that Thatcher "had to create her own model of female leadership" and that "her ventures in this regard captivated public attention, marked her out – regardless of policy – as a new and unique political phenomenon" (2012, p.11). It is perhaps because of Thatcher's personal uniqueness that the component elements of Thatcherism which she re-packaged and promoted were, by extension, also seen to be new to the Conservative Party.

told about the country's position to make their ideas seem like "common sense" to floating voters who might otherwise have opted for the newly-formed Social Democratic Party (SDP), something about which many in the Conservative Party were secretly worried (2018, p.5). The conclusion that the "Conservatives' dominance in the early eighties was not the result of a more successful or popular programme, but of a more dominant narrative" (Abernethy, 2018, p.17) leads to questions about the nature of the Thatcherite narrative at play, which the article does not describe. Abernethy does indicate that one of the purposes of the narrative was to reinforce the idea of a two-party system. This was intended to cast the SDP aside, presenting its politicians as inexperienced and its policies as vague in contrast with the Conservatives' "sensible approach", and to emphasise that no credible alternative existed. (2018, p.15). Similarly, Robert Saunders (2012) has written about how Thatcher constructed a narrative of 'crisis' in the 1970s. He notes that Thatcher "did not simply exploit a sense of crisis" but "offered a specific interpretation of the seventies that privileged particular responses" which became a "hegemonic narrative" (2012, p.25). The construction of this narrative was, he says, "Thatcher's first great achievement" (2012, p.25). The advantages of this narrative strategy were that it allowed Thatcher to present her values and principles as fundamental and historic, and her ideas as tried and tested truths rather than a radical doctrine (Saunders, 2012, p.29). That Thatcher was able to use her narrative account to anchor her beliefs in a distant past, as part of Britain's heritage, was of particular importance at the time. There was a sense among Conservatives, including Thatcher, that voters were tired of change, radical upheaval and, as one policy document put it, "promises of a Brave New World" (qtd. in Saunders, 2012, p.28). Instead, Thatcher did not offer a new world, but a return to an old one which had been lost. Yet, despite Saunders' description of this narrative framework as Thatcher's first great achievement he, like Abernethy, does not explore 'narrative' as a concept in any great depth. Though these examinations of Thatcherism are both illuminating, they do not fully reveal the extent to which Thatcherism was reliant upon a narrative framework, especially about British national identity. To fully consider the implications of Thatcherism's relationship with narrative, we must first explore what is at stake when we talk about 'narrative'.

Hayden White, in his 1996 essay "Storytelling: Historical and Ideological", rejects the notion that a narrative account of history can be a "neutral medium", as claimed by historians who had called for a return to narrative, rather than 'scientific', histories (2010, p.274). Instead, he asserts, "narrative is an expression in discourse of a distinct mode of experiencing and thinking

about the world, its structures, and its processes" (2010, p.274), Drawing upon the work of structuralist historian Fernand Braudel, who first systematically argued that narrative led to a dramatistic perspective on historical events, White states that the ideological function of narrative leads to the "transformation of history into spectacle" (2010, p.275). That is to say, to narrate an account of the past is to present a sequence of events as if a "theatrical production" over which the narrator has control (2010, p.275). For White, to narrate history is to transform facts into a story in which historical events, agents and agencies are all characterised in much the same way as fiction (2010, p.290). Historical events are, in this sense, utilised in a process of storytelling intended to shape and influence how others understand both what preceded the current moment and the circumstances through which it came into being. Narratives are not, however, simply accounts of how events unfolded. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz do not define narrative as a linked sequence of events, but as itself an event. In this regard, narrative is understood as a "multidimensional purposive communication from a teller to an audience" in which the experience of narrative is as important as the thematic meaning of it (2012, p.3). However, there is, in this act of communication between a teller and an audience, a third position. Phelan and Rabinowitz distinguish between the narrator (the teller), the narratee (who the narrator addresses) and the narrative audience (those who observe the act of communication between narrator and narratee) (2012, p.6). They use Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as an example to demonstrate this relationship in practice. In the opening of the novel, Captain Walton is the narrator (in his letters), Mrs Saville is the narratee (as the letters are addressed to her) and Shelley's reader is the narrative audience (because they observe this communication but are not part of it, knowing that they are not Mrs Saville) (2012, p.6). This relationship, as described here, is specific to fiction – but it also provides a cogent way of describing the relationship between Thatcher and the writers discussed in this thesis.

Thatcher, I suggest, should be understood as the narrator of a highly politicised account of history (and namely British history) which, she claimed, was the source of many of her values. The British electorate of the 1970s and 1980s, to whom this narrative was primarily directed, are the narratees as they are intended to receive her message. Most significantly of all, though, the writers discussed here are part of a narrative audience. That is, they position themselves quite apart from the British electorate of the 70s and 80s (though in most cases they were also still technically part of that) to comment on the narrative interaction that they witnessed between Thatcher and her

audience. In many cases, though, writers' engagement with this interaction was not simply a commentary on it, but an attempt to intervene in it. As I demonstrate throughout, novelists seek to disrupt Thatcher's historical narrative (and associated vision of the future) by exposing the contradictions of Thatcherism.[54] Where this relationship becomes more complex though is that Thatcher, as narrator, can be (and has been) removed from it, but the narrative continues to be upheld. In this sense, her narrative has endured (and continues to be re-told, as Chapter Four explains in greater detail) because of its acceptance within, or even *as*, mainstream history. Braudel's criticism of narrative history, in this instance at least, was right in so far as what began as an identifiably ideological perspective on history has, over time, been recorded as an objective account of the past. As Matthew Hilton, Chris Moores and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite have recently pointed out, popular historical accounts of the 1980s often simply re-tell a story of postwar Britain constructed and told by the Thatcher governments (2017, p.147). The novelists challenging this narrative, then, are not simply intervening in Thatcher's political discourse but in mainstream historical discourse. As Bale (2016) suggested, however, the former quickly (and, it appears, effortlessly) merged into the latter in the 1980s and quickly blurred the boundaries between the two.

In the way that White suggests, Thatcher's narrative was a spectacle, intended to frame the crisis of the 1970s – in the mind of the onlooking electorate – not simply as economic, but as a crisis of national identity. The notion, proposed by Thatcher, that the 'permissive society' represented a regrettable break with British values also implied a crisis of historical narrative: what happened during the 1960s and 1970s was not just presented as a departure from British values, but a disruption to the equilibrium of British history. In *Narrative Politics* (2014), Fredrick W. Mayer observes the use of a similar narrative technique by Martin Luther King Jr. Mayer states that, in his famous 1963 'I have a dream' speech, King quoted the opening lines of Abraham Lincoln's

[54] It is also necessary to note that the kind of narrative used by Thatcher is different to the kind employed by novelists. Thatcher – as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom with daily media exposure – can articulate a narrative which would reach an unquestionable larger audience than any single novel. Thatcher's historical account of British history was communicated across a series of interviews, speeches and so on. Moreover, these were not necessarily always portrayed on their own terms either: they were often mediated by various media outlets with their own political agendas which could frame Thatcher's remarks according to their own agenda. The support Thatcher received from *The Sun* newspaper, for example, among other right-leaning publications meant that she had sympathetic outlets to communicate her message. The novel is not involved in this same process of mediation and is, in that sense, a direct communication from author to reader; it is also a single text and (by virtue of that) less fragmented than a narrative sustained over several years' worth of interviews, speeches and other modes of communication. Authors of fiction also offer a narrative account which is more literary in style and not simply a vehicle for conveying a politicised account of the past.

Gettysburg Address (about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) and framed the America of the early 1960s as one which has "failed to live up to its true character", as described by Lincoln (2014, p.1). At that point in his story, though, King took "a dramatic turn" and his "narrative pivoted from a tragic past to a triumphant dream of the future" (2014, p.1). There are, of course, multiple differences between the two: the fact that they had markedly different politics; they addressed different audiences, with different ambitions; and King's narrative is contained within a single speech, while Thatcher's is drawn out over several years, across a series of speeches, interviews and so on. Despite that, though, Thatcher – in much the same way as King – presented the idea of the nation not living up to its true character in recent years in order to assert a vision of how that true character could be reinstated.[55] In this sense, she, like King, also looked to the future – presenting her own political vision as a means of restoring the nation's true character and correcting the course of history. Both these narratives – of an America that has denied its black citizens liberty and of a Britain that has become too permissive – can be understood in relation to the same basic narrative structure. In Tzvetan Todorov's *Introduction to Poetics* (1981), he proposes that narratives are structured along the lines of equilibrium, disequilibrium and re-established equilibrium.[56] He says of this model:

> An ideal narrative begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb. From which results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is quite similar to the first, but the two are not identical. Consequently there are two types of episodes in narrative: those that describe a state (of equilibrium or of disequilibrium) and those that describe the transition from one state to the other. (1982, p.51)

What he describes here is an initial state of order being interrupted by an event or change of circumstances significant enough to destabilise it. There is a subsequent point at which the period of disorder is ended and resolved, after which a state of order is returned. Crucially, though, what

[55] The contrasting of the distant and recent past is significant here. It is in the portrait of the distant past that the 'true' values, nature and character of the nation are located and, in the recent past, these appear to have been lost or in some way compromised.

[56] Mayer offers several other models for thinking about how political narratives are structured, but I have chosen Todorov's because it is broad enough in its description of how events unfold to be applied to multiple, different political situations. Here, for example, the Thatcher and Martin Luther King Jr. narratives can both be thought about in relation to this model. Some of those which Mayer consider, such as the 'Resurrection' structure which describes a 'reversal of fortune' narrative, is applicable to neither (2014, p.60).

emerges in the final phase of this process is not the same as the initial state of order. The disruption to the initial equilibrium, and the means by which it was dealt with, is reflected in the nature of re-established order. For Dominic Strinati, narrative is, therefore, "the story of how this disruption arises, how it is dealt with and how order is restored" (2000, p.29). It is this narrative structure which best highlights why Thatcherism should be understood as reliant upon a (historical) narrative framework.

Thatcher, as narrator, situated herself at the tipping point between disequilibrium and re-established equilibrium, emphasising the former and promising the latter. Her Victorian values and the lessons of thriftiness harked back to a time when, in her view, Britain was true to itself (that is, in Todorov's model, the initial period of equilibrium). The period which followed, which Thatcher deemed the 'permissive society', was presented as a moment of crisis in which these British values were lost. Thatcher presented the Conservatives under her leadership as an opportunity to reverse the nation's decline and to restore those lost values. Positioning herself as the narrator of this apparent moment of crisis in which British values had been lost also allowed Thatcher to appear dominant within the narrative as well as informed about the 'cause and effect' plot. That is to say, she framed herself as best placed to resolve the crisis because she was different to those who had caused it (recall, at this point, Saunders' observation that Thatcher looked back at a time when many other political figures were offering 'brave new worlds'). What is significant here though is that, while this is a narrative, it is not a resolved one. Thatcher would not have benefited from telling the full story: she benefited from promoting the idea that the period of disequilibrium was ongoing, but that she could bring it to an end. To say this though is to speak in broad, general terms. To demonstrate exactly how Thatcherism relied upon a narrative framework, the final part of this chapter documents the emergence of the 'anti-consensus' politics element of Thatcher's account of recent history. By carefully tracing the development of her anti-consensus rhetoric in the period from 1968 to the end of her premiership, using the archival evidence available, we can see that her criticism of the so-called consensus is not fully articulated until the run-up to the General Election of 1983. That the UK had suffered because of 'consensus' politics was not a view that Thatcher held at the time of the so-called consensus, but one which she retrospectively applied in her narrativisation of the period.

In 1968, Thatcher gave a lecture entitled "What's wrong with politics?" to the Conservative Political Centre. In this lecture, Thatcher is mildly critical of the idea of consensus politics in

general, but she makes explicitly clear that the UK does not have consensus politics: she says "we have not suffered the fate" of consensus (1968, n.p.). During her time as Education and Science Secretary in the Heath government (1970-74), Thatcher does not publicly – or privately (as far as the available archival material reveals) – criticise the idea of a consensus. For all that she would later become critical of a postwar consensus existing during this time, there is no evidence of her raising concerns about it or even discussing the concept at the time of its apparent existence. Indeed, her period at Education and Science, she continues implementing Labour policies. She continues, for example, the roll out of comprehensive schools; she extends the cuts to free school milk which Labour first initiated; and she overturns the Conservative policy to close the Open University and favours Labour's policy of continuing to fund it. To compound this, Thatcher remains silent on the issue of consensus politics when she challenges Heath for the leadership and barely mentions it throughout her time as Leader of the Opposition. During the leadership contest, Thatcher did not attempt to associate Heath with a failed consensus: on the contrary she tells *World in Action* that she wants Heath to want to be part of her cabinet (1978, n.p.).[57] Once she becomes Leader of the Opposition, Thatcher may be seen to distinguish herself from an era of 'consensus', but using very soft, only mildly-critical language talking, for example, about consensus going as far as it could and now looking to have a bigger slice of the cake (1979b, n.p.). This, however, only occurred outside of the House of Commons: she never referred to the postwar consensus in parliamentary debates. By contrast, Prime Minister James Callaghan did, with positive connotations, but Thatcher never challenged this. On 24th February 1979, she gave a speech to a conference of Conservative European Candidates which was off-the-record and not attended by journalists. Her speech was given from a series of brief notes, rather than written out in full. The archive contains these notes and one of the points she made on the night was summarised, in those notes, as: "Need for Conviction – Not consensus" (1979a, n.p.). During the Conservatives' period in opposition under Thatcher, then, she may have privately been critical of consensus, but she did not challenge it publicly. There are two possible reasons for this. The first, as Tim Heppell (2014) states in *The Tories,* is that the scepticism surrounding her leadership meant that she took a conciliatory approach when she became Leader and maintained this approach during her first government. The second, as Emily Stacey's (2017) research suggests, is that Thatcher was more

[57] This interview is, however, better remembered for her declaration that the UK was "rather swamped by people with a different culture" – though, as the editorial comment which accompanies the archival manuscript states, it was reported that Thatcher had said the UK was "rather swamped by people *of* a different culture" (1978, n.p., emphasis added).

focused, as Leader of the Opposition, on developing her image as a leader – that is to say, she had to prove she could offer an alternative before she could say an alternative was needed.

However, while Thatcher was not critical of a postwar consensus during her time in the Heath government, the Centre for Policy Studies (which Thatcher helped establish in 1974) certainly was. There is archival evidence to demonstrate that some of what CPS figures like Alfred Sherman said in private – such as that the 'consensus' was based on a misunderstanding of the economist John Maynard Keynes – was later repeated in public by Thatcher and her allies.[58] Thatcher, then, was silent on the issue in public but in private, her associates within the CPS were creating an anti-consensus rhetoric that Thatcher would later adopt. Over the course of her first government, Thatcher initially continued the mild approach to criticising the notion of consensus. The first explicitly critical intervention on the subject, during this period, came not from Thatcher but from Nigel Lawson. In "The New Conservatism", a 1980 lecture to the Bow Group which was published as a pamphlet by the CPS later in the same year, Lawson dismissed the postwar consensus as a period of failed Keynesian economics. The following year, in a radio interview with the BBC, Thatcher was told that Ted Heath had urged her government – via the media – to return to consensus policies. Rather than challenge Heath's assertion, Thatcher gave a vague response in which she claimed not to know exactly what people meant by consensus (1981d, n.p.). However, within a month – in time for her Robert Menzies Lecture at Monash University – Thatcher concluded that consensus was "the process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies in search of something in which no-one believes" (1981d, n.p.). This change in tone may have been a consequence of the fact that Thatcher was speaking to a small, foreign audience rather than a domestic one. However, the next day the BBC, which had been following her international trip, picked up the comment and asked if it was aimed at her predecessor. Thatcher denied this and said she was referring to another Commonwealth leader, whom she would not name, and not Ted Heath (1981b, n.p.).

The 1983 General Election campaign marks a notable shift to a much more publicly and explicitly critical position on consensus-era politics. In a series of print and broadcast interviews over a period of 5 months leading up to the election, Thatcher intensified her anti-consensus

[58] See, for example, the 1976 document produced by Sherman, to mark the CPS' second birthday, which states: "A good deal of our work has related to questioning the post-war consensus, based on a misunderstanding of Keynes, which must carry much of the blame for our inflationary regression and stagnation" (Sherman, 1976, n.p.).

rhetoric. This directly corresponds to what Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (2012) refer to as the beginning of 'High Thatcherism'. Heppell makes a similar point in *The Tories* about Thatcher's second term in office being the point at which the she abandoned a conciliatory approach and became more markedly 'Thatcherite' (2014, p.80). Among the comments she made in these interviews was the suggestion that consensus is "not right for the British character", deploying a discourse about British renewal, and that she would liberate the 'true' nature of the nation (1983b, n.p.). When asked in another interview what she intended to replace 'consensus' politics with, she responded: with freedom and responsibility (1983a, n.p.). This phrase encapsulates the contradictory nature of Thatcherism, with the liberal idea of freedom twinned with the more authoritarian idea of responsibility which – in her mind – also meant a responsibility to the nation. Here we can see, in practice, how Thatcher is indebted to Hogg in the way that Freeman (2017) described. After 1983, Thatcher's criticism of consensus politics escalates dramatically beyond that point, but there are several key moments worth highlighting because of their significance to the development of her overall narrative. The first substantial intervention was a BBC Radio 3 interview which took place in 1985. In the interview, Michael Charlton proposed that Thatcher's government had abandoned consensus which, he said, "was for full employment" (qtd. in Thatcher, 1985a, n.p.). In response, Thatcher – who had said in 1968 that she did not believe a consensus existed in Britain – stated that governments that value free societies would not embrace consensus or aim for full employment, and only Communist Russia would have such a mentality. She said that consensus politics was directly responsible for the Winter of Discontent and that the Unions had been running the country, rather than the government. She went further than she ever previously had, though, by going on to describe the nature of consensus politics as un-British, claiming that consensus politicians are weak and incapable of taking tough decisions, and that – during the consensus era – British voters were crying out for a strong leader to rescue them and restore their freedom (1985a, n.p.).

By 1986, we can detect movement in the position on the kind of model trajectory, like Todorov's, according to which Thatcher was narrating: that is, from the tipping point between disequilibrium and re-established equilibrium, firmly into the territory of the latter. In March of that year, she told the Conservative Central Council that Britain had been transformed – and that this was not because of consensus, but because of decisive leadership (1986, n.p.). In April 1987, she highlights that her policy agenda – once "derided, criticised and frowned upon" – had taken

hold. This agenda, she says, emerged because she and Keith Joseph set out to "do justice to the British character" and identifies, again, her values of liberty and enterprise as intrinsic to the nation's heritage (1987b, n.p.). A few months later, following her 1987 General Election victory, she reflected upon Thatcherism's defeat of the Alliance's call for a return to consensus politics and states "we are a successful party leading a successful nation" (1987c, n.p.). That Thatcher's narrative shifted from one which looked forward to a period of re-established equilibrium to occupying this position is compounded by the Conservative's 1987 General Election campaign message: "Britain is Great Again". This rhetoric about a return to greatness and the restoration of a successful nation was only effective because, for years beforehand, the Conservatives had emphasised that 'true' Britishness had been lost or abandoned. Throughout the period in which this argument was made, though, Thatcher's position on the notion of a 'postwar consensus' was inconsistent. What I have demonstrated here is substantially at variance with the ideas of those scholars like Mark Smith (2013) who have it that Thatcher was always anti-consensus: to frame her in this way – even when this framing is critical, as in Smith's case – is to reinforce Thatcher's narrative about herself, rather than to expose her true development into an 'anti-consensus', conviction politician. She was not a vocal critic of any such consensus during her time as a backbench MP, when serving in the Heath government or during her time as Leader of the Opposition. During this time, however, we can now see clear evidence that the CPS think-tank developed the anti-consensus rhetoric which Thatcher eventually adopted (sometimes almost word-for-word) in the run up to the 1983 General Election. This intensified anti-consensus attack suggested that the idea of 'consensus' politics was somehow un-British and Thatcher's politics, by contrast, was truly British. The development and eventual deployment of this anti-consensus rhetoric, retrospectively applied to the Heath government (and, indeed, to Heath himself), gives a clear indication that this was a consciously developed narrative used, initially, for electioneering purposes but which has since fed into a broader sense of Thatcher being a 'conviction, not consensus' politician.

This chapter has served two key purposes: to offer a more sophisticated definition of Thatcherism than those that have appeared in the kinds of literary scholarship highlighted in the Introduction and to provide an interdisciplinary theoretical framework for the subsequent three chapters. This framework is based on an understanding of Thatcherism in which two things are fundamental: British nationalism (in terms of content) and the nature and uses of narrative in politics (in terms of practice). To see Thatcherism as reliant upon a narrative framework is

significant for two reasons. First, it allows us to see how Thatcher linked her principles to a historic sense of Britishness and, in turn, mobilised a historical account of British history which she said had, in recent years, lost its way. The Thatcherite narrative, in this sense, was a call to arms to restore Britain to its former glory and rescue it from an ostensible moment of crisis. Mayer has said that narrative

> is perhaps *the* essential human tool for collective action, a tool of enormous power and flexibility for constructing shared purposes, making participation in collective action an affirmation of personal identity, providing assurance that others will join us in the cause, and choreographing coordinated acts of meaning (2014, p.49).

Looking at Thatcherism in this way emphasises, if nothing else, that is was not simply a creed of individualism (as it is often stereotyped), but massively reliant upon speaking to, and about, a collective identity: namely, 'we, the British'. While it is reasonable to suggests that many political figures deploy narratives in some way, Thatcher is unique in two ways: both in providing the kind of highly politicised historical account of the nation's recent history as a means of framing her own values, as well as the extent to which this politicised history has been absorbed into and shaped mainstream history (as Hilton, Moores and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite have demonstrated). Second, thinking about Thatcherism in relation to narrative provides a solution to the problem that Gamble (1988) identified: what makes a contradictory set of ideas coherent? As I have demonstrated here, and as others like Farrall (2017) have suggested, the ideological contradictions of Thatcherism are made coherent or, at least, sufficiently masked to appear coherent through how they were framed in Thatcher's storytelling. The apparent contradiction between a commitment to individual liberty and demonstrating moral authoritarianism, for example, was explained by Thatcher's account of how freedom and responsibility were linked: self-restraint and discipline had been lost in the 'permissive' era, and that the balance between the two had to be restored at the level of the individual for the greater good that is restoring 'true' Britishness. She illustrated her broader historical narrative of a nation that had lost its way with specific anecdotes of her own childhood in Grantham or being "brought up by a Victorian grandmother", as she told the *Evening Standard* (Samuel, 1992, p.14). One key example of this, according to Raphael Samuel, was her father. Alf Roberts, Samuel says, was portrayed by Thatcher in "countless" interviews as a "self-made (self-educated) man […] who had pulled himself up by the bootstraps" to make something of himself (1992, p.14). In recounting her father's life in this way, she was able to present the kind of self-

reliance and other assorted 'Victorian values' she promoted as enabling, rather than preventing, individual freedom. This narrative – explored here in greater depth, but also recognised by Abernethy and Saunders among others – was an effective tool both in shaping how history has recorded the period and as an electoral strategy. As subsequent chapters show, however, writers of British fiction were not content with letting Thatcher's account of history go without challenge.

CHAPTER 2

INDIVIDUALISM

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with one of Thatcherism's most prominent and distinguishing tenets: individualism. Thatcher's conservatism, Mark Bevir and R.A.W Rhodes suggest, was situated "between collectivism and individualism" (1998, p.103) in a way which managed to reconcile individualism with a more traditional Toryism. This reconciliation was, according to them, her greatest achievement.[59] Their argument proposes that Thatcherism, far from being an atomising individualist doctrine, "recognises there is more to life than free markets" (1998, p.103) and acknowledges the individual's moral obligation to fellow citizens. This observation is correct and is underscored by the sentiment of her often-misinterpreted 'no such thing as society' comment. In her 1987 *Woman's Own* interview, and elsewhere, Thatcher framed her understanding of individualism as one of self-reliance and responsibility, part of which was an acceptance of one's obligations to family and neighbours (1987a, n.p.). As Andrew Crines, Timothy Heppel and Pete Dorey note, the significance of Thatcher's interview comments was not simply her emphasis on the individual, but her promotion of an individualism which rejected "a culture of dependency" (2016, p.131). The often-ignored emphasis that Thatcher placed on the individual belonging to, and having obligations to, society more broadly sits comfortably alongside established Conservative Party positions on 'the individual' throughout the postwar period: it was not a radical move towards a culture of selfishness and greed. In 1947, David Clarke, the head of the Conservative Research Department following the Second World War, published *The Conservative Faith in a Modern Age*. In it, Clarke wrote that "society is an organic whole in which the social atoms react in all their movements upon one another" (p.13). Michael Fraser, who served as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party from 1964-75, similarly observed that society was not "merely a haphazard aggregation of individuals in isolation" but that individuals exist within various "groups and communities within the nation" (qtd. in Green, 2012, p.48). Fraser, like Thatcher, sees

[59] This view is by no means shared by Thatcher scholars. E. H. H. Green (2006), for example, notes that Thatcherism's adoption of neoliberal ideas and emphasis on individualism was not congruent with traditional conservatism – indeed, he says conservatives have historically been sceptical of individualism. Green adds that this scepticism had not vanished by the 1980s: Conservative MPs like Francis Pym and Ian Gilmour were critical of Thatcherism and viewed it as a form of 19th-century liberalism (p.46).

the individual operating within multiple social groups (such as the family) but shares her understanding that such social collectives are finite in nature. He and Thatcher both see the nation as the broadest collective framework in which each of these groups exists. Likewise, Enoch Powell opined that "society is much more than a collection of individuals acting together […] it looks inwards, as a community, to its members; it looks outwards as a nation" (Wood, 1965, pp.4-5). In this context, then, Thatcher's individualism was not so much a radical break with existing Conservative Party thinking as much it was a bold re-articulation of it, to a much broader audience. Her vision of the individual's place in society was characterised by freedom and liberty, but this freedom was twinned with responsibility and moral decision-making: the erosion of 'society', as Conservative politicians had long understood and defined it, was not part of her agenda.[60]

Common accounts of the 1970s and 1980s have framed individualism as a specifically Thatcherite notion. Certainly, it was important to, and a central focus of, the Thatcherite project, but it was not of exclusive importance to Thatcherites. Emily Robinson et al. (2017) have demonstrated that popular individualism – a greater demand for individual rights, personal liberty and self-determination of identity – was not a product of Thatcherism. Instead, they argue that discourses of popular individualism were prominent in the 1970s and that they should be understood as a cause of Thatcherism, not caused by Thatcherism.[61] They state that the "growth of individualism […] was a trend Thatcher managed, through luck as well as political skill, to exploit" (2017, p.272).[62] This argument poses a challenge to the likes of Stuart Hall who dismissively argued that Thatcher simply changed the 'common sense' of British politics: on the contrary, the individualist rhetoric of the Thatcher government was a response to – and even a management of – changes which had already started to occur.[63] Nonetheless, figures on the left chose to criticise, rather than embrace, the growing appetite for greater individuation. Ben Jackson

[60] This is evident in her 1981 lecture at Monash University, in which she emphasised that individuals have "the ability and the right to choose; to choose what to believe and what to do; above all, to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil." Furthermore, in an earlier lecture entitled "Europe – the obligations of liberty" (1979) she outlined her three pillars of individual freedom: democratic choice, to avoid excessive state authoritarianism; economic freedom; and the right to be free, and exist equally alongside other individuals, under the rule of law (1979d, n.p.). Neither of these definitions promoted the erosion of society in favour of an 'atomised' individualism which some, as I will outline, accused Thatcher of promoting.

[61] Andy Beckett has similarly identified an "aspirational, more individualistic Britain" (2009, p.54) emerging in the postwar period prior to Mrs Thatcher taking office.

[62] As Colin Hutchinson points out, Malcolm Bradbury (and Daniel Snowman) made a similar point in *Introduction to American Studies* (1998). They argue that the counter-culture movement of the 1960s emphasised "radical style over radical content" – and that the emphasis on individual forms of expression was later manipulated by figures like Thatcher and Reagan (qtd. in Hutchinson, 2008, p.78).

[63] This was Hall's argument in "The Great Moving Right Show" (1979, p.17).

and Robert Saunders (2012) correctly state that, among Thatcher's critics, her "rampant individualism" was cited as evidence of "a new era of greed" (p.1). The criticism, from the left, of Thatcher's individualist agenda often reaches the point of caricature. It has been suggested, for example, that Thatcher favoured an atomised society in which social bonds were denigrated, and greed and self-interest were promoted.[64] As Robinson et al. also observe, Tony Blair and other leading Labour figures like Peter Mandelson have (relatively recently) recalled how they consciously defined their New Labour project not in opposition to capitalism, but to a "rampant" Thatcherite individualism (2017, pp.275-276). However, as Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite acknowledges, Thatcher held a "belief in an individualism which cannot simply be caricatured as greed and selfishness" (2013, n.p.). David Harvey (2007) is wrong, therefore, when he states that, under Thatcher, "all forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in favour of individualism" for the precise reasons that I have outlined.[65] What is more, Anthony Giddens, one of the New Labour project's key influencers, sees individualism as a defining facet of the late 20th century.[66] Giddens described, in *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1990), how "self-identity" had become "a reflexively organised endeavour" (p.5). This, for Giddens, entailed in part individuals constructing their own biographies and forging their identities through consumer choices. As my discussion of *Saturday* (2005) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) will show, the continuity of individualism into the late 1990s and early 2000s warranted the attention of contemporary fiction writers. Yet, for Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro, the continuity of such an expression of individualism was not seen to be as detached from Thatcherism as Giddens' work suggests. Robinson et al. discuss, in their article, the need to revise the meta-narratives through which contemporary history is articulated, including

[64] Those who have made claims along these lines include John Campbell, who (in an unsympathetic biography) stated that Thatcher had replaced "social solidarity" with an "atomised society" (2008, p.533). The same view was also given in an editorial for the *New Statesman* in 2009 and in a 2017 letter to the *Guardian*, the latter of which crudely linked Thatcher's former employment as a research chemist to her supposed "atomisation" of society (Ellwood, 2017, n.p.). Scholarly criticism is guilty of such misrepresentations. Jim Leach (2006), in the renowned film studies essay collection *Fires Were Started*, refers to "the Thatcherite ideal: the 'self-sufficient' adult whose aggressive individualism can operate successfully in public life" (p.198). This depiction, evidently, was not Thatcher's 'ideal'.

[65] This quotation is taken from Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2007) which offers an uncompromising and inaccurate neo-Marxist account of neoliberalism's history. The quotation, which is demonstrably wrong, has formed the basis of frameworks for analysing Thatcherism within literary studies. Philip Tew, Emily Horton and Leigh Wilson's *The 1980s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* (2014) and Andrew Hoberek's *Considering Watchmen: Poetics, Property, Politics* (2014) are two examples of where literary critics have relied upon an obviously flawed definition of Thatcherism within their work. Both these works treat Thatcherism and neoliberalism as synonyms, though neither turns to, for example, Hayek to offer a more balanced definition of what 'neoliberalism' means.

[66] The contrast here, between Giddens' theoretical work on individualism and Mandelson's rhetoric surrounding it, shows how Thatcherism could 'capture' individualism as its own. First because the left overlooked the growing importance of self-determined individualism in the 1970s, as Robinson et al. show, and then because figures on the left appeared to define themselves in opposition to Thatcher's exploitation of it.

those narratives which reinforce the notion that individualism was a specifically Thatcherite philosophy. The fictional case studies discussed in this chapter, I would suggest, have served to reinforce the meta-narratives which Robinson and others seek to undo.

Indeed, much of the literature and popular culture of the period reinforced the left critique of individualism as a necessarily Thatcherite concept. In 1981, Graham Swift's *Shuttlecock* presented a form of individualism expressed through the breakdown of the family unit (suggestive of an increasingly 'atomised' individual), followed by the main character, Prentis, discovering that his family history (particularly surrounding his father) was a lie. Revelations such as this (that an individual's family history is a false narrative construct) which force individuals to question their sense of self is a trope also found in Amis' *Money* and Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library*, among others. The notion of a selfish individualism causing the 'atomisation' of society persisted throughout the decade. In 1989, Margaret Drabble published *A Natural Curiosity*, the sequel to *The Radiant Way* (1987). The novel deals with similar tropes surrounding the breakdown of familial relationships, for which Mrs Thatcher is framed as being partially responsible. In theatre, Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money* (1987) depicted a Britain in which financial services reflected Thatcherite values. Thatcher's second government's re-regulation of the City of London led to the Lawson Boom of the mid-to-late 1980s. Churchill represents this flagship reform in terms of corruption and lies, with self-interested individuals participating in underground trading which culminates in murder. In television, the Harry Enfield character Loadsamoney was a crude, working-class 'Thatcherite' who professed that Mrs Thatcher had "done a lot of good for the country but you wouldn't want to shag it". Enfield's money-obsessed creation, not unlike Amis' John Self, was an embodiment of greed and low culture. The musicians of the period have also been associated with a similar type of seemingly 'Thatcherite' individualism. Joseph Brooker sees Duran Duran as a symbol of Thatcherism: ostentatious, superficial, rich, lusting and associated with consumption and excess (2010, p.19).

Taking this cultural landscape into account, this chapter focuses upon four novels, discussed in two discrete sections. In the first, I consider how pornographic tropes are used to explore ideas of the individual and the nation in Martin Amis' *Money* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library*. The second, which considers the influence of Thatcher's individualism in more recent years, focuses upon Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, with an emphasis on how the self is constructed through narratives of aspiration. The latter of the

two is more concerned with the legacy of 'Thatcherite' individualism; the former considers how literary figures represented it contemporaneously, in the 1980s. The lens through which 'individualism' in all four of these novels can be viewed collectively, though, emerges from the political scientist Francis Fukuyama's analysis of literary models of dystopia.

In *Our Posthuman Future* (2002), Fukuyama set out two models of dystopia which emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. These models are based on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). Both novelists, he says, are prescient in their predictions: Orwell foresaw the spread of information technology and Huxley anticipated "the other big technological revolution", namely, biotechnology (2002, p.4). While Orwell's dystopian vision of an authoritarian state may be more commonly drawn upon as a framework for exploring the contemporary, Fukuyama suggests it was ultimately the less accurate in its prognostication. Rather than assisting authoritarianism and dictatorship or leading to "centralization and tyranny" (2002, p.4), Fukuyama argues that the spread of information technology has assisted the development of, and greater participation in, liberal democracy. What is more, information technology has not resulted in a Big Brother state, but it has led to governments becoming more transparent as they have been driven to publish more about their activities (2002, p.4).[67] For Fukuyama, Huxley's vision was more accurate – and truly threatening in the present – than Orwell's. Unlike that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Fukuyama does not consider the evil in *Brave New World* to be self-evident. Instead, it operates subtly. Rather than direct control and oppression, there is a recognition that "people would have to be seduced rather than compelled to live in an orderly society" (2002, p.5).[68] Within the society of *Brave New World*, sex is easily accessible and gratification is made easy; the traditional family unit has been abolished to maximise individual satisfaction; and art forms such as Shakespeare are (with one exception) universally neglected. The parallels with the four novels discussed in this chapter are immediately obvious. Ideas of the traditional family unit, to which Thatcher suggested the individual was responsible, are in some

[67] Here I am conscious that Fukuyama was writing in 2002, before the current climate of so-called 'fake news' and the notion of the 'news bubble' driven by social media and the rise of 'alternative news' sites, such as *The Canary*. In an interview with Sam Leith of *The Spectator*, novelist Robert Harris drew parallels between Nazi Germany and the era of 'fake news'. Harris noted that Nazi propagandists "spoon-fed" news to mass audiences: now, he says, the individualist nature of social media means "everyone can get the news they want. They don't have to think: they are just comforted in their prejudices, and there is a totalitarian vibe in the air." (Leith, 2017, n.p.)

[68] The notion here, that individuals must choose to be complicit with systems of oppression rather than directly controlled, reflects the argument made by Judith Butler in "Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling" (2014). In it, Butler asks why individuals choose to bind themselves to systems of power. I return to this question in my analysis of *Never Let Me Go*.

way challenged in each. In *Money* and *The Swimming-Pool Library*, Amis and Hollinghurst represent societies in which the family is neglected in favour of instant sexual gratification. *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go* dramatise biological issues regarding the traditional family unit. McEwan explores an individualism over which the individual has no control because of genetic inheritance which, among other things, causes the narrator's mother to no longer recognise him.[69] Ishiguro deals with what it means to be non-human: genetic creations with no familial ties which are nonetheless capable of demonstrating their humanity through their attempts to live like 'normal' families. All four novels reflect upon the role of writing and/or art in their respective societies – and, in *Never Let Me Go*, art is framed as an expression of humanity. Ultimately, though, what Fukuyama is exploring in his comparison of these models of dystopia is the concept of the individual – and what it is that constitutes our individual (human) identity. He proposes that any technological force which can alter or redefine what it means to be human could potentially pose a threat to the continuity of liberal democracy (2002, p.7).[70] It is on this basis – that liberal democracy was threatened by bioscience's potential to change the nature of 'the human' – that Fukuyama criticised his own argument in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).[71]

Aside from Fukuyama himself, another critic of the *End of History* thesis was Jacques Derrida. In *Spectres of Marx* (1993), Derrida dismissed Fukuyama as someone who wished to ensure the death of Karl Marx (by which Derrida also meant the end of Marxist thinking). Derrida asserted that Fukuyama's celebration of liberal democracy was near-evangelical and ignorant of the inequality and economic oppression which occurred in liberal democracies. Derrida's critique (made in defence of Marxism) was, of course, at the very least, misleading. As Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina (2017) point out, in 1820 most of the world's population lived in extreme poverty but, in 2015, this was predicted to fall below 10% for the first time. Since 1987, the share of people living in extreme poverty around the world has decreased by 11%. Roser (2017) also shows that GDP per capita in the UK has increased at a dramatic rate since the start of the 20th century. Over the last two centuries, incomes have also dramatically increased: there was, by

[69] Fukuyama directly cites instances of individuals blaming their parents for their genes, rather than themselves, when (in some way) they fail to live up to social expectations (2002, p.9).
[70] While only the two more recent of the four novels discussed here deal explicitly with scientific alterations and redefinitions, the earlier two explore how the individual is redefined in social terms, drawing upon the notion of the ostensibly Thatcherite 'atomisation' of society.
[71] In *The End of History*, Fukuyama proposed that liberal democracy represented the peak of political development – but, in his reflections in *Our Posthuman Future*, he says that there can be no 'end of history' without the 'end of science' (and that scientific developments are far from over) (2002, pp. xii-xiii).

contrast, next to no increase in the average income between the 13th century and the 18th century. Roser describes what the UK has experienced since the beginning of the 19th century as "previously unimaginable prosperity for the majority of the population": this, of course, is also the period in which Fukuyama sees the beginning of the end of history and the spread of liberal democracy (2002, pp.xi-xii). The dramatic improvement in the quality of life of so many people around the developed world has occurred alongside the spread of liberal democracy. In part, it is because of this that New Labour did not attempt to introduce a hard-left agenda in the late 1990s (accepting instead some of the 'logic' of Thatcherism) and why it was ideologically closer to the political anatomy of Fukuyama than that of Derrida. That the world has improved in all kinds of meaningful and significant ways in recent decades is a point made by Henry Perowne in Ian McEwan's *Saturday,* and one to which I will return in the second part of this chapter.[72]

Thatcherite individualism, then, was not simply about the atomisation of society, nor did it promote greed and selfishness. For Thatcher, individualism was about responsibility and self-reliance – and a practical means by which she could articulate a critique of the welfare culture under previous governments. This, though, is not how her critics chose to represent her individualism. For them, Thatcherite individualism served to denigrate the social bonds which formed communities and families. This was not just a consequence of Thatcherism, in their view, but a conscious decision and integral to her broader political mission. Despite the efforts of historians like Emily Robinson and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite to undo the metanarratives surrounding the idea that Thatcherism 'introduced' individualism into British society and politics, these narratives are entrenched in literary and historical accounts. As we will see in *Money* and *The Swimming-Pool Library*, and then *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go*, contemporary fiction has framed individualism – as its authors perceived it – as one of the most defining and enduring elements of Thatcherism.

[72] This is also the basis of Raymond Tallis' *Enemies of Hope* (1997) which rejected the nihilistic view of modernist and postmodernist cultural critics and argued instead that the twentieth century saw multiple positive advances for humankind. However, as Stuart Kelly (2002) recalls, Tallis was also critical of the "improbabilities" of McEwan's *Saturday*.

Pornographic Nationalism:
Money (1984) and *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988)

The changing pornography industry of the late 1970s and early-to-mid 1980s is perhaps not an obvious context in which to discuss the fiction of the period and its relationship with Thatcherism.[73] During its production boom in the USA between 1973 and 1984, pornography became widely available on VHS and Betamax; it was also at this time that pay-per-view pornography was first offered in hotel suites. Consequentially, this resulted in the decline of adult theatres and adult stores. The price decrease in camcorders in the late 1980s led to a rise in the production of home-made pornography, furthering the extent to which individuals engaged in pornographic practices (Coopersmith, 2002, p.27). Pornography's move from public to private venues meant that its consumption became an increasingly private and isolated practice. The advancement of globalised distribution and greater diversities in genre resulted in the American porn industry gaining $75 million in worldwide revenue by the mid-1980s (Sun et al., 2008, p.312). One clear trend indicated by these changes is that, in terms of both production and consumption, pornography became increasingly associated with individual rather than collective experience during this period. Significantly though, Tom Waugh indicates that while the pornography market changed, it broadly changed along heterosexual lines. The individuating elements of pornography were generally tailored to the desires of heterosexual male consumers, meaning that outmoded venues like adult theatres and book stores generally became more associated with gay consumers (Waugh, 1985, n.p.). This is not to say, however, that gay pornography did not also undergo transformation at this time. As Dan Callwood has recently noted, the pornography boom extended to Europe and, in France in particular, gay pornography "experienced its own boom, beginning in 1975 with the import of the American film *Good Hot Stuff*" (2017, p.27). This transatlantic trend went against Margaret Thatcher's call for a return to Victorian values and her apparent rejection of the permissive society of the preceding decades: the society in which the pornography boom (or pornography booms) had started. What we see here is a practical, real-life example of the kind of

[73] Kaye Mitchell's *Textual Practice* article, "Self-Abuse" (2012), also considers *Money* in this context, but that essay provides a feminist reading of Amis in isolation. I am more concerned with how pornography functions in the works of Amis and Hollinghurst and how it speaks to ideas of national identity. In that sense, I am less concerned with questions of sexuality (though discussions of this cannot be avoided, given the novels' themes and content) than I am with how pornography, as a form of media, is used to interrogate Thatcherism. It is for this reason that I do not draw upon queer theory in any substantial sense. Equally, as I have already said, there has been much discussion of Hollinghurst in relation to queer theory and it is my intention to view his novel within the same framework as that of the other authors.

contradictions that novelists of the 1980s set out to exploit. The market-orientated economy that Thatcher favoured led to developments in pornography which are driven by individual consumption. But while Thatcher may have supported the economic means, the societal change which it brings about is a direct contradiction of the more socially conservative attitude she had towards pornography. One must note, however, that Thatcher's definition of "permissiveness" had more to do with self-reliance (and being 'work shy') than it did sexuality. On one level, Thatcher defined her Victorian values as a willingness to "work jolly hard", to "improve yourself", to demonstrate "self-reliance", to "live within your means", to show "tremendous pride in your country", to be "a good member of your community" and to give "a hand to your neighbour" (1983c, n.p.). Beyond this description, the Victorian values discourse also embodied the anti-permissive sentiment that Thatcher often articulated in her rejection of the so-called postwar consensus. In 1982, Thatcher had given a more concrete definition of her Victorian values, describing how the "standards" associated with such values had been eroded by permissiveness. She said:

> over the past two decades and more, you and I have watched all these standards steadily and deliberately vilified, ridiculed and scorned. And for years there was no riposte, and no reply […] We are reaping what was sown in the sixties. The fashionable theories and permissive claptrap set the scene for a society in which the old virtues of discipline and self-restraint were denigrated. (1982b, n.p.)

Here Thatcher suggests that reinstating individual self-restraint and discipline would lead to the restoration of those lost standards. One aspect of the permissive society, as Thatcher understood it, was a more liberal attitude towards sexuality at the expense of the traditional family unit. Though Thatcher did not criticise this directly, it nonetheless stood in contrast to her emphasis on those (supposedly) Victorian ideals of self-restraint and family values. Victorian attitudes to sexuality are prominent in the work of Michel Foucault who has documented how the period saw an influx of discursive categories (including 'homosexual'). For Foucault, these terms were used to identify and repress sexual transgressions, while the "conjugal family […] took custody of [sex] and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction" thus making the heterosexual couple the 'normalised' image of sexuality (1978, p.3). Thatcher's promotion of family values and rejection of permissiveness has greater significance when understood from a Foucauldian perspective; it

becomes clear, in this context, why novelists of the period turned to sexuality as a means by which to critique Thatcherite ideas of individualism and nationhood.

Attitudes to sex and sexuality can also provide a way of tracing Thatcherism's influence on successive governments. Clarissa Smith suggests that Tony Blair's discourse was part of a broader "fiction" that "the sexual exists separate from popular culture, national identity, politics and the social more generally" (2010, p.244). However, it was not just in discourse that New Labour represented a continuity of Thatcherite attitudes towards sex and sexuality: Smith also notes Blair's concern over the breakdown of marriage, the rise in teenage pregnancy and a culture which appeared increasingly promiscuous (2010, p.244). Indeed, while Thatcher may have espoused values which were broadly anti-pornography, it was Blair who legislated against it. His Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 set the boundaries for what kinds of pornography were acceptable, making it an offence to possess material considered by the state to be extreme. Smith sees this as a policing of desire which encourages a suspicion of those whose desires are not considered 'normal'. The Digital Economy Bill, introduced in the House of Commons in 2016, represents a more recent continuation of this. It aimed to force pornography websites to acquire proof that their visitors are 18 and ban the use of 'non-conventional' pornography. Both of these legal developments represent a continuity of, rather than a move away from, Thatcher's Victorian values.

The move from the permissive society to that of Victorian values was not, however, the only context in which Martin Amis and Alan Hollinghurst, the focus of this section of the chapter, were writing. Pornography, from the mid-1970s, would also have an increasingly significant place in intellectual debates, with articles on the subject appearing in prominent journals. Though not about pornography, Laura Mulvey's essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), focused upon the concept of 'the gaze' and how social relations are constructed around seeing/being seen. Her argument was that Classical Hollywood cinema, although not pornographic, was visually constructed to satisfy male desires: the spectator, she contended, was forced to see the fictional world from the perspective of a heterosexual man. In these films, men took on typically and reassuringly masculine roles, while women featured only to be looked at as a sexualised or fetishised subject. This essay set the scene for subsequent articles which offered critical perspectives on pornography. In 1978, Gregg Blachford published an article entitled "Looking at Pornography: Erotica and the Socialist Morality" in both *Screen Education* and *Gay Left*. The article describes the

impact that feminist theory had on gay socialism, the political position of *Gay Left*, in thinking about private sexual practices more critically. Blachford concludes by saying that Britain in the late 1970s was struggling to deal with pornography. As he put it, "porn is consistent yet contradictory with dominant values": on the one hand consistent with the principles of capitalism, but contrary to widely-held moral values (1978, p.20). In a 1980 *Screen* article, entitled "Photography / Pornography / Art / Pornography", John Ellis declared that pornography was "one of the urgent and unanswered questions that our culture presents to itself" (p.81). The article questioned at what point visual representations become 'pornography' and cease to be another genre or medium. His conclusion was that "'pornography' is […] a designation given to a class of representations which is defined by particular ideological currents active in our society" (p.81): that is to say, what constitutes pornography as a mode of representation or communication in any given period necessarily depends upon the dominant ideological and moral worldview of that period. This echoes Blachford's observation that pornography, as a mode of representation, contradicted the dominant moral position of the late 1970s and it is something to bear in mind when considering Margaret Thatcher's discourse surrounding Victorian values.

In more recent years, we have seen a continuation of both of these trends (the individuation of production and the widening of intellectual debate). Rachel Stuart (2016) has documented the rise of webcam modelling sites in which individuals are paid to undertake sex work in either public or private performances. In the case of the latter, Stuart says that "the customer can make requests for specific sexual acts to be performed […] these performances tend to be highly pornographic." (2016, n.p.) What we see here is a further move towards greater individuation: the market is not simply catering to the needs of individuals through diversification of genre, but through an interactive, real-time exchange in which the individual selects a performer and then directs their performance. But while pornographic practices have become more private, intellectual debates surrounding pornography have become increasingly public.[74] In 2013, the feminist scholar Germaine Greer argued against the motion "Pornography is Good for Us" at a public debate held at the Royal Institution of Great Britain. Greer's argument centred on her thesis that "pornography doesn't make us less repressed, pornography is a way of making money out of the fact that we are repressed" (2013, n.p.). Like John Ellis, Greer sees pornography as a medium which embodies the

[74] Amis himself contributed to this debate in a non-fiction essay for the *Guardian*, entitled "A rough trade", published in 2001.

values and attitudes of the present moment. In 2015, at a public lecture at Durham Castle entitled "Pornography: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly", Peter Tatchell provided a defensive assessment of pornography. Tatchell concluded his lecture by stating "for all the negative aspects to pornography, it can also, in some circumstances, be the cornerstone of a sexual democracy. It can be a social leveller because it gives everyone access to carnal pleasure and happiness regardless of our age, looks, abilities or background" (2015, n.p.). Both Greer and Tatchell were, respectively, women's and gay rights activists in the 1980s when the pornography boom occurred, but their views on it are polarised. Greer sees the medium as a means of oppression which reinforces stereotypes about sex and sexual relations, while Tatchell sees it as a potential force for liberation. Debates not unlike these have recently found a new space in which to develop. 2014 saw the launch of the peer-reviewed journal *Porn Studies*, established to address the gap between the continuing development of pornography and the lack of scholarly understanding of those developments. As its editors put it: "the ways that porn is produced and distributed have undergone rapid, radical and incremental change, but much of the popular discussion about those changes is still based on guesswork" (Attwood and Smith, 2014, p.2).

What I am interested in thinking about here is the contribution that authors of fiction have made to these debates. The place of pornography in Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) and Amis' *Money* (1984) is so prominent that it is difficult to not to read the novels as part of this broader context; yet, for decades, many literary critics have managed to do just that. My specific argument here is not simply that these novelists turned to porn, but that they turned to porn to do two things. First, to explore the apparent contradictions in a discourse and political vision which appeared to simultaneously promote incompatible elements of economic liberalism and social conservatism. In addition, pornography is also used in these novels as a way of critically exploring national identity – and they do this by drawing upon intellectual debates about, and theorisations of, the imagination. The concept of the pornographic imagination was first outlined by Susan Sontag in a 1966 essay of the same name. In it, she proposes that pornography offers "a theatre of types, never of individuals" and that the individual in pornography remains "interchangeable with another and all people interchangeable with things" (2009, pp.51-53). Nonetheless, Sontag sees literary merit in pornographic writing (her focus is on literature not moving image media). For all that characters in pornography are interchangeable, she sees the narrator in pornographic literature as able to offer a perspective from outside a set of cultural norms and accepted practices, to be

outside looking in. She states, "He who transgresses not only breaks a rule. He goes somewhere that the others are not; and he knows something the others don't know" (2009, p.71). What Sontag suggests is that the pornographic imagination transcends the discursive boundaries of what is considered 'normal' or acceptable and, in doing so, achieves a critical perspective which is not obtainable by those who remain within the limits of acceptability. This is, of course, a limited theory. It cannot reasonably apply to all those pornographies which do not work through a fictional narrative such as homemade sex tapes and the recent rise in webcamming. Nonetheless, it does speak to what Amis and Hollinghurst do. As writers they transgress literary boundaries by representing hardcore sex; in diegetic terms, their narrators are themselves transgressors. Not intended to offer viewpoints with which readers sympathise, Will Beckwith and John Self instead make readers of each novel see the world from their immoral, unethical perspectives. These two narrators are also part of that theatre of types: interchangeable and not intended to be individuals in their own right but to be symbolic manifestations of certain facets of Thatcherism. But as well as the influence of theories of the pornographic imagination, these novels also speak to contemporary debates about how nations are imagined. The early 1980s, in which both authors were writing and in which both novels are set, also saw the emergence of Salman Rushdie's essay "Imaginary Homelands" (1982) and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983). Rushdie defined the early Thatcher years as a time in which the state had "taken reality into its own hands" and set "about distorting it, altering the past to fit present needs" (2010c, p.14). Rushdie theorises that the novel is an imaginary homeland, a place brought into being through imagination and the act of narration: to read the novel is to bring that imaginary homeland into being again and again. Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities* developed this link between nationalism and imagination. For Anderson, the nation must be imagined and created in the mind because "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (2006, p.6). What is most significant about this act of imagining, he says, is the style in which the nation is imagined. One of the key characteristics of how Anderson suggests the nation is theorised is as a "deep, horizontal comradeship" of shared values, shared history and shared heritage (2006, p.7). The two novels in question, however, do not abide by this. They seek to imagine, and to force others to imagine, an alternative to the dominant narratives of history and heritage advanced by Thatcher's political discourse; to consider an alternative to Thatcher's narrative account of Victorian values as a genuine aspect of British heritage and to rethink the notion that permissiveness

represented a threat to that heritage. For both, the heritage and the socially conservative value system are as mythical and imagined as the pornographic fantasies which apparently threaten them.

Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library*, published in 1988, tells the story of Oxford graduate Will Beckwith, whose chance encounter with Lord Charles Nantwich leads to him being employed as Nantwich's ghost writer. Will is openly gay and an extremely sexually active man who often fails to understand that others do not share his class privilege. His friend James, for example, has a sexual encounter with the same undercover police officer as Will, but only James is subsequently arrested. Will benefits from the fact that his grandfather, Lord Beckwith, is a well-known public prosecutor. Lord Beckwith is also the source of Will's wealth, status and the hereditary peerage he will eventually inherit. It is because of this wealth and status that Will is able to exercise freedom in a way that James, for example, cannot. But the foundations of this freedom prove unstable. When reading Lord Nantwich's diaries in preparation to write the autobiography, Will discovers that Nantwich was imprisoned for his homosexuality and that it was Lord Beckwith who ordered his prosecution. That his grandfather was actively working to criminalise and prevent the kind of lifestyle Will leads causes him to question his own identity and at what cost he has enjoyed freedoms not afforded to others because of his grandfather. The novel ends with Thatcher's re-election in 1983.[75] *The Swimming-Pool Library* engages with pornography in two ways. While characters encounter and use pornographic material, Hollinghurst's novel is also pornographic in its own right, written in what Stephen Murphy describes as "the most explicit, even pornographic, language" (2004, p.70). Indeed, the novel is underpinned by many of the same conventions that Sontag identifies in pornographic writing: it is sexually explicit throughout and describes sexual encounters in minute detail. Furthermore, most of the novel's events are a consequence of sexual exchange, as the narrative maps out Will's sexual pursuits and encounters. The title of the novel, in fact, highlights this. Lord Nantwich's library is based in what used to be a swimming pool, but the attendant at the swimming pool in Will's private members' club, the Corry, distributes pornography to the members, making it a literal swimming pool library. On a formal level, the novel is also a series of sexual, as well as temporal, exchanges as the narrative shifts between accounts of the events which occur in Will's life in the 1980s and similar events described by Lord Nantwich in his diaries. There is no clear resolution at the end of the novel: on the contrary

[75] Incidentally, *The Line of Beauty* (2004) – which consciously mirrors much of *The Swimming-Pool Library,* while also directly addressing the AIDS crisis – begins after this election, picking up where the earlier of the two left off.

Hollinghurst emphasises the unresolved tensions which indicate a lack of social progress between these two temporalities (e.g. James' arrest). Though the narrative is consistently told from Will's perspective (even Nantwich's diaries are mediated through him), Hollinghurst subtly indicates that he is replaceable, as with Sontag's theatre of types. Notably when he is absent from the Corry for a long period, Will returns to find that nobody "noticed that [he] had been away" and that others fulfilled the roles he usually occupied, meaning the club was "going on much as normal" (p.191). Ross Chambers' view that Hollinghurst's "authorial agency is blind to the ways in which it subserves cultural forces that are beyond its ken" (1993, p.217) does not hold true in light of this. On the contrary, Hollinghurst's appropriation of pornography, on both a formal and narrative level, demonstrates a clear awareness of societal and cultural changes (namely the intricate and contradictory nature of Thatcherism): by entwining pornography with national identity, his exploration of Thatcherism is articulated from an innovative literary position.

Hollinghurst's novel, like Benedict Anderson's conceptual work on nationalism, suggests that communities are formed in the imagination. On a London tube journey, Will entertains himself by considering which of the other passengers he "would least object to having sex with" (p.269). After recounting the game's origins, he avers that it is "[consoling] yet absurd, how the sexual imagination took such easy possession of the ungiving world" (p.296). It is through a shared commitment (in this 'sexual imagination') that Will forms his understanding of a gay community: at other points, James and Lord Nantwich reveal the role their own imaginations play in forming their own perspectives on this community. That the novel is a series of sexual exchanges can also be understood in relation to this. Will mediates the narrative's events and perceives the world around him through the sexual imagination almost exclusively. Indeed, that the sexual imagination takes "easy possession" of the world around him indicates how his sexualised gaze influences his perception and understanding of the space he is in: he ignores aspects of society which do not speak to his desires and, at once, we are introduced to the role the imagination plays in forming both national and smaller collective identities. Murphy argues that London is represented as a space which is "devoid […] of heterosexual men" (2004, p.70), but this proves inaccurate. Will's narration subtly betrays that London is not the exclusively queer utopia he often describes it as. When he enters the adult theatre the attendant is not interested in pornography but instead watches what Will calls "real TV" (p.48), an early hint at the suggestion that pornography and nationhood are both grounded in an unreal, imagined fantasy – a point which Hollinghurst later develops. Drawing

attention to pornography as a fantasy of the sexual imagination also implies that the gay "community" as Will sees it is also formed in the imagination. The attendant, heterosexual and working class, is not part of this community but works in what is nonetheless a distinctly gay space. Though he implies that the attendant does not belong in this space, it is Will's sardonic remarks and imposing gaze which position him as the more powerful and invasive of the two. He describes the "spotty Glaswegian" who smells of "grease" (p.48) in terms which emphasise the differences in their class and national identities. Working-class heterosexuals are subjected to the gaze of upper-class homosexuals throughout the novel. However, it is during Will's meeting with somebody who belongs to an altogether non-British, and even anti-British, national identity that Hollinghurst's views on Thatcherite nationalism are most forceful. Hollinghurst's critique is most explicit during Will's encounter with Gabriel, an Argentinian who subverts Will's gaze and turns his sexual imagination against him.

Will's encounter with Gabriel takes place in a hotel room. Unlike his previous encounters however, Gabriel is not a submissive partner. Rather, Gabriel "looked frankly at [Will's] crotch before meeting [his] gaze", adding "I will show you something very interesting" (p.273). Gabriel's gaze is equally as dominant as Will's and he demonstrates autonomy in inviting Will to look at him. Gabriel then opens a suitcase "stuffed with pornography", informing Will that in "my country these things, these dirty pictures, do not exist" (p.273). Through various sexual and pornographic iconography, Gabriel begins to blur the distinction between sexuality and nationhood. It is here that Hollinghurst most obviously and (in every sense) explicitly binds the part of the imagination in which pornographic fantasies occur to the part in which a sense of nationhood develops. The juxtaposition of Gabriel's revelation with Will's memories of reading *Latin Lovers* magazine highlights the difference between reality and pornographic fantasy. Will's imagined sense of self, informed by his understanding of his national identity and his place in a local gay community, is revealed to be underpinned by a specifically Western fetishisation and mediation of other cultures, rather than a realistic representation of them. Furthermore, the sexual imagination's coarseness is exposed most clearly in its impact on Gabriel's perception of Britishness. This perception is displayed in an attempted erotic performance to pleasure Will. Stuart Hall's (1997) claim that, during the Falklands War, Thatcherism articulated a crude, mythical definition of Britishness which displayed camp and self-parody is mirrored in this part of the novel and in Hollinghurst's own understanding of Thatcherism. Throughout the novel, Britishness is theorised from an upper-

middle class, South-Eastern perspective. The institutions which reinforce Will's understanding of Britishness, in a Burkean sense, are exclusive to his socio-economic class: they include the House of Lords, the University of Oxford and long-established private clubs, each of which he has a familial connection to. Even the more marginalised figures in Will's network, such as James, belong to this culture.

Unlike Will's sense of nationhood, Gabriel's theorisation of British national identity satirically consists of "a gigantic pink dildo" (p.275), a "studded leather cock ring", a "dumbly repeated catchphrase" from some "crudely dubbed American porn films" and a "black leather mask which completely covered his head" (p.274). That Britishness is seen, from a non-Anglophone perspective, to be interchangeable with American national identity is something which is also presented in Amis' *Money*. When Will is presented with this uncanny portrait of Britishness informed by, and mediated through, pornography, he finds it "impossible to tell" if Gabriel anticipated "approval or amusement" (p.274). Will's inability to recognise this appropriation of pornography's conventional facets, which he has encountered throughout the novel, is furthered when he, for the first time, is subjected to another's dominant gaze. Only Gabriel's eyes are visible when wearing the mask which heightens Will's awareness that he is being gazed upon. Moreover, when Gabriel blinks it is "like the lens of a camera" (p.274) which underlines that this encounter is informed by pornographic mediation but with Will now positioned as the fetishised subject. The encounter ends with Gabriel offering to "whip you […] for what you did to my country during the war" (p.275), which explicitly links this encounter with nationhood. By entwining the two discourses and imagined phenomena, Hollinghurst can engage in a critique of national identity which foregrounds the changing context of pornography at a time when Thatcherite discourse reinforced supposedly repressive or, at least, traditional sexual categories associated with socially conservative views on sex and sexuality. In doing so, Hollinghurst acquires the privileged outlook of the transgressor described by Sontag and, by writing from this perspective, forges a link between

pornography and national identity which frames the status of nationhood as something which emerges, like pornography, as a fantasy of the imagination.[76]

Martin Amis' *Money* focuses on the life of John Self, an almost parodic representation of a working-class man who gets rich in the Thatcher years, working initially in advertising and then as a producer in the American porn industry. Self, as a character, is so renowned for greed and hedonism that the 2010 television adaptation cast the morbidly obese Nick Frost as Self, despite the novel making clear that Self is not actually fat. Throughout the novel Self travels between the UK and USA but it becomes increasingly hard for him to distinguish one from the other, much in the same way that Gabriel is unable to distinguish between different national identities and sees Western culture as a single homogenous mass. The novel is also like *The Swimming-Pool Library* in how it ends. John Self, like Will Beckwith, is forced to reconsider his understanding of his own identity following revelations about his family. Barry Self, whom John believes to be his father, is in fact no relation, meaning that John Self is not a 'Self' at all. John is, throughout the novel, framed as an 'everyman' stock character who can be understood in terms of Sontag's 'theatre of types and not individuals'. Self is, for Joseph Brooker (2012), the archetypal Thatcherite subject: not so much an individual identity as a transferable literary trope which embodies Thatcherite values (or, at least, a critical interpretation of those values). Amis' novel is also set during Thatcher's first period of office and turns to pornography to engage with notions of the free individual.[77] He too positions pornography in opposition to the idea of sex 'belonging' to the conjugal family: Caduta, the actress who plays the mother character in a porn film produced by Self, declares "I hate all children. I always have" (p.319) and demands that her on-screen children are removed from the script. According to Self, pornography is a medium in which "the element of lone gratification is bluntly stressed" (p.67). Yet, pornography within the novel does not just facilitate self-gratification, it is a material manifestation of the ideological underpinnings of Self's imagined community. Brian Crews also identifies the link between pornography and the imagination in the novel, correctly stating that

[76] I am aware of the debates about pornography's role in constructing and reflecting social realities, identities and inequalities in queer theory, not least in Leo Bersani's *Is the Rectum a Grave?* (2010). However, I have not framed my reading of Hollinghurst using queer theory, in spite of the prominence of homosexual pornography in his novel, for two reasons. The first, as stated in the Introduction, is that I intend to read all the texts discussed in this thesis through the same critical framework and to ensure that certain writers are not framed differently, as Hollinghurst often is, on account of their own identities. Second, Bersani's consideration of pornography and socially constructed identities is more about gender – such as the construction of male and female identities (p.20) – but not national identity, which remains my primary focus throughout.

[77] A key difference here is that Amis' novel was written during this period and published by 1984; Hollinghurst's was written with a degree of retrospect and published in 1988.

porn "colour[s] [Self's] thoughts and language" (2010, p.651). Self describes, on various occasions, the "pornography still fresh in [his] head" (p.49) from the previous night. Self, who articulates his experiences of the world in overtly sexual metaphors, elaborates: "The screening-room inside my head (exclusive, members only but cheap to join) grows stale and smoky" (p.329). The notion of membership inside the head proposes, as with Rushdie and Anderson, that communities are formed within the imagination: Self describes those in his imagined community as his "kind, the new kind" (p.58). The notion of a 'new kind' of socioeconomic identity appears in both novels. In *Money*, the new kind are identified by Self as those who have "money but can never use it for anything but ugliness" (p.58); those who have become financially, but not culturally, middle class. This is a key aspect of Brooker's description of the Thatcherite subject, an incongruent financial/cultural class status and one often associated with a form of crudeness. This crudeness acts as a defence mechanism for Thatcherism: to criticise Self's use of money for 'ugliness' or his low-cultured tastes, according to Brooker, warrants accusations of snobbery (2012, p.145). In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, we see evidence of a 'new kind' (and of related snobbery) when Will observes that the Corry, his members only club, has become more populated and overcrowded, rendering the club less exclusive. That John Self's imagination is theorised as a screening-room indicates the influence mediation has on him. There is an obvious similarity here between Self's screening room and Gabriel's eyes appearing like the lens of a camera. These two ways of exploring a media-saturated world differ, however, in that Amis' metaphor presents Self as a more passive observer and Hollinghurst's is used to emphasise Gabriel's dominance. Pornography functions as a mode which blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction and reality and fantasy within the novel: Karl Marx and Jesus Christ are among the historical figures whose life stories are retold, in the novel, in pornographic biopics (p.111). Self's own analysis of porn, that it "was realistic", also leaves him wondering "Was it real?" (p.47). Here Amis contrasts reality with an aesthetic form which tries to convince its audience of its authenticity. Indeed, Amis himself tries to achieve this in his frequent metafictional turns, for example introducing himself into the narrative as a character. As with Hollinghurst, Amis' appropriation of pornography distinguishes him from Britain's well-established post-war realist writers (including his father, Kingsley Amis) as he engages with more fantastical or, at least, imaginative elements in his social critique.

Amis' use of pornography to explore Thatcherite ideas of individualism and nationhood primarily occurs through the sexualisation of money and the interlinking of money and

pornography. What Amis does is to highlight a contradiction within Thatcherism which the sociologist Jeffrey Weeks summarised thus:

> The most successful high priests of Radical Right politics in the West, President Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, presided over probably the greatest revolution in sexual mores in the twentieth century, despite their best endeavours […] Individual freedom cannot stop at the market; if you have absolute freedom to buy and sell, there seems no logic in blocking a freedom to choose your sexual partners, your sexual lifestyle, your sexual identities or your fantasies, even if those involve pornographic indulgence and the most elaborate forms of autoerotic ritual (1995, p.29)

Amis' conclusion that individual liberation leads to transgressive acts is not, however, an attack on individuals. By turning to metafictional techniques, namely the introduction of an eponymous character into the narrative, Amis distinguishes his personal views from Self's. Following Self's argument with a woman about porn magazines, 'Amis' (the character) advises him that he "could have argued that the man was being exploited too" because "men do it for money the same as the girls" (p.177). Here Amis deviates from other intellectual positions on pornography held by, for example, *Gay Left* and Germaine Greer: whereas the gay socialists and Greer took the feminist view that pornography was exploitive of women in particular, Amis sees it as an all-round exploitative practice which individuals of both sexes seemingly choose to participate in, but which they do in a culture which promotes easy money and sees the individual as a commodity with a market value. Certainly, Amis' suggestion reinforces Greer's view that pornography is not an exploitative force in itself, but one which highlights underlying repressive and exploitive forces (in the novel's case, 'bad' money). Nicky Marsh views the culture Amis represents as one in which individual freedom has been limited, not enabled. For Marsh, it is a demonstration that neoliberalism represents "a culture in which agency has been systematically removed from the individual" (2007, p.862). Although Marsh is wrong in her assumption that Thatcherism and neoliberalism are synonymous terms and directly interchangeable concepts, her sentiment accurately reflects what Amis suggests in the novel. Performers only participate out of necessity for money: his suggestion is that it is not individual agency that leads porn stars to transgress Thatcher's Victorian values, but an inherent contradiction in her rhetoric.

Though it is often associated with individual freedom and the 'rolling back of the state', Thatcherism is presented here as a restraint: as Self puts it, you "cannot beat the money conspiracy. You can only join it" (p.288). More a force of homogenisation than individual liberation, the apparently Thatcherite values Self adopts lead him to subjectify women. His imposing sexual gaze frames women as a commodity to be consumed, not unlike pornography itself. His imagining of sexual encounters is expressed through a discourse which connotes money. He recalls that when "making love, we often talk about money. I like it. I like that dirty talk" (p.151), and describes how he "kissed that dry purse into a glossy wallet" (p.259) when recounting his girlfriend Selina's sexual gratification. His consumption of women is as relentless as his consumption of food and alcohol and, on occasion, it proves violent. Self sees Selina's only purpose as being to provide him with sexual pleasure. When she refuses sex, he asks her "*what do you think is the point of you?*" (p.244); he subsequently attempts to rape her (though she fights him off). Self's interpretation of Thatcherite individualism is not one with Victorian values at its heart, but one in which selfishness imposes upon the liberties of others: this echoes an earlier suggestion in the novel that one individual's success in this society leads to another's misfortune, a notion reinforced by the multiple acts of rape. What the novel achieves by setting the over-exaggerated and vulgar Self against Thatcher's anti-permissive rhetoric is not to suggest that all those who embraced Thatcherism are like Self. Rather, it dramatises an apparent contradiction between Victorian values on the one hand, and the ways that a political discourse which emphasises individual freedom can be interpreted on the other.

These novels, then, are both engaged with, and concerned with, broader intellectual debates about pornography and about nationalism – and they bring these debates together through the concept of the imagination, which is integral to both. In linking pornography with nationalism, both Hollinghurst and Amis find ways of suggesting Thatcherite nationalism is a crude fantasy or a fantastical imagining. Of course, in Benedict Anderson's terms, all nationalism operates in this way, but what these novels do is question the extent to which Thatcher's articulation of Britishness was widely held, offering perspectives from those outside of the imagined community. In each novel, the narrator – intended to be read as an embodiment of Thatcherism in some shape or form – finds that they are not who they understood themselves to be; that the heritage upon which they constructed their sense of self was false. This, in turn, forms part of a broader criticism of Thatcherite individualism, which these novels suggest is contradictory, attempting to promote the incompatible principles of liberal free-markets with socially conservative moral authoritarianism.

In this sense, pornography occupies an inside/outside position: compatible with the free market but not with Thatcher's Victorian values. By appropriating pornography, what the novels do is to present an understanding of Thatcherism as more than neoliberal economics, and more than the break with the so-called postwar consensus as it was broadly understood in political science at the time. They present Thatcherism, quite rightly, as the coming together of aspects of neoliberalism with more typically conservative nationalism.

The Narrative Self:
Saturday (2005) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

1979 marked the beginning of almost two decades of Conservative Party governance, first under Margaret Thatcher and subsequently under John Major. It was not until 1997 that Labour returned to government, having had a series of leaders during its time in Opposition: James Callaghan (1979-80), Michael Foot (1980-83), Neil Kinnock (1983-92), John Smith (1992-94), Margaret Beckett (1994) and Tony Blair (1994-97).[78] But when the party won in 1997, now under the guise of New Labour, it was significantly transformed. The Labour Party led by Michael Foot was markedly different to the New Labour manifestation led by Tony Blair. In 2011, in one of his last contributions to the study of Thatcherism, Stuart Hall opined that Tony Blair was part of a 'neoliberal revolution' that began under Thatcher. Hall took the view that "New Labour repositioned itself from centre-left to centre-right" (2011, p.19) and, like Thatcherism, he saw in it a tension between two fundamentally contradictory forces.[79] Hall stated that, in New Labour, there "was a continuous tension between a strident, Fabian, Benthamite tendency to regulate and manage and the ideology of the market, with its pressure for market access to areas of public life from which it had hitherto been excluded" (2011, p.20). The metanarrative about several decades of unhindered neoliberalism, however, is a tired one which is rarely adopted by political scientists and historians today. There is some accuracy in what Hall suggests, but simply to say that Thatcher and

[78] James Callaghan and Michael Foot both resigned the leadership following General Election losses. Neil Kinnock did not resign after Labour's 1987 General Election defeat as the party won 20 seats and increased its share of the vote; Kinnock resigned following Labour's loss at the 1992 General Election. John Smith died in office and Margaret Beckett subsequently held the role on a temporary, acting basis. Tony Blair remained leader until his resignation in 2007, having won three General Elections.

[79] There is a degree of truth in this. Analysis by the Comparative Manifesto Data project team demonstrates that in 1997, for the first time, Labour's manifesto was classifiably 'centre-right'. New Labour's 2001 manifesto returned it (although only marginally) to the centre-left, following which it began to move more to the centre (Afonso, 2015).

Blair were part of the same neoliberal lineage is as crude as it is incorrect. There is clear evidence, at the level of policymaking, that Thatcherism influenced New Labour, but there is also evidence (at this same level) that Blair fits much more comfortably in the Labour tradition than Hall's thesis acknowledged. As Ben Jackson (2017) has noted, for example, this is true of New Labour's childcare policy. The neoliberals on the right in the 1980s had supported a childcare voucher model, but New Labour's policy in the 1990s and beyond represented a shift towards state provision. This shift towards state provision, however, was not universal: New Labour did not return the state to the role that Labour manifestoes of previous decades had proposed. The policy, in the end, represented a patchwork of public and private providers. Despite the presence of the state in New Labour's policy, Jackson argues that the fact Blair did not introduce a universal childcare policy represents a success of neoliberal thinking – but not a direct continuity. Much in the same way, Richard Heffernan also sees New Labour not as a direct continuity, but as an "accommodation to and adaption of Thatcherism" (2000, p.178). While New Labour did not simply represent the continuation of the same 'revolution' as Thatcherism, as Hall suggested, Thatcherism's influence upon it was evident and discernible.[80] This final section of Chapter Two is concerned with how writers of fiction have dealt with Thatcherism's continuities into the early 21st century, with a focus upon the critique of individualism in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday*.

The two novels were published in 2005, the year in which Tony Blair celebrated his third General Election victory. McEwan's novel, of the two, is more obviously grounded in the era of New Labour. *Saturday* has as its backdrop a protest march against the 2003 war in Iraq. It was at this time that some commentators on the left – as well as on the right – started to view Blair as a Prime Minister with neoconservative tendencies.[81] Laura Colombino (2014) argues, unconvincingly, that the novel should be understood in a specifically post-9/11 context. She sees

[80] It is necessary to establish this to accurately understand how *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go* fit into this political context because too many critics, such as Alexander Beaumont (2015) who has also written on both, simply label the period 'neoliberal'. In many cases (such as Beaumont's) this is because of the influence of Hall's work.

[81] Ben Rawlence (2004) wrote in the *Guardian* that Tony Blair's neo-conservatism predated that of George W. Bush. Rawlence stated that Blair was a neoconservative, and not simply a liberal interventionist, because of the "scope of his ambition": Blair, apparently, had an "agenda" which was "almost imperial in scope" (n.p.). Writing from the right, Douglas Murray also suggests, in *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It* (2005), that Blair's neoconservative foreign policy preceded Bush's, rather than followed it. Murray also identifies, in the neoconservatism of Blair and Bush, an acknowledgement of the End of History thesis and a celebration of the triumph of liberal democracy (p.163). Mark Mardell (2003) wrote, for the BBC, that Blair was not a neoconservative, but that his agenda was compatible with that of neoconservatives like Dick Cheney.

the novel as one in which individual bodies represent or symbolise spaces of terror. This reading, though, fails to recognise the importance of how the individual (beyond just the corporeal self) is genetically and socially constructed. While she appears to (correctly) identify the novel's exploration of how genetics can threaten the sense of an individual 'self', she does not place this into wider debates about the narrative self. In contrast to *Saturday*, as I will later explain, *Never Let Me Go* takes place prior to the election of New Labour. Ishiguro's novel spans the preceding decades and charts the life of three clones who grow up in Hailsham boarding school. It is not immediately obvious that the novel may be taken as a commentary on Blair's Britain but, as I will demonstrate, it explores the continuities of Thatcherism in subtler ways than *Saturday*. While the two are vastly different in obvious ways – with Ishiguro's clone narrative more of a dystopian fantasy than McEwan's portrait of a day in the life of a neuroscientist – they also have much in common. Both novels comment upon the place of the arts and the sciences in their respective portrayals of contemporary society; they focus on professionalised medicine and the ethics of care; and, perhaps to a lesser extent, they comment upon ideas of lifestyle and consumerism. But fundamentally, at the heart of both *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go* is an exploration of the interaction between narrative and the construction of the individual self and the limits of individualism. In *Saturday*, McEwan's focus on the incurable neurological condition suffered by Baxter highlights those aspects of the self (and the cognitive abilities required to constitute the self, such as a functional memory) which are beyond the control of the individual. What is more, McEwan's representation of neuroscientist Henry Perowne's personal life also indicates that the self is bound to various other selves through family ties, a trope which also figures in *The Swimming-Pool Library, Money* and *What a Carve Up!*. In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones' engagement with the arts underpins their ongoing quest to prove that they have a soul. Their efforts, however, are futile: their individualism, no matter how pronounced, is not able to change the fact that they were born to be harvested for organs. Only towards the end of the novel do they learn that their existence and fate were never things over which they had control. In both instances, the novels challenge the notion

that the individual exists as a social construct, instead focusing upon the biological limitations of human (or post-human) existence.[82]

As well as speaking to this specific political moment, the novels also follow contemporary philosophical debates about the notion of the narrative self which began in the 1980s and continued into the 21st century. The concept of the narrative self – the constitution, articulation and representation of an individual identity through narrative(s) – was central to works by Charles Taylor, Jerome Bruner, Marya Schechtman, Daniel Dennett and Anthony Giddens.[83] In 2003, Samantha Vice wrote that although individual lives are constituted through narrative, each person does not forge their identity through narrative in the same way: some may actively think about their lives as a narrative while others may do it only in moments of reflection. Much more significant to both Thatcherism and the two novels discussed here, though, is Vice's justification for *why* individual lives are understood in narrative terms. She states that "we experience ourselves and the world in way [*sic*] that is meaningful and coherent, with a trajectory of development, in a way that promises, or actively seeks closure and significance" (2003, p.97). Although it is not explicitly identified, Vice's explanation of how the self operates through narrative has, at its heart, aspiration and hope. The aspirational individual is imagined to be the archetype Thatcherite voter: hardworking entrepreneurs growing their businesses and working-class families buying their council houses. Furthermore, Madeleine Bunting has argued that New Labour represented a triangulation between a Thatcherite aspirational individualism and the collective traditions of the Labour Party (2017, p.98). But the role of aspiration in *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go* should not be overlooked, as it is through aspiration (and the myths surrounding what Vice calls the "trajectory

[82] Here the individual is seen in biocultural terms – that is to say, the novel acknowledges that individual identities are constituted through biological and social factors. McEwan was writing at a time of growing debates about bioculturalism, resulting in the publication of Lennard J. Davis and David B. Morris' "Biocultures Manifesto" (2007) in *New Literary History*. In addition, McEwan also inherited scientific/cultural debates in which the influence of Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1976) had already taken hold. Dawkins' writing, though scientific, found its way into political discourses to support notions of individualism. The early 2000s saw the revival of these debates, with publications like Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate* (2002). For more on how debates emerging out of Dawkins' work influenced British fiction, see Patricia Waugh's "Science and fiction in the 1990s" (2005).

[83] Anthony Giddens was a significant influence on Tony Blair's politics. As Bill Jordan points out, Giddens' 'Third Way' "redefined the central terms of the debate between liberalism and socialism" by "fusing individual choice with equality and social justice" (2010, p.47). The continued focus on individualism and individual choice (albeit framed in a different way) is one indicator of Thatcherism's influence on New Labour and social democracy more broadly. Giddens, though, did not accept that New Labour was a continuation of Thatcherism. In his reflection on its time in office, he said that he understood why some felt New Labour did not deliver the 'New Dawn' it promised, but he nonetheless distinguished it from the "disastrous legacy" of Thatcherism (Giddens, 2010, n.p.).

of development") that McEwan and Ishiguro critique the Thatcherite idea of individualism extended by New Labour.[84]

Saturday takes place on 15th February 2003 and, like James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the events of the novel occur within the space of a day. The novel opens with Henry Perowne, who has woken up in the early hours of the morning, bearing witness to a burning aeroplane gliding through the night sky. Henry follows developments about the plane crash via the television news throughout the course of the day; while it is of interest to him, though, the protest against the invasion of Iraq takes precedence and leads the news bulletins. The significance of narrative in the novel is established from the outset. Moreover, McEwan's protagonist – who often sees the world of the novel from a materialist perspective and reduces people to their genetic makeup while dismissing different aspects of their self-determined identity – introduces the theme in his contrasting of the arts and sciences. Henry's daughter, Daisy, is a poet. The divide between the arts and the sciences in the novel is most prominently articulated through the tensions in their father-daughter relationship, with Henry representative of the sciences and Daisy of the arts. Throughout the novel, Henry reads literary works at Daisy's recommendation but fails to understand the importance she places upon them and upon storytelling more broadly. Henry claims to be "living proof" (p.68) that people can live without stories, contrary to Daisy's belief. This, however, is not true. Although it appears true to him, McEwan undermines his narrator's claim by returning to Henry's worldview – which is itself informed through a particular narrative which Henry has constructed – throughout the novel. Henry is not a Thatcherite. His dislike for Thatcher is revealed in his political disagreements with his father-in-law, a poet named Grammaticus, who is described as "an early fan of Mrs Thatcher" (p.195). Henry also displays a degree of ambivalence towards Tony Blair, who is identified as the Prime Minister in the novel and whom Henry has met. When Perowne sees Blair on TV, he describes how he feels forced to ask himself if Blair is trustworthy and looks for clues that he is lying – but all he ever sees, "at worst", is "a straining earnestness" (p.145). Aside from the personalities of the political era, however, Henry's ideological positions are much more complex and often put him at odds with his left-wing daughter. More significantly, though, these views are

[84] It is necessary to note at this point the difference between individualism and individuality. The latter refers to the traits and characteristics that distinguish individuals from one another, whereas the -ism represents a moral, political and philosophical commitment to the freedom of the individual over state or collective control. These novels explore the concept of 'the individual' in relation to both: often individuality is used to demonstrate a compatibility with or reflect an existence within an individualistic society.

not simply stated at random. Instead, Henry constructs a narrative through which he justifies his politics: far from living without stories, *Saturday* has at its heart Henry Perowne's defence of liberal capitalist democracy and globalisation.[85] This defence manifests as a story of global improvement over recent decades.[86] He states that "At every level, material, medical, intellectual, sensual, for most people it [the world] has improved" (p.77). Upon passing the Chinese embassy in London, Henry's reflects upon how technology has made it unsustainable for Communist authoritarianism to persist in China. The country's economy has, in his view, "grown too fast" and "the modern world's too connected" for the Communist Party to "keep control" (p.123). The reason behind this, he proposes, is consumerism. He cites, as evidence for his claim about China, the growing presence of mainland Chinese consumers in Harrods "soaking up the luxury goods" (p.123). Yet, in his overall political thesis, it is not the products themselves but the very idea of consumerism – and the associated connotations of aspiration and the freedom to choose – which Henry sees as transformative. This notion is reinforced by his observation of how London has been transformed, for the better, by globalisation's introduction of different cultures through commercial enterprise. He remarks that:

> This commercial wellbeing is robust and will defend itself to the last. It isn't rationalism that will overcome religious zealots, but ordinary shopping and all that it entails – jobs for a start, and peace, and some commitment to realisable pleasures, the promise of appetites sated in this world, not the next. Rather shop than pray. (p.126)

Again, despite not being a Thatcherite, Henry celebrates the virtue of liberal capitalist democracy as one in which consumerism, choice and economic prosperity are the antidote to ideological extremism and authoritarianism. There is a resemblance to how Thatcher's own values (and

[85] Further to this, he also acknowledges that the news media constructs a narrative in the way in which it sets its agenda and constructs a narrative about what is important and what is less important. He notes that the media's interpretation of which of the day's events is most important is contrary to his own (p.178)

[86] Perowne's perspective here is closer to that of Francis Fukuyama than it is to Jacques Derrida's critique of *The End of History*. It is perhaps for this reason – that Perowne does not articulate a Marxist interpretation – that critics such as Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace (2007) and Deryn Rees-Jones (2005) have argued that Henry is a mouthpiece for McEwan's own conservatism. To a limited extent, Perowne's contemplation of the Iraq war mirrors McEwan's own reluctant support for it. McEwan (like Henry) though is not a "Blitcon" (a British literary neoconservative) as Ziauddin Sardar (2006) argued. As I have indicated, Henry's worldview is more complex than straightforwardly conservative (as these critics have it). The complexity of his politics is shown when he states that his "respect for socialised medicine" is not an indicator of his views on foreign policy and that the "proposed war […] generally doesn't divide people predictably; a known package of opinions is not a reliable guide" (p.100).

particularly her orientation to capital) were presented as an antidote to communism, as described in Chapter One.

Aside from explaining his worldview, Henry's narrative also establishes a sense of order and cohesion out of the modern-day crisis that appears to challenge it: radical Islamic terror. For Henry, despite the threat of Islamism, the "world has not fundamentally changed" (p.77). Rather, "Islamic terror will settle into place" alongside other "crises", such as climate change and other recent wars. Henry actively uses this narrative of stability and progress as a counter-narrative to another. He imagines left-wing academics offering their students accounts of modern history which are designed for entertainment value and miss out important examples of human progress which are deemed to be boring. Henry says of a local university:

> The young lecturers there like to dramatize modern life as a sequence of calamities. It's their style, their way of being clever. It wouldn't be cool or professional to count the eradication of smallpox as part of the modern condition. Or the spread of recent democracies. (p.77)

This, he goes on to suggest, is a systematic problem "for the humanities" in general, as "misery is more amenable to analysis: happiness is a harder nut to crack" (p.78).[87] McEwan's framing of the humanities in *Saturday* contrasts their role in *Never Let Me Go*. Henry Perowne sees the humanities as a means of reinforcing a narrative about human misery and decline, whereas in Ishiguro's novel the humanities function as a way of making the lives of Hailsham's students meaningful. However, as I will explore in my discussion of *Never Let Me Go,* the humanities are presented, in both cases, as the antithesis of science and a force for deception.

Beyond this, though, the most significant exploration of narrative – and of the narrative self – in *Saturday* is revealed in Henry's perception and medical analysis of a series of individuals with neurological conditions: his mother, his patients at his hospital and, above all, Baxter. McEwan's exploration of individualism in the novel is articulated most powerfully through his

[87] Curtis D. Carbonell (2010) has read McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997) as evidence of McEwan's interest in exploring the common ground between the humanities and the sciences – and bringing them into conversation. This interest, as I will demonstrate, is also present in *Saturday*. McEwan presents Henry as a self-confessed reductionist, initially sceptical of the humanities. By the end of the novel, though, Henry's worldview is altered when McEwan causes the sciences and humanities to collide during Baxter's invasion of the Perowne family home. This reading is supported by Jane F. Thrailkill's (2011) essay "Ian McEwan's Neurological Novel" in which she argues that McEwan presents a constructivist model of knowledge, in a narrative in which individuals (including the author) contribute to the creation of knowledge. For her, *Saturday* is a meditation upon how to bridge the gap between the humanities and the sciences.

juxtaposed representations of Henry and Baxter, the violent gang leader whose car collides with Henry's. The confrontation leads to the novel's climax, in which Baxter breaks into Henry's home during a family dinner. Baxter is pushed down the stairs by Henry's son and sustains head injuries; later that evening, Henry is called by his hospital to operate on Baxter. It is during their initial heated exchange that Henry, aware that he cannot take on Baxter and his friends physically, uses his knowledge as a neuroscientist to expose Baxter's condition. Baxter suffers from Huntingdon's disease. His self-described reductionist perspective leads him to say of Baxter that "There is much in human affairs that can be accounted for at the level of the complex molecule" (p.91). His 'reading' of the signs of Baxter's illness also enables him to separate other personality traits which he considers to be a performance: Henry is bemused by Baxter and his friends as their threats seem to be like quotations from films that they have seen (p.90). In distinguishing between the ostensibly false, performed aspect of Baxter's behaviour and the (even if unknown to his friends) serious reality of his condition, Henry begins to challenge the idea of a narrative, self-determined self. Rather, he says that Baxter's condition – the signs of which are clear to him – represent "biological determinism in its purest form" (p.93): Baxter's future is something over which he has no control because of a single, inherited gene. That Henry specifies that the gene is not simply the cause of the illness but that it is inherited further undermines the concept of the individual being an isolated, self-determined construction. In Baxter's case, his fate was determined at birth because of his parents' own genetic makeup. Nonetheless, the single inherited gene makes impossible any attempt by Baxter to live a life of his choosing as both his psychology and physical form are affected. This is made clear when Henry delves into specific details of how Baxter's condition will worsen over time. Vice's account indicates that individual narrative trajectories are of great significance to how the narrative self operates. Baxter's condition, however, means that he is unable to conceive of a future. Not only does his knowledge of what will happen to him limit his aspiration, but Henry points out that the cognitive means by which he can forge a narrative of his life – his memory and his consciousness – will deteriorate (p.96). Henry claims, upon reflection, to have seen in Baxter an acknowledgement of his limited future juxtaposed with his hidden aspiration. He says that Baxter displayed "real intelligence" as well as "dismay that he was living the wrong life" (p.111). The sentiment contained within the notion of "living the wrong life" furthers Henry's case: the

"correct" alternative, imagined as part of a narrative project of self-betterment, cannot counter or overcome the way that the individual is determined, fundamentally, by the genetic.[88]

This initial encounter with Baxter is one of numerous instances in the novel where Henry's reductionist viewpoint challenges the notion of the socially constructed self. His view of how individual lives are a combination of biological determinism and social construction is articulated in his blurring of another patient's condition with the plane crash witnessed that morning. The patient is presented as a stroppy and difficult person who will nonetheless "pull through" following her recent surgery (p.105). Beyond that, Henry says that it is her "own decision to crash" after a colleague suggests that she will "go down in flames" (p.105). The implication of this exchange is that human agency is secondary to biology: only after her condition has been treated is she free to be the cause of her own downfall. The language used to convey this mirrors the description of the plane crash, thereby suggesting that individual agency operates in a similar way: that the overall trajectory (that the plane will crash) cannot be altered but some limited control (such as how the plane crashes) can be exerted. Henry also sees the place of narrative and an aspirational trajectory as secondary to biology in the case of a second patient, Andrea Chapman. Andrea, a child whose operation has been a success, is contrasted with Baxter: she will make a full recovery and, Henry accepts, her life will be her own. He says of her future ambition, inspired by his own medical practice:

> No one will ever quite know how any real or imagined medical careers are launched in childhood during post-operative daze. Over the years, a few kids have divulged such an ambition to Henry Perowne on his rounds, but no one has quite burned with it the way Andrea Chapman does now. (p.260)

At the heart of Henry's reflection, though, is the suggestion that aspirational narratives – not unlike Ruth's ambition to work in an office in *Never Let Me Go* – are imagined futures with no guaranteed reality. Finally, Henry's own mother, who suffers from dementia, is cited as a fourth instance of biologically determined deterioration overwhelming the socially constructed, narrativised self. Following a visit to his mother's care home, he talks about her memory loss: memory, as his earlier

[88] Giving Baxter a severe genetic condition like Huntingdon's syndrome reinforces Perowne's point, in a way that a character with a simpler genetic disorder would not. This is an example of how, as I have mentioned, McEwan prepares to stage an interaction between the sciences and the humanities at the end of the novel: by equipping Perowne with concrete evidence which supports his reductionist worldview (in the form of Baxter's condition, rather than a simpler one), McEwan enables him to articulate his position unchallenged until the final confrontation.

analysis of Baxter has already established, is a function of the brain upon which the narrative self is reliant. He refers to "the woman she once was" and describes how his visit "merges in memory with all the rest" (p.153). Vice's narrative trajectory is further contradicted by Henry's mother's dementia. As well as losing her ability to remember who she is, her condition also removes her ability to be grounded in the present: she believes, Henry says, that her own mother is coming to collect her from the care home (p.160). However, of the four cases, it is here that he begins to concede that literary narratives can change human relations. Henry states that he once saw his mother as less intelligent than himself and looked down upon her for being without curiosity. By reading the Victorian novel, though, he becomes more able to understand his mother's achievements. He discovers, through the novel, "themes", which explain his mother's life story and is able, for the first time, to empathise with her (pp.155-156). This acknowledgement of literature's affective potential is derived from Daisy's insistence that he reads the novels she recommends. Her opinion of her father is summarised thus: "she thinks he's a coarse, unredeemable materialist. She thinks he lacks an imagination. Perhaps it's so, but she hasn't quite given up on him yet" (p.134). However, it is not his newfound empathy for his mother through which he realises literature's affective power, but the final confrontation with Baxter at his home.

The close of the novel sees the return of Baxter. This time Baxter, accompanied by his gang, has broken into the Perowne family home during a family dinner party, at which Henry's wife, children and father-in-law are present. This moment also sees the return of Henry's analysis of Baxter, in which the notion of a narrative self is more explicitly criticised. Henry continues to articulate a definition of individualism which is not based on aspiration or a social identity, but based upon biology and genetic makeup. To explain the irrational steps that Baxter has taken, Henry reflects upon "the truth" of Baxter's knowledge of his own condition (p.210). Henry's comments suggest that Huntingdon's makes it impossible for Baxter to see himself as part of a broader narrative trajectory, in the way that Andrea Chapman does, because he "believes he has no future and is therefore free of consequences" (p.210).[89] During the time in which Baxter is in his home, Henry observes

[89] There is an implicit suggestion here that to see oneself as part of a narrative trajectory – in which one's aspirations and a meaningful future could be put at risk by actions such as Baxter's – is also a form of control. In this sense, the idea of the narrative self encapsulates the tension, inherent in Thatcherism, between liberty and authority.

> the unique disturbances, the individual expression of his condition – impulsiveness, poor self-control, paranoia, mood swings, depression balanced by outbursts of tempter, some of this, or all of it and more, would have helped him, stirred him, as he reflected on his quarrel with Henry this morning. (p.210)

To an extent, then, Baxter's irrational actions (which might otherwise be framed as an individualistic expression of anger or rejection of the situation in which he finds himself) are not entirely his own. Henry's summary of his condition here removes Baxter's agency and deflects his behaviour, at least in part, onto his condition. What is more, not only is Baxter's future compromised by his condition, but it also begins to change his identity in the present. Henry notes that soon Baxter's illness will render his physical form "too absurd" to continue to perform his established social identity.[90] Henry says that

> Over the coming months and years the athetosis, those involuntary, uncontrolled movements, and the chorea – the helpless jitters, the grimacing, the jerky raising of the shoulders and flexing fingers and toes – will overwhelm him, render him too absurd for the street. His kind of criminality is for the physically sound. At some point he'll find himself writing and hallucinating on a bed he'll never leave, in a long-term psychiatric ward, probably friendless, certainly unlovable, and there his slow deterioration will be managed, with efficiency if he's in luck. Now, while he can still hold a knife, he has come to assert his dignity, and perhaps even shape the way he'll be remembered. (p.211)

However, with this declaration, Henry inadvertently highlights another means by which identities are constructed and maintained through narrative: specifically, how memories are shaped. This is the beginning of a sequence of statements which betray that his initial notion, that people can live without stories, was not entirely correct. Although he has already identified that Baxter will suffer memory loss, his comment about shaping "the way he'll be remembered" emphasises the extent to which narratives of the self persist in others' memories. To an extent, Baxter appears able to control how he will be remembered and how the narrative account of his life, even after the

[90] I use the word "perform" consciously here as, in their initial exchange, Henry makes multiple references to the comical and bemusing actions of Baxter and his gang which he sees as a performance rather than a genuine expression of identity. Henry likens their initial threats to lines from films and struggles to see their behaviour as genuine, rather than a mimicry of something they have witnessed elsewhere (pp.86-90).

eventual decline that Henry describes, will play out. The control he has over this and his own individualism and individual agency, however, remains limited. What Perowne begins to articulate is an understanding of individual identity seen as an interaction between the biological and the social, but in which control over both is limited. Within this definition, biological factors still outweigh social influences in the constitution of the individual: the former can render the latter inoperable, as Baxter's illness demonstrates. However, where socially constructed individualism is more significant than biologically determined individualism is in relation to how individuals are remembered by others. Henry suggests that Baxter remains capable, despite his own inevitable demise, of shaping how others will remember him. In this way, his identity will continue to be narrativised by how others construct him in memory – and his socially constructed self, rather than his genetic makeup, will determine how he exists in such accounts. The second instance of Henry's realisation of storytelling's importance comes when Baxter forces Daisy, now naked, to read one of her poems to him. The affective power of Daisy's writing causes Baxter to become over-emotional which, subsequently, allows Henry to outwit him and lead him away from his family. In the moment Henry witnesses Baxter's emotional breakdown, the literary narrative's affective function is secondary to the observation that narrative appears to be intrinsic to the human mind. Specifically, Henry acknowledges that, in Baxter's deteriorating mind, there is a loss of the narrative process through which we understand and articulate a "continuous self" (p.223). Once again, he posits a definition of individualism which is an interaction between genetics and narrative, and in which a genetic defection manifests as the breakdown of that narrative. In Baxter's case, Henry states that "It's of the essence of a degenerating mind, periodically to lose all sense of continuous self, and therefore any regard for what others think of your lack of continuity" (pp.223-24). Baxter's lack of continuity, in this instance, is the sudden shift from his performed street thug identity to somebody who is visibly emotional because of Daisy's poem. The implication of what Henry concludes, though, is that a functional mind, unaffected by a defection of any kind, is one which comprehends the world and the individual's place and relations within it through a narrative structure.

The novel ends with Henry's more assertive and explicit rejection of the idea of the socially constructed individual: Perowne reflects upon the nature of individualism, and why people live the lives they do, and concludes that "It can't just be class or opportunities – the drunks and junkies come from all kinds of backgrounds, as do the office people. Some of the worst wrecks have been

privately educated." (p.272). Here he rejects various processes of socialisation, such as economic advantages and education, as the key factors which shape individual identities. Vice's definition of the narrative self is one with a clear trajectory and in which individual lives are coherently structured and narrated through largely self-determined stories. By contrast, for Henry, "The random ordering of the world" presents the individual with "a trillion trillion possible futures" (p.128). Inhis view, too many people either exceed the limitations imposed upon them by their background or lead lives in adulthood which are worse than during their comparatively affluent adolescence for individual identities to be entirely socially constructed. Instead, "Perowne, the professional reductionist, can't help thinking it's down to invisible folds and kinks of character, written in code, at the level of molecules", adding that "No amount of social justice will cure or disperse this enfeebled army haunting the public places of every town" (p.272). To this end, Jane Macnaughton is right to state that the novel "does not make a convincing case for the efficacy of a literary education for doctors. Perowne can live without fiction and is clearly able to be responsive to his patients' stories without first having his sensibilities refined by literature." (2007, p.74). Henry is more understanding of literature's affective power, of its significance in others' lives, and of the importance of storytelling in the construction of identities. None of these discoveries is, however, so fundamental that they alter either his professional practice or his political philosophy, the latter of which is reinforced at the end of the novel. The unknown narrator, acknowledging Henry's reductionist perspective, explicitly criticises the so-called political Third Way – with its emphasis on social justice – upon which New Labour was built. What is more, the suggestion that state intervention is capable of alleviating inequality and social disadvantage is rejected. Instead, a more typically Thatcherite alternative is presented, reflecting the sentiment of Thatcher's "no such thing as society" comments: that individuals are ultimately responsible for their own behaviour, not society. Ultimately, then, this appears as something of a contradiction within the novel. Henry has consistently presented the view that there are limitations to individualism, both biological (in terms of genetic defections) and social (in that we cannot control how others construct our identities). Nonetheless, despite this lack of control, the novel concludes with the view that individual identities are pre-determined: while self-narration has a role to play in providing coherence and structure in individuals' lives, the scope of these narratives is limited by that which is already "written in code" (p.272). What Perowne does, then, is to reject the concept of the aspirational individual at the heart of Thatcherism, while simultaneously making the biomedical case for the Thatcherite idea of self-reliance and the argument against the welfare state.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* deals with ideas of aspirational individualism in similar ways to *Saturday*. In *Never Let Me Go*, the narrative self is also employed (futilely) as a means of resisting a difficult biological reality. Here, though, it is not a genetically inherited disease that limits Kathy, Tommy and Ruth's freedom, but the fact that they are clones raised unwillingly (and, for the most part, unknowingly) as organ donors. It is only when Miss Lucy, a guardian at Hailsham boarding school where they are raised, tells the students that they are clones that they are first aware that they are not strictly human. Although set prior to Blair taking office, Anne Whitehead has acknowledged that *Never Let Me Go* is nonetheless "suggestive of the continuities into the present of the social issues to which it alludes" (2011, p.62). However, Whitehead's analysis is limited in that she simply sees these continuities in terms of government health care policy – and, specifically, the increasing presence of the private sector in the NHS since Thatcher. The novel, though, I would argue, is much more concerned with the underlying philosophical continuity of the Thatcherite notion of individualism also explored in *Saturday*. The role and disposition of the narrator in Ishiguro's novel is not unlike McEwan's. Kathy, the last surviving of the three central clones, also works in a healthcare-related role and views the idea of the narrative self with scepticism. Despite this, Kathy's narration and her existing sense of self-identity are reliant upon an episodic memory which is, in turn, intrinsically reliant upon a narrative structure. Although she appears sceptical about ideas of a 'self' being constructed through narrative, her account reinforces that such a thing exists. What her scepticism does reveal, however, is the loss of hope that was previously associated with the clones' narrative selves, demonstrated through their aspirations and beliefs (e.g. in deferral) which she now sees as irrevocably lost. The narrative self, then, continues to exist at the end of the novel but is divorced from hope. Unlike Henry Perowne's, though, Kathy's scepticism is not grounded in a scientific reductionism; it stems from first-hand experience and revelation. The function of Hailsham boarding school, and particularly its arts-based curriculum, is to provide a more humane way of raising the clones before their organ donations begin, while challenging existing notions of what a 'human' is. Fundamentally, the novel explores the various narrativised means of expressing an inner quality that demonstrates the clones' humanity – including love, enterprise, creativity and ambition – but these efforts are not enough to overcome the biological difference between the clones and humans.

Jane Elliott (2013) also sees *Never Let Me Go* as a novel about individualism. Elliott argues that the novel tells the story of "the failure of individuation, but this story is simultaneously cast as

counter to reality, as an alternative version out of keeping with actual historical events" (p.95). The first sentiment expressed by Elliott appears true of the novel, but her suggestion that it is grounded in an alternative history which has no relation to actual events is questionable. Instead, I would argue that the novel maps onto the preceding decades in a subtle, but meaningful, way. The novel opens with confirmation that the present moment from which Kathy, now aged 31, is narrating is the late 1990s: more specifically, it is also late April. Using this as a starting point, the references to the passing of time in the novel indicate that this is April 1997. The opening and closing passages of the novel depict Kathy standing, looking out over an empty field; she reflects on the past and wonders about the future. The significance of doing so at the end of April 1997, given those political and ideological continuities to which Whitehead and Elliott refer, is its proximity to the election of New Labour on May 1st 1997. It is also significant for other reasons too: assuming that Kathy was born in 1966 (which she would have been, if she is 31 in 1997), it also implies that it is 1979 when the clones first begin to think about their art as a commodity with a market value – the same year that Thatcher first took office; it suggests that it is 1982 when the clones first begin to explore sexuality and desire, the same year in which Thatcher called for a return to Victorian values. Ishiguro does not offer specific dates, other than that the present is the late 1990s, but he does make various references to the passing of time, for example "almost a year to the day" (p.233) or the passing of a "couple of years" (p.76), with some occasional references to the specific month. By piecing these references to the passing of time together, it is logical to assume that Kathy is reflecting upon a period which directly maps onto the rise and development of Thatcherism, from the end of the so-called "postwar consensus" to the late 1990s. In this sense, Elliot's suggestion that the novel does not comment upon real historical events appears unlikely: rather, the novel deals with the political landscape of the decades preceding its publication through abstract and allegorical modes of storytelling. Nonetheless, at the heart of this story is the question of individualism and individual freedom.

In Parts I and II of the novel, Kathy reflects upon her childhood and teenage years at Hailsham, and subsequently the cottages where Hailsham alumni live. Although the clones are oblivious to it at the time, headmistress Miss Emily reveals in the final part of the novel that Hailsham was set up by a group of left-wing human rights activists who begin to lose power at the end of the 1970s and become powerless by the end of the 1980s. The activities which the clones engage in at Hailsham are largely a means of demonstrating and articulating a narrative of

individualism. The activities include everything from creating what Tommy summarises as "painting, poetry and all that stuff", which he believes "*revealed what you were like inside*" (p.173), to buying items from the Spring Exchange, and "personalising our desks" (p.38). Whitehead has suggested that the promotion of the humanities in the clones' adolescent years is "at best a deception or lie, and at worst, complicit with the system of political oppression to which the clones are subject" (p.57). As in *Saturday*, the humanities in *Never Let Me Go* feature as the binary opposite to the sciences, insomuch as they serve to provide an alternative to a harsher, uncontrollable scientific reality. In *Saturday*, this is Henry's view of literature and, in Ishiguro's novel, it is the guardians' view of art: the obvious difference is that Henry is expressly on the side of scientific reductionism whereas the guardians believe that art can express the clones' humanity. In this sense, then, the humanities act as a deception – akin to the noble lie of Plato's *Republic* – necessary to give the clones' lives meaning. The clones are encouraged to create works of art which are collected by Madame, a woman who visits Hailsham but appears reluctant to engage with its students. A rumour circulates the school that Madame presents the art works in a gallery. The reality, as they later discover, is that Madame collected the art to utilise it as evidence that the clones have a soul. This is one of multiple ways that they are encouraged to express a sense of individuality in an attempt to prove their worth in a society characterised by individualism. Besides that, the clones also partake in a school sale at which they buy various items used to express their sense of self. It is at one of these sales that Kathy buys a recording of the fictional song "Never Let Me Go", from which the novel takes its name. The possessions which the clones collect shape their identities long after their time at Hailsham. This is revealed most clearly when the adult Tommy demonstrates his affection for Kathy by seeking a replacement for the recording which, by this point, she has lost. The clones' outward expression of their innermost selves is equally bound up, in such instances, with their possessions as with their art.

Looking back, Kathy, now aware that the Hailsham experiment offered a false sense of hope about the future, begins to understand that while the clones had constructed narratives about themselves, they were never truly in control of their existence. She recalls Miss Lucy's revelation that "Your lives are set out for you" (p.80) as evidence of this: something which appeared meaningless to the students at the time. What Kathy does, as a result, is offer an account of Hailsham as an environment in which a narrative self was able to exist, but only within certain constraints (invisible to them at the time). For example, a heteronormative discourse permeates

Hailsham, and works to encourage the clones to self-regulate their individualism: this is evident when Kathy refers to the Thatcherite ideal of the nuclear family on numerous occasions as a 'normal' or 'ordinary' family; there is, similarly, an intolerance of "any kind of gay stuff" (p.94). When Kathy, Tommy and Ruth reach the cottages, they learn of a myth regarding how organ donations may be deferred if a couple can demonstrate that they are in love.[91] However, the main way that Kathy explores the relationship between individual freedom and the power system which controlled them is through memories of Ruth. Ruth is originally referred to, on multiple occasions, as being the naturally more dominant member of the group, often compared to a mother figure among the clones. In Part III of the novel, when Ruth and Tommy have become donors and Kathy works as a carer to Ruth, the power relations between them change: Kathy now embodies the dominant discourse of the medical profession and has evidently gained a sense of authority over Ruth and Tommy. The relationship between power, medicine and medical discourse also appears in *Saturday* and is demonstrated in Perowne's relationship with Baxter. Looking upon Baxter's body as he is about to operate on him, Henry states: "Once a patient is draped up, the sense of a personality, an individual in the theatre, disappears" (pp.247-48). Within the professional-patient relationship, the former can remove and re-work the identity of the latter. In *Never Let Me Go*, a similar transformation occurs when the relationship between the pair changes. Kathy had reflected that their long-held idea that they somehow resembled a 'normal' family was merely always part of a lie. Rather, she observes, the clones are divided into donors, who will soon die, and the carers who facilitate the donation process. Kathy notes how a black-and-white photograph of the care centre where Tommy resides shows that it has been converted from "a holiday camp for ordinary families" (p.214) into the medical facility that it has become. This process of conversion re-emphasises the divide that Kathy now sees between the clones' lives and ordinary lives: it is no longer intended for the ordinary families they once likened themselves to, but a sphere in which the carer-patient relationship is formalised. Kathy's altered discourse, in her role as a carer, reveals her changing perception of Ruth. Rather than the strong, mother-like figure she was in their childhood, she sees Ruth as weak. Despite Tommy and Ruth having previously been lovers, when Tommy embraces Ruth Kathy suggests that "it was clear, though, this was just to steady her" (p.220). Like Henry's changing perception of Baxter upon identifying his illness, what Kathy does

[91] The only conception of love expressed in the novel is strictly heterosexual.

in her role as carer is to consciously, and explicitly, embody the power system which has implicitly controlled them their whole lives, and to actively rework Ruth's identity through the lens of care.

Much like Baxter though, Ruth challenges the medical authority that Kathy embodies. She resists Kathy's new-found authority by questioning the epistemological basis of her claim that the care profession she works in is largely a force for good for donors. Ruth asks "How would you know? […] How could you possibly know? You're still a carer" (p.222). Yet while Ruth challenges the new power relations that exist between her and Kathy, she cannot return to the narrative self she developed at Hailsham. Upon finishing boarding school, Ruth had shown an ambition to work in an office. Her commitment to the narrative trajectory that would lead her to office work was such that she, and others, travelled to Norfolk to find her 'possible'.[92] When she is reminded of her past aspiration, she appears haunted by how reality, as she now understands it, contradicts what she once believed achievable. Returning from a day out, Kathy tells Ruth and Tommy that she has something to show them. She stops the car on the side of the motorway and draws their attention to a billboard. The advertisement depicts an office like the one they visited in Norfolk. Ruth becomes overwhelmed with sadness when confronted with the image of what she had once aspired to and how naïve she had been to believe she could be anything but an organ donor. Like Perowne's final observation about the fallacy of social justice, and his apparent (if unknowing) support of certain Thatcherite attitudes, Kathy challenges Ruth's sadness, asking, "Don't you sometimes wonder what might have happened if you'd tried?" (p.226). Combined with the memories that the billboard evokes, this reduces Ruth's voice to a "whisper" (p.225). Kathy's language reflects the Thatcherite rhetoric surrounding the self-reliant individual, responsible for their own fate. While Perowne's point is not contradicted by the events of *Saturday*, Ishiguro makes clear that Kathy's sentiment is facetious: all the clones' fate will be the same, despite their individual efforts. This is something that Ruth struggles to accept, even after accepting her own life is coming to an end. She continues to believe that there is a chance that Kathy and Tommy might escape the system and encourages them to seek deferral for their own organ donations. Ruth fails to understand that her disappointment will be that of all clones, and not exclusively her own: even in accepting her reality, she still maintains on some level that she is an individual and this suffering is hers alone. What she does, therefore, is to continue to uphold (from her perspective) the failed deferral narrative but

[92] The 'possibles' are the human beings who have been cloned. Ruth discovers that one of the older clones at the cottages may have seen her possible in Norfolk, working in an office.

removes herself from it. The persistence of the myth does not end with Ruth. When Kathy visits Ruth for the last time, Ruth's docile body lies in front of her, expressionless and voiceless, void of any identity beyond that of a body in the final stage of the role it was created to fulfil. Kathy interprets the way Ruth stares at her as a reaffirmation of her previous request that she and Tommy seek deferral, and ultimately suggests that she dies believing some clones might live a life of their choosing.

Kathy and Tommy, at Ruth's suggestion, track down former Hailsham headmistress, Miss Emily, and request a deferral, only to find out that this is a myth that had been circulating at Hailsham since its opening. Miss Emily then reveals that while she and others were aware of how students were responding to their engagement with the humanities – i.e. that it encouraged aspirational individualism – it was the most humane way to raise the clones, as opposed to the battery farming that had previously occurred. To allow the clones to develop a narrative self and express themselves through possessions and creativity was not just a noble lie, but an experiment intended to challenge societal perceptions of what 'human' means. There is, as with *Saturday*, an exploration of how individual identities are a fusion of the socially constructed and the biological, but as in *Saturday*, it is ultimately the biological which has more bearing on individual fate. In Whitehead's terms, the humanities are not presented as complicit with the political system at work in the novel – but a means by which it could be resisted and a way of caring.

The sentiment of this definition of care, to support a myth to offer quality of life, contrasts with the definition of Kathy's role as a carer, in which she facilitates the systematic killing of the clones. Kathy's final memories are then focused on the idea of what it means to care, and how Miss Emily's notion that ignorance is bliss may be true. Kathy initially remembers that, after Miss Emily's revelation, "more and more, Tommy tended to identify himself with the other donors" (p.271). Tommy had previously resisted adopting the identity of a donor – refusing the clothes provided by the care centre and refusing to integrate – but now he embraces this identity. Like Ruth in her final moments, Tommy also abandons his previously constructed sense of identity and accepts the homogenous, uniform existence: here the reality of the hospital (the institution with the greatest connotations of biology) undoes the work of Hailsham (the humanities' equivalent institution). In her 2014 lecture, "Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling", Judith Butler discusses a similar instance in which a man with overpowering delusions, at the request of his doctor, professes to be mad. This, for Butler, indicates the performative element of truth: not only is the act of avowal, of claiming to tell

the truth, a performance, but through avowal the subject enters into a social contract and submits, through self-constitution, to the terms set out by a system of power. In this sense, power "brings into being what it says" (2014, n.p.) in what can be understood to be a speech act. This is what Kathy observes of Tommy: he has reassessed his own identity having discovered that his past identity was grounded in a myth and subsequently reconstituted his sense of self through the terms set out by the institutional power under which he now knows he will spend the rest of his life. This leads Kathy to draw comparison between Ruth's and Tommy's final moments. She says to Tommy: "The way it is, it's like there's a line with us on one side and Ruth the other" (p.279). Kathy visualises knowledge – the discovery of truth contrasted with the belief in the noble lie – in this instance as a dividing line, sorting those who die believing the myth of Hailsham from those who do not.

This theorisation of knowledge as a dividing line returns at the close of the novel and, understood in this way, has meaningful implications for Jane Elliott's reading of the novel's ending. Elliott argues that, at this point, "the reader increasingly desires to redirect Kathy's gaze to the approaching threat she refuses to examine" (p.95), suggesting that she is unaware of her real place in the world. However, following Tommy's death, the novel returns to its present moment (in the late 1990s), the location from which Kathy has been narrating, and we learn that she has been, this entire time, standing at the edge of a road looking at a wire fence and the field behind it where she imagined everything from her childhood "had washed up" (p.282). Kathy has previously suggested that she would always have her memories, and that her memories constitute her being as an individual, but this final image challenges that.[93] Much in the same way that the imagined line divided Ruth and Kathy, Kathy's memories are now also divided from her (with the fence acting as a physical dividing line) and she is unable to return to what she describes as the Hailsham in her mind. Kathy, the 31-year-old adult, has been exposed to the reality from which she was protected by the myth of Hailsham. Now, with this new-found knowledge, she is separated from her own past, and from the memories (made comprehensible through narrative) that once constituted her identity. Contrary to Elliott's remark, Kathy's separation from her own identity – as she visualises it – exposes that she fully understands the threat she faces. But perhaps more significantly, the fact that Kathy even reflects upon her future with a sense of trepidation is indicative of this political

[93] The significance of memory as a means by which narratives are established and reinforced is common in *Saturday* and *Never Let Me Go*. In both, there is a failure of memory: McEwan's novel presents a crisis of memory which occurs when the capacity to form memories and to order memories chronologically is lost because of a degenerative illness. In Ishiguro's, the crisis is not medical but personal. Kathy's memories are accessible to her but the meaning of them is transformed by her discovery; they no longer represent any form of 'truth' about her present-moment sense of self.

climate – under which she will carry on in her role as a carer, complicitously going to wherever she is "supposed to be" (p.282) – continuing despite the impending change of government.

Fundamentally, what both novels seek to do, then, is to challenge the emphasis placed upon the aspirational individual within Thatcherite discourse. In particular, both novels draw attention to the extent to which freedom and individual choice are limited. The main way in which they achieve this is by emphasising the differences between socially constructed and genetically-determined notions of 'the individual'. Within the novels' exploration of these two expressions of individualism, there are two main common themes. The first is the contrasting of the humanities (associated with socially constructed identities) with the biological sciences (linked to genetically-determined identities). In both novels, aspiration and self-determination are undermined by the biological factors that influence individuals. *Saturday*'s Baxter and the clones of *Never Let Me Go* are, in different ways, seen to perform an identity of their choosing – but the circumstances of their births undermine any element of choice in deciding their future. Samantha Vice's identification of a narrative trajectory at the heart of the narrative self is especially important in reading these novels. It is these characters' lack of future in particular – and the futility of a rhetoric which promotes ambition and self-reliance – which most forcefully challenges the Thatcherite conceptualisation of individualism. The second theme is the introduction of medical tropes – and, particularly, the exploration of power and authority through the professional-patient relationship. Henry Perowne and Kathy H take on very different medical and health care roles: Henry is a neuroscientist while Kathy is a carer. Despite the many differences, though, this relationship – in both novels – serves as a vehicle through which a patient's identity is changed against their will. The authority attached to the medical professional in both cases affords them the ability to deny the patient's self-expression by drawing upon the genetically-determined aspects of their identity, over which they have a greater understanding. To this end, the novels propose that individual identities, fates and opportunities are not solely determined by individuals themselves – and they highlight the extent to which those in positions of authority can re-work and revise the narrativised identities that individuals have articulated.

Yet, despite the challenge the novels pose to Thatcherite individualism, they both demonstrate an ambivalence towards it, rather than an explicit rejection of it. Henry Perowne's celebration of Western capitalist liberal democracy, the end of the Cold War, medical developments in recent decades, his anti-communism, and his general sense that life has improved for most

people appears to accept some aspects of Thatcher's legacy (including her own orientation to capital). His observation that there is a direct link between consumerism and freedom is not unlike Thatcher's own view. Similarly, in *Never Let Me Go*, there is an indication that consumerism – promoted by Hailsham's exchanges where the clones are encouraged sell their art and buy other items – offers a means of self-expression which is as valuable as artistic expression. In addition, Kathy's criticism of Ruth's lack of achievement, ostensibly because she had not tried hard enough, mirrors the Thatcherite virtue of self-reliance. What is more, both novels' exploration of the narrative self also concludes that narratives – even if untrue – can provide necessary frameworks through which individuals can feel more fulfilled. This is articulated clearly in the contrasting of Baxter (who has no future) and Andrea Chapman (who does, precisely because she presents an aspirational narrative trajectory). Likewise, even despite knowing her own ambitions were not realised, Ruth dies with the solace of believing that Kathy and Tommy may yet have their own donations deferred. As a result, McEwan and Ishiguro challenge elements of the Thatcherite discourse surrounding individualism, but they also provide justification for why the idea – even if flawed – of the self-determined, aspirational individual in control of their fate can be fulfilling.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIETY

Introduction

The surprise parliamentary majority obtained by David Cameron and the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election appeared to confirm the widely-held assumption among pollsters and political scientists that the economy was at the top of the electorate's list of priorities. Cameron and his chancellor, George Osborne, had campaigned on the strength of their "long-term economic plan" and placed economic recovery, the increase in employment and cutting the budget deficit at the heart of their election message. Their plea to the country was to give them time to finish the job and not to risk the progress made since they entered office, in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, in 2010. This message was not unlike that used by Thatcher in 1983: as Sally Abernethy (2018) notes, Thatcher also asked the country to consider an unpopular policy platform the 'common sense' option and the right, though tough, approach. Despite the polls showing Labour and the Conservatives more or less tied, Cameron became the first Conservative Party leader to win a majority in the House of Commons since John Major's victory (which was also unpredicted) in 1992. The Conservative win meant that Cameron had to deliver upon a central manifesto commitment: a pledge to hold an in/out referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. Following months of negotiations which saw Cameron hold one-on-one meetings with each of the leaders of the other member states, the government officially advocated remaining a member of the EU. Several cabinet ministers – including the then Lord Chancellor, Michael Gove, and Cameron's Northern Ireland Secretary, Theresa Villiers – diverged from the government's official position and supported the Vote Leave campaign group. Cameron and Osborne were leading figures of Britain Stronger in Europe, the official Remain campaign, and deployed similar economic arguments that they had used in the General Election the previous year. Among the economic arguments, Cameron and Osborne predicted that the UK's exit from the EU would cost each household over £4,300 (Elliott, 2016, n.p.). Ultimately, however, their case was labelled "Project Fear" and it failed to deliver success at the ballot box. In the early hours of 24th June 2016, it was confirmed that the UK had voted to leave the EU and, consequently, David Cameron resigned. In the aftermath of the referendum, political scientists – including Matthew Goodwin and Robert Ford (2017), John Curtice (2017) and Pippa Norris (2018) – concluded that

Leave's success lay in its supporters' distinct sense of national identity and the importance they attached to Britishness.

One of the core messages in Curtice's analysis of British social attitudes in the wake of Brexit is that a commitment to nationalism proved more important to Leave supporters than the economic case put to them by the government. His multivariate analysis revealed that "only items associated with people's sense of national identity and cultural outlook were significantly associated with vote choice" (p.2). Particularly important to the referendum result was a feeling among voters "that their distinctive national identity and the culture that they associate with that identity are being undermined" by the UK's membership of the EU (Curtice, 2017, p.3). Pippa Norris (2018) identifies a divide between younger and older voters: the latter (who are more likely to be Leave supporters), she says, "endorse a broader range of socially conservative and authoritarian values associated with nationalism" (Norris, 2018, n.p.). Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin (2017) offer a more specific characterisation of Leave voters as a group for which "national identity is linked to ancestry and birthplace, not just institutions and civic attachments, and Britishness is far more important to them than it is to liberal graduates" (p.19). This body of work on cultural divisions has been complemented by popular accounts of Brexit's causes: these also attributed the referendum result to a cultural cleavage in which the ignored and the 'left behind' have rebelled against a ruling 'elite'. One such account – David Goodhart's best-seller *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (2017) – proposed that the left-right framework no longer sufficiently captures the divide in British politics. For Goodhart, the UK is now divided between 'Anywheres' – often middle-class, liberal metropolitan graduates who are comfortable with social change – and 'Somewheres'– those whose identities are rooted in a specific community (usually their hometown), who are uncomfortable with the nature and pace of social change and whose skillset and opportunities are limited. Like Norris, Curtice, and Ford and Goodwin, Goodhart also recognises that 'Somewheres' show greater commitment to national identity (2017, p.38). This recent paradigmatic shift in political science reveals the endurance of the brand of national identity that Thatcherism articulated: Stuart Hall's description of the Thatcherite notion of Britishness as exclusive and narrowly-defined (1997, p.26) is echoed in Ford and Goodwin's identification of an "exclusive and exclusionary sense of national identity" (2017, p.20) among Leave voters. Similarly, Norris uses Hall's description of Thatcherism – "authoritarian populism" (1979, p.15) – to describe

the 'mood' of Brexit Britain.[94] Though these recent accounts do not trace the cultural divisions back to the 1980s, the texts studied in this chapter portray British society as divided along similar lines and, in earlier cases, explicitly attribute them to Thatcherism.

The 2017 General Election provided further evidence in support of notions of a society left divided after the referendum. Although only two years since David Cameron's 2015 electoral triumph, the Conservatives – now led by Theresa May, whose own relationship to Thatcher is discussed in Chapter Four – would deliver another surprise result. This time, the widely-expected Conservative landslide did not materialise and the government lost its majority. This was despite May increasing the Conservatives' vote share by over 5% and the party receiving over 2 million more votes than it had under Cameron two years earlier. The 2017 election represented a return to two-party politics, with Labour and the Conservatives taking a combined 82.4% of the vote share. More remarkably, for the first time in modern history, the Conservative Party won the votes of more working-class voters than the Labour Party did (Curtis, 2017). John Gray (2017), writing in the *New Statesman*, argued that Jeremy Corbyn's Labour represented the politics of middle-class populism (a view shared by David Goodhart). The dramatic changing nature of the two parties' 2017 electorates (compared to their 2015 supporters) is symbolised by the fact that Labour won Canterbury for the first time in history and the Conservatives took Walsall North (held by Labour since 1979). Hilary Mantel's "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" (2014) reflects these recent suggestions that UK's main left-wing party now best caters for the middle-class intellectual much in the same way that Malcolm Bradbury's *Cuts* (1987) explored the failure of the intellectual left to articulate a satisfactory response to Thatcherism.

This chapter considers how the kind of social and cultural divisions with which Curtice, Norris and others have recently become concerned offer new ways of reading fictional narratives about Thatcherism. Multiple recent accounts of Thatcherism and contemporary British fiction (Marsh, 2007; Crosthwaite, Knight and Marsh, 2014; Horton, Tew and Wilson, 2014; Beaumont, 2015) have focused on the culture of economics and finance. These accounts have seen Thatcherism in predominantly economic terms and, while the readings of contemporary fiction are

[94] Though Hall and Norris do not define authoritarian populism in precisely the same way, the exactness of the phrase they use to capture the characteristics of a new cultural cleavage identifies parallels between the early 1980s and more recent years. In both cases, there is an identification of nationalist sentiment, socially conservative thinking and a cultural backlash against what Norris calls "progressive values" (2018, n.p.): in Thatcher's case, such a backlash against the 'permissive society' was critical in her diagnosis of the cause of British decline in the postwar period.

illuminating, much is missed by focusing on economics and finance alone. Here I consider how four fictional accounts have represented the changing nature of social class, educational differences and the breakdown of the left-right divide as a means of exploring social tensions and, in three out of four cases, how they sought to undermine Thatcher's rhetorical construction of Britishness by portraying a divided nation. In the first section of the chapter, I consider how Malcolm Bradbury's *Cuts* (1987) and J.G. Ballard's *Running Wild* (1988) expose underlying cultural divisions in their representation of Britain in the 1980s. Both novels depict Thatcherism as having created elite and exclusive conclaves cut off from the rest of society. In the second section, I turn my attention away from the novel to consider how other narrative forms – the film screenplay and the short story – have represented the 1980s to more recent audiences. In doing so, I explore the representation of social and cultural divisions through the prism of Martin Farr's (2017) work on the 'internationalising' of Thatcherism, a process whereby mainstream non-fiction accounts of Thatcher have divorced her from her own politics and presented her as a symbol of strength, leadership, determination and a saviour of her nation. Although the more recent texts do still identify the cultural divisions which the chapter examines, I demonstrate how there is clear evidence (compared to the earlier texts) of Thatcher being divorced from them and elevated, in Farr's terms, to an almost symbolic status.

Satire: *Cuts* (1987) and *Running Wild* (1988)

Many of the novelists whose work is discussed in this study were at an early stage of their literary career when Mrs Thatcher first came to office and, indeed, they are still writing now, long since the end of her premiership. This section looks before that generation and considers two deceased authors whose careers – both as fiction writers and in other professions – were already well underway by the 1980s. Malcolm Bradbury and J.G. Ballard were both born in the 1930s and had published their first novels around two decades before the 1979 General Election. Bradbury had combined his work as an author with the publication of literary criticism. As an academic, Bradbury established a Master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia: early and distinguished graduates of the course were Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro. Ballard's earlier life saw him abandon the study of medicine in favour of a degree in English Literature before joining the Royal Air Force. Ballard's childhood experience of being interned by the Japanese in

Shanghai, as Martin Amis wrote at the time of his death, led him to attach "very low value […] to human life" and, Amis suggests, the violence he witnessed at this time in his life is reflected throughout his literary work (2009, n.p.). The literary style and innovation of both Bradbury and Ballard were influential on many of those who make up Amis' generation but, like their protégés, their own writing was also influenced by Thatcherism. Despite this, though, Malcolm Bradbury's *Cuts* (1987) has received less attention from literary critics than any other novel discussed in this thesis (excluding those only very recently published); Ballard's *Running Wild* (1988) has also been much overlooked, though it has been the subject of more scholarly writing than *Cuts*. A possible explanation for this is that critics have tended to focus upon these authors' more well-known works, such as Bradbury's *The History Man* (1975) or *Rates of Exchange* (1983) and Ballard's *Crash* (1973) or *Empire of the Sun* (1984).[95] Nonetheless, it is important to consider how established literary figures of an older generation – that of Kingsley Amis rather than his son Martin Amis – also turned their attention to Thatcherism. In so doing, it is my intention to demonstrate that criticism of Thatcherite thinking was not simply the preoccupation of a new, emergent group of politically-inclined writers – but that it also captured the imagination of those older, established writers who had inspired that younger generation.

Like much of Bradbury's fiction, *Cuts* is, at least in part, a campus novel. John Campbell, in his biography of Margaret Thatcher, refers to Bradbury's writing about fictional universities to demonstrate how academics were perceived in the 1970s and then in the 1980s, following a dramatic "fall in status" which he says they experienced under Thatcher (2008, p.400). *Cuts* tells the story of this decline in social status as it happens, though his representation of academics is not necessarily a positive one. Throughout the novel there exists a dichotomy between snobbish, out-of-touch academics and crude, out-of-touch television executives.

Writing for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1987, the actress and television screenwriter Jean Marsh identified the importance of social divisions in *Cuts*. Marsh stated that *Cuts* is about "life in a country

[95] *Rates of Exchange*, published a year before Martin Amis' *Money*, is Bradbury's first analysis of Thatcher's Britain and the emergence of a culture seemingly obsessed with money. Similarly, *Doctor Criminale* (1992) reflects upon the influence of Thatcherism after Thatcher has left office. Patricia Waugh rightly notes that, in it, Bradbury "[signalled] the emergence of a 'new world order'" in the same way that Fukuyama's End of History thesis did (2010, p.120). However, I am more interested in discussing *Cuts* precisely because of the lack of critical attention it has received, despite being, in my view, more prescient than the others in looking beyond finance culture to document social and cultural division which remain relevant to political debates even now. I do not agree with Robert A. Morace's assertion that it should be dismissed as a "self-indulgent" and "redundant" "blot on the literary landscape" (1989, p.74): as I will demonstrate, it is hugely significant in examining Thatcherism in relation to the notion of educational divisions.

that can accommodate a gigantically expensive and gorgeous Royal Wedding with people sleeping in cardboard boxes in the subway" (1987, n.p.). Bradbury himself thought of Thatcher's Britain in terms of a divided nation made up of winners and losers. In 1988, he wrote an essay in *The New York Times* entitled "Mrs Thatcher's Children" which opened by stating that:

> For many – but not all – of the people who live in it, Mrs. Thatcher's Britain feels today like a rich and booming society. In the London stores, money flows freely. In the clubs and pubs, so does the lager and the champagne – even more so now that Britain's once strict licensing laws have been relaxed. True, down by the Embankment of the river Thames, beggars work the commuting crowds and homeless young people sleep under the bridges, huddled in cardboard packaging. But downriver a sparkling new skyline shines – the post-modern high-rise towers of the thriving City of London, the banking and business quarter. The famous Square Mile – England's Wall Street – is an area of glass fantasy these days, and every building has its tree-filled atrium and its crystal elevators. Spreading out over the poorlands of the East End and onto the old docklands, once the heart of British imperial sea trade, it is the core of a new empire, now based on invisible transactions, electronic impulses, video display unit screens, fax machines and, above everything else, the new enterprise spirit. (1988, n.p.)

On a surface level, Bradbury's criticism of Thatcher's Britain appears to be exclusively concerned with the divide between rich and poor. His final comments, though – about a new capitalist empire of financial transactions, technology and enterprise – reveal a deeper divide. More significant is that the areas of London which belong to this so-called "new empire" are culturally separated from other parts of the country – but culturally closer to other parts of the world which have undergone a similar transformation. The description of Square Mile as "England's Wall Street" shows how Bradbury sees globalisation as a creator of greater similarities between London and its equivalent in the USA than between the UK's capital and the rest of the country. Globalisation, in this sense, appears to challenge the idea of the nation having a singular, coherent identity: how can a nation continue to exist if new global sites, with their own shared culture, exist in stark contrast to the rest of the nations in which they are located? This is, as I will demonstrate, a question raised throughout *Cuts* and one which is utilised to portray Thatcher's Britain as a divided nation to challenge her claims to have restored the nation's greatness. That Bradbury sees the divisions in society as more

than economic is foundational to his definition of Thatcherism. For Bradbury, writing in the same essay, Thatcherism marked the end of the postwar period. This is a point that he repeated several years later in his 1993 study *The Modern British Novel*. He argued that the 1980s, in both Britain and abroad, was a decade in which "the intellectual map was reshaping" (1993, p.397). Focusing on the period between the end of the Second World War and the election of Margaret Thatcher, "Mrs Thatcher's Children" highlights the social divisions caused by social class in the 1950s and by age and generational differences in the 1960s. While, in his view, Thatcherism does not resolve these divisions (as is clear from his depiction of the rich and the homeless quoted in his *New York Times* essay) it does complicate them significantly. Bradbury proposes the notion of an emergent "New Class" (1988, n.p.) which is, in its character and definition, not unlike Joseph Brooker's idea of the 'moneyed and uncultured' Thatcherite subject. The New Class consists of lower-class people who are ambitious; women who are equally as powerful as men; the professional classes (and particularly working-class people rising through the ranks of professions to which they did not ordinarily belong, such as law); the New Class is at ease with globalisation; and its members are defined by their fondness for consumerism, branding and, above all else, money. Members of this New Class, Bradbury suggests, have transformed the hierarchies of society and secured their place within parts of it that others of a similar social status would not generally have reached. The New Class is, to borrow Bradbury's metaphor, "home and dry, in residence in the old British country houses" (1988, n.p.).

Bradbury identifies changes in the very nature of social class in his non-fiction, and reflects such changes in his fiction, but not all literary critics have detected this resonance between the two. In *Evading Class in Contemporary British Literature* (2009), Lawrence Driscoll has suggested that, from Thatcher to Blair, there was an ideological effort to "erase the category of class from public discourse"; what is more, he claims that British fiction writers have been complicit with this – and that "the pages of the contemporary British novel" have demonstrated "clear evasions and erasures of class" (pp.1-3). Driscoll's view is not that Thatcherism and New Labour eradicated the social barriers imposed by social class, but that working-class identity was consciously supressed and eradicated. My analysis of *Money* in the first chapter offers an alternative perspective which suggests that class – and the changing nature of class – are paramount to Amis' novel. Furthermore, Bradbury, in the late 1980s, and Brooker, writing more recently, both offered more nuanced and sophisticated ways of conceptualising the transformation of social class identities, as reflected in

fiction, under Thatcher. Driscoll, by contrast, appears to dismiss the claim that the nature of social class changed as working-class people entered professions from which they were previously excluded, to a great extent, and that they now earned wealth on an unprecedented scale. What Driscoll suggests specifically is that a stereotypically traditional working-class identity has disappeared from the pages of the contemporary British novel. That one might be culturally working class but not economically so, as Bradbury and Brooker argue, is lost on Driscoll. Instead, he argues that a singular expression of working-class identity has been consciously excluded from British fiction, on ideological grounds, and that writers are therefore somehow complicit with Thatcherism and Blairism. There is no acknowledgment that such identities were being transformed – and that British fiction was concerned with these transformations.[96] Driscoll's analysis certainly does not hold true when reading *Cuts*. The idea of a social system shaken up, of clashes between different cultures, and of unhealed divisions decades old (as Bradbury suggests in his 1988 essay), are all essential to understanding the novel.

Given Bradbury's own view of Thatcherism as divisive and the concerns expressed in his essay about those for whom it did not work, it is not surprising that Christian Gutleben concludes that *Cuts* is "a satire of a system which needs many sacrifices for the persistence of a few privileges" (2015, n.p.). Nonetheless, Gutleben's reading of *Cuts* and its representation of Thatcherism is more concerned with whether it can be considered a condition of England novel; in arguing in the affirmative, Gutleben is primarily concerned with how *Cuts* represents differences in wealth. Indeed, the other social divisions with which the novel is concerned are only referred to – in broad terms – as "all aspects of society" (2015, n.p.). This, as I will demonstrate, is ultimately dismissive of the social and cultural divisions which *Cuts* focuses upon – and which are more important in the grand scheme of the novel. A more sophisticated discussion of Bradbury's work in relation to Thatcherism is found in *Upward Mobility and the Common Good* (2007). Here, Bruce Robbins acknowledges that a range of British writers – from Pat Barker to David Lodge – recognised the widely held public perception that the welfare state and state intervention were not working. Far

[96] Driscoll's argument also contains a vague reference to "the postmodern neoliberal self" (2009, p.141), a term which is deployed without any attempt at definition or explanation. The phrase is used to describe Nick, the protagonist in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004), and it is the only occasion upon which it is used in Driscoll's entire monograph. While he does not state his definition of the term, its implicit meaning can be understood by what he claims it contrasts with: black, gay and working-class people. This implication, however, is complicated by the fact that Nick (who is described as the postmodern neoliberal self) is gay. 'Neoliberal' is used here (not uniquely, given the other examples highlighted in Chapter One) in a way which is intended to represent a politics with which the author personally disagrees – but ultimately the term is meaningless in this context.

from offering crude remarks about how Thatcherism represented an assault on the welfare state and interventionist economic policies, Robbins highlights – in a way not dissimilar to how, more recently, Robinson et al. (2017) have highlighted changing social undercurrents in relation to popular individualism – how authors identified and interrogated social changes and concerns to which Thatcherism (and Thatcherite discourse in particular) seemed to speak. Malcolm Bradbury is among the authors that Robbins includes in his list of writers whose work achieves this. Robbins rightly states that Bradbury's fiction was not simply about the aesthetics of Thatcherism or a new obsession with money and finance, but about the underlying cultural divisions which it exposed – and it is those divisions that are analysed here.

Cuts tells the story of writer and academic Henry Babbacombe's move from academia to the seemingly more Thatcherite world (as indicated, in the eyes of the novel's academics, by its association with profitmaking) of television production. Babbacombe lives a secluded life and is largely unsuited to his new employer, Eldorado TV, which produces low-budget television series for mass audiences. Henry's work, like that of all academics in the novel, is intended for niche audiences and his career change introduces him to a world which exists in stark contrast to the exclusive and elitist academic institution to which he has formerly belonged. Throughout, the contrast between Henry's intellectualism and fondness for high culture and the television studio employees' apparent crudeness (which is repeatedly contrasted with their wealth) emphasises that both groups are equally – though in different respects – out of touch with everyday life. Henry is recruited to write the script for the series *Serious Damage*, one intended to rival recent productions of *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Jewel in the Crown*.

Throughout *Cuts*, Bradbury maintains the novel's satirical approach with an ongoing play on the word 'cuts', examining various types of cuts and the ways (literal and metaphorical) that cutting can occur. For example, the narrator states that the "Tory lead had been cut in the polls. This was likely to lead to cuts in taxes and rates" (p.96). The most obvious 'cuts' taking place in the novel – and the ones from which the novel takes its name – are economic cuts in the form of government spending reductions. However, from an early point in the novel, Bradbury links the economic aspect of Thatcherism to its broader cultural impact (though often the economic and the cultural exist in contradiction to one another). The narrator states that "There were some people who said they were cutting the country in two – The North from the South, the rich from the poor" (p.4). This North/South divide is a recurring theme within the novel, but Bradbury also

links parts of the South (London in particular) to the "new empire" of globalised spaces that he also defines in the essay "Mrs Thatcher's Children". What Bradbury does, therefore, is to undermine Thatcher's rhetorical framing of Britain as a united collective striving to reinstate lost national values and 'greatness', offering instead a Britain in which discrete sections are culturally cut off from one another. Britain, in the novel, is described as having experienced a summer of discontent: "It was a rather abrasive summer all round, for the North didn't like the South, or the South the North, the poor didn't like the rich, or the rich the poor, and life seemed harsher but cleaner, harder but firmer" (pp.7-8). The North/South divide is framed as something about which Britons are fully aware: the wealth gap informs regional identities which, in turn, are defined by their opposition to – and dislike of – one another. On 8th July 1987, a press digest for Margaret Thatcher (made available in the Thatcher Foundation archive in 2017) briefed the then Prime Minister on the nature of the North/South divide. The note said that *The Times* had reported the average weekly household income in the South was £50 higher than in the North in 1984 and 1985. Unemployment in the North was "partly explained", the memo said, by "failure of small businesses to develop there" (Anonymous, 1987, n.p.). However, what Bradbury represents is a far starker cultural division and a much greater divide between the rich and the poor than Thatcher government acknowledged. By contrasting the North with the South (and with elitist areas of London specifically), Bradbury explores the idea that the capital belongs to a globalised network of cities benefiting from the "new enterprise spirit", as he describes it, of "invisible transactions" and "electronic impulses" (1988, n.p.). These cities are linked to one another by, among other things, their exclusivity to the wealthy and well-connected; he suggests that, in this lack of inclusivity, such global locations are increasingly cut off from the broader culture and people of the country in which they are physically located. As Bradbury puts it, under the emerging new world economic order, "the world seemed to be changing fast" (p.8). The separation of London from the rest of the United Kingdom is made most explicit when the Eldorado production company is forced to relocate to the North. The process sees "the 600 or so talented people who worked in the Eldorado glass tower" moved from the South: "all said they enjoyed it, however much it may have been that they preferred to be in London, or better Hollywood, where in their business most of the real and exciting inaction was to be found" (p.10). In contrast to this new global empire, Liverpool is chosen as a location for a film shoot for the purposes of "grim actuality" (p.27), while a script about "unemployment in Newcastle" is turned down because it is too "depressing" (p.29). The North in general, Henry concludes, is a "vaster place than sometimes

thought by people in the South […] and the pieces of it do not connect together with any ease at all" (p.42). While the Thatcher government may have diagnosed that average incomes in the North were lower than in the South because of a failure of enterprise to establish itself in the former, Bradbury suggests that Thatcherite enterprise culture is the cause of increasingly fragmented regional and local identities across the UK.

Indeed, Bradbury presents Thatcher's Britain as one in which money and finance culture have taken centre stage, stating that the "people who used to talk art now talked only money, and they murmured of the texture of Telecom, the lure of Britoil, the glamour of gas" (p.5). The notion here of those once interested in art becoming preoccupied with money establishes a key theme to which Bradbury constantly returns: that of crudeness, of putting profit before art. The production of *Serious Damage* is so focused on profitmaking that the essence of the entire film is changed so that its principal location can be moved from an English countryside to Switzerland simply to avoid tax. In a society characterised – in Bradbury's terms – by the new Thatcherite money culture, we see key aspects of English heritage which feature in the screenplay (which is intended to reflect those films produced at the time by Merchant Ivory) eroded by an obsession with profit. Production decisions are driven by profit and tax avoidance to such an extent that, by the end, Henry's original screenplay in no way reflects what is filmed. There are parallels with Amis' *Money* and the film produced by John Self eventually entitled *Bad Money* (having originally been named *Good Money*). Amis' novel similarly links more exclusive parts of London with New York and the focus on profit rather than art is also foregrounded.

Reflecting upon the commercial success of heritage film and television genres, Sir Luke Trimmington (an actor whose name is also a play on the verb 'to trim', a synonym for cut) says "We had the entire world wanting to revisit Brideshead". The novel also claims that "everyone's into nostalgia now" (p.28), an observation that not only gestures towards the successful heritage film genre of the period, but also reflects upon the nature of Thatcher's national narrative. John J. Su has written, in *Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel* (2005), that Margaret Thatcher "invoked a moral framework of 'Victorian values'" which was used "to justify a host of economic, social and military policies" (p.129). In stating this, Su sees Thatcherism in a similar way to what is proposed here: a framework to bring together multiple strands of (often contradictory) policies and ideas, though his thinking on this is less detailed and developed as a definition of Thatcherism. His suggestion is that there is a "nostalgic essentialism" at the heart of Thatcherism which is "designed

to draw electoral support" (2005, p.129).[97] This is something which Bradbury recognises: in the novel, he describes the period as one of "flowing nostalgia" (p.111). The role of nostalgia in the novel, though, is not just a recognition of one aspect of Thatcher's rhetoric but is also a means by which Bradbury contrasts Thatcherism's myth-making (regarding the nation's heritage) with other fundamentally Thatcherite principles. The nostalgic elements of the screenplay for *Serious Damage* – in which Henry has consciously included quintessentially English tropes to appeal to the new market for heritage film and television – are abandoned in pursuit of another Thatcherite ideal: low taxation. The script originally features "an English country house" setting which is replaced with "a continental location" so that the production team can avoid paying "British tax" (p.147). Bradbury's suggestion here is that the Thatcherite notion of national renewal and a return to greatness represents an ideological contradiction in relation to the world of global financial transactions that Thatcherism had helped create: the new global empire, as Bradbury describes it, undermines Thatcher's rhetorical framing of the nation state returning to past greatness. The consequence of this apparent tension between Thatcherism's economic and its national messages is, Bradbury suggests, that rather than restoring Britain's former glory as Thatcher promised, she has presided over the nation becoming increasingly divided. This is most evident in his juxtaposed representation of its increasingly globalised capital and its depressing, grim North. Furthermore, the observation that "terror was coming out of the always fundamentalist Middle East to threaten the newly fundamentalist West" (p.110), as well as suggesting that it is ideologically extreme, proposes that the impact of Thatcherism is part of a transnational phenomenon (rather than one rooted in a specific British national heritage as she claimed).

The nature of nostalgia and how the filmmakers deploy it in their productions is also used as a means of commenting on the character of Thatcherism, its proponents and the culture it has created. Their "collaborative effort" is described by Bradbury as "lacking in moral truth" and

[97] Where I disagree with Su, though, is in his vaguely evidenced assertion that the nostalgic element of Thatcher's discourse was "imperialist" and represented "subliminal racism" designed to appeal to "white England" (2005, p.131). The Falklands War is cited as evidence of this. Su is one of many cultural theorists, including Paul Gilroy (1987), who have argued that Thatcherism is thoroughly and unproblematically racist – but, for the reasons that follow, this appears more an attempt to dismiss or oppose Thatcherism outright than to explain it. First, analysis by Joe Twyman for YouGov shows that it was "the way the Thatcher governments successfully managed to boost the personal economic expectations of the British electorate" (2013, n.p.), rather than the Falklands War, that led to the Conservatives' 1983 and 1987 General Election victories. In addition, as Matthew Francis (2017) points out, Thatcher (before becoming Prime Minister) had seen private polling which showed growing discontent with immigration among voters: her language was, at times, an attempt to speak to these concerns but did not, as she stated, reflect her personal views (p.274). Francis adds that, under Thatcher, "the party no longer understood black and Asian Britons as 'immigrants', but as indigenous minorities" (2017, p. 287).

"human seriousness" as well as being "vulgar" (p.125). The notion of vulgarity and vulgar behaviour, a trope common in multiple novels analysed in this study, is prominent in *Cuts*. In his 2012 essay entitled "Sado-monetarism", itself a term borrowed from Bradbury, Joseph Brooker talks of the crude and vulgar behaviour of the Thatcherite subject. This concept is fully explored in Chapter Two in relation to my discussion of *Money*. As in Amis' novel, there is also a sense in *Cuts* that this new emergent culture is, in part, to be understood by its fetishisation of money on an almost sexual level. Bradbury states: "sex was lethal, smoking abhorrent, drinking dangerous, food destructive, and indeed the only pleasure left to make life worth living, if it was at all, was money, poor little paper money" (p.110). Like *Money*, Bradbury's novel presents restaurants as a key public space in which the economically middle-class and the culturally lower-class contradictory character of the Thatcherite subject (as Brooker puts it) is most prominently displayed. Yet, while Amis' *Money* highlights a transnational vulgarity which is present in both the British and American social venues visited by John Self, *Cuts* suggests that the vulgarity associated with Thatcherism is specific to the UK. The restaurant in the UK is a space in which socially disruptive behaviour is displayed and wealth is associated with crudeness (p.99). By contrast, though, a similar restaurant visit in Switzerland is presented as classy and elitist: this is a space in which the economic and cultural status of the guests are aligned, unlike in the UK where – as Brooker suggests – money has been acquired "without needing to go through the class rituals of an older elite" (2012, p.145). This identification of Thatcherism as vulgar is itself, however, subject to satirical treatment by Bradbury. Brooker, as discussed in Chapter Two, highlights that authors who identify Thatcherism as vulgar risk accusations of snobbery. Bradbury manages to deflect such accusations by being equally satirical in his treatment of those who hold such views: in this case, out-of-touch academics. Indeed, the university campus is, in the novel, used to highlight broader social and cultural divisions. The institution at which Henry was initially employed has been transformed by a clash between the snobbery of its academics and the ostensible crudeness of its Thatcherite Vice Chancellor. The latter, knighted by Margaret Thatcher, considers himself "privy to the inmost working of her mind" (p.58) and runs the university according to his interpretation of her policy platform. This attempt to forge a Thatcherite university includes the pursuit of privatisation which involved "sponsored tutorials" in which "lecturers now discussed the poems of Catullus or mathematical equations wearing tee-shirts and little caps that said on them 'Boots' or 'Babycham'." (p.58). The pursuit of Thatcherism within the institution also sees the establishment of the "Durex Chair of French Letters" and an effort "to disestablish ancient departments like Classics and English altogether, and

replace them by more modern ones, such as a Department of Snooker Studies" (pp.58-59). Central to this process of establishing a Thatcherite university is globalisation: Henry observes a "man removing from the great building in front of him the sign that said 'Library', replacing it with another that said 'Center for Overseas Students'." (p.60). What Bradbury gestures towards here, in his mocking vision of what a Thatcherite university might look like, is an educational division that Brooker does not discuss in relation to his concept of the Thatcherite subject. Nonetheless, it is significant in that, aside from encouraging crudeness, Thatcherism is also seen (by Bradbury, at least) to promote an anti-intellectualism in its assumed support for Snooker Studies over the study of English or Classics.

Throughout the novel, this educational division separates Henry's old academic colleagues from his new co-workers in the world of television production: the two groups are equally divided from the rest of society due to their respective intellectual and financial elitism. While Bradbury presents the world of television production as economically elite, academics are presented as belonging to a self-consciously intellectual elite which they work hard to ensure is exclusive in nature. Upon learning of Henry's new career, for example, Professor Finniston admits only to having "a vague idea" of what a television company is (p.63). Finniston, who fires Henry, also mockingly refers to him losing his job as becoming "a great model of Thatcherite enterprise" (p.69). The act of working in the private sector and an involvement with mass audiences are both deemed vulgar by Finniston who states that "unlike our present Vice-Chancellor, I would never dream of hiring out my mind for vulgar profit"' (p.64). He derides the establishment of new universities and the expansion of higher education as "vulgar" (p.65) and looks down on the concept of mass communication or engaging with the public. He favours, instead, an exclusive academic culture with colleagues "naturally preferring to transfer their thoughts by word of mouth to the two or three people who are fit to understand them" (p.65). The potential for accusations of snobbery identified by Brooker in "Sado-monetarism" are explicitly embodied in Bradbury's representation of academics. The cultural divisions which exist in 1980s Britain are not simply caused by Thatcherism, but also by those who actively distance themselves from what they perceive to be the crude culture of a lower class beginning to enter professions from which it was previously excluded. Indeed, Finniston acknowledges this explicitly when stating to Henry: '"Clearly we live in two different worlds, Babbacombe. Though I suppose these days most people do"' (p.67).

Henry's own academic background provides a stark juxtaposition with the producers of *Serious Damage* and he is constantly at odds with the culture of the New Class, as Bradbury describes it. This is made apparent early in the novel when, despite his new role, he admits that he "preferred his own writing to sitting there watching the writing other people had written, he had never bothered to acquire a television box" (p.41). Throughout the novel, Henry is oblivious to the fact that the production team tolerates his comments on contemporary philosophers and theorists, for example, as academic eccentricities rather than understanding or being impressed by them. He mistakenly says of Cynthia Hyde-Lemon that "he was with his own kind of people at last" (p.50). However, Hyde-Lemon later betrays that she is not among Henry's "own kind of people" when she mistakenly interprets his reference to the later works of Harold Pinter ("late Pinter") as a reference to an individual named Late Pinter (p.50). There is, in this moment, a suggestion that Henry (and the world of academia) and Hyde-Lemon (and the less intellectual, profit-motivated type she represents) are not just culturally divided from one another, but that they also belong to secluded groups, cut off from the rest of society. Lord Mellow later reinforces this divide when he states "'I considered becoming Master of a Cambridge college myself. Until I realized no man in his right mind could possibly afford it'" (p.53). Later in the novel, Henry visits another university campus and automatically feels more at home in the confines of this unfamiliar institution than within the building of the production company for which he now works. It is when Henry is in this university environment – despite it not being one he is familiar with – that the narrator observes that this "was the world in which he truly knew he belonged, and the world from which, because of the cuts, he had now been excluded" (p.86). In stating this, however, Bradbury draws parallels between the distant and exclusive globalised world to which London now belongs (whereby it is, in some ways, more like Wall Street than the rest of the UK). University campuses are, similarly, spaces which are connected to one another in their elitism while disconnected from the rest of the society to which they belong: universities, in the novel, are alike in their "indifference to sad and foolish reality" (p.86). Henry's easy transition from one to another suggests that it is easy for academics to enter other (though differently) elite worlds. While *Cuts* is critical of the world inhabited by this new, emerging global elite – to which it suggests Mark Thatcher belongs (p.140) – it does not offer a sympathetic portrayal of academics at a time when the higher education sector faced significant financial budget cuts. Rather, Bradbury's ironic representation of academia suggests that it has entrenched qualities which makes it more like these newly-emerging exclusive worlds than not. Bradbury is explicitly critical, in his fiction and his non-fiction, of what he

perceives to be the more detrimental consequences of Thatcherism: in this novel, its disruption of a well-established elitism on university campuses is not one of them.

Bradbury's exploration of an educational divide is an important one – and one which other authors of the 1980s do not explore in as great a depth as they do other social and economic inequalities.[98] The idea of educational inequality and those 'left behind' due to a limited skills set was a major factor in the UK's decision to leave the EU and the subsequent analysis of this watershed electoral event, discussed in the introductory section of this chapter. Following the vote to exit the European Union, research by Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath (2016) suggested that educational inequality was the biggest driver behind the support for leaving. Income inequality did feature as a factor, evidenced by the fact that support for Leave was 10 points higher among those with incomes under £20,000 than it was among those with incomes over £60,000. The difference in educational inequality was, however, much more telling: support for Leave was 30 points higher among those whose highest academic qualification was a GCSE than it was among those who had studied for an undergraduate degree. Goodwin and Heath conclude that Brexit supporters' "lack of qualifications put them at a significant disadvantage in the modern economy, they are also being further marginalised in society by the lack of opportunities that faced in their low-skilled communities" (2016, n.p.). Those who leave school at 16, they suggest, were also more likely to hold nationalist views. However, what Bradbury demonstrates in *Cuts* is that this factor existed as a significant division in contemporary British society long before the publication of more recent work like Goodwin's and Heath's.[99] Thatcherism is not necessarily the cause of this educational divide: rather, it exposes and disrupts exclusive social networks already in existence, such as those in academia, by creating the social conditions for the emergence of Bradbury's 'New Class'. What Bradbury reflects in the novel is that educational inequalities are more apparent in a society in which the moneyed and uncultured have entered the world of more established elites,

[98] I am not implying that educational disparities are not at least implicit in other works of this period. Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library,* Amis' *Money* and Coe's *What a Carve Up!* – to name three examples discussed elsewhere in this thesis – do feature examples of characters whose education (or lack of) represents some form of social barrier or division. What makes Bradbury stand apart from the authors of these other texts is that he links educational inequality directly to his own articulation of what a 'Thatcherite subject', to use Brooker's term, is.

[99] That is not to say that political scientists were not already conscious of the importance of educational divides: here I am simply noting that there has been a recent turn towards considering this kind of social division as more important than economic divisions. There is, however, also recent work in political science which maintains that economic division remains the most decisive factor in terms of voting intentions. Sara B. Hobolt's (2018) study of the 2017 General Election, for example, finds that "classic left–right economic attitudes are still the primary driver of vote choice in Britain […] Cultural attitudes also matter, but less than economic ones." (pp.7-8).

thereby attempting to capture the complexity of Thatcherism and its electoral appeal rather than dismissing it entirely.

The final element of Bradbury's novel relevant to understanding its exploration of Thatcherism is the constant tension, running throughout, between reality and storytelling. What makes *Cuts* most significant, in the context of this study, is that Bradbury frames this society, one dominated by Thatcherism, as one in which narrativisation plays a crucial part. At the end of the novel, reality and storytelling become so intertwined that the final scene of the *Serious Damage* script becomes reality: the character is intended to die in the television production but, while filming the death scene, the actress dies. The novel is naturally concerned with storytelling in that its main protagonist writes and studies fiction and the Eldorado production company, by which he is later employed, makes television programmes intended to appeal to mass audiences. Yet, the novel's commentary on the nature of reality and how storytelling influences people's perception of what is real should also be read as part of a broader series of observations about Thatcher's own rhetorical account of historical events that have culminated in the current political moment. Thatcher's Britain is, in the novel, "a funny sort of world" and "engrossing" if one can see it without "getting too involved in reality" which does "not exist anyway" (p.45). The "old soft illusions" of the past are replaced "with the new hard illusions" of the present (p.5) and "boring old facts" are translated into "visual symbolic images" (p.18). This is a Britain in which much is communicated through symbolism, imagery and mythmaking rather than straightforwardly factual accounts. The production of *Serious Damage* is cut in a way that excludes language and dialogue and instead features a montage sequence, a series of back-to-back images intended to symbolise meaning rather than communicate it directly. The constant focus on images and symbols throughout the novel, as a critical element of how ideas are communicated to mass audiences, speaks to the same understanding of Thatcherism as that posited by Stuart Hall. In his 2004 study of Hall's work, James Procter states that "In contrast to conventional accounts of the Thatcher governments, which concentrate on economic policies, Hall argues it is at the level of images that the Conservative Party secured victory through the 1980s. Imagery as opposed to policy is what he feels best characterises 'Thatcherism' and its political success." (p.98). Hall, like Bradbury, similarly recognises that this seemingly new political phenomenon warrants a new response from the intellectual left: one to which Hall makes significant contributions, as Procter notes (2004, p.98). Procter adds that, if Hall is correct in thinking that "part of Thatcherism's success resided in its

ability to make us think politics in images", then it follows that the Falklands War "undoubtedly represented the pinnacle of its symbolic achievements" (2004, p.99). This, in Hall's terms, was a moment in which "moral principles were articulated through a series of images in which the British past became subject to […] 'a highly selective form of historical reconstruction'" (2004, pp.99-100). There is much merit in this argument and, indeed, common ground with what has been suggested here concerning Thatcher's construction of a historical narrative account of the twentieth century to justify 'Thatcherism'. *Cuts* reflects a society in which symbols and images have come to dominate society: complicated realities are boiled down to simple images – British history, for example, has been reduced to the conventional iconography and generic tropes of the increasingly popular English heritage film and television genre. Such narrative conventions and cliched tropes within film and television exist, Henry is told, "because people need them and love them and understand them. They don't want surprises. They don't want unfamiliar stories." (p.106). Furthermore, Lord Mellow adds that the creation of narratives is "a collaborative effort, and nothing was really written, but rewritten" (p.114). This notion of a collaborative effort to rewrite an established historical account and reducing it to a simple narrative with familiar themes and tropes serves not simply as a description of the film industry but, more broadly, of how 'Thatcherism' was articulated by its proponents as a return to a form of 'true' Britishness.

Overall, then, Bradbury's novel presents a Britain which – contrary to the rhetoric of Mrs Thatcher and her government – is not returning to a state of former glory so much as increasingly becoming part of a globalised world. This is, however, not true of the UK as a whole: Bradbury suggests that Thatcher is presiding over a nation that is also becoming increasingly separated and fragmented. This is most obvious in, and best accentuated by, the cultural divisions – rather than the economic divisions – that *Cuts* presents. The decision to represent academics as equally out of touch, consciously isolated and intellectually elitist, appears to be critical of the intellectual left's response to Thatcherism, on the precise grounds that Brooker identifies: to look down on the culture that Thatcherism has created – that of the 'New Class', in Bradbury's words – appears to be snobbery. Thatcherism has ostensibly eliminated class barriers (at least for some), but the left's only retort appears to be an attempt to reinforce those barriers by other means in institutions such as the university. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator observes that:

> The days went by, the summer of 1986 became the wet, windy autumn, the 1980s moved a bit closer towards becoming the 1990s, the twentieth century shuddered

> on the edge of becoming the twenty-first, the second Christian millennium moved with an appropriate sense of apocalypse towards its last and final days, and the first day of principal photography grew ever nearer on the series that was to be shot in the autumn and shown in the spring. (p.109)

There is, in this statement, a sense that Thatcherism's influence would shape British society and culture long after the end of the 1980s and, indeed, after the end of the twentieth century. Bradbury's prediction was correct – as demonstrated by studies such as Stephen Farrall's research into the long-term impact of Thatcherism on public policy and social attitudes.[100] Yet, as I stated in the Introduction, literary history has tended towards viewing the fiction of the period as exactly that: contained neatly within the 1980s, with some minor thematic overspill into the 1990s.[101] Bradbury's *Cuts* resists this categorisation as 'fiction of the 1980s', confidently offering a prescient view of a Britain which will long be shaped by the changes with which the novel is concerned.

J.G. Ballard's *Running Wild* has much in common with Bradbury's *Cuts*. It is a satire about those who are so divorced from reality that they cannot see what is intended to be explicitly obvious to any reader. It is Ballard's thirteenth novel and his sixth since 1975, the year in which Mrs Thatcher became Leader of the Conservative Party. Martin Amis has suggested a division of Ballard's body of work into distinct periods. The last period, from 1982 until his death, is said to be concerned with 'Myths of the Near Future' (also the title of a short story collection which Ballard published in 1982). These novels are, Amis states, "about the violent atavism of corporate and ultra-priviledged [*sic*] enclaves in a different kind of near future" (2009, n.p.). At the heart of *Running Wild* is the idea – also present in *Cuts* – of a privileged class, cut off from the rest of society. Graham Matthews, in a way not dissimilar to Amis, attempts to divide Ballard's work into distinct periods and offers the category 'Ballard's Late Fiction' to denote the final period in his oeuvre. The qualities

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[100] See for example Farrall's 2014 essay collection (co-edited with Colin Hay) entitled *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies* or his 2017 article (co-authored with Hay, Will Jennings, Maria Teresa Grasso and Emily Gray) "Thatcher's Children, Blair's Babies, Political Socialization and Trickle-down Value Change: An Age, Period and Cohort Analysis".

[101] Graham Matthews (2017) makes the point that numerous edited collections, survey textbooks and undergraduate modules reinforce this reductive way of thinking about literary history (p.842-843). Ironically, while his article identifies one problem in literary studies it then reinforces another. Matthews offers the following crass and simplistic observation of the 1980s which is free of nuance (the likes of which are common in literary studies and which my own study attempts to correct): "The 1980s were dominated by Margaret Thatcher, whose dominance of the political scene heralded a sea change away from the post-war period of consensus with its full employment, prosperity, and welfare state, to represent moneyed interests, pose new questions concerning national identity, promote a credo of self-assertion, and campaign against working-class mobilization and the trade unions" (p.846).

of this category include "an ongoing concern with violence and community" and a preoccupation with the "formation of communities at the turn of the twenty-first century" (2013, p.123). The novels gathered under the heading 'Late Fiction' in Matthews' article, include *Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003) and *Kingdom Come* (2006). The epigraph in the article – "Violence is the True Poetry of Governments" (2013, p.122) – is taken from the final novel in the list and highlights the political nature of this category. These novels, he says, constitute "variants on the detective novel in which the protagonist investigates quotidian communities where the veneer of normalcy is supported by an undercurrent of criminality, violence and madness" (2013, p.123). Given this description, I would argue that *Running Wild* should also be included in this: the novel is a parody of the detective genre, an exploration of a suburban community, and the entire narrative is an exploration of multiple acts of violence. His additional statement that Ballard adopts an approach, in his late fiction, in which he "depicts a believable microcosm of everyday life" to explore "the influence of the environment on the individual" (2013, p.124) only reinforces the case for including *Running Wild* in this category, given the closeness of that description to the nature of the novel. What is more though, *Running Wild's* absence from the 'Late Fiction' category also appears to overlook a substantial turn in Ballard's career: his explicit engagement with Thatcherism.[102] Including *Running Wild* in this category provides a more coherent way of categorising Ballard's work, as well as a lens through which the rest of his 'late' work can be read: that is to say, *Running Wild* represents a critical juncture, in its turn to Thatcherism, which provides the context for subsequent novels. This would necessarily mean including *Rushing to Paradise* (1994) in the 'late' collective, but there is logic to doing so: John Baxter (2011) notes that the parallels between Dr Barbara (the novel's lead character, an environmentalist who sets out to create an island dominated by women) and Thatcher were overlooked at the time of the book's publication (p.303). *Miracles of Life* (2008) – his only other major work published post-1988 – would not need to be included in this collective because, according to Matthews, it belongs in a separate category (along with *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991)) which he refers to as the 'life

[102] I say "explicit" here because it has been suggested that his earlier work was engaged with Thatcherism. One such suggestion is made by the 2015 film adaptation of the 1975 novel *High-Rise*. The film ends with a radio broadcast in which Margaret Thatcher comments on the nature of state capitalism and political freedom: this is a genuine recording of Thatcher speaking. The audio was, however, taken from a speech which she gave in 1976, a year after Ballard published the novel. The relationship between *High-Rise* and Thatcherism has, in that sense, been retrospectively constructed. The date of the novel's publication also means that Ballard would have begun writing it before Thatcher's ascent to the party leadership. Kim Duff (2014) offers a more convincing reading of *High-Rise* as a critique of the failed social utopian political vision of mass urban housing conceived in the 1960s (p.11).

trilogy', in which Ballard experiments with the distinction between fiction and autobiography (2013, p.123).

By reading *Running Wild* in the same vein that Matthews reads the other 'late' texts, I wish to achieve two main objectives. First, to demonstrate that Thatcherism – as a social and cultural phenomenon to which British fiction writers responded – disrupts attempts to place authors into clear 'generational' categories. Like Bradbury, Ballard did not belong to the same generation as Martin Amis and Ian McEwan, for example, but all four begin to write fiction about Thatcherism around the same time. Second, to offer a means of thinking about the novel as a framework for reading the rest of Ballard's 'late' fiction as a response to Thatcherism. I will not offer a reading of each of Ballard's 'late' novels in doing so. Instead, I will demonstrate how the themes and characteristics identified by Matthews as common in Ballard's 'late' works have their roots in his first substantial exploration of Thatcherism, thereby setting the tone for what followed.

Ballard's early admiration for Margaret Thatcher is well documented. In an interview with Andrew Asch, Ballard described Thatcher's "sexual hold" on the UK, stating that she was "very popular for her time in office" and admitted to having "sexual fantasies about her" (1995, n.p.). James Campbell, in an article for the *Guardian* based on an interview with Ballard, noted that many of his left-wing counterculture admirers of the 1980s were shocked by him "expressing respect for Margaret Thatcher, and supporting her attempts to "Americanise" British life" (2008, n.p.). In the context of documenting his support for Thatcher, Roz Kaveney wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement* that "Ballard's version of the avant-garde and Surrealism did not include the left-wing politics of most of the original Surrealists" (2011, n.p.). Any admiration he had for Thatcher, however, did not stop him satirising elements of her eponymous -ism in his fiction. Indeed, much of his eventual criticism of Thatcher or her governments was aimed at the nationalist undertone of the Falklands War episode. In an interview with Thomas Frick, conducted in 1983 and published in 1984, Ballard said of the war:

> The Falklands War was a classic, the way in which the military reality of the war was instantly submerged by a tide of political and patriotic sentiment created and propelled forward by TV and the newspapers. The war is now inextricably fused

> with its own myths and with the personality of Thatcher. TV tapped the desperate need for a declining nation to live out in fantasy (qtd. in Pringle, 1984, n.p.).[103]

Ballard's *Running Wild* explores this "political and patriotic sentiment" and its myths in extreme isolation, including how media narratives skewer obvious realities and shape 'official' accounts of events. Pangbourne Village is an exclusive housing estate in which each of the residents demonstrates archetypal Thatcherite values. It is a gated community which is cut off from the rest of society. It is an estate which demonstrates "almost total self-sufficiency" (p.13). Indeed, the village "has no connections, social, historical or civic with Pangbourne itself" (p.12) and is instead typical of the "numerous executive housing estates built in the 1980s" (p.11). The residents belong to a firmly middle-class element of society, mainly consisting of lawyers, stockbrokers, bankers and others from similar professional backgrounds (p.12). The story is a parody of the detective fiction genre, with psychiatrist Richard Greville cast as narrator in an investigation into the Pangbourne massacre. The massacre sees all the adult residents of Pangbourne Village brutally slaughtered and, as is made explicit to readers from the beginning, their children are the perpetrators of the murders. Greville, however, cannot see this – and the narrative focuses on his attempts to make the evidence of the crime scene fit with the mythical narrative promoted by the media.

For the Pangbourne children, the isolated and quintessentially Thatcherite community in which they live is described by Greville – though still ignorant of the significance of his observations – as "a fortress" and "a prison" (p.30), likening their residence there – against their will – to keeping an "exotic pet" (p.39). The crime scene is said to appear as if "a small creature was trying to get out" (p.39). The novel becomes preoccupied with highlighting the difference between the parents' Thatcherite lifestyle that is fundamentally authoritarian and controlling in nature, on the one hand, and genuine freedom, which the children seek to obtain, on the other. What they experience in Pangbourne Village is, instead, "a despotism of kindness" (p.59) and their lives reflect "an idea of childhood invented by adults" (p.65). Greville can see nothing wrong or constraining when he observes that "scarcely a minute of the children's lives had not been intelligently planned" (p.32) and that the near-identical houses of the estate each has the appearance

[103] The interview was conducted in 1983 in writing, with Ballard responding to Frick's questions by mail. The quotation here was not in the final printed interview, which appeared in *The Paris Review* in 1984, but Frick sent an early version of the full, unedited interview to the *JGB News* newsletter editor, David Pringle, with the caveat that "there's a fair chance that it will be sanded down to some smoother form of interchange". Pringle quoted Ballard's comments on the Falklands War in the newsletter (Pringle, 1984, n.p.).

of a "luxury prison" (p.33). In describing the children's lifestyles in this way, Ballard contrasts the authoritarian nature of Thatcherism with the much more libertarian way of life that the children find by the end of the novel. Their community is "ringed by a steel-mesh fence fitted with electrical alarms" (p.13) and the estate is described as one in which "even the drifting leaves look as if they have too much freedom" and where it is "hard to visualize [the children] at play" (p.7). Discussing the contrast between liberty and authority, Jeannette Baxter (2007) rightly observes that Ballard's novel is one which "demands a process of readerly investigation" to "open the transparent surfaces of contemporary history and culture" in order to reveal the "paradox" at its heart (p.2) and, in doing so, "holds the textualization of historical reality up for scrutiny" (p.4). Here, the paradox that Ballard focuses upon most closely is the contrast between a discourse of freedom and liberty and his perception that Thatcherism was, in reality, constraining rather than liberating. Baxter also observes the significance of the comic contrast between the obvious guilt of the children in murdering their parents and Greville's dismissal of parricide as an outlandish answer to the mystery. She argues that the act of parricide, central to the narrative, emphasises that this is an attack on "patriarchal authority" and on "conventional notions of 'the family'" (2007, p.6). Multiple novels included in this study identify the family, as Ballard does, as a central tenet of Thatcherite discourse. As in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, for example, the traditional nuclear family unit in *Running Wild* is something from which the individual must be liberated. Thatcher's observation that there are families and there are individuals is, in this novel, presented as a paradox: here there can be either individuals or families. Baxter correctly observes that the novel establishes itself as one that presents an affront to authoritarianism precisely because the children choose to demonstrate an act of rebellion by ending the existence of their families. That Greville refuses to accept this, however, indicates a lack of willingness to grant the children "any sense of agency" (Baxter, 2007, p.13). Instead of recognising their individualism, criminal though it is, Greville reinforces a series of alternative narratives which do not contradict Thatcherite discourse and values surrounding the family and the self-sufficient community.

Ballard's criticism of the Falklands War and the myths propelled by the TV and print media at the time are key to understanding the point of his criticism of the media in *Running Wild*. Arguing, as Dennis A. Foster does (1993, p.523), that the children's media attention gives them a sense of control by allowing them to return to a state of surveillance with which they are uncomfortable is misjudged. Foster's conclusion is that the role of the media in the novel is to explore how 'internal'

terrorists, in this case the children specifically, "constitute their identities and produce their effects largely with the help of the media" (1993, p.523). Yet, throughout the novel, the media consistently undertakes a role not dissimilar to Greville's in that it perpetuates wildly inaccurate hypothetical scenarios of what has happened in Pangbourne to preserve the notion that the children are innocent. When it is no longer possible for the media to deny the reality of the children's guilt, it instead revises their original identities in order to distance their actions from their upbringing. From the beginning of the novel, it is made clear to Greville that "all the children were present at the scenes of their parents' murders" (p.18) but he immediately dismisses any notion that they were involved. Instead, he is only able to understand the clues which litter the crime scene (and which invariably and explicitly implicate the children) in a way which is consistent with the media reports being disseminated by "the popular press throughout the world" (p.1). Immediately, the novel establishes that this is not a story about how the media accentuates the terrorist identities of the children, but one which explores the dominance of the media in shaping how events are understood and recorded. As Baxter puts it, the novel "holds the textualization of historical reality up for scrutiny" (p.4) and, in this instance, it is the media which the novel holds responsible for doing so.[104] Greville's suggestions that the murders may have been perpetrated by either "a foreign power" which later holds the children in its custody (p.104), "a disaffected assassination squad of Libyan professionals" (p.22), "an international terrorist group, perhaps the IRA" (p.22), or "a unit of Soviet Spetsnaz commandos" (p.24) are all clearly influenced by similar proposals made by the media. The national broadcaster, the BBC, for example, suggests that the murders may have been committed by "a group of long-term unemployed from the north of England" who may have experienced a sense of "murderous rage" in response to seeing the "display of privilege and prosperity" in Pangbourne Village (p.26). The separation of the prosperous South and the suffering North of England offers a similar image of a United Kingdom divided by Thatcherism to that offered by Bradbury. The economic divisions of the UK which undermine the integrity of its unity as a single national identity is further emphasised by Greville's suggestion that "Welsh nationalists" (p.47) – who promote an independent Wales, separate from the UK – may have committed the murders or that it could have been a criminal gang from Glasgow "capable of mounting the large-scale operation" (p.23). What unites each of these suggested perpetrators is that none of their

[104] Indeed, Greville himself states that his account of the Pangbourne massacre would not remain unedited: early in the novel he makes clear his plan to "revise these diaries for publication" (p.3), which further highlights the novel's preoccupation with unreliable narrative accounts and the scrutiny of such narratives (as Baxter suggests).

national or regional identities is congruent with the idea of Britain and Britishness promoted by Thatcherism or, moreover, the media myths about Britain at the time of the Falklands War that Ballard criticised. At the end of the novel, the children's guilt cannot be denied (though Greville does not inform the Home Office of his findings). The media remains unwilling to accept the reality of the massacre on the grounds that the nation has invested too much "emotional capital" in the previous media narratives (p.79): to learn of reality now would be to disrupt the ongoing process of myth-making. Rather than accept that the children have turned their back on their parents' lifestyles, the press instead proposes that they are, in fact, "the agents of a foreign power", perhaps inspired by "a rehearsal of the murder of the Kremlin Politburo by their own grandchildren" (p.81). By casting doubt upon the true Britishness of the children, and proposing that they have been corrupted by a foreign power, Ballard implies that media narratives serve to reinforce acceptable values about national identity rather than observe and reflect reality: by proposing that the children's true national identity is not what it initially appeared to be, the press is able to accept their transgressions without disrupting the narrative surrounding the massacre which it has already created.

The children's final public appearance, five years after the original massacre in Pangbourne Village, sees them attempt to assassinate Margaret Thatcher. The children drive an armoured truck through the gates of Mrs Thatcher's own private estate but ultimately their attempt to kill the now-former Prime Minister is unsuccessful. What is more, the media attributes the explosion caused by the truck to a faulty gas main and instead focuses upon a news item in which Mrs Thatcher hands out cups of tea to the police and the firemen. Much in the same way that Ballard said the media coverage of the Falklands War became bound to, and accentuated, Thatcher's personality, the novel observes that "As before, she continues to enjoy respect, if not affection, as a leader now sometimes known as 'the Mother of her Nation', or 'Mother England'" (p.105). The mirroring of the earlier murders in the attempted murder of Mrs Thatcher is significant in the repeated framing of Thatcher as a parental authority figure: the now-enlightened Greville ponders whether "all authority and parental figures are now their special target" (p.105). Greville's observation that the headlines, written by a "sycophantic newspaper editor nostalgic for the halcyon days of the 1980s" further undermines Foster's view that the children use the media to their advantage. The idea of Thatcher as the mother of the nation and 'Mother England' not only indicates that Ballard, like the other novelists in this study, identified Thatcherism's nationalist agenda as its defining characteristic, but

it also undermines Thatcherism's own commitment to freedom and liberty. Instead, Thatcher is linked with the same authority that the children associated with their parents and which constrained their freedom, rather than enabled it. Thatcher is divorced from her rhetoric of liberty and freedom and presented as a controlling figure for the nation as a whole.

In his investigation into the Pangbourne massacre, Greville discovers that each of the children has been partaking in consuming media which promote alternative messages to those which uphold Thatcherite ideals. The "first crack in the façade" which Greville identifies is a "stack of glossy magazines, well-thumbed copies of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*" (p.37), followed closely by the discovery of "various gun and rifle publications, *Guns and Ammo*, *Commando Small Arms*, *The Rifleman* and *Combat Weapons of the Waffen SS*", described as "the real porn" for which the actual pornography was merely "good camouflage" (p.38). The blurring of sexual fantasy with violence is complemented by "secret journals" which "describe a richly imagined alternative to life in the estate that at the same time seems an implicit comment upon it" (p.69). Through alternative, transgressive media sources and creating their own narratives, the children participate in thinking about a counter-narrative to that which permeates the isolated Pangbourne Village: it is in this vein that, during their act of rebellion, they cut the TV cables to prevent further media broadcasts into the estate (p.87). This act of writing a counter-narrative is not just the preoccupation of the children, but also that of Ballard. *Running Wild* is at once a surrealist account of a massacre, a satirical take on the detective genre and a serious commentary on the power of the media to impose inaccurate historical accounts which are designed to reinforce a set agenda rather than a reflection of reality. That the novel is about these themes is evident in how Ballard's commentary on the role of the media at the time of the Falklands War is reflected in his representation of the role of the press in the story. In doing so, Ballard – like Bradbury in *Cuts* – is concerned with cultural divisions and social disunity. The United Kingdom, though it is emphasised to a lesser extent, is also fragmented in *Running Wild*: the impoverished North and the Welsh who seek independence from the UK provide a sharp contrast to the multiple private estates which are said to have emerged during this period. Pangbourne Village is only one such estate and, like the others, it is cut off from the area in which it is situated in both geographic terms as well as in terms of heritage and culture. By reading the novel in the context of Ballard's criticism of the Falklands War, it is apparent that the predominant cultural divide which the novel explores is that of the acceptance and the rejection of nationalist myths. Ballard presents Thatcherism as fundamentally authoritarian, limiting – rather

than enabling – genuine individual liberty. Instead, the novel explores Thatcherism as an elite narrative, reinforced by the mass media and offices of the state (such as the Home Office), about national identity and values over which individuals have no control and which do not necessarily match their personal identities. By reading *Running Wild* as an exploration of Thatcherism in this way, I return to my previous point that Matthews' categorisation of Ballard's 'late fiction' should include *Running Wild* as it contains all of the characteristics he attributes to Ballard's later works. Furthermore, *Running Wild* should also be seen as a critical juncture in Ballard's canon of works: Matthews is correct in his observation of the later novels' concerns with violence and community, but those concerns can be traced back to *Running Wild* which, in turn, provides a more meaningful way of understanding the 'late' framework. That is to say, by positioning *Running Wild* as the beginning of the 'late' works of Ballard, it is possible to see the novel as a lens through which to read his subsequent late novels – as Matthews describes them – as a continued preoccupation with social and political concerns to which Ballard first turned because of his engagement with Thatcherism.

Both *Cuts* and *Running Wild* demonstrate how established novelists – of the previous generation to that of Amis or McEwan – became concerned with the effects of Thatcherism around the same time as their younger counterparts. Like the younger writers discussed in this study, they associated Thatcherism with a distinct sense of national identity and a pronounced understanding of Britishness. In both *Cuts* and *Running Wild*, Thatcherism is explored in relation to ideas of storytelling and myth-making (with regards to national heritage and national values, respectively). The shared identification that Thatcherism encourages in perpetuating myths of its own making leads, in both instances, to nationalist ideas held within Thatcherite discourse existing in contradiction with its other key characteristics. Bradbury focuses upon how Thatcherism's apparently unshakable commitment to Britain is undermined by its association with, and promotion of, a series of new global financial centres which are more like one another than they are to other parts of the countries in which they are located. This is satirically explored through Eldorado's decision to remove the English country house scene from the *Serious Damage* script and relocate to Switzerland, for tax purposes. Ballard similarly uses satire to explore the contradictory relationship between authoritarianism and liberty, whereby the Pangbourne children's lives are so meticulously planned that a metaphorical attack on paternalism is expressed through a literal massacre of their parents. Both novels also propose that the key ideas promoted by Thatcherism

do not, contrary to Thatcher's own claims, belong to a specifically British heritage. Instead, these ideas are framed as part of a more recent global shift. In *Cuts,* this is true of the "newly fundamentalist West" (p.110), while *Running Wild* observes that the phenomenon has spread across "Western Europe and the United States" (p.106) and that the Pangbourne children were, likewise, part of a global movement that would eventually "challenge the world that loved them" (p.106). What both novelists do, then, is to contrast the rhetorical idea of a single, united Britain with underlying cultural divisions which undermine Thatcher's idea of Britain, its heritage and its values.

Symbol: *The Iron Lady* (2012) and "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" (2014)

While the previous section is concerned with how social and cultural divisions were emphasised by fiction, this section looks at how more recent texts have divorced Thatcher from those divisions and contributed to the 'internationalising of Thatcherism'. Martin Farr (2017) has noted how, in many non-fiction media texts, the image of Margaret Thatcher is becoming increasingly more symbolic and less party political.[105] This process does not occur within a specifically British context but in an international one and is evident across different media forms, from filmmaking to journalism. According to Farr, the process of internationalising Thatcherism is not about "neoliberalism, […] foreign policy, […] an economic history [or] an assessment of Thatcherism": it is concerned with the "personification of an ideology" and how that "can help its dissemination" and its "transmission to new generations" (2017, n.p.).[106] Farr begins with a phrase borrowed from David Cannadine's biography *Margaret Thatcher: A Life and Legacy* (2017).[107] Drawing upon Cannadine's identification of Thatcher's "global charisma" (2017, p.124), Farr separates Thatcher and Thatcherism and specifies that there was a "global charisma of the person and the

[105] Farr is especially – though not exclusively – concerned with the international news media and news reporting of political speeches, events and debates. His only foray into fictional representation is a reference to *The Iron Lady* (2011) when he noted that Thatcher was considered significant enough to be depicted in a film.

[106] This is the argument made in Farr's forthcoming book *Margaret Thatcher's World*, due for publication in 2019. The references to Farr's work here are based on a recording of his keynote paper, "Margaret Thatcher's World", given at the Thatcher Network conference, entitled "Thatcher and Thatcherism: New Critical Perspectives", held at Durham University on 19th January 2017.

[107] As pointed out in my review of this biography (2017), Cannadine fails to add anything substantially new to Thatcher scholarship and, indeed, offers a relatively uncritical account of her early life and influences which does little more than to reiterate what Thatcher said about herself.

-ism" (2017, n.p.), and that both have been imported across the world.[108] The impression of Thatcher that has informed the accounts Farr refers to are largely influenced by her international trips, rather than her domestic appearances. What emerges in these accounts, though, is a narrative which overlooks Thatcher's divisiveness. There is an incorrect assumption that Thatcher's three General Election victories were indicative of her popularity. In Farr's terms, "the impression internationally is that [Thatcherism] must have been popular because she was re-elected, that there was a great formation behind her in winning the miners' strike" (2017, n.p.). The consequence of this is that Thatcher has, to a great extent, come to represent qualities of leadership, "strong will", decisiveness, "iron-fisted will" and "strong conviction" in the international media: instances of this can be found in news coverage about Thatcher in East Asia, India, Europe, Australia and the United States of America (2017, n.p.).

More importantly for my study is that, attached to Thatcher within many of these accounts, is a narrative which emphasises her role in reversing decline in Britain. Farr identifies that the Czech press coverage of her death said that, in Britain, she had "pointed out the path from a rotting society"; it was reported that Emmanuel Macron openly regretted that France had not had its own Thatcher in the 1980s; and the Indian media noted how she had reversed the "British disease" (2017, n.p.). Furthermore, in China, Germany, Russia, Canada, Iran, South Africa and Italy, media commentators spoke of Thatcher as a saviour figure and talked of her "revolution" being a "global" one (Farr, 2017, n.p.). International politicians have also embraced Thatcher and Thatcherism in a way that has accelerated the process of divorcing the two from one another and reinforcing Thatcher's status as a symbol of leadership, strength and of reversed decline. In 2015, in the run-up to the 2016 US Presidential election, Republican hopeful Carly Fiorina invoked the image of the Irony Lady to affirm her own leadership qualities; in 2016, French presidential candidate François Fillon embraced the intended insult that he was a Thatcherite as a compliment; Tsai Ing-wen, the first female President of Taiwan, praised Margaret Thatcher and held her up as a guide

[108] His distinction between the importing of Thatcher and Thatcherism and the exporting of the two is important. Farr notes that efforts to establish think-tanks and various lecture series, for example, have had a limited impact on the process he identifies. One such speaker series, established in the early 1990s, was a money-making venture by Mark Thatcher which, according to Farr, achieved little beside generating profit. Rather, the internationalising of Thatcher and Thatcherism has been down to a process of importing: individuals inspired by Thatcher or who have borrowed from her (either ideologically or stylistically) have done so of their own free will. That is, they have not needed to partake in programmes designed to spread a 'Thatcherite' message, they have 'imported' her influence themselves through their own interpretation. Farr notes, though, that for all the international commentators have called for Thatcherism in their own nation ("'What France needs is Thatcherism', 'What India needs is Thatcherism', comes up time and again", he says), there is also an explicit acknowledgement that Thatcher was a nationalist (2017, n.p.).

for her own approach to leadership; and, in a UK context, Nicola Sturgeon publicly stated her admiration for Thatcher's leadership qualities. The vast range of individuals who associate themselves with Thatcher's model of statecraft highlights that her "leadership style and mode can transcend very hostile political boundaries" (Farr, 2017, n.p.).[109] The enduring image of Thatcher that permeates the international media is, according to Farr, one of masculinised feminine strength: this point is underscored by the fact that one of the images commonly used alongside her obituaries in the international press was of Thatcher riding in a tank. Thatcher's masculinised qualities are not separated from feminine iconography however. Farr notes how images of her handbag are often associated with a combative style (with 'to handbag' becoming a verb which describes an act of verbal criticism), while one cartoon commented upon her legacy by depicting her using a feather duster to sweep hammers and sickles from the planet. What the internationalising of Thatcherism has produced, Farr concludes, is "a template" with a particular "manner", a synonym for "action", "change" and "dynamism" within the context of a narrative about "Britain being transformed", and it represents "patterns of leadership" that cut across political divides (2017, n.p.). Moreover, that Thatcher personifies all these qualities – as a symbol of a strong leader capable of delivering radical change – helps communicate the ideas, principles and values of Thatcherism to a mass audience that might not have received or understood them in the same way in an abstract form (Farr, 2017, n.p.). It is in using Farr's 'internationalising' framework that I explore how the 2012 film screenplay *The Iron Lady* and Hilary Mantel's 2014 short story "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" (from the collection of the same name) also contribute to Thatcher's increasingly symbolic status. Neither of these is a novel, or a novella, but they are narrative-based texts which, I would argue, have contributed to the shaping of Margaret Thatcher's image and to the public understanding of her legacy in the present political moment. In a chapter that considers political divisions, I am particularly concerned here with how these texts have framed those divisions retrospectively and how they have presented Margaret Thatcher's relationship to them.

The Iron Lady was released in cinemas in the UK in 2012. Directed by Phyllida Lloyd and written by Abi Morgan, the film received mixed reviews; its portrayal of Thatcher as a dementia sufferer, in particular, caused outrage among some of those who viewed her favourably. By

[109] One could argue that Thatcher's symbolic qualities transcend politics altogether. In 1996, pop group the Spice Girls declared that Margaret Thatcher was "the first Spice Girl" in an interview in which Victoria Adams also echoed Thatcher by describing the European Union as "a terrible trick on the British people" and a threat to the UK's "national identity and individuality" (Boggan, 1996, n.p.). More recently, singer Nicki Minaj likened herself to Thatcher, describing both herself and the former Prime Minister as "queens and women of power" (CM, 2018, n.p.).

contrast, the film was also criticised by her detractors who said it represented her in too positive a light (Hastings, 2012, n.p.). Thatcher never saw the film and Mark and Carol, her children, were reported to have avoided seeing it too (Pierce, 2012, n.p.). Nonetheless, Thatcher's dementia plays a crucial role within the film as a storytelling device, separating her time in office from the storyline's present moment: it is the primary means by which the film divorces Thatcher from Thatcherism. Graham Fuller noted that, soon after the film's release, it was widely noted "that it presented 'Thatcher without Thatcherism'" (2012, p.67). Fuller's analysis is that "sound commercial reasons" led the film's writer and director to offer a representation not of the "dry stuff of policymaking", but of a love story (between the young Margaret and Denis), her ascent through the male-dominated House of Commons to lead the country, and a sympathetic portrait of her "comparative anonymity" in her later years (2012, p.67). The film opens with an old, unrecognisable Margaret Thatcher buying milk and looking at newspaper headlines about a bombing, which include "Fear for Brits in Hotel Blast". The headlines are a self-conscious reference to the IRA bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton in October 1984. By presenting the event as a distant memory, it frames the present-day Thatcher, who looks frail and is practically unidentifiable to others in the shop, in startling contrast to the portrait of a resolute Thatcher giving her conference speech after, and in spite of, the bombing. Throughout the film, reminders of Thatcher's earlier life and political career cause her to have flashbacks which act as a means of transporting the film between the past and present day.[110] By distinguishing the past and the present in such stark terms, the film offers two different representations of Thatcher: the public image of a Prime Minister and the private individual in later life. That she has dementia, an illness which causes lapses in memory, divorces the present-day Thatcher from her past self. This is best articulated when Thatcher responds "I don't recognise myself" in response to footage of her present-day self on the news. The presence of an imagined Denis Thatcher, despite his being dead in the film's present-day storyline, accentuates the distinction between the two Thatchers and allows the film to represent the older, frailer Thatcher through a personal relationship (while the earlier Thatcher is explored as a public figure).

Brooke Allen (2012) has written that the ambiguity surrounding the political views of Abi Morgan and Phyllida Lloyd means that it is difficult to know where the film's loyalties lie in regard

[110] Other instances like this include hearing music which causes her to recall dancing with Denis and accidentally signing her name 'Margaret Roberts' which invokes memories of hiding under the table in the flat above her father's shop as Grantham was bombed during the Second World War.

to Thatcher herself. Allen states that the lack of a clearly pro- or anti-Thatcherite message, combined with the writer's and the director's unknown political positions, means that "[even] political enemies will be compelled to admire Thatcher's well-honed skills, her demonic energy, her grade-A brass balls, and will find themselves rooting for her at the most surprising moments" (2012, p.113). Allen's article on the film is typical of the writing around this particular representation of Thatcher: the lack of an obvious political position means that what is emphasised more than anything, with regard to who Thatcher is and what she represents, are those traits of leadership and strength, presented as if unquestionable and unobjectionable. But by what means does the film attempt to make those viewers who are more hostile to Thatcher admire her, in Allen's words? In separating Thatcher from Thatcherism, the film contributes to the process of turning Thatcher into a symbol of strength and leadership as per Farr's internationalising model. More specifically, though, the film presents Thatcher as a progressive force for women in politics: she is not simply a strong leader, but a strong female leader who succeeds against all odds. The film has a feminist undertone which seeks to present Thatcher as objectively having achieved much as a woman, and for women, regardless of one's opinion of her politics. Susan L. Carruthers (2012) acknowledges that the film's underlying message appears to be "Whatever else we might think of her […] we must admire this woman's glass-ceiling-shattering ascent and her spouse's willingness to put her career before his, as defiant of normative gender roles", adding that "Thatcher's lonely separation – a woman in a world of men – forms a constant motif" throughout the film which makes it more about her journey than her politics (p.52). One of the earliest instances of the film presenting Thatcher as a female role model is when a young aide tells the present-day Thatcher "I hope you appreciate what an inspiration you've been to women like myself". The notion of Thatcher as a female role model is, significantly, present in both the representation of the past and in the present moment: while the film usually seeks to emphasise the differences between the two different temporalities, the feminist message cuts across this divide and, as a result, underscores her achievements as a woman as one of her defining and enduring characteristics. The film echoes much of the discourse that Farr identifies in the international media, including a scene in which the news (in the film) credits Thatcher as the "woman who changed the face of history", emphasising that hers is a global legacy; Thatcher's own line "none of these men have the guts" also echoes Farr's identification of Thatcher as a symbol of strong leadership and masculinised, combative femininity. As Rebecca S. Richards (2011) has said of the 'Iron Lady' trope, "the very specific identity […], situated originally in Thatcher, is unique, in that it became a transnational identity for

female heads of state, even if they did or did not resemble Thatcher in body or politics" (p.8).[111] Like Farr, Richards sees the characteristics of the 'Iron Lady' persona as a template which cuts through political divisions and describes instead an approach to statecraft and qualities of leadership. Thatcher's time in party politics is presented in the film as one of struggle: she is patronised at her candidate selection meeting and often presented in isolation early in her career. The scene in which she first enters the House of Commons depicts Thatcher's heels as the only feminine shoes among a plethora of men's shoes: this is not Thatcher's issue alone, but that of all women who, the film suggests, are chronically underrepresented. Thatcher's time as Education Secretary is represented in the film with a degree of factual inaccuracy. When she is mocked for her high-pitched voice, she is shown to be the only woman in the House of Commons. Thatcher was, at this time, one of numerous female MPs, but the decision to present her as a lone woman mocked by men on both sides of the chamber emphasises that the film is, at times, concerned less with historical accuracy and more with advancing the notion of Thatcher as a symbol of female strength and leadership. Thatcher's observation that her "background" and "sex" meant that she would "never truly be one of them" is presented as justification for her authoritative 'Iron Lady' persona. Yet, the film also makes clear that the construction of this image was not down to her alone, but also down to the involvement of Airey Neave and Gordon Reece, the television producer who worked as a political strategist for Thatcher. Neave is presented as the only other parliamentarian who is loyal to Thatcher: his role in constructing what would become known as her Iron Lady persona is not that of a dominant male, but of a supportive one. However, a second historical inaccuracy is used to further the notion that Thatcher's political career was a lone battle: Neave and Thatcher part ways in a car park when, seconds later, Neave's car blows up. In reality, Thatcher was not present when Neave fell victim to an IRA bomb but, by representing his loss in this way, viewers are directly confronted with the poignant image of Thatcher witnessing the loss of her only male ally in the most violent way. Time and again the film prioritises telling the story of Thatcher's isolation and difficulty as a woman over what is historically true.

The sections of the film that offer an account of Thatcher's political career can be understood as a version of the 'national revival' narrative that Farr describes in "Margaret

[111] Richards' work on the 'Iron Lady' as a transnational rhetorical device is curious in its attempt to use Donna Haraway's work on cyborgs and feminism (from 1984) to explain Thatcher and other female world leaders. While this element of her article is not convincing, she is right to assert that, by embracing the intended insult, Thatcher initiated a "subversive moment that challenges the either/or binary of femininity or militarism that has often precluded women from participation in the higher office in their countries" (p.7).

Thatcher's World". The film establishes the Winter of Discontent as a moment of crisis which, as Colin Hay has identified, provided key material for Thatcher's own narrative about the decline of Britain in the run up to the 1979 General Election (2010, p.464). The film depicts the streets filled with rubbish and there is a power cut during one of Prime Minister Edward Heath's cabinet meetings: the overly-powerful unions are proposed as the cause of the problem. In a cabinet discussion about the unions, Thatcher listens as Heath and his Secretaries of State repeat the word "compromise", invoking memories of her father during the Second World War. Alfred Roberts' lessons on strength and leadership are positioned, in this way, as the foundations of Thatcher's own political agenda and personal determination.[112] This suggests to viewers, prior to the film's account of her premiership, that the origins of Thatcherism are rooted in her experience in her father's shop in Grantham. By suggesting that the overly-powerful unions were the cause of the Winter of Discontent and that Thatcherism was the application of 'common sense' principles (gained while running a family business) to running the country, the film uncritically reinforces the narrative that Thatcher offered to the electorate at the time.[113] Similarly, in its account of her premiership, the film focuses on the restoration of Britain and its reputation. Phrases like "restore this country to greatness" and "put the great back into Great Britain" are accompanied by fanfare and images of the Union Jack in its representation of her election as Prime Minister in 1979. It combines these images of triumph with actual archival news footage of Thatcher, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction and contributing to the sense that the film is an objective historical account. Likewise, Thatcher's insistence that "we did not seek election and win in order to manage the decline of a great nation" and her reference to "our determination to see the country prosper once again" speak to both the film's feminist undercurrent (by presenting her as a lone female battling men who wish to maintain the status quo) and to a narrative of national revival.[114] Nationalism is explicitly presented as a defining characteristic of Thatcherism, too, particularly in the film's representation of the Falklands War. This is not unlike other texts discussed in this study,

[112] Unlike the "Grantham Anthem" in *Spitting Image*, discussed in the Introduction, *The Iron Lady* presents Thatcher's claim that her political vision was rooted in her father's teachings earnestly (rather than satirically).
[113] See, for example, Sally Abernethy's (2018) article on Thatcher's success in framing her political agenda as 'common sense' principles – which is discussed in Chapter One – to understand how the film reinforces Thatcher's own position.
[114] This is especially true of her confrontation with US Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Haig visits the UK to attempt to affirm the USA's position of neutrality over the Falklands. In what is presented as a patronising address, Haig attempts to tell Thatcher that his understanding of the situation is more sophisticated. His line "But Margaret with all due respect, when one has been to war…" is cut short by Thatcher's retort "With all due respect sir, I have done battle every single day of my life, and many men have underestimated me before. This lot seem bound to do the same, but they will rue the day". Here the film blurs the distinction between military conflict and life as a woman in politics, explicitly demonstrating what Farr identified as a masculinised, combative femininity (2017, n.p.).

but where *The Iron Lady* differs is in the extent to which it offers no alternative to the view that Thatcher was a lone figure, taking on the (male) political establishment, to defend her nation. Thatcher's decision to dispatch a task force to the Falkland Islands – justifiable, in her mind, because they are British territory and they have been invaded by fascists – is met with scepticism by those who question the financial cost of doing so. Geoffrey Howe is depicted saying that Britain "can't afford to go to war", but Thatcher prioritises the defence of British territory over economic savings. By combining the notion of Thatcher as a lone woman and the defender of Britain, the film casts Thatcher as a Churchillian figure who protected her nation in an hour of need. It goes to such lengths to emphasise the idea of Thatcher as defending Britain on her own that it inaccurately suggests that the then Leader of the Opposition, Michael Foot, opposed military intervention: Foot had, in fact, supported Thatcher's defence of the Falkland Islanders "based on moral grounds" including their right to self-determination and because the Argentinian act of aggression reminded him of Hitler and Mussolini (Boyce, 2005, p.46). Much like the earlier scenes when Thatcher was Education Secretary, as well as in its depiction of Airey Neave's death, the film accommodates historical inaccuracy in order to reinforce its key message about what Thatcher represented. The UK's victory in the Falklands War is presented as a moment of national pride, with the song "I'm in Love with Margaret Thatcher" (1979) by the Notsensibles unironically playing over images of national celebrations. Thatcher declares it a day to "hold one's head high and take pride in being British". Heard in the soundtrack, speaking from the present moment, Denis Thatcher reflects upon the moment of the Falklands War by stating that Margaret had gone "from the most hated Prime Minister of all time to the nation's sweetheart" and that "Britain was back in business". By attributing these lines to the imagined Denis Thatcher, the film presents these exaggerated claims as the objective opinions of somebody personally close to her, although they are claims which the film's account does much to support.[115] In doing so, the film identifies the

[115] Research published by Ipsos MORI shows that the net satisfaction ratings of Thatcher and of her government both peaked after the Falklands War. However, this increase in popularity was momentary and Thatcher's net satisfaction soon returned to around what it had been at the time of her election in 1979 (i.e. under 5%). Thatcher's net satisfaction at the time of the 1983 General Election was not as high as it had been at the time of the Falklands War. However, Ipsos MORI's data does show a sharp increase in two measures of public opinion, immediately prior to both the 1983 and 1987 General Elections: 'capable leader' and 'understands problems facing Britain'. Thatcher may not have been popular, but she was seen as a strong leader capable of taking the country in the right direction. In a public survey conducted in 1989 which sought to understand what voters considered the "three best things" Thatcher had achieved, the Falklands War was mentioned by "only a few": more saw her handling of the trade unions as a greater achievement (Skinner, 2013, n.p.) Despite this, though, the comments attributed to Denis Thatcher in the film, that Margaret had become the "nation's sweetheart", does not reflect that this was momentary and that she had a negative net satisfaction rating for most of her time in office.

significance of British national identity and the importance of restoring pride in Britishness as a central aspect of Thatcher's project.

While the film represents Thatcher as having a transformative effect on the nation, it does not seek to imply that there were no social or cultural divisions during her premiership. The exchanges between Thatcher and Michael Foot in the House of Commons are used to express these. Foot tells Thatcher that, under her, the "rich get richer and the poor are irrelevant". Furthermore, members of her own cabinet are overheard accusing her of being "out of touch with the country". The film also uses archival footage of the rioting in Brixton, with a newsreader stating that "we are now one split nation with a huge gulf dividing the employed from the unemployed". Yet, this suggestion of a divided nation – a trope present, but foregrounded to a far greater extent, throughout *Cuts* and *Running Wild* – is one which does not damage Thatcher's character. The rioters are presented as violent and unreasonable; Thatcher's (fictional) retort to her cabinet's accusation of being out of touch sees her challenge her colleagues about the cost of living. By asking them to list the price of butter, the film implies that their inability to do so means it is they who are out of touch: Thatcher subsequently lists various brands of butter and their prices which reinforces the film's earlier emphasis on her roots as the grocer's daughter. Where the film is most critical of Thatcher is in relation to her downfall, which is presented as a consequence of a failed extension of her nationalist thinking. The Community Charge (more commonly known as the poll tax) and her increasing euroscepticism are presented as too extreme for Thatcher's Conservative Party colleagues. Her justification for the poll tax is that "if you live in this country you must pay for the privilege", which is framed as a misjudged translation of her abstract political rhetoric about nationhood into policy. The poll tax riots are represented as much more brutal than the earlier Brixton riots. This time the rioters are not simply presented as violent but as victims of the policy: now it is the state which, through the more aggressive (rather than defensive) police, is seen as violent. Yet, Thatcher's downfall is also highly theatrical and sympathetic to the notion that she was ousted by her male colleagues. This is a point which is subtly conveyed through the introduction of conventions from director Phyllida Lloyd's previous experience of directing opera. As Thatcher leaves Downing Street for the final time, much to the upset of her (not coincidentally) female clerical staff, she walks through rose petals to the sound of tragic operatic music. The archetypal operatic female reflected by Thatcher at this point is widely understood to represent the victimised heroine and the subject of a tragic demise not of their own making (Ketterer, 2006,

p.111; Lucia, 2000, p.1420; Rutherford, 2013, p.25). In abandoning all claims to historical accuracy and drawing upon intertextual conventions (with which they are obviously familiar) in this highly-theatrical portrait, Morgan's and Lloyd's feminist account of Thatcher is one which sees the men who have conspired against her throughout the film finally succeeding in bringing about her downfall. This is not presented as the result of an unpopular policy, against which Thatcher was warned by her cabinet colleagues, but a consequence of a male-dominated political establishment reasserting control.

The final scene of the film, which returns to the present moment, is not so much political in orientation but more intended to invite viewers to reflect upon the meaning of Thatcher's career (as the film has just presented it) as a woman. The scene depicts Thatcher in her home looking out of the window, listening to the sound of children playing. An aide offers to wash her tea cup, but Thatcher declines and the film ends with her standing at her sink. This scene self-consciously refers to an earlier flashback depicting the moment that Denis Thatcher asked Margaret Roberts to marry him. Along with accepting his proposal, the young Margaret offers the caveat "I will never be one of those women, Denis, who stays silent and pretty on the arm of her husband", adding that "one's life must matter" and "I cannot die washing up a tea cup". By gesturing back to this statement that she must live a meaningful life in the film's final moment, the two scenes – the proposal and the final scene – bookend the filmic representations of Thatcher's successful political career. Immediately prior to this scene, the film had already begun to establish a process of reflection. Thatcher, looking back at her political career, recalls that "all I wanted was to make a difference in the world": although she does not explicitly state whether she considers herself to have done so, the film's account of her impact on British politics leaves little room for suggesting that she did not. This is a film about a life that mattered. The specific reference to making a difference "in the world" echoes the narrative which emerged in the international media, following her death, about her legacy being a global one (Farr, 2017, n.p.). That she is shown, in the final scene, to be content with washing the tea cup towards the end of her life implies that Thatcher is satisfied, in her own terms, that her life has mattered. Indeed, this is what Lloyd intended: she stated, in an interview with *The Guardian,* that the film was not "a plea for forgiveness for policy" but "a contemplation of the cost of a big life" (Cochrane, 2012, n.p.).

While multiple critics (of varying political persuasions) quoted here have identified *The Iron Lady* as a film which conceals the political sympathies of its writer and director, it is markedly more

favourable to Thatcher than many of its literary and cinematic predecessors or, indeed, contemporaries. Certainly, within the context of this study, *The Iron Lady* does more to uncritically reiterate Thatcher's account of her premiership than any other text discussed. The film suggests that the unions, too powerful and influential, caused the Winter of Discontent and that all those around Heath's cabinet table, except Thatcher, were too weak to deal with the issue. This mirrors Thatcher's (later) rhetoric about the 'postwar consensus', as discussed in Chapter One. What is more though, the film acknowledges the social and cultural divisions – for example, between the North and South, or the employed and the unemployed – that *Cuts* and *Running Wild* do, but their representation here comes second to the story about Thatcher's achievements as a woman. By separating Thatcher in the present moment from the Thatcher of the 1980s (and before), the film distances her from the impact of her policies. In so doing, *The Iron Lady* contributes to the internationalising of Thatcherism, as per Farr's thesis, by emphasising her qualities of strength, leadership, determination and masculinised femininity.

While *The Iron Lady* may enforce a broadly favourable view of Thatcher, such a view is not a prerequisite for a text to contribute to the separation of Thatcher from Thatcherism in the way the film does. Hilary Mantel's "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" is evidence of this. Unlike those of Lloyd and Morgan, Mantel's personal views on Margaret Thatcher are widely known. The publication of "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" was accompanied by multiple interviews in which Mantel expressed disdain for Thatcher: in one, for example, she said she "loathed her" and that Thatcher had "wrecked this country" (Chotiner, 2014, n.p.). "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" is set on August 6th 1983, but it opens with a recollection of April 25th 1982 – the day that Britain was declared victorious in the Falklands War, with Mrs Thatcher telling the nation to "rejoice". The two texts' different takes on the Falklands War encapsulates the difference between Mantel's story and *The Iron Lady*: while the latter presented it as a moment of national pride in which the UK was 'in love with Margaret Thatcher', Mantel's imagined IRA gunman sardonically repeats "Rejoice […] Fucking rejoice" (p.242) as he prepares to shoot the Prime Minister. Yet, despite Mantel airing a vastly different opinion of Thatcher in comparison with either Lloyd or Morgan, "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" manages to be strikingly similar to *The Iron Lady* in its overall contribution to the process of turning Thatcher into a symbol of masculinised femininity and side-lining her from debates about social and cultural divisions.

"The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" explores a significant cultural division expressed through social class, but it differs from *Cuts* and *Running Wild* in that the divide is among two social groups on the left that oppose Thatcher. The premise of the story is that "Three days before her assassination, the Prime Minister entered this hospital for minor eye surgery" (p.210): the hospital in question is in Windsor and the opening passage of the story establishes (in careful detail) that this is a middle-class, suburban area. Nonetheless, Mantel's narrator is keen to stress that:

> Windsor's not what you think. It has an intelligentsia. Once you wind down from the castle to the bottom of Peascod Street, they are not all royalist lickspittles; and as you cross over the junction to St Leonard's Road, you might sniff out closet republicans. (p.211)

Along with her recollection that "when Mrs Thatcher came to visit, the dissidents took to the streets" (p.211), the opening description of Windsor juxtaposes an exclusive, middle-class area associated with royalty with the idea of hidden clusters of left intellectuals, republicans and dissidents. This lays the foundations for the story to later expose, as it does, both the political naivety and the social privilege of the narrator when she, as a self-styled left-wing dissident, comes into conflict with a Liverpudlian assassin working for the IRA. The narrator, and others like her, are quickly identified to be entitled and elitist: one local resident with a PhD says she is tempted to park in the 'doctors only' parking bay in the hospital so she can collect fresh bread from the baker; the locals bond over using the same tradesmen for home improvements; the narrator is putting Perrier water in the fridge when the Liverpudlian assassin (identified by "his accent" (p.215)) rings the doorbell; and, upon answering the door, she assumes, on the basis of his appearance, that he is there to repair the boiler (pp.211-213). When the assassin makes his way into the narrator's home, she quickly establishes that he is not a plumber, but subsequently assumes (because of his sniper equipment) that he is a photographer. A satirical exchange ensues in which the discourses of photography (and media spectatorship more generally) and violence become intertwined. The reference to getting a "shot" (p.217), for example, links media spectatorship and the planned murder of Margaret Thatcher – and foreshadows the story's later representation of Thatcher as a media construct expressed and understood through a series of symbols rather than as a coherent individual identity:

> 'How much will you get for a good shot?'
> 'Life without parole,' he said.
> I laughed. 'It's not a crime.'
> 'That's my feeling.' (p.217)

The assassin's description of his sniper rifle also introduces a gendered element to this relationship: '"That's the beauty of her. Fits in a cornflakes packet. They call her the widowmaker. Though not in this case. Poor bloody Denis, eh? He'll have to boil his own eggs from now on."' (p.219). That the weapon's name is grounded in the assumption that the assassination of high-profile individuals creates widows emphasises Thatcher's uniqueness as a female world leader. In their discussion about Thatcher and Thatcherism, the assassin questions the basis upon which the narrator can oppose the two. He says of Merseyside, in contrast to Windsor: '"Three million unemployed,' […] 'Most of them live round our way. It wouldn't be a problem round here, would it?"' (p.218). The North/South divide is more prominent here than in *The Iron Lady*: the idea of a divided country is articulated in a way more like the novels by Bradbury and Ballard than by Morgan and Lloyd's film. Significantly, though, in Mantel's portrait the divide occurs among the anti-Thatcherites, with Thatcher side-lined within this debate. In comparison to the assassin's complaint about unemployment and poverty in Liverpool, the narrator's complaint about Thatcher is superficial – and one which serves to emphasise Thatcher's own narrative about her modest upbringing in Grantham:

> I said, 'It's the fake femininity I can't stand, and the counterfeit voice. The way she boasts about her dad the grocer and what he taught her, but you know she would change it all if she could, and be born to rich people. It's the way she loves the rich, the way she worships them. It's her philistinism, her ignorance, and the way she revels in her ignorance. It's her lack of pity. Why does she need an eye operation? Is it because she can't cry?' (p.220)[116]

[116] As with Bradbury, Mantel's story indicates that much of the criticism directed towards Thatcher (and Thatcherism) was aimed at its apparent crudeness. There is also a snobbishness directed at Thatcher by the narrator which she later extends to the assassin when she observes of his appearance: "I thought, he looks like a man who does his own laundry" (p.233).

The narrator compares this North/South divide in England to the political divisions in Ireland and Northern Ireland across the twentieth century (a theme which permeates the *Assassination* collection). She states that:

> moving on, to modern, non-sectarian forms of stigma, expressed in modern songs: you are a scouser, a dirty scouser. I'm not, personally. But the north is all the same to southerners. And in Berkshire and the Home Counties, all causes are the same, all ideas for which a person might care to die: they are nuisances, a breach of the peace, and likely to hold up the traffic or delay the trains (p.223)

The South of England here is represented as non-ideological and ignorant of the rest of the country: it is not Thatcher in this story (unlike in Ballard and Bradbury) who perpetuates the North/South divide, but the privileged, middle-class left or, to borrow the assassin's term for the narrator in this moment, "the bourgeoisie" (p.226). The narrator's response to this accusation is that she and he are on the same side, but he objects to somebody of her social privilege attempting to align herself with his cause: "'You think you're on my side?' He was sweating again. 'You don't know my side. Believe me, you have no idea.'" (p.226). As with Bradbury's representation of academics, Mantel appears to satirise the intellectual left's response to Thatcherism: there is a sense, in this moment, that some people hate Thatcher because it is fashionable to do so, but that they are just as far removed from the everyday lives of others in their country (specifically in the North of England) as they accuse Thatcher of being. The narrator's intellectual snobbery is exposed most prominently when she questions the use of the term 'bourgeoisie':

> I said, 'Bourgeoisie, what sort of polytechnic expression is that?'
> I was insulting him, and I meant to. For those of tender years, I should explain that polytechnics were institutes of higher education, for the young who missed university entrance: for those who were bright enough to say 'affinity', but still wore cheap nylon coats. (p.227)

Although to a far lesser extent than occurs in *Cuts*, Mantel highlights the social significance of educational divides but again, unlike Bradbury, this division is explored within the confines of the anti-Thatcherite left. In doing so, the story exposes a more complex picture of contemporary Britain's cultural divisions far beyond simply left and right. In its representation of this clash of

cultures, the story dramatises the complexities of how the left is fragmented along the lines of regional identity, class identity and educational background.

In explaining his reasons for attempting to assassinate Thatcher, and that his opposition to her is more serious and genuine than the narrator's, the assassin separates Thatcher as a person (identified only through symbolic "accessories" (p.229)) from issues relating to the impact of her government's policy (specifically relating to the Troubles in Northern Ireland):

> 'What do you think this is about?' he said.
> 'Ireland.'
> He nodded. 'And I want you to understand that. I'm not shooting her because she doesn't like the opera. Or because you don't care for – what in sod's name do you call it? – her accessories. It's not about her handbag. It's not about her hairdo. It's about Ireland. Only Ireland, right?' (p.229)

Despite Mantel's own personal views on Thatcher, her story is like *The Iron Lady* in that those who oppose Thatcher appear unreasonable. A self-identified IRA marksman is, like the Brixton rioters as Lloyd presents them, unobjectionably on the wrong side of the law and inherently violent. By the time of Thatcher's appearance at the very end, though, the main conflict of the story is no longer between her and the IRA, as it ostensibly was to begin with, but between the assassin and the narrator. Thatcher's appearance in the story is brief and her assassination, after which the story is named, is ambiguous: the story ends before the gunman pulls the trigger. Thatcher is described as wearing "High heels on the mossy path. Tippy-tap. Toddle on" and wearing a "bag on the arm, slung like a shield. The tailored suit just as I have foreseen, the pussy-cat bow, a long loop of pearls, and – a new touch – big goggle glasses" (p.242). Further to that, the narrator also describes seeing Thatcher from the perspective of the gunman: "He sees what I see, the glittering helmet of hair. He sees it shine like a gold coin in a gutter, he sees it big as the full moon." (p.242). Throughout this passage, Thatcher is gazed upon through framing devices (the window, the scope of the sniper rifle) and reduced to a series of symbols which reinforce the qualities Farr identifies: she is not an identifiable individual but 'accessories' which reinforce the notion of the Iron Lady's masculinised, combative femininity (with her hair doubling as a helmet and her handbag a shield – both of which are defensive objects). Mantel's representation makes literal Farr's assertion that the internationalising of Thatcherism sees Thatcher become the personification of the characteristics

with which she is associated: here, a series of isolated objects and body parts become visual metaphors for those characteristics.

"The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" is explicit in its invitation to readers to think about alternative histories. The narrator observes that "History could always have been otherwise" (p.240). Eileen Pollard records that Mantel's short story was in fact developed from an earlier publication in which the assassination of Thatcher was presented as Mantel's own fantasy. The narrator in the story is based on Mantel's memory of herself viewing Thatcher from a window and concluding how easy somebody else, in her position, could have shot Thatcher: that history could have been otherwise. Pollard argues unconvincingly that "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" disturbed readers and caused controversy because of a "pervasive sense of ambiguity" rather than the allusion to the act of assassination itself (2018, p.41). Her reading of the story places it in the context of Mantel's work (which is not without merit), but she does not consider it as part of a broader body of British fictional texts about Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism. In placing the story in the latter context, Mantel's focus on historical narratives and plausible alternative histories in the story, which Pollard rightly identifies, evidently fits with the themes and strategies that other writers have used to explore Thatcherism. It makes more sense, I would argue, to see Mantel's story as a contribution to this broader literary trend than to view it solely in the context of her other short stories.

Cultural divisions are still significant in contemporary representations of Thatcher and Thatcherism but, as *The Iron Lady* and "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" demonstrate, there is evidence in some texts of a reinforcement of the process which Martin Farr refers to as the internationalising of Thatcherism. This process of internationalising, or separation, is not universal or true of all contemporary fiction, as my discussion of Ali Smith's 2016 novel *Autumn* demonstrates. Where it does occur, the image of Margaret Thatcher reflects how she is represented in the international media more closely than how she and Thatcherism were represented in the 1980s British novel. This may be because, as Graham Fuller (2012) suggested regarding *The Iron Lady*, it is commercially beneficial to do so: literary and cinematic representations of Thatcher may have a potentially broader appeal to an international audience if they confirm the existing historical metanarratives about Thatcher's uniqueness and qualities of strength and leadership. It may also be because the narrative Thatcher told of herself – which, to different degrees, finds itself reinforced by the two texts discussed here – has become so entrenched in popular consciousness

that it is difficult to capture her essence, in fiction, film or journalism, without relying upon and repeating those tropes about her strength, determination and leadership. What *The Iron Lady* perhaps best demonstrates is that Thatcher's narrative about her government's mission to revive the status and fortune of the nation has endured and, in this instance, become uncritically reproduced as objective truth. She is, in this account, detached from the impact of her government's policies and presented as a woman who achieved much in politics, taking on the status quo and a male-dominated established that sought to work against her. While "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher" does not go as far as *The Iron Lady* to present Thatcher as the saviour of her nation, it does remove her from its main representation of national, social and cultural divisions: it is, in fact, elitism on the left which is the primary antagonist for the divisions represented in the story. Instead, Thatcher's character is reduced to a series of symbols that, as with *The Iron Lady*, reinforces the connotations of a strong female leader. Mantel's portrayal of Thatcher can therefore still be understood in relation to Farr's internationalising model because of the extent to which this representation mirrors how Thatcher is constructed within the international, rather than British, media. These texts have, ultimately, a different relationship with the idea of historiography. Denis Thatcher's declaration in *The Iron Lady*, as he observes Margaret watching old family films on repeat, that "you can rewind it, but you can't change it!" suggests that the past is fixed: accounts can be repeated but not changed. Mantel's short story ends, by contrast, with the observation that history could have been different, inviting readers to consider the possibility – in the moment of the story's ambiguous ending – of a world in which Margaret Thatcher had been assassinated. Nonetheless, despite the two different approaches taken to revisiting the 1980s – *The Iron Lady* attempting to present itself as an objective and biographical account while Mantel's is self-consciously and highly subjective and grounded in fantasy – both contribute to the same understanding of who Margaret Thatcher was and what she represented on a personal level, that is to say, quite aside from her -ism.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY

Introduction

Recent debates in political history have focused upon questions of how and why 'Thatcherism', as a concept, has remained the dominant lens through which historians have continued to view the last four decades of British politics. In "New Times revisited" (2017) – a special issue of *Contemporary British History* edited by Matthew Hilton, Chris Moores and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite – a group of contemporary political historians offer alternative ways of looking at the period. In their analysis of the dominant historical narrative about postwar Britain, Hilton, Moores and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite highlight (as I have in Chapter One) the simplicity of the 'social democracy/neoliberalism' displacement model in which Thatcherism is presented as a (calculated) radical break with an era of 'consensus' which has defined British politics long beyond Mrs Thatcher leaving office. To them, this is a reductive account of post-war British history because it reads all social change in relation to this broad paradigm shift, excluding other important drivers of change (2017, p.149). It is for this reason that they offer accounts of postwar Britain which analyse social change in relation to other major developments, such as those in sexual and racial politics, the changing nature of humanitarianism, and new discourses of social class. In doing so, Hilton, Moores and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite challenge Thatcherism's status "as the driving force for the decade" (2017, p.145), acknowledging that this was also the ambition of Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques in the 1980s. Hall and Jacques first responded to Thatcherism by encouraging the intellectual left to take the so-called New Right seriously, but quickly recognised a more urgent need: "challenging accounts of the 1980s" in which Thatcherism was credited (even before the decade was over) as re-defining the nation, while the left's critical response to Thatcherism was largely absent from (and had little impact upon) such accounts (2017, p.145). In setting out the justification for challenging dominant historical narratives driven by Thatcherism now, Hilton, Moores and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite examine "the plethora of popular accounts of the 1980s" written by historians and draw attention to their "striking" similarities:

> […] the lack of nuance; the desire to make Thatcher either the saint or scourge of a decade; and a determination to understand political, social, cultural and economic

> developments visible in and after the 1980s as manifestations of Thatcherism or some related variant – usually 'neoliberalism'. (2017, p.147)

There are echoes, in their criticism of these accounts, of the Hegelian conceptualisation of 'history' as not what happened, but a record of how what happened has been narrated (Fiala, 2003, p.64). That is to say, these Thatcherism-centric accounts of recent British political history are reliant upon existing dominant narratives and serve to repeat and compound them. In doing so, they exclude alternative, marginalised perspectives on the period: Matthew Francis' (2017) contribution to "New Times revisited", for example, tries to counter this by exploring black and minority ethnic voters' experiences of Thatcher's Britain. There is, though – implicit in recent efforts to challenge this particular 'repeated' history – an acknowledgement that Hall and Jacques failed in their attempt to prevent Thatcherism becoming the defining idiom of the decade.[117] What is not acknowledged is that theirs was not the only challenge to Thatcherism's shaping of historical accounts taking place at the time. To suggest otherwise is to overlook the extent to which such a challenge has been posed, in a much more complex way, by writers of British fiction. Indeed, these writers – drawing upon the novel's potential to create, through narrative, a world imagined from the (fictional) viewpoint of the marginalised – have highlighted the extent to which historical accounts are objective and exclusive.[118] In doing so, novelists have presented 'history' as a practice of account-giving which relies upon similar narrative structures and techniques as fiction. Yet, fiction, unlike historical writing, is not bound by a need (or ambition) to be objective; it is able, instead, to embrace subjective viewpoints and articulate experiences which are excluded from mainstream accounts. That is something that each of the novels discussed in this chapter – by Jonathan Coe, Alan Hollinghurst and Ali Smith – demonstrates. Moreover, the consideration of 'narrative', in these historians' exploration of Thatcherism, ignores the critical perspectives offered by literary theory: what they offer is an implicit definition of the term to simply denote 'an account', chronological in nature, without any consideration for issues that would concern literary critics engaging with the

[117] Chapter Three highlighted how fiction has, since the 1980s, acknowledged the failure of the intellectual left to articulate a clear alternative to Thatcherism. Malcolm Bradbury satirised left-wing academics' response to Thatcherism as class snobbery, while Hilary Mantel has, in more recent years, presented the left as fractured and incapable of offering a single, unified response to Thatcherism.

[118] Steven Connor recognises the novel's potential in this regard, especially in his account of its ability to articulate a "'history from below' or unofficial history" (1995, p.129). In reflecting upon Foucault's 'subject of history', he concludes that history is dependent upon narrative because narrative "secures the idea of history as a series of actions performed by and upon agents" (1995, pp.2-3). The novel, he adds, is a significant part of this process because it is one of "the most important ways in which the world is made accessible and comprehensible by narrative" (1995, p.3).

term – such as narrative voice, structure and viewpoint.[119] This chapter seeks to consider – building upon Homi K. Bhabha's recent work in narrative theory – how fictional accounts in, and since, the 1980s have challenged Thatcherism by destabilising 'dominant' historical narratives by recounting history from marginalised viewpoints.

Bhabha's seminal work on the relationship between nation and narration first appeared in the 1980s, but his latest work in narrative theory has developed this theme, focusing upon the relationship between narrating and freedom (with a specific emphasis on an individual freedom to narrate the history of a nation or culture). Bhabha has, in recent years, developed the concept of 'the right to narrate' which involves the practice of self-narration, defined as:

> the authority to tell stories, recount or recast histories, that create the web of social life and change the direction of its flow. The right to narrate is not simply a linguistic act; it is also a metaphor for the fundamental human interest in freedom itself, the right to be heard – to be recognized and represented. (2015, n.p.)[120]

The right to narrate was an idea which Bhabha described in his writing on democracy "as an act of communication through which the recounting of themes, histories and records is part of a process that reveals the transformation of human agency" (2003, p.34). This 'right' is, he says, not simply legal but ethical and aesthetic in nature: it is a right to speak, to be heard and develop connections. Narrative functions, within the process of self-narration as Bhabha describes it, as an attempt to reach out and make connections by articulating something to which others can relate and which can bind individuals together (2003, p.34). In his earlier writing on the subject, Bhabha asserted that, when "faced with crises of progress", the historical accounts that should be drawn upon to learn "lessons of equality and justice" are those of "marginalized, peripheralized peoples" (2003, p.28). In this sense, the focus of Bhabha's 'right to narrative' is upon questions of who can narrate and what the practice of narration reveals about an individual's status in society. For Bhabha,

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[119] Similarly, there is no consideration in their analysis of Thatcherism's own reliance upon a narrative framework (as outlined in Chapter One) to understand how Thatcher's own account of the decade (and those leading up to it) influenced the historical accounts they criticise.

[120] Connor views narrative in a similar way to Bhabha, concluding that the novel has been the medium in which narration as an act of liberation can take place most effectively because the novel, as a form, is not "merely the mirror or register of historical events" (1995, p.4). He proposes that the novel serves as a reminder that narrative is not simply about recording history, but that it is "one of the most important forms of symbolic action, or communicative behaviour, in which we as human beings indulge" (1995, p.4). Similarly, he sees the novel as "an especially ductile form in which to elaborate the narrative idea of the nation", as nation is "closely implicated" with "the exercise of narrative" (1995, p.44).

though, the individual does not exist in isolation but belongs to and in that sense represents a group: the right to narrate is a "communal or group right to address and be addressed, to signify and be interpreted, to speak and be heard" (2003, p.34). To self-narrate is, for marginalised individuals, to reach out to other members of a community while also representing that community. There is, in the formation of community described here, an important parallel to be drawn between his notion of self-narration and Rousseau's idea of nationalism. Rousseau saw nationalism, as identified in the epigraph, as possessing the ability to bind individuals together, through shared social bonds, in a single collective identity. This potential was, in Rousseau's theory, dependent upon a shared sense of nationhood which, in part, is grounded in a shared history. As discussed in Chapter One, Benedict Anderson's work on nationalism similarly identifies the importance of a shared history and common heritage in binding citizens together. But Bhabha's notion of self-narration exposes the limits of Rousseau's idea. Bhabha's essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation", first published in 1989 and subsequently included in *The Location of Culture* (1994), established a definition of the nation similar to Anderson's idea of the imagined community. In it, Bhabha presents the nation as a concept which is brought into being through discourse and exists as an entity to which people bind themselves. Mark Currie correctly observes that, though he sees the nation as a discursive construct, Bhabha also recognises that "no single discourse can convey the multiplicity of forces which make up that formation" (1998, p.92). The consequence of this limitation is that the nation exists, in Currie's words, as a "structure of exclusion" and "any attempt to totalise it will have to exclude, or marginalise, those parts of the nation that are not deemed representative of its total essence" (1998, pp.91-92). Steven Connor observes, though, that 'exclusion' is not always a straightforward act that is committed against a group: he highlights those cases of "self-inventing" communities (such as youth culture movements) which belong to the margins for the sole reason that they define themselves against the mainstream (1995, p.95). There is a degree of complexity (and contradiction) in recognising that some marginalised groups' communal identities are brought into being precisely because of their marginal, excluded status.

While this is true in some instances, such as those described by Connor, not all marginalised groups choose their exclusion in an act of self-definition. In the 1980s, the nation (and particularly the formation of the nation through narrative) was identified as a racially-exclusive entity by critics of Thatcherism like Salman Rushdie and Stuart Hall. It was the view of both that the narrative

account of the nation's history was the precise means by which exclusion occurred: the nation's history included only those who were ethnically 'pure' (to borrow Hall's term) and not those who belonged to the margins of society. Hall agreed with Anderson's idea of the nation existing as an imagined community and emphasised the concept of the nation's reliance upon narrative. For Hall, narratives (when associated with nation) do not just account for the history of the nation, but also serve to connect the everyday lives of citizens in the present with "a national destiny that preexisted us and will outlive us" (1992, p.293). It was on this basis that Hall was critical of the narrative of national history fashioned by the Thatcherites, as he saw them, because their idea of national identity was "symbolically grounded" in a history of "a *pure, original people*" and excluded people like him who were not 'pure' British (1992, p.295).[121] Similarly, in his essay "The New Empire Within Britain" (1982), Salman Rushdie described Thatcherism operating through a rhetoric about the nation's history and the use of a "we" which represented "an act of racial exclusion" (2010a, p.131). It was, he said, designed to "invoke the spirit of imperialism" and appeal to an imagined community of white Britons for whom the country's status as a former colonial power remained important to a sense of broader, contemporary national identity (Rushdie, 2010a, p.131). In Rushdie's view, narratives of heritage, as Thatcher told them, excluded references to what he described as the nation's "real history" (2010a, p.131). The novels discussed in the first part of this chapter, as I reveal, are similarly concerned with narrating repressed or untold aspects of "real history" to counter Thatcher's own historical account. Rushdie's warning about Thatcher was not limited to black citizens though: the thrust of his criticism of the British Nationality Act 1981 was that it "stole the birthright [*sic*] of every one of us, black and white" in its modification of *jus soli* (p.136).[122] However, the following year, Rushdie also acknowledged the failure of the left following the "dark fantasy" that was Thatcher's 1983 General Election victory: how, he wondered, was a government that had modified (and, in some cases, removed) a right to citizenship and which presided over mass unemployment re-elected? In "A General Election" (1983), he concluded Thatcher must have won the support of voters among the unemployed, among the women who would be impacted by her means-tested child benefit policy, among the trade unionists "whose rights she [proposed] to severely erode", and among the businessmen "whose businesses she [had] destroyed" (2010b,

[121] Mark Currie has commented on how Bhabha sees linear narratives about a nation's history as a facilitator of the process of exclusion because they present events as objective elements of a natural continuity rather than as a constructed account. The result, he suggests, is that immigrants appear at best, in such narratives, as "a late addition to the nation which do not alter its national character" and, at worst, as having contaminated the purity of the nation (1998, p.92).

[122] The concept of *jus soli* is explained in Chapter One.

p.160). This, to him, signalled that the British people had lost faith in the Labour Party – "the party they forged as their weapon" against the "ruling class" (Rushdie, 2010b, p.161).[123] For Rushdie, Thatcher's nationalism and defence of an exclusive portrait of British heritage was part of Thatcherism's appeal to such voters – even when other aspects of the Thatcherite project seemed not to favour their personal (and particularly economic) circumstances. That this nationalist rhetoric was based upon a myth which excluded so many who were, like Rushdie, marginalised in society did not appear to matter to either Thatcher or her voters. Yet the exclusivity of nationalist narratives, as constructed within Thatcherite discourse, should not be understood in solely racial terms. It would be easy – given the prominence of Bhabha, Rushdie and Hall in postcolonial studies – to focus exclusively upon black British writing, but to do so would be to overlook how other writers have engaged with this same trope and sought to challenge how British history has been constructed.[124] The previous two chapters focused upon the contradictions, or complexities, of the Thatcherite mantra of individual liberty (Chapter Two) and how Thatcherism wrought social and cultural divisions (Chapter Three). This chapter draws upon both these themes to explore how the act of narration reflects the freedom of those most marginalised within a divided Britain.

The novels discussed here explore the relationship between history and narrative. Each of them gives (imagined) voices to those who are excluded from, or marginalised within, mainstream accounts. What is more, they are each as concerned with uncovering or recounting forgotten or 'hidden' aspects of the past as they are with narrating from the margins in the present day. In *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *What a Carve Up!*, this is achieved through the metafictional representation of (auto)biography writing, while *Autumn* sees Smith turn to art history as an alternative to a more conventional, chronological narrative history. In doing so, each aims to challenge dominant historical accounts of contemporary British society and offer instead counter-narratives which articulate what Rushdie has called 'real histories'. In this sense, these writers demonstrate how the novel, as a form, can function as a way "of making history; they belong to

[123] This underscores the point I have made throughout this thesis: writers of the period were not simply anti-Thatcherite and to present them as such is reductive. Rather, they were engaged in thinking about the complex appeal and contradictory nature of Thatcherism, as well as the failure of the left to stop it.

[124] This is not to imply that 'black British writing' is homogenous in nature. Brooker (2010) has noted that the 1980s was a period in which writers were acutely aware that 'black' was a constructed and contested term, with many exploring "the Britishness of black life" in their work while others saw 'black' as an expression of resistance quite aside from 'Britishness' (p.158). Nor was it homogenous in form: James Procter has suggested that poetry, rather than the novel, was the primary medium in which black writers expressed their political response to the period (2000, p.97). Similarly, while I have identified similarities between Hall and Rushdie here, Brooker rightly identifies that the two were engaged in public debates about collective black identity and racial politics (2010, pp.157-58).

the history of events and they contribute to the historical narrative of those events" (Connor, 1995, p.128). Connor goes on to say that, because the nation constructs itself through narrative, "the novel may come to be regarded as one of the principal agencies by which the nation constructs itself" (1995, p.86). While I do not entirely agree with this view – in that the narratives about national identity articulated and upheld by political figures like Thatcher have surely been much more influential than the novel in this regard – it is nonetheless the case that, as the dominant literary form in Europe for some two hundred and more years, the novel has played a significant role in articulating similar, alternative, new, or counter-narratives of nation. The novel's role is not necessarily always to construct a nation, as Connor suggests: whether the texts included in this study attempt to construct a nation – or to deconstruct it, as it were – is a point to which I will return in the Conclusion.

The narrators deployed in these novels embody a duality that Steven Connor (1995) has identified in his description of 'outside insiders' and which Dominic Head (2002) calls a "dual perspective" (p.156).[125] It is in this mode of 'dual perspective' that they see articulated alternative perspectives on British history. For Connor, 'outside insiders' are those who were "previously held spatially and culturally at a distance" and "have retuned or have doubled back to the distant imperial centres to which they had previously been connected, as it were, only by their separation" (1995, p.85). It is clear, both here and in his description of their "divided or ambivalent ethnic belonging in Britain" (p.94), that Connor sees the 'outside insider' primarily through the prism of postcolonialism. Yet, we can (and should) understand this narrative mode as functioning beyond exclusively racial identities in order to see the broader way that this character trope has been deployed in response to Thatcherism. Indeed, Bryan Cheyette, for example, has extended the term's scope beyond race. Cheyette indicates that contemporary British fiction includes instances of the "inner exile" – writers marginalised "within Britain's national borders" (2003, p.70).[126] Will Beckwith's homosexuality and Michael Owen's social class are the means by which Hollinghurst

[125] Head is speaking specifically about Kazuo Ishiguro and his status as an immigrant in Britain, but the notion he refers to – that of Ishiguro's belonging to both the margins and the mainstream – can also be extended to other writers and their narrators.

[126] Cheyette's specific example is the British-Israeli writer Clive Sinclair. There are, however, numerous characters discussed in this study who embody the dual perspective of 'outside insiders' beyond race: John Self belongs to a middle class in economic but not cultural terms, Kathy H is a clone but her carer role affords her more authority than her peers, and the children of Pangbourne enjoy the benefits of their parents' wealth while detesting their politics and lifestyle. Indeed, in *The Iron Lady*, Mrs Thatcher herself is simultaneously a figure of leadership and a woman out of place in a man's world; at once the leader of her party but not fully accepted by its upper class.

and Coe, respectively, present their narrators as 'inner exiles' or 'outside insiders'. In *Autumn*, Elisabeth Demand's age, values and internationalism shape her minority status in a more right-wing Brexit Britain (as Smith presents it) in which the racial 'exclusiveness' of Thatcherite nationalism is no longer implicit but mainstream government policy. While Demand embodies Smith's politics to an extent, Smith's own status as an 'outside insider' or an 'inner exile' is compounded by the contrast between her Scottish identity and the Englishness of Thatcherite notions of Britishness. Beyond this, Connor himself gives us reason to look beyond race in our identification of 'outside insiders'. He writes that – beyond the external forces and pressures which challenge Englishness – "the multiplication of alternative forms of belonging and self-identification" meant that Englishness "began to come apart on the inside" (1995, p.3). What Connor is referring to, in broad terms, is the rise of identity politics which emerged out of the liberation movements of the 1960s and had gained prominence, by the 1980s, as an anti-authoritarian mode of thinking about society and culture. More recently, the role of identity politics in contemporary Western society has been the subject of books by Francis Fukuyama (2018) and Kwame Anthony Appiah (2018). Both writers display a scepticism towards the deployment of identity politics in recent years by the far left and the populist nationalist right. The title of the latter's recent book, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*, gestures knowingly to Rousseau's description of nationalism as the 'ties that bind', but it is Fukuyama's *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* that proposes a civic nationalism based on creed (rather than heritage or race) as a solution to populist nationalism and the rise of the far right. Appiah sees individuals as not possessing a single identity: instead, he suggests that we each have multiple identities which are refracted through one another. The trademarks of these separate identities operate, he suggests, in a subtle way: that is, as subconscious habits informed by identities rather than conscious decisions made to signify one's identity (2018, p.21). In the two novels discussed in the first part of this chapter, *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *What a Carve Up!*, identity politics are set against the backdrop of Thatcherism, ostensibly encouraged by the emphasis on individual liberty on the one hand but contradicted by other aspects of it (such as moral authoritarianism) on the other. Indeed, the 'outside insider' primarily serves, in these novels, to explore the contradictions inherent in Thatcherism. Moreover, the novels also demonstrate narrative's ability to foreground Appiah's observation that individual identities are made up of multiple (sometimes conflicting) facets. It is, in fact, the foregrounding of such contradictory identities that makes these narrators 'outside insiders'.

The first section of this chapter draws upon Isaiah Berlin's two concepts of liberty to consider how the process of biography writing in *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *What a Carve Up!* reflects upon the nature of the narrators' individual freedom. It is through the act of (auto)biography writing that Will Beckwith and Michael Owen, the respective narrators of these novels, come to discover that their long-held view of their own family history is deeply flawed. The discoveries they make about the past necessarily lead them to revise their own sense of individual identity in the present. In doing so, Hollinghurst and Coe highlight the constructed idea of history as an exclusionary process that has been discussed here. The second section of the chapter turns to Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) in the context of Brexit. As discussed in the Introduction and expanded upon later in this chapter, the UK's exit from the EU has led to widespread commentary regarding what Brexit says about Thatcherism today. Smith uses *Autumn* as a way of framing Brexit as a direct consequence of Thatcherite social attitudes to immigration and race, drawing explicit parallels between Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May. Smith's novel is also concerned with how history is written, with an emphasis on the reliability and integrity of politicians. She abandons a chronological history and explores how past political ideas are repeated in the present (as if a seasonal cycle) through a literary 'montage', as she has it.

History vs. Liberty: *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) and *What a Carve Up!* (1994)

In the introduction to the revised edition of *The Colour of Memory,* Geoff Dyer has written that the "word Thatcherism" never appears in the novel, not because it is "unimportant", but because it is "ever-present" (2012, n.p.). The novels I have discussed in this thesis have – to varying degrees – reflected an 'ever-presence' of Thatcherism. This 'ever-presence' has been examined in literary representations of individualism and society in the previous two chapters and, in this, it is considered in relation to how British history is mediated through Thatcherite discourses. By the time of Margaret Thatcher's election in 1979, the politics of the so-called 'consensus' had declined in popularity, particularly among the working-class people it was seemingly intended to help. Reflecting upon the declining popularity of left politics, Stuart Hall stated that Thatcherism had successfully "rooted itself in the contradictory experience of the working class under social democratic forms of 'statism' [and] presented itself as *the* 'popular force' in the 'struggle' of 'the

people' against 'the state"' (1980, p.26). The nature of this contradictory experience, and Thatcherism's exploitation of it, goes some way to explaining how Thatcher gained support from a part of the electorate that had not previously voted Conservative. Namely, for Denis Kavanagh, this was achieved by challenging the postwar worldview which reflected an 'us-and-them' mentality: Kavanagh argued that the political status quo which preceded Thatcher, and against which she positioned herself, "existed at the elite level and did not necessarily reflect popular values" (1987, p.57). The experience of this was contradictory in that the ruling elite acted on behalf of working-class people, but the ability of working-class people to represent themselves and act on their own behalf was limited by this arrangement. Thatcher's message was that she did not wish for the state to maintain this 'us-and-them' relationship, but that she believed in recognising each citizen as an individual able to make their own decisions free from the influence of the state.

The concept of aspirational individualism was one which permeated Thatcher's discourse throughout her period in office: as demonstrated in Chapter Two, the influence of this Thatcherite way of thinking about 'the individual' was extended by the New Labour project. Thatcher diagnosed that the promotion of aspirational and self-reliant individualism was a necessity to counter the ideology of the political left which, in her mind, actively sought to reinforce class distinctions. This, for Thatcher, enabled politicians to enforce collective identities and then "set them against one another" (1992, n.p.). It was for this reason that she declared that class was a "communist concept" (1992, n.p.) Her promotion of the idea of the self-reliant individual was perhaps most famously articulated in her declaration that there was "no such thing as society" (though it is not always seen as such). In an interview with *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987, Thatcher declared that the 'consensus' worldview had created a generation which considered it the obligation of the state to resolve their personal problems: for Thatcher, the people who were "casting their problems on society" in the hope that society would resolve their problems would find that there was "no such thing" (1987a, n.p.). Thatcher's critique of "society" as an abstract concept was part of her broader critical stance on the welfare state, preferring instead to appeal to a concept of individualism ostensibly founded upon the principles of self-reliance and Victorian

values.[127] As I have suggested, Thatcher framed her political mission in relation to the concept of liberty and articulated her commitment to freedom through an anti-communist, anti-statist liberation narrative about national renewal. In exploring the notion of liberty in relation to Thatcherism, this section focuses upon Jonathan Coe's *What a Carve Up!* (1994) and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) to consider how ideas of history (and particularly in the context of the family) clash with individual liberty and freedom. This analysis reveals that both these novels propose that true liberty is reflected in the act of narrating and in constructing a narrative of one's own accord (which, as I demonstrate, resonates with Homi Bhabha's recent work on 'self-narration').

Margaret Thatcher inherited a debate about liberty in the postwar period which had been significantly influenced by the liberal thinker Isaiah Berlin and, particularly, his influential 1958 essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", later published in his 1969 book *Four Essays on Liberty*.[128] Berlin was born in Latvia but grew up in Russia, witnessing both the February and October revolutions of 1917. His family, feeling increasingly fearful of Bolshevik rule, returned to Latvia in 1920 but, because of the anti-semitism they experienced there, moved to Britain in early 1921. He spent most of his life in the UK but continued to self-identify as a Russian Jew throughout this time. Much of his writing on liberty is informed by his early experiences in Russia and sets out a clear opposition to Marxism and communism. In "Two Concepts of Liberty", Berlin argued that those on the political left and those on the political right both claim to be in favour of the principles of 'freedom' and 'liberty', but that these terms are broad enough to evade precise definition. 'Liberty' and 'freedom' are, he says, not used to mean the same thing by all those who associate their politics with them. What Berlin observed at the time of writing was "an open war […] being fought between two systems of ideas which return different and conflicting answers" to "the question of

[127] In his autobiography, Thatcher's second Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, defined Thatcher's Victorian values as being "of the Samuel Smiles self-help variety" (1992, p.64). However, it is notable that Smiles (though not representative of all Victorians) opposed free-market economics, but Thatcher and Lawson did not. This is typical of the extent to which Thatcher's narrative account of British history draws upon the past in a selective and often contradictory way.

[128] Isaiah Berlin's work on liberty did not just set the intellectual climate for debates about liberty which Thatcher indirectly inherited. There is a more direct and explicit link between Berlin's work and Thatcherism. Ferdinand Mount, Head of the Number 10 Policy Unit from 1982-83 and responsible for a significant part of the 1983 Conservative manifesto (the blueprint for 'High Thatcherism'), was directly influenced by Berlin (who was a family friend). Mount's memoir, *Cold Cream* (2009), outlines how Berlin's lectures influenced his own political ideas and taught him that politics is naturally, and unavoidably, contradictory thereby requiring trade-offs (p.78).

obedience and coercion" (1969, p.2). In teasing out the differences between the two sides of this debate, he developed the concepts of positive and negative liberty.

Negative liberty refers to the freedom to choose, unhindered by state or other external intervention, so long as these choices do not infringe upon the liberty of others. He states that:

> Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others. If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved. (1969, p.3)

This, he says, is "the answer to the question 'What is the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?'" (1969, p.2). Positive liberty, by contrast, involves the act of giving up certain individual liberties and embracing a system of values within the context of which one can conceive of oneself as free. Liberty in the positive sense also involves a degree of intervention and is, Berlin states, "the source of control of interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that" (1969, p.2). It is between these two contrasting ideological positions that the "open war" to which Berlin referred took place. Negative liberty emphasises the rights of man to act without intervention so long as he does not harm others. But this definition of liberty, he makes clear, cannot apply to all men equally. Those at the bottom of the social order will remain there without some form of external intervention and the nature of the freedom they are able to exercise is less than that of those at the top.[129] He expresses the sentiment of this notion metaphorically: an Egyptian peasant, he says, is not free in the same way that an Oxford Don is free. The only way to change this situation is to limit the liberty of some as a means of enhancing the freedom of others. However, if the extent of this external intervention is too great and too centralised, it runs the risk of resulting in a totalitarian state. The problem then is this: "We cannot remain absolutely free, and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest. But total self-surrender is self-defeating" (1969, p.5), but how might this open war of liberties be resolved? Where does Thatcherism sit among these two concepts?

[129] This view is not unlike the one taken by Hayek in his disagreement with von Mises, as described in Chapter One.

The contradictory nature of Thatcherism – which led Stuart Hall to call it, on multiple occasions, Janus-faced – was frequently a point of criticism among the contributors to *Marxism Today*.[130] However, in the fiction of the 1980s these contradictions are often foregrounded in attempts to capture the complications of this new political agenda that was presented, not least by Thatcher herself, as a radical break with the past, rather than simply to act as explicit criticism. Will Beckwith in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* occupies a space between the centre and the margins of society: on the one hand he enjoys the economic liberalism that Thatcherism promoted (and the social individualism that was perhaps a side effect of this and implicit in discourses of 'freedom'), but he also falls victim – as a homosexual – to interpretations of Thatcher's socially conservative, morally authoritarian response to the permissiveness of the 1960s. Will's relationship with his family, and most notably his grandfather Lord Beckwith, dramatises this contradiction: Lord Beckwith enables Will's freedom, on the one hand, through inherited status and wealth, but he also discovers that his grandfather, a Conservative peer, has a history of persecuting gay men and promoting the continued criminality of homosexuality that Will practices. Hall's analysis of Thatcherism as an ideology suggests that it was precisely this contradictory nature that enabled it to gain popular support. Indeed, the concept of 'the popular' is significant in Hall's understanding of how and why Thatcherism was at once libertarian and authoritarian, and this led him to define Thatcherism's character as what he termed 'authoritarian populism'. Thatcherism did not simply represent a new contradictory ideology which appealed to a desire for free individualism on the one hand, and a strong, patriotic image of the nation on the other. Rather, Thatcherism replaced an existing contradiction and positioned itself on the side of the people as a force to resist, as Thatcher saw it, the unwarranted influence of the state and the related decline of Britain. Hall noted that Thatcher identified a "deep disillusionment among ordinary people" who, like her, viewed the state as a "centralised bureaucracy, a neutral beneficiary, which at best did things to and for people, but which was substantively outside their control" (1980, p.27). Thatcherism sought to replace this 'us and them' experience of 'consensus' politics – which Denis

[130] *Marxism Today*, published monthly between 1967 and 1991, was the official magazine of the Communist Party of Great Britain. During the 1980s, under Martin Jacques' editorship, the magazine offered an ongoing analysis of Thatcher and Thatcherism, including several articles by Stuart Hall. It was in this magazine that New Times theories were explored: these theories suggested that Thatcherism marked a significant break with the past, leading to a state of globalised, post-industrial postmodernity. For more, see James Procter's *Stuart Hall* (2004).

Kavanagh says "existed at the elite level and did not necessarily reflect popular values" (1987, p.57) – with a discourse of 'you and us, we equals'.

Kavanagh's analysis of Thatcher's speeches in the run up to the 1979 General Election revealed two major themes: a negative emphasis on "socialism" and a positive emphasis on "freedom", a "free society" and "freedom under the law" (1987, p.5). But Thatcher did not simply promise unrestrained freedom: indeed, Andrew Riley – archivist of Thatcher's papers at Churchill College, Cambridge – has noted that the idea of equality under the law (i.e. freedom within limits) is one of the most common themes in Thatcher's speeches and letters (2015, n.p.). Hall notes that while she associated the Labour Party with unaccountable state power, her own authoritarianism was explicit. One example of a typically Thatcherite concept which is simultaneously authoritarian and libertarian is that of the "self-reliant individual". This notion appeals to the working-class people who, Hall suggested, believed that the state operated for them, but was not accountable to them, by suggesting that working-class life could be improved if individuals were given more control over their own lives (a typical idea of liberty in the negative sense). Yet, it also has authoritarian appeal – while it serves as an offer of freedom to those who want it, it also implies that people who are not willing to contribute fairly to the nation and pull their own weight must not be able to continue as they are. This is the point that Thatcher made in her infamous *Woman's Own* magazine interview in which she declared that people who did not take responsibility for their own lives, and instead looked to society to solve their problems for them, would find that there was 'no such thing as society'.

To grasp the apparently contradictory nature of Thatcherism whereby it is at once authoritarian and libertarian, as Hall has it, is vital in order to understand how Thatcherism – and its claim to liberate the individual – are dealt with in Coe's *What a Carve Up!* and in Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library*. Clearly Thatcherism's successful attempts to appeal to working-class voters, as outlined, does not support the claims made by literary critics (such as Louisa Hadley, Ryan Trimm or Kim Duff) that Thatcherism was overwhelmingly opposed by, or damaging to, the working classes. Kim Duff, for example, discusses the privatisation of council houses and concludes that Thatcher's policies had a bleak impact upon working-class families (2014, p.2): but Right to Buy was a popular policy from which many working-class individuals benefited. Trimm does not consider what Thatcherism responded to during the 1970s, or how it gained popular

support, instead he concludes that Thatcher sought to "systematically destroy the institutions of the welfare state" and adds that the public were outraged (2010, p.159).

What a Carve Up! is narrated by author Michael Owen who is hired by Tabitha Winshaw to write a biography of the Winshaw family: the broad outline of the novel's plot is much the same as Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library,* in that a young, naïve central protagonist is hired to write a biography by the elderly and eccentric subject of the work. In both instances, though, the process of writing a narrative account of the subject's family's history turns out to be a well-planned exercise designed to facilitate the author's discovery of something about their own heritage and, in the process, force them to rethink their own identity. It is by this means that the novels attempt to recover the "real histories" to which Salman Rushdie referred. Will Beckwith first encounters his subject, Lord Nantwich, in a remote public toilet in London where both men are looking for sex. The novel frequently foregrounds the extent to which pursuing sex with other men had become an 'underground' sub-culture and one in which the police were covertly operating. However, Lord Nantwich has an unexpected heart attack and Will is forced to intervene to save him: this is the beginning of a series of events which lead to the two developing a close friendship. Will believes that Nantwich invited him to ghost-write his autobiography (and, given that Nantwich was born in 1900, a biography of the twentieth century) because he is a historian. On the contrary, Nantwich solicits Will to undertake this work having discovered that Will's grandfather is Lord Beckwith, the man who persecuted Nantwich for his homosexuality and made a public example of him. It is Nantwich's intention that Will should discover that his privilege and wealth are inherited from a man whose position in society was determined by his persecution of people like Will. In *What a Carve Up!,* Michael Owen is similarly misled over the reason for his employment: in this instance, he is under the impression that he has been hired to write the Winshaw biography because he is a writer of some prominence. It is only at the end of the novel that he discovers that Tabitha Winshaw hired him with the intention of him discovering the truth about his biological father, that is, that his father was her brother's co-pilot during the Second World War who mysteriously survived their plane being shot down. The end result, for both narrators, is that they are forced to reconsider their own identity and, more specifically, the historical (and genealogical) circumstances which have shaped their individual identities.

Both novels also attempt to capture the contradictory nature of the political moment of the 1980s on a formal level. In doing so, both also draw attention to the historical narrative

framework upon which Thatcherism was reliant and through which it articulated itself. *What a Carve Up!* achieves this by merging fictional, metafictional and non-fictional accounts together in one fragmented and anachronistic narrative. For example, the novel itself is a work of fiction, though it makes reference to non-fictional events (such as the ousting of Thatcher by Conservative MPs). Within the context of this fictional narrative, Owen is a writer of fiction, but his biography of the Winshaws marks his first turn to non-fiction writing (though this is, in reality, still fictional). However, even within the context of the novel, the biography becomes "a serious mess" because Owen has allowed his imagination to fill the gaps between facts and now "[parts] of it read like a novel and parts of it read like a history" (p.91). At later points in the novel the biography's blending of fact and fiction is criticised by an unidentifiable authorial voice, which turns out to be the editor of Owen's biography, which is published posthumously. This voice interjects in a footnote to the novel to warn readers that Owen's account is not factual. The implication here is that one discourse's claim to be factual (the biography) is undermined by a fictional discourse (the imagined editor) which highlights that the account is, indeed, fictional: this, in turn, makes what the footnote states factual. In blending fact and fiction in this way, Coe's novel offers a commentary on the process of constructing a narrative account of the past, and the extent to which a true account of the past can be written without it becoming a blend of fact and fiction.

In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, Hollinghurst raises a similar issue: if marginalised figures in society are not able to offer an account of themselves and of their experiences in the present, how can an historical account of that period claim to be an accurate representation of society? Hollinghurst's use of form in the novel is altogether more conventional than Coe's (this, perhaps, being on account of the fact that Hollinghurst takes inspiration from Ronald Firbank whereas Coe looks to the more experimental B.S. Johnson).[131] Nonetheless, Hollinghurst also writes a novel about the formation of a narrative account which is similarly concerned with the process of writing a biography. The novel is not as explicitly metafictional as Coe's – there are, for example, no footnotes which directly address the reader – but Will's reading of Nantwich's diaries highlights

[131] This is perhaps most evident in their authors' own backgrounds before becoming writers. Hollinghurst followed his undergraduate degree at Oxford University with a research degree which considered Ronald Firbank, E. M. Forster and L. P. Hartley. Of the three subjects of his thesis, Firbank is directly mentioned in *The Swimming-Pool Library*. Similarly, Coe also studied English Literature, writing a PhD at Warwick University on intrusive narration in Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749) and other comic novels. There are obvious comparisons between *Tom Jones* and *What a Carve Up!*, particularly Coe's own notion of the intrusive narration and black humour. In 2004, Coe published a biography of B.S. Johnson which won the 2005 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction.

that his formal training as a historian has only provided him with an 'official' account of the 20th century, and one from which the perspective of homosexuals has been excluded. At one point in his diaries, Nantwich considers the possibility that historical accounts of the present moment may not represent his experience or values. Nantwich and a friend set up a boxing gym to help local disadvantaged boys, but one of the boys joins a far-right group and attacks Nantwich's friend for being gay. Nantwich's diary records that, at this moment, he looked to the Union flag erected above the gym and thought: "I wonder what that flag had come to mean now" (p.244). The Union flag was used by groups like the National Front, but to represent a different understanding of Britain's past than the one Nantwich has experienced (or, indeed, Thatcher articulated). His suggestion that the flag could take on, and have projected onto it, multiple (and contradictory) meanings is indicative of the extent to which nationalism is reliant upon constructing a narrative (rooted in fact and fiction) in order to support a particular understanding of Britain and Britishness. This argument, much like Thatcher's own suggestion that society was an abstraction, is congruent with the position adopted by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1983). In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson posits that the nation cannot be understood as a community of people who have a face-to-face relationship with those who share their national identity; this would be largely impractical, and it is obvious, he suggests, that not all those who subscribe to a particular national identity could conceivably know one another. Rather, Anderson avers that national identities are constructed in the imagination: that people associate themselves with a chosen vision of the nation and imagine their fellow countrymen to be part of a shared communion. The significance of this scene in *The Swimming-Pool Library* is that it demonstrates what happens when two conflicting ideas of Britishness come into conflict with one another, each contesting the other's claim to be represented by the Union flag. The link between nationalism and individualism is clear in Anderson's work. For example, Anderson points out that despite the "objective modernity" of the nation state, individuals see the nation in relation to themselves and, therefore, project upon it a "subjective antiquity" (2006, p.5).

The narrators of both novels make discoveries about their own lives during the process of biographical writing: they each feel that the influence others have had over them (about which they were ignorant) has coerced them into living a life beyond their own control. For Michael Owen this is the realisation that the Winshaw family has not only had indirect control over him through their media and commercial monopoly by limiting his choices as a consumer and a citizen, but that

they are also responsible for the death of both his adoptive and biological fathers. Will Beckwith, upon learning of his grandfather's actions in persecuting Nantwich, decides that he cannot write the biography. Lord Nantwich explains that his main aim was for Will to learn of his own past, and Will subsequently discovers that his brother-in-law had known of Lord Beckwith's past all along: while Will had lived with the illusion of freedom as a result of his family's wealth, others were aware that this freedom was precariously dependent upon his grandfather not discovering the truth about Will's sexuality. The suggestion in both instances is that the idea of the free and autonomous individual, liberated from the influence of the state, is a fabrication. Instead, others in positions of power and influence are able to assert indirect control over the two narrators and determine the conditions in which they are able to exercise what liberty they have.

As well as both narrators making discoveries about their lives, the novels' endings also persuade readers – who are equally unaware of the truth – to revisit the events of the novel and revise them in light of what has been revealed. The effect of this is not simply that readers must consider how the revelations change the nature of the characters, but that they themselves become engaged in a process of having to revise the narrative account that they have just read and re-imagine an alternative one which can be considered 'true' or 'real'. This, for example, occurs when Michael Owen discovers that he did not coincidentally meet a fan and an old publishing company contact on the same day, but that they were hired by Tabitha Winshaw to coerce Owen into agreeing to write her biography. Ultimately, what this process of revising the novel's events draws attention to is the extent to which both novels' narrators have not been truly free, but rather subjected to a series of scenarios staged or influenced by others in which they felt the illusion of freedom. This is a deliberate strategy on Coe's part to use the narrative and the experience of reading to guide the reader through a reflection upon the nature of freedom and choice. In Berlin's terms, Thatcherism represents a form of negative liberty in which individuals are free from external interference. Yet, in the context of Thatcherism, this only refers to the ambition to 'roll back the state': according to these novels, what emerges (perhaps even beyond Thatcher's intention) are other forms of control and coercion which limit the freedom of individuals. In *What a Carve Up!* this is explored through monopolisation: the Winshaw family – and its youngest generation in particular – have influence across all sectors of society and manipulate public services and private enterprises to serve their own best interests. In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, the power exerted over some individuals is not entirely divorced from the state. Hollinghurst represents a 1980s in which

policemen still actively pursue gay men by stealth means, including seducing them and citing their reciprocal advances as evidence of their guilt. Will, however, does not experience much of this because of his family name and his wealth. For Hollinghurst, the limitations placed upon individual freedom during this period are determined by class as much as by sexuality. It is not until his friend, James, is arrested by an undercover police officer that Will realises that he is not part of the "normal gay world" (p.192) but an exclusive one. Will's heritage allows him to live outside of this experience but, when his friends fall victim to it, he is confronted by the fact they do not share the same heritage. Randall Stevenson has argued that *The Swimming-Pool Library* is "historically specific in celebrating a relatively carefree phase of gay life" (2004, p.505), but this summary is emblematic of a broader tendency in literary criticism to read Hollinghurst's representation of Britain in the 1980s as a homogenous, near-utopian experience for gays: it is difficult to justify such an interpretation. Such a view overlooks the ways in which sexuality intersects with issues of class, gender, race and nation both in the novel and in society at that time: Will's ability to exercise a greater degree of freedom, compared with other gay men, on account of his class is one such example of this. If Will is, as Stevenson suggests, "carefree", then this is only because of his initial ignorance, and his is by no means representative of "gay life" more generally in Hollinghurst's novel. Yet, for all that it is his family ties that afford him this freedom, Will still does not embrace the family values espoused by Mrs Thatcher. Through Will's attitude to his family, Hollinghurst exploits and lays bare an apparent contradiction between Thatcher's family values on the one hand, and her case for individual freedom on the other. Will, even prior to discovering his grandfather's history, considers heterosexual nuclear family life (based on his sister's marriage) to be restrictive. Though he does not question that the children's material needs will be met, Will considers his sister to be a bad mother (her children are an inconvenience to her ability to enjoy a social life), and his brother-in-law to be emotionally detached from his children; his role is simply to sustain their privilege. In both cases, the children limit the freedom of their parents (to spend their time and money how they wish), and the parents limit the freedom of their children by imposing upon them an unrealistic, "picturesque and romantic" (p.56) idea of how childhood should be. By contrast

though, Will, who undermines the more socially conservative elements of Thatcherite discourse, is seemingly free from the burden of family life, and children in particular.[132]

Coe's novel also articulates its criticism of Thatcherism through the representation of the family. Members of the younger generation of the Winshaw family work in a diverse range of public and private sector roles within financial, cultural, agricultural, media and political organisations, and they can exercise vast degrees of unaccountable power which Michael Owen perceives to have, in some way, had an indirect effect on him. The Winshaws are all self-centred and embrace a form of individualism which has no regard for the welfare of others and no sense of social justice. Yet again Coe does not declare that this is what Thatcher intended – in fact Thatcherism is not mentioned explicitly – opting instead to suggest an ever-presence of Thatcherism, as described by Geoff Dyer. Rather, Coe presents the Winshaws' greed as a by-product of negative liberty and a lack of regulation: evidently the Winshaws have not embraced Thatcher's fondness for Victorian values and being neighbourly. Within the novel, the extent to which the Winshaws occupy the role of Berlin's Oxford Don while Michael Owen is the Egyptian peasant is most clearly expressed through, in Homi Bhabha's terms, the act of self-narration. The act of re-writing the past is a common trope in fiction, often used by characters to comprehend the issues of the present by returning to the past. Winston Smith in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) is a typical example of this. Smith tries to escape the dystopia in which he finds himself, both physically and mentally, by hiding in an alcove to write his diary, but early on the novel states: "For whom, it suddenly occurred to him, was he writing this diary?" (1949, p.9). It is, though, less significant, in light of Bhabha's suggestion, to ask for whom Winston is writing and more insightful to ask about whom he is writing. The answer to this is himself: even within a dystopic environment, Smith retains at least the authority to write about himself and his experiences, to use this writing process to work through his issues and represent himself. This is not the case for Michael Owen or Will Beckwith. Indeed, the contrast in how Owen and Beckwith are deployed as narrators is

[132] Queer theorist Lee Edelman has argued, in *No Future* (2004), that the image of the child has been deployed in political discourse as a means of shaping "the logic within which the political itself must be thought" and a way of framing political debates (p.2). A consequence of this, he suggests, is that a heteronormative framework is imposed which renders "unthinkable […] the possibility of a queer resistance" (p.2). Will Beckwith's 'resistance' (though he does not actively think of living a gay life, with numerous sexual partners, thus) appears not to be limited in the way that Edelman suggests. More significantly though, Hollinghurst – by making explicit Rupert's desire to be gay like his uncle – inverts the role of the child, as Edelman sees it, and uses Rupert to resist the ostensible faultless concept of the heterosexual, nuclear family which is, according to Edelman, otherwise protected from criticism in the name of defending the child.

significant. Unlike Winston Smith, Owen and Beckwith do not live in totalitarian states, but nonetheless self-narration does not seem possible in the fictionalised Thatcherite societies that Coe and Hollinghurst present. Michael Owen's own life is, as one editor in the novel tells him, not sexy enough to sell and, if it cannot sell, it is of no value. The project upon which he works throughout the novel is a biography of the Winshaw family whose power and influence – in Berlin's terms – contracts the space in which Owen can be free: he is financially dependent upon writing the biography and, as previously mentioned, the way they exercise their own liberty indirectly impacts upon his life. In this sense then, Owen's inability to resolve the issues he faces through the act of writing (issues, for example, regarding his relationship with his mother and the discovery of his real biological father, which he struggles to discuss verbally) is indicative of the extent to which he does not possess the freedom to be heard or represented, as Bhabha describes. By contrast though, Hilary Winshaw, a right-wing tabloid columnist and commentator, occupies the unique and privileged position of being able to narrate and represent a version of herself to a national audience which is not genuine. Hilary describes what she writes as "a bit of junk for the newspapers" and adds: "You don't think I'd share my *beliefs* – anything that was actually *mine* – with all those people, do you?" (p.172). Perhaps not, but Owen is certainly dependent upon narrating Hilary's (and her family's) life on her behalf, while also using this process to attempt to work through his own issues: the result of this, though, is that he finds the Winshaws' influence in every part of his life. Despite the fact that Hilary chooses not to offer a representation of her true self, the extent of the freedom she has – as a member of the privileged Winshaw family – to narrate without purpose emphasises the extent to which she and Owen do not both experience freedom in the same way. Owen's life is not significant enough to warrant narration even by himself (he could choose to do this but, it would not be financially rewarding). By contrast, Winshaw has benefited from her social influence (largely down to her family legacy) which allows her to narrate a caricatured version of herself and fabricate news stories. Such stories positively influence the public's perception of the Thatcher government which, Coe suggests, has indirectly (and perhaps unintentionally) allowed her to exercise liberty at the expense of others.

Will Beckwith's freedom is limited in two ways. First, the legal and social prejudices experienced by some gay men limits the audience with whom he could share such an account. This is the most obvious way in which he is not free, though his wealth and status mean such prejudices do not restrict him in the way they do some of his contemporaries. This is the second way in which

his freedom is limited. He is coerced in that his privilege helps to maintain his ignorance of how other gay men experience London in the 1980s. Will, in theory, is free to offer an account of himself in the way that Bhabha suggests – unlike Owen, he did not write the biography out of financial necessity – but such an account would be marred by his ignorance of his own family's history. Bhabha's right to narrate includes "the authority to tell stories, recount or recast histories" (2015, n.p.), but prior to Will's discovery about his grandfather he articulates a family history of which he is proud: the only criticism he makes of his family are broader points about heterosexual family life. Following the revelation however, his attitude towards his family becomes more critical and leads him to question his own identity. Evidently, when he is no longer bound by others' efforts to limit his knowledge of his family's past, he does not choose to offer the same account of himself as he previously had. It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that Will's liberty is reduced in a subtler way than Owen's, but both are restricted by the actions of others. If the specific version of negative liberty that Thatcherism represents does not permit individuals to directly limit the freedom of others, then what Hollinghurst and Coe are concerned with in *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *What a Carve Up!* is the extent to which the actions of some indirectly limit others' liberty.

Thatcher's Legacy:
Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016)

In recent years, writers of contemporary fiction have engaged with the legacy of Thatcherism in relation to specific themes or events. Writers like John Lanchester fictionalised the circumstances and impact of the financial crash of 2008 but, in doing so, implicitly looked back to Thatcherism. Lanchester's *Capital* (2012) deals with the banking crisis of the 21st century but, the author makes clear, it is a story of a banking system that was born out of Thatcherism (Anonymous, 2015, n.p.). Recent years have also seen a series of novels, like Jonathan Coe's *Number 11* (2015) and Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012), focussed on political economy and the Coalition government (2010-15) – or, to borrow the defining word of the post-crash society, novels about austerity.[133] Likewise, these too have not been simply concerned with the present: Coe's novel's intertextual references to his own *What a Carve Up!* highlight a clear sense of continuity (in his view) from the 1980s to now,

[133] The title of Coe's novel both signalled that this was his eleventh novel and gestured, knowingly, to the common abbreviation of the office of the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer, 11 Downing Street.

while Smith's novel was, in her own terms, about the changing nature of England wrought by a culture of privatisation that began long before David Cameron became Prime Minister (Marcus, 2013, n.p.). A by-product of the critical examination of Thatcher's legacy through such specific thematic prisms has been the spawning of literary sub-genres, such as Katy Shaw's (2015) identification of "crunch lit". The novels that belong to these sub-genres look back to Thatcherism as well as at the present political moment, drawing connections between the two. The novel's allegorical potential allows contemporary fiction to be 'about' both Thatcherism and more recent political developments, even though it may not deal with Thatcherism in explicit terms (conveying, instead, Thatcherism's 'ever-presence'). The most recent wave of novels to look back to Thatcherism whilst examining the present political moment are mostly concerned with the politics of Brexit. These (potentially) include Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and *Winter* (2017), Douglas Board's *The Time of Lies* (2017), Anthony Cartwright's *The Cut* (2017), Amanda Craig's *The Life of the Land* (2017), Adam Thorpe's *Missing Fay* (2017), Sam Byers' *Perfidious Albion* (2018) and Jonathan Coe's *Middle England* (2018). The legacy of Thatcherism, in such texts, is largely explored through social attitudes to race, immigration, and the contrasting of a mythical past and a present-day nation 'invaded' by immigrants.

In the Introduction to this thesis I observed that Kristian Shaw has coined the term 'Brexlit' – a reference to literary responses to Brexit – but the novels I have listed here demonstrate why it is too early to give precise definition to such a category.[134] There are, certainly, distinct similarities between these novels. They are each concerned with, and represent instances of, racism, xenophobia, hostility between cultures and/or anti-immigration sentiment. There is also a contrast, in each, between the metropolitan and the 'left behind', between towns and cities and, in blunt terms, between London and not-London. But in the texts mentioned, the social divisions and the notion of a 'divided nation' highlighted in Chapter Two are far less subtle. While much of the division is racial in nature, there is also a sense of highlighting those who are economically divided from an often London-centric elite. Aside from these similarities though, caution should be exercised in claims concerning the precise nature and the defining characteristics of this recently

[134] The term 'Brexlit' has clearly taken root. It has appeared in mainstream publications like *The Financial Times* (2017), *The Economist* (2018) and *The New European* (2018). Jonathan Coe also used the term in a 2018 *Guardian* article. It is not always defined in the same way, however: in *The New European,* the term denotes "books, films, and television feeding on an enduring national nostalgia disguised as patriotism" (Millar, 2018, n.p.). Here 'Brexlit' describes texts which share the (apparently) nostalgic, backward-looking nature of Brexit, whereas Shaw defines 'Brexlit' as novels which are usually more critical of Brexit Britain.

constructed sub-genre. Only four of these authors – Ali Smith, Jonathan Coe, Sam Byers and Anthony Cartwright – have made explicit that their work is about Brexit (with the latter commissioned specifically to write a Brexit 'anniversary' novel).[135] By contrast, at the 2018 Charleston festival, Amanda Craig resisted claims that hers is a Brexit novel, despite it sharing many of the emerging conventions of other Brexit novels. Douglas Board's *Time of Lies* imagined a future UK in which the two-party system had broken down after Brexit and a new populist radical right party formed a government. In reality, the 2017 General Election represented a return to a two-party system, undermining the novel's central projection of what 'Brexit Britain' would look like. We may speculate, therefore, that an emerging 'Brexit novel' sub-genre may deal with issues of race, the contrast between towns and cities (or the urban and the rural) and the economically 'left behind', but it is too early to define the category beyond these broader observations. The novel discussed in this section – Ali Smith's *Autumn* – stands out from the other Brexit novels discussed because it is the one that makes the most explicit link between Thatcherism and the Conservative government delivering Brexit. Smith draws specific parallels between Thatcherism and the politics of the UK's second female Prime Minister, Theresa May. That she does so makes it necessary to first explore the extent to which Thatcherism and 'Mayism' are similar.

Theresa May – who was elected to parliament in 1997 and went on to become the longest-serving Home Secretary in over sixty years – became the Leader of the Conservative Party on 11th July 2016 and Prime Minister on 13th July 2016. She resigned the Conservative Party leadership on Friday 7th June 2019, thus triggering a leadership contest which would usher in a new Prime Minister. From an early point in Theresa May's premiership, a narrative emerged in the press – on the left and the right – which claimed that she and Brexit (the defining mission of her government) marked the end of Thatcherism. However, there is an understanding, implicit in each of these articles, that Thatcherism is predominantly, if not exclusively, an economic phenomenon: that is to say, Thatcherism is presented as a form of economic libertarianism, an outright rejection of the state and a relentless drive towards globalisation. Theresa May, by contrast, is described as a "neo-statist" (Marshall, 2016) and a communitarian (Cowley, 2017). This perception of May largely rests on the seemingly more interventionist tone set at the start of her premiership and, in particular,

[135] *The Cut* was published on 23rd June 2017 to mark one year since the vote to leave the EU.

her commitment to an industrial strategy and the connotations associated with that phrase. But to what extent is it true that May marks a decisive break with decades of uninterrupted Thatcherism?

Across the articles which reinforce the 'post-Thatcherite' narrative, several common distinctions emerge. Thatcher is generally presented as a globalist, an economic liberal in favour of globalisation, and in favour of a form of individualism which amounts to greed and self-interest. May, on the other hand, is parochial, with 'Middle England' sensibilities, a protectionist, an interventionist and a communitarian. These are crass and simplistic observations, and indeed much of how May is described could also be applied to aspects of Thatcher's outlook, but they are nonetheless prominent tropes in this broader narrative. In a claim which is typical of how May is framed within this narrative, Will Davies (2016) argues that May's discourse – such as her focus on "ordinary people" as opposed to David Cameron's on "hard-working families" – is evidence of a break with neoliberal thinking. He suggests that the nature of the Home Office, quoting one department official describing it as "the voice of the working class inside Whitehall", can account for May's different political outlook to Cameron's. In Davies' view, the Home Office also explains May's supposedly more protectionist economic position: he contrasts the Home Office with the Treasury, stating that the former is concerned with citizenship and security but that the latter sees national borders only as a barrier to economic growth. James Forsyth (2017) cites May's early proposals regarding curbs on executive pay, workers on boards, and limits on foreign takeovers, as evidence of a move leftwards, to a more protectionist and interventionist position. However, he also suggests that there was "an element of party politics to this" in which May's discourse was consciously intended to win over those on the centre left who no longer supported Labour under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Much of what May promised in her early premiership, such as the pledge to put workers on boards, was not delivered, in part because of the 2017 General Election result (which saw the Conservatives lose their parliamentary majority meaning May could not deliver all her manifesto commitments) and partly because of the May government's (ultimately failed) focus on delivering Brexit.

Another common theme which underpins the apparent distinction between Thatcher and May is the incorrect but well-established view that the Conservative Party is polarised, divided between Thatcherites and One Nation Conservatives. Paul Goodman – the editor of *Conservative Home* – reiterates a cliché about Thatcher 'rolling back the frontiers of the state' and says that May could happily roll them forwards. Of course, in many different ways Thatcher did expand the state

rather than roll it back, but Goodman's observation reiterates the idea of the Thatcherite/One Nation divide. This understanding is shared by Eliza Filby who refers to the party's "old Thatcherite v one-nation split" and by Michael Kenny and Nick Pearce (2017) who suggest that May is attempting to "decouple Conservative Euroscepticism from Thatcherism to create "a new fusion" of Euroscepticism with "Tory "One Nation" economic and social traditions". In addition, Kenny and Pearce add that May represents the "end of the neoliberal consensus" and the "revival of patterns of thinking that pre-date Thatcherism" (2017, n.p.). Ultimately, then, what has emerged is a narrative in which May is presented as a fundamental break with what is, across these articles, interchangeably called a Thatcherite/neoliberal/Cameroonian consensus. We are told this is not simply a break with Cameron but with Thatcher and all Conservative leaders since. While this account has become dominant and widespread, it is by no means unchallenged. There have also been articles that have identified similarities between Thatcher and May. A minority of these articles are concerned with policy. Only George Trefgarne – writing for the pro-free market, neoliberal website *CapX* – challenges the view that they are different on policy. For Trefgarne, May's industrial strategy might have initially been wrapped up in an "interventionist rhetoric", but he says that this – like the "crazy demand to put workers on company boards" – has been "jettisoned" (2017, n.p.). He sees the substance of May's industrial strategy in completely different terms to those who have cited it as evidence of interventionism. Rather, he describes the policy as "a more thoughtful attempt to address long-term competitive issues", adding that it is "the sort of approach Lady Thatcher might have adopted" (Trefgarne, 2017, n.p.). Trefgarne, like James Forsyth, believes that the seemingly more left-wing discourse used to introduce the industrial strategy was a conscious effort to win over moderate Labour voters.

In these articles, there are multiple observations that May possesses Thatcher's shared affinity with 'the people' and the country; that they both feel a sense of shared belonging to the Britain of 'the people' and not to some form of elite. Goodman (2016) notes how Thatcher and May both contrast 'the elite' and 'the people', choosing to side with the latter rather than the former. Similarly, David Runciman (2017) suggests that Thatcher and May both have an affinity with the membership of the Conservative Party that their predecessors did not. They share the sensibilities, and understand the culture, of what Rafael Behr (2017) calls "Middle England 'common sense"'. Behr also sees in May's politics qualities and values which mirror Thatcher's: "redoubtable self-reliance", charity, manners, a moral code and nostalgia. While these similarities

do not necessarily focus on policy, they do suggest that Thatcher and May share a cultural outlook; that they are able to identify with 'the people' and distance themselves from elites; and that their personal appeal reaches beyond typical Conservative voters. However, one of the means by which they were able to achieve this, rather than simply because they fulfilled the mandate of the people, was because of their distinct nationalism. In thinking more about this, my aim is to contribute to this latter narrative, of continuity and similarity between Thatcher and May. While we do not have a clear sense of May's politics from a policy perspective, we have a much better-informed understanding of the kind of country and national feeling that May seeks to create. As Stephen Glover (2017) put it, "we still have no very clear idea what 'Mayism' is" but we do understand the "character and mood" of Mayism. This, in part, is due to the extent to which Brexit has dominated May's government's agenda and become the defining characteristic of the current political moment.

One of the reasons given in support of the suggestion that May has ended Thatcherism is the notion that she belongs to the One Nation wing of the party – and that she is opposed to neoliberal economics. The problem here, however, is that Thatcherism was never simply neoliberalism by another name. At the heart of Thatcher's political philosophy was a commitment to civic nationalism – something to which Thatcher had dedicated herself long before her involvement with the New Right. A key reason for this commitment was her interpretation of Benjamin Disraeli's One Nation vision. In her 1996 Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, she equated other interpretations of One Nation Conservatism with "No Nation Conservatism" (Evans, 2009, p.103). As Stephen Evans points out, while there was unquestionably a divide between Thatcher and others in the party, Thatcher was not defining herself against the One Nation tradition, but "deploying an alternative (though equally legitimate)" One Nation ideal which emphasised patriotism over paternalism. But Thatcher did not just adopt the One Nation brand for reasons of short-term opportunism. In 1949 she wrote of the need to embrace "Disraeli's vision reinterpreted in the modern Conservative creed of one free nation" (qtd. in Evans, 2009, p.110). In fact, as Evans suggests, Thatcher's interpretation of Disraeli was arguably correct. It had been Disraeli's intention to make the Conservative Party the party of nation and to make patriotism natural Conservative territory. Evans concludes that "Thatcher may have been closer to the true spirit of Disraeli than the party she led for nearly 16 years". Thatcher certainly thought so, telling the Conservative Party's backbench MPs in 1987 that her government had succeeded in delivering the

One Nation vision in a way no previous government had. In addition, Thatcherism was not completely alien to the One Nation Tories. E. H. H. Green (2002, p.14) indicates that, in some shape or form, Thatcherite thinking had existed in the Conservative Party before 1975 – and much of it within the One Nation backbench group. David Seawright describes as "weak" the argument that the One Nation group was only ever a "paternalistic […] wing of the party" rather than a series of diverse strands bound together by the One Nation banner (2010, p.31). What we ultimately get here is a sense that Thatcher belonged to a strand of One Nation thinking which is less often associated with the term than those stereotypes projected onto Theresa May. This is underscored by Thatcher's 1985 speech to the Young Conservatives in which she stated that at "the heart of our philosophy lies this fundamental truth: that the success of a nation depends on the efforts and enterprise of its citizens. For us, it doesn't matter who you are, or who your family is. It's what you are, and what you can be, that counts" (1985b, n.p.). This, she said, was "not some new principle dreamt up in 1979. It comes straight from the "One Nation" pamphlet of 1950, written, amongst others, by Ted Heath, Iain Macleod Robert Carr and Enoch Powell" (1985b, n.p.). Thatcher, as this speech demonstrates, did not see herself as alien to the One Nation tradition, but as part of it: for Thatcher, to bring down inflation and to liberate the individual from statism were examples of how her governments had put One Nation thinking into practice.

Where there is a clear continuity from Thatcher to May is in their nationalist interpretation of One Nation. Indeed, academics have already begun to document the development of May's self-conscious nationalism through the prism of her commitment to govern in the One Nation tradition. Oliver Daddow (2017) has recently noted that May has adopted a tried-and-tested nationalist discourse surrounding the 'national interest' to attempt to create a sense of unity at a time of division. He notes also that, in response to Brexit, she has modified classic Conservative discourse surrounding Europe, such as Ted Heath's 'family of nations', and used it to describe not Europe but the UK, emphasising a renewed emphasis on a collective identity that exists only within Britain's borders. This argument is, above all though, best demonstrated by comparing two examples of Thatcher's and May's similar nationalist outlooks, looking particularly at utterances which have become notorious in their misinterpretation: Thatcher's 'no such thing as society' and May's 'you are a citizen of nowhere'. Both of these phrases became talking points because of how they were misinterpreted. Thatcher's was understood, as BBC News (2017) suggests, as "evidence of a heartless approach where needy individuals are left to fend for themselves" (Anonymous,

2017, n.p.). May's comment about citizens of nowhere was seen as criticism of those who reaffirmed their commitment to a European citizenship post-Brexit. May's speech, given at the 2016 Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, stated that "if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what the very word 'citizenship' means" (Anonymous, 2016, n.p.). Though the examples of 'citizens of nowhere' she gave included "a boss who earns a fortune" but neglects their employees, international companies that treat "tax laws like an optional extra" and a "director who takes out massive dividends while knowing that the company pension is about to go bust" (Anonymous, 2016, n.p.), some left-wing commentators concluded that the speech contained elements of Nazism.[136] Some of the most prevalent interpretations of both speeches, then, were not what Thatcher or May intended. At the time they made these comments, both Thatcher and May were dealing with growing disunity and questions of national identity that challenged traditional notions of Britishness. Thatcher's was at a time of the IRA, the Falklands crisis, the British Nationality Act, and renewed academic and intellectual interest in how nations are imagined, such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands*. Similarly, May's comment was made following the divisions revealed post-Brexit, an SNP threat to hold a second independence referendum, issues with the Northern Ireland Assembly, the territorial dispute surrounding Gibraltar after Brexit and the global issue of corporate tax evasion. Thatcher's comment, though often misinterpreted, has stood the test of time and continues to be quoted as a phrase which is symbolic of her wider beliefs. It remains to be seen whether May's 'citizens of nowhere' will be quoted in years to come, but its place in literary history is already secured as the epigraph of Ali Smith's *Winter* (2017).

What both the 'no such thing' and 'citizen of nowhere' comments have in common is what Thatcher and May said they meant by them: in their clarifications we can see how both were intended to function in a similarly nationalistic way. In many respects it is because they were forced to clarify their phrases that the nationalist sentiment behind them was exposed. Thatcher's clarification of the 'no such thing' interview response emphasised individual responsibility and that it was specifically those who believed it was the job of society, in the abstract, to solve their

[136] This included the Liberal Democrat, Vince Cable, who suggested the phrase 'citizens of nowhere' could have been taken from *Mein Kampf* (Merrick, 2017, n.p.) and the *Guardian* newspaper which published letters from readers, drawing comparisons between May and Hitler, under the headline "Theresa May's Brexit speech had shades of Hitler" (Davis and Hollis, 2018, n.p.). Clearly May's intended criticism of businessmen like Sir Philip Green, to whom May unsubtly referred in her comment on directors taking dividends with consequences of the company's pension scheme, was wrongly understood as a more general attack on citizens who have a strong sense of European identity.

problems for them who would find society, in that sense, did not exist. Rather than an attack on social collectives – which Thatcher actually emphasised the importance of in the same interview – her comment was a critique of an abuse of the welfare state. Recent research by the Centre for Policy Studies found that 74% of people surveyed disagreed with the statement presented out of context, including 73% of Conservative voters and 79% of Labour voters. But when participants were presented with Thatcher's full interview response, about individual responsibility and commitment to family and community, 66% agreed with Thatcher's view (Anonymous, 2013). Theresa May's clarifications of 'citizens of nowhere' was remarkably similar. Davies states that May's comment was "pitched as much at bankers as it was at left-wing intellectuals". But May claims that she did not have any individual or social group in mind when she made the comment. Rather, she said it was a criticism of those who use positions of privilege to evade responsibilities to their community precisely because they do not belong to one. As with Thatcher, May's comment was a criticism of abstract notions of belonging designed to reinforce a sense of being rooted in a collective. For this, May is described as a communitarian, but the message here is not dissimilar to Thatcher's: that the individual does not exist in isolation, but is responsible to family and to their community. And in Thatcher and May's discourse, nationalism functions as the means of justifying this responsibility – that one can belong to a nation but belonging is coupled with a sense of duty.

While their apparently different attitudes to the state are often the main focus of comparisons, Thatcher and May both adopt a nationalist discourse at the heart of which lies the advocacy of individual responsibility and a rejection of abstract concepts (concepts which, in their view, help certain individuals to neglect their responsibilities to their community or reinforce the notion of a cosmopolitan elite which lives beyond the realm of 'the people'). Both Thatcher and May use the One Nation outlook to frame their nationalism – but also to attempt to create a sense of unity at a time of division and change. This discursive sense of unity also acts as a concrete reinforcement of a singular British identity – a literal one nation message – in response to new emerging ways of imagining Britain and Britishness: but there is also a party political dimension to this too. The nationalism of May and Thatcher is consciously deployed to give the impression of the Conservative Party being on the side of the people; an impression helped by the fact that May and Thatcher both attempted to frame themselves as non-elitists who share in the (national) culture and values of 'the people', even if they were not perceived this way. Overall, though, while commentators' immediate tendency has been to emphasise change, there is a cultural continuity

between Thatcher and May which, as I demonstrate here, is a necessary context in which to understand how Ali Smith's *Autumn* deals simultaneously with Thatcherism and Brexit.

Autumn is the first in a loosely-linked series by Smith, known as her 'seasonal quartet', with *Winter* published in 2017, *Spring* due for publication in 2019 and *Summer* set to mark the final volume of the four. It explores, as I will demonstrate, the similarities between Thatcher and May's nationalist perspectives outlined in the introduction to this section.[137] The novel tells the story of Elisabeth Demand, a precariously-employed university lecturer (in art history), who was born in 1984 at the height of Thatcherism. It is temporally fragmented, with most chapters alternating between Elisabeth's childhood and the present day. Other chapters, though, do not belong to an identifiable time period: brief passages which are not explicitly related to the story's characters or themes, such as the description of October's autumnal qualities (pp.177-178), punctuate the novel and serve to fragment it structurally. These structural and temporal fragmentations, on a formal level, reflect the thematic emphasis on social fragmentation which is central to Smith's vision of Britain today. Like the texts discussed in Chapter Three, *Autumn* focuses upon divisions in society (especially along racial and ethnic lines) and a breakdown of community. These divisions are presented in the novel as having been legitimised and accentuated by the vote to leave the EU. The reason for the fragmentation of the narrative takes on greater significance, though, when it is understood in relation to young Elisabeth's debate with Daniel Gluck about the meaning of the word 'collage'. Gluck is Elisabeth's childhood neighbour whom she continues to visit, in hospital, when she reaches adulthood. Gluck has, by 2016 (the novel's present moment), reached the age of 101 and therefore lived, like Lord Nantwich in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, through most of the 20th century. Though he does not attempt to deceive Elisabeth (as Nantwich does Will Beckwith), Gluck has a similar role to Nantwich – that of an older mentor – in his efforts to challenge how Elisabeth sees the concepts of 'history' and 'truth'. Upon being told by Elisabeth that he is "using the wrong word" (p.71) to describe a place of further education, Gluck says of the word 'collage':

> I disagree, Daniel said. Collage is an institute of education where all the rules can be thrown into the air, and size and space and time foreground and background all

[137] For thoughts on how *Autumn* may mark the beginning of a renaissance of British political fiction, written in response to Brexit, see my article "Ali Smith's Autumn: Why Brexit may be good for British fiction" (2017).

> become relative, and because of these skills everything you think you know gets made into something new and strange. (p.71-72)

His description of a collage is also an accurate reflection of what Smith attempts to do with the novel: that is, to create a collage of moments in the twentieth and twenty-first century – rather than offer a chronological historical account of this period – in order to highlight instances of political lies and deceit, and of nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment. In doing so, Smith highlights Thatcherism's continuities through the shared character and disposition of Conservative politicians and governments, particularly around race and nation, during this period.

Throughout the novel's present-day chapters, the social divisions of 2016 are attributed, in explicit terms, to Brexit. The novel combines its fictional account with factual details to pinpoint exact moments in the EU referendum campaign, leaving no ambiguity as to where Smith is directing her criticism: such moments include a reference to the murder of Jo Cox MP (p.38) and Elisabeth reading a real *Guardian* article, published on 1st July 2016, entitled "Look Into My Eyes: Leave.EU Campaign Consulted TV Hypnotist" (p.137). The article details how the Leave.EU group, the unofficial 'Leave' campaign supported by former UKIP leader Nigel Farage, consulted Paul McKenna on its communications strategy. Elisabeth quotes the advice they received: "*Facts don't work. Connect with people emotionally"* (p.137). Smith's novel features continuous allusions to a divided nation, in a way not unlike Malcolm Bradbury's *Cuts*. The first of these, the original declaration that "All across the country, there was misery and rejoicing" (p.59), also provides a template for all subsequent references to a divided country. The line 'All across the country…' is repeated throughout the novel and acts as a means of emphasising a series of contradictory thoughts, views, experiences and emotions (such as misery and rejoicing) which, in turn, make the idea of a single national history, or of a single imagined community, difficult to comprehend. The trope is most prominent in a three-page description of how Brexit has divided the country, with each line beginning 'All across the country…':

> […] All across the country, people called each other cunts. All across the country, people felt unsafe. […] All across the country, people felt history at their shoulder. All across the country, people felt history meant nothing. […] All across the country, the country split in pieces. All across the country, the countries cut adrift.

> All across the country, the country was divided, a fence here, a wall there, a line drawn here, a line crossed there. (pp.59-61).

Most significant in this description of a divided Britain is the juxtaposed description of history as both important and meaningless: there is no single, agreeable account of the nation's past or the importance of it. History is, in this moment of division, exposed as an subjective endeavour. Indeed, the insignificance (to some) of history – and specifically English history, as Smith is keen to remind readers that her native Scotland, along with Northern Ireland, voted in favour of Remain – is emphasised by her statement that "All across the country, people looked up Google: *Irish passport applications*." (p.59). Smith again reflects true events in her fiction, as the number of UK Google searches for Irish passport applications did increase significantly following the vote to leave. The attempts to locate and embrace a distant Irish heritage, hitherto overlooked, in order to retain the benefits of EU citizenship implies that heritage is not a fixed, permanent concept but something which can change to suit individuals' needs at any given time. Deciding that one's Irish ancestry is now a defining feature of one's identity is the example Smith uses to illustrate this.

The breakdown of community, in the novel, challenges the concept of heritage by (implicitly) posing the question: how can such a divided people, with such different views on, and interpretations of, Britishness, share a single heritage? During a hospital visit, the narrator observes that "It's funny to be sitting on such an uncommunal communal chair. There's no one Elisabeth can exchange a look with about that, though, let alone tell the thing she's just thought about the book and the coins" (p.18). The contradiction of a 'communal' area in which people are not communal is juxtaposed with her observation about 'the book and the coins'. The latter reference is to the presence of Shakespeare in contemporary culture: she identifies in *Brave New World,* the novel she is reading in the hospital, the allusions to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and notes that the coins in question are commemorative editions which feature Shakespeare. She concludes that art, on the one hand, has a genuine heritage which is displayed in the intertextual presence of Shakespeare in the present day, while society, on the other, appears increasingly divided with little binding it together. One of the reasons that Elisabeth offers to explain the breakdown of community is the devaluation of reading, particularly the closure of the local library and the lack of access to communal reading spaces. This is evident in the response she receives following her proposal that books be made available in the Post Office: "Funny you should say that, the man says. Most of those people aren't here for Post Office services at all. Since the library closed this is

where they come if it's raining or intemperate" (p.19). This is not simply the view of Elisabeth, however, but also that of Smith herself. Smith was a vocal critic of the scale of public library closures which occurred under the Cameron governments. She published the short story collection *Public Library and Other Stories* in 2015 and, while the collection does not feature a story called "Public Library", it contains reflections from Smith's friends about the importance of libraries to them which enhance the stories' themes.[138] Smith also told the 2015 Edinburgh International Festival that library closures threatened "the democracy of reading" and that libraries represented a "furiously important tradition" which was now under attack (Wade, 2015, n.p.). *Autumn*'s criticism of library closures is therefore not simply that community spaces have been taken away, but that a national cultural tradition is also being eroded.

Elisabeth's exchange with a member of staff in the Post Office, when trying to send off an application for a passport renewal, is one in which a breakdown of social bonds is emphasised by misinterpretations of humour. Elisabeth's attempts to be light hearted do not register with the member of staff. She asks, when she is told her head is the incorrect size in her passport photo, "If this were a drama on TV, Elisabeth says, you know what would happen now?" and the staff member responds: "It's largely rubbish, TV, the man says. I prefer box sets". The reference to box sets highlights an increasingly individualistic means of media consumption, contrasting with the shared, communal, mass audiences of TV (the programmes on which are scheduled are, consequently, result in a 'shared' audience experience) (p.25).[139] Yet, while the breakdown of community manifests in the present day, Elisabeth identifies this problem as having its roots in the Thatcher years, during her childhood. What is more, it is not simply a problem created by C/conservatives, or by those who embrace a selfish individualism, but one to which her own mother (who, in the present day, is identified as passionately anti-Brexit and pro-immigration) also contributes. Young Elisabeth's mother asks about the nature of a school project about neighbours that she is working on, which Elisabeth describes thus: "We're supposed to talk to a neighbour

[138] Some of the major themes of *Public Library and Other Stories* are also found in *Autumn*: these include criticism of public sector cuts, the bureaucracy of government agencies and services, and the difficulty of proving one's identity. In the latter case, one story in the collection satirically portrays a man being told that he must prove that he is not dead, contrary to what is recorded on a computer database. That he is alive is not enough and he must provide official records to demonstrate that he has not died: the same exploration of how identity is proven is explored in *Autumn* in Elisabeth's struggle to renew her passport and her difficulty in accessing a local GP away from home.

[139] The greater individualisation of media consumption as a driver of social and community disintegration, as represented here, seems a natural progression from the increasingly individual-orientated pornography market of the 1980s, as discussed in Chapter Two in relation to *Money* and *The Swimming-Pool Library*.

about what it means to be a neighbour, then make a portrait in words of a neighbour, Elisabeth said." (p.43). Though Elisabeth holds a broadly communitarian view of society, others around her, including her mother, are less trusting of strangers and more separatist in their approach to communal life. The aim of the project – which, she says, is "about history, and being neighbours" (p.45) – is largely similar to the acts of writing that the narrators of (and, indeed, the authors of) *What a Carve Up!* and *The Swimming-Pool Library* undertake: to offer an account of the past which articulates suppressed, alternative or hidden voices that have, in some way, been excluded from mainstream historical accounts. She seeks to engage in listening to how others account for the past, but she also detects that her mother's scepticism towards the project highlights a threat to community and collective identity because of the lack of conversation between neighbours. In Benedict Anderson's terms, nations are to be understood as 'imagined' entities because those who belong to the nation cannot reasonably know all the others who belong to it. What Smith suggests here, though, is that – even if that were possible – people would not wish to know others who share their heritage: the very concept of a national heritage – particularly one as singular and homogenous as that articulated by Thatcher – becomes problematic when individuals are so unwilling to listen to others' experiences of, and perspectives on, the past. Her mother's disapproval of her engaging with her neighbour, Mr Gluck, is framed through memory as symbolic of the social attitudes which have led to a breakdown of community relations which manifest, among other occasions, during her Post Office trips.

The novel extends the collage trope to conceptualise individual identities. When Elisabeth views 'Untitled (Sunflower Woman)', in a catalogue in the British Library, she observes that "Her body was a collage of painted images. A man with a machine gun pointing at the person looking at the picture formed her chest. A factory formed her arm and shoulder" (p.152). Echoing other descriptions of individual identities in the novel – such as that of the "junkshop of the self" (p.11) – the collage metaphor is underpinned by an idea of individual identity that is, like the novel's view of national identity, not singular or coherent but rich and varied. Like *Public Library and Other Stories*, Smith's *Autumn* is concerned with contested notions of identity and citizenship. Early on, the novel describes Elisabeth in terms which establish her modest lifestyle and sets out her main aim in the story – to renew her passport:

> thirty two years old, no-fixed-hours casual contract junior lecturer at a university in London, living the dream, her mother says, and she is, if the dream means having

> no job security and almost everything being too expensive to do and that you're still in the same rented flat you had when you were a student over a decade ago – has gone to the main Post Office in the town nearest the village her mother now lives in, to do Check & Send with her passport form. (p.15)

The passport, throughout the novel, provides a symbolic means through which Smith reflects upon the nature of identity and citizenship, as well as a way of exploring the relationship between individuals and institutions of the state. Upon trying to register with a GP in her mother's village, Elisabeth engages in an exchange with the receptionist about the validity of her passport:

> I'm afraid this passport has expired, the receptionist said.
> Yes, but only a month ago. I'm going to renew it. It's obviously still clearly me, Elisabeth said.
> The receptionist started a speech about what was and what wasn't permitted. (p.34)

Smith highlights, here, the extent to which identity is regulated by the state; that she does so using a passport consciously links this to the novel's overall commentary on immigration and citizenship. As with Rushdie's assertion, in the 1980s, that the Thatcher government's British Nationality Act was an attack on British citizens as well as immigrants, Smith suggests that the authoritarianism of the May government's Home Office is also punitive for UK citizens. The receptionist's declaration that the passport no longer proves who Elisabeth is, because its expiry date has passed, satirises the supposed value placed upon the individual by Conservatives. Instead, the individual is, in this instance, only legitimised by the validity of the state's records rather than through self-determination. This satirical criticism is repeated when "Elisabeth shows the receptionist her library card for the university" as a means of proving her identity to the receptionist, only to be told "I'm afraid we need something with a current address and preferably also with a photograph." (p.104) Elisabeth's conceptualisation of individual identity as a rich collage (along the lines of Gluck's initial re-definition of the word) exists, therefore, in contrast to the state's reductive view of individuals as merely information recorded in a database. In an interview, Smith described how

> The way we live, in time, is made to appear linear by the chronologies that get applied to our lives by ourselves and others, starting at birth, ending at death, with a middle where we're meant to comply with some or other of life's usual

> expectations […] But we're time-containers, we hold all our diachrony, our pasts and our futures (and also the pasts and futures of all the people who made us and who in turn we'll help to make) in every one of our consecutive moments / minutes / days / years, and I wonder if our real energy, our real history, is cyclic in continuance and at core, rather than consecutive. (Anderson, 2016, n.p.)

Smith's idea of the individual as a 'time container' – in which elements of the past, present and future of the self is reflected – reinforces the idea of the individual as a rich collage.[140] These qualities which constitute individualism, in Smith's terms, are eroded by Elisabeth's bureaucratic experience of attempting to verify her identity. It is the broadly left-wing worldview that Elisabeth possesses, Smith suggests, that truly values the importance of heritage to individual and national identities; the Conservative governments of recent decades, by contrast, appear unified by their attempts to regulate and make more exclusive the very nature of 'identity'.

This criticism of national and individual identity feeds into the novel's broader concern: the legacy of Thatcherism in the 21st century and, particularly, how Thatcherite ideas about nationhood (as Smith sees them) have influenced or informed the social climate which led to the vote to leave the EU. The novel directly links social attitudes to immigration (which Smith frames as the key driver behind Brexit) with Thatcherism through the deployment of an unidentified radio commentator. Elisabeth is said to realise that

> she hasn't so far encountered a single care assistant here who isn't from somewhere else in the world. That morning on the radio she'd heard a spokesperson say, *but it's not just that we've been rhetorically and practically encouraging the opposite of integration for immigrants to this country. It's that we've been rhetorically and practically encouraging ourselves not to integrate. We've been doing this as a matter of self-policing since Thatcher taught us to be selfish and not just to think but to believe that there's no such thing as society*. (pp.111-12)

In linking Brexit and Thatcherism in this way, the novel identifies the endurance of a rhetorically constructed idea of Britishness – exclusive in nature – from the 1980s to the present day. The spokesperson here makes explicit the point that Smith makes more implicitly throughout the novel: that is, that society is becoming increasingly divided and that these divisions have their roots in

[140] There are echoes here, too, of a Bergsonian idea of time and memory that is found in work of modernist writers like Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust and Vladimir Nabokov.

Thatcherism. Smith draws parallels between Thatcher's 'no such thing as society' comment, referred to here, and May's 'citizens of nowhere' speech mentioned earlier in the novel. She sees both remarks as commentaries on how individuals interact with one another in a community, viewing both as insular and typical of a society which is inward-looking and in which communal bonds are actively denigrated. Although Smith's interpretation of 'citizens of nowhere' is not what May intended, the phrase (as Smith presents it) clearly captures the essence of how she views contemporary politics. This is underscored by the quotation's appearance in the epigraph of *Winter* (2017), as well as the fact that Elisabeth Demand's name is a reference to it. Elisabeth recalls how, as a child, she was informed of the etymology of her name: Demand "comes from the French, Mr Gluck said. I think it comes from the French words de and monde, put together, which means, when you translate it, of the world." (p.50) This reference, drawing upon May's 'citizens of the world, citizens of nowhere' remark, establishes Elisabeth as somebody who exists in opposition to May's politics: she is, in defiance of May's apparent view, of the world. Elisabeth, then, is typical of the younger, more cosmopolitan and left-leaning demographic that supported continued membership or the European Union and which holds more positive views of the EU's freedom of movement. She has lived her entire life in opposition to the UK government.[141] As Goodhart pointed out, those like Elisabeth do not feel strong connections to a sense of national identity but often favour a more global idea of citizenship. This is the demographic of which May's 'citizens of nowhere' comment was misinterpreted as being most critical.

Smith's deployment of a narrator who was born, and grew up, under Thatcher is used to reflect not just upon the legacy of Thatcherism, but also on what she believes Thatcherism represents to a generation younger than Smith's own. She does this by considering, from Elisabeth's perspective, the Thatcherite notion of the 'property-owning democracy'. Following a dream in which Elisabeth imagines herself in her "whited-out" flat (p.203), she admits that

> it isn't *her* flat and she knows this in the dream; she's got used to the idea now that she'll probably never be able to buy a house. It's no big deal, no one can these days

[141] This includes the New Labour governments. The novel recalls "the winter of 2002-3. Elisabeth was eighteen. It was February. She had gone down to London to march in the protest. Not In Her Name. All across the country people had done the same thing and millions more people had all across the world" (p.149). The repeated 'all across the country' trope, which was used to highlight the social and cultural divisions wrought by Conservative governments and Brexit, is now extended to Blair and the Iraq War. This serves to present, if only in vague terms, New Labour as part of a process of continuity from the 1980s to the present day: divisive, untrustworthy and unrepresentative of Elisabeth's politics.

> except people who're loaded, or whose parents die, or whose parents are loaded. (p.203)

The idea of home ownership, for Elisabeth, is as much a fantasy as her present-day conversations with Mr Gluck who, it is revealed, is in a coma: Elisabeth visits him in the hospital but her interactions with him – the most meaningful interactions she has with any other individual in the novel – are imagined. The novel, in its depiction of home ownership as a fantasy, reflects a UK in which the number of homeowners is waning. In 2007, 73.3% of people in the UK owned their own home but, by 2016, that had fallen to 63.4%, representing the biggest decline in home ownership in any EU country (Chapman, 2018, n.p.). This, in turn, has led to the issue of home ownership becoming another significant social division. In 2016, a *Guardian* report analysed recent survey data which showed that 89% of the 18-34 age group had a desire to own a home of their own, but that only 26% of this group thought that it was possible to imagine a future in which they would never be able to afford to do so (Tigar, 2016, n.p.). Home ownership was also revealed to be one of the most significant factors in distinguishing between Conservative and Labour voters in the 2015 General Election. YouGov found that twice as many homeowners voted for the Conservatives compared to the number that voted for Labour: almost half (47%) of homeowners in the UK voted for the Conservatives overall (Riley-Smith, 2015, n.p.). More significantly, in the novel, is what the Thatcher's home ownership revolution – now a dream – is contrasted with: the reality of, in Smith's terms, a narrow-minded Thatcherite attitude to immigration and those who are not 'one of us'. A week after the Brexit vote, Elisabeth "passes a cottage not far from the bus stop whose front, from the door to across above the window, has been painted over with black paint and the words GO and HOME" (p.53). The vandalism captures the rhetoric of the Leave campaign and highlights the continued presence of a racially-exclusive nationalism that other authors, such as Rushdie, previously identified in Thatcherite discourse. The specific words used – 'Go Home' – also refer to the 'Go Home' vans which were deployed on the streets of London in 2013 under May's stewardship of the Home Office. Overall, the novel presents Thatcherism's legacy not as Thatcher's vision of a property-owning capitalist democracy in which individuals are free to choose, but as an insular and ethnically-exclusive notion of 'Britishnesss' which has resulted in the UK's separation from the EU. Smith suggests, though, that this idea of Britishness has not emerged from nowhere, but has been constructed by politicians. When watching the proceedings of the Scottish Parliament, Elisabeth's mother sees the word "Integrity" on the mace on display:

> It's the word integrity, her mother said. It does it every time. I hear it and I see in my head the faces of the liars.
> Elisabeth grimaced. Every morning she wakes up feeling cheated of something. The next thing she thinks about, when she does, is the number of people waking up feeling cheated of something all over the country, no matter what they voted for. (p.197)

Brexit has, in Elisabeth's mind, accelerated social divisions and racial tensions while pleasing nobody. Smith questions, in this moment, the integrity of politicians and presents them as liars. In doing so, the novel reflects upon the implications of dominant political narratives and accounts of history being constructed by people who lack integrity and tell lies. To facilitate this point – and to make a final contribution to the novel's historical 'collage' – Smith turns her attention away from Brexit to the early 1960s and draws comparisons between the current political moment and the Profumo Affair of 1961. In doing so, the novel highlights another, well-established example of the unreliability of dominant narratives. The affair involved John Profumo, the Conservative Secretary of State for War, and the 19-year-old model, Christine Keeler, who was romantically involved with him. It was thought that Keeler was also possibly involved with a Soviet diplomat, which heightened public interest in the affair on the grounds that there may have been a potential security risk. Profumo denied any involvement in the affair in the House of Commons, but later admitted the truth about his relationship with Keeler. The dominant narrative surrounding the affair has been shaped by Lord Denning's investigation into it which presented Keeler unfavourably. Keeler challenged Denning's account throughout her life, but never managed to counter the negative reputation she acquired because of the affair and Profumo's lies. By highlighting this political event, Smith asks readers to think of Brexit in the same terms: political figures, lying and acting out of self-interest, at the expense of those whose voices will be written out of history.

The novel's rejection of national and individual identities viewed through the prism of linear chronologies and the presentation of these identities, instead, as a 'collage', poses a broader challenge to the formation of historical narrative accounts. Smith is concerned, throughout the novel, with how narration brings identities into being. The way that this occurs, in her view, is outlined in an exchange between young Elisabeth and Daniel about the difference between stories and the real world:

> There is no point in making up a world, Elisabeth said, where's there's already a real world. There's just the world, and there's the truth about the world.
> You mean, there's the truth, and there's the made-up version of it that we get told about the world, Daniel said.
> No. The *world* exists. *Stories* are made up, Elisabeth said.
> But no less true for that, Daniel said.
> That's ultra-crazy talk, Elisabeth said.
> And whoever makes up the story makes up the world, Daniel said. So always try to welcome people into the home of your story. That's my suggestion. (p.119)

Worlds, in Daniel's mind, are created through narrative. There is no contradiction or tension, in his mind, between storytelling and truth. There is, by contrast, a distinction between what is true and the version "we get told about the world" – a sentiment which underscores Smith's criticism of political narratives and the integrity of those who are in the privileged position to shape them. Furthermore, his advice to Elisabeth that worlds, created in this way, should be welcoming, also contrasts his view of the world with how Smith presents Conservative political discourse throughout the novel: that is, from Thatcher to May, as advancing an idea of Britishness that is racially exclusive and unwelcoming.

CONCLUSION

In April 2018, I interviewed Michael Heseltine in front of an audience of several hundred people at the University of Liverpool. Heseltine, as Secretary of State for the Environment under Margaret Thatcher, had adopted (in his own words) an interventionist approach to reversing the decline occurring in the Merseyside region following the 1981 Toxteth riots. At this event, I asked him about his views on Thatcherism and its legacy. He responded – paraphrasing Thatcher's 1987 *Woman's Own* interview – by saying that, in his mind, there is no such thing as Thatcherism. His argument was that 'Thatcherism' was simply the term given to the implementation of a series of policies which the Conservatives had first committed to supporting under Heath's leadership, if not before. Here I have argued that there is such a thing as Thatcherism, but that – as Heseltine suggests – much of its substance was not radically new. Instead, I have suggested that Thatcherism should be understood as a narrative about the restoration of British national identity that served to make coherent a series of (sometimes contradictory) ideological strands: principally neoliberalism, neoconservatism and nationalism. These ideas had, in some meaningful way, already been part of the Conservative Party's thinking prior to Thatcher's leadership, but it is her style of delivery that was unique. Thatcher told a story about a crisis of British national identity and, deploying a pronounced sense of history, presented her values as part of that history, inextricably bound to 'true' Britishness. Thatcherism was, in that sense, not a forward-looking radicalism but a promise to restore a sense of order that had ostensibly been lost in recent decades.

My intention, however, was not simply to think about Thatcherism in relation to the uses of narrative, but to employ that conceptualisation as a means of exploring contemporary British fiction. In doing so, I have read a range of examples of contemporary writing in a way not mirrored in other recent literary scholarship by deploying an interdisciplinary approach that gives full nuance to a detailed consideration of political as well as literary narratives. Similarly, I have resisted the notion that Thatcherism was exclusively a phenomenon of the 1980s and demonstrated that its legacy and implications are still influential in shaping fiction now. The result has been to show how fiction of, and since, the 1980s is not simply anti-Thatcherite, but capable of capturing and exploring its contradictions, its complexities, its continuities and – like fiction itself – its reliance

upon narrative. To finish, I wish to view my own argument through the prism of Salman Rushdie's essay "Imaginary Homelands" (1982).

Unimagined Homelands

In "Imaginary Homelands", Rushdie talks of the dilemma faced by immigrant writers who – in a foreign country – look back to past experiences of their homeland to reclaim a sense of identity or belonging. However, in doing so there is, he says, a recognition that the homeland of the past cannot be reclaimed: it is fundamentally lost. For Rushdie, however, to draw upon memories of the homeland in the present is to bring a new homeland into being through imagination (2010, p.10). His own *Midnight's Children* (1981) is given as an example of how Rushdie himself has created an imaginary homeland, in literature, in an effort to reflect a world of the past in the present. His later novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), also explored the notion of the homeland in relation to ideas of migration, rootlessness and dual identities. But Rushdie's was not the only migrant perspective in the British fiction of the 1980s. In the first issue of *Granta* (1979), Bill Buford argued that British writing of the 1950s, 1960s and most of the 1970s lacked excitement and was monotonous. By its third issue, though, Buford observed that the British novel had, since 1980, become imbued with migrant perspectives that were beginning to shape a new generation of writing (qtd. in Finney, 2006, p.3). In addition to Rushdie's work, the fiction of writers like Kazuo Ishiguro, Timothy Mo and Monica Ali also reflected upon migrants' relationships with Britain and its status as a 'homeland'. So too did writing by second-generation immigrants such as Andrea Levy, Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith. This plurality of voices – speaking from the centre to, and about, 'homelands' beyond it – had significant implications for the very notion of a 'British' novel. As Patricia Waugh has outlined, the fiction of the 1980s led Buford – along with Malcolm Bradbury and the novelist and academic David Lodge – to identify the 'British' novel as something which increasingly reflected a greater cultural diversity than earlier postwar writing and which was altogether more global or internationalist in its mindset (2010a, p.124). These critics claimed that it was difficult to say that there was such a thing as an identifiably 'British' novel: instead, this new generation of writers was increasingly writing to, and about, global concerns, identities and cultures. For Brian Finney, these "novelists no longer exclusively address an insular middle class readership. Viewing England (frequently cosmopolitan London) as a microcosm, they write to the world about

the world in general" (2006, p.3).[142] In this sense, the 'British' novel of the 1980s was often written by those who were not straightforwardly 'British' at a time when Mrs Thatcher was attempting to define a precise and coherent sense of Britishness. Even before thinking about how specific authors went about consciously challenging Thatcherism, the changing nature of 'British' fiction indirectly challenged Thatcherite notions of Britishness simply by giving voice to those who did not necessarily conform to such notions, instead reflecting a plethora of other racial, regional, sub-national and (inter-)national identities besides those being identified as 'British'. Buford, himself an American, considered the term 'British' unrepresentative of people living in Britain: "I still don't know anyone who is British. I know people who are English or Scottish or Northern Irish […] born in Nigeria but living here or born-in-London of Pakistani parents and living here […] or the born-in-Nigeria-but-living here-Nigerian-English" (qtd. in Waugh, 2010a, p.124).

These (mostly) migrant perspectives offered views of Britain as seen by those Steven Connor (1995) – as discussed in Chapter Four – called outside insiders, or those who Waugh suggests offer a "double perspective" because they are at "the same time insiders and outsiders in this society" (2010a, p.125). Waugh has noted that "the consequence of voices from outside moving to the centre" is what has "most defined British fiction of the contemporary period" but, importantly, she adds that those 'outside' perspectives came "not only from outside the British Isles but from those who felt internally colonised within it" (2010a, p.123). Migrant writers like Rushdie can, at least, rely on another (even if now imagined) nation to which they have some sense of belonging. Rushdie is able, as stated in his own terms, to bring into being through literature an India of the imagination. He has, in that sense, another 'home' beyond the geographic (and literal) homeland that is Britain. Any feeling of not fully belonging to either place, or a sense of 'in betweenness', at least has the potential to forge "new, transnational models of identity and belonging" (McLeod, 2000, p.216). Writers like Alan Hollinghurst and Ali Smith, as we have seen, articulate, in their fiction, a sense of marginalisation within a 'homeland' to which they (and their narrators) belong (without having migrated or been born to migrants). Unlike migrant writers, though, they are not able to occupy a space between two homelands to forge new models of identity.[143] This dilemma highlights the importance of a sense of belonging and attachment (rather

[142] Finney is not commenting here on the changing nature of the readership, rather on the way that authors addressed their imagined readership.

[143] Smith does, however, see herself as specifically Scottish before British. She is often regarded in terms of territoriality because (among other reasons) her writing about other authors, like Muriel Spark, frames them as 'Scotland's own'.

than just geographic location or being 'of' a place) to the very nature of a 'homeland'. More recently, Waugh has described the novel "as a home, a place where we find home, but also a place that unhouses us, because in order to think of what we are, we need to be unhoused." (2014, n.p.). The texts included in this study (though they are not all novels) do this by asking us to see 'Britain' from the perspective of somebody who is unhoused within their homeland: they present a view of Britain from a liminal perspective, seen from the viewpoint of somebody who occupies a position which places them on both sides of the threshold between 'belonging' and 'not belonging'. This is a common theme that binds many of the texts included in this thesis. John Self belongs to a new elite in a financial sense but not a cultural one; Will Beckwith's social status affords him many privileges which he comes to realise are not compatible with his sexuality; Henry Babbacombe and the children of Pangbourne have an awkward sense of belonging, in different ways, to elite enclaves cut off from the rest of society; the clones of Hailsham exist at the threshold between human and non-human, displaying humane qualities but incapable of ever being human in a biological sense; Hilary Mantel's narrator demonstrates that one can 'belong' in Thatcher's Britain despite being anti-Thatcher, while the Liverpudlian assassin feels as excluded from it as the IRA group to which he is affiliated; similarly, Henry Perowne, though apparently anti-Thatcher, articulates (at least some) Thatcherite values, while Baxter's inability to indulge in an aspirational individualism pushes him to the margins.[144] Even Mrs Thatcher herself, as represented in the opening scene of *The Iron Lady*, appears to have an uncomfortable relationship with a society that continues to be shaped by her -ism.

John McLeod (2000) has argued that those who occupy an 'in-between' space – that is, those who feel they cannot rightfully lay claim to any one homeland – are "neither here nor there, unable to indulge in sentiments of belonging to either place" (2000, p.214). This, he claims, is reflective of the fact that the "conventional ways we use to think about […] 'belonging' no longer work" because concepts like 'home' and 'belonging' are dependent upon notions of being 'in place' in both a community and a geographic location (2000, p.124): I would add to that, based on what I have argued in this thesis, a sense of belonging to the history and heritage of that community or place. Literary critics, including McLeod, have tended to see such a divided sense of belonging strictly in relation to migrant writers who are divided between two nations. What is clear, though,

[144] Notable here is the fact that Ishiguro's clones are all white and English: there is no suggestion in the novel of their heritage being anything other than this, despite his own migrant identity.

is that British writers who have no attachment to nations other than Britain can feel equally marginalised, as Waugh recognises, but the precise nature of their literary response is different to that of migrant writers. Rather than attempting to forge a new identity rooted in a state of 'in betweenness', non-migrant writers (as well as some migrant ones, as Ishiguro's work indicates) instead embrace their liminal position and employ what Homi K. Bhabha described as "strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (1994, p.2). For Bhabha, identities which exist at the margins of society require an 'art of the present', which entails a rethinking of the ways that history, identity and community are represented. Bhabha's observations about how national histories may be reproduced from the perspective of disenfranchised minorities are convincing, but he conceives of these minority groups purely in relation to race and migration. I would suggest that his notion of the 'art of the present', particularly the focus on rethinking history, also extends to those who are not migrants.

Johnathan Coe has stated that the novel is a form of historical record and "one of the most vital resources in trying to understand what happened" (2018a, n.p.). He argues that fiction, in attempting to capture the exactness of the present moment, may eventually appear dated: references to specific political figures who are significant at the time of writing, for example, may seem obscure or meaningless to readers in years to come. Fiction of this kind also runs the risk, Coe suggests, of being contradicted: what the novel suggests will happen as it speculates about the nation's future may be contradicted by what actually happens. Nonetheless, he claims there is a degree of truth captured in fiction which attempts to document the contemporary. It is this attempt to capture the 'truth' of the present moment, and to document an alternative history of that moment, which best describes what many non-migrant authors attempt to do in their writing. Rather than articulating a new identity, writers like Coe, Hollinghurst and Smith have embraced what McLeod calls the contrary logic of border identities to rethink the dominant modes through which history, society and community are represented (2000, p.217). By embracing their contradictory, 'outside insider' identities and holding them up as reflections of their homeland, these writers' characters do not simply expose their own contradictions but the contradictions in Thatcherism itself. It is precisely because Thatcherism is contradictory that they belong to a Britain which alienates or marginalises them: it speaks to part of their identities while alienating other aspects of them. Moreover, they do not merely attempt to highlight Thatcherism's contradictions but to challenge the dominant

Thatcherite idea of Britishness which unhouses them. This is achieved by challenging the historical narrative in which Thatcher's notion of Britishness is rooted and offering an alternative in its place. The novel acts, therefore, as a historical counter-narrative in two ways: in the sense that several of the novelists discussed here offer historical accounts of the twentieth century which run contrary to Thatcher's own, as well as in the way that Coe described – by documenting a history of the present which exposes Thatcherism's contradictions.

Writers are, in that sense, aware of fiction's potential to challenge the process Rushdie outlined whereby politicians mobilise a narrative account of history to suit their own agenda in the present. Writing in the early 1980s, Rushdie talks about the importance of fiction in situations "when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs" (2010, p.14). In this context, "the novel", he argues, "is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" (2014, p.14). It is not a coincidence that what Rushdie observes so accurately describes the act of appropriating history, as undertaken by Mrs Thatcher, that I have discussed throughout this thesis: though he has in mind Indira Ghandi in the essay, Rushdie writes in the new, retrospective introduction to the *Imaginary Homelands* (2010) essay collection that he was also consciously writing in the shadow of "the Thatcher revolution" (2010, p.1). For Rushdie, then, fiction is not just a description of how the imagination can remake its sense of place, but a means by which the distortion of reality, by politicians, can be countered. This is congruent with the role I have attributed to contemporary writing in demonstrating its attempt to offer a counter-narrative to Thatcherism. Where my argument departs from Rushdie's thesis, though, is in thinking about the formation of the imaginary homeland. By focusing upon the extent to which Thatcherism was reliant upon a grand narrative, I have shown that – in the context of Thatcherism – it is not the fiction writer but the politician who first brings the imaginary homeland into existence. The role of the novelist, I would suggest, is the inverse of this. Rather than attempting to forge a new identity or mode of representation which emerges from a state of 'in betweenness', the writers I have discussed instead engaged in modes of narrative undoing. They have not sought to challenge Mrs Thatcher's narrative of British history by imagining new, alternative homelands. Rather, they have sought to undo the one that Thatcher imagined. Their role, and the role of their writing, has been to expose Thatcher's rhetorical construction of Britain and Britishness as a historically-flawed fabrication; as a space which is divided and lacks a single, coherent identity; and to expose the

contradictions inherent in Thatcherism. The texts discussed throughout this thesis have not sought to imagine a homeland, but to unimagine one.

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