

Detecting the Self and the Other

Violence and Nation Building in Postmodern Crime Fiction

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1. Introduction

“The Dying Detective” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle features an Asian disease used by a murderer against probably the most famous literary detective, Sherlock Holmes. The murderer of British origin researches said disease and uses his knowledge to kill his nephew (cf. Doyle, “The Dying Detective” 1178). Thus, he transgresses the British moral standards with the help of a foreign disease. Ethical and national transgression overlap. Exposure to the colony is associated with moral corruption. However, the murderer does not succeed in poisoning Holmes, and the exotic threat to London’s Victorian society is banned (cf. Doyle, “The Dying Detective” 1169-1181). This illustration of the Asian disease reflects the Victorian fear of contamination by its colonial others (cf. Mukherjee 33). The murderer's research on this very disease may demonstrate a particular fascination for the colonies, which provide the UK with spices and economic growth, but their attraction may be fatal and, therefore, needs to be restricted.

This restriction takes the form of pure rationality and reason personified by Sherlock Holmes, who defuses the looming invasion of the kingdom and re-imposes order on the latter by solving the crime. It is the detective who separates right from wrong, and in this case, accordingly, British from Asian. He upholds society's morals and protects them from foreign invasion. The Victorian detective is not only the protector of ethics and innocence, but he is also the protector of England's national boundaries (cf. Siddiqi 25).

The study *Anxieties of Empire and Fiction of Intrigue* by Yumna Siddiqi already demonstrates that the Victorian whodunit subtly uses and assesses ethnic others and, thus, reinforces existing stereotypes. The widespread popularity of the genre was amongst other things based on the classical detective's ability to impose order on threats from the empire, which reflects the political situation in the colonies and soothes the colonizers' fear of losing control. Due to its wide distribution and its designation for readers of popular fiction Victorian, crime fiction does not only passively represent power relations but also actively shapes the British self-image of

superiority (cf. Siddiqi 22).

While the classical detective, Sherlock Holmes, succeeds in his effort to protect the British border, the question arises as to whether the postmodern detective is equally successful. Regarding the conception of the genre, the postmodern detective serves as a rejection of the literary tradition. This moment of subversion is related to the genre's awareness of the narrative strategies that underlie every formation of a concept. The postmodern detective cannot read the crime scene, and his observations remain inconclusive, as the world's basic principle is arbitrariness (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, "Funktionen" 362). Clues do not necessarily bear meaning. Due to this doubt in unambiguous readability, postmodern crime fiction holds the potential to uncovering narrative elements in national or ethnic discourses and of providing a platform for resistance.

This renunciation of literary traditions transports the postmodern detective into a realm of absent self-definition. He is no longer the aloof mastermind or the omniscient moral institution. Consequently, the postmodern detective experiences a crisis. His search for the culprit transforms into a search for his own identity (cf. Tani 56).

The detective's identity issue depicts a striking analogy with the destabilized concept of the nation in the late 20th century. Traditionally a nation is defined as a "social-political category:" Ever since the inception of the concept during the time of Enlightenment an ethnically homogeneous group of people is said to have mastered trials which then again are considered the founding myth and legitimation of a nation (cf. Wallerstein 77). Based on this myth, the nation develops a narrative propagating the connection between its heritage and its destiny that contemporary inhabitants are bound to pursue (cf. B. Anderson 11). This connection also justifies a national policy of exclusion of ethnically different people, for the intended implementation of one's destiny ultimately places a nation in a competitive position with others.

The two pillars of national discourse, namely the heroic past and the ethnic unity of the

population, have been put to the test by political, socio-cultural, and intellectual changes during the 20th century. On the political level, the global balance of power shifted in favor of the United States of America. Besides, decolonization led to the emergence of numerous nation-states from the former colonies, a circumstance that further undermined the political supremacy of the former European colonial powers. While the Western nations had to deal with the change in predominance, the former colonies faced the challenge of becoming fully-fledged nations by building up a functioning administration on the one hand and creating a socially binding national myth on the other (cf. Hall, "Old and New Identities" 147).

Political developments also brought about changes at the socio-cultural level. Decolonization and the ongoing globalization process favored a rise in migratory movements. The increasingly heterogeneous societies stood in contrast to the concept of an ethnically uniform nation-state so that there was a growing need to renegotiate national and cultural identities.

To this end, postcolonial critics emphasized the harmfulness of preconceived cultural identities. Homi Bhabha, for example, argues against national entities based on epistemology by favoring the procedural aspect of identity formation, as "[t]he social articulation of difference from the minority perspective is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation." ("Of Mimicry" 2). Thus, he holds to be true that the cultural identification process is particularly for postcolonial or minority groups tied to the idea of a dialog. Cultural identity is never fixed but has to be continuously re-affirmed and re-adjusted within a changing context. These changes are made in agreement with the negotiating partner and are hence the sum of an infinite, dynamic process.

In addition to intellectual efforts to redefine cultural identities, a changed understanding of historiography, which, like postmodern crime literature, derives from the language-philosophical findings of the linguistic turn, also played an essential role in the concept of the nation in the 20th century. While traditional historiography still postulates the objective representation of historical

events, contemporary historiography emphasizes subjective influences. Historiography is not a reproduction of the past, but an interpretation (cf. White 20, A. Assmann 43). The concept of the nation, however, is based, as mentioned above, on the assumption of a heroic past which, however, according to current historiographical standards, is merely a subjective representation. Direct and objective access to past national events becomes impossible.

Consequently, the analogy between the detective's and the nation's crisis is striking: The detective and the national citizen lose their identity-constituting foundation and see themselves confronted with the necessity of redefinition. Both their losses occur due to the revelation of narrative strategies within the representation of the world. The detective fails because of the missing readability of crimes and clues, while citizens discover the social constructiveness of their nationality. Their understanding of situations is always an interpretation of reality and, hence, just one structuring option among many.

The genre's awareness of narrativity, furthermore, allows a meta-discussion of the nation concept. While most popular ethnic crime fiction, for example, by Tony Hillerman and Laura Joh Rowland, circle around ethnic distinct characters and subcultures that provide the background and clues to a crime (cf. Christian 2), postmodern crime fiction goes one step further in questioning the feasibility of national rootedness. It will be interesting to see whether the postmodern detective clings to the binary way of thinking and identity creation – the detective vs. the murderer, the moral vs. the immoral, the national insider vs. the national outsider. The detective's failure grants him the potential to abandon his position as the protector of national borders and become a site of resistance against rigid epistemological structures. Is he or she the one who initiates a dialog with the apparent violent other, or will the detective turn into a murderer willing to sacrifice personal ethics to defend the national border?

Within academic research, the approach to analyze the relation of crime fiction and the nation concept is an ongoing trend. While most academic writing on crime fiction focuses on

sociological and or narratological aspects of the genre, a different tendency has gained momentum. The representatives underline the genre's versatility concerning other genres or other kinds of literature than its original ones (cf. Pearson and Singer 2-3). Crime fiction is no longer a neglectable mass-cultural good but “a locally engaged, formally diverse, and discursively productive text” (Pearson and Singer 3).

As can be seen from the example mentioned above of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's “The Adventure of a Dying Detective,” crime fiction has had ties to the concept of the nation ever since its inception. Therefore, it is not surprising that current scientific publications, e.g., on the postcolonial detective, increasingly address this topic.¹ Nevertheless, the postcolonial detective is merely one example of the increased analysis of crime fiction and nationhood. The anthologies *The Foreign in International Crime Fiction* edited by Jean Anderson, Caroline Miranda, and Barbara Pezzotti as well as *Investigating Identities* edited by Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate M. Quinn analyze crime fiction from a broader perspective – Western, postcolonial, and transnational.

This dissertation will contribute to the academic discourse by, on the one hand, shedding light on a sub-genre that is not considered a mass cultural good, thus underlining the adaptability of the genre's convention. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the postmodern crime novel, due to its linguistic-philosophical foundation on the linguistic turn, can illuminate narrative strategies of national discourse in even greater detail.

This thesis will display several links to the narratological research on crime fiction because of the emphasis on narrative strategies. That is not a step backward but as a generically-induced necessity to capture the full destabilizing potential of the postmodern detective. This procedure combines the strengths of the formerly dominant narratological and the current socio-cultural

¹ Among the publications on postcolonial detectives are Ed Christian's *The Post-Colonial Detective* (2001), Yumna Siddiqi's *Anxieties of Empire and Fiction of Intrigue* (2008), Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee's *Crime and Empire* (2003) or Christine Matzke's and Susanne Mühleisen's *Postcolonial Postmortems* (2006).

approach.

From this short outline, it should have become plain that this thesis traces two aspects: the aesthetics of postmodern crime fiction and its interaction with the nation's socio-political concept. The theoretical framework of crime fiction will be discussed in more detail during this dissertation to ensure a comprehensive analysis. This framework will cover the development of crime literature – from its beginnings to its postmodern interpretations – in the light of its philosophical and ethical assumptions. It will also include the representation of other ethnicities and, in particular, the character of the ethnic detective, who is gaining increasing popularity. (cf. Christian 4).

As the challenge to national borders and its representation in postmodern crime fiction is a global phenomenon, this dissertation employs a comparative approach that features different national literatures. This method will guarantee a broad perspective on the aesthetics of the subgenre and its applications in different literatures. In addition to this aesthetic reason, the analysis of varying socio-cultural experiences in different national contexts also plays a role in the choice of this structural approach. It allows the analysis of power structures that exist in different national contexts. The aspect of transnational or even global networks of power is also included and analyzed with regard to their particular manifestations in diverse national contexts.

Literary works from four different nations pay tribute to the global occurrence of national destabilization and postmodern crime fiction. The first part of the thesis will concentrate on fictions from Western literatures, namely from the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as both of them share a long-standing crime fiction tradition and a fascination for the omnipotent detective. The study focuses on the question of the character's removal from the tradition of the border protector. The detective might even be the one who crosses national or moral boundaries, while the nation faces dissolution in the form of an impenetrable past or a significantly increased number of migrants.

The British section of the dissertation includes Peter Ackroyd, Julian Barnes, and Kazuo Ishiguro. The three writers gained a reputation within the genre of historical meta-fiction (e.g., Ackroyd *Chatterton*, Barnes *Flaubert's Parrot*, Ishiguro *The Remains of the Day*; cf. A. Nünning, *Theorie, Typologie und Poetik* 6) and are like the rest of the selected authors not considered to be primarily crime fiction writers. Nevertheless, they all use either the detective character or structural formalities of crime fiction to investigate a murder, hidden clues, or missing people.

Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) centers on the idea of the creation of an alternative state liable to dark magic by killing people at London's landmarks built in the time of Enlightenment. Julian Barnes' *Arthur and George* (2005), in turn, is based on the true story of The Great Wyrley Outrages, the slaughtering of six horses, for which George Edalji, who was of Indian descent, was wrongfully sentenced to hard labor. The last novel *When We Were Orphans* (2000) by Kazuo Ishiguro is like Barnes' set in the past. An aspiring detective pursues his lifetime goal and attempts to solve the mystery of his parents' disappearance during his infancy in Shanghai in the early 20th century.

Michael Chabon *The Yiddish Policemen Union* (2007), Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* (1993), and Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* (1982) will constitute the US-American section of this book. These novels presume that past enigmas are often indissoluble because of far-reaching conspiracies. This idea of an impervious reality refers to the US' hard-boiled tradition.

In contrast to the United Kingdom, the United States has a reputation for being a genuinely multicultural society. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at one of these ethnic groups to highlight its particular situation. Several prominent examples of US postmodern crime literature show an interest in Jewish-American heritage and culture. *Operation Shylock* deals with the potential return of Israeli Jews to diaspora initiated by a fake Philip Roth, whom the real Philip Roth has then to chase, whereas *The Yiddish Policemen Union* demonstrates an equal concern for the Jewish situation. However, this novel transfers the question into an alternate

reality where the Messiah-to-be is found murdered. Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*, on the other hand, seems to be devoid of Jewish influence and, hence, to represent the assimilated Jewish-American community.

The second part of this dissertation will examine postmodern crime fiction outside Western literature. The focus is on the postmodern detective within a non-Western context regarding his complex socio-political situation. Crime fiction, however, is not an original genre with a long-lasting tradition in the postcolonial context, as it relates to the Western ideas of Enlightenment. Outside the West, the detective is an adopted figure that might be subject to adjustments (cf. Orsini 436). Postmodern crime novels from India and Sri Lanka comprise the second half of this thesis due to their former colonial ties to the United Kingdom. This unique historical constellation helps to exemplify a dialogical structure in the Indian and Sri Lankan encounter with their former colonizers. It might also support the thesis that a cross-cultural dialog replaces the classical detective's one-sided allocation of blame.

The postmodern crime fictions from the Indian subcontinent are Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* (1986), Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* (2006), and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). India's role as Britain's former colony and its current economic ascension make the investigation of its violent history and soaring self-image appealing in the context of this dissertation.

In these selected novels, the criminal assumes at least an equal, if not more significant role than the detective. In *The Circle of Reason* and *The White Tiger*, the criminals are even the protagonist. While Abu in *The Circle of Reason* just happens to be part of different communities that try to build a utopian society outside the capitalist area of influence and is, thus, hunted down, Balram Halwai, the main character in *The White Tiger*, is a financially-motivated murderer and at the same time a smart analyst of Indian society. *Sacred Games* illuminates the links between organized crime and the corrupted police in contemporary India.

The Sri Lankan novels foreground political issues tied to the just recently ended civil war on the island. Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) and Romesh Gunesekera's *Heaven's Edge* (2002) both describe war crimes. Anil investigates the remains of an unknown person who turns out to be a war crime victim so that the government forces her to abandon her inspection. In these selected novels, the criminal assumes at least an equal, if not more significant role than the detective.

The already announced elaboration on the development of the postmodern crime novel and its relationship to the other subgenres of the crime novel precedes the in-depth textual analysis of the selected novels.

2. Development and Characteristics of Fictional Detectives

Strangulation, poisoning, stabbing, shooting – the list of options to end another human's life is long. Nevertheless, as diverse as the killing methods may be, they all have two results. The first one is obvious: it is a moral uproar, including the call for justice and the misery of those left behind. The second result is much harder to admit to: fascination. What drives someone to kill another human being? Greed? Power? Or is the other person not even perceived as human, thus, it is legitimate to murder him or her?

This fascination does not refer to our contemporary era of rising coverage due to even more outrageous crimes or of TV-series featuring police, pathologists, or crime scene investigators chasing drug dealers, rapists, killers, or mass murderers. Through all ages, violence has been a part of human society in the form of religion and mythology (e.g., the murdering Shiva, the crucified Jesus Christ), or spectacles (e.g., gladiator fights in ancient Rome, public executions), or, of course, interpersonal violence like slavery or wars. It also became a central theme in literature, like in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*.

In the middle of the 19th century, a genre evolved that institutionalized violence and crime or better the uncovering of crime: classical detective fiction. This genre not only proved itself prevalent but also adapted and adjusted to the needs and likings of its readers so that it became the most popular and most successful genre quantity-wise in the 20th century (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, "Funktionen" 344; Rzepka 2).

Due to its massive numbers, its simple narrative formula, and its appeal to a broad specter of readers, crime fiction was very early on labeled as low or trivial literature, which then again led to the neglect of this genre by the academia until the late 20th century. Ever since then, academic writing has spent more effort scrutinizing the genre's attributes, its reference to social realities, and its ways of distribution. The studies of crime fiction prove themselves to be fruitful, especially outside the solely generic context. Yumna Siddiqi argues that crime fiction affects the

formation and circulation of opinions and social anxieties outside the text because of its large group of readers (cf. 22). The genre is far away from just passively reflecting the society in a condensed form. The simple formula makes the differentiation of right and wrong easier and furthers similar dichotomic thinking and acting in reality.

The positioning of this dichotomy in crime literature, its ethical implications, and its development are essential to follow the argumentation of this dissertation. The analysis of the problem of violence in postmodern crime novels requires both a genre and a socio-cultural perspective. Accordingly, the presentation of the historical development of the genre needs to address the ethical question of the other.

The Rise of the Detective²

Having unknowingly impregnated his mother and killed his father, Oedipus sets out to undo the curse on Thebes by finding and punishing the perpetrator who killed the former king, his father. This chase after himself makes him an often-named predecessor of the modern detective with whom he undeniably shares certain traits: a murder, the search for truth, and the culprit's identification. Nevertheless, Oedipus is not a detective himself, as this figure refers to the Western cultural movement of Enlightenment and its belief in science and progress. His “enquiry is based on supernatural, pre-rational methods that are evident in most narratives of crime until the development of the Enlightenment thought [...]” (Scaggs 11). While the gods decide Oedipus' fate, modern crime fiction is a realm devoid of any supernatural being.

Indeed, it is the aspect of rationality that counts as the most distinctive trait of the detective (cf. Alewyn 68; Holquist 156). Even the great literary detectives like to stylize themselves as purely

² The anthologies *The Poetics of Murder* by Glenn W. Most and William W. Stowe and *The Cunning Craft* by Ronald G. Walker and June M. Frazer offer a good overview of the historical development of classic detective novels and the hardboiled detective fiction, especially concerning literary and genre theory. *A Companion to Crime Fiction* by Charles J. Rzepka and Lee Horsley also deals with historical trends, various sub-genres, and the works of selected authors and filmmakers. Martin Priestman's *Crime Fiction* is dedicated to similar topics. The same applies to his anthology *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. John Scaggs' monograph *Crime Fiction* is more compact and is devoted above all to selected sub-genres of the crime novel.

rational beings that can explain crimes and all otherworldly phenomena due to deductive reasoning:

From a drop of water [said the writer], a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known wherever we are shown a single link of it. Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study, nor is life long enough to allow any mortal to attain the highest possible perfection in it. [...] Puerile as such an exercise may seem, it sharpens the faculties of observation, and teaches one where to look and what to look for. By a man's fingernails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot, by his trouser-knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs – by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed. (Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet" 22)

This analytical brilliance and the utmost belief in it is something that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes has in common with the other classical detectives – namely, Edgar Allan Poe's Auguste Dupin³ and Émile Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq. The skill does not only allow them to make their living, but it also excludes them from the ordinary people and rises him above basically everybody else. A less capable but explanation-providing side-kick to the genius (e.g., the character of Watson) functions as a narrative trick and grants the reader access to such a superhuman being (cf. Sweeney, "The Locked Room" 8; Scaggs 20). The intellectual distance between the detective and any other character makes Siegfried Kracauer call the former a non-person ("Unperson"), a notion that emphasizes the detective's aloofness and his loose ties to the rest of the society.⁴ It also generates associations of his asexuality. The detective is such an intelligent being that he is exempt from human bodily desires, and the Christian urge to populate the world (cf. Kracauer 30).

The murderer's deed challenges the detective's capacity to unwind riddles. He attempts to veil the procedure of the killing and to hide all clues that might give him away. The culprit's desire for mystification has been linked to the Romantic movement and its Gothic novels (cf. Alewyn 71-77). He appears as a Byronic character in contrast to the enlightened detective who wins the fight

³ In her essay "From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes," Heather Worthington explains Dupin's formative significance for the crime novel genre due to establishing narrative patterns. Thus "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" establishes the locked room mysteries, while "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" initiates the model of the armchair detective who does not even have to come to the crime scene to solve the crime (cf. 22-23).

⁴ In his essay "His Appearance is against him," Robin Woods traces the detective's detachment from society to his scientific roots. On the other hand, according to Woods, the detective acts as a buffer between the criminal and society to avoid social contamination by criminal elements (cf. 18-19).

between rationality and irrationality. The chaos-creating tendencies of the murderer are annihilated or rather put in order (cf. Tani 13-14).

The detective's victory is bound to the assumption that his world and the crime in it are based on textuality, thus, making social patterns, human behavior, and crimes readable. Metaphorically speaking, the detective is nothing more than a very proficient reader of social regularities and deviance.⁵ He pays attention to the seemingly non-relevant signs or clues that finally lead to the murderer's detection (cf. Alewyn 70; Bloch 41; Sweeney, "Locked Rooms" 8). In this way, he resembles the reader of crime fiction: The reader follows the more or less visible clues in the text as the detective does in his investigation.⁶ On the other hand, the murderer has a similar function as the author of a text. Both create a story which calls for a reader to understand it:

In a manner of speaking, the criminal writes the secret story of his crime into everyday 'reality' in such a form that its text is partly hidden, partly distorted and misleading. But although he tries to subject the whole text to his conscious and, as it were, artistic control, some signs usually escape his attention and inadvertently express their true meaning (his criminal authorship). So, even if the criminal as a skillful author has managed to rewrite the story of his crime in the coherent form of a different story, these unmanageable signs tend to disrupt the appearance and create a mystery. (Hühn 454)

The failure of the murderer underlines crime fiction's belief in the hermeneutic code. No text, no narrative, no code is unreadable. The textual world rests on the formula of cause and effect.

The structural simplicity of crime fiction strengthens the formula's likability. Accordingly, most classical detectives take place in remote countryside manors or other unpopulated areas.⁷ This spatial retreat limits the number of suspects as well as the possibility of coincidental events (cf. Alewyn 69). Therefore, the detective's compilation of clues or hints about a case or a suspect becomes plausible and cannot stand in question by chance. However, the location of the murder

⁵ As Tzvetan Todorov pointed out in his influential essay "The Typology of Detective Fiction," two stories can be identified in the classic detective novel and subsequently in its generic successors: "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. (159). The story of the crime is necessarily a story of absence because it only comes to light through a character in the story of the investigation. The significance of the story of the investigation, in turn, lies in the fact that it "serves only as a mediator between the reader and the story of the crime. (161).

⁶ George N. Dove's essay "The Detection Formula and The Act of Reading" deals with the prerequisites on the part of the reader of crime novels. He postulates that the reader must acquire knowledge of the detection formula to read and understand crime novels adequately. Otherwise, he could follow the wrong clues or leads (cf. 30-32). The reading of crime novels is, therefore, a socialization process.

⁷ Conversely, H.E. Sweeney understands the closed or remote locations of action in detective novels as an excellent metaphor of the genre, which in her view, remains in constant self-reflection of its form and content (cf. 11). In both cases, superfluous and disruptive influences are removed. This distinct focus on the formula for detective fiction ultimately leads to a "formula of all narrative. (4).

is not only of structural importance. It is also a symbol of a perfect world. In the British context, a manor house triggers ideas of the long-established nobility, who act as defenders of class and the moral system. The choice of such emblems as the crime scene creates a sense of unease. Contrary to horror stories, crime fiction draws its shiver, not from exotic but known and everyday places (cf. Alewyn 75). Lethal threats are seeping into our seemingly protected societies preying on innocent victims.

The moral issue of murder is also only simplistically alluded to as the primary conditions are presumed to be clear: the killing is a social anomaly and, hence, evil. The detective is the one to bring about justice and re-instates the social norms (cf. Pyrhönen 140).⁸ In proving the perpetrators' guilt and protecting society from the evil influence, the detective also exemplifies his understanding of morals. Neither the people nor any form of government judges the killer. They are unable to do so. It is the detective's task and decision to act as a judge and allocate guilt. In doing so, he reveals his conformity with or deviance from social morals (cf. Pyrhönen 131). One should not assume that the culprit's punishment is the prime goal of the investigations. In crime fiction, the sentence in court or even the period in jail goes unmentioned. The revelation of the murderer's identity is the final culmination point:

To engage in a whodunit game as the genre usually demands, the reader has to accept a number of elements such as [...] the following notions about crime: crime, even murder, evokes practically no other emotion than curiosity about the perpetrator's identity (and possibly method and motive); murder is not really shocking as an act, but as a sign that someone is upwardly mobile in an inappropriate way [...]; the punishment of the culprit is secondary to the revelation of his or her identity; and crime is the site for the criminal's and the detective's ingenuity rather than for moral indignation as regards its planning, committing, covering up, and transgression - the worse the better - for this game to take off, but without the distressing features such a transgression contains in real life. (Pyrhönen 164)

The classical detective fiction is, thus, mainly a mind game between the detective and the murderer. The crime committed unsettles society and triggers the investigation, but it is merely a tool and does not fundamentally challenge or threaten society's moral code. It remains the

⁸ For most of my analysis of the classical detective fiction and hard-boiled fiction, I follow Heta Pyrhönen's description of generic rules, as she pays excellent attention to the underlying narrative strategies as well as the genres' ethical implications. This combination will prove especially fruitful for the following analysis of postmodern crime fiction thematizing the nation concept because the chosen novels pose not only narrative but also ethical questions concerning the issue.

unwanted exception that is corrected by the detective.

The Realistic Turn

The character of the classical detective was too detached from reality in the eyes of the representatives of the American hard-boiled school. The detectives in Dashiell Hammett's or Raymond Chandler's novels chase the perpetrators in a fictional world permeated by corruption and the desire for power. The change of the crime scene in the hard-boiled genre underlines the change on a broader level. The locale of the murder in the classical detective novels is always a remote place, whereas the crimes in the hard-boiled fiction take place in the city (cf. Nusser 64). This change of scene denies the attribution of guilt that is common in classical detective fiction due to the larger number of possible causes of events. The large mass of people, the traffic, the cramped living conditions, and the influence of organized crime refuse the detective every sense of control over the situation. Constant impenetrability is the metier the sleuth has to work in (cf. Hühn 462).

The shift into the cityscape is also paradigmatic for the detective's development into a more bourgeois character. He is no longer a god-like, distant character, nor a social outcast (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, *Formen* 157). The trait that sets him apart from his peers is his idealism. The detective becomes a loner as he is unwilling to give up his morals to the temptations of the city, like most of the other characters do:

In fact the hard-boiled school, emphasizing realism (thus a non-stereotypical and non-intellectual conception of the detective novel) and at the same time a social and moral message (the corruption of society, the importance of the individual stand against it, no matter how meaningless) creates a late form of romance in which the hero must be idealistic and 'tough' as well, because such is the society in which he operates. This idealistic motive (the hardened but good 'knight' who fights the corrupted society) is certainly more connected to the 'irrational' current of the genre including the degenerate 'dime novel' and the tangential feuilleton than to the line that runs from Poe to the British cerebral game. (Tani 29)

Contrary to the classical detective fiction, the hard-boiled stories stress the sleuth's fight for morality. The committed crimes are no longer the exceptions in a society that agrees on the same ethic grounds. Instead, these crimes conform to their social background. The uncovering of the culprit's identity is still an inherent part of hard-boiled fiction, but the detective's struggle for his ideals against all the odds outweighs the intellectual mind game of the classical detective fiction.

The hard-boiled detective's fight for his values is an act of individualization in the sense that his efforts are a continuous affirmation of his moral system against his environment.⁹ On the one hand, he is closer to the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, he has to uncover the crimes in his social circle. Ethically it is him against them.¹⁰

Nevertheless, society in hard-boiled fiction is heterogeneous, unlike that portrayed in classical detective fiction. Every character strives to fulfill his or her desires:

In this sense, the ethical view may be said to be linked with a traditional American ideological heritage. The plot is patterned as a search for self-fulfillment by the characters, as all seek their own private good; their clashing interests result in crimes. In an atmosphere of mutual distrust, the investigator needs to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. In a context of institutional corruption crime is treated as an individual affair. Narration is a means of self-realization, self-recovery, or self-justification, conveying the message of a single person. (Pyrhönen 189-90)

Although the detective manages to name the perpetrator at the end of his investigation, he cannot change his society's moral code. He is only able to solve an individual crime and no longer a protector of the innocent.

The Postmodern Detective

After the Second World War, more and more authors who, until then, had not written crime fiction became attracted to the genre and one of its major characters, the detective. Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Der Richter und sein Henker* (1952), Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommages* (1953), or Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962) are nowadays considered classics of postmodern crime fiction. The definition of this genre is somewhat complicated considering the different terms used in academic writing: postmodern crime fiction (cf. Thompson 171), metaphysical crime fiction (cf. Holquist 173), the anti-detective novel (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, "Funktionen" 362;

⁹ In his analysis of the hardboiled genre, Andrew Pepper focuses primarily on the question of masculinity. He concludes that the hardboiled detective, on the one hand, is an affirmation of masculinity, which can but does not have to have misogynistic traits. On the other hand, he emphasizes that the hardboiled detective is a response to the emerging consumer culture characterized by Fordist production measures. According to Pepper, the male hardboiled detective is thus an ambivalent figure characterized by an image of dominant masculinity and social transformations (cf. 148).

¹⁰ In the context of the detective's struggle against social obstacles, Peter Hühn and Heta Pyrhönen refer to the changed function of narrative in the hardboiled tradition (cf. Hühn 461, Pyrhönen 187). Hühn assumes an "interactional reading" between the history of the crime and the attempt of the detective's investigation. The interaction leaves traces on both and does not allow for the healing of society (cf. Hühn 461). Pyrhönen interprets narration in the context of the hardboiled novel differently. Narration is the only possibility for the hardboiled detective "of achieving a sense of self and self-control" (187).

Tani 63) are just a few to name. Nevertheless, they all cover the same phenomenon. However, this dissertation employs the term postmodern crime fiction as it relates to the postmodern aesthetics of parody, pastiche, and metafiction. First and foremost, the genre comprises a play with the existing conventions that also allow philosophical deliberations on postmodern realities. Metaphysical crime fiction might allude to the ethical nature of the genre, but it falls short in the playfulness and the narrative strategies employed. Ethical debates are not unknown to crime fiction and can be discovered in, for example, the work of G.K. Chesterton. The innovative twist in postmodern crime fiction stems from its turn to meta-fictional devices and its parodist tone. Additionally, the genre is not an absolute objection to the detective character, as implied in the term anti-detective novel. Therefore, this term is not used throughout this dissertation.

What makes postmodern crime fiction so different from its predecessors that academics coined a term for this subgenre and even called it "the paradigmatic archetype of literary imagination?" (Spanos 154). Jeanne C. Ewert states that the firm belief of the classical detective story in the hermeneutic code, as well as the marginalized position of the detective in society, caught the attention of the postmodern writers (cf. 167). The latter facing the turmoil of war and genocide from the hands of countless and faceless agents considered the human intellectual capacity to analyze the world as insufficient. Following the postmodern logic of non-causal events, postmodern crime fiction denies closure, and the detective fails. The hermeneutic code and the art of deduction are useless.¹¹

Postmodern crime fiction writers use the existing formulas of crime fiction as mere patterns to create anticipation (cf. Tani 56, 60). But in the end, they frustrate their readers and constitute the detective as an empty shell of human intellectual idealism:

Thus, the metaphysical detective story does not have the narcotizing effect of its progenitor; instead of familiarity, it gives

¹¹ William Spanos points out that the postmodern variants of the crime novel are to be understood as fundamentally anti-Aristotelian. The refusal to solve the crime contradicts the causal plot structure of beginning, middle and end. According to Spanos, the postmodern strategies of the crime novel aim "to generate rather than purge pity and terror; to disintegrate, to atomize rather than to create community. (155).

strangeness, a strangeness which more often than not is the result of jumbling the well-known patterns of classical detective stories. Instead of reassuring they disturb. They are not an escape, but an attack. By exploiting the conventions of the detective story such men as Borges and Robbe-Grillet have fought against the modernist attempt to fill the void of the world with rediscovered mythical symbols. (Holquist 173)

While Michael Holquist views "the metaphysical detective story" as a solely postmodern genre, Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney oppose such a strong differentiation between modernism and postmodernism (cf. 4-6). They point to metaphysical tendencies in the subgenre's antecedents and, thus, emphasize continuity in the development of crime fiction. Michael Holquist's position that postmodern crime fiction deviates from generic predecessors insofar as it is far more aware of its narrative strategies is, in comparison, more convincing because it highlights the genre's convention to uncover its narrative artificiality. In doing so, postmodern crime fiction sets the focus on the construction of narratives – moral, social, or philosophical ones – and confronts the Western notion of objective truth. The enigma in postmodern crime fiction is no longer the deed but the formation of narration (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, "Funktionen" 351). Thus, in turn, truth is a subjectively generated narration.

The impossibility to access objective truth refers to the non-existence of a rational world, which in postmodern crime fiction is often challenged by chance. The detective does not arrive at a conclusion because of his deductive abilities. Sometimes it is chance that comes to assist him, hence, undermining his intellect (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, "Funktionen" 362). Another option for chance to interfere with the detective's rational world view is the murder. In some cases, the killing happens unintentionally, making the initial cause untraceable (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus, "Funktionen" 359). Like in the hard-boiled novels, the postmodern detective is unable to re-affirm the social order that is threatened by a crime. The postmodern subgenre goes even one step further, yet: the failure of the detective illustrates not only the impenetrability of the world but also causes doubts concerning his own identity. How can a detective whose identity relies on his rational capacities define himself in a chaotic environment? The whodunit's and especially the hard-boiled's emphasis on individuality and a stable self are impossible in postmodern crime

fiction.

The denial of a stable identity and a happy ending and the use of the existent formula of crime fiction makes the postmodern version a parody (cf. Tani 41-42). It breaks with the conventions which only continue the Western assumptions of rationality, truth, and justice that are all supposed to lead to either social or individual stability. The aforementioned notions are part of Western dichotomic thinking: rationality vs. emotionality, truth vs. lie, justice vs. injustice. Within these dichotomies, one element is preferential to the disfavor of the other. Rationality brings about the truth, which will consequently guarantee justice.

On the other hand, emotions are unable to uncover the truth and will lead to injustice due to dichotomic thinking. These assumptions become even more problematic when they are linked to specific groups of people. Traditionally it has been the white man who fashioned himself as the epitome of rationality and its associated concepts, whereas women or ethnic others were perceived as emotional or worse closer to the bestial roots in humans. This order was established by the ruling class of white men and internalized by women and ethnic others (cf. Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism "42-43). The classical and the hard-boiled detectives are overwhelmingly white and echoed the social perception of their group. In this way, they also reinforced the existing power structures (cf. Mukherjee 28).

The authors of postmodern crime fiction did not set out to destroy Western power structures. Their agenda was rather to make the narrative constructions visible that constitute our identity. The first postmodern crime novels to be published are interested in the possibilities and impossibilities of language and the narrative expansion of the genre. They do not consider the unfair conditions of female or ethnic individualization. They might, however, carry the potential to be used in favor of oppressed groups because they question central ideas of Western philosophy and demonstrate the subjective formation of every concept. In stressing subjectivity, postmodern crime fiction does not only shift the emphasis from one element of the dichotomy to

the other. It refrains from any absolute idea by leaving the detective in a moment of crisis and identity search. Rationality is shaken.

The Other Detectives

The development leading up to the formation of the postmodern crime fiction does not include the abolition of its predecessors. Instead, they functioned as patterns for multiple subgenres so that one can proclaim a vast diversity of crime fiction on the contemporary book market (cf. Suerbaum 211). The variety ranges from classical to postmodern works, from historical to ethnic crime fiction, from socio-cultural to comedic examples. This trend to plurality promotes destabilization of strict (sub)genre distinctions (cf. Marcus 252). Since the 1970s, popular crime fiction has become increasingly infused with high literary techniques and social criticism (cf. Priestman 173).

Ulrich Suerbaum tags this phenomenon *Krimi Plus* which demonstrates crime fiction's aspiration to offer its readers more than just pure detection (cf. Suerbaum 207). Therefore, a rising interest in gender issues or the class system can be spotted. For example, the literary detective Barbara Havers, who investigates murders with her partner Thomas Lynley in Elizabeth George's novels, combines both of those components. She does not only have to assert herself as a woman in a male-dominated occupation group but also functions as an example of the problematic living conditions of the British working class.

The factor of ethnicity¹² is another aspect that made an impact on crime fiction. The number of ethnic detectives is so large that it is impossible to outline this subgenre's development and its current status clearly within the context of this dissertation. Major representatives are Tony

¹² Ethnicity is a socio-cultural factor. Ethnic groups possess varying traditions and rites that are traded down from one generation to another. (cf. Wallerstein 77) In contrast to the nation, a socio-political category, it does not necessarily imply a political realization of a group's heritage or destiny, nor is it bound to a state's territory. Instead, different ethnic groups can share one political space while rooting individuals to a specific cultural background (cf. Jenkins 53-54). The critic Stuart Hall proclaims that the notion of ethnicity has the potential to go beyond this dominant meaning and might rather denote a human's ethnic and, hence, cultural position in principle. He prefers this concept of ethnicity as it underlines a speaker's subjective point of view and, therefore, eliminates any hierarchy between different ways of thinking (cf. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora "222).

Hillerman and his series on the Navajo tribal police, Alexander McCall Smith and his *The No. 1 Detective Agency* series, or Walter Mosley and his Easy Rawlin's series. All ethnic crime novels, however, share the accentuation of the detective's origin (cf. Christian 2). The sleuth is defined by his community and is, at the same time, continually struggling with it. This search for ethnic identity facing a mainstream and a minority society resonates with the sleuth's traditional loneliness (cf. Fischer-Hornung 12). Ethnically he is tied to his community, but professionally he has to obey and represent his government, whose majority most likely consists of a different ethnicity than his own. The detective has to handle this gap and has to come to terms with his split identity, which according to Christian makes the postcolonial detective approach the “crime with a special sensitivity” (Christian 2). This loneliness the ethnic detective experiences is insofar different from the classical and the hard-boiled detective's one as the latter chooses his solitary and the former does not (cf. Fischer-Hornung and Mueller 12). The traditional detectives are remote from society because of their genius or belief in their morals, whereas the ethnic detective is unable to blend in due to his physical and cultural differences. His body and the female body are inscribed with a power structure discourse, which also allows them to be more aware of social discrimination and injustice (cf. Christian 2).

In her analysis of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, Wendy Knepper states that postcolonial crime fiction *per se* denies a solution because of the fragmented postcolonial living experience (cf. 38-39). In *Anil's Ghost*, no solution is provided, mirroring Sri Lanka's postcolonial state. However, the novel's genre exceeds the sole description of postcolonial crime fiction. Michael Ondaatje applies narrative techniques like non-linear story-telling and meta-fictional elements that prove this work to be devoted to postmodern aesthetics. Therefore, *Anil's Ghost* earns the label of postmodern, postcolonial crime fiction, for it is influenced by both ways of thinking, which are interlinked but not completely overlapping.

The difficulty of assigning this particular novel to a subgenre exemplifies the process of genre

hybridization. As mentioned above, elements of other genres merge with those of crime fiction. Most of these hybrids are still generically considered crime fiction, though. Several academic articles were published on ethnic, female, or historical crime fiction illustrating the change in the genre and highlighting the bonds of those works with the crime fiction tradition. Lindsey Davis' novels featuring Marcus Didius Falco are named historical crime fiction and not crime histories, Alexander McCall's writing is labeled postcolonial crime fiction and not criminal postcolonial fiction. The case of postmodern crime fiction deviates from this handling. The discussion on works in this genre center often on their philosophical, aesthetic, or social components, but their ties to the crime fiction genre are rather neglected. The reasons for this are manifold: the work itself may focus more on the investigation of metaphysical or social issues than on the committed crime, thus, limiting the apparent influence of crime fiction but still not denying it.

Additionally, the authors of postmodern crime fiction are not dedicated to that subgenre. In other words, they do not write complete series in the subgenre starring one detective character as it happens in the popular crime fiction. They may publish one postmodern crime fiction but then move on to another genre: Siri Hustvedt, for example, who started her career with *The Blindfold*, a postmodern crime fiction, and later wrote *What I Loved*, a novel deliberating loss and memory. The missing dedication to the genre translates to the different marketing strategies of the publishing industries and the book stores. Postmodern crime fictions are never shelved in the crime fiction section in book shops, and their authors are never called 'master of suspense' but rather 'a narrative mastermind,' thus aiming at an intellectual or more elitist group of readers. Hence, the identification of postmodern crime fiction is exacerbated by the subgenre's tendency to use the crime fiction formula to scrutinize other issues, by the author's missing dedication, the market policies, and the slight neglect of genre ties in academic writing.

Postmodern crime fiction is a genuinely postmodern genre in that it dedicates itself to postmodern aesthetics and metafictional narration. Therefore, the argumentation of the selected

novels includes a discussion of other generic influences, as the trend of metafictional narration in postmodern crime fiction may find its equivalent in other genres.

3. Postmodern Detectives as Investigators of the British National Discourse

The connection between detective fiction and the British nation-state has always been a strong one: The literary genre had a stabilizing effect by supporting existing power relations as during the Victorian era through the character of the detective. Additionally, it soothed the shaken national spirit during the era of the Golden Age detective fiction, when the literary withdrawal to the English countryside provided a distraction from the reality between the wars (Teo 90). Either way, the detective character functioned as a protector of the British self-image.

This dissertation includes examples from British postmodern crime fiction due to said correlation of the genre with the nation-state. Additionally, British national literature provides an insight into the representation of the main mechanisms of Western nation-building. The United Kingdom, hence, serves as an example for Western nation-building within this analysis. Western nations display similar tactics due to sharing the same cultural, political, and social hemisphere. At the same time, they also differ in various aspects, such as economic or political supremacy. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the development and techniques of Western nation-building and the applications specific to the British context. Britain's loss of its hegemonic position during the 20th century is a defining trait of the British nation-state and has dramatically affected its self-image and consequently, its literature, among other things. Facing Britain's diminished global status, many literary authors of the 20th century dealt with the question of what it (still) means to be British or English. The two world wars, the reduction of economic power due to decreased trading monopolies, the rise of new global players, and the independence of the colonies threatened the British self-image and halted its mission of progress (cf. Prince 24).

One can, however, not fully comprehend this moment of crisis for the British nation-state without looking at the core principles of Western nation-states in general. Historically, the formative era for Western nations was the age of Enlightenment, which generated a new impulse

for the so-called Western civilization process.

The Christian concept of the "Fall of Man," which should ultimately grant humanity re-admission into paradise after judgment day, did no longer determine human life. Enlightenment instead aimed to improve the human race through education, which supported progress in science, philosophy, politics, and economics. Its emphasis on the human mind's capacity for critical thinking and its intense criticism of the Christian faith created a metaphysical vacuum:

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

Contemporary societies, hence, longed for the transcendence of individual lives. The concept of the nation-state was able to provide individuals with a sense of transcendence by fulfilling the human needs that were formerly met by the Christian faith. Among these, the sense of community is the most important. This sense of belonging arises from the myth of national characteristics:

This illusion [i.e. of the national personality] is twofold. It consists in believing that the generations which succeed one another over centuries on a reasonably stable territory, under a reasonably univocal designation, have handed down to each other an invariant substance. And it consists in believing that the process of development from which we select aspects retrospectively, so as to see ourselves as the culmination of that process, was the only possible, that is, it represented a destiny. (Balibar, "The Nation Form" 86)

The "invariant substance," which denotes an unchanged culture, is, thus, a prerequisite of national communities. Hence, the nation emphasizes an essence unique to its people and denies changes because of territorial gain or loss or even migration, which would imply adjustments of the national culture. Because of the "invariant substance," the national past has an ahistorical tinge and, in this way, allows individuals to feel protected within their ethnically homogenous peer group. Therefore, the nation is a safe haven for its members (cf. Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" 293).

On the other hand, the seemingly ahistorical national past created the self-awareness among citizens that they were – irrespective of their era – the epitome of the national characteristics, thus, clearly demonstrating a historical development, which, in turn, provided the nations with

the mission to win the civilization race (cf. Balibar, "The Nation Form" 86).

Despite the present being a culmination of national qualities, the citizens, hence, had to pursue the nation's future destiny. All citizens had to play their part in the civilization race and follow their leader's rule as the nation concept is closely tied to the idea of progress, a key component to all Western nation-building techniques. The citizens of a nation-state are continuously asked to prevail and move forward to comply with their mythological peer group and the inherited mission (cf. Balibar, "The Nation Form" 86).

Until the end of the 19th century, the nation-states remained — despite their different forms and manifestations — a symbol of progress and served their purpose of granting its inhabitants a sense of belonging. The 20th century, however, was a turning point for the nation-states all over Europe. Their set-up was drastically altered due to democratic movements, the world wars, the gradual dissolution of the colonial system, and the shift in power to the USA, among other things (cf. Hedetoft 38-40, 43-45).

Due to its top position in the civilization race at the end of the 19th century, the British nation-state was particularly affected by the developments of the 20th century, which threatened the British national foundation: The loss of the colonies equals territorial loss and initiates an increase in migratory movement into Britain, thus destabilizing the mythical, national community. The reduction of global influence on a political, economic, and social scale, on the other hand, thwarted the nation's mission for supremacy and contradicted British progress.

These damages to the British nation-state influenced, as mentioned before the British self-image:

England is full of ghosts. They constitute an absence which defines us. In the three decades after the Second World War the English imagined themselves a natural given [...] sustaining themselves with visions of a warrior nation of virtue, endurance and physical courage. And yet for all this national myth-making there was a dissonance in its telling. (Rutherford, *After Identity* 42-43)

Rutherford states that, after the Second World War, English society is predominantly interested in the generation of a seeming continuity without being able to succeed in this effort. The United Kingdom is past-oriented, but unable to bridge the temporal gap. This movement in British society illustrates that the latter feels detached from the national mission of progress. The British

people are no longer the epitome of their national characteristics, which, in turn, also distances them from their mythological peer group.

Besides, the British citizens at the end of the 20th century face a globalized world and increased migratory movement, which, according to Rutherford, threatens the British self-image even further:

No longer able to project internal contradictions and conflicts out into foreign lands, England was confronted with what it had denied and repressed about itself. The benign sense of omnipotence and complacent belief in racial superiority was replaced by a strange half silence, half denial about the end of the empire. Unable to project onto defenceless others, the dominating English culture experienced a weakening of its sense of identity. What does it mean to be English? With each wave of immigration, sections of the population exhibited a sense of vulnerability which expressed itself in bullying: they persecuted the incomers because they felt persecuted by them. (*After Identity* 69-70)

The influx of migrants into their homeland, thus, raises new questions for British citizens and abolishes the national ideal of an ethnically homogenous group.

This analysis of the three British postmodern crime novels will pay special attention to two core components of national discourse: (dis-)continuity in British historical considerations and the relation to ethnic others. It will examine the postmodern variations of the literary detective as well as their correlations with the British national discourse. It will be interesting to see whether the detective character can uphold its traditional guardian role in times of generic and national disarray.

The three postmodern crime fictions, namely Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* have a historical setting in common:

Detective Hawksmoor in the homonymous novel focuses on an internal enemy of state whose murderous acts have their roots in the times of Enlightenment. This very period significantly shaped the Western nation concept.

However, Julian Barnes features a White detective, Arthur Conan Doyle, and a suspect of Indian descent, George Edalji, in *Arthur & George*. In this novel, based on a historical incident, Barnes traces the question of the ethnic other in the predominantly White Victorian society. Kazuo Ishiguro, on the other hand, foregrounds the problems of transnationals in *When We Were Orphans*. The protagonist Christopher Banks grew up in Shanghai of the 1930s and returns there

later to solve the case of his abducted parents.

After an elaboration on the generic conventions of British postmodern crime novels, the second part of the forthcoming analysis will have a closer look at the representation of nation-building covering both the historical as well as the migratory dimension. The ultimate goal of the analysis is to uncover how the detective character comes to terms with the changing parameters.

Postmodern Adaptations of the British Classical Detective

Peter Ackroyd's crime fiction *Hawksmoor* displays the classic contrasting pair of a murderer, the architect Nicholas Dyer, and a detective, Nicholas Hawksmoor. The general outline seems to be the traditional fight between chaos and order, myth, and reason. However, Ackroyd provides his readers with a far more complex narration, for the murders happen during the construction of churches in the time of Enlightenment and re-occur in contemporary London. The modern detective cannot explain the killings from a scientific point of view as they do not obey any physical law. He is destined to fail.

Ackroyd structures his novel straightforwardly by alternately providing his readers with chapters on the murderer and the detective. While Dyer's chapters appear in the style of a diary and have a first-person-narrator, namely the murderer, the chapters on the detective have a third-person-narrator. Despite these differing narrative points of view, the reader quickly becomes aware of the similarities between murderer and detective, who seem to be *doppelgänger*, as can be deduced from Nicholas Dyer's understanding of his craft. He demonstrates a structural approach to the construction of his churches, which are designed to last eternally due to human

sacrifices:¹³

And so let us beginne; and, as the Fabrick takes its Shape in front of you, alwaies keep the Structure intirely in Mind as you inscribe it. First, you must measure out or cast the Area in as exact a Manner as can be, and then you must draw the Plot and make the Scale. I have imparted to you the Principles of Terrour and Magnificence, for these you must represent in the due placing of the Parts and Ornaments as well as in the Proportion of the several Orders: you see, Walter, how I take my Pen? [...]

This you must distinguish from the Profile, which is signified by edging Stroaks and Contours without any solid finishing: thus a book begins with a frontpiece, then its Dedication, and then its Preface or Advertisement. And now we come to the Heart of our Designe: the art of Shaddowes you must know well, Walter, and you must be instructed how to Cast them with due Care. It is only the Darknesse that can give trew Forme to our Work and trew Perspective to our Fabrick, for there is no Light without Darknesse and no Substance without Shaddowe [...].¹⁴

The comparison of architecture, the craft of the murderer, with literature and authorship reminds of the traditional trope of the murderer as the author and the detective as the reader (cf. Pyrhönen 31-32). Thus, Dyer appears to be the perfect and well-known antipode to Detective Hawksmoor: the former being the creator, the latter being the reader and analyst. Following the logic of the comparison above, the reader of the novel identifies with Detective Hawksmoor and becomes an analyst of crime or crime fiction, respectively. With regard to the narrative approach, it should also be added that the roles of Dyer and Hawksmoor are reflected in the narrative concepts of their respective chapters. While Dyer, as creator, murderer, and first-person narrator, allows the reader of the novel seemingly unhindered access to his subjective world of thought, Hawksmoor remains at a supposed distance from the reader through the third-person narrator of his chapters. However, this narrative concept is deceptive, for Dyer leaves behind signs of his murders that are not readable by Hawksmoor or by the reader of the novel:

The rest I omit, for many a bitter Pill can be swallowed under a golden Cover: I make no Mention that in each of my Churches I put a Signe so that he who sees the Fabrick may see also the Shaddowe of the Reality of which it is the Pattern or

¹³ It is noteworthy that human sacrifices not only play a role in occult practices such as Hawksmoor's attempt to create a different world order. On the contrary, the nation-state has been relying on them ever since its conception. The nation project was first and foremost initiated by the elites of Enlightenment to coordinate the masses with the help of centralized institutions. The nation concept with its inherent contradictions, such as the ahistorical past combined with the contemporary citizens' will to progress, offered the possibility of involving the masses by making the national community plausible because of common heritage. This bond, in turn, allowed the elites to ask for obedience and sacrifices: Similar to the Christian community, the national community had to be standardized and needed protection from the outside in the form of human sacrifices that were later glorified. (cf. Balibar, "The Nation Form" 95) Sacrifices were a means of measurement to pinpoint a nation's determination to fulfill its destiny, its citizens' potential to keep up with the national qualities. The usage of violence to support one's nation or even the willingness to die for it became achievements. (cf. A. Assmann 33) Looking at Hawksmoor's deeds from this perspective, one could conclude that he rather unveils the darkness inherent in humankind than being the latter's murderous outsider.

¹⁴ Ackroyd, Peter. "Hawksmoor", 5-6. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "HA".

Figure. Thus, in the church of *Lime-house*, the nineteen Pillars in the Aisles will represent the Names of Baal-Berith, the seven Pillars in the Chappel will signify the Chapters of his Covenant. All those who wish to know more of this may take up *Clavis Salomonis*, Niceron's *Thaumaturgus Opticus* where he speaks of the Line and Distance, Cornelius Agrippa his *De occultia philosophia* and Giordano Bruno *De magia* and *De vinculis in genere* where he speaks of Hieroglyphs and the Raising of the Devilles. (HA 45)

Dyer's signs on the intended usage of his churches are part of a different tradition. They are not created according to the rules of science or the Anglican-Christian tradition but according to the devil's specifications. The portrayed works are, hence, all holy grounds in which satanic knowledge is hidden at the same time. A work of art can, therefore, have different meanings depending on the individual. Following Dyer's comparison between architecture and literature, the novel *Hawksmoor* could thus be a story about murders in 18th century London and simultaneously contain unreadable codes for the uninitiated. Only those able to read the signs can, in either case, understand the whole picture.

By rendering Detective Hawksmoor as well as his confederate reader illiterate, Dyer undermines the generic conventions of crime fiction. The illegibility of the crime scenes corresponds with the understanding of the formula of the subgenre of postmodern crime fiction: the world is an incomprehensible and unreadable place.

It is not only the killings that elude the comprehension of Hawksmoor and the readers. The same is true for the murderer on a personal level. His chapters are held in the style of a diary with a first-person narrator displaying Dyer's recount of his life, which makes Berkem Güneraci Saglam call *Hawksmoor* "an autobiographical journal [that] hints at parodies of autobiography, the confession narrative, and of diary writing (cf. 131). Central to the genre of autobiography is the illusion of factuality and truthfulness due to the seeming unity of author, narrator, and protagonist (cf. Baumann and Neuhausen 19). However, the topic of satanic rituals does not comply with the contemporary understanding of facts. Dyer may give the reader his background story and tell him or her about his parents' death (cf. HA 11-16), but his final accomplishment remains a mystery. His escape from arrest is not only an indicator of the subversive genre conventions of postmodern crime fiction. It also disappoints the reader's expectation of a closed

life description, the essential genre convention of autobiography. Despite the conventions of autobiography as well as the first-person narrator, the murderer thus eludes the reader.

Dyer, thus, functions as the destabilizer of crime fiction and autobiography while denying the readers any closure. Detective Hawksmoor, on the other hand, shows the traditional feats of a classical detective and exemplifies great pride in his skill of reading social codes:

'I'm glad you know what is true.' Hawksmoor scratched his cheek as he spoke. He was playing a part: he knew this, and believed it to be his strength. Others did not realise that their parts had been written for them, their movements already marked out like chalk lines upon stage, their clothes and gestures decided in advance, but he knew such things, and thought it better to have chosen. The uniformed officer seemed not to have heard his last remark, and looked blankly at him. (HA 118)

Hawksmoor, therefore, demonstrates the capacities of a classical detective, which allow him to interpret and even anticipate human behavior. He is also designed as a superior human being or at least an analyst, as the regular police officer is unable to follow his reasoning. Consequently, Hawksmoor is detached from average human society, a vital element of every classical detective (cf. Alewyn 67-68).

Additionally, Hawksmoor is designed as a man of science, which also resonates with the core characteristics of a classical detective:

'I need to know when, 'he said,' In this case when is more important than how. Do you have a time-table?' For although images of this murder now surrounded him, and the parts of the body had become emblems of pursuit, violence and flight, they were as broken and indistinct as the sounds of a quarrel in a locked room. Only the phases of time could be known clearly: the quickening and deepening of respiration at the first shock of the hands around the throat; livid congestion and laboured respiration as the grip tightens and consciousness becomes confused; infrequent respiration, twitchings, loss of consciousness, terminal vomiting and death. Hawksmoor liked to measure these discrete phases, which he considered as an architect might consider the plan of a building: three to four minutes for death. (HA 113)

For Hawksmoor's investigation, the coroner's findings are essential because they will explain the premature death. The victim's bodily reactions to the strangling create a timeline which Hawksmoor compares to an architecture of death, a comparison that once again connects Hawksmoor and the murderous architect Dyer. Every building is constructed according to a particular style and, most of all, according to the law of static. Therefore, buildings may look different, but they still are the results of physics. In Hawksmoor's view, the same is true for murders: a person can be poisoned, drowned, or stabbed, but killings cannot be committed outside the realm of physical law.

Even when the signs are inconclusive, to begin with, Hawksmoor does not give up. Instead, he

holds onto his role as a protector of society. His confidence in his detection abilities remains unscathed:

'Murderers don't disappear. Murderers aren't unsolvable. Imagine the chaos if that happened. Who would feel the need to restrain himself then?' And if for the moment Hawksmoor saw his job as that rubbing away the grease and detritus which obscured the real picture of the world, in the way that a blackened church must be cleaned before the true texture of its stone can be seen.

Walter was impatient to be gone. 'And so what do we do next?'

'We do nothing. Think of it like a story: even if the beginning has not been understood, we have to go on reading it. Just to see what happens next.' (HA 126)

Once again, the comparison of murder with architecture on the one hand and text on the other occurs. Indeed, murder, architecture, and text form a triangle in *Hawksmoor*: Every element is interchangeable because they all obey the same rules: either they are created by signs or they are read and understood when someone is capable of the code. As the different subjects can be exchanged, one cannot help but wonder if the acts of killing/building/writing are diametrical opposites of detecting/analyzing/reading.

Ackroyd deliberately designs the characters of the murderer and the detective to support the reader's doubts about their pure antagonism (cf. Onega 45, Saglam 130). Dyer and Hawksmoor share e.g., the same first name, and are accompanied by an assistant called Walter (cf. HA 9, 109). In fact, it was Nicholas Hawksmoor, who built the mentioned churches in the Spittle-Fields or the Limehouse and was the apprentice of Sir Christopher Wren, named Sir Chris in the novel (cf. Lord 119). These circumstances add to the suspicion that Dyer and Hawksmoor are anything but mere antagonists and are, instead, in the process of approaching each other.

The detective's journey towards realizing his limited assets begins with his incapacity to make sense of the killings. While Hawksmoor prides himself to be a "scientist" or "scholar" (HA 152), the murders remain scientifically incomprehensible. His tools of analysis do not match his opponents:

'I don't know about the time. Even if I allow for a rise of temperature of six degrees at death, and even if the rate of cooling was only two degrees an hour, his present body heat would mean that he was killed only six hours ago.' Hawksmoor felt the tic returning as he listened to this intently, and he rubbed his eye. 'And yet the extent of the lividity is such that the bruises were made at least twenty-four hours ago - normally they can take two or three days to come out like this.' Hawksmoor said nothing, but stared in the man's face. 'You say the timing is crucial, superintendent, but I have to say that in this case I don't understand the timing at all.' The pathologist at last looked down at his bloody hands, and went towards a metal sink to wash them. 'And there's another thing, he called out over the sound of running water, 'There are no impressions, no prints. A strangler's fingers pressed into the neck will leave a curved nail impression, but there are only bruises here.' (HA 113)

Hawksmoor is stripped of traditional ways of analyzing a crime, as the rules of science do not apply. The signs left behind are incomprehensible.

The detective's initial refusal to admit his probable failure and his attachment to traditional private-eye beliefs make him an almost two-dimensional character. His inability to wrap up the murder cases reveal him to be a caricature of the honorary detectives of old:

Hawksmoor is the most obvious of English detectives, a humourless walking parody, not of policemen but of fictional detectives, who themselves are often nothing more than barely sketched cardboard cut-outs [...]. Nothing more than a virtual trope himself, he succumbs to a lack of form and internal, hermeneutic logic because the narrative in which he finds himself will not behave according to the rules of the game. (Gibson 95)

According to the rules of postmodern detective fiction, Hawksmoor tries to perform his deduction, fails, and, thus, unveils the weakness of the classical detectives. Ackroyd plays with the traditional schemata of classical detective fiction by exaggerating the dual relationship between murderer and detective. The clear differentiation between these two characters does not hold up, which leads to the identity crisis of the detective. *Hawksmoor* is a play with the detective formula. The characters are flat, whereas the complexity of the novel comes from its playfulness with generic traditions. *Hawksmoor* not only destabilizes one genre but two – namely crime fiction and autobiography.

In Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, the novel's protagonists also shed light on the concept of the literary detective without displaying *Hawksmoor*'s generic playfulness. The fictional Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, reflects on his writing and even tries to solve the case of George Edalji, who works as a solicitor and holds a naïve belief in the British judicial system whose victim he becomes. Both of them are connected to an ideal: either the superhuman rationality of the literary detective or the blindness of Justitia. Nevertheless, they are also the epitomes of the failure of these ideals.

Many critics have remarked so far that *Arthur & George* represents a shift in Julian Barnes' oeuvre. They see the novel in the tradition of modernist and realist writing (cf. V. Nünning 228), which discontinues Barnes' prior style of "postmodern fabulation" (Berberich 119). The straightforward narrative perspective of the heterodiegetic narrator uses Arthur and George as

focalization, which grants the contemporary reader easy access to the inner workings of the Victorian poet and his client, ultimately “evoking sympathy for the characters” (V. Nünning 228). However, the change in narrative techniques does not mean a complete shift in Barnes’ preferred topics in his work. He is still concerned with the theme of identity – especially in the context of reality and fiction, which makes Barnes’ shift to a realist writing style even more intriguing because said style in the traditional sense is still connected to the ideas of objectivity and truthfulness. This analysis will, therefore, pay special attention to this aspect.

In addition to this shift to the modernist tradition, critics still give *Arthur & George* various generic labels. Barnes' novel is called a biography (cf. Berberich 121, V. Nünning 220), a historical novel (cf. Berberich 128), a detective novel (cf. Berberich 128, Weese 302), a Bildungsroman (cf. Berberich 128, Schneider 54), a retro-Victorian novel (cf. Cavalié 89) or a neo-Victorian detective novel (cf. Zwierlein 32). This range of different types of genres illustrates the complexity of the novel and, on the other hand, represents one of the most prominent critical approaches to it. The same is true for this analysis, which will focus on aspects of detective fiction and the interconnections with other genres.

Arthur & George is a fictional recount of a historical case, which already demonstrates Barnes' fascination for the boundary between reality and fiction. The investigation serves the purpose of suspense as well as the rediscovery of the British past. As in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, the crime fiction genre is used to detect the connection between past events and contemporary times, potentially illuminating the question of contemporary British identity. To fully comprehend Barnes's approach to identity formation, we must first analyze his appropriation of traditional crime fiction elements, which he uses as tools to elaborate on this issue.

The fictional Arthur Conan Doyle strongly believes in the sense of sight. The act of accurate seeing unravels in his opinion the mysteries of the world:

Arthur believed in looking - at the glaucous eye of a dying whale, at the contents of a shot bird's gizzard, at the facial relaxation of a corpse who was never to become his brother-in-law. Such looking must be without prejudice: this was a practical necessity for a doctor, and a moral imperative for a human being.

He liked to tell how he had been taught the importance of careful looking at the Edinburgh Infirmary. A surgeon there, Joseph Bell, had taken a shine to this large, enthusiastic youth and made Arthur his out-patient clerk. His job to muster the patients, take preliminary notes, and then lead them to Mr Bell's room, where the surgeon would be sitting his dressers. Bell would greet each patient, and from a silent yet intense scrutiny try to deduce as much as possible about their lives and proclivities. He would declare that his man was by trade a French polisher, that one a left-handed cobbler, to the amazement of those present, not least of the patient himself. Arthur remembered the following exchange:

'Well, my man, you've served in the army.'

'Aye, sir.'

'Not long discharged?'

'No, sir.'

'A Highland regiment?'

'Aye, sir.'

'Stationed at Barbados?'

'Aye, sir.'

It was a trick, yet it was a true trick; mysterious at first, simple when explained.¹⁵

Arthur's mentor, the model for Sherlock Holmes, displays a superior power of observation, which allows him to categorize his counterpart in an instant.¹⁶ This fact conforms with the idea of the superhuman literary detective. The circumstance that the fictional Arthur draws from Joseph Bell and remodels aspects of his character for the literary detective, however, underlines the already prominent link between fiction and reality. One should, additionally, remark considering this excerpt on Joseph Bell that the act of seeing is close to reading and immanently reminds of the commonplace of the detective as the reader of a crime scene (cf. Merivale and Sweeney 8). The person who sees or reads correctly becomes the one who also creates narrations or narrative illusions hiding the facts they are based upon.

Arthur's aspiration to follow in the footsteps of his literary detective Sherlock Holmes becomes apparent when he takes on George's case, which, in turn, strengthens his association with the act of seeing. Their first meeting is exemplary for his will to deduce:

So: preliminary inspection reveals that the man he is about to meet is small and slight, of Oriental origin, with hair parted on the left and cropped close; he wears a well-cut, discreet clothing of a provincial solicitor. All indisputably true, but this is hardly like identifying a French polisher or a left-handed cobbler from scratch. Yet still Arthur continues to observe, and is drawn back, not to the Edinburgh of Dr Bell, but to his own years of medical practice. Edalji, like many another man in the foyer, is barricaded between newspaper and high-winged armchair. Yet he is not sitting quite as others do: he holds the paper preternaturally close, and also a touch sideways, setting his head at an angle to the page. Dr Doyle, formerly of the Southsea and Devonshire Place, is confident in his diagnosis. Myopia, possibly quite a high degree. And who knows, perhaps a touch

¹⁵ Barnes, Julian. "Arthur & George", 52. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "AG".

¹⁶ Patricia Pulham describes in her essay "Channeling the Past. Arthur & George and the Neo-Victorian Uncanny" the motif of seeing, its generic ties and the resulting questions of blindness:

If we consider these uncanny triggers in relation to *Arthur & George*, its deployment of the neo-Victorian uncanny proves clear: it doubles Doyle and Holmes; it reanimates Victorian genres, for example the realist text, detective fiction, and the Victorian ghost story; and it plays with death, ghostliness, and spectrality, seemingly animating the dead, and, in doing so, posits Barnes himself as a form of, medium' who channels past events and spectral entities. More importantly, however, it uses vision as a trope which asks us to examine both physical and ,textual' blindness' – blind spots and narrative blinds that involve the reader in an intricate and potentially castrative game of detection. (163)

of astigmatism too. (AG 293-94)

This imagery of Arthur as the oculist and George as the myopic patient illustrates the social power structures they live in because George as a British citizen of Indian descent and alleged criminal is dependent on Arthur's help. Nevertheless, it also disqualifies George for the role of the detective due to amblyopia, which keeps him from analyzing any crime scene. Therefore, it is not surprising that he fails on his mission to find the culprit of the smearings on barns during his childhood. Instead, his mother outsmarts their maid. (cf. AG 30-31). Very early on in Barnes' novel, he, thus, establishes Arthur and George as opposites, which is even further emphasized by the alternating focalizations of the chapters (cf. Schneider 54).¹⁷ In contrast to traditional examples of crime fiction, the detective and the victim function as antipodes in Barnes' *Arthur & George*. Both may be chasing the culprit who, despite their united efforts, remains unknown and uncharged.

Thus, Arthur's professional success in the literary realm cannot be transferred to his real-life detection in real life. He falls short of his aspirations, while the literary character he designed is successful due to his modern interpretation of the generic rules:

He had brought detectivism up to date. He had rid it of the slow-thinking representatives of the old-school, those ordinary mortals who gained applause for deciphering palpable clues laid across their path. In their place he had put a cool, calculating figure who could see the clue to a murder in a ball of worsted, and certain conviction in a saucer of milk. (AG 74)

Arthur developed a superhuman being, a hero for the masses who could explain to them the connections in their fast-changing living reality. He becomes the innovator of the detective genre and lays the foundation of what we perceive as the typical traits of the classical detective. Nevertheless, he remains nothing but a mere mortal.

¹⁷ Deborah Rossen-Knill argues in her essay "How dialogue creates opposite characters: An analysis of Arthur & George, Language and Literature" that the opposition of Arthur and George is among other things based on their language skills in social contexts. This skill set is, in turn, responsible for their social status. (cf. 45) In her opinion, George fails to succeed in society due to his constantly literal understanding of statements. Arthur, on the other hand, is able to create new opportunities for himself because of the sensibilities he displays in interaction. (cf. 48) Rossen-Knill is right in assuming that the level of dialogue is one aspect that shows the opposition of Arthur and George. Nevertheless, other characteristics of the protagonists also further or hinder their social success, for example, their respective ethnic backgrounds.

How little Arthur has in common with Sherlock Holmes becomes even more evident in his fascination for the metaphysical world. Very early on in the novel, he is established as a character interested in humans' capacities:

What might this mean? If thought could be transferred across distance without any evident means of conveyance, then the pure materialism of Arthur's teachers was, at the very least, too rigid. The congruence of drawn shapes he had achieved with Stanley Ball did not allow the return of angels with shining swords. But it nevertheless raised a question, and a stubborn one at that. (AG 54)

The telepathy experiment Arthur attends is just one example among many. He also visits seances and psychics. After his death, his family even holds a seance to meet him again (cf. AG 498).

From a current point of view, Arthur, hence, seems to betray his scientific ideals; according to him, the membrane between the physical and the metaphysical realm seems permeable and, therefore, dysfunctional. One has to keep in mind, however, that the times of the Empire were times in which the British society changed rapidly. The venturing into unknown places of the world is analog to new scientific discoveries. Arthur's exploration into the metaphysical world can, in the spirit of his age, be understood as the contemporary will to gain knowledge of the unknown. The scientific world he studied with all its rigid rules has become too small for him. Instead, he sets out to discover and establish a new set of rules just as he does it with the re-innovation of the detective genre. Arthur is, hence, a character willing to transgress boundaries.

George, on the other hand, is presented as far less adventurous. He grows up in a vicarage and abides its daily, religiously-motivated routine. Despite his father's profession, George does not enter the clergy but studies the law. He may not be a fervent follower of the Christian God, but at least he inherits the Christian belief in truth: "George himself is never urged to speak the truth: this would imply that he needs encouragement. It is simpler than this: he is expected to tell the truth because at the Vicarage no alternative exists." (AG 5). In the vicarage, truth is absolute, as God is omniscient. Accordingly, George is raised to believe that truth has no varieties and could never be generated. This naivety will be his downfall in court.

In contrast to Arthur, who explores psychic eventualities, George remains tied to the physical world. While the former enjoys the vivid stories of chivalry, the latter finds comfort in the law's

paragraphs. They become his replacement for religion as the origin of truth:

He feels confident and happy with the law. There is a great deal of textual exegesis, of explaining how words can and do mean different things; and there are almost as many books of commentary on the law as there are on the Bible. But at the end there is not that further leap to be made. At the end, you have an agreement, a decision to be obeyed, an understanding of what something means. There is a journey from confusion to clarity. A drunken mariner writes his last will and testament on an ostrich egg; the mariner drowns, the egg survives, whereupon the law brings coherence and fairness to his sea-washed words. (AG 89)

While George does not believe in God and his words, he trusts in legal texts whose primary capacity lies in their connection with reality. In George's mind, they can shape the physical world and human societies, a quality he denies metaphysical ideas, which, in turn, makes him resemble the classical detective more than Arthur does – at least in this one aspect. Therefore, Arthur is prepared to tear down the boundary between physics and metaphysics, whereas George vouches for his loyalty to the physical law entirely. Both, however, hold their opinions because of the factor of truth. Arthur suspects the world beyond to provide greater knowledge to his contemporary society, whereas George sees the English law as the cradle of truth.

During his trial, George has to realize that his belief in the English judicial system is anything but flawless:

Mr Disturnal was a tall, sleek figure, with a swift manner to him. After a brief opening speech, he called Inspector Campbell, and the whole story began again: the discovery of the mutilated pony, the search of the Vicarage, the bloodstained clothing, the hairs on the coat, the anonymous letters, the prisoner's arrest and subsequent statements. It was just a story, George knew, something made up from scraps and coincidences and hypotheses; he knew too that he was innocent; but something about the repetition of the story by an authority in wig and gown made it take on extra plausibility. (AG 167)

Despite the knowledge of his innocence, George observes the working ties between authorities and the generation of a plausible story. The position of Inspector Campbell, as well as his appearance, give his story credibility bordering on truth. Thus, George discovers the right of influential people to create narrations the public holds to be true. Truth is to be bargained for. It is never absolute (cf. Schneider 52).

Furthermore, his trial's outcome makes George see how the fabricated story about his alleged crime affects his life and the perception other people have of him:

It was suddenly borne in upon him that until minutes ago only a few people - mostly policemen, and perhaps some foolishly ignorant members of the public, the sort who would beat on the doors of a passing cab - had actually assumed him guilty. But now - and shame broke over him at the realization - now almost everyone would think so. (AG 201)

The judicial sentence creates a narration about George the public thinks to be correct. Truth,

hence, is generated and not found. George's guilt becomes tangible. His sentence is yet another example of Julian Barnes' elaboration on the relation of reality and narration. Arthur's attempt to work as a detective and George's belief that non-fictional, legal texts should be preferred to religious stories also shed light on the issue. The examples, however, are far more numerous and need to be taken into consideration.

Arthur's life is just like George's also affected by narration. His creation seems to have a life of its own:

In December of that year, Holmes fell to his death in the arms of Moriarty; both of them propelled downwards by an impatient authorial hand. The London newspapers had contained no obituaries of Charles Doyle, but were full of protest and dismay at the death of a non-existent consulting detective whose popularity had begun to embarrass and even disgust his creator. It seemed to Arthur that the world was running mad: his father was fresh in the ground, and his wife condemned, but young City men were apparently tying crêpe bands to their hats in mourning for Mr Sherlock Holmes. (AG 88)

After Sherlock Holmes' literary death, Arthur's fans start publicly mourning in contemporary London. The fictional creation has emancipated itself, which caused the master to kill it. Arthur's life is tied to Sherlock Holmes, who granted him a decent outcome, title, and fame. Thus, narration influences reality – just as in George's sentence.

Nevertheless, the relation between reality and narration is not a one-way street. On the contrary, reality also plays its part in the creation of narration:

He identifies a story, researches and plans it, then writes it out. He is quite clear about the writer's responsibilities: they are firstly, to be intelligible, secondly, to be interesting, and thirdly, to be clever. He knows his own abilities, and he also knows that in the end the reader is king. That is why Mr Sherlock Holmes was brought back to life, allowed to have escaped the Reichenbach Falls thanks to a knowledge of esoteric Japanese wrestling holds and an ability to scramble up sheer rock faces. (AG 276)

As an author and husband to a fatally-ill wife, Arthur follows his readers' wishes and re-animates Sherlock Holmes. He has to obey the rules of the literary market. Readers influence the literary process and its products. Arthur finds himself limited in his omnipotence by his character and his readers.

Another aspect that affects literary products is the requirements of the publishing houses. During the late Victorian age they differ significantly from today's emphasis on novels:

Magazines published two kinds of stories: either lengthy serializations which ensnared the reader week by week and month by month; or single, free-standing tales. The trouble with the tales was that they often didn't give you enough to bite on. The trouble with the serializations was that if you happened to miss a single issue, you lost the plot. Applying his practical brain to the problem, Arthur envisaged combining the virtues of two forms: a series of stories, each complete in itself, yet filled with running characters to reignite the reader's sympathy or disapproval.

He needed therefore the kind of protagonist who could be relied upon to have regular and diverse adventures. Clearly, most professions need not to apply. As he turned the matter upon the Devonshire Place, he began to wonder if he hadn't already invented the appropriate candidate. A couple of his less successful novels had featured a consulting detective closely modelled on Joseph Bell of the Edinburgh Infirmary: intense observation followed by rigorous deduction was the key to criminal as well as to medical diagnosis. Arthur had initially called his detective Sheridan Hope. But the name felt unsatisfactory, and in the writing Sheridan Hope had changed first into Sherringford Holmes and then - inevitably as it seemed thereafter - into Sherlock Holmes. (AG 61)

Hence, the creation of the Sherlock Holmes series is the consequence of the publishing houses' requirements. It is nothing more but a practical solution. In uncovering the factors which directly influence the creative process, Barnes demystifies the idea of the authorial genius even further.

However, the ultimate dismantling of the omnipotent author is Arthur's failure to solve George's case completely, which he takes on despite his previous denial of similar requests (cf. AG 291).

In other words, Julian Barnes displays the constructedness of many concepts central to Western representation. Truth is nothing more than an officially orchestrated narration. Omnipotence represented by the author's character is a mere illusion, which lastly undermines any self-determined act of creation. Finally, the boundary between reality and fiction collapses. With the power of narration revealed, the perpetrator in crime fiction becomes a mere victim of narrative tactics, as George's case exemplifies. The strict generic rules of crime fiction cannot be maintained, and a truthful investigation is impossible (cf. Schneider 57). Nevertheless, Barnes' *Arthur & George* not only sheds light on the constructedness of crime fiction.¹⁸ It also undermines its realist writing tradition by revealing the narrative techniques inherent in its style. The seeming objectivity does not guarantee a truthful account. It is a mere product of narrative technique. The disclosure of narrative traces in truth, omnipotence, and reality discredit the latter.

¹⁸ In her essay „The Gift of Seeing – The Eyes of Faith” Anne-Julia Zwierlein analyzes the relation of seeing and neo-Victorian crime fiction. She negates any connection of *Arthur & George* to the subgenre of postmodern crime fiction and bases her claim on the fact that the outcome of the novel was predetermined and Barnes' considerations rather historical than philosophical. (cf. 42-45) I, however, strongly disagree with her in that aspect. In contrast to Zwierlein, Ana-Karina Schneider states that *Arthur & George* is a novel on the “quest for truth and clarity of philosophical scope.” (59) Elsa Cavalié, furthermore, points to Barnes' intentional fashioning of Doyle as a postmodern character and detective with an unstable identity. (cf. 97) Based on my own analysis I agree with the latter two critics on the issue of genre. While *Arthur & George* is clearly written more conventionally than *Hawksmoor*, for example, it still maintains a philosophical depth associated with postmodern thought. The deconstruction of authorship, objectivity and truth attest to that.

The relation of reality and fiction with reference to the detective character is also central in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*. The novel features Christopher Banks, an orphan and full-time detective. He tries to solve his cases with the same competence and mannerism as his idol Sherlock Holmes, while simultaneously dealing with his childhood trauma, the loss of both his parents in Shanghai.

Ishiguro illuminates the issue of reality and fiction with the help of parameters from literary tradition and personal memory processes. He exemplifies how the realm of fictionality cannot be separated from the realm of reality due to the human factor.

While *Arthur & George* was written in the realist tradition and employs several focalizations, *When We Were Orphans* features a first-person narrator who – comparable to the chapters of the murderer in *Hawksmoor* – traditionally first signals unhindered access to the inner life of the character. But while Dyer evades interpretation through the illegibility of his code, Ishiguro in *When We Were Orphans* aims to illustrate the transfiguration of the world by a subject:

It's from his perspective, but I didn't want to write a realistic book with a crazy narrator. I wanted to actually have the world of the book distorted, adopting the logic of the narrator. In paintings you often see that. Expressionist art, or whatever, where everything is distorted to reflect the emotion of the artist who is looking at the world. It's kind of like that. The whole world portrayed in that book starts to tilt and bend in an attempt to orchestrate an alternative kind of logic. It's not necessarily crazy logic. (Richards par. 13)

Ishiguro very well achieves his goal of creating this distorted logic. Already at the beginning of the novel, he raises doubts about the reliability of the first-person narrator. He succeeds in doing this by revealing the incoherence in Banks' relationship with his surroundings, as the following passage on the protagonist's 14th birthday illustrates:

'We thought since you're going to be a detective, you'd be needing one of these.'
At this point, I quickly recovered my wits and made a show of pretending the whole thing had been an amusing jest. But by then, I fancy, my two friends were themselves confused about their intentions, and for the remainder of our time at the tea-shop, we never quite regained our former comfortable mood.
As I say, I have the magnifying glass here now in front of me. I used it when investigating the Mannering case; I used it again, most recently, during the Trevor Richardson affair. A magnifying glass may not be quite the crucial piece of equipment of popular myth, but it remains a useful tool for the gathering of certain sorts of evidence. and I fancy I will, for some time yet, carry about with my birthday gift from Robert Thornton-Browne and Russel Stanton. (WO 9)

Banks decided to become a detective early in his life, and his school friends take this career

choice as an opportunity to make a joke at his expense. As a result, Banks is forced to reclaim his composure. Looking back at the events of his 14th birthday, Banks tries to demonstrate a considerable distance. He exemplifies adult capacities of reflected judgment. Banks is aware that the magnifying glass is the source of many parodies about his profession. It appears to be an outdated tool, a mere reminiscence of Victorian times and the contemporary literary detective Sherlock Holmes.

On the other hand, Banks emphasizes the magnifying glass's usefulness in the cases he mentions without giving too many details. His line of argument is, thus, defined by a foregrounded adult reflection, which is counterbalanced by emotional reasons in favor of the magnifying glass. In other words, Banks does not illustrate a clear and believable position towards the detective's tool and accordingly towards his profession.

Indeed, every time the adult Banks finds his profession questioned, he resorts to a defensive mechanism. That becomes especially apparent in a conversation with an older gentleman on a party:

'Your whole life? But what are you? Twenty-one? Twenty-two? Well, I suppose I shouldn't discourage you. After all, if you young men won't entertain idealistic notions of this sort, who is there to do so? And no doubt, my boy, you believe today's world to be a far more evil place than the one of thirty years ago, is that it? That civilization's on the brink and all that?'
'As a matter of fact, sir,' I said curtly, 'I do believe that to be the case.' (WO 16)

The gentleman's teasing remark puts the adult Banks in the position of a naive child who is unwilling to open his eyes to reality. Banks, however, seems to be unaware of the gentleman's paternal, ironic undertone and the latter's criticism of the outdated desire to order the chaos of the world. In the gentleman's opinion, the wish to restore order is a mere childish myth, which makes *When we were Orphans* appear to be a story about a child failing to grow up (cf. Webley, "Shanghaied into Service" 185). Consequently, one has to question Banks' reflection on his profession. In this conversation, he unveils the disproportional hopes for the detective's capacities and, hence, for himself. He is incapable of separating myth and reality of the detective's profession, which marks him as an unreliable narrator.

The need for a savior in the form of the detective as well as Bank's desire to fulfill this function

himself are rooted in his childhood. During this time in Shanghai, he lived through traumatic events, the abduction of his father, and later on, his mother. After the father's abduction on his way to work, Banks starts playing detective with his Japanese friend and neighbor Akira. In variations of the game, the two boys fantasize about the father's rescue from the hands of the perpetrators. According to the fragility of a child's mind, the father's imprisonment and the search for him are painted in brighter colors:

Our narratives concerning my father had, as I say, endless variations, but fairly quickly we established a basic recurring story-line. My father was held captive in a house somewhere beyond the Settlement boundaries. His captors were a gang intent on extorting a huge ransom. Many smaller details evolved quite rapidly until they became fixtures. It was always the case, for instance, that despite being surrounded by the horrors of the Chinese district, the house in which my father was held was comfortable and clean. In fact, I can still remember how this particular convention came to be established. It was perhaps our second or third time of trying the game, and Akira and I had been taking it in turns to play the role of the legendary Inspector Kung - whose handsome features and dandily worn hat we both knew well from newspaper photographs. We had been quite absorbed in the excitements of our fantasy, when suddenly, at the point when my father first appeared in our story, Akira gestured to me - indicating that I should play him- and said: 'You tied up in chair.'¹⁹

Banks is in an unbearable situation and glorifies the conditions of imprisonment. Despite his knowledge of the living condition in the Chinese quarters, he imagines his father being in a clean place. The kidnapers are also romanticized because Banks imagines that they act out of poverty and not out of greed. In other words, they are not the essence of evil but humans (cf. WO 111). The two boys play the detective in turns. Their idea of this role is nourished by the real-life Inspector Kung, who functions as an uncorrupted icon due to his immaculate features. Within the boys' game, the detective has an ordering role. He is the one who puts the pieces of Banks' shattered world back together (cf. Sönmez 80).

This childish need for a protector, a hero to save the world, is supported by Banks' beloved mother, who glorifies the detectives and especially Inspector Kung (cf. WO 109). She wishes to defend her son from reality by creating omnipotent characters fighting evil, which, in turn, falls on fertile ground, as Banks desires exactly these heroes. Thus, mother and son form a perfect pair to create comforting illusions for the latter.

Banks' mother was the epitome of an upright person for her son. This role is partially founded on

¹⁹ Ishiguro, Kazuo. "When We Were Orphans", 109-110. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "WO".

her Victorian beauty (cf. WO 56) and her commitment to the Anti-Opium Campaign (cf. WO 60-61). Alyn Webley argues in his essay “Shanghaied into Service” that it is the merger of corporate values and private life, which strikes the Banks’ family at its core. Morganbrook and Byatt, the company where Banks’ father works, is a player in the Opium business, which Banks’ mother, in turn, tries to abolish. Webley understandably views the diverging interests of Banks’ parents as a criticism of capitalist trade, which in *When we were Orphans* is closely associated with exploitation (cf. 186).

The mother’s fight against opium makes her Banks’ role model, and he transfers these expectations to all the other adults: They have to combat dark forces and, most importantly, protect the weak. If they fail, they lose their every value just like his *amah* Mei Li, whose own weakness after the abduction of Banks’ mother disqualifies her as a protector:

It dawned on me that Mei Li was weeping, and I knew, as I had known throughout that punishing run home, that my mother was gone. And a cold fury rose within me towards Mei Li, who for all the fear and the respect she had commanded from me over the years, I now realised was an impostor: someone not in the least capable of controlling this bewildering world that was unfolding all around me; a pathetic little woman who had built herself up in my eyes entirely on false pretences, who counted for nothing when the great forces clashed and battled. I stood in the doorway and stared at her with the utmost contempt. (WO 123)

While all adults, therefore, have the task of protecting and upholding the world, the detective is in Banks' mind the ultimate representative of this strife. This conclusion is supported by the mother's stories as well as his own child's game. As a result, Banks early on in his life decides to pursue the career of a detective.

Banks' childhood trauma thus explains his demands on the detective. At the same time, however, it is an indication for the reader of the novel – concerning Banks' function as an unreliable narrator – to question his explanations of his profession and to interpret them in a different light. A valuable reference point for the analysis of the detective character in *When We Were Orphans* is Sherlock Holmes, whose stories Banks read as a young boy (cf. WO 52). The passage above on the magnifying glass as a birthday present depicts the complicated relationship between the myth of the Victorian detective, Banks' wishful thinking, and its compatibility with his environment. At the same time, this passage is not the only example that illustrates that Banks is

merely trying to imitate his role model and yet fails in the eyes of the reader.

Another characteristic of Sherlock Holmes that Banks tries to imitate is his social elevation. He withdraws from London's social life and stylizes himself as a loner:

I began thereafter to socialise far less and became more deeply immersed in my work. I studied notable cases from the past, and absorbed new areas of knowledge that might one day prove useful. Around this time, too, I began scrutinising the careers of various detectives who had established their names, and found I could discern a line between those reputations that rested on solid achievement, and those that derived essentially from a position within some influential set; there was, I came to see, a true and a false way for a detective to gain renown. In short, much as I had been excited by the offers of friendship extended to me following the Mannerling affair, I did, after that encounter that at the Waldorf, remember again the example set by my parents, and I resolved not to allow frivolous preoccupations to deflect me. (WO 21)

Banks copies the behavior of other detectives. His social retreat does not come to pass due to his natural inclination or intellectual superiority, as is the case for Sherlock Holmes. On the contrary, Banks withdraws from society because he suspects the public expects him to do so. Banks' compliance with imaginary social expectations becomes more telling when one regards the detective's mission. He does not only pursue order because of his drive but also because of imagined social desirability. After his return to Shanghai, he publicly behaves as if he were there to ease the tensions before the advent of the Second World War, while the other guests at a party seem to be oblivious of his mission (cf. WO 161-62).

Another example is Banks' meeting with a cleric. The latter presumably reproaches Banks for the devastating worldwide situation that the detective was not able to soothe (cf. WO 137). In other words, Banks wants to please the public without realizing that he is ultimately trying to please his younger self, which needs closure to the earth-shaking experience of his parents' abduction.

Consequently, Banks does not have the talent to order the world, whereas his literary role model, Sherlock Holmes, complains about quite the contrary in *A Study in Scarlet*:

'There are no crimes and no criminals these days,' he said, querulously. 'What is the use of having brains in our profession? I know well that I have it in me to make my name famous. No man lives or has ever lived who has brought the same amount of study and of natural talent to the detection of crime which I have done. And what is the result? There is no crime to detect, or, at most, some bungling villainy with a motive so transparent that even a Scotland Yard official can see through it.' (24)

Banks and Holmes may resemble each other in their desire for order. Their capacities to successfully close cases are on totally different levels, though. While Holmes almost misses a valiant opponent or a challenging crime, Banks is unable to solve his parents' mystery. On the

contrary, Banks believes that the criminals have the upper hand (cf. WO 16). Nevertheless, Holmes remains his idol as well as the unachievable embodiment of the perfect, omnipotent adult:

But in the view of the belatedness just analysed, we understand that the detective's role, in fact, is rooted in nostalgia for a romantic world, a world of individualism and masculine perseverance that has passed away (if it, indeed, ever existed). Against this background we also understand the reason for the detective's role as outsider and loner, [...] for all his modern scientific credits, he brings home an ethos and excitement deriving from things past or things exotic – that can still challenge independent spirits, while all around the inhibitions of modern institutional life take over. (Döring 70)

The relation between Holmes and Banks could be called nostalgic-fictional, as the fictional Holmes represents the obsolete values in Banks' living reality. The nostalgic aspect of this relationship is rooted in Banks' assumption that there used to be a time when order was possible; in other words, before his parents' abduction.

Hence, reality and fiction conflate for Banks. During the happier days of his childhood, he learned of the detective as the guardian of order, a function that became essential when his parents vanished. Banks transfers the fictional concept of the detective to his reality without doubting it in his adult years. This dependence on guidance devalues Banks as a detective even further.

As *When We Were Orphans* is set in the period between the World Wars Yugin Teo understandably links the novel to the detective novels of the Golden Age:

Ishiguro employed concepts of collective memory and nostalgia when he was conceiving *When we were Orphans*. The novel forms a link to the 'Golden Age' of English detective fiction from the 1920s and 1930s by writers such as Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers. This is a genre that is greatly vilified for its genteel traditions and its associations with social hierarchy, as well as its shallow portrayal of its characters. Ishiguro took an interest in this genre of writing because of what it means in the context of British history. This is a genre suffused with feelings of poignancy for a time of a social order and idealism that was no longer seen as realistic or possible after the Great War [...]. (88)

Teo draws parallels between the function of the detective for Banks and the British nation. The character has a stabilizing effect in times of social unrest. He traces the nostalgic quality of the Golden Age detective novel back to the pastoral tradition, which allows the readers “the comfort of retreating into a time of innocence” (Teo 90). The reference to Classical and Golden Age detective fiction make *When We Were Orphans* appear to be a novel on the history of the detective genre, which, in turn, demonstrates Ishiguro's knowledge of the close relationship between the genre and the British nation-state. The belatedness of *When We Were Orphans* as a

detective fiction from the ending 20th century explains the nostalgic relation to the literary predecessors as well as the detective's consequent failure.²⁰

The detective character becomes the authority in Banks' life after his parents' abduction. At the end of his trials, Banks will realize that his life, according to the detectives' rules, was not worth it. In Shanghai, his identity as a professional and as a human being will face utter deconstruction. This process starts with the meeting with Inspector Kung, who used to be the inspiration for the child's game with Akira. Kung is far from the dandy-like character he used to be. Instead, he gave in to the corruption of the city and leads a pitiable life in the slums of Shanghai (cf. WO 203-04). The threat a city poses for a detective reminds the readers of the hard-boiled school and its preference for confusing crime scenes. Kung has not triumphed over corruption, though. Instead, his failure foreshadows Banks'.

Due to the excessive usage of alcohol Kung cannot access his memories and, thus, cannot supply Banks with useful information concerning the parents' abduction (cf. WO 204-07). Shortly before Banks intends to leave Shanghai with his love interest, Sarah Hemmings, Kung names the hideout of the potential perpetrators, close to the war zone in Chapei (cf. WO 217). Banks follows this lead while being endangered continuously by the fighting between the Japanese and the Chinese. Chapei, a slum district, is a place devoid of clearly arranged streets or even street signs. Two big chimneys are the only points of orientation (cf. WO 234). The labyrinth of the slums is the beginning of the detective's final self-awareness process and should, according to Margaret Sönmez, be read as a symbolical labyrinth (cf. 85).

In Chapei, Banks is incapable of finding his way alone until he meets a wounded Japanese

²⁰ According to Franziska Quabeck, the changes to the genre of English detective fiction stem from "the postcolonial practice of rewriting" (158). The issue of the postcolonial rewrite is, however, multilayered. In the second part of this analysis of *When We Were Orphans*, the issue of transnationalism, indeed, plays a significant role in the deconstruction of the nation concept and, consequently, the detective character. One should, however, not neglect that the detective genre's adaptation process, namely in the form of postmodern crime fiction, in the 20th century appears because of major philosophical and stylistic changes. In the case of *When We Were Orphans*, these changes occur in the specific setting of the British tradition of crime fiction.

soldier he believes to be his childhood friend Akira. Instantaneously, he suggests continuing the detective game together and to search for his abducted parents. In the middle of the fighting during the Second World War, Banks ultimately unveils how little he overcame his childhood trauma. Instead of running for his life, Banks lingers in the past and continues his search with the seeming Akira (cf. WO 251-55). They find the house Kung indicated but discover that a regular Chinese family lived there until everyone except the young daughter was killed by bomb shelling. Facing this atrocity and the young orphan, Banks displays tragic-comic tendencies by promising to find the perpetrator:

'Look, really,' I said, 'you're being awfully brave. I swear to you, whoever did all this, whoever did this ghastly thing, they won't escape justice. You may not know who I am, but as it happens, I'm ... well, I'm just the person you want. I'll see to it they don't get away. Don't you worry, I'll... I'll... I'll...' I had been fumbling about in my jacket, but I now found my magnifying glass and showed it to her. [...]

I kicked aside a bird-cage in my path and went over to the mother. Then, perhaps out of habit as much as anything else, I bent down and began to examine her through the glass. Her stump looked peculiarly clean; the bone protruding out of the flesh was a shiny white, almost as though someone had been polishing it. (WO 272)

Even in the war zone, Banks believes he can find a single culprit and, consequently, once again displays the degree of his delusion. He holds onto the myth of the detective as well as his mythological tool, the magnifying glass. He may have rationally degraded its usefulness before, but in a moment of horror, he still expects it to provide vital clues. Although the mother is a victim of war, Banks still resorts to a futile, detailed analysis, which makes him a parody of every classical detective. He is utterly incapable of acknowledging his incapacity to change the course of the world (cf. Teo 91).

Without explaining, Banks is finally able to meet up with a double agent, Yellow Snake, whom he suspects to have information on his parents' abduction. From the start, Yellow Snake turns out to be Uncle Philip, one of his mother's co-propagandists against opium and short-time father replacement. He reveals that Banks' father eloped with a lover and died of typhus shortly after. His mother purposefully lied to her son (cf. WO 286-87). She was later abducted by the Chinese

warlord, Wang Ku, who made her part of his harem.²¹ In exchange for sexual favors, Wang Ku financed Banks' education in the UK. In turn, Uncle Philip allowed this to happen, as he desired Mrs. Banks, but his feelings were not reciprocated. Her current location, however, remains unknown (cf. WO 287-96).

The case of the missing parents is finally solved without the detective majorly contributing to it. A fellow culprit continues to correct his deductions and undermines the identity of the detective. While Banks has to realize in Chapei that his actions are meaningless to the course of the world, his identity is destroyed during his meeting with Uncle Philip. He fails on a personal and social scale and has to give up his childhood illusions as well as his detective idol.

Overall, one can observe a subversion of the strict the generic rules of the classical detective fiction in all three novels I analyzed. Detective Hawksmoor finds himself overpowered by a murderer who operates outside the realm of science. The fictional Arthur Conan Doyle ventures into a real detection only to find out that the notion of truth is constructed, whereas Christopher Banks is revealed to idolize the detective character without succeeding in his chosen profession. All three detectives are entangled in assumptions about their profession – science, the establishment of truth, omniscience – but fall short in successful execution.

As exemplified, all novels also display a certain stylistic playfulness: Ackroyd uses diverging narrative points of view to elaborate on the *doppelgänger* motif of murderer and detective. Additionally, he combines the subgenre of postmodern crime fiction with meta-autobiography and, consequently, dissolving generic boundaries. *Arthur & George*, in turn, appears to be a novel in the realist tradition only to deconstruct the central ideals to this writing style: truth and objectivity. Lastly, Ishiguro presents the reader with a detective character from whose point of

²¹ Emily Horton and Wai-Chew Sim, point out the parallels between the relationship of Banks with Wang-Ku and Pip with Magwitch in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (cf. Horton 205, Sim 331). Wang-Ku functions as a patron to Banks, just like Magwitch does for Pip. Horton and Sim both make the case that the reference to *Great Expectations* contributes to the nostalgic tone of *When we were Orphans* because Dicken's novel is a masterpiece of Victorian times, the era associated with the simplicity of life in Ishiguro's work.

view the story is related, but disqualifies him as an unreliable narrator, a factor to which further attention will be paid in the following part of the analysis which foregrounds the relation of the detective and nation-building.

Nation-Building in British Postmodern Crime Fiction

While the previous chapter focuses on the reinterpretation of the classic detective fiction in postmodern British writing, this chapter will foreground the inter-correlation of postmodern British crime fiction and its representation of the nation-state. As mentioned before, the chosen novels all have historical settings and illustrate the process of British nation-building. As stated, the national founding myth set in an undetermined past creates a sense of national belonging and determines national characteristics. Ultimately the national myth allows the ruling party to ask its minions for sacrifices in favor of the communal good (cf. Balibar, "The Nation Form" 95). The nation's historical or mythological past is a significant component of the national narrative and a sense of belonging.

There exist, however, various lenses through which one can observe the past. Lenses mean different concepts of memory, such as collective or subjective access to the past. All these concepts allow a different look at the past without ever granting a full-fledged picture (cf. J. Assmann 123).

This incomplete accessibility of the past plays a notable role in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*. The detective's incapacity to solve the historical crimes that re-occur in contemporary London is proof of that. Consequently, the values he represents are overturned. These values, namely rationality and the superhuman status, were established during the era of Enlightenment, in which *Hawksmoor* is partially set, and were then again traded down to become an asset of the national character.

Rationality is said to be the main characteristic that sets men apart from the beast and, hence, makes humankind superior as well as more advanced (cf. Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism",

57). The idea behind this is the scenario of progress. Men allegedly succeeded in consecutively ruling the world due to their intellect, whereas nature is being dominated and remained unchanged. Ackroyd, however, aims at the destabilization of this renowned notion of progress. He achieves this by contrasting two epochs: Enlightenment (the era of Dyer, the killer) vs. the present (the era of Hawksmoor, the detective). Choosing Enlightenment as the historical counterpart is essential for illuminating the national discourse for the following three reasons: First, as already mentioned, Enlightenment is the outstanding era for rational thought and central to the establishment of the idea of progress, which is an integral part of the discourse on nation-building.

Moreover, this period was characterized by a disregard for religious beliefs and emotional superstition. These philosophical teachings sought to free humanity from irrational shackles by improving people and allowing them to transcend their animal selves. Second, the detective character is the embodiment of rationality, which is linked to this specific era. Third, Enlightenment shaped the place of the nation on a material level, which is a factor in nation-building that should not be underestimated. Buildings, as well as memorials, are sources of identification (cf. A. Assmann 48). Therefore, Dyer, as the architect of several London's churches, actively shapes the British national memory. The defined stature Enlightenment holds in the British past is, thus, both material and philosophical.

The characteristic example of the novel's undermining qualities is the failure of the detective. The historical aspects bear further challenges to the established norms, though. The primary factor in destabilizing the notions of rationality and progress is Nicholas Dyer, the murderer. As demonstrated, he is anti-rational, the natural antagonist of the detective, and even denies the reader of the novel a true insight into his intentions despite his function as a first-person narrator. The opacity of Dyer's character is particularly evident in the fact that he is a representative of a sect or subculture that stands up against the values of Christianity and Enlightenment:

I shall only say at this point that I, the Builder of Churches, am no Puritan nor Caveller, nor Reformed, nor Catholick, nor

Jew, but of that older Faith which sets them dancing in Black Step Lane. And this is the Creed which Mirabilis school'd in me: He who made the World is also the author of Death, nor can we but by doing Evil avoid the rage of evil Spirits. Out of the imperfections of this Creator are procreated divers Evils: as Darknesse from his Feare, shaddowes from his Ignorance, and out of his Teares come forth the Waters of this World. Adam after his Fall was never restor'd to Mercy, and all men are Damned. Sin is a Substance and not a Quality, and it is communicated from parents to children: men's Souls are corporeal and have their being by Propagation or Traduction, and Life itself is an inveterate Mortal Contagion. We baptize in the name of the Father unknown, for he is truly an unknown God; Christ was the Serpent who deceiv'd Eve, and in the form of a Serpent entered the Virgin's womb; he feigned to die and rise again, but it was the Devil who truly was crucified. We further teach that the Virgin Mary, after Christ's birth, did marry once and that Cain was the Author of much goodness to Mankind. [...] These are the Teachings and I will not Trouble my self with a multiplicity of Commentators upon this place, since it is now in my Churches that I will bring them once more into the Memory of this and future Ages. (HA 20-21)

Interestingly, the teachings of his sect share elements with Christianity. The sect's version of humanity's mythical past is, however, kept hidden from the dominant narrative of the Church. To be precise, its version is stored in the churches Dyer builds without becoming part of the central discourse.

The traces he leaves behind are incorporated into cultural memory without being of any significance. Aleida Assmann provides in *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization* a useful definition of different forms of memory. She differentiates between functional and storage memory. Functional memory is a past-related narrative with a clear message for the present. It has identity-defining qualities. Storage memory, on the other hand, is an entity of alternatives and provides memory with flexibility:

Functional memory makes a political statement and it profiles a distinct identity. Storage memory forms the counterpart [...]. Storage memory may be seen as an important reservoir for future functional memories. This is not only a precondition for the cultural phenomenon called "Renaissance," but it is more generally a fundamental resource for all cultural renewal and change. It is equally important as a corrective to current functional memories in any society. If the borders between functional memory and storage memory remain permeable, elements can be exchanged, patterns of meaning can be altered, and even the general framework can be restructured. Without this border traffic between the different realms of cultural memory, drawing upon a reservoir of unused possibilities, alternatives, contradictions, criticisms, and unremembered incidents change would be excluded and memory would be fixed and made absolute. (130)

While functional memory at least tries to appear static, storage memory means constant change hidden behind the boundaries of functional memory. This difference is beneficial for the analysis of Dyer's subcultural knowledge, as it underlines storage memory's undermining potential. The teachings of the sect are no part of functional memory, but they bear the potential to re-arrange the outlook on traditions and norms so that they should, rather, be equated to storage memory. They have found their way into the public from time to time without influencing it (cf. HA 45). The memories of old are about to change the framework of contemporary common knowledge

and functional memory as the detective's failure implies. The murderer's victory over the detective can be understood as the victory of superstition over rationality. Nevertheless, it is also the victory of a more flexible memory concept. The past is far from rigid but becomes an active partner in an ongoing negotiation of our contemporary identity – even to the extent of totally abolishing it.

Dyer may stand for an incomplete and ever-changing understanding of memory. For his art, however, he proclaims immortality:

My Churches will indure, I reflected as I was born onward, and what the Coles build the Ashes will not burie, I have liv'd long enough for others, like the Dog in the Wheel, and it is now the Season to begin for myself: I cannot change that Thing called Time, but I can alter its Posture and, as Boys do turn a looking-glass against the Sunne, so I will dazzle you all. (HA 10-11)

Dyer believes his art to be ever-lasting while at the same time propagating only a temporary existence for any other being or thinking pattern. That appears to be a contradiction. The latter could be solved by viewing Dyer as a representative of storage memory in a never-ending fight with functional memory over meaning. That would leave out the factor of art, though. Thus, one could argue that Dyer, as an artist, feels obliged to serve storage memory and change the viewers' outlook on tradition, when they look at his churches. It seems to be an artist's task to tell an alternate story. The artist becomes a safe haven for lost voices.

Dyer does not only attack seemingly historical facts or the established set of knowledge. He also opposes the common perception of time as a linear entity:

And now these Scenes return to me again and, tho' here in my Office, I am gone backward through Time and can see the Countenance of Sir Chris. as once it was in the Shaddowe of Stone-henge. Truly Time is a vast Denful of Horrour, round about which a Serpent winds and in the winding bites itself by the Tail. Now, now is the Hour, every Hour, every part of an Hour, every Moment, which in its end does begin again and never ceases to end: a beginning continuing, always ending. (HA 62)

Instead of a linear understanding, Dyer proposes a cyclical one that goes back to ancient time concepts. This temporal concept precedes the Christian linear one just as his sect is allegedly older than Christian faith. In preferring the cyclical understanding of history, Dyer negates the concept of progress as well. Humanity cannot continually improve itself. Instead, it goes through the same stages over and over again. This cyclical pattern is also represented on the narrative

level, e.g., the re-occurring order of murders or the singing of the 18th-century childhood rhymes in both eras (cf. Gibson 100). The different ages become inseparable and appear “to be the ever-revolving wheel of life and death” (Onega 46).

As Gibson illustrates, these childhood rhymes mentioned above are only one example of an attempted authenticity effect in *Hawksmoor* (cf. Gibson 100). Ackroyd seemingly obeys the generic rules of historical novels by carefully selecting aspects of the past that simulate historical density (A. Nünning, “Theorie, Typologie, und Poetik” 71). In contrast to the tradition of the genre, he, however, arranges these clues of seeming historical correctness into a cyclical system to destabilize the underlying assumptions of historical writing. In other words, Dyer purposefully plays with elements that either support or undermine the credibility of his very own novel. As a result, he uncovers the selection process at the heart of historical novels (cf. A. Nünning, “Theorie, Typologie, und Poetik” 73). *Hawksmoor* is, thus, interested in the narrative process of selection and re-arrangement. He makes narrative strategies visible and, therefore, destroys the illusion of authenticity due to narrative coherence.

Another example of Ackroyd’s unsettling narrative technique is the geographical setting of *Hawksmoor*: the city of London. This concrete place is the unchallenged center of the United Kingdom. Ackroyd, however, strips it of its awe and grandeur and illustrates an alternative to the dominant narrative:

The common sort of people gawp at the prodigious Rate of Building and exclaim to each other London is now another City or that House was not there Yesterday or the Situation of the Streets is quite chang'd [...]. But this Capital City of the World of Affliction is still the Capitol of Darknesse, or the Dungeon of Man's Desires: still in the Centre are no proper Streets nor Houses but a Wilderness of dirty rotten Sheds, allways tumbling or takeing Fire, with winding crooked passages, lakes of Mire and rills of stinking Mud, as befits the smokey grove of Moloch. (HA 47)

While the dominant narrative of Enlightenment may have been rationality and progress, Dyer’s demonstration resembles the British population’s uncivilized state despite the ongoing claim of progress and architectural change. The animal instincts are still intact. This representation of humans as animals, of course, alludes to Dyer’s cyclical understanding of time, which

contradicts progress.²²

His diverting understanding of time, as well as Ackroyd's play with apparently authentic components of life in the Age of Reason, question the reader's perception of the past. Is the past the past or is it, rather, something that happens now? As mentioned before, the historical and mythological past of the nation is essential to generate national identification. The assumption is that a morally superior core group in the past helped the nation in its global ascension. By denying a linear understanding of time and, hence, the concept of progress, Ackroyd takes the past identification group out of the equation. It cannot be temporally located anymore but could exist at this very moment.

The cyclical understanding of time also undermines any form of historical writing. If the past is nothing one can look back on or accumulate facts about, how can authors write about it? Their topic disappeared – just like *Hawksmoor* disappears at the end of the novel (cf. HA 216-17). *Hawksmoor* is a moment of crisis for the historical novel and the crime fiction genre. Even though Ackroyd exemplifies that he is more than aware of the respective genre traditions, he ultimately opts to disintegrate them all. The detective, as the epitome of canonized knowledge and up-to-date analysis, fails in understanding the non-established time concept, which threatens historiography and historical fiction, making *Hawksmoor* a novel on the impossibility of historical writing. That, in turn, is an utter contradiction. Ackroyd's attempt to write a historical novel on the impossibility of historical writing has to be realigned to the subgenre of historiographic metafiction. Linda Hutcheon establishes this term of historiographic metafiction

²² Berkem Güreñci Saglam argues that the city of London functions as a requirement for the mythical aspects of *Hawksmoor*:

The binding factor, as implied throughout the novel, is again the sense of place. The sinister atmosphere in the novels throws a mysterious shadow over the city which enables the doubles to emerge. The emphasis is given to architecture underlines Ackroyd's argument of an eternal city suggested in the previous novels. The connections between architecture and the city, and thus the characters and the city, are suggested early on [...]. A dark mind from the dark city, Dyer understands the infinity and circularity of the city, and works to develop it according to the same pattern. Having grown up through plagues and fire, he is aware that disasters easily bring buildings and streets down, this his aim in becoming an architect is in direct relation to the city that he grew up in, as he wishes to make secure structures, such as will prevail eternally. (146-47)

Saglam correctly concludes that, according to Dyer, eternal darkness is at the heart of the city. He aims at the everlasting conservation of this darkness through his architecture. This finding aligns with the argument of the role of the artist and his or her claim on eternity.

in her monograph "A Poetics of Postmodernism". At that time, it was a relatively new phenomenon in the genre of historical novels, and it was defined by a high theoretical self-reflexivity about history's constructiveness (cf. Hutcheon 5).

This thesis is widely going to follow Hutcheon's definition of the genre. She reasons that this increased self-awareness comes from a significant philosophical shift in postmodernism:

Postmodern art similarly asserts and then deliberately undermines such principles as value, order, meaning, control, and identity (Russell 1985, 247) that have been classic basic premises of bourgeois liberalism. Those humanistic principles are still operative in our culture, but for many they are no longer seen as eternal and unchallengeable. The contradictions of both postmodern theory and practice are positioned within the system and yet work to allow its premises to be seen as fictions or ideological structures. This does not necessarily destroy their "truth" value, but it does define the conditions of that "truth." Such a process reveals rather than conceals the tracks of the signifying systems that constitute our world - that is, systems constructed by us in answer to our needs. However important these systems are, they are not natural, given, or universal. (13)

Hutcheon holds the opinion that the defining characteristic of postmodernism is its doubt of the traditional value system. Postmodern works display the constructedness of these valuable concepts without annihilating them. They question ideals but from within their very own value system. These ideals we humans hold dear are the mere fulfillment of our needs. However, this also means that postmodern works, despite all their inclination for subversion, are dependent on the ideas they deconstruct (cf. Hutcheon 59).

Accordingly, Hutcheon argues that the idea we have of the past is a construction of the human mind. She does not negate the past but postulates that the only access to the past is via texts – narrative discourses in other words (cf. Hutcheon 97).

By unveiling the narrative strategies, historiographic metafiction deconstructs the illusion of authenticity in historical novels and another primary concept of humanist thought:

Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. This kind of postmodern fiction also refuses the relegation of the extratextual past to the domain of historiography in the name of the autonomy of art. [...] They [i.e. novels] also show that both genres unavoidably construct as they textualize that past. The "real" referent of their language once existed; but it is only accessible to us today in textualized form: documents, eye-witness accounts, archives. (Hutcheon 93)

The pillar of truth is shaken without falling. Instead, historiographic metafiction displays the complex fashioning of truth. This concept is, however, essential to any identity formation

process. Which repercussions does it have for a nation or an individual if the past cannot be ‘truthfully’ and, hence, not objectively accessed?

Detective Hawksmoor experiences this as our representative. While Hawksmoor tries to read the signs of past and present crimes, the novel’s reader reads a historical novel that diverts from the dominant perception of the time of Enlightenment and does not allow access to the past by defying our traditional knowledge of time. Consequently, historical and national grandeur is a mere narrative construction without a sound foundation. By deconstructing time Ackroyd uncovers the fragility of our temporal and contemporary view of existence and leaves the reader in a state of unease (cf. Gibson 96).

Overall, it is remarkable that Ackroyd manages to undermine three generic conventions in *Hawksmoor*: the historical novel, autobiography, and crime fiction. He does so by uncovering the narrative techniques at the heart of said genres and by revealing the preconditions of Western thought processes. Ultimately, *Hawksmoor* is a novel defined by its unsettling playfulness with generic conventions.

In contrast to *Hawksmoor* Barnes’ *Arthur & George* is far more conventional on a generic level, as this novel is written in the realist tradition (cf. V. Nünning 228). Despite this notable difference, *Hawksmoor* and *Arthur & George* share a setting in the past. In the case of *Arthur & George*, the story is taking place in the Victorian age.

In the first part of the analysis of *Arthur & George*, it was exemplified that truth is generated, influenced, or even maintained by narration within the novel. The conflation of reality and fiction undermines the notion of truth. Neither the varying detectives nor the author characters can maintain their supremacy. In the course of the following analysis, the role narration has for the nation-state plays a predominant role. The latter formed a narration on George’s case. Julian Barnes is, however, far from underlining a nation’s ultimate power of authorship. Instead, he destabilizes this power monopoly by denying it the factor of truth. Doubts about a nation’s

credibility mark its downfall. That becomes possible with the disclosure of narrative techniques at the heart of the national discourse.

The main point of reference for these narratives is the past on a mythological as well as historical level. These versions of the past become utilized to create a sense of unity among the contemporary national group, which lastly allows citizens to identify with their nation. The narrations of the past are due to historiographical mechanisms (e.g., omissions, the domination of the victorious, overemphasis) far from being objective and, thus, prone to subjective influence (cf. A. Assmann 43-45). The exclusion of other ethnicities has often been among the results of such narrative processes. In western cultures, this often equaled their superiority over other people (cf. Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" 57).

The exclusion of the other also plays an integral part in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*. George's trial is about more than just his potential guilt. It raises questions about the acceptance of ethnic minorities in Victorian society and their sense of belonging. While George's character is, hence, mostly outward-oriented, which means towards the UK-colonies, Arthur's personal, national narratives are more inward-oriented. He focuses on the British past and British mythology. With the help of these characters, Julian Barnes investigates the two poles of nation-building: firstly, the identification processes through historical belonging and secondly the identification process through the exclusion of ethnic others.

As a child, Arthur is regularly enchanted by the stories his mother tells him. On the one hand, they become the source for his urge to write stories, whereas, on the other hand, they also unveil his definition of being English:

Irish by ancestry, Scottish by birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits, Arthur became English. English history inspired him; English freedoms made him proud; English cricket made him patriotic. And the greatest epoch in English history - with many to choose from - was the fourteenth century: a time when the English archer commanded the field, and when both the French and Scottish kings were held prisoner in London.

But he also never forgot the tales heard while the porridge stick was raised. For Arthur the root of Englishness lay in the long-gone, long-remembered, long-invented world of chivalry. There was no knight more faithful than Sir Kayne, none so brave and amorous as Sir Lancelot, none so virtuous as Sir Galahad. There was no pair of lovers truer than Tristan and Iseult, no wife fairer and more faithless than Guinevere. And of course there was no braver or noble knight than Arthur. (AG 31)

Arthur's desire for belonging makes him look back at 14th century England. The English domination on the battlefield gives him inspiration as well as the feeling of coming from a traditional and superior lineage. Along with these historical achievements comes a set of values based on English mythology. While Arthur appreciates political freedom as a historical achievement, the role model qualities of English mythological characters, on the other hand, have personal value. "Faithfulness" or "Virtuousness" are traits connected to the realm of chivalry that Arthur defines as being English.

In other words, Arthur's attitude towards the British past and mythology goes hand in hand with the theoretical findings I displayed earlier. The past defines significant parts of our national understanding. Arthur differentiates between historical and mythological past, though. Within the historical setting, Arthur is mainly concerned with the English people as a factual and successful group, whereas on the mythological level, he is more individually oriented. The characters he names are essences of qualities. Their greatness comes from this one-dimensionality.

Arthur's differentiation between fiction and historiography has a long-standing tradition in western thought and can be traced back to Aristotle, who already proclaimed that fictional texts are designed as things could have been, whereas historical texts show how they were (cf. Aristotle 234). Arthur keeps this difference, and like Aristotle, favors fiction over historiography. During the novel, this boundary collapses, though. While Aristotle views the artist as the fortress of universal truth (cf. 235), Arthur, as an author, witnesses the notion of truth collapse. As shown in the first part of the analysis of *Arthur & George*, Arthur experiences how fiction and facts can well influence each other (e.g., the reanimation of Sherlock Holmes due to his readers' urges). In George's case, he also witnesses how other entities or other people than himself hold authorial power:

It means, it means, my darling Jean, that this Home Office, this Government, this country, this England of ours has discovered a new legal concept. In the old days, you were either innocent or guilty. If you were not innocent, you were guilty, and if you were not guilty, you were innocent. A simple enough system, tried and tested down many centuries, grasped by

judges, juries, and the populace at large. As from today, we have a new concept in English law - guilty and innocent. George Edalji is a pioneer in this regard. The only man to be granted a free pardon for a crime he never committed, and yet to be told at the same time that it was quite right that he served three years of servitude.' (AG 434)

George's final sentence initiates a new dimension of jurisdiction that is in itself contradictory.

The English court designs an entirely new category and, hence, exemplifies authorial powers.

This circumstance is a conflation of fiction and fact due to the apparent breach with common sense.

The sheer irrationality of the verdict transports it into the realm of fictionality and clearly shows the interests at the heart of English jurisdiction. The legal system and consequently, the English nation are disclosed as storytellers at least when it comes to George's case. They do not value the qualities of the mythological characters as Arthur does because they divert from his code of honor and create a gray zone in between. By doing so, they fundamentally violate Arthur's standards of Englishness. Therefore, it becomes evident that we encounter two different kinds of national identity.

While Arthur treasures virtues such as faithfulness, the government would naturally proclaim the same and undermine these ideals simultaneously by trying to be infallible. Personal narration faces the Grand Narrative. Nevertheless, both parties would define themselves as English, which demonstrates that a sense of national belonging does not automatically mean a perfect unity.

Julian Barnes, hence, displays a fragmentation of the Victorian Age. It is far from being romantically unified and rightfully powerful in the competition of international forces. The English did not bring impeccable Western values to the world but undermined the same values they propagated. The Grand Narrative prevailed, though, and is fostered by the nostalgic desires of contemporary people. But Julian Barnes warns his readers that an unreflected longing is inappropriate and he "depicts, in particular, Edwardian Englishness as an unstable concept, one that is not necessarily, as common myth would have it, innate and inimitable, but on the contrary, one that is laboriously studied and painstakingly applied – a façade, rather than a nation's pride." (Berberich 123). Barnes exemplifies that both aspects – the superior moral values and the perfect

national unity – are mere illusions or well-designed narratives that hide the underlying fragmentation. He does so by contrasting the embodiment of a perfect Victorian Englishman and author with the national government and its power structures. However, just as Arthur finds his authorial potency limited by his readers' and his own financial needs, the government is ultimately revealed to be a narrative institution.

When we look closer at George's character, this statement becomes even more evident. Due to his mixed descent, the factor of race²³ plays a predominant role in George's life. As he is partially Parsee, he is unable to blend into English society – despite being able to have a career as a solicitor and to speak immaculate British English (cf. AG 124). How tragic the rejection by English society is for George can be best illustrated by analyzing his childhood ideology and behavioral patterns:

'George, where do you live?'
'The Vicarage, Great Wyrley.'
'And where is that?'
'Staffordshire, Father.'
'And where is that?'
'The centre of England.'
'And what is England, George?'
'England is the beating heart of the Empire, Father.'
Good. And what is the blood that flows through the arteries and veins of the Empire to reach even its farthest shore?'
'The Church of England.'
'Good George.'

And after a while Father begins to groan and wheeze again. George watches the outline of the curtain harden. He lies there thinking of arteries and veins making red lines on the map of the world, linking Britain to all the places coloured pink: Australia and India and Canada and islands dotted everywhere. He thinks of tubes being laid along the bed of the ocean like telegraph cables. He thinks of blood bubbling through these tubes and emerging in Sydney, Bombay, Cape Town. Bloodlines, that is a word he has heard somewhere. With the pulse of blood in his ears, he begins to fall asleep. (AG 23-24)

In this passage, Julian Barnes plays with the body metaphor for a (nation) state and includes a religious tinge. The metaphor finds itself extended to the English colonies with England as the heart at the center, whereas the Anglican Church functions as the blood of the organism. The choice of body parts incorporates a power relation. The heart and the blood are irreplaceable for

²³ Race is a strictly biological category. A person's appearance and the related level of beauty, physical strength, and intellectual capacity are according to race inherited qualities. Race includes a hierarchy, which means, in most cases, the superiority of the white race. In contrast to the nation, race is a cruder way of differentiating groups of people, as members of a race can be spread over various nations without annihilating ties with either of the two concepts (cf. Wallerstein 82).

a body's survival. Accordingly, England and the English church are central to its colonies. They trigger colonial life. The father's choice of religion as the connection between the motherland and its colonies surely relates to his profession as a Vicar, but it also hints at the export of moral values to the colonies, if one interprets the Anglican Church as a moral institution. The blood rich with English values nurtures the marginal body parts.

Furthermore, the mentioning of blood also relates to the issue of race. The surrounding organs are unable to produce blood on their own but depend on the donation of the heart. In other words, they are not of the same blood. George and his father, however, understand the metaphor of the nation-state as a body as a sign of equality. Nevertheless, it echoes the real power structures between England and its colonies. His father's opinion influences George's:

National identity is thus absorbed unquestioningly. While Barnes's work is historical, it still raises important questions about national identity that resonate with contemporary assumptions about belonging and naturalization. Barnes clearly points out nationality's artificiality, its often laborious acquisition, and its early imprint on impressionable children. (Berberich 124)

The issue of youth and the acquisition of a national mind set can also be traced to George exhibiting behavioral patterns that structurally resemble racial exclusions:

It is not just the cow - or the cow's many friends like the horse, the sheep, and the pig - that renders George suspicious of the world beyond the Vicarage wall. Most of what he hears about it makes him anxious. It is full of people who are old, and sick, and poor, all of which are bad things to be, judging from father's attitude and lowered voice when he returns; and people called pit widows, which George does not understand. [...] When the outside world brings the door-knocker down, George usually jumps. All things considered, he would prefer to stay here, inside, with Mother, with his brother Horace and new sister Maud, until it is time for him to go to Heaven and meet Great-Uncle Comson. (AG 9)

In George's childish outlook on the world, the outside bears great threats. He prefers not to meet with the sick and the poor outside the Vicarage. Everything beyond the walls of his home bears the mark of impurity.

Similarly, ethnic minorities are viewed. They are strangers and fearsome and, hence, have to be excluded from "pure" Western societies (cf. Bauman 28-29). George himself does not racially discriminate, but the patterns behind those ideas are not unknown to himself. He displays binary thinking and grants himself a more valuable position. Without a doubt, he is raised in the West and was influenced by its ideals and way of thought accordingly.

As mentioned before, George seems to identify more with English culture than with his Parsee

origins:

His father has also chosen to respond to the crisis in what seems to George a peculiar fashion: by giving him short lectures on how the Parsees have always been much favoured by the British. George thus learns that the very first Indian traveller to Britain was a Parsee, that the first Indian to study Christian theology at a British university was a Parsee; so was the first Indian student at Oxford, and later the first woman student; so was the first Indian man presented at Court, and, later, the first Indian woman. The first Indian to enter the Indian Civil Service was a Parsee. Shapurji tells George about surgeons and lawyers trained in Britain; about Parsee charity during the Irish famine and later towards suffering millworkers in Lancashire. He even tells George about the first Indian cricket team to tour England - Parsees every one of them. But George is quite without interest in cricket, and finds his father's stratagem more desperate than helpful. When the family is required to toast the election of a second Parsee Member of Parliament, Muncherji Bhowndree in the constituency of North-East Bethnal Green, George finds a shameful sarcasm rise within him. (AG 62)

While his father proudly points out the achievements of Parsees, George shamefully withdraws.

This fact displays a rift between father and son or first and second-generation migrants. The father still feels connected to his original ethnic group. His son, on the other hand, distances himself from it. Julian Barnes does not give his readers any clues about the father's motives, though. The case of George is, however, a different one. Barnes describes at length George's attitude towards his ethnic roots.

Even at high age George still experiences moments of exclusion:

It was true that inaccurate assumptions were habitually made: that he and his sister had recently arrived in the country; that he was a Hindoo; that he was a trader of spices. And of course he was still asked where he came from; though when he replied - to avoid discussing the finer points of geography - that he was from Birmingham, his interlocutors mostly nodded in an unsurprised way, as if they had always expected the inhabitants of Birmingham to look like George Edalji. Naturally there were the kind of humorous allusions that Greenway and Stentson went in for though few to Bechuana Land but he regarded this as some inevitable normality, like rain and fog. And there were even some people who, on learning that you came from Birmingham, expressed disappointment, because they had been hoping for news from distant lands which you were quite unable to supply. (AG 473)

Almost naturally, people expect him to be non-English and maintaining ties to his assumed homeland. He is meant to fulfill stereotypes by performing a specific profession – a trader of spices. In other words, George's outward appearance directly translates into a certain image people have of him. In their mind, Parsees do not grow up in Staffordshire.

Having been continuously confronted with these assumptions, one has to wonder why George shows so little interest in his Parsee origin. At least according to his outward appearance, he would fit in better into a Parsee community. Nevertheless, he remains loyal to the English nation:

On that day of Queen Victoria's visit, 500,000 people came to greet her, and despite the vast crowd there were neither disturbances nor casualties. George is impressed, yet also not surprised. The general opinion is that cities are violent, overcrowded places, while the countryside is calm and peaceable. His own experience is to the contrary: the country is turbulent and primitive, while the city is where life becomes orderly and modern. Of course Birmingham is not without crime and vice and discord - else there would be less of a living for solicitors - but it seems to George that human conduct is more rational here, and more obedient to the law: more civil. (AG 69)

This passage suggests two reasons for George's preference for England. Firstly, the fact that he lives in England makes him physically and emotionally experience the English nation. It is tangible. He directly witnesses clear rules and orders. However, the likable advantages of a Parsee community are nothing he ever gets to watch on his own.

Secondly, George is a fervent follower of the Western thought of progress. As mentioned before, the nation concept allowed to infuse the masses with the future-oriented idea of progress, one of the decisive aspects of Enlightenment philosophy. The nation-state embedded this claim for progress in its lessons and became "a civilizing force, [...] a symbolic and material vehicle of modernity." (Hedetoft 36). In the quote above, George mainly compares the city with the countryside and displays hierarchical thinking by representing the countryside as being stuck in a primitive state. On the other hand, the city is the epitome of progress and allows English citizens to live an orderly life.

By sentencing George for mutilation and displaying his realization process on narrative power Barnes, however, proves George's assumption of progress to be false. Barnes, therefore, reaches the same conclusion as Ackroyd in *Hawksmoor* – despite all the differences in generic tradition.

The debate on the nation in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* focuses, just like Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, on the aspect of difference – temporally and ethnically. The nostalgic mystification of the detective character already hints at the importance of memory culture in *When We Were Orphans*. The representation of the past with its historical accounts, collective memory, and personal identification is central to every nation-building discourse (cf. A. Assmann 33). Ishiguro's take on this topic is, however, very individually centered, as he vastly elaborates on the relation of personal memory vs. official history.

On the other axis of identification, Ishiguro exemplifies the problematic situation of hybrid

individuals.²⁴ The British Christopher Banks and his Japanese friend Akira grow up – far away from their supposed home countries – in Shanghai and find themselves caught in a specific cultural setting that does not allow an easy identification with their respective national group. Banks' search for his abducted parents is not only an attempt to prove his detective capacities. It also becomes a quest to discover his national roots by returning from London to Shanghai, the city of his hybrid childhood.

Therefore, Banks' strife to solve his parents' case is an endeavor to find his roots and, hence, his identity. He lacks a sense of belonging, which is illustrated by his state of being an orphan. Growing up in Shanghai and being detached from his national peer group metaphorically equals his orphaned state, as one's nation is very often perceived as a nurturing parent, which finds its lingual expression in the term fatherland. The image of the doubly-orphaned child – on a literal as well as metaphorical level – discloses the aspect that is at stake: home. Just like his friend Akira, Banks as a child repeatedly affirms that the International Settlement in Shanghai is his home and not the United Kingdom:

'Look here, old fellow. You really ought to cheer up. After all, you're going to England. You're going home.'
It was this last remark, this notion that I was 'going home', which caused my emotions to get the better of me for - I am certain of this - the first and last time on that voyage. Even then, my tears were more of anger than of sorrow. For I had deeply resented the colonel's words. As I saw it, I was bound for a strange land where I did not know a soul, while the city steadily receding before me contained all I knew. Above all, my parents were still there, somewhere beyond that harbour, beyond that imposing skyline of the Bund, and wiping my eyes, I had cast my gaze towards the shore one last time, wondering if even now I might catch sight of my mother - or even my father - running on the quay, waving and shouting for me to return. But I was conscious even then that such a hope was no more than a childish indulgence. And as I watched the city that had been my home grow less and less distinct, I remember turning to the colonel with a cheerful look and saying: 'We should reach the sea fairly soon, don't you think so, sir?' (WO 28-29)

The definitions of a home by the Colonel and Banks contrast each other. The Colonel believes in national belonging. To him, the UK is his home, while Banks views Shanghai as his home and the United Kingdom as a country full of strangers. Although it remains unclear if the Colonel views ethnic differences as central to the definition of home, Banks' approach is unveiled: home

²⁴ Emily Horton states that Ishiguro's critical cosmopolitanism distinguishes him from many other contemporary novelists. He challenges the territorial distribution and, throughout his work, draws attention to the "on-going history of imperialism upheld through such discourses as nationalist authoritarianism, traditionalism, and nostalgia, as well as corporate transnationalism." (164-166) *When we were Orphans* is a prime example for Horton's thesis. The novel is concerned with all the aspects mentioned above and favors a cosmopolitan approach to belonging instead of national affiliation.

is characterized by the city he grew up in, where he still suspects his parents. In other words, his sense of belonging during his childhood devalues the idea of the nation. He does not see himself as a member of a racially and culturally uniform group but of a mixed origin group that shares his living experiences. Thus, the nation is far from being a natural concept.

Banks' ambiguous national affiliation emphasizes his state as an orphan further. Shao-Pin Luo even deems him, the orphaned Banks, a representative of exile:

[...] the figure of the orphan becomes for Ishiguro a central means of examining the anguish of displacement and the sorrows of exile. Forever burdened with their original loss, a never-healing wound, both exile and orphan have to invent alternative, fictional worlds with performative identities and substitute families. (55)

The performative identity that Banks forms for himself is his profession as a detective. Within the course of his life, he creates several substitute families that guarantee human companionship (e.g., Akira as an older brother or Jennifer, the orphaned girl he adopts). Banks remains, however, unable to emotionally settle down. The loss of his parents and his mixed upbringing unsettle his sense of belonging.

Banks misses his childhood throughout his life, but this does not mean that he considers himself to be Chinese, either. On the contrary, he is forbidden to leave the International Settlement, which strengthens his sense as a foreigner in Shanghai:

I for one was absolutely forbidden to enter the Chinese areas of the city, and as far as I know, Akira's parents were no less strict on the matter. Out there, we were told, lay all manner of ghastly diseases, filth and evil men. [...] I remember quizzing Akira repeatedly about these exploits. The truth concerning the Chinese districts, he told me, was far worse than the rumours. There were no proper buildings, just shack upon shack built in great proximity to another. [...] There were, moreover, dead bodies piled up everywhere, flies buzzing all over them, and no one there thought anything of it. (WO 54)

Beyond the walls of the International Settlement lie the Chinese districts, which, according to the parents, can only be characterized by dirt and villainy. In the imagination of the young boys, the degree of filth increases. In the center of this demarcation stands the well-known colonial tactic of separation between different ethnic groups by defining the local one as inferior and dirty. Co-mingling has to be prevented. Interestingly, the group that wishes to distinguish itself from the Chinese consists of different ethnicities (at least Japanese and English). The joint status as the foreigners unites the inhabitants of the International Settlement, though.

Consequently, they employ the aforementioned colonial tactic and shut out the Chinese. Shanghai, itself, is, therefore, never really Banks' home in the sense of an unfragmented belonging. The seeming inferiority of the Chinese people is even heightened by his mother's commitment to the Anti-Opium campaign:

In those days, it was still a surprise to me when any adults displayed [...] ignorance of my mother's campaigns against opium. Throughout much of my growing up, I held the belief that my mother was known and admired far and wide as the principal enemy of the Great Opium Dragon of China. The opium phenomenon, I should say, was not something adults in Shanghai made much effort to hide from children, but of course, when I was very young, I understood little concerning the matter. I was accustomed to seeing each day, from the carriage that took me to school, the Chinese men in the doorways along Nanking Road, sprawled in the morning sun, and for some time, whenever I heard of my mother's campaign, I imagined her to be assisting this specific group of men. (WO 60-61)

One of Banks' few contacts with Chinese citizens, hence, consists of watching dazed Opium addicts from afar. They seem to be constantly immobile and confirm the image of the Chinese that circulates within the International Settlement. Banks' mother tries to help these specific men and, therefore, fulfills the expectation her son has of adults: she protects the weak. Her completion of this task goes hand in hand with Banks' admiration for her. He enlarges her part in the Anti-Opium campaign, and only later in his life during his research in the British Museum comes to realize that his childish perception was, indeed, false (cf. WO 63).

That is just one incident in which personal and official memories contradict each other. Ishiguro elaborates at the supposed role of Banks' mother at great length, whereas he keeps the passage on the revelation of the truth rather short. Additionally, he makes Banks solely hint at the role the United Kingdom used to play in the Opium trade. The first-person narrator, thus, almost excludes historiography from his account. Instead, he rather underlines his personally experienced past. That also explains the rather short appraisal of his findings in the British Museum, which functions as an archive:

Interest in the national identity gave impetus to an archival movement that collected the remains of a forgotten past. At the center of this interest was everything that could provide information about the heroic deeds of that past and the established national traditions inherited from it. Suddenly people began to discover monuments all around them. (A. Assmann 48)

The collection of the British Museum does not include any heroic deeds by Banks' mother. Thus, according to national history, she has not played any particular role in the Anti-Opium campaign. From this almost negligible passage, one can deduct the complex relationship Ishiguro constructs

between personal and official memory. Banks prefers his personal account of the past that does not coincide with official memory, which is merely a condensed version of the past. On the other hand, Banks' refusal to critically reflect on the outcome of his research marks another moment of doubt of the narrator's reliability. He overemphasizes moments of his past without putting them into a historical perspective. The particular emphasis of a historical detail reminds of Banks' detection techniques, such as his examination of a mother's dead body with the magnifying glass in the war-torn Chapei district, which consequently gained comical qualities (cf. WO 272). His professional shortcomings, as well as his general perception, are, hence, prone to detail while losing the bigger picture. Banks, the first-person-narrator, presents the readers with a distorted world view.

Alyn Webley suggests in his essay "Making and Breaking of Hegemony" that many of Ishiguro's protagonists prove to be unreliable narrators due to social change:

Finally, I would like to suggest that it is Ishiguro's recognition of the anxiety caused by finding oneself on the outer limits of history, as a representative of a hegemony that is no longer the dominant driving force of society, that fuels his preoccupation with the question of the reliability, or unreliability, of memory. The narrators' sense of the fragmentation and disintegration of an old hegemony, and the formation of a new one, is the trigger for their reflections. Because the narrators have identified themselves so deeply with a particular set of values, the act of remembering becomes an attempt to preserve their subjective identities by reasserting disintegrating hegemonies, and resisting newly forming ones. (19)

Webley's results are interesting as they are easily transferable to Banks, who, as a detective and a British citizen, faces changes and threats to his former superiority. Banks experiences fragmentation but tries to generate a sense of coherence for himself as well as the reader who has insight into his thoughts due to him being a first-person-narrator. He fails to uphold this coherence because of outside influences such as his visits to the British Museum or his conversations with others (e.g., the older man who underlines Banks' naivety). Franziska Quabeck adds to the discussion of the reliability of the narrator by stating that Banks "is literally dialogically constituted in the sense that we only find out about his true feelings through his dialogues with others." (cf. 156). Hence, the reader cannot trust the first-person narrator's direct information and is dependent on interaction with other characters. The view from outside onto Banks disqualifies the first-person-narrator and reveals his inner conflict, which triggers him to

distort his past and consequently, his identity.

In addition to his childhood trauma, Banks transnational status also plays a role in his identification process: His upbringing and his living environment during his childhood, contradict a clear-cut identification process according to the rules of Western thought. He is exposed to a society of cultural diversity in a world that still functions based on national belonging. Akira's house gives a prime example of the sheer ordinariness of the hybrid culture they live in:

My memory of Akira's house is that, from an architectural standpoint it was very similar to ours; in fact, I remember my father telling me both houses had been built by the same British firm some twenty years earlier. But the inside of my friend's house was a quite different affair, and the source of some fascination for me. It was not so much the preponderance of Oriental pictures and ornaments - in Shanghai, at that stage in my life, I would have seen nothing unusual in this - but rather his family's eccentric notions regarding the usage of many items of Western furniture. Rugs I would have expected to see on floors were hung on walls; chairs would be at odd heights to tables; lamps would totter under overly large shades. Most remarkable were the pair of 'replica' Japanese rooms Akira's parents had created at the top of the house. These were small but uncluttered rooms with Japanese tatami mats fitted over the floors, and paper panels fixed to the walls, so that once inside - at least according to Akira - one could not tell one was not in an authentic Japanese house made of wood and paper. I can remember the doors to these rooms being especially curious; on the outer, 'Western' side, they were oak-panelled with shining brass knobs; on the inner, 'Japanese' side delicate paper lacquer inlays. (WO 71-72)

Although the house was built in Western style, the insides tell a different story. The parents leave their marks by re-appropriating the rooms to their traditional arrangement. By doing so, they affirm their national and cultural identity and exemplify the specific situation of migrants abroad. Surrounded by a strange environment, they need to re-root themselves culturally. Their migratory desire to do so proves Tim Cresswell's point that place is, in fact, a matter of meaning:

Humanistic geography's most important reminder has been that we do not live in an abstract framework of geometric spatial relationships; we live in a world of meaning. We exist in and are surrounded by places - centers of meaning. Places are neither totally material nor completely mental; they are combinations of the material and mental and cannot be reduced to either. (13)

For the Japanese parents, the national decorum may be a reminder of home and their loyalty to it, but they also create a place of meaning their son Akira has to live in and for whom the implications are serious. As a mixture of Western and Eastern architecture, the house is a symbol of his hybrid existence. However, his childhood in Shanghai leaves him with only rudimentary knowledge of Japanese society. This lack leads him to believe that he is a constant disappointment to his parents:

'It same for me,' he said. 'Mother and Father, they stop talk. Because I not enough Japanese.'
[...] My parents stopped talking to one another, he told, whenever they became deeply unhappy with my behaviour - and in

my case, this was an account of my not behaving sufficiently like an Englishman. If I thought about it, he said, I would be able to link each of my parents' silences to some instance of my failing in this way. For his part, he always knew when he had let down his Japanese blood, and it never came as a surprise to him to discover that his parents had ceased talking to one another. (WO 73)

Akira shares his thoughts with Banks, who immediately understands and attempts to make his parents happier by being more English. He confides in Uncle Philip, who initially views these fears of being not English as a childish illusion:

I saw my chance and said: 'Uncle Philip, I was just wondering. How do you suppose one might become more English?'
'More English? [...] Who says you're not sufficiently English already?'
'No one really.' Then after a second I added: 'But I think perhaps my parents think so.'
'And what do you think, Puffin? Do you think you ought to be more English?'
'I can't really tell, sir.'
'No, I suppose you can't. Well, it's true, out here, you're growing up with a lot of different sorts around you. Chinese, French, Germans, Americans, what have you. It'd be no wonder if you grew up a bit of a mongrel.' He gave a short laugh. Then he went on: 'But that's not a bad thing. You know what I think, Puffin? I think it would be no bad thing if boys like you all grew up with a bit of everything. We might all treat each other a good deal better then. Be less of these wars for one thing. Oh yes. Perhaps one day, all these conflicts will end, and it won't be because of great statesmen or churches or organisations like this one. It'll be because people have changed. They'll be like you, Puffin. More a mixture. So why not become a mongrel? It's healthy.' (WO 76)

Uncle Philip seemingly views in Banks' way of growing up as a chance to enhance the situation of the world by abolishing the national and cultural boundaries. To him, Banks may appear to be the perfect cosmopolitan:

So there are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to other, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is so much to learn from our difference. (Appiah, XV)

According to Uncle Philip and Kwame Appiah's understanding of cosmopolitanism, Banks' childhood abroad frees him from the shackles of national obligations. Banks may have realized the relativity of national borders due to his exchange with children from other nations. Additionally, he may have gained a better comprehension and appreciation for varying cultures. However, Uncle Philip does not take the exceptional position of young Banks into consideration who is simply one of the irregularities in a world still determined by the nation-state.

Banks' allusion to the generational fragmentation between parents and children due to cultural up-rootedness makes Uncle Philip sway, though:

'But if I did everything might ...' I stopped. [...] Like that blind there' - I pointed - 'if the twine broke. Everything might scatter.'
Uncle Philip stared at the blind I had indicated. Then he rose, went to the window and touched it gently.
'Everything might scatter. You might be right. I suppose it's something we can't easily get away from. People need to feel they belong. To a nation, to a race. Otherwise, who knows what might happen? This civilisation of ours, perhaps it'll just collapse. And everything scatter, as you put it.' (WO 76-77)

It remains unclear whether Uncle Philip believes in the disintegration of civilization because of merging cultures. That is mainly the consequence of the unreliable first-person narrator. Nevertheless, Uncle Philip and Banks – at least superficially – conclude that humans have to be part of a collective. Everyone needs to have parents on an individual level as well as collective roots.

How hard it can be to return to one's national roots after living a hybrid life exemplifies Akira's fate, who is sent to Japan to attend school there. Before his departure, Akira shows signs of attempted identification with Japan, as he habitually recounts the latest of Japan's feats:

It was around that same time - that same summer- when certain aspects of Akira's behaviour began seriously to irk me. In particular, there was his endless harping on the achievements of the Japanese. He had always tended to do this, but that summer things seemed to reach obsessive levels. Time and again my friend would bring to a stop some game we were playing just to lecture me on the latest Japanese building being erect in the business district, or the imminent arrival of another Japanese gunboat in the harbour. He would then oblige me to listen to the most minute details and, every few minutes, his claim that Japan had become a 'great, great country just like England'. (WO 78)

Akira follows the Grand Narrative the Japanese government creates. It makes him believe in Japan's greatness and heightens the urge to be a part of this community. Once again, it is the aspect of progress that increases a country's attractiveness. As mentioned before, this concept determines a nation's distance to the inferior state of animality. Akira buys into this assumption as his comparison of Japan to England illustrates. After moving to Japan, he finds himself very quickly ostracized. Akira's pronunciation and his behavior mark him as a stranger in his home country. Thus, he is an outsider at school as well as among his relatives (cf. WO 89).

In the end, Akira returns to Shanghai. Neither Japan nor Shanghai is his home. Solely, inside the International Settlement, does he feel comfortable. His situation mirrors Banks', which makes the two friends *doppelgänger* (cf. Zinck 148). Both their fates depict the troubles of the hybrids of the second generation. While seeing the International Settlement as their home, they long for parental approval, which in their mind is linked to the nationally correct behavior. In this way, the strange entity called the nation becomes a substitute parent for Akira and Banks. The second-generation hybrids are not free of the nation concept.

A representation of historical perception accompanies the debate on the nation concept, the loss of a sense of belonging, and the human capacity to re-root. As elaborated before, Banks stresses personal memories and disfavors official versions. During his adult years in London, the urge to return to Shanghai grows. The desire is not only intensified by his return to Shanghai but also by the assumption of the unchanged friendship with Akira:

But I have also been looking ahead, to the day when I eventually return to Shanghai; to all the things Akira and I will do there together. Of course, the city will have undergone many changes. But then I know Akira would like nothing more than to take me around, showing off all his great knowledge of the city's more intimate reaches. He will know just the right places to eat, to drink, to take a walk; the best establishments where we might go after a hard day, to sit and talk late into the night, swapping stories about all that has happened to us since our last meeting. (WO 124)

While Banks appears to be anticipating architectural changes in Shanghai, he maintains an unshakable belief in his friend Akira. Although it is unclear whether Akira still lives in Shanghai, Banks assumes that they are going to meet up there. He yearns for emotional stability that may already be long lost. This nostalgic feeling can be detected in many aspects of Banks' emotional world: the loss of his parents leads him to idealize his stable childhood. The function he grants the detective as a protector of the weak makes the very same a tool to reach his nostalgic goal and consequently renders this profession outdated. Additionally, Banks' status as a hybrid and an exile reminds of the coinage of the term nostalgia by doctor Johannes Hofer, who diagnosed Swiss expatriates with this sickness, when they displayed an unusual yearning for their home country (cf. Boym 3). Thus, nostalgia is an emotion nourished by distance:

Nostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. (Boym XIII)

Banks experiences this feeling of displacement and loss in various ways (loss of parents, his friend, the International Settlement) and commits himself to this nostalgic love.

Following Boym's assumption that nostalgic longing needs the distance, it is not surprising that Banks' arrival in Shanghai causes his nostalgic fantasies to crumble. During his search for his parents in Chapei with a Japanese soldier that he holds to be Akira, Banks sees himself confronted with a situation he is no longer able to control. He and Akira are taken in by Japanese soldiers, and Banks starts sobbing. His childish perception of the world is overcome as he

affirms in a conversation with Colonel Hasegawa:

The colonel nodded. 'Our childhood seems so far away now. All this' - he gestured out of the vehicle - 'so much suffering. One of our Japanese poets, a court lady many years ago, wrote how sad this was. She wrote of how our childhood becomes like a foreign land once we have grown up.'
'Well, Colonel, it's hardly a foreign land to me. In many ways, it's where I've continued to live all my life. It's only now I've started to make my journey from it.' (WO 277)

Banks realizes that the soldier who accompanied him through Chapei does not have to be Akira because he subconsciously may have projected his wish to see his childhood friend onto strange soldiers. As a consequence, he emotionally remained in his childhood, whereas most people moved on and accepted the loss of the past.

One can, thus, distinguish between two forms of nostalgia: Banks shows a reactionary variant as he disregards changes and only shortly acknowledges them on a rational level. His lost parents and his ambiguous relation to his national belonging are replaced by the detective character who is meant to work things out. He denies the possibility of permanent loss until he is confronted with the irrevocability of the past. The nostalgic emotions of the General are determined by distance and the acceptance of permanent loss. The wounded Japanese soldier best describes the potential of this form of nostalgia:

'Nos-tal-gic, 'Akira said, as though it were a word he had been struggling to find. Then he said a word in Japanese, perhaps Japanese for 'nostalgic'. 'Nos-tal-gic. It is good to be nos-tal-gic. Very important.'
'Really, old fellow?'
'Important. Very important. Nostalgic. When we nostalgic, we remember. A world better than this world we discover when we grow. We remember and wish good world come back again. So very important. Just now, I had dream. I was boy. Mother, Father, close to me. In our house.' (WO 263)

Nostalgia is useful in the process of identification. The belief in a better past can result in an urge to improve the current negative situation. At the same time, adults have to be aware of the processes of the idealism inherent in nostalgia. That can be achieved by accepting the linear flow of time and, accordingly, permanent loss. Nostalgia is, therefore, neither wholly positive nor negative. Instead, it contains chances as well as risks for everyone.

The return to Shanghai cures Banks of his reactionary nostalgia concept, which affects every part of his life. In 1958 he is finally able to locate his mother at Rosedale Manor in Hong Kong. After solving this issue Banks is capable of letting go and grants the reader an outlook on his life:

I do not wish to appear smug; but drifting through my days here in London, I believe I can indeed own up to a certain

contentment. I enjoy my walks in the parks, I visit the galleries; and increasingly of late, I have come to take a foolish pride in sifting through old newspaper reports of my cases in the Reading Room at the British Museum. This city, in other words, has come to be my home, and I should not mind if I had to live out the rest of my days here. Nevertheless, there are those times when a sort of emptiness fills my hours, and I shall continue to give Jennifer's invitation serious thought. (WO 313)

Banks re-defines the notion of home for himself. It is no longer Shanghai but London, where he spent most of his life. He can heal the fracture in his sense of belonging and adjust to his life in the UK. In other words, he finally arrives at the roots of his supposed national belonging. His status as a double orphan (parents and nation-wise) is obsolete. Even his profession only holds nostalgic value. Banks, hence, succeeded in finding a place for himself in the adult world. His past is no more than a distant land. A vital component of being an adult is the acceptance of change. Banks is now willing to accept it as the anticipation of his worsening condition shows. Instead, he may allow change and move to Jennifer in the countryside.²⁵

Overall, all British postmodern crime novels showed a considerable preoccupation with the historical and philosophical origins of crime fiction. Ackroyd displays a specific interest in the philosophy of Enlightenment and the *doppelgänger* motif of detective and perpetrator. The latter deconstructs the dominant linear understanding of time and functions as an advocate for storage memory, which ultimately negates any objective access to the past, denying national historiography or myth-building. While Ackroyd shows great playfulness, Barnes captures the actual investigation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in a realist writing style. He focuses on the relation of fiction and reality and questions with whom the authorial powers lie – e.g., the nation-state, the author, his readers. In the process, he uncovers the narrative tactics inherent in various discourses, including the detective character, truth, or even the nation, consequently, undermining all these concepts – even his realist writing style and its associated values.

Lastly, Ishiguro takes yet another approach to the relation of the detective and the nation-state.

He elaborates on the workings and dangers of individual memory processes. From the

²⁵ Franziska Quabeck reaches in her analysis of *When We Were Orphans* the conclusion that none of the characters can become rooted again (cf. 150). Banks' acceptance of London as his new home and the willingness to move in with Jennifer are, however, indicators of re-rooting.

perspective of the unreliable first-person narrator, the reader comes to understand the nostalgic potential of the detective character but also the relativity of home and the nation-state.

The failure of the detective in all three novels is bound to the indirect access to the past, the unreadability of signs, and, most of all, to his unawareness of the powers of narration. The aspect of narration is, however, evaluated quite differently: In *Hawksmoor*, the preference of storage memory and the awareness of alternative ways of thought grant the murderer Dyer agency. He is a character pictured as someone able to redefine himself. Julian Barnes stresses that no person or entity ultimately holds the monopoly on narratives, which unveils, on the one hand, generic traditions and, on the other hand, the existence of power relations. In contrast to Ackroyd, he denies the possibility of free agency, as Arthur and George have to act within an existing narrative system, whereas Dyer in *Hawksmoor* manages to construct a counter-narrative successfully. Ishiguro, in turn, takes yet another stance. The unreliable narrator and the distorted memory processes call for caution as the mystification and glorification of the past can endanger the present.

These different results regarding the act of narration are closely linked to the different narrative positions in the analyzed crime novels. The promise of the first-person narrator and the protagonist of the (meta-)autobiography in *Hawksmoor* is not kept. Even the third-person narrator with the different focalizations in *Arthur & George*, who is clearly to be placed in the realistic tradition, cannot guarantee objectivity in the approach of the past, contrary to his narrative tradition. The latter is also impossible for the unreliable narrator in Ishiguro's novel, who merely idealizes the past. Despite the differences in dealing with the depiction of the past, all novels share the common feature that they illustrate the impossibility of objective access to the past via the narrators. Referring back to the quotation by Jonathan Rutherford in the introduction to this chapter that Great Britain was "full of ghosts" and had dissonances in its myth formation after the Second World War (*After Identity* 42-43), the analysis of the selected

postmodern crime novels shows that the described haunting quality of the past is also addressed in them. However, none of the novels retains the sheer depiction of the inaccessibility of the past but also reveals the inadequate methods employed by traditional historiography, autobiography, and even the historical novel.

The treatment of ethnic others in *Arthur & George* and *When We Were Orphans* illuminates the discussion on the British nation and the detective character from a different perspective. George, a representative of second-generation migrants to the United Kingdom, exhibits signs of being utterly taken by imperialist thought patterns as well as the corresponding need to belong. Banks, the transnational detective in Ishiguro's novel, also presents problems of belonging. Both characters demonstrate that the community one feels attached to does not have to be ethnically homogenous and, therefore, discredit one major assumption of the nation-state.

In summary, the relationship between the detective figure and the British nation has changed significantly in the postmodern crime novel at the turn of the millennium compared to the detective novels of Victorianism or the golden age between the World Wars. As one might expect, the detective does not succeed in protecting the nation from destabilizing elements. Ethnically heterogeneous groups and even more the inaccessibility of an objective past unsettle the classical concept of the nation. In the British context, the disclosure of narrative methodologies plays a unique role.

However, the destabilization of these regulatory entities, the detective and the nation, is not synonymous with their abolition. On the contrary, no new regulatory authority is established, or a new principle of belonging beyond interpersonal relationships is proclaimed. Even the self-created agency of the successful murderer, Dyer, remains unexplained. Both the detective and the nation are in a kind of limbo. They have been exposed, in the words of Linda Hutcheon, as concepts that constitute this world based on our needs without having been abolished (cf. 13).

4. Jewish-American Detectives and the Exploration of Lost Cultural Roots

In the context of the thesis at hand, the study of literary detectives in Jewish-American settings allows insights into a specific ethnic group in the USA. The latter rose to hegemonic power in the 20th century and have always seen themselves as an ethnically heterogeneous society due to their status as an immigrant colony. The central themes of the analysis are thus from the outset different from the United Kingdom, which was still strongly marked by the global loss of power and the detachment from the idea of a homogenous society. The case of the Jewish-American detective is, indeed, a very particular one among the chosen postmodern crime fictions, as the Jewish-American community faces several unique questions surrounding such issues as assimilation and diaspora as well as the relation with the State of Israel, a unique example among nation-states itself.

Looking back at Jewish history, the state of the Jewish community in the US is unparalleled, because Jewish-American citizens are a highly successful and are a well-integrated part of American society (cf. Baron 140-41). In contrast, their ancestors lived in diaspora at the margins of their respective European societies. They suffered discrimination as well as persecution and had to shoulder a specific task to keep their cultural heritage alive:

Jewish identity in the Diaspora was essentially dependent upon a cultivated temporal existence – Jews' ability to reproduce elements of the past in the collective and individual present. Jews in exile had no landscape they could claim as their own, certainly not one they could claim by virtue of their Jewishness; for the most part, they had no monuments, buildings, or sacred and symbolic sites that embodied and could reactivate their memories as a people. Their identity was dependent upon the comprehension of and familiarity with texts, and on a determination to practice the precepts and laws dictated by these texts in their lives; it was an identity that celebrated the power of memory. The rituals and the calendar, the cycle of reading the Torah and the holidays – these allowed collective memory and individual memory to come together and foster each other. The past was not understood through historiography and as a series of distant and detached events but was something with which one engaged through ongoing dialogue. (Chowers 43)

The ancestors of contemporary Jews based their cultural identity on the continuous execution of rituals that consequently formed collective and individual memory. Unlike other cultural groups in Europe, they could not refer to any form of state or state symbols for identity formation. This lack of a formal structure to support a cultural or national identity furthered the creation of different subgroups within the Jewish community. Living in the diaspora, a considerable part of the

Jewish community dreamt of the return to the fatherland and the establishment of a Jewish state. The Zionist movement benefitted greatly from the ideas of Enlightenment — mostly from the concept of progress. The Jewish state was supposed to become the epitome of modern achievements (cf. Chowers 24). Nevertheless, even those who would not listen to the Zionist call during the late 18th to 19th century expressed their hope that the liberal notion of progress would ultimately lead to “their incorporation [...] into the political, social-cultural, and economic life of the various countries.” (cf. *ibid.* 25). Among the non-Zionists, some Jews even started viewing their religious identity as separate from their cultural identity, therefore, accepting their diasporic state while maintaining their religious affiliations. The era of Enlightenment, which was crucial for the development of the nation concept in Europe, thus, also greatly influenced the contemporary European Jewish minorities. It founded their hope for either a nation-state of their own or their integration into a modern nation-state.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is widely viewed as the “transition from passive Jewish impotence [i.e., during the Holocaust] to active Jewish power.” (Novak 226). After experiencing the horrors of the Holocaust as a religious and cultural minority in European countries in the mid-20th century, the founding fathers of Israel wanted their nation-state to be the embodied promise to the Jewish people that they would be protected from disasters like that in the future. Thus, they also had a critical opinion of the Jewish diaspora, as the example of David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister, illustrates:

Ben-Gurion wished to strengthen and fortify political Zionism. He believed this required the formation of a new Jewish identity that would be Israeli in nature. In his opinion, the Jewish identity that had emerged in the Diaspora was an obstacle to creating the brave, pioneering, independent, sovereign Jew. He rebelled against traditional Jewish identity and sought severance from Diasporic Judaism. Since practically almost all Jewish creation after the Bible had been produced in the Diaspora, Ben-Gurion knowingly relinquished it. The Talmud, halakha, philosophy, poetry, and all that filled the pages of the Jewish library—all were erased. He was attempting to found Jewish Israeli identity on the historical narrative of the Old Testament. (Stern 11)

This complete denial of meaningful Jewish life in the diaspora still has an influence on non-Israeli Jews worldwide, an aspect to which we will return in an instant. Before that, some light will be shed on the underlying but unique assumptions of the State of Israel, which is, due to its

legislation, “a Jewish and a democratic state” (Stern 22). However, declaring Israel a Jewish state came to trigger discontent and conflict with Israel’s minorities, making up twenty percent of its population (cf. Stern 9–10). The criticism of Israel by said groups includes issues such as civil rights, religious tolerance, racism, national security, and occupation (cf. Baron 195).

The duality of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state also poses identification problems for Israeli Jews, who “identify – albeit with varying degrees of internationalization and consciousness – with two cultures: traditional Jewish and Western liberal.” (Stern 25). In other words, the formation of a Jewish state did not solve the problem of its inhabitants’ national or cultural identity.

The same is true for the Jewish-American community. It has to design a relationship with Israel due to tautological reasons, as Baron puts it: “[...] to be Jewish is to have a relationship with Israel because Israel is the Jewish State.” (194). He continues to illustrate that each Jew’s relationship with Israel is not only a political or religious issue but rather central to their identity as Jews:

Why does Israel matter for Diaspora Jews and the construction of contemporary Jewish identity? Because of the expectation that Diaspora Jews have an obligation toward Israel, and because this obligation is to have a relationship with Israel. In theory, every Jew can decide how to respond to this obligation. Yet we know that the more critical one is of Israel, the harder it is to publicly articulate this position without being attacked because of the expectation that to be Jewish is to have a supportive obligation to Israel. Here again the immanent critique is apparent, as Jews are expected to relate to Israel, but if the relationship is too critical or too lax one runs the risk of being accused of failing as a Jew. (212)

This expected unwavering support of Israel by Jewish-American citizens defines the Jewish-American community. American-Jews, thus, have to tackle a variety of identity questions and social expectations. For Israeli Zionists, on the other hand, they remain in exile, “a place where Jewish identity could never be realized, and, consistent with this risk, where Jewish security could never be actualized.” (Baron 140). All Jews worldwide are expected to return home, which means to Israel, and if they do not, they should at least behave supportively of the common cause. Depending on their generation, their level of secularization, and their personal political view, a considerable number of US-American Jews nowadays hold a critical opinion of the Jewish nation-state and feel obliged to voice their criticism publicly. That applies generally

speaking but not exclusively to the younger, more secular and liberal Jewish-American citizens. They need to consider their relationship with the State of Israel, with their diasporic history, as well as with their cultural and religious heritage. (cf. Baron 143 – 150).

The three postmodern crime fictions in this analysis will each illuminate on these aspects in more detail: Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is set in an alternative universe in which all Jews live in exile in Alaska. The central theme of his novel is, hence, diaspora and, to some extent, the State of Israel. Additionally, it is an homage to classical American hard-boiled fiction, as it displays social problems and features the detective as the lonesome fighter in an impenetrable, ever-present criminal world where no one can be trusted. Chabon can consequently be seen to be coming from a particular tradition of US-American postmodern crime fiction. In the works of Thomas Pynchon and Paul Auster (e.g., *The Crying of Lot 49* or the *New York Trilogy*), one can also find elements of hard-boiled crime fiction. At the same time, these works comply with postmodern aesthetics and narrative strategies. The same is valid for Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*.

Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* is also concerned with the relation of Jewish-American citizens with the State of Israel. The novel contains the classical *doppelgänger* motif in crime fiction. It entertains its readers with a wide variety of crimes ranging from identity theft to necrophilia, while also drawing on the tradition of a different genre: autobiography.

Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* is also an autobiography, but in contrast to Roth's novel, it is clearly labeled non-fiction. This particular work is included in this thesis, as, firstly, Auster engages in an in-depth deliberation on (the absence) of Jewish elements in his everyday life and, thus, complements Chabon's and Roth's approach to an analysis of Jewish-American life. Secondly, Paul Auster is an important representative of the postmodern crime fiction genre, and its conventions can already be pointed to in his early non-fictional work. Lastly, *The Invention of Solitude* is, like *Arthur & George* or *Hawksmoor* in the chapter on British postmodern crime

fiction, a noteworthy example of genre hybridization. It will allow exploring the intercorrelations between postmodern crime fiction and other genres even further.

Generic aspects such as genre hybridization, the conventions of postmodern crime fictions, and the detective character will be the first step of the analysis. The second step will integrate the findings of the first step into an overall analysis of the Jewish-American situation, as displayed in the chosen novels.

Jewish-American Detectives and Methods of Identification in the Postmodern Context

As mentioned earlier, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* follows the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction. The latter is characterized by the fact that the detective no longer possesses a godlike intellect. He is defined by greater physical and emotional involvement in his case as well as by his idealism in the context of a corrupt, mostly urban environment. The hard-boiled detective has the task of solving the crime without losing his values or his life. His sleuthing thus becomes an act of individuation in a criminal society, a circumstance that reflects the US-American value system, which focuses on the individual.

Detective Meyer Landsman²⁶ works for the homicide department of the District Police in Sitka, a fictional area in Alaska,²⁷ where the Jewish refugees were allowed to settle and are about to be expelled again.²⁸ Like Barnes' *Arthur & George*, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* employs a limited third-person narrator, but in this case, without alternating focalizations. Instead, the narrative focus remains with Landsman throughout the entire story.

²⁶ As Daniel Anderson points out that the name of the protagonist, Detective Landsman, already exemplifies the strong connections of the novel to the Jewish-American community, as it derives from an organization called "landsmanshaft" that helped Jewish immigrants in the US with their integration process. (cf. 90)

²⁷ Adam Rovner shows in his essay on *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* that alternate histories and a different Jewish fate are frequent subjects in American and British literature after World War II. Novels such as K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Philip Roth's *The Plot against America* have, according to Rovner, the question of Jewish reterritorialization at their core, which finds its expression in an alternative history. (cf. 133) He concludes his analysis by stating that these alternative histories "make use of the detective fiction to challenge the consensus of national and ethnic identity and affiliation." (149).

²⁸ Chabon, Michael. "*The Yiddish Policemen's Union*", 7. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "YPU".

The latter is quite the contrast to the distinguished British gentlemen detectives because he is according to the generic rules of hard-boiled fiction a broken man despite professional success:

According to doctors, therapists, and his ex-wife, Landsman drinks to medicate himself, tuning the tubes and crystals of his moods with a crude hammer of hundred-proof plum brandy. But the truth is that Landsman has only two moods: working and dead. Meyer Landsman is the most decorated shammes in the District of Sitka, the man who solved the murder of the beautiful Froma Lefkowitz by her furrier husband, and caught Podolsky the Hospital Killer. His testimony sent Hyman Tsharny to federal prison for life, the first and last time that criminal charges against a Verbover wiseguy have ever been made to stick. He has the memory of a convict, the balls of a fireman, and the eyesight of a housebreaker. When there is a crime to fight, Landsman tears around Sitka like a man with his pant leg caught on a rocket. It's like there's a film score playing behind him, heavy on castanets. The problem comes in the hours when he isn't working, when his thoughts start blowing out the open window of his brainlike pages from a blotter. Sometimes it takes a heavy paperweight to pin them down. (YPU 2)

Like so many hard-boiled detectives, Landsman is marked by life, overwhelmed by the cruelties his job makes him see. On the other hand, his job keeps him upright and prevents him from drinking too much. Another similarity Landsman has in common with hard-boiled detectives is his strong individualism (cf. Pyrhönen 189-90). After his divorce, he remained single and solved many professional cases on his own without getting corrupted (cf. YPU 10). In this way, he becomes the embodiment of ethics in a failing system.

Chabon, furthermore, includes another crucial feature of a traditional detective character: his strong ties with rationality:

As a kid in school, Landsman received good marks in physics. Newtonian mechanics, bodies at rest and in motion, actions and reactions, gravity and mass. He found more sense in physics than in anything else they ever tried to teach him. An idea like momentum, for example, the tendency of a body in motion to stay in motion. (YPU 266)

From a genre perspective, Landsman's belief in science goes back to the experimental Sherlock Holmes. In contrast to the latter, however, he knows that science does not guarantee absolute predictability of life. As every hard-boiled detective, he has to accept the fact that reason has its limits. He does not have control over his surroundings or even himself, as Landsman's fear of the dark exemplifies (cf. YPU 10). Fear cannot be rationalized and disproves any potential god-like position of the detective character Landsman.

The ties of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* with hard-boiled fiction that have been illustrated so far are the personal physical involvement in the detective's cases, an appropriated belief in rationality, and an individualist outlook on life. The relativity of reason can, on the other hand,

be viewed as a hint of postmodern aesthetics. Clear indications of a postmodern detective story are, for instance, Landsman's failure to save his sister and, more importantly, prevent the attack on the Dome of Rock by an Orthodox-Jewish sect, the Verbovers. This failure also sets him apart from classical hard-boiled sleuth, as they would despite all losses, succeed in solving the main case:

The hilltop in Jerusalem, crowded with alleys and houses. The broad empty mesa of paving stone. The jagged jawbone of burnt teeth. The magnificent plume of black smoke. And at the bottom the legend, in blue letters, AT LAST! These posters will sell at the stationers' for between ten dollars and \$ 12,95.

"Sweet God. What are they doing? What did they do?"

There is a lot that shocks Landsman about the image on the television screen, but the most shocking thing of all is simply that an object eight thousand miles away has been acted upon by Jews from Sitka. It seems to violate some fundamental law of the emotional physics that Landsman understands. (YPU 358-59)

The Verbovers' attack on the Dome of Rock, hence, defies Landsman's understanding of the mechanisms of the world or "emotional physics". He believes that the Jews of Sitka have a marginal position within the global context, which makes the crime itself incomprehensible to him. Despite its impact, the crime is ridiculed at the same time, literally transformed into a poster motif. The world of Sitka is, hence, based on contradictions: things or people can be emotional and rational as well as minor and major. That makes the act of categorization impossible for the detective. Instead, everything appears to be in limbo, as the unresolved issue of Sitka at the end of the novel illustrates (cf. YPU 411). In this way, the ethnic detective is left in a double identity crisis: the lack of professional skills and the unknown future of his ethnic group.

The postmodern trait of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* becomes apparent in the interplay of the pre-dominant genres influencing the novel: the already discussed hard-boiled fiction and the dystopia. In an alternative reality, Chabon draws the picture of a dysfunctional Jewish district that is going to lose its political entitlement (cf. YPU 7). The temporary relief from exile and its foreseeable end is the breeding ground for a superstitious sect that tries to force the coming of the Messiah and, thus, the salvation of the Jewish people. The superstitious orientation of the criminals could, at first sight, be understood as the mere fight of a reasonable cop versus unreasonable criminals. However, in the end, it is Landsman, who feels the absence of the

Messiah and the need for salvation the strongest: “For days Landsman has been thinking that he missed his chance with Mendel Shpilman [...] without even realizing, he blew his one shot at something like redemption. But there is no Messiah of Sitka. Landsman has no home, no future, no fate but Bina.” (cf. YPU 410-11). His environment influences the detective. He is much more in need of a superior metaphysical entity.

One could say that the hard-boiled detective gives in to the alternative world, the dystopia, which a real hard-boiled detective as the epitome of righteousness in a corrupt world would never do. In other words, the two genres Chabon employs are designed to be in confrontation with each other: the dystopia provides the background, whereas the hard-boiled fiction functions as a familiar focus. Landsman presents many familiar features of the hard-boiled conventions to generate the reader’s trust and, thus, furthers the anticipation of a somehow successful ending, but the detective does not prevail. Instead, certain lines of narration like the future of the Jewish people or of Landsman and his ex-wife Bina remain unknown. The collision of two genres does not have a winner. Rather, the result is a hybrid form of different genre traditions.²⁹

Gordon Bigelow exemplifies Chabon’s excellence in pastiche in many of his works (cf. 317-318). *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* is among them, as it very well captures the character, atmosphere, and narrative style of hard-boiled fiction. Bigelow, furthermore, points out that “Chabon continues to explore this boundary [of literary production, aesthetics, and moral philosophy] by applying the verbal intensity of literary fiction, trailing its associations with English poetry and classical rhetoric, to the market-driven forms of pop culture, and by attaching the philosophical engines of literary theory to the hybrid chassis of pulp.” (318). Chabon’s

²⁹ In contrast to me, Mike Witcombe argues in his essay “A Comedy of Eruvs” that it is Chabon’s integration of Jewish aspects of identity, which makes *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* a success (cf. Witcombe 31). He states that the genre of hard-boiled fiction “may enhance a reader’s understanding of Chabon’s wit, but it is not a prerequisite [...]” (cf. *ibid.*). I, on the other hand, hold the opinion that it is the interplay of US-American genre traditions and Jewish-American culture, which makes the novel an artistic success. The aspect of suspension plays a role not only on the content level (return of Sitka) but also on the genre level (hard-boiled fiction and dystopia) and on the language-aesthetic level (Chabon’s Yiddish as a mixture of actual Yiddish and English (see following chapter)). Because of this extensive presence, a single success factor appears unlikely.

pastiche and the formation of hybrid forms are more than a mere transgression of conventions. They are also an act of creation.

The Yiddish Policemen's Union and Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* have the factor of pastiche in common. Both novels display traditional traits of either hard-boiled or the classical detective fiction and undermine the strictness of the generic form by creating a hybrid form or by degrading the genre to a mere accumulation of genre requirements (cf. Gibson 70; Bigelow 317-18). The crime fiction genre becomes a simple means of aesthetic deliberation.

As mentioned before, Chabon creates sympathy for his detective protagonist by using elements of the hard-boiled tradition. Nevertheless, this sympathy has a very special tinge: it is ultimately nostalgic. While Landsman is increasingly unsuccessfully trying to gain the upper hand over his corrupt and dystopian environment and thus increasingly loses the status of an almost romantic and individualistic hero, the disappointment of readers whose expectations of the hard-boiled genre have not been fulfilled is increasing. Similar to Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* with its references to the classic detective novel, a feeling of loss of an ideal character develops in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, which is significantly connected with the basic US-American value of individuality. It is not surprising, therefore, that this very connection between hard-boiled crime fiction and nostalgic transfiguration will be taken up again in the context of the analysis in the following sub-chapter on national discourse in Jewish-American crime novels. The nostalgically heightened sympathy for Landsman as a representative of hard-boiled fiction is further enhanced by the Jewish diaspora's nostalgic transfiguration. The nostalgia for the Jewish diaspora on the content level is analogous to the nostalgia on the genre level due to Chabon's pastiche technique.

The question of Jewish diaspora is also central in Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock*. The Jewish tradition and Roth's relationship with it plays a role in quite a few of his novels, e.g., *Portnoy's Complaint* and *The Counterlife*. Morris Dickstein sees him as a member of a "black humor

generation, rebelling against the constraints of the ghetto – they were too young to know any real ghetto – but against the mental ghetto of Jewish morality and Jewish family.” (64). The Jewish-American community, however, often criticizes Roth’s view as supporting antisemitism. The situation becomes even more intricate in *Operation Shylock*. David Gooblar rightfully states that the subtitle *A Confession* and the preface, create the illusion of non-fictionality while large parts of the main text appear too twisted and too fantastic to be true (cf. 45). However, the mere announcement of a non-fictional text, an autobiography with the accompanying first-person narrator to be exact, triggers the readers’ expectations and Roth is willing to support that with well-known facts about himself: the protagonist of the book is called Philip Roth, he went through a mental breakdown recently, and, of course, he is a famous author. Consequently, Roth purposefully blurs the boundary between reality and fiction (cf. Safer 161 – 64).

The subtitle *A Confession* already puts *Operation Shylock* in a tradition reaching back to Augustinus *Confessiones*, widely named as the first autobiography in the Western hemisphere. Literary informed readers surely expect a narration of Roth’s life progressing from a moral, emotional, and or psychological low point to some enlightenment and a change of lifestyle.

Additionally, the subtitle indicates a relation to the Catholic custom of confession, which, according to Michel Foucault, is used as a means of individualization. In his *History of Sexuality – The Will to Knowledge* Foucault exemplifies the invisible power structures inherent in the confession custom:

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, “demands” only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation. Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom: traditional themes in philosophy, which a “political history of truth” would have to overturn by showing that truth is not by nature free – nor error servile – but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. The confession is an example of this. (60)

Transgressive (sexual) behavior was tried to be corrected by talking about it, as individuals were equated to their behavioral patterns. Expressing their sin granted them relief and a sense of freedom based on the utterance of truth. Michel Foucault sees this process as the basis of our

contemporary discourse on sexuality: Talking about it gives us a feeling of self-determination and freedom while at the same time obscuring power relations (cf. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 60). The structural aspects of Foucault's confession theory can, without a problem, be applied to other contexts of individualization. He developed it within the framework of sexuality, but the confession is not aimed at sexuality alone. Rather, it includes any socially transgressive behavior.

At first, Roth seems to follow the conventions of autobiography and confession by providing his readers with information on a severe identity crisis based on wrong medication and hints of a schizophrenic tendency due to his *alter ego*.³⁰ Ultimately, he does, however, not keep the promise he made in the preface. He remains silent about the episode of his secret mission for the Mossad and as opaque as the murderer Dyer in Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, whose secret was also left unsolved. The culmination point of his dealings with Jewish culture is omitted (cf. OS 357). Therefore, his confession is incomplete, or as Tamas Dobozy puts it: "Roth's confession is a confession that confessions are impossible" (50). In the light of the afore elaborated theory by Michel Foucault, Roth evades the standardized individualization process by the omission of his espionage adventure, which was in the preface announced to be the main purpose of writing the novel. By not publishing it and by not publicly confessing, Philip Roth withdraws from the arena of public individualization.

Thus, the subtitle has a double function: On the one hand, it is connected to the Catholic confession. On the other hand, it furthers assumptions of reading a non-fictional text because of its relation to the tradition of autobiography. Due to its playfulness with the genre conventions of autobiography *Operation Shylock* could also be called a meta-autobiography, a genre that arose during the 20th century (cf. Baumann and Neuhausen 19).

³⁰ Roth, Philip. "Operation Shylock", 25. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "OS".

This subgenre is defined by the display of narrative strategies at the core of autobiographical writing (cf. A. Nünning “Meta-Autobiographien” 54). The life story of a person is no longer an actual account but a narrative designed according to the conventions of autobiography (cf. *ibid* 44). Consequently, this subgenre undermines the core element of autobiography – the unity of author, narrator, and protagonist (cf. Baumann and Neuhausen 19). By uncovering the influence of narratives on a person’s identity formation process, meta-autobiographies highlight the fragmentation of subjects (cf. A. Nünning “Meta-Autobiographien” 64). The dissolution of the unit of author, narrator, and protagonist becomes clear in *Operation Shylock*, through, among other things, the deletion of the secret service mission announced by the first-person narrator. Thus Roth draws attention to the different roles of author and narrator. The combination of the Catholic confession and the sub-genre of meta-autobiography illustrates Roth’s awareness of contemporary individualization processes as well as his ambiguous stance against them.

Just like Ackroyd in *Hawksmoor*, Roth uses the *doppelgänger* motif to destabilize the notion of identity. The fictional Philip Roth is confronted with an impostor who propagates anti-Zionist ideas in Israel. His project includes the Jewish return to the diaspora in Europe (cf. OS 40-43). He argues that resistance to his proposal would lead to the destruction of the Jewish state and the complete annihilation of the Jewish people.³¹ Appalled by this behavior, the fictional Philip Roth travels to Israel to confront his *alter ego* with the identity theft of which he does not know whether it's a crime: “I don't even know what it is an impostor can be charged with. Invasion of privacy? Defamation of character? Reckless conduct? Is impersonation an actionable offense?”

³¹ In his essay “Double-Consciousness and the Jewish Heart of Darkness” Brett Kaplan addresses the motif of the *doppelgänger* in *Operation Shylock* exclusively. Among other things, he points out that this motif is mainly present in Holocaust literature: “Within Holocaust literature and testimony the thematic of the double works to help some survivors understand the bifurcation between the pain of the past and the ordinariness of the present – and for some survivors the double means that the real one is the one in the camps and the dream-self is the one who is here, in the present.” (136)

(OS 34).³² In the following analysis, it will become apparent that Roth's insecurity about identity theft as a crime is not based on a lack of legal consequences. The factor in question is identity, itself, as the mere existence of "the double renders it impossible to construct the subject through the first-person pronoun." (Safer 751). This crisis is a crucial element in postmodern crime fiction and, therefore, *Operation Shylock* fulfills at least this one requirement.

The fictional Roth's identity crisis has to be seen in the context of writing, (meta-)autobiographical writing to be precise. The underlying assumption of autobiography is the creation of identity through writing by hindsight. What happens to an author who always used to define his characters according to other people's identities when his authorial autonomy is threatened by the arrival of an *alter ego*, another author figure? His *doppelgänger* challenges him: "You look at me as though I'm fawning, but it's the truth - I know your books inside out. I know your *life* inside out. I could be your biographer. I *am* your biographer." (OS 73). The *alter ego's* access to the fictional Roth's identity is the latter's works. In his logic, the reading process of all the books guarantees a complete understanding of Roth's life, making the reader, in turn, the best biographer. Two questions arise due to this assumption that are also interesting in the actual Roth's overall work: Firstly, how well can one know a person's life actually to become his or her biographer? Moreover, how much do authors reveal in their texts about their real life? Of course, the central component to both questions is the author, a role that Roth fulfilled so nonchalantly in his former books:

In fact, the very threat of Pipik's plot stems from his claim that he is telling the truth, that he is Philip Roth — this is precisely the root of Philip's fears; he worries that people will believe these claims, and confuse the "Diasporist" with the author. Just as the claim to, or appearance of, non-fiction opens up the possibilities that Deception could expose Philip's wife, that The Facts could expose "May Aldridge," and that Patrimony could expose Herman Roth, Pipik's assertion that his narrative is nothing other than the truth threatens to expose, to implicate, and to invade the privacy of Philip Roth. Roth, who, in his past three books, had examined the consequences of this sort of exposure from the position of the writer, now finds himself on the other side of the conflict, powerless to determine the way his story is told. His concerns, at first, are clear. (Gooblar 46-47)

³² In her analysis of *Operation Shylock*, Elaine Safer considers, among other things, the aspect of intertextual references in relation to the motif of the doppelgänger. Thus Roth refers to Dostoevsky's *The Double* and Gogol's *The Nose*. According to Safer, the obsessive need of the protagonists of these two works to either convict his double or win back his nose also underscores the protagonist Roth's urge to constrain his double. On the one hand, this proves the prevalence of the identity theme in world literature, and on the other hand, according to Safer, Roth adapts it to the postmodern context (cf. 162-64).

As David Gooblar emphasizes, the fictional Philip Roth finds himself confronted by a change of situation, because the appearance of Moishe Pipik, his *alter ego*, puts Roth in a state of powerlessness. He is no longer the one who assigns motif, intention, or desires to a person or a character in his books. Instead, his life is taken over by his reader, and he has “to acknowledge the limits of his artistic stance.” (Levy 68).

This conversion of the power relationship between author and reader can easily be analyzed within the light of narrative theories. In Roland Barthes’ major work, *The Death of the Author*, he proclaims a limited authorial influence on his or her work and, even more importantly, the rise of the readers as a factor in a work’s reception (cf. 148). Moishe Pipik utters his claim to define the author’s identity. He emancipated himself and turned the traditional literary power relationship around. The readers’ emancipation from a mere vessel which receives authorial meaning to an active meaning-constructing entity equals the castration of the author’s omnipotent powers:

In patriarchal Western culture, therefore, the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen’s power, like his penis power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim. (Gilbert and Gubar 6)

By denying Roth his unique creative powers, Pipik metaphorically turns him into a eunuch or threatens to do so. Consequently, the relation between Roth and Pipik is not only a struggle for sanity but also (creative) potency. It is marked by sexual competition. The winner will exclusively be able to lay claim to posterity.

It remains unknown who the winner, though. Towards the end of the novel, the fictional Philip Roth resorts to writing a fake letter that illustrates his ongoing fascination for Pipik. He imagines how the *femme fatale*, Jinx, engages in post-mortem sex with Pipik, who supposedly succumbed to cancer. This disease made it necessary to amputate Pipik's penis and replace it with a mechanical version. This implant, however, appears to survive its owner's death:

For two days, wearing her nightgown and watching CNN, Wanda remained beside the body in the bed. She comforted him with the news that no Israeli strike of any sort was going to be launched in retaliation; she told him about the Patriot missile installations, manned by American servicemen, protecting the Israelis against re-newed attacks; she described to him the

precautions that the Israelis were taking against the threat of Iraqi germ warfare - "They are not slaughtering Jews," she assured him, "they're going to be all right!" But no encouragement she was able to offer could bring him back to life. In the hope that it might resuscitate the rest of him, she made love to his penile implant. Oddly enough, it was the only bodily part, she wrote to me, "that looked alive and felt like him." She confessed without so much as a trace of shame that the erection that had outlived him had given her solace for two days and two nights. "We fucked and we talked and we watched TV. It was like the good old days." And then she added, "Anybody who thinks that was wrong doesn't know what real love is. It was far nuttier as a little Catholic taking Communion than having sex with my dead Jew." (OS 365-366)

Taking Roth's fascination for Pipik as well as the latter's afterlife in the form of his penile implant into consideration, one has to conclude that the power clash between the author and his reader has no definite outcome. Pipik is "uninterpretable" (Shostak 746). On the one hand, Roth affirms his authorial powers by omitting his mission for the Mossad. On the other hand, Roth imagines Pipik's post-mortem erection, which symbolizes how some of Roth's omnipotent authorial powers shifted. Roth can no longer write without imagining his reader and his part in the creative process. The line between the author and the reader in their respective roles has been blurred. They are both necessary to lay claim to the posterity of a piece of art.

Looking at the author-reader relationship from the angle of crime fiction exemplifies once again why *Operation Shylock* has to be labeled a postmodern crime novel. As elaborated in the chapter on the crime fiction genre, the criminal's quality is often analog to the author's (leaving signs/writing), and the detective's quality resembles the reader's (analyzing signs). Philip Roth goes one step further, though, and illustrates the exchangeability of these roles. Pipik's original job is that of the detective, and he becomes a criminal by taking on Roth's identity. He used to be Roth's reader and now his biographer. Roth faces an impostor and becomes a detective, while at the same time giving up some of his authorial powers. In the same way, as one can assume the role of the reader or an author, one can turn into a detective or a criminal. Roles are not fixed.

The permeability of the roles of the detective and the murderer are another commonplace in postmodern crime fiction. In Paul Auster's *The City of Glass*, for example, one of the detectives looking for the original language of humanity turns into the abuser of his child (cf. 20). Both examples are tied to the readability of the world: Just as in Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock*, the contemporary world makes the analysis of signs impossible. The blurring of a transparent role

system is another result of this arbitrariness that prevents simple interpretation. Consequently, the concept of identity is shaken.

As mentioned before, Philip Roth takes a stance against the contemporary individualization process. It becomes evident in his usage of many elements that are generally said to create individuality. One of these is the photograph which is used in the Demjanjuk trial in the novel:

They [i.e. Demjanjuk's lawyers] claimed only that Demjanjuk and Ivan the Terrible were two different people and that the evidence to the contrary was all worthless. They argued that the identity photo spread assembled for the Treblinka survivors by the Israeli police was totally unreliable because of the faulty and amateurish procedures used, procedures that had led or manipulated the survivors into mistakenly identifying Demjanjuk as Ivan. They argued that the sole piece of documentary evidence, an identity card from Trawniki, an SS training camp for Treblinka guards - a card bearing Demjanjuk's name, signature, personal details, and a photograph - was a KGB forgery designed to discredit Ukrainian nationalists by marking one of them as this savage war criminal. (OS 49-50)

Demjanjuk's lawyers insist on the forgery of the photo, whereas the prosecutors traditionally use the picture as evidence of guilt. These two arguments echo the arguments that were brought up in the real re-trial against Demjanjuk in 1993 in Israel during which the prior death sentence was renounced due to mistaken identity (cf. Kulish A6). They underline the two essential qualities that Susan Sontag assigns to a photograph:

Photographs had the advantage of uniting two contradictory features. Their credentials of objectivity were inbuilt. Yet they always had, necessarily, a point of view. They were a record of the real – incontrovertible, as no verbal account, however impartial, could be – since a machine was doing the recording. And they bore witness to the real – since a person had been there to take them. [...]

This sleight of hand allows photographs to be both objective record and personal testimony, both a faithful copy or transcription of an actual moment of reality and an interpretation of that reality – a feat literature has long aspired to but could never attain in this literal sense. (26)

So, on the one hand, the photograph is something subjective, a piece of art. On the other hand, it complies with the rules of objectivity. It is, hence, a hybrid of objectivity and subjectivity. Demjanjuk's photo is a paradigm for Roth's question of clarifying identity. His life is on the line, while he might also be responsible for murdering Jews in the concentration camp in Sobibor. Justice needs to be served without collateral damage. It is hardly achieved without establishing identity, though.

Roth uses the photograph to emphasize the fictionality of reality once again. Just as non-fictional texts are not free of creative shaping, the photograph is also shot by someone from his or her perspective with the technological equipment available. Philip Roth is far less concerned with

Demjanjuk's guilt than with the false requirements of our judicial system, which falls prey to humans' wrong understanding of reality. Autobiography and photography may pretend to be directly related to reality, but by having a closer look, these ties are being cut due to their subjective origin. Kate McLoughlin also stresses the unresolved paradox of identity formation in her analysis of *Operation Shylock*. She views Demjanjuk's state as being Ivan the Terrible and not being Ivan the Terrible as a logical predicament "[... that] requires a new kind of logic, or even a suspension of logic." (123). To her mind, this paradoxical aesthetic can be transferred to potential handling of the Holocaust that should neither be mystified nor reduced to mere facts (cf. 127).³³

Another aspect that became even more prominent than the photograph in determining identity or the perpetrator in a trial is the genetic test. Therefore, it is not surprising that the fictional Philip Roth tries to find a sample of his impostor and the latter's mistress, Jinx:

A kinked spiral of dark pubic hair about the size of a fourteen-point ampersand adhered to the enamel rim of the bowl. I tweezed it loose between two fingernails and deposited it into a hotel envelope from the stationary drawer of the desk. I searched the bathroom floor for a strand of her hair, an eyelash, a snippet of toenail, but the tiles had been swept spotlessly clean - nothing there either. (OS 252)

The fictional Roth finds a pubic hair of his *alter ego*, but he does not get a hold of Jinx, which illustrates the limits of science. Without a sample, identity cannot be determined. The genetic code is partially undermined and stripped of its omnipotence.

While the genetic code is one of the most modern ways of asserting identity, Roth does not neglect the traditional ways, either. Central to the fictional Roth's relationship with his *alter ego*, whose real name he does not know, is the ritual of name-giving. Consistent with the Jewish-Christian tradition he assumes that the knowledge of his *doppelgänger's* name will grant him relief or even power over him:

³³ In contrast to my opinion, Sophia Lehmann views Demjanjuk's identity in a different light. She reaches the conclusion that Roth advocates for the former's release, as he is "essentially a different person because of the passage of time." (88). She bases this assumption on her premise that Roth's history concept implies that the past should not affect the present (cf. *ibid.*). Kate McLoughlin's analysis of Demjanjuk and her understanding of history are ultimately more convincing than Lehmann's. A past that is not fully secured and the subsequent need to deal with it continuously cannot be equated with a complete detachment from the past. That also applies to the release of war criminals.

I was being confounded by somebody who, very simply, was not me, who had nothing to do with me, who called himself by my name but had no relation to me. To think of him as a *double* was to bestow on him the destructive status of a famously real and prestigious archetype, and *impostor* was no improvement; it only intensified the menace I'd conceded with the Dostoyevskyan epithet by imputing professional credentials in duplicitous cunning to this ... this what? Name him. Yes, name him now! Because aptly naming him is knowing him for what he is and isn't, exorcising and possessing him all at once. Name him! In his pseudonymity is his anonymity, and it's that anonymity that's killing him. Name him! Which? is this preposterous proxy? Nothing like namelessness to make a mystery of nothing. *Name him!* If I alone am Philip Roth, he is who?

Moishe Pipik. (OS 115)

The urge to name has two different sources. The first one is the fictional Roth's awareness of the literary tradition of the *doppelgänger* motif and his destructive powers (cf. Shostak 730). Giving the *alter ego* a different name would make him a different person and undo the curse on Roth. The second one is his view on name-giving: In the Jewish-Christian tradition, the giving or veiling of names is a vital component, e.g., Adam's naming of the animals in paradise making him their superior. Another example related to the issue of names that is more interesting in the context of naming Moishe Pipik is the Jewish rule of not saying God's name. This secrecy puts Jews in the position of non-understanding and renders them powerless in comparison. Accordingly, the fictional Roth wants to change the power relation between him and his double and gain control over his *doppelgänger* by knowing his name or at least baptizing him.

This role of names in Jewish-Christian tradition is another re-occurring component in postmodern crime fiction, whose fundamental interest lies in the false decoding of crimes. In Jorge Borges' *Death and the Compass* and Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, the committed crimes are linked to the search for God's real name and his plan for humanity. Neither of the detectives can resolve the enigma, and both die in their attempt to do so (cf. Borges 111-123; Eco 622-23). The fictional Philip Roth may not die in his struggle to gain control over his *doppelgänger*. Nevertheless, as said before, he does not free himself from Pipik's influence, either.

The name Moishe Pipik, itself, deserves closer scrutiny:

Moishe Pipik! The derogatory, joking nonsense name that translates literally to Moses Bellybutton and that probably connoted something slightly different to every Jewish family on our block - the little guy who wants to be a big shot, the kid who pisses in his pants, the someone who is a bit ridiculous, a bit funny, a bit childish the comical shadow alongside whom we had all grown up, that little folkloric fall guy whose surname designated the *thing* that for most children was neither here nor there, neither a part nor an orifice, somehow a concavity and a convexity both, something neither upper nor lower, neither lewd nor entirely respectable either, a short enough distance from the genitals to make it suspiciously intriguing and yet,

despite this teasing proximity, this conspicuously puzzling centrality, as meaningless as it was without function [...] (OS 116)

The choice of name for the *doppelgänger* is very telling. The fictional Philip Roth moves his *doppelgänger* from a sublime, almost metaphysical realm to the tangible Jewish-American subculture. In other words, he makes his *alter ego* a commoner: Not any commoner, but a commoner who is not taken seriously due to his non-functionality.

Timothy Parrish rightfully argues that the choice of name also mirrors Philip Roth's relation with Jewish culture:

Staring at the sleeping Pipik, he imagines Pipik dead. Part wish, it is another reminder that Roth cannot suppress the fear that his double's appearance will require his own death. Pipik is an absence, a blank space capable of absorbing Roth's identity into his own nullity. On the other hand, what he told his double about the meaning of Pipik is also true. This blank can be turned into anything; it is "protean, a hundred different things" (185). From this perspective, the name's associations with Moses and the term "belly button" are significant. The navel marks the space once occupied by the umbilical cord, which tied one to the womb. Once the cord is cut, though, one's self must find its way among other selves. When placed in conjunction with the name "Moses," "belly button" at once evokes the origin of Jewish identity and its loss. Pipik therefore represents to Roth the necessary cutting of the cable that enables the invention of his own identity. On this view, "Moses" is transformed from a figure of austere purpose and godly mission into a trickster whose natural habitat has become the phone line between Newark and Danbury. If this myth can be interpreted to explain how Jews managed to move from Israel to Europe to America, then it also becomes as well Roth's myth of how he ventures to Israel to repossess himself as a Jewish American author. (593)

The missing umbilical cord as a metaphor for the lost connection with Jewish tradition in the constant diaspora is significant. It visualizes the assumption of selfhood, the need for adaptation, and the loss of cultural roots. (cf. also Royal 84 – 85). In naming his *alter ego* Moishe Pipik, the fictional Philip Roth tries to reconnect not with Judaism but with every day Jewish-American culture

On a generic level, *Operation Shylock* appears to be a potpourri of different subgenres and elements of crime fiction. The fictional Philip Roth's hint at his secret mission for the Mossad makes *Operation Shylock* sound like a spy novel. On the other hand, his interest in Demjanjuk's case furthers assumptions of a detective fiction set in court. Lastly, Roth investigates various elements of importance in any crime fiction: names, photographs, and DNA, all of which are necessary to determine a culprit's identity in the genre. Roth, however, undermines all these aspects. The secret mission is never set in words, Demjanjuk never found guilty or not guilty, and the identification parameters fall short. Consequently, Roth deconstructs these aspects to

illustrate his fragmented identity model, which appears to be coherent in this first step of the analysis, as he undoes any generic convention of traditional crime fiction.

The question of identity in relation to the factuality and/or fictionality of reality is also an intrinsic part of Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*. This text is widely seen and sold as one of Auster's non-fictional or autobiographical works despite its apparent ties to fictional writing in the form of authorial omissions and other hints of authorial craftsmanship, which are clear indicators for *The Invention of Solitude* being a meta-autobiography despite its stylistic difference from *Operation Shylock*. Brendan Martin shares the opinion that *The Invention of Solitude* is a playful interpretation of autobiography, which "removes the mantle of authorial control." (11). A considerable amount of critical analysis on *The Invention of Solitude* concerns itself the generic categorization of Auster's novel. The labels range from memoir, philosophical treaty, and anti-detective story (cf. Hau 200) to diary and essay (cf. Vallone 305) or to the genre of the fairy tale (cf. Barrett 89). Overall, critics agree that *The Invention of Solitude* transgresses mere genre boundaries and cannot be clearly defined. Therefore, *The Invention of Solitude* will be a grateful contribution to the generic debate on the relation of reality and fiction. In contrast to the other novels, it provides a varying understanding of crime, a crime based on the violence of absence.

At the beginning of Auster's deliberation on absence stands for the death of his father:

In some strange way, I was remarkably prepared to accept his death, in spite of its suddenness. What disturbed me was something else, something unrelated to death or my response to it: the realization that my father had left no traces. [...] Devoid of passion, either for a thing, a person, or an idea, incapable or unwilling to reveal himself under any circumstances, he had managed to keep himself at a distance from life, to avoid immersion in the quick of things. He ate, he went to work, he had friends, he played tennis, and yet for all that he was not there. In the deepest, most unalterable sense, he was an invisible man. Invisible to others, and most likely invisible to himself as well. If, while he was alive, I kept looking for him, kept trying to find the father who was not there, now that he is dead. I still feel as though I must go on looking for him. Death has not changed anything. The only difference is that I have run out of time.³⁴

It is not his father's death that shocks Auster the most, but the nothingness his father leaves behind. This void is created not due to the severing of close bonds but because of the impossible

³⁴ Auster, Paul. "The Invention of Solitude", 6-7. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "IS".

understanding between father and son. Auster diagnoses his father's reluctance to live and to engage with his surroundings emotionally. The father's death is the initiation of Auster's hunt for clues.³⁵ It will take him to the violent past of his own family, of the Jewish people and continuously lead him to the context of human solitude. Thence, the topics of Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* are just as in the other postmodern crime fictions human atrocities mixed with a philosophical analysis of the postmodern condition. The difference is the narrative mode. Structurally, *The Invention of Solitude* consists of two parts: The first part focuses on the death of the father and is called *The Invisible Man*. The second part, named *The Book of Memory*, shifts its focal point to Auster's relationship with his son.

To fully understand the text's narrative mode, one must have a closer look at a medium Auster dissects thoroughly in *The Invention of Solitude* – the photograph. As mentioned before, the photo carries two very different qualities that should be kept in mind: the claim for truth and the subjective angle of art. Auster begins his meta-autobiographical text, not with a word but with a photograph of a family with a mother and five children. The age of the children ranges from infancy to maybe early puberty. In their faces, one can see awe, disregard, or boredom. It is not a picture of happy family life. The absence of the father is significant for the ensuing text. One might argue that he is the photographer and is, thus, missing. But that is speculation. The fact is that the non-fiction starts with the absence of the father on the visual and textual level.

Auster later returns to the theme of family portraits and shares his thoughts on them:

One very big album, bound in expensive leather with a gold-stamped title on the cover – This is Our Life: The Austers – was totally blank inside. Someone, probably my mother had once gone to the trouble of ordering this album, but no one had ever bothered to fill it.

Back home, I pored over these pictures with a fascination bordering on mania. I found them irresistible, precious, the equivalent of holy relics. It seemed that they could tell me things I had never known before, reveal some previously hidden truth, and I studied each one intensely, absorbing the least detail, the most insignificant shadow, until all the images had become a part of me. I wanted nothing to be lost. [...]

Discovering these photographs was important to me because they seemed to reaffirm my father's physical presence in the

³⁵ Galia Benziman illustrates in her essay on authorial characters in Auster's work that the latter has been preoccupied with two central topoi: "The image of the writing self and the motif of the fatherless son." (463) She views the act of writing in *The Invention of Solitude* as "both an act of mourning and an ars poetica of self-creation, in which the writer laments his fragile, unstable status as his father's child and struggles to give birth to himself as a newborn writer." (464).

world, to give me the illusion that he was still there. The fact that many of these pictures were ones I had never seen before, especially the ones of his youth, gave me the odd sensation that I was meeting him for the first time, that a part of him was only just beginning to exist. I had lost my father. But at the same time, I had also found him. As long as I kept these pictures before my eyes, as long as I continued to study them with my complete attention, it was as though he were still alive, even in death. Or if not alive, at least not dead. Or rather, somehow suspended, locked in a universe that had nothing to do with death, in which death could never make an entrance. (IS 14-15)

Of course, Auster hints at the commemorative powers of the photo, but his emphasis on the visual experience of actually seeing his father unveils that the reader cannot see him at all. While we were able to view the rest of the Auster family at the beginning of the book, Auster withholds the opportunity of looking at his father. The father remains a textual entity and, in this way, absent for the reader. The only way we access him is through reading Auster's text. Thus, we partially share Auster's experience of his father's absence. He physically eludes us – at first.

Later on, in the text, Auster finally seems to grant the reader the wish of seeing the absent father figure. At length, he describes a trick photography that can be found on the cover of the Faber edition of 2005:

From a bag of loose pictures: a trick photograph taken in an Atlantic City studio sometime during the Forties. There are several of him sitting around a table, each image shot from a different angle, so that at first you think it must be a group of several different men. Because of the gloom that surrounds them, because of the utter stillness of their poses, it looks as if they have gathered there a conduct to a seance. And then, as you study the picture, you begin to realize that all these men are the same man. The seance becomes a real seance, and it is as if he has come there only to invoke himself, to bring himself back from the dead, as if, by multiplying himself, he had inadvertently made by himself disappear. There are five of him there, and yet the nature of the trick photography denies the possibility of eye contact among the various selves. Each one is condemned to go on staring into space, as if under gaze of the others, but seeing nothing, never able to see anything. It is a picture of death, a portrait of an invisible man. (IS 33)

The photograph Auster provides us with the fragmentation of his father, a trick. It undermines the traditional quality of objectivity in photos (cf. Peacock 23). Instead, it becomes something designed, a piece of art, and points to the photographer who no longer remains a neutral entity. The father in the picture is visible and invisible at the same time. He is visually present so often that the observer is unable to determine the 'real' father and, therefore, starts doubting his authenticity. Thus, the photo matches Paul Auster's perception of his father the best: present and non-present or, as James Peacock puts it, "alive and dead." (20). In choosing this particular photograph, Auster underscores the subjectivity of photos as well as their personal usage afterward. As Susan Sontag points out, the display of pictures always serves a specific purpose, a subtext that imbues them with meaning:

To the militant, identity is everything. And all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions. During the fighting between Serbs and Croats at the beginning of the recent Balkan wars, the same photographs of children killed in the shelling of a village were passed around at both Serb and Croat propaganda briefings. Alter the caption, and the children's death could be used and reused. (10)

The same is true for the trick photograph. Without Auster describing and analyzing it, the cover photo would remain a trick photograph. However, Auster's statement makes this photo the visualization of his ever-present, ever absent father, or as Lauren Barrett stated: "Imagination renders them [i.e., the photos] meaningful." (101). The trick photography does not make one marvel at the abilities of technology but makes one mistrust the wholeness of an individual, makes one think about what is captured in the photo.

These two passages in which Auster discusses photography disclose its illusion either by unveiling its memory function or photos' inherent subjectivity. Therefore, either way, a photo is far from being neutral or objective despite its said characteristic of being realistic. In one of his later fictional works *Man in the Dark*, Auster elaborates on a slightly different subject: a videotape which is so real that every American citizen hopes it to be fictional.

Mercifully, there is no sound.

Mercifully, a hood has been placed over his head.

He is sitting in a chair with his hands tied behind him, motionless, making no attempt to break free. The four men from the previous video are standing around him, three holding rifles, the fourth with a hatchet in his right hand. Without any signal or gesture from the others, the fourth man suddenly brings the blade down on Titus's neck. Titus jerks to his right, his upper body squirms, and then blood starts seeping through the hood. Another blow from the hatchet, this one from behind. Titus's head lolls forward, and by now blood is streaming down all over him. More blows: front and back, right and left, the dull blade chopping long past the moment of death.

One of the men puts down his rifle and clamps Titus's head firmly in his two hands to prop it up as the man with the hatchet continues to go about his business. They are both covered in blood.

When the head is finally severed from the body, the executioner lets the hatchet fall to the floor. The other man removes the hood from Titus's head, and then a third man takes hold of Titus's long red hair and carries the head closer to the camera. Blood is dripping everywhere. Titus is no longer quite human. He has become the idea of a person, a person and not a person, a dead bleeding thing: *une nature morte*.

The man holding the head backs away from the camera, and a fourth man approaches with a knife. One by one, working with great speed and precision, he stabs out the boy's eyes.

The camera rolls for a few more seconds, and then the screen goes black.

Impossible to know how long it has lasted. Fifteen minutes. A thousand years. (Auster, *Man in the Dark* 175-176)

The real-life videos of US-captives in Afghanistan that were the templates for this fictional description struck the American public in its core. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are the most medialized ever. The embedded correspondents and the presentation of heroic moments gave the American public the impression of being close to the actual events despite the massive governmental manipulation behind the scenes (cf. Butler, *Prekarious Life* 148). Viewing one of

their landsmen being decapitated on tape, however, turned the political tactics around, as the Taliban used the very same media the US did to display its superiority. The person in the picture was not of a different ethnic descent but of American, which undid the established hierarchy of acceptably displayed violence:

Thus postcolonial Africa exists in the consciousness of the general public in the rich world – besides through its sexy music – mainly as a succession of unforgettable photographs of large-eyed victims, starting with figures in the famine lands of Biafra in the late 1960s to the survivors of the genocide of nearly a million Rwandan Tutsis in 1994 and, a few years later, the children and adults whose limbs were hacked off during the program of mass terror conducted by the RUF, the rebel forces in Sierra Leone. [...] These sights carry a double message. They show a suffering that is outrageous, unjust, and should be repaired. They confirm that this is the sort of thing which happens in that place. The ubiquity of those photographs, and those horrors, cannot help but nourish belief in the inevitability of tragedy in the benighted or backward – that is, poor – parts of the world. (Sontag 71)

According to Sontag, the accepted representation of acts of violence is limited to the Global South. In the Western context, such atrocities are not to happen. The decapitations took place in Afghanistan or Iraq, but they nevertheless showed white men being killed without their affiliates being able to help them. The tapes were visual proof of American helplessness, a nick in their narrative of bringing order to the two countries due to their omnipotence.

Auster's comparison of Titus' head with *une nature morte* alludes to the traditional form of painting that was supposed to remind humanity of its mortality. In referencing this style of painting, Auster indicates a long visual tradition that reaches from paintings to photos and video images. All these types share a haunting quality.

According to Auster, there seems to be a gap between reality and pictures of all kinds (paintings, photos, videos). It can consist of the absence of elements (photos of the family) or an aestheticization of violence (decapitation). It is this gap that gives people room for imagination. Even the hyperreal act of execution can be appropriated for the arts. Depending on their context, pictures can represent moments of glory or horror. The haunting quality of images of any kind is thus co-produced by the more or less orchestrated reaction of the viewer. Images are never objective because of their placement and the emotional needs of the viewer. They serve the purpose of remembrance, glorification, or terror and create narratives.

Paul Auster uses his father's photographs in the context of *The Invention of Solitude* accordingly (cf. Barrett 101). Among all the different pictures he finds of his father (cf. IS 14-15), he chooses to print the ones that suit his perception. Therefore, the photographs are far from neutral and cannot serve as his proof. In uncovering photography's shortcomings in objectivity, Auster devalues his source. Photos are manipulated in too many ways, and even in hyper-real forms cannot rid themselves of their fictional ties.

The subjective quality of the mentioned photos questions the autobiographic and, thus, the non-fictional genre of *The Invention of Solitude*. In devaluing the realistic trait of the photos, Auster also undermines the concept of an objective reality, which appears to be unrepresentable or as Alex Blazer puts it: "the newfangled metamemoir [i.e., *The Invention of Solitude*] offers the possibility of the return and reappearance of the impossible, symbolizing the reality of subjectivity within the order of literature." (62). That, in turn, affects the concept of non-fictional writing. Factual accounts appear not to be able to exist without fictional influences.

On a generic level, it is, hence, tough to position *The Invention of Solitude*. The non-fiction shows ties to facts of Auster's life, but having a closer look, it is far less concerned with conveying the life story than with analyzing the means and the possibility of doing so. In other words, *The Invention of Solitude* provides a meta-discussion of means that are said to have a link to reality and, as a result, might prove identity. Nevertheless, these means – especially photography – fall short of their task. *The Invention of Solitude* deconstructs landmarks of identity by undermining the photographs' claimed link to reality.³⁶ The subject remains fractured while also being aware of its state (cf. McLennan 707). *The Invention of Solitude* also stretches generic boundaries by devaluing the non-fictional autobiographies. Incorporating elements from postmodern crime fiction stretches the generic regulations even further and exemplifies, just

³⁶ As Ansgar Nünning points out in his analysis of meta-autobiographies, the narrators in this genre often face the limitations of memory. (cf. 44) The narrators then have to rely on means to bridge this gap that derives from the inaccessibility of the past. Said means become part of a larger narrative, which grants only a superficial de-fragmentation of the subject.

like *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* and *Operation Shylock*, the fragility of these assumed borders. Put differently, *The Invention of Solitude* can just like *Operation Shylock* be viewed as a meta-autobiography, as it is interested in narrative constructions and the incoherent formation of identity. Looking back at his childhood Auster uncovers the means of subjective identity construction and accordingly breaches generic boundaries.

Uncovering Jewish-American Identity

To understand Jewish-Americans' issues regarding their national or ethnic belonging, one must consider several factors: the standing of the Jewish-American community in the contemporary United States, the Jewish diaspora, and the State of Israel. It is, therefore, not surprising that all three texts *The Yiddish Policemen Union*, *Operation Shylock*, and *The Invention of Solitude* thematize these aspects to a certain degree. This dissertation will illustrate the varying opinions on these issues and show how common they are in today's diverse Jewish community.

The starting point of the Jewish problem in Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen Union* is the absence of Israel.³⁷ In his alternative universe, the new Jewish state was taken over by its Arab neighbors, and the entire Israeli population was expelled (cf. YPU 17). They are allowed to settle in Alaska but only temporarily.³⁸ The district of Sitka is about to become a part of the American state again (cf. YPU 29). Thus, Chabon negates the maybe most important factor of identification in the worldwide Jewish community: Israel, a potential home-base even for the Jews living overseas. In his fiction, Jews have to face the option of never returning to Israel:

The Holy Land had never seemed more remote or unattainable than it does to a Jew of Sitka. It is on the far side of the planet,

³⁷ Michael Chabon is renowned for being a successful author of Jewish descent who often features his ethnic background. For this, he has been widely praised and criticized. (cf. D. Anderson 87) His critics complain that Chabon uses his status as an author to promote his political views, which are, in their opinion, anti-Zionist and anti-Israel. Chabon's case illustrates the dilemma of Jewish-Americans. The latter are supposed to have a relationship with Israel, which ultimately has to be positive. Otherwise, they run the risk of triggering a controversy within the Jewish-American community or even beyond. *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* also incited a debate, but reducing the novel to sheer anti-Zionist propaganda would mean overlooking its "complex treatment of the issues of Israel, Jewish identity." (D. Anderson 88)

³⁸ Adam Rovner points out that the idea of a settlement for Jewish refugees in Alaska is based on an actual proposal by Harold Jickes, Secretary of Interior, in 1939. It was, however, rejected by Congress in the following year. (cf. 144)

a wretched place ruled by men united only in their resolve to keep out all but a worn fistful of small-change Jews. For half of a century, Arab strongmen and Muslim partisans, Persians, and Egyptians, socialists and nationalists and monarchists, pan-Arabists and pan-Islamists, traditionalists and the Party of Ali, have all sunk their teeth into Eretz Yisroel and worried it down to bone and gristle. Jerusalem is a city of blood and slogans painted on the wall, severed heads on telephone poles. Observant Jews around the world have not abandoned their hope to dwell one day in the land of Zion. But Jews have been tossed out of the joint three times now - in 586 BCE, in 70 CE and with savage finality in 1948. It's hard even for the faithful not to feel a sense of discouragement about their chances of once again getting a foot in the door. (YPU 17)

With the fictional expulsion by the Arab groups, Israel has again been taken away from the Jewish people, which poses an obstacle to the fictional Zionist movement. As mentioned before, Zionism is the counterpart to the concept of nationalism in the Western hemisphere. “[It] put forward the need to create, parallel, to other peoples, a secular-nationalist Jewish identity that could also serve as an all-encompassing cultural alternative to traditional Jewish identity defined through religion.” (Schweid 23). Ultimately, factual Israel became, however, a mixture of the secular, Western claim and the religious expectations of Judaism (cf. Schweid 24).

In Chabon’s novel, the Sitka Jews are deprived of the real-life option of making *aliyah*. Instead, he celebrates a different Jewish tradition than that of the Jewish return to Israel (s. also D. Anderson 89-90). He, rather, prefers diaspora:

You have to look like Bina Gelbfish, Landsman thinks, to explain the wide range and persistence of the race. Jews who carry their homes in an old cowhide bag, on the back of a camel, in the bubble of air at the center of their brains. Jews who land on their feet, hit the ground running, ride out the vicissitudes, and make the best of what falls to hand, from Egypt to Babylon, from Minsk Gubernya to the District of Sitka. Methodical, organized, persistent, resourceful, prepared. Berko is right: Bina would flourish in any precinct house in the world. A mere redrawing of borders, a change in governments, those things can never faze a Jewess with a good supply of hand wipes in her bag. (YPU 155)

Strong Jewish traits – adaptability and resourcefulness – become only visible in a diasporic setting. Borders appear to be meaningless to Chabon, including those of a potential Jewish state, which, according to Daniel Anderson’s analysis, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* only “complicates identity formation” (90). Chabon does not see Israel as a necessity for Jewish survival, as cultural Jews are, due to their constant experience in the diaspora, equipped with qualities to thrive in every kind of environment. They do not need a nation-state because they have learned to live without its seeming protection. Hence, Chabon thinks outside the box of mere nationalism and values historical and ethnic experience. In his view, being Jewish is not determined by territory but by a state of mind.

In Chabon's opinion, Jewish identity is not determined by religion, either (cf. Myers 588). On the contrary, a group of Orthodox Jews, the Verbovers, are criminal mobsters and the main antagonists in *The Yiddish Policemen Union*, which is an outright criticism of current Israel that only recognizes Orthodox Judaism as the rightful branch (cf. Glaser 159-160). Chabon is not the only one who holds a critical opinion of the close ties of Judaism and the State of Israel. It is shared by many secular and liberal Jewish-Americans (cf. Diner 330). The role of Orthodox-Judaism in Israel, hence, furthers an estrangement between Israeli and liberal American Jews.

As mentioned above, from his liberal point of view, Chabon characterizes the state of diaspora as a favorable condition in which Jews can display their strengths. He even goes one step further and declares diaspora to be the paradigm of Jewish existence:

But there was always a shortfall, wasn't there? Between the match that the Holy One, blessed be He, envisioned and the reality of the situation under the chuppah. Between commandment and observance, heaven and earth, husband and wife, Zion and Jew. They called that shortfall "the world." Only when Messiah came would the breach be closed, all separations, distinctions, and distances collapsed. (YPU 214)

Living in the world means being scattered because there will always exist polarities that cannot be united by humans. If one understands the nation as a symbol of ethnic and cultural unity, this statement can once again be seen as a denial of the usefulness of the nation for the Jewish people. This unity would be nothing more than an illusion. Interestingly, Chabon gives this state of the union a religious tinge while at the same time underlining that religion is removed from our worldly reality, emphasizing his criticism of the interaction of Judaism and Israel. He does not negate God's potential for creating a new wholeness but sees him as being removed from our current living reality.

By taking religion and Zionism out of the equation, Chabon is left with an everyday cultural life to define Jewish-American identity. According to his preference of diaspora, Chabon uses Yiddish rather than Hebrew as the conversational language in his novel (cf. Rovner 146). He favors the language shaped during the hundreds of years in the diaspora to Hebrew, the language of rituals and the State of Israel:

Landsman knows Hebrew when he hears it. But the Hebrew he knows is the traditional brands, the one of his ancestors

carried with them through the millenia of their European exile, oily and salty as a piece of fish smoked to preserve it, its flesh flavored strongly by Yiddish. That kind of Hebrew is never employed for human conversations. It's only for talking to God. If it was Hebrew that Landsman hear at Peril Strait, it was not the old salt-herring tongue but some spiky dialect, a language of alkali and rocks. It sounded to him like the Hebrew brought over by the Zionists after 1948. Those hard desert Jews tried fiercely to hold on to it in their exile but, as with the German Jews before them, got overwhelmed by the teeming tumult of Yiddish, and by the painful association of their language with recent failure and disaster - As far as Landsman knows, that kind of Hebrew is extinct except among a few last holdouts meeting annually in lonely halls. (YPU 286)

With the help of Detective Landsmann, Chabon illustrates the different characteristics of the two languages. Hebrew is the language of rituals bound to the State of Israel, whereas Yiddish is a language of practicality that flourishes in diaspora communities. Landsmann is very well aware of the meaning of language for a nation-state. The establishment of a state language has always been one of the prerequisites for the formation of European nation-states and the main factor for national identity creation.³⁹

The preference of Yiddish over Hebrew in Chabon's alternate universe is telling. In reality, Hebrew is the official language of the State of Israel, while the importance of Yiddish is declining. Jewish-Americans very seldom speak Yiddish; for most people, specifically in the younger generation, English is their only mother tongue. They do not need Yiddish anymore and, preferably, learn Hebrew at an American Hebrew school if they want to get in touch with their cultural roots. One could, hence, come to the conclusion that the alternative universe Chabon creates is heavily steeped in nostalgia – for things which are lost or lost their former status, namely Yiddish, for Jewish diaspora and also for hard-boiled crime fiction.

In the chapter before, it was argued that hard-boiled crime-fiction functions as a stabilizer, while the dystopic elements of Chabon's novel generically destabilize and unsettle the reader's expectation. Hence, the reader automatically sympathizes with the struggling detective Landsman, who appears to remain a traditional hard-boiled sleuth. His failure only becomes

³⁹ The original introduction of European state languages following the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1439 displays a shift in hegemonic power from a religious to secular institutions. State languages “were both distinct from the sacred languages of the clergy and from the ‘local’ idioms – initially for purely administrative purposes, but subsequently as aristocratic languages [...]. It is connected with the process by which monarchical power became autonomous and sacred.” (Balibar, “The Nation Form “87). In other words, the aristocrats' secular needs to organize their people more efficiently led to a uniform language. On the one hand, this simplified the administration; on the other hand, it also implied a change in hegemony. It is no longer the church's exclusive right to explain the world through the lens of the Bible, which was the most reproduced text in the monasteries of the Middle Ages.

apparent at the end of the novel, which gives the whole hard-boiled convention a nostalgic tinge, as its prerequisites are outdated.

Chabon's relation to the Yiddish tradition is very much the same as to hard-boiled fiction. Both aspects share a nostalgic quality. As mentioned in the chapter on the United Kingdom, nostalgia plays its part in the formation of a nation. Notably, during the Romantic period, poets longed for the national past obscuring the less heroic events (cf. Boym 14). In his longing for diasporic Yiddish communities, Chabon blocks out the hardships they went through and, rather, glorifies them as molding factors of Yiddish strength. Until now, his approach to glorify the Yiddish past has been the same as the nationals'. The difference, however, is its impact. While the Romantic poets strongly influenced the national movements, Chabon's nostalgia is attached to a more or less lost concept. The number of Yiddish-speakers in the Jewish-American community is low. The question of Israel is for many Jewish-Americans more critical than the identification with the Yiddish or even the Jewish-American community (cf. Diner 321).

D.G. Myers' analysis of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* displays that the seemingly Yiddish words that Chabon includes in his narrative are inauthentic:

But Chabon's access to Yiddish is less than authoritative. Although Chabon seeks to create a world that is linguistically intact—Yiddishland in Alaska—his style slips repeatedly, and he just gets things wrong. Consider his reliance upon the words yid and yids. He has taken some heat for it, but the usage might have been defended as fitting, Yid is simply the Yiddish word for Jew. Why not the correct Yiddish plural yidn, then, instead of its anglicized double? The usage begins to inch uncomfortably closer to a slur once it becomes obvious that Chabon alternates between Jew and yid with no apparent system. [...] Similarly Chabon confounds a talmid hakhem, a scholar of Jewish law, who is often a child prodigy, with a zaddik, the mature leader of a Oasidic community who is distinguished less by scholarship than piety. He alternates between the terms tzaddik ha-dor and messiah as if they were interchangeable (they are not); he arranges a Oasidic wedding on the Sabbatli; he places customers in a kosher restaurant at adjoining tables, eating corned beef and cheese blintzes. [...] Whatever the case, his Yiddish is entirely imaginary. If the French novelist Henri Raczymow is right that a "few words of Yiddish do not constitute a legacy, but merely a remnant, the 'next-to-nothing' that remains of what was lost," then what about a few words of synthetic Yiddish? The only access they provide is to the strain of Chabon's imagination, and the loss is not even registered. (585-586)

Myers shows that Chabon misuses Yiddish, as the Americanized plural forms or the unclear understanding of words and their related concepts exemplify.

While Myers is consequently skeptical about Chabon's fictional Yiddish, Flore Coulouma and Agnes Muller look at this aspect from a different perspective. Above all, they explore the question of the motivation behind the use of fictional Yiddish in a novel that is primarily in English. They conclude that the textual references that point out that *The Yiddish Policemen's*

Union should be written in Yiddish, even though the reader reads the novel in English, give rise to the feeling of "linguistic exclusion" (cf. 187). This linguistic uncertainty also influences the fundamental relationship in this third-person narrative, for the narrator and reader should communicate with each other in at least a language that both have sufficient command of (cf. 176).

This dissertation's argument is similar to that of Coulouma and Muller, who insist that it is not Chabon's primary goal to create the most authentic Yiddish exile community possible. Chabon's choice of diasporic tradition is precious in the current discussion of Jewish-American identity because it sheds light on an often disregarded aspect of Jewish history (cf. also Scanlan, "Strange Times to be a Jew" 506). *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is not proof for a still intact Yiddish community. It is proof for the examination of diasporic Jewish culture by a Jewish-American author, whereas many of his fellow authors rather look into the State of Israel or abandon their cultural roots completely (cf. Myers 588).

Philip Roth, however, also deals with the issue of diaspora within his novel *Operation Shylock*. Within the group of Jewish-American authors, Philip Roth has an exceptional standing, which is not only the result of his literary fame but also of his highly controversial books containing aspects of Jewish life and politics. He – much like Michael Chabon – was more than once reproached for allegedly supporting antisemitic feelings and being a black sheep in the Jewish-American community (cf. Fishman 136). Roth himself does not seem discouraged by this judgment. On the contrary, he incorporates the criticism of him and his writing in *Operation Shylock*: "When I was younger my Jewish betters used to accuse me of writing short stories that endangered Jewish lives - would that I could! A narrative as deadly as a gun!" (OS 186). This statement points back to an aspect discussed in the previous chapter – Roth's lack of authorial potency. He does not see his stories as incitement against Jews. Of course, Roth's utterance could

be a mere defense against criticism. That is why his elaborations on Jewish culture and people in the context of *Operation Shylock* will heavily feature in this analysis.

As Sylvia Barack Fishman already noted, the criticism of *Operation Shylock* focuses on the fact that Roth gives a voice to the Arab community, thus creating a platform for ethnic minorities with critical viewpoints on the State of Israel (cf. 136).

I fight the occupier with words, as though words will ever stop them from stealing our land. I oppose our masters with ideas - that is my humiliation and shame. Clever thinking is the form my capitulation takes. Endless analyses of the situation - that is the grammar of my degradation. Alas, I am not a stone-throwing Arab - I am a word-throwing Arab, soft, sentimental, and ineffective, altogether like my father. I come to Jerusalem to stand and look at the house where I was a boy. I remember my father and how his life was destroyed. I look at the house and want to kill. Then I drive back to Ramallah to cry like him over all that is lost. (OS 121)

Interestingly, Zee, the Arab saying these words, and the fictional Philip Roth share the attitude about the unfortunate demise of words in their environment. While Roth questions his position as an author, Zee is confronted with the apparent deafness of Israel. Hence, Roth seems to be proclaiming the crisis of words regardless of ethnic belonging.

Furthermore, Zee functions as a representative of moderate Palestinians because he non-violently criticizes the Israeli settlement policy. By using colonial terms (“occupation,” “masters”), Zee stresses the unacceptability of the Palestinian situation. On the other hand, it is due to those words that Roth finds himself reproached for by Jewish communities, making Israel appear to be an illegitimate and immoral enterprise. To Roth’s mind, the Israel-Palestine conflict seems to be over land and words.

In his fervent speech defending the Palestinian cause, Zee touches another matter that is at the heart of the legitimation of Israel: the Holocaust.

Then 1967: the Israeli victory in the Six Day War. And with this, the confirmation not of the Jewish dealienization or of Jewish assimilation or of Jewish normalization but of Jewish *might*, the cynical institutionalization of the Holocaust begins. It is precisely here, with a Jewish military state gloating and triumphant, that it becomes official Jewish policy to remind the world, minute by minute, hour by hour, day in and day out, that the Jews were victims before they were conquerors and that they are conquerors only because they are victims. This is the public-relations campaign cunningly devised by the terrorist Begin: to establish Israeli military expansionism as historically just by joining it to the memory of Jewish victimization; to rationalize - as historical justice, as just retribution, as nothing more than self-defense - the gobbling up the Occupied Territories and the driving of the Palestinians off their land once again. What justifies seizing every opportunity to extend Israel's boundaries? Auschwitz. What justifies bombing Beirut civilians? Auschwitz. What justifies smashing the bones of Palestinian children and blowing off the limbs of Arab mayors? Auschwitz. Dachau. Buchenwald. Belsen. Treblinka. Sobibor. Belsec. (OS 132)

Zee does not hold the opinion that there were no Jews murdered in the concentration camps. On

the contrary, he holds the mass murder to be accurate and asks why Israeli Jews would do the same to another ethnicity. He dares to pose this question in the context of one of the greatest human atrocities and is not alone. Left-wing American-Jews are also concerned about the purposeful application of the Holocaust in contemporary Israeli politics (cf. Fishman 648). They are appalled by the idea that the Jewish plight might be reduced to public relations, as Zee puts it.⁴⁰

The horror of the camps, however, caused according to the fictional Philip Roth a severe trauma for the Jews which nurtured their desire to say what is just or unjust finally:

My second Jewish courtroom in two days. Jewish judges. Jewish laws. Jewish flags. And non-Jewish defendants. Courtrooms such as Jews had envisioned in their fantasies for many hundreds of years, answering longings even more unimaginable than those for an army or a state. One day *we* will determine justice! (OS 140)

This representation of Israeli jurisdiction is far from being flattering as it turns it into a masquerade of mere revenge devoid of any competence. The act of speaking justice is, according to Roth, arranged along ethnic lines. On the one side, the Jewish people represented by Jewish judges and state attorneys who base their authority on past atrocities. On the other side are the “non-Jewish” who face the adamant Jewish will to justice. This depiction of seemingly Jewish tactics grounded on Jewish victimization is an incitement to certain parts of worldwide Jewish communities because it appears to belittle the former cruelties. *Operation*

⁴⁰ Tamas Dobozy sheds a similar light on this issue. He extensively analyzes Roth’s treatment of and approach to the Holocaust in *Operation Shylock* in his corresponding essay. In his opinion, Roth tries to find the balance between the two popular stances on the Holocaust: firstly, its unspeakability and, secondly, the absolute “necessity of remembering and historicizing the Holocaust to ensure that it never happens again.” To Dobozy’s mind, Roth propagates the obligation to continuously speak about the Holocaust and why one cannot speak of it. In other words, he favors the active handling of the Holocaust and its modes of representation. (cf. 50) Dobozy’s findings match this analysis of the subject in the preceding chapter, as the reflection on the modes of representation and on authorial power is applied to the Holocaust as well as to contemporary subject formation. Highlighting the representational aspect of subject formation or historical events denies any claim to absoluteness. Instead, he postulates the acceptance of limitations and fragmentation on several levels of identity formation ranging from the philosophy to history.

Shylock contains provocation.⁴¹

Philip Roth's argument is not that one-dimensional. He does not stop at one aspect of criticism of contemporary Israeli politics but takes a further scope of the Jewish community into consideration. His infamous character Zerk differentiates between two groups of Jews:

That's what these 'authentic' Jews will have contributed to civilization - a country lacking every quality that gave the Jews their great distinction! They may be able to instill in other Arabs who live under their evil occupation fear and respect for their 'superiority,' but I grew up with *you* people, I was educated with *you* people, *by* you people, I lived with *real* Jews, at Harvard, at Chicago, with *truly* superior people, I lived with real people, whom I admired, whom I loved, to whom I did *indeed* feel inferior and *rightly* so - the vitality in them, the irony in them, the human sympathy, the human *tolerance*, the goodness of heart that was simply *instinctive* in them, people with the Jewish sense of survival that was all human, elastic, adaptable, humorous, creative, and all this they have replaced here with a stick! (OS 126)

Zerk's preference of diasporic Jewish culture reminds of Michael Chabon's longing for the Yiddish one. He plays at the fact that large parts of American intellectual life are determined by Jews and admires how diaspora inspired their flexible and humorous way of life. Roth's interest in Jewish(-American) life is, therefore, not restricted to the political dimension, as he considers the cultural one, too. This statement manifests itself in his deliberations on Jewish aspects in American life:

Hebrew school wasn't school at all but a part of the deal that our parents had cut with *their* parents, the sop to pacify the old generation - who wanted the grandchildren to be Jews the way that they were Jews, bound as they were to the old millennial ways - and, at the same time, the leash to restrain the breakaway young, who had it in their heads to be Jews in a way no one had ever dared to be a Jew in our three-thousand-year history: speaking and thinking American English, *only* American English, with all the apostasy that was bound to beget. (OS 312)

The factor of language exemplifies the status of Jewish components in Jewish-American lives. Hebrew has become a rudiment. It is not actively practiced anymore but superficially implanted into the young Jewish-Americans as a deal between generations without the youngest generations' agreement. They do not experience diaspora the same way as their forefathers did. For them, the US is their fatherland, American English their mother tongue, and Hebrew solely a remnant of the past. Hence, this passage illustrates what is at the heart of the assimilation process: the loss of cultural connectedness and the older generation's strife for reconnection (cf.

⁴¹ Ulla Haselstein shares the criticism of *Operation Shylock* concerning the treatment of the Other, especially with regard to the judicial context. She explains how the intertextual reference between *Operation Shylock* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* draws a parallel between Israel and Venice and the exclusion of the Other, among other things, through legal practices. Due to the stereotyping in *The Merchant of Venice*, however, this analogy is misguided, as "such a generalization [...] brushes over and represses the history of anti-Semitism [...]" (67-68).

Diner 314).

The complexity of the loss of one's cultural roots becomes apparent when the fictional Philip Roth is held captive and tries to read the Hebrew signs on the wall:

But I drove this possibility out of my mind by studying the nine words on the blackboard, focusing on each character as though if I looked long and hard enough I might unexpectedly regain possession of my lost tongue and a secret message would be revealed to me. But no foreign language could have been any more foreign. The only feature of Hebrew that I could remember was that the lower dots and dashes were vowels and the upper markings generally consonants. Otherwise all memory of it had been extinguished. (OS 315)

The fictional Philip Roth is language-wise a paradigm of assimilation. He does not speak Hebrew and even lost all the knowledge he ever had about it. Hebrew became just another foreign language to him, although one might suppose otherwise. The loss of Hebrew and its seemingly related secret knowledge about Jewish culture is tied to the idea of language as a code. This aspect is, as mentioned in the chapter on crime fiction, central to many postmodern crime novels. They often play with this traditional assumption to emphasize the arbitrary quality of language and to ultimately discredit the role of the detective. The analogy between the detective and the reader provides the background for this act (cf. OS 453-54). The fictional Philip Roth is also a postmodern detective and is overwhelmed by the task of deciphering. In his case, the failure does not lead to his downfall but the proven inaccessibility of his cultural roots.

In this way, the fictional Philip Roth very well exemplifies the situation of the younger Jewish-American generations. His obvious short-comings in understanding cultural aspects of Jewish life as well as his attempt to overcome them and reconnect with his cultural roots are proof of that. His trip to Israel has to be seen as precisely that. Due to the accusation of furthering Anti-Semitism, Roth's relationship with Jewish culture and Israel has a political dimension. Like Michael Chabon, he belongs to the group of left-leaning Jews who have a critical attitude towards Israeli politics. This critical position, however, does not equal an Anti-Israel stance (cf. Diner 321). The opposite is true, as the fictional Philip Roth chooses the Jewish side when he is forced to make a decision (cf. Gooblar 50). *Operation Shylock* is a seemingly autobiographical account of the fictional Philip Roth's mission for the Mossad. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the

previous chapter, the reader merely finds out about Roth's arrival in Israel, the search for his *alter ego*, and the initial contact with Smilesburger, a Mossad agent. The chapter eleven which would have contained the narration of his mission is omitted:

I have elected to delete my final chapter, twelve thousand words describing the people I convened with in Athens, the circumstances that brought us together, and the subsequent expedition, to a second European capital, that developed out of that educational Athens weekend. Of this entire book, whose completed manuscript Smilesburger had asked to inspect, only the contents of chapter 11, "Operation Shylock," were deemed by him to contain information too seriously detrimental to his agency's interests and to the Israeli government to be published in English, let alone in some fifteen languages. (OS 357)

After the feedback of agent Smilesburger, the fictional Philip Roth opts for self-censorship instead of authorial independence. Within the fictional autobiographical universe, this seems an extraordinary thing to do for Roth, who included blatant criticism of Israeli politics as well as graphical sexual fantasies in his writing of *Operation Shylock*. In other words, he is not shy to provoke. Why would the fictional Philip Roth hold back the information that made him write his meta-autobiographical account?

The answer lies in his position to the Jewish people. He may criticize Israeli politics and admit his lack of cultural understanding, but this does not mean that he would sell out the Jews or threaten their safety.⁴² On the contrary, he obeys the law of *loshon hora* and does not give away information on his people:

About these Jews who defame the Jewish people, the Chofetz Chaim has told us everything anyway. They are driven by *loshon hora*, and like all who are driven *loshon hora*, they will be punished in the world to come. And so why, in our world, should I pursue them? That is the first question I have for you. The second is this: If I do, can I count on Philip Roth to assist me?" (OS 343)

The loyalty in Jewish culture requires that the members of the community are not even allowed to speak badly about their people. The fictional Philip Roth, therefore, complies with this rule by not unveiling the top-secret events in Athens. The statement quoted was made by agent Smilesburger, and the reader knows the answer to the second question. Of course, the fictional Roth helped him out. Despite all his criticism of Israel, Roth remains loyal to the Jewish community.

⁴² In her analysis of *Operation Shylock*, Karen Grumberg comes to the conclusion that Roth ultimately favors Israel over Jewish communities in the diaspora, as Pipik, "the King of Diasporism," fails in his endeavor and dies emasculated. (cf. 52) Pipik's failure should not be equated with a belittling of Jewish diaspora culture, as the fictional protection of Israel through textual omission does not mean a complete approval of Israel's politics.

Timothy Parrish sees in the omission of the eleventh chapter another aesthetic dimension:

Of course his novel is still a tale, a story, but, if read correctly, it refuses to tell tales against the Jews. That the missing episode depicting his spy mission, his chosen silence, becomes the title for the book suggests that *Operation Shylock* is not so much about the stories that Roth has told, as critics have always complained, but the story he has not told. The silence that surrounds the Holocaust becomes here a source of Jewish storytelling power. (592)

Parrish views the omission of chapter eleven as a resourceful approach to storytelling as it mirrors the unspeakability of the Holocaust. For him, the horror of the concentration camps cannot be captured in literature and calls for silence. This silence equals Roth's omission of the secret operation. It has become clear that Roth's provocations about Israeli politics cannot divert from the fact that he is still part of the worldwide Jewish community.

The aspect of the connection to or disconnection from the Jewish roots appears in a different light in Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*, which contains *Portrait of an Invisible Man* and *The Book of Memory*. While the first part of the analysis of Paul Auster's work focused more on the question of the medium (meta-autobiography, photography, and the detective genre), the second part will foreground the national or ethnic ties in the whole text. One cannot understand the tie Auster displays to have with his Jewish roots without taking the family situation, especially the relation to Samuel Auster, into consideration. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the father-son relationship is characterized by absence. This absence, in turn, creates the permeating sense of solitude, which as John Barbour states, is the one component that links both parts of *The Invention of Solitude* (cf. 186) Barbour's argument that one has to understand Auster's multifaceted philosophy and aesthetics of solitude to finally grasp his relationship to his father as well as to his ethnic roots is convincing. Therefore, the aspect of solitude is also included in this analysis of Auster's sense of ethnic belonging.

The role Jewish life plays for Auster becomes evident during a restaurant visit with his estranged father:

And still, as a little boy, how he would sometimes take me with him to Jewish restaurants in neighborhoods I had never seen before, dark places filled with old people, each table graced with a tinted blue seltzer bottle, and how I would grow queasy, leave my food untouched, and content myself with watching him wolf down borscht, pirogen, and boiled metas covered with horse radish. I, who was being brought up as an American boy, who knew less about my ancestors than I did about Hopalong Cassidy's hat. (IS 30)

The ever-absent father stands in for the young Auster's emotional distance to the Jewish culture. He has no connection with Jewish food, perceives eating in a Jewish restaurant as a nostalgic hobby of older people, and, rather, observes the cultural rites with anthropological interest. Paul Auster continues to keep his analytical distance in *The Invisible Man* and tries to make sense of his father's behavior and relationship with the Jewish tradition. Auster does not come up with a solution whether his absent father is responsible for his detachment from Jewish culture or whether his very own involvement in mainstream American culture supported the estrangement from the parent and his cultural roots. He is not interested in this kind of causal connection but accepts this analogy of absent father and absent cultural connection (cf. Kramer 88).⁴³

This cultural void is despite some overlaps not wholly filled with American traditions, as Auster's strong sense of *mens rea* exemplifies while singing Christmas Carols at school (cf. IS 181). Out of fear of betraying his Jewish belonging, he refrains from singing. This lack of emotional and cultural belonging leaves Auster in the realm of solitude – at least during his younger years.

In writing *The Invisible Man*, Auster comes to an understanding of his father, whose father, in turn, was murdered by his wife, Paul Auster's grandmother. Through the citation of newspaper articles, Auster discovers his family history (cf. IS 213). It is designative that the source of this information is not his father but the medium of the newspaper, Kenosha Evening News. He cannot personally experience it or rely on a source that was part of past events. Auster's family history is stripped of its family aspect, which means that the information is handed down from generation to generation within a family. Instead, he learns about it in the same way as he would acquire knowledge about events without any ties to him. The information gathered in the

⁴³ In his analysis of Auster's early works, Andreas Hau also emphasizes that the question of one's own identity in *The Invention of Solitude* is not primarily dealt with through the question of ethnic origin. His relationship to his Jewish roots, according to Hau, had already been examined in detail in his early poetry. Even if Jewish culture is not entirely omitted in *The Invention of Solitude*, Hau sees Auster's approach in the novel more in the tradition of Thoreau. Each individual is "a sample of the human species, each individual being different but *essentially* the same." (205)

newspaper is, therefore, to be understood as another proof of the emotional distance between father and son, which leads us back to the issue of solitude (cf. Kramer 86).

By incorporating the newspaper articles into his writing, Auster reveals the situation of Jewish immigrants to the United States. Despite their current comparatively good standing, the Jewish community faced obstacles in the past, as Auster's description of his grandmother's inability to speak English illustrates (cf. IS 40). The Jewish position within the White Christian majority becomes visible when one has a closer look at the newspapers which covered the murder and its clientele. While the *Kenosha Evening News* stresses the widow's unemotional state during the funeral and explains the Jewish burial rites to its readers (cf. IS 42-43), a Jewish newspaper based in Chicago describes a crying Mrs. Auster in panic and distress because of what is happening to her (cf. IS 45). Within this polarity, language plays a major role. Mrs. Auster, unfit to convey her story in English, is seen as a heartless, insane wife. In her community, she can at least interact. This circumstance makes a principal difference in the perception of her as a person. Paul Auster denotes the differing conclusions and lines of reasoning about the same person with this weighing of information and articles.

On the other hand, he also demonstrates the solitude of a migrant who is not able to communicate. Mrs. Auster is stranded in a community in which her voice is literally not heard. Paul Auster's uncovering of his family's history is ultimately a venture into the generational forms of solitude.

The Invisible Man is, therefore, mainly a reflection on the effects of absence. Auster discovers that the bond he shares with his father is based on distance, whereas, in *The Book of Memory*, this absence is transformed into a form of solitude that is the source of creative powers, at least for Auster (cf. Barbour 93).

A prominent motif for the development of his creative purposes of solitude is the room that stands in for an individual's seclusion from the world. This motif is not exclusively bound to

Paul Auster himself but is also mentioned in the context of another father-son-relationship or Anne Frank's hiding place. Anne Frank's house, indeed, leaves a great impression on Auster:

For no particular reason [...] he decided to go to Anne Frank's house, which has been preserved as a museum. It was a Sunday morning, gray with rain, and the streets along the canal were deserted. He climbed the steep and narrow staircase inside the house and entered the secret annex. As he stood in Anne Frank's room, the room in which the diary was written, now bare, with the faded pictures of Hollywood movie stars she had collected still pasted to the walls, he suddenly found himself crying. Not sobbing, as might happen in response to a deep inner pain, but crying without sound, the tears streaming down his cheeks, as if purely in response to the world. It was at that moment, he later realized, that *The Book of Memory* began. As in the phrase: 'she wrote her diary in this room.' (IS 86)

In bringing up Anne Frank's diary, Auster puts himself in the tradition of Jewish non-fictional autobiographical writers. However, distant he might be to his cultural roots; he still somehow identifies himself with them. This identification is minimal as his fascination for the room instead of the particularly Jewish site of remembrance shows. Auster is moved by Anne's total reclusion from the world as a means for creative production, which, in turn, is linked to self-analysis. He already hints at the complex interaction of the room and the rest of the world by calling his emotional, tearful reaction to the sight of Anne's living environment, a "response to the world" (IS 86). How is it that one can withdraw from the world while at the same time staying in touch with it? Does one have to hide to understand oneself?

Equally surprising is the change of pronoun that occurs in *The Book of Memory*. In *The Invisible Man*, Auster uses the pronoun 'I' when referring to himself. This changes in *The Book of Memory*, in which he uses 'He' for himself. The switch of pronouns is anchored in Auster's will to self-analysis. In *The Invisible Man*, the first-person narrator immersed himself in family photographs trying to make sense of his familial roots with the help of a seemingly objective medium. He discovered the bond of distance between father and son by recognizing that photos are not media of objectivity. The onlooker is part of the story or photo. Ultimately, the first-person narrator cannot fulfill the conventions of autobiography, as he does not reach a final stage of self-recognition. The autobiographical requirement of self-analysis is not completed.

The extent to which Auster's fictional and non-fictional writing is connected becomes indisputable in the change of pronoun, which plays its part in *The Invention of Solitude*, but also in his fictional work *Invisible*:

My approach had been wrong, I realized. By writing about myself in the first person, I had smothered myself and made myself invisible, had made it impossible for me to find the thing I was looking for. I needed to separate myself from myself, to step back and carve out some space between myself and my subject (which was myself), and therefore I returned to the beginning of Part Two and began writing it in the third person. *I* became *He*, and the distance created by that small shift allowed me to finish the book. Perhaps he (Walker) was suffering from the same problem, I suggested. Perhaps he was too close to his subject. Perhaps the material was too wrenching and personal for him to write about it with the proper objectivity in the first person. What did he think? (Auster, *Invisible* 89)

The motif of the change of pronoun reoccurs within Auster's work. The switch of the pronoun in *Invisible* is meant to guarantee the author character better analytical skills. It seems to create a distance between 'I' and 'Me' by turning the latter into 'Him.' In *The Book of Memory*, Auster pursues the same method: By naming himself A. and switching the pronoun, he grants himself an analytical distance from his object, himself. The first-person narrator becomes a third-person narrative voice. In doing so, Auster goes against the conventions of autobiography, for which the distance in time is enough to grant a proper understanding of one's personality. Stated differently, he thematizes the narrative tactics in an autobiography, which proves once again the status of *The Invention of Solitude* as a paradigm of meta-autobiography. For Auster, the autobiographical tactic is insufficient, which has to do with his concept of the room:

The presence of one person crowded the room, two people choked it. It was impossible to move inside it without contracting your body to its smallest dimensions, without contracting your mind to some infinitely small point within itself. Only then could you begin to breathe, to feel the room expand, and to watch your mind explore the excessive, unfathomable reaches of that space. For there was an entire universe in that room, a miniature cosmology that contained all that is most vast, most distant, most unknowable. It was a shrine, hardly bigger than a body, in praise of all that exists beyond the body: the representation of one man's inner world, even to the slightest detail. S. had literally managed to surround himself with the things inside him. The room he lived in was a dream space, and its walls were like the skin of some second body around him, as if his own body had been transformed into a mind, a breathing instrument of pure thought. This was the womb, the belly of the whale, the original site of imagination. (IS 94)

Inside the room, a person is stripped of his or her personal history and external relations. Instead, one is reduced to oneself, a kernel of what one used to be in the outside world. Therefore, the 'I' writing inside the room is unequal to the 'He' in the outside – a state that Auster represented with the change of pronouns.

In a room, one is, as Auster describes it, reduced to oneself while at the same time projecting one's inner cosmos into the room. The withdrawal from the world and the projection of one's

inner universe to the immanent environment are oxymoronic. How could a person retreat and expand simultaneously? This idea of the room has a long tradition in Western writing. Michel de Montaigne offers in his *Essays* a definition of the room that is in its function not so much different from Auster's:

We should have wives, children, property and, above all, good health ... if we can: but we should not become so attached to them that our happiness depends on them. We should set aside a room, just for ourselves, at the back of the shop, keeping it entirely free and establishing there our true liberty, our principal solitude and asylum. Within it our normal conversation should be of ourselves, with ourselves, so privy that no commerce or communication with the outside world should find a place there; there we should talk and laugh as though we had no wife, no children, no possessions, no followers, no menservants, so that when the occasion arises that we must lose them it should not be a new experience to do without them. (270)

Montaigne's primary interest in arranging this room appears to be self-sufficiency, which is not of importance in Auster's mind. They share, however, the aspect of withdrawal, the focus on oneself, and the dialogue. This dialog-function corresponds with Auster's concept of expansion of the self, as the room becomes the site of self-analysis. Auster's mental engagement with oneself carries clear connotations of physical experience (cf. IS 94). The room becomes part of the body and, in this way, the site of the mind. Body and mind are in Auster's concept, thus, not exclusive, which opposes the traditional Cartesian dichotomy. He even goes one step further than just equalizing body and mind and incorporates something inanimate, the room, into himself. By crossing this boundary, Auster animates the inanimate and applies the characteristics of humanity to an object, thus, postulating a post-human approach (cf. Nancy 3). This circumstance can be read as an example of the postmodern deconstruction of the subject in the Derridean sense. The human is no longer the anthropocentric focus of the world due to his animate state. Instead, he merges with his surrounding decentralizing himself (cf. Derrida 73).

The room is not the only object that Auster humanizes. He does the same to language:

Rather, language as it is laid out in the dictionary: an infinitely complex organism, all of whose elements - cells and sinews, corpuscles and bones, digits and fluids - are present in the world simultaneously, none of which can exist on its own. For each word is defined by other words, which means that to enter any part of language is to enter the whole of it. (IS 172)

The animation of language is another telling example of Auster's denial of an anthropocentric view on the world. In lieu thereof, he stresses the evolving nature of language and humans' complex relation with it, as we become part of that transforming organism by using language.

Conforming with the major thesis of language philosophy, Auster postulates the influence of language on our perception of the world. He does so by incorporating language into the animated world, thence promoting it from the status of a mere human tool to an acting, living entity of its own.

Language corresponds with human life in the same way as space. While the retreat into a single room furthers a man's self-reflection by adjusting oneself to this spatial condition, therefore, extending the 'I' beyond one's physical limits, using language is nothing else but the entrance into a limitless network with language and its users. It is the connection of these two components – the room and language – that forms what Auster calls “the original site of imagination” (IS 94).

Whether the book speaks of loneliness or companionship, it is necessarily a product of solitude. A. sits down in his own room to translate another man's book, and it is as though he were entering that man's solitude and making it his own. But surely that is impossible. For once solitude has been breached, once a solitude has been taken on by another, it is no longer solitude, but a kind of companionship. Even though there is only one man in the room, there are two. A. imagines himself as a kind of ghost of that other man, who is both there and not there, and whose book is both the same and not the same as the one he is translating. Therefore, he tells himself, it is possible to be alone and not alone at the same moment. (IS 145)

Auster's act of writing in solitude is the paradigm of his self-created oxymoron of being isolated and connected at the same time. The reduction to one's single-core and the writing/translating make it possible for Auster to meet other people in a pure form or, as Katarzyna Kuczma phrases it: “He succeeds in this endeavor by enlarging the room of his solitude and connecting it with the rooms of other solitary people, [...]” (62). It is Auster meeting someone else without being tied to any role. The retreat into the solitary room becomes Auster's source for imagination and a way of reconnecting with the world (cf. also Barrett 107). The phenomenon of solitude is far from negative. On the contrary, solitude is an essential component of the author's work and, hence, central to Auster himself. Going into isolation makes him realize his true self better.

Why would one pay such close attention to Auster's concept of the room and its relation to language in a chapter that, according to its title, is more concerned about nationalism and the representation of ethnic belonging? At the beginning of this analysis of *The Invention of Solitude*, Auster's detachment from Jewish culture was declared. In contrast to Roth and Chabon, he is not interested in the political embodiment of Jewish culture, Israel, and does not devote

himself to a constant self-analysis of his relation to his cultural roots. Instead, he draws on stories and events within the Jewish context. He is aware of the cultural heritage that influences his writing without him emotionally over investing in it. Auster does the same with Jewish culture as he does with his father's inheritance, solitude, and incorporates it to his advantage. His thoughts on the prophet Jonah will exemplify this argument:

First commentary on the Book of Jonah.

One is immediately struck by its oddness in relation to the other prophetic books. This brief work, the only one to be written in the third person, is more dramatically a story of solitude than anything else in the Bible, and yet it is told as if from outside that solitude, as if, by plunging into the darkness of that solitude, the 'I' has vanished from itself. It cannot speak about itself, therefore, except as another. As in Rimbaud's phrase: 'Je est un autre.'

Not only is Jonah reluctant to speak (as Jeremiah is, for example), but he actually refuses to speak. 'Now the word of the world came unto Jonah ... But Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the world.'

[...]

The popular mythology about the whale notwithstanding, the great fish that swallows Jonah is by no means an agent of destruction. The fish is what saves him from drowning in the sea. 'The waters compassed me about, even the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.' In the depth of solitude, which is equally the depth of silence, as if in the refusal to speak there were an equal refusal to turn one's face to the other ('Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord') – which is to say: who seeks solitude seeks silence; who does not speak is alone; is alone, even unto death – Jonah encounters the darkness of death. (IS 132-134)

Jonah flees from the mission God gives him and ends up in the stomach of a whale. There he is utterly cut off from the world. He is alone in a room. Another parallel to Auster's conception of the room is that the site of the stomach gives Jonah a voice to speak – in Auster's case, a pen to write. Jonah's reluctance to speak equals the disconnection from any social network and ultimately brings him to the verge of death from which he is reborn with a voice, the tool of reconnection with society. The same is true for Auster's writing. In his physically most remote moments, he discovers a way to regain contact in being an author.⁴⁴ Therefore, the parallels between Auster's conceptions and their role models in Jewish mythology (Jonah) and history (Anne Frank) cannot be ignored.

On the contrary, one could go one step further and compare Auster's metaphysical experience in a locked-off room with aspects in Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy, which is mainly based on

⁴⁴ James Peacock argues that, according to Auster, authors have to live and write in solitude to fulfill their professional duties. The necessity of solitude for any author makes his or her existence comparable to Jews in diaspora: "Jews and writers are in exile, both inside and outside, here and there, everywhere and nowhere. Only by fully committing himself to this exile and immersing himself in his and others' expressions of solitude can Auster be in the world." (35) He adds that a "poetics of absence" is ultimately "a characteristically Jewish mode of expression" (ibid.).

Jewish tradition and Jewish history. In his philosophy, the aspect of language is also an essential factor of connection between two individuals and holds metaphysical qualities:

To speak, at the same time as knowing the Other, is making oneself known to him. The Other is not only known, he is greeted [salué]. He is not only named, but also invoked. To put it in grammatical terms, the Other does not appear in the nominative, but in the vocative. I not only think of what he is for me, but also and simultaneously, and even before, I am for him. In applying a concept to him, in calling him this or that, I am already appealing to him. I do not only know something, I am also part of society. This commerce which the word implies is precisely action without violence: the agent, at the very moment of its action, has renounced all claims to domination or sovereignty, and is already exposed to the action of the Other in the way it waits for a response. Speaking and hearing become one rather than succeed one another. Speaking therefore institutes the moral relationship of equality and consequently recognizes justice. Even when one speaks to a slave, one speaks to an equal. (7-8)

Language, hence, serves as an equalizer between two individuals. Speaking with someone is the conformance with an ultimate and prior rule of existence: Every individual is bound by his or her duties for the Other. In neglecting his tasks as a prophet Jonah violates this golden rule and, thus, comes close to the verge of death. In this environment of utmost silence and solitude, he has an epiphany and re-starts using his voice again. Auster's insight is similar (cf. IS 145). Writing or translating is an act of solitude but also reconnects with others.⁴⁵ Like Levinas, he does not view a single individual at the center of his life philosophy, but an individual in his or her interactions with others. The result in Levinas' and Auster's theory is a decentralized subject that is defined by its relationship with others.⁴⁶

As shown previously, Auster touches on the subject only peripherally. Instead, he uses elements of Jewish culture as part of his narrative strategy or artistic, creative process in order to ultimately structure his ongoing process of identification.

⁴⁵ In their respective analyses of *The Invention of Solitude*, Andreas Hau and James Peacock deal more decisively with the intertextual references. Besides the references to the book of Jonah and Anne Frank's diary, which have already been mentioned, Hau reports that Cicero, Descartes, Flaubert, Marina Tsvetayeva, or Hölderlin are also included (cf. 209).

Peacock furthermore points to Proust and Blanchot (cf. 28-29). He continues that "The Invention of Solitude is [thus] a compilation of his and other writers' memories rendered in writing. Its effect is aggregative rather than strictly narrative, in the sense that it builds toward understanding by piling quotation upon quotation." (33) In other words, Peacock finds that Auster's ongoing references to other writers are also a form of reconnection, albeit not strictly narrative.

⁴⁶ Rachael McLennan likewise emphasizes the representation of an incoherent subject in *The Invention of Solitude* based on each individual's responsibility towards others. She further considers the change of narrator's voice in "The Book of Memory" to a third-person narrator as an expression of this responsibility, for Auster makes himself an other. (cf. 707)

Philip Roth addresses his Jewish roots and cultural identity in a much more confrontational way than Paul Auster, by openly asking many questions, such as about Israel or the Jewish Diaspora, with the help of different characters in his novel. That may be the reason why both *Operation Shylock* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* have been discussed much more controversially than *The Invention of Solitude*. Despite all criticism of Roth's work, *Operation Shylock* ultimately takes a defensive stance towards Jewish culture and also towards the State of Israel.

In contrast to *Operation Shylock*, the Jewish Diaspora is clearly in the foreground in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* and presented as a preferential life setting. Michael Chabon is thus very clearly in opposition to prominent representatives of Israel, who, as described in the introduction to this chapter, consider fruitful Jewish life possible only within the Israeli state borders. In the end, Chabon goes even further than Roth, as the former sees no need for Zionist ideas since the Jewish community has always shown its particular strengths in exile.

This idea plays no role in either *Operation Shylock* or *The Invention of Solitude*. Roth's fictional *doppelgänger* may propagate Jewish life in the Diaspora, but his plan fails to gain acceptance. Paul Auster does not deal with the nation-state at all and does not even hint at his attitude towards Zionism.

From the perspective of narrative theory, it can be said that all three novels show clear signs of genre hybridization. *Operation Shylock* and *The Invention of Solitude*, like Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, contain the genre traditions of the crime novel and the autobiography. However, with the help of contemporary narrative theory, they raise them to a meta-level, thus calling into question fundamental assumptions of both genres. Hence, in both novels, the possibility of insight and the associated interpretative sovereignty of the detective or the author of an autobiography is undermined. The possibility of order and individual creation of meaning is negated. Above all, this is made possible by an increased examination of the means of identity

formation — the functionality of which both Roth and Auster question. Neither photographs nor genetic tests support the detective in his search for clues, for they can no longer unequivocally prove identity. Even the act of writing can no longer do this for the author figure.

In both cases, this finding is also highlighted by the respective narrative voices in each work. *Operation Shylock* refers to the role-based existence of humans through the presence of *doppelgängers* and the dissolution of the unity of author, first-person narrator, and protagonist. The autobiographical self is spread over several instances (author, narrator, protagonist, but also reader) without appearing coherent. Instead, the protagonist, as the author, has to recognize the limitations of his omnipotence by the reader / *doppelgänger*. The first-person narrator, in turn, allows insights into the inner life of the character. However, by hinting at an ultimately undescribed secret service operation, he leads the reader of the novel so far astray that he must be classified as unreliable, which in turn raises questions of authenticity due to the strong autobiographical references to the real Philip Roth. The question "Who is Philip Roth?" is rendered impossible by this fragmentation.

The Invention of Solitude also plays with the narrative voice and changes it in the second half of the book. A third-person narrator replaces the first-person narrator of the first half in the second half to view himself with distance. By doing this, however, Auster simultaneously reveals the narrative processes inherent in autobiographies.

The Yiddish Policemen's Union differs substantially from *Operation Shylock* and *The Invention of Solitude*, as this novel exhibits a mixture of the traditions of the crime novel and dystopia. Despite all dysfunctionality, the values of the hard-boiled detective are transfigured and serve in the alternative narrative universe instead as a familiar fixed point for the reader, which in comparison to the two previous examples also leads to the fact that in Chabon's novel the detective character seems to be less subverted. This conclusion is further supported by the third-person narrative voice of the novel, which is less experimental than the narrative voices of the

other two novels. As a result, the detective remains a US-American ideal to hold onto, although, as the dystopian living conditions prove, this is rather a futile undertaking.

Finally, one should return to the overarching question of this dissertation: Is the postmodern detective given a new role in the national discourse? It can be seen that the three postmodern detective novels selected present a much more diversified picture of this central question on the content level than was the case, for example, with the British postmodern detective novels. It is not the US-detectives' main concern to create a national or individual identity by dealing with the past. Instead, the focus is mainly on the examination of cultural roots and Israel. The subject of ethnicity thus plays a more significant role than that of history. That is not surprising, especially against the background that the USA was at the peak of its power in the 20th century, and Israel was not founded until 1948.

In *The Invention of Solitude*, the detective character, despite all doubts about the methods of identity creation, becomes a kind of cultural preserver through the quasi-dialogical approach of writing out of isolation, without decisively addressing this. The narrative approach also allows the protagonist/narrator/author Roth to support Israel by omitting the eleventh chapter, thus safeguarding its interests. It is striking that in both Auster's and Roth's novel, it is ultimately the narrative and its methods that allow something like agency, albeit in a reduced form. Chabon's preference for Yiddish makes it clear that the detective is no longer the guardian of national boundaries, but rather rooted within his ethnic group, which is a more fluid approach to identity building. Although narrative processes are revealed in identity-founding actions of the nation, ethnicity, or individual, all three detectives retain a reduced scope of action that is not necessarily directly linked to the concept of the nation. Their affiliation and loyalty are an ongoing matter of negotiation. They seem to take on the role of the mediator.

5. Criminals as Detectives: Disclosure of National Discourse in Indian Postmodern Crime Fiction

The question of the Indian nation differs considerably from its Western counterparts but cannot be debated without its ties to them. Its very own historical, cultural, and social premises are, however, not undone. On the contrary, India's vast territory that is home to a variety of ethnicities, religions, and languages as well as its current role as one of the rising players in the global economy make the Indian national discourse unique.

Ever since India's independence in 1947, two versions of national discourse dominate the public debate: the secular discourse and Hindu nationalism. The first one derives from Gandhi's vision for India:

Mahatma Gandhi looked at the Indian nation as, ideally, a harmonious collection of religious communities all placed on equal footing. He promoted a syncretic and spiritual brand of the Hindu religion in which all creeds were bound to merge, or converge. (Jaffrelot 38)

The most prominent advocate for this discourse was Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, who made Gandhi's vision for India the basis for his foreign policy of non-alignment. The second version, Hindu nationalism, is religiously motivated and propagates that India is, first and foremost, a Hindu country. Therefore, groups of different faiths or ethnicity need to assimilate. The origin of Hindu nationalism lies in the 19th century and, thus, long before the foundation of the Indian nation-state, when the caste of the Brahmins intended to counter the narrative of the colonial rulers, who fashioned themselves as the saviors of India from the dark ages (cf. Ogden 3). The Brahmins, in turn, branded the Christian colonizers as the menacing Other, who were not originally from India but an invasive force. Over the years, the Hindu nationalists added the Muslims in India, the Indian Congress, or even China to the list of their potential threats (cf. Ogden 5-13).

Thus, two principal differences between the secular and the Hindu national discourse exist: the construction and the treatment of an other as well as the definition of being Indian. The secular national discourse does not pursue the question of the original Indian in detail, hence, following

Gandhi's harmonious approach of convergence:

There is in this discourse [i.e. the secular national discourse] a perception and acceptance of the fusion and synthesis of different races that eventually came to constitute the Indian nation. In fact, for those articulating the secular national discourse, the question of original inhabitants is not of primary significance and is not pursued assiduously. [...] Thus, the nation becomes a much more ambiguous thing and is constituted by a mixture of races: Aryan, Dravidian, Thracian, Semitic and Mongolian, and by people of a variety of religious faiths who nevertheless became distinctly Indian. [...]

But what constituted this Indianness? For Nehru, the essence lay in some 'impulse,' 'inner urge,' 'an Indian geist.' [...] The defining spirit of India was in its unity and tolerance. (Commuri 54)

The leitmotif of tolerance in the Indian national discourse may appear a secular achievement.

Nehru's definition of the Indian spirit is, however, at least partially constructed along religious boundaries, as Gitika Commuri exemplifies. In his writings on the Indian nation, Nehru glorifies the Indian past before the Islamic invasion and characterizes the former achievements as modern in contrast to the achievements from the time of the Moghuls (cf. Commuri 50). While Nehru, hence, affirms unity and tolerance as the Indian core concepts, he cannot hide his very own religious and cultural heritage. His approach is, to some extent, a Hindu approach.

Nevertheless, of course, Nehru does not name the Hindus the dominating religious and cultural community in India. This aspect sets him apart from the representatives of Hindu nationalism, such as Madhav Sadashiv Gowalkar and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. To them, the issue of the original inhabitants in India is crucial. Despite the evidence against their belief, these representatives argue that the Arians, their ancestral group, were indigenous to India. They wish to be a part of 'original' India before the arrival of the foreign invaders who, following their argument, have no right to claim the land (cf. Commuri 59-60).

On the one hand, the two versions of the Indian national discourse may differ with regard to the aspect of the Other, but on the other hand, they are connected by a fascination for the Hindu past, which Hindu nationalism affirms more strongly than secular discourse (cf. *ibid.*). In other words: The Hindu past is, in both cases, the basis of the Indian nation-state discourse. They share this characteristic with Western national discourses, in which the retrospection of a nation's achievements is also an indispensable element (cf. B. Anderson 11).

While India, hence, shares similarities with the Western conception of the nation-state, it also

shows a mainly Indian trait. This trait is spirituality, spiritually motivated tolerance, to be precise.

Therefore, the two discourses have another aspect in common:

Both streams of identity discourse perceive the Self as tolerant and spiritual as opposed to the Other that is perceived as violent, aggressive and imposing. Common to both discourses are two strands of argument: that Indian civilization did not undertake aggression against others and was non-violent, and that the Indian civilization (essentially Hindu civilization) has welcomed and hosted peoples of different faiths. (Commuri 76)

Spirituality seems to be the essential component of both Indian discourses and, hence, at least in their opinion to the Indian self. This spirituality is in both discourses culturally rooted in Hinduism, which is perceived as non-violent in contrast to the Muslim invaders or Christian colonizers. In other words, the trait of tolerance becomes inseparably entwined with spirituality, which contrasts with Western concepts of a nation, as these are founded on the separation of state and the Church. Despite the similarity of spirituality, the evaluation of the former invaders or colonizers is gradual in both discourses. Within the secular discourse, these groups are just among the peoples that arrived at the subcontinent and became more or less part of its population, whereas, in the Hindu nationalist discourse, these groups are the menacing others.

Both discourses, however, use the element of spirituality to distance the Indian nation from the western ones; in their opinion, India is “non-materialistic, spiritual, and universal” (Commuri 77). In contrast, the western nations are defined as “assertive, acquisitive and seeking of power” (ibid.). They use spirituality to get an angle on western hegemony and design an alternative concept of the nation-state and national identity. The issue of spirituality makes it clear that the former colony decided to define itself without taking its former colonizers’ views into account. It is an act of emancipation.

To some extent, it is also an inversion of the Orientalist lense (ibid.). The former colonizers used to consider themselves to have the moral high ground in contrast to the Indians to whom they believed to bring the light of civilization:

Thus the economic and political aggression of the Company [i.e. East India Company] was in fact presented as the arrival of history in India, and invested with unique moral authority. If Britain was shown to be the harbinger of history, the most visible of this momentous event was held to be the arrival of order, justice, and legality. Conversely, if India was a country without history, the manifestation of this lack was to be found in the 'naturally' criminal inclination of the native inhabitants. (Mukherjee 25)

The western colonial powers not only subjugated their colonies but also used them for their very own identification process. The colonials served as a foil onto which western societies could project their animalistic tendencies, such as “greed, fear or socially unacceptable sexual desires,” while at the same time imagining themselves to uphold higher ethical standards (Rutherford, *After Identity* 68). Hence, internal differences in western societies were relocated to the outside to create a fragile national whole. In other words, the colonial powers created a world in black and white by degrading the colonized to mere animals and by elevating themselves to a god-like position due to their civilizing potential. The colonized, on the other hand, incorporated the dualism of the West as a virtuous, strong, and aesthetic entity vs. the colonies as the inferior others into their belief system, consequently excluding themselves (cf. Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism” 42-43). That led to the glorification of the West and the degradation of the colonies by themselves.

Following the argument of many postcolonial critics, a simple inversion of the Orientalist lens would, however, not be enough to overcome the power structure inherent in the relationship of the former colonizer and former colonized. According to Homi Bhabha, no nation, no culture can claim an “originary, holistic, organic identity,” as they all rely on means of representation to give their community meaning (Bhabha, “The Third Space” 210). Being the original would have relieved any culture from ongoing self-redefinition. That not being the case, every community has to define itself against the foil of others continuously. At the same time, it has to cover up the flaws in its narrative.

Instead of insisting on the futile attempt of identification through continuous self-isolation, Bhabha, along with many postcolonial critics, propagates a dialogical approach embracing the already representational character of identity formation. Identity is always formed by the interaction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and ‘me’ and ‘the Other.’ It is dialogical by nature (cf. Jenkins 53-54).

For sure, the question arises how these critics could stick to the dialogical approach after the linguistic turn, which advocates the boundaries of language as a meaning-generating unit. Cognitive concepts of words vary due to different life experiences, which ultimately means that language can only be exercised subjectively (cf. Derrida 32). The postcolonial critics, like Homi Bhabha or Stuart Hall, legitimize their position by abandoning the urge for universal truth and naming it unachievable or even unrealistic. Rather, they underline the very weakness of language saying that identity is tied to representational actions that need to be repeated frequently to form temporary identities:

Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write - the positions of enunciation. What recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say 'in our own name', of ourselves, and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of are never identical, never exactly in the same place. Identity is not transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 222)

Stuart Hall underscores the procedural aspect of identity, thus, historicizing the individual. Everybody has its speaking position that is determined by time and place. Hence, the individual evolves, constantly changes, and is never the same as five seconds ago. Put negatively, this assumption leaves us with an unstable and fragile identity concept. Put positively, it also allows us to learn, to change our opinions, and to grow. The postmodern and postcolonial understanding of identity triggers a wide range of options and fears simultaneously. Metamorphoses become a universal concept for every individual.

These findings can be transferred to the collective level. Neither national nor cultural identities are fixed but always objects to historical changes (cf. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 225). That opposes the national concept with its mythical past and national future, therefore, counteracting its de-historicizing effort.

To explore the idea of cultural flexibility in the Indian context, all selected three postmodern crime novels present influential criminals. This selection primarily refers to the fact that during the colonial era, Indians were said to have a strong propensity for crime, which was genetically

determined from the point of view of the British colonial masters. Crime in colonial India was thus perceived as inherent to the Indians and not as a consequence of the socio-economic conditions under which they had to live (cf. Mukherjee 25).

The analysis will scrutinize whether Aravind Adiga, Vikram Chandra, and Amitav Ghosh are still following the principle of internal exclusion. The latter means the internalization of the colonialist assumptions into the personal conceptions of the formerly colonized. Additionally, the analysis will include various aspects of Indian nation-building, namely traces of the secular and Hindu nationalist discourse, the representation of an internal or an external other, and the relation of Western versus Indian nation-building.

Appropriating the Generic Conventions of Crime Fiction to the Indian Context

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* won him the Man Booker Prize in 2008 and is, until today, his most acclaimed and most criticized piece of work. The novel sheds light on the issue of upward mobility and the relationship between upper and lower classes in contemporary India. In letters to the Chinese president, the protagonist, Balram Halwai, narrates the story of his life, which begins in the Indian countryside, leads him to Bombay, where he kills his boss and steals the latter's money.

The structural arrangement of *The White Tiger* in letters points to the genre of the epistolary novel. Nevertheless, assigning *The White Tiger* to one genre only is impossible. Weishin Gui, for example, presents the generic relations *The White Tiger* holds with a *Bildungsroman* as well as gothic literature (cf. 182). Ines Detmers views the novel to be in the tradition of the Victorian condition-of-England novel (cf. "New India?" 539), and Ulka Anjaria is like Detmers interested in the traces of social realism in *The White Tiger* but on a slightly broader scale (cf. 115).

The positions of the above mentioned critical authors are valid. Nevertheless, the focus of this dissertation will be on the connection of *The White Tiger* with the tradition of crime literature and other selected literary conventions.

Halwai's letters to the Chinese Premier serve as a kind of confession. This strategy is not unheard of in crime fiction. Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is also essentially a confession of the killer he writes after being found guilty by Hercule Poirot in the last chapter (cf. 365-368). Although the frame of both novels is the same, *The White Tiger* explicates many differences in its execution. While Dr. Sheppard is detected, Balram Halwai's murder remains unsolved, and no police officer can function as a match for him. Despite official police efforts to catch him, Halwai leads a comfortable life and has his own company. Within the novel, he will not be judged. The absolute triumph of the criminal gives us already a hint that *The White Tiger* is to be situated in the subgenre of postmodern crime fiction.

Before the actual text analysis begins, central aspects of the classic detective novel will be repeated. This repetition is necessary as the novel often refers to the classical genre conventions and contorts them. The classical detective fiction is based on the ideal of rationality, which means a clear causal relationship between clues and the killing, the supreme standard of the hyper-rational detective, and the victory of order over chaos (cf. Tani 13-14). This connection of crime fiction with the values of Enlightenment should be kept in mind because it will help in the understanding of the twists Aravind Adiga applies to the genre and the superior position of the former colonizers.

The White Tiger counterposes the Western assumption that the state can guarantee justice. Instead, Halwai exposes the state's need to create narratives in order to govern people:

Just because drivers and cooks in Delhi are reading Murder Weekly, it doesn't mean that they are all about to slit their masters' necks. Of course, they'd like to. Of course, a billion servants are secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses - and that's why the government of India publishes this magazine and sells it on the streets for just four and a half rupees so that even the poor can buy it. You see, the murderer in the magazine is so mentally disturbed and sexually deranged that not one reader would like to be like him - and in the end he always gets caught by some honest, hardworking police officer (ha!), or goes mad and hangs himself by a bedsheet after writing a sentimental letter to his mother or primary school teacher, or is chased, beaten, bugged, and garroted by the brother of the woman he has done in. So if your driver is flicking through the pages of Murder Weekly, relax. No danger to you. Quite the contrary.

It's when your driver starts to read about Gandhi and Buddha that it's time to wet your pants, Mr Jiabao.⁴⁷

Halwai detects the government's technique of fashioning the murderer as an abnormal and

⁴⁷ Adiga, Aravind. "The White Tiger", 125-26. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "WT".

punishable outsider of society, while at the same time providing the public with an outlet for its social frustration. The masses are kept in place to continuously serve the upper class by picturing attempts of upward mobility as unnatural and against the law:

From this there emerge two lines of objection of crime and of the criminal. On the one hand, the criminal designated as the enemy of all, whom it is in the interest of all to track down, falls outside the pact, disqualifies himself as a citizen and emerges, bearing within him as it were, a wild fragment of nature; he appears as a villain, a monster, a madman, perhaps, a sick and, before long, 'abnormal' individual. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 101)

In *Discipline and Punishment*, Michel Foucault analyzes the changing approaches of penalty in the jurisdiction. He demonstrates how the perpetrator is re-integrated into society to serve the latter's purposes. The medium for achieving this result is the body. In other words, the criminal's anomaly is adjusted for the social body's needs (cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 109).

The depiction of the criminal as "a wild fragment of nature" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 101) structurally reminds us of the British opinion of Indians as a less civilized race that needs to be supported by the enlightened messengers of the Empire. The colonizers thought of all Indians as criminals or backward animals, a stigma only a few Western individuals shared (cf. Mukherjee 33).

The Indian government, which presents itself as the rightful successor of the colonial rule, applies a similar tactic: Not all Indians are barbaric – only those who violently oppose the existing power structures and the civilized code the government transferred from the European system to the Indian one. The government uses the de-humanization of criminals for the further marginalization of the lower classes. The idea behind this ideological appropriation is that the Indian state finally arrived in modern times and should have the same legislation and jurisdiction as the Western world. The transfer of this legal system includes the myth of omnipotence and justice: ill-doers will be persecuted and brought down by hard-working state representatives (cf. Roy, "Introduction" xiv).

Halwai is aware of the incorrectness of this narrative due to his successful coup, in any case. Rather, he unveils that the law which governs India is not the state's version but jungle law:

'Listen,' the old driver said when I was handing him over the hundred rupees he had been promised as a bonus. 'It's not

enough to drive. You've got to become a driver. You've got to get the right attitude, understand? Anyone tries to overtake you on the road, do this' he clenched his fist and shook it - and call him a sisterfucker a few times. The road is a jungle, get it? A good driver must roar to get ahead.' (WT 57)

Members of the Indian lower classes fight and make sacrifices every day to move ahead. The official myth of playing by the rules, and, hence, moving forward/upward is false. India's reality is still the reality of the jungle. That does not imply that Aravind Adiga complies with the colonizers' view of India as a backward country. On the contrary, he demonstrates the western ideals of progress and Enlightenment as mere illusion, consequently opposing the established power relation between former colonizer and former colonized.

For instance, the state's omnipotent narrative is not the road to success, as the police-generated wanted posters of Halwai show. Details of his appearance and the murder's circumstances are overrated or omitted and forestall his detention (cf. WT 22, 32). The unspecific relation between clue and perpetrator undermines the essential assumption of the causal relation in classical detective fiction. The disconnection makes detective work impossible and an issue to chance. Nevertheless, Adiga does not stop at eroding this upheld ideal of classical detective fiction in a way typical for postmodern crime fiction. He even destabilizes the very metaphor of rationality:

Sometimes, in my apartment, I turn on both chandeliers, and then I lie down amid all the light, and I just start laughing. A man in hiding, and yet he's surrounded by chandeliers!
There - I'm revealing the secret to a successful escape. The police searched for me in darkness: but I hid myself in light. (WT 118)

This visible hiding place has a long tradition in crime fiction and goes back to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, in which Dupin manages to replace a compromising letter from a blackmailing minister after the police failed.⁴⁸ The detective correctly concludes that as the letter was not accurately hidden somewhere, it may not be concealed at all (cf. Poe 144). Just like the minister does not try to conceal the letter in secrecy, Halwai does not flee into his former milieu. He does not hide at all and uses the money to become more and more successful and more visible. This recourse to literary predecessors in crime fiction fosters the anticipation of Halwai's

⁴⁸ Another example in this line of literary tradition is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia," in which the king's henchmen search Irene Adler's home in vain. (cf. 442) Only Sherlock Holmes is able to manipulate her into giving away the visible hiding place of the compromising photograph. (cf. Doyle 444)

arrest. However, it does not happen in the novel. Therefore, *The White Tiger* can be associated with a breach away from literary tradition, as the murderer does not get caught, which is typical for postmodern crime fiction.

In contrast to most of the other novels discussed in this thesis, the killer's identity is known. Thus, the reader is not deprived of this knowledge. *The White Tiger* still provides a pervasive sense of insecurity. It is founded on the satirical disintegration of today's dominant ideas.

The state's measurements to handle criminals fail and a murderer hides in light, while successfully leading a company. The light metaphor points to the European period of Enlightenment, which furthered social order and rationality, characteristics of a supreme human being. Halwai demonstrates, however, that the light has none of these qualities but can be used to make himself appear as an enlightened and adjusted human who conforms with the desired narrative of a modern and further advancing India. The metaphorical light of the Enlightenment movement has been degraded to mere chandeliers in the apartment of an upward moving Indian.⁴⁹

Regarding the usage of classical detective genre conventions, one has to conclude that Aravind Adiga erodes traditions. He features a prosperous criminal who writes his murder confession. Instead of him being caught, as in Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Halwai

⁴⁹ In her essay "Re-definitions of India and Individuality in Adiga's *The White Tiger*" Kathleen Waller also points to a cultural re-interpretation in Adiga's novel by investigating the usage of the color white, which can be associated with the light of a chandelier. Waller reaches the conclusion that the color white – just like the light metaphor – receives a particular twist due to transcultural re-interpretation:

The white space of the inner circle can be absent or present, often described as "void of whole." White symbolism pervades the text and is confused by a multicultural reading of it. Whereas in Western cultures white is seen as a representation of innocence and purity, Asian cultures link white with death and ominous feelings. Asian texts also lack the immediate connotations of race with white that Western society might place on it, especially when looking at the concepts of white and black together. (5)

White is neither the color of innocence, nor does it hold a racial quality. Instead, Waller points out that white has traditionally been the color of mourning in Asia. Furthermore, as she exemplifies through her text analysis, white becomes reinterpreted with nothingness in the Derridian sense. By fully embracing his nothingness, his invisible role in Indian society, Halwai finds a way to re-invent his own identity by murdering his boss and founding his own company with the stolen money, therefore becoming the White Tiger, a visible and self-made entrepreneur (Waller, 4-5). The motif of the color white may not work in the same way as the light metaphor in *The White Tiger*; but the two of them share the characteristics of re-interpretation in the Indian context and, therefore, explicate the possibility of agency on a cultural and identity level.

succeeds with his coup and shows no sign of regret. Contrariwise, he even reflects the imperative of further killings in the future (cf. WT 316). The murderer's confession, the traditional way of reinstating society's order is void, which makes *The White Tiger* "a middle-class nightmare" (Anwer 314). In this way, the confession has a stabilizing effect on society but not as in the bourgeois classical detective fiction. It strengthens jungle law, instead.

The confession form, the letter to Wen Jiabao, creates an almost intimate relationship between Halwai and the Chinese Premier. It makes the latter an accomplice in the killing:

Now, Your Excellency, a great leap forward in Sino-Indian relations has been taken in the past seven nights. *Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai*, as they say. I have told you all you need to know about entrepreneurship – how it is fostered, how it overcomes hardships, how it remains steadfast to its true goals, and how it is rewarded with a gold medal of success. Sir: although my story is done, and my secrets are now your secrets, if you allow me, I would leave you with one final word. (WT 317)

Halwai seems to fashion himself as a political player by referring to the slogan *Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai* that originates from the panchsheel agreement, in which India consented to drop any territorial claim in Tibet in favor of China (Commuri 238). Thus, his confession appears to be a business exchange or an attempt to reach a political agreement. Choosing a Chinese political figure as an addressee is from an Indian standpoint insofar interesting as India shares with China a long history of rivalry when it comes to political influence in the Asiatic region without "the deep cultural and historical intertwining [as] with [...] Islamic Pakistan and Kashmere [...]" (Commuri 233). By sharing his knowledge on entrepreneurship and upward mobility, Halwai also hints at the more significant economic role that China and India play globally in the contemporary world. The Indian-Chinese rivalry, thus, has political and financial characteristics. Another aspect to be considered in *The White Tiger* is the construction of sympathy. In classical detective or hard-boiled fiction, the detective is favored due to intellectual or moral superiority, and the killer often acts on base motives, which leads to an obvious arrangement of likability. Balram Halwai, however, does not fit into this pattern. On the one hand, he is a ruthless murderer; on the other hand, he is also ill-treated by his master and his family (cf. WT 154, 164). Thus, the reader is not devoid of sympathy for the killer. Balram Halwai intensifies this effect as

the first-person narrator of *The White Tiger*. He becomes the representative of the lower classes in India and almost a heroic character despite being a murderer (cf. Detmers, “New India?” 540).

Lena Khor agrees with Iris Detmers in that they both interpret the first-person narrator, Balram Halwai, as the voice of the subaltern (cf. Detmers 539, Khor 62). Khor, however, takes it a step further and states that Halwai’s function as an unreliable narrator, which in her opinion is not based on “the usual biased perspectives that inevitably occur in cases of self-representation,” leads the reader to question his prejudices and value system by satirically over-fulfilling stereotypes about the poor.

On the other hand, Megha Anwer contradicts Detmers and Khor, arguing that due to Halwai’s rise to a successful businessman, he loses his status as a subaltern and cannot speak for them (cf. 309). Halwai should, however, not be understood as an a-historical protagonist despite this change of status. His experiences in the India of darkness shape his character and are an essential motivator for the reader that the latter can find sympathy for Halwai.

His excessive politeness calling Wen Jiabao always ‘Your Excellency,’ his acute analysis of Indian society, and his posing as an Indian know-it-all, give him a human and comical trait. The reader ultimately does not approve of Halwai’s deed but at least considers him to be an amusing literary character. His professional success and happy ending do not leave the readers dissatisfied. Instead, it is the Indian society that is heavily criticized and appears dislikable as it produces such individuals by not providing other alternatives. The society which is still meant to be protected by the detective in classical detective fiction becomes the origin of crimes in *The White Tiger*.

Consequently, Aravind Adiga pays attention to the deconstruction of the classical detective fiction. He does so in great detail. This approach has to be seen in the broader context of postcolonial issues. The detective genre is originally a Western one and has no tradition in Indian

literature itself (cf. Orsini 436). Therefore, it can be viewed as another artifact of the former colonizers that is heavily imbued with Western ideals, namely rationality and historical progress. In deconstructing the genre by continuously referring to its literary traditions and changing them, Adiga illustrates a postcolonial approach to the genre. It is not necessary for him, the author, to follow the generic rules just as his countrymen are free to choose a different path. This discussion of postcolonial alternatives will be further pursued in the chapter on Indian nationalism, as this will grant additional insights.

Halwai's success illustrates that he has learned to play by the rules that are not absolute entities but adaptable narratives. The murderer was able to go mainstream due to the correct usage of contemporary ideas. Therefore, *The White Tiger* can also be understood as critical of the Indian government and its desire for global upward mobility.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* features, like *The White Tiger*, a criminal as protagonist indicating the novel's ties to the crime fiction.⁵⁰ The police officer chasing him is nothing but a minor character who struggles with his disillusionment. Like many of his literary predecessors, Assistant Superintendent of Police Jyoti Das impresses with meticulous and attractive looks.⁵¹ Unlike his role models, his appearance does not transfer into perfect investigations. On the contrary, his style is nothing but a veil to cover his distrust in humanity:

Jyoti's father, glaring, nervously wiping his forehead, muttered: Chaos; that's all that's left. Chaos, chaos. The note of churning in his voice caught in Jyoti's mind, as it always did, churning a drifting cloud of fears. He got up and ran down to the lake. There, with the chaotic surging of human life invisible behind him, he saw a shimmering, velvety carpet of ducks and cormorants and storks covering the lake. [...] Looking at them in the flesh he was struck with wonder, and as he watched them he gloried in the peace, the order, the serenity granted by a law on such a vast and immutable scale. (CR 37)

Das is not a detective who can take on human vices. He is overwhelmed and prefers the painting of birds to ordering human chaos, which is the essential quality of every literary detective.

⁵⁰ As Clair Chambers points out, *The Circle of Reason* also shows the influence of the *Bildungsroman*, the picaresque novel, the novel of ideas, magical realism, and the Hindu epic (cf. 33-34).

⁵¹ Ghosh, Amitav. "The Circle of Reason", 123. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "CR".

Instead, “he becomes an agent in a bureaucratic machine responsible for the deaths of several innocent people [...]” (S. Singh 51).

Das’ role as a potential savior of society is further undermined by the simple fact that he is only a supporting character who desperately tries to catch up with the protagonist Alu. The latter grows up with his uncle, Balaram, who founds an alternative, non-governmental school which is annihilated in a police ambush (cf. CR 148-49). On his escape to the West, Alu is not only supported by secret societies but also establishes one that forbids the usage of money (cf. CR 280-81). Because of his involvement in groups opposing governmental values, Alu is the protagonist and antagonist at the same time – just like Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger*. There exists, however, one significant difference between Alu and Balram: While Balram is a murderer outwitting government officials, Alu is an innocent citizen participating in actions that are perceived as threatening but are in themselves non-violent. He becomes the paradigm for exorbitant government measures.

The notion embattled by the government as well as the alternative organization is reason. How different the concepts are, becomes evident in Balaram’s obsession with phrenology. This science that was popular in the late 19th century presumes a connection between the shape of the skull and a human’s social performance. Nowadays it is outdated, which grants Balaram’s warnings about a baby’s future murders a comic trait:

The exhibit, that is to say your son, has distinct protuberances above the asterion and over the temporal muscle above his ears. Furthermore, his mandible and zygomatic arches are already developed to so extraordinary a degree that I can only tell you, with the utmost regret, that he reproduces almost exactly the structure of a Typical Homicidal. With careful nurture you may perhaps be able to hold him down to mere felony, but no further, I fear, no further. Pray, Bhudeb-babu, for I know you believe in prayer, pray that you may not be his first victim. (CR 24)

Followers of contemporary criminology know about certain social risks and the influence of stressful situations that amplify violent behavior in a person. They would, however, entirely refrain from the predictability of killings due to the form of the skull.

Balaram’s interest in Phrenology is based on this link, though: “In this science the inside and the outside, the mind and the body, what people do and what they are, are one.” (CR 17). Balaram’s

belief in Phrenology, as well as the reader's knowledge about its falseness, not only picture him as a comic figure. To the reader, he appears to be an innocent fool who may be misguided but not a threatening terrorist that calls for governmental elimination. The unnecessary bloodshed of Balaram and other co-workers at school are the last incentive to sympathize with all the members of the non-governmental organizations presented in this novel (cf. CR 148-49). On the other hand, the governments are portrayed as inhuman entities who carry out measurements that are totally out of proportion. The result is the reader siding with the seeming criminals.

Furthermore, the retreat to the outmoded Phrenology can, despite its tendency for ridiculousness, be seen as a criticism of the current reasoning culture, as "the narrative resists any easy distinction between notions of a tradition of Western reason and mystic Eastern tradition." (Jones, 436). According to Balaram, it has lost touch with everyday life and is far too abstract. That is why he organizes his school differently: It contains a department of pure reason which includes the subjects reading, writing, arithmetic, history of science, and technology. But the school also offers weaving and tailoring in the department of practical reason, which illustrates Balaram's mission of designing reason as a tool to make a living (cf. CR 99).

The reason for his downfall and the destruction of his school is his objective to improve the living situation for the locals and the refugees from Bangladesh by eliminating all germs. (cf. CR 61). He fails because his way of reasoning is misunderstood by the government that interprets Balaram's accumulation of carbolic acid as preparations for a terrorist attack (cf. CR 131-32).

Balaram's quest for reason explicates the latter's relative quality. Reasoning does not provide universal truth. It always depends on one's point of view. The conflict between Balaram and the government is a conflict of two different reasoning cultures unable to make sense of the other. By stripping reason of its absoluteness and by making the readers sympathize with Balaram, Amitav Ghosh also undercuts the main attribute and prerequisite of detective fiction. If there are multiple ways of reasoning, the ultimate naming of perpetrators becomes impossible. Instead,

Ghosh visualizes that the monopoly of reasoning lies with the powerful and not with the righteous. The powerful can call any group terrorist and eliminate it.

The issue of terrorism has always been an important factor in Indian politics. In May 1985, the Indian government introduced a law called TADA – Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. The act was related to the unrest following the Sikh massacre in 1984 and, at first, limited to Punjab with the highest Sikh population density in India. It was directed explicitly at terrorist attacks or conspiracies and limited the rights of free speech: Indians were not allowed to pose any government-critical questions (cf. Kalhan et al. 145). TADA was severely criticized by human rights organizations, as it caused the torture and arbitrary deaths of innocents.

In retrospect, the criticism proved to be accurate, as TADA was more prevention of than a reaction to terrorism:

Together with qualitative evidence concerning TADA's application, these data suggest that TADA functioned more as a tool to enable preventive detention and police abuse than as a meaningful and effective criminal law. Indeed, in 1987 the Punjab director-general of police implicitly conceded that the police frequently used TADA primarily as a preventive detention law, describing a common practice by which the police would first detain at least some individuals for the maximum two years available under the NSA's preventive detention authority before then charging and detaining the same individuals under TADA, in order to "keep them in custody for another year or two." (Kalhan et al. 148)

In short, TADA was an act designed to capture, torture, or kill first and maybe never ask any questions. The same is true for the annihilation of Balaram's school. The police suspected an act of terrorism instead of a measurement to clean refugee camps of all bacteria.⁵² Thus, *The Circle of Reason* can also be understood as a criticism of the Indian government's policies which, according to Arundhati Roy, are still intact in the current law POTA:

In this age of hyper-nationalism, as long as the people who are killed are labeled gangsters, terrorists, insurgents or extremists, their killers can strut around as crusaders in the national interest and are unanswerable to no one. Even if it were true (which it most certainly isn't) that every person who has been killed was in fact a gangster, terrorist, insurgent, or extremist - it only tells us there is something terribly wrong with a society that drives so many people to take such desperate measures.

⁵² Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak note that the refugees' border crossing involves more than just the loss of their culture and motherland. The place they leave is hostile; the place they arrive at does not welcome them. Refugees are transitional beings. They are caught in a power relation that makes sure they will not be able to change their situation. Fences, surveillance, the impossible attainment of citizenship keep them in place, hidden away from the national public. They are sentenced to non-belonging and exclusion (Butler, Spivak, *Who sings the Nation-State?* 6).

The Indian state's proclivity to harass and terrorize people has been institutionalized, consecrated by the enactment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which has been promulgated in ten states. ("How Deep Shall We Dig?" 27)

Roy shares the belief with Ghosh that the anti-terrorist acts of the Indian government are mostly a pawn to keep up control. They are merely used as a cover to reduce anomalies/independent thinkers in Indian society and to tighten the police's power. The government's cleaning actions are unlike Balaram's not aimed at bacteria but human deviators. It does not need proper reasoning on its side. Simple, self-defined labels are enough to eliminate human life. That is the right of the powerful.

The foundation and destruction of Alu's secret society in al-Ghazira follow the same pattern as Balaram's. He and his followers abstain from using money to contain the spread of germs (cf. CR 280-81). But a society that shuns money is a society that rebels against capitalism. Thus, it must be annihilated (cf. CR 346-49). While Balaram confronts the scientific discourse, Alu rejects capitalism. Both components were introduced to the colonial context by the West and are immanent parts of a postcolonial society. The governmental reactions demonstrate the state's fear of losing control:

When he traces the police activity of the post independence Indian state in the face of luridly imagined political threats, Ghosh underscores the repressive aspects of colonial rationality that linger in the structures of postcolonial government. He suggests that the postcolonial state is heir to the anxieties about order and control that are characteristic of colonial regimes, and the full force of postcolonial rationality is seen in the state's response to insurgency and subaltern migrancy. (Siddiqi 140)

Interestingly, the government's anxiety about chaos is echoed by the secret society's desire to establish a new order. They oppose each other but aim at more or less the same thing: a system that allows them a decent and ordered life. For the migrants in Alu's circle, the governmental order means chaos. The contemporary system denies equality and freedom for every human being, as it excludes the weak. The neo-liberal myth cannot keep its promises.⁵³

⁵³ In her analysis of *The Circle of Reason*, Claire Chambers points out that the overreaching and exploitation of migrants in Al-Ghazira can also be interpreted in relation to the genre of the picaresque novel, whose influences she reveals in Ghosh's novel. She considers the following characteristics of the genre to be fulfilled in Ghosh's novel: poverty, petty crime, migration to improve one's situation, social satire, a community of the destitute (cf. 36-37). Chambers interprets Ghosh re-situating of the plot in a neo-colonial context, and the resulting criticism of the capitalist system of the oil state as an adaptation of the picaresque novel to postcolonial conditions means (cf. 38-39)

Amitav Ghosh uses a comparison to demonstrate the relation between Alu's society and the West that is greatly reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's mimicry concept ("Of Mimicry" 87):

[...] I saw that very crowd absolutely silent, listening to a man, hardly more than a boy, talk, and that, too, not in one language but in three, four, God knows how many, a khichri of words; couscous, rice, dal and onions, all stirred together, stamped and boiled, Arabic with Hindi, Hindi swallowing Bengali, English doing a dance; tongues unravelled and woven together - nonsense, you say, tongues unravelled are nothing but nonsense - but there again you have a mystery, for everyone understood him, perfectly, like their mother's lullabies. They understood him, for his voice was only the question; the answers were their own. (CR 279)

The combination of multiple languages within an insurgent group which is dedicated to the well-being of the lower classes is a reinstatement of the Christian Pentecost community. Both groups, the contemporary migrants deprived of civil rights and the first members of the early Christian church, are or were oppressed by a dominant regime but are or were able to connect with the unprivileged parts of society by proposing a new form of equality. The Christian version is ideologically based on the equal value of the soul irrespective of an individual's income. Thus, personal success was no essential marker in a Christian community. The same is true for Alu's society in which everyone donates his wages to a fund that supports the whole society (cf. CR 282). The similarity of the multiple languages heard simultaneously hints at the universal approach of both societies. The fact that in the case of *The Circle of Reason*, those languages are not Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, but Arabic, Hindi, and Bengali refers to the extension of the early-Christian idea of equality to the postcolonial societies.

The mixing of languages in Alu's community mirrors, on the one hand, the Christian tradition in which the diversification of the 'original' language equals a fall from God's grace (e.g., Tower of Babel) and the unification of languages like on Pentecost highlight a step towards the return to paradise. On the other hand, the changed languages pose as a breakaway from the dominant idea of Pentecost, therefore, fulfilling the requirement of Homi Bhabha's mimicry, which "problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the nation is no longer naturalizable. [It is] a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simple mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it inimitable." ("Of Mimicry" 87).

In other words, the incomplete copy produced by the postcolonial mimicry destabilizes the given power structures due to the copy's seeming coincidental similarity and disparity. Western beholders observe the resemblances but find their absolute position shaken by the slight differences. Thus, marginalized postcolonial aspects shake the dominant discourse and urge the West to enter an open dialogue.

In his analysis of the very same scene – Alu speaking in multiple tongues to a group of people – Tuomas Huttunen concludes that Alu establishes a new form of communication which is devoid of creating a one-dimensional discourse:

It is discourse retaining alterity and independence of the person/s it is directed to. Remarkably, the crowd answers Alu through silence as an act or a voice: it does not attempt to 'know', or define anything through linguistically recognizable discourse. This way, the communicative relationship maintains both the diversity of the group and its wholeness and secures the agency and independence of each of its participants. Alu's speech represents the ethically important approaching and searching of the other in the form of a question. As the other, or the one observed, cannot strictly speaking be known [...], the question in its function of approaching the other is of much more importance than the answer. What is more, the observer and the observed are in contact simultaneously. They are both active participants in this communicative act, in which no one is reduced to the position of a passive target of scrutiny without an agency or voice [...]. (138-39)

The slippages Alu's community produces on a lingual and economic level have political dimensions and, hence, bear a threat for the national governments. The oppression which its members face is an obstacle, but the comparison with the early-Christian church is not only the source of Western discomfort but also carries the hope for a positive outcome of the pro-migrant movement. Its fragility becomes apparent when the government forces kill half of its members or when Alu and the other survivors try to find their way back to India after having arrived in Algeria (cf. CR 422-23). The migrants' journey has not yet ended.

Recapitulating one could record that *The Circle of Reason* can be counted as postmodern crime fiction. Early on, Ghosh destabilizes the absolute Western notion of reason and creates sympathy for the criminals who follow their reasoning. Additionally, he marginalizes the central characteristics of detective fiction, the detective, and features the seeming chaotic forces. Ghosh implements an inverted outlook on reason and philosophy, which challenges the dominant discourse. Thus, the generic changes in the novel are parallel to the metaphysical alterations.

The tyranny of the imposed Western knowledge is also a central aspect in another novel by Amitav Ghosh: *The Calcutta Chromosome*. In this book, we have several detectives. Antar discovers the ID of his missing colleague L. Murugan and starts investigating his disappearance (cf. Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome* 22). Murugan, in turn, did research on Sir Ronald Ross and his discovery of the mosquito transmitting malaria, whose existence would not have been proven if it had not been for the secret Indian society that opposes the Western concept of knowledge. This group knows a way to immortality, which is based on the transmission of one person's genetic information into another one and the subsequent re-arrangement of that person's brain structure (cf. Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome* 251). *The Calcutta Chromosome* could be called a postcolonial medical thriller in which the Indian society experiences a criminalization due to the application of the secret cult trope. But like in *The Circle of Reason* the secret society becomes the origin of powerful resistance to the Western discourse:

Maybe this other team started with the idea that knowledge is self-contradictory; maybe they believed to know something is to change it, therefore in knowing something, you've already changed what you think you know so you don't really know it at all: you only know its history. Maybe they thought that knowledge couldn't begin without acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge. (Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome* 105)

The idea of the impossibility of knowledge immanently objects to the concept of the literary detective. Knowledge is impenetrable. The detective can never know the perpetrator. Accordingly, the detectives in *The Calcutta Chromosome* fail. Although they discover the secret society, they are not able to communicate their results. The moment they find the solution, they are absorbed into the alternative system by dying (cf. Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome* 310-11). Antar and Murugan do not die for good, in any case. They rather become a voice of the secret society destined to leave traces of their existence for the detectives to come (cf. Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome* 310). In opposing a clean solution by the detective, the agents of the impossibility of knowledge also counterpose the Western concept of science (cf. Sharrad 220). Like in *The Circle of Reason*, the West holds the monopoly on empiricism, and the postcolonial characters construct an alternative system.

Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*⁵⁴ deals unlike *The White Tiger* but similar to *The Circle of Reason* with Indian shadow societies whose existence is not only tied to the mobster background. Instead, the societies in Chandra's novel also have a political or religious function. One of these shadow societies utilizes the Mumbai Hindu *bhai*, Ganesh Gaitonde, to threaten the overall well-being of Indian society with an attempt to erase the city in an atomic explosion.⁵⁵ The counterpart and opponent of Gaitonde is inspector Sartaj Singh who barely prevents the detonation (cf. SG 877). Singh's investigation starts as a routine inspection of Gaitonde's suicide and the murder he committed on a female hustler, Jojo, shortly before his death (cf SG 946-47). After the revelation of the *bhai*'s rise to power and the narration of other cases Singh and his partner Katekar have to pursue, *Sacred Games* gains more thriller-like qualities with the anticipation of Mumbai's annihilation. Despite drawing from the detective and the thriller genre, Chandra's novel is also influenced by the spy genre, postcolonial writing, Hindu philosophy, biographies, and historiographic metafiction. This potpourri of genres makes *Sacred Games* a paradigm of genre hybridization. The novel is not limited by the aesthetics of one genre, although crime fiction and postcolonial writing appear to be the most dominant influences.

The chapters in *Sacred Games* feature Singh and Gaitonde, respectively, and, thus, illuminate the parallels in their careers. While the chapters on Sartaj have a third-person narrative voice focusing on the detective, the chapters on Gaitonde have a first-person narrator who grants the reader of the novel more access to the emotional inner life of the criminal. This *doppelgänger* motif of the detective and the criminal is anchored in crime fiction tradition as Dupin and Minister D- (cf. Poe 143) or Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Moriati (cf. Doyle, "The

⁵⁴ Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* has so far found little attention in critical writing. As one of the few academics who concerns herself with Chandra's novel, Caroline Herbert analyzes the relation of the novel's characters with different aspects of the Indian nation (e.g., cityscape, religious groups, ethnic minorities). Krupa Shandilya, in turn, compares *Sacred Games* to Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Her main argument is that Chandra re-writes the underlying assumptions of the colonial novel by playing with the tradition of the Victorian narrative and dissolving the boundary between the political and the sacred – the sacred can be politicized (cf. 347-48).

⁵⁵ Chandra, Vikram. "Sacred Games", 836-72. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "SG".

Final Problem” 832-33) exemplify. In opposition to these characters, Sartaj Singh cannot resolve this pairing in his favor because he finds himself more and more entangled in a net of corruption and can in the end only avert Mumbai’s destruction with the help of a mafia family which requests Singh’s betrayal of his mentor in exchange (cf. SG 792-93). This final decision blurs the line between right and wrong even further, although Singh was already willing to take bribes as most of his fellow policemen did (cf. SG 23). He completely ceases to be an elevated human like the classical detectives or a highly individualized and morally stubborn sleuth in hard-boiled fiction. Singh is dependent on society, which also grants him more depth when he struggles with his Sikh identity in the Indian context, migration problems, and his corruptness. His main issue is his job, though:

Katekar was dead, the murderer was dead, the murderer's friends were dead, it was all over. Nothing to do, nobody to pursue. Katekar's death was murder, an accident, an act of fate. It was a simple story, the way Kamble and others would tell it: three apardhis cornered, we should've fired first, encountered the bastards, but it was Singh's operation, Katekar got too close and didn't shoot, so he died. Case closed. These things happen. It's the job. But after everything, after all, Sartaj was unable to rest with this story, to be comforted by the neatness of it, by its clean forward velocity and its final rest. [...] We are debris, Sartaj thought, randomly tossed about and nudging into each other, splitting other's lives apart. Sartaj opened his eyes, and the room was still the old one, the shadows outside completely known to him, known a thousand nights over. This was his corner of the world, safe and familiar. And yet here was this question, sitting on his chest: why did Katekar die? How did this happen? (SG 305)

Although the story of Katekar’s death seems to be straightforward, it is dissatisfying for Singh, who cannot see a greater picture and disqualifies narration as a method to create meaning. He searches for a metaphysical explanation but cannot find such a pattern that could give him closure. In his presumably safe room, Singh deliberates the meaning of unpredictable loss and feels his world threatened, as he realizes the fragility of human life and the insufficiency of police narratives. He is disillusioned by the eternal fight for the preservation of human life as well as the unpreventable failure. But if he cannot succeed in his job, why should he keep doing it? Singh experiences an identity crisis, which does not make him an “uncritical representation of Nehruvian secularism”. (Herbert 962)

The same is true for Ganesh Gaitonde, whose life is continuously endangered by his rivals’ attacks. He develops schizophrenic tendencies as he always has to anticipate betrayals or to plan his coups. Unpredictability is his asset:

Until then, all my life, I had felt like a ghost, a thousand ghosts roaming around inside my body, each equally possible and every one of them more lost than the other. I had come from nowhere and made a name for myself, but I had felt always that I was playing a part, many parts, and that I could switch from this name to another easily, that I was Ganesh Giatonde today, I could well become Suleiman Isa tomorrow, and then any of the men I had killed. I had felt anger, pain, and desire, but I had held back always from allowing the fragments inside me to settle into a shape, a form. I had led men to believe in me, in Ganesh Gaitonde, and always secretly despised them for believing in me, because I was nothing. And so I was the phantom of a man, capable of frenzied couplings with whores, in whose sopping chuts I tried to make myself real, but I was not fit for marriage. Marriage is belief. Marriage is faith. Marriage is wholeness. [...] I stood ready now. I knew who I was. I was a Hindu bhai. And so I hovered lightly above my wife, my wife feeling the confident pulse along every length of my body. I went into her. Her scream thrilled over my shoulders. Afterwards there was blood, on the sheets, on my thighs. I was content. (SG 395-396)

His fragmented personality becomes whole in accepting his role as a Hindu *bhai*. Interestingly, both identity crises – of the detective and the *bhai* – are related to their roles. While the detective questions his role (cf. SG 305), the *bhai* finds consolation in his newfound one (cf. SG 395-96). That might have to do with the relation of the *bhai*'s role with a defined religious group, the Hindus, whereas Singh represents the secular Indian state that according to the vision of Gandhi and Nehru at least officially tries to accommodate the needs of multiple religious and ethnic groups. (cf. M. Singh 69).

The wholeness of the secular state has been endangered ever since it came into existence as the conflicts between Hindu India and its Muslim minorities or its neighbor Pakistan show (cf. Roy, "Democracy "15-16). Further examples are communist uprisings, the Sikh massacre, or current migrants from poorer Asian states (cf. Roy, "Democracy "10). Just as Singh asks himself why he should keep doing his job as a secular state officer, secular India has to face its past failures in the form of discontent and violent upsurges that cannot be pacified by the state's narrative of inclusion, economic success, and equal rights (cf. Roy, "Introduction" xiv). Hindu nationalism, however, gained more and more supporters (cf. Sarkar 279). Indian secularism, just as Singh's professional identity, is endangered.

The opposition between state and religion in India – embodied by the detective and the godfather – has a longstanding tradition that reaches back into colonial times:

Nevertheless, externalization and neutrality became the tropes of a state which tried to project itself as playing the role of a transcendent arbiter in a country divided along religious lines. Again, however, this did not contribute to a secular atmosphere in society. Indian religions were transformed in opposition to the state and the religion became more important in the emergent public sphere. As in Britain, religion was transformed and molded in a national form, but form defined itself in opposition to the colonizing state. The denial of participation in the political institutions of the colony led Indians to develop an alternative set of institutions of a jointly political and religious nature. Indians did not conceive the colonial state as neutral

and secular, but rather as fundamentally Christian. (van der Veer, "The Secularity of the State" 265)

The British attempt to create a political space free of religion led to the establishment of religious institutions that the Indian population could identify with more easily. From their perspective, the British Empire was a Christian institution. However, these secret societies, inaccessible to the West, posed a threat to democracy according to liberal discourse. They were said to undermine freedom of speech and, therefore, fundamentally to oppose the rules of a secular state (see van der Veer, "The Secularity of the State" 261).

One could assume that Chandra in *Sacred Games* refers to this fear-driven, liberal tradition, for in this case too, the criminal subcultures imbued with religious affiliations are beyond the reach of the Indian state. This impression is reinforced by the Muslim background of Ganesh Gaitonde's mafia opponent, Suleiman Isa:

There had been a small war with Suleiman Isa, the war between our companies. This combat had been long, it was eternal. Now its connections to a larger war were becoming apparent. The game was many tendrilled, webbed and seductive and infinitely dangerous. I heard about Suleiman Isa sending the bombs and I laughed, and I said, of course. And I asked myself, where next do I go? Where's the next move? What's coming for me? (SG 407)

The war between the Hindu and Muslim mafia reflects the national conflict between these two religious groups. As already mentioned, the distrust of religious subcultures in the Indian context stems from the colonial age. The question, therefore, arises whether and to what extent Vikram Chandra follows the exoticizing control techniques of the West. At first glance, the juxtaposition of Hindu and Muslim mafia seems to indicate that he is, in any case, not entirely free of this idea. In addition, he draws, for example, the perfect Indian mafia boss with strong religious ties, violent features, and misogynistic behavior, which further underlines this impression (cf. SG 395-96).

On the other hand, Chandra does not make the mistake of creating two opposing fronts of crime and religion vs. justice and state. Sartaj Singh is established as a Sikh officer who is very well aware of his unique status as the only Sikh inspector in the police force (cf. SG 29). He, like Gaitonde, cherishes his religious and cultural roots. Singh's religious affiliations make evident that the Indian police as the state's executive is not an organization devoid of religion. Beliefs

and traditions rather play an essential role as Singh's thoroughness in clothing and grooming demonstrates (cf. SG 29-30). His distinct looks (long hair, beard, mustache) set him apart from the mostly Hindu police squad (cf. van der Veer, "Writing Violence "264-265) and make him literally more visible. He serves "as a reminder of the nation's diversity" (Herbert 958) and experiences this visibility like any other minority. As an official representative, he serves as a positive example for the re-integration of Sikhs after the riots in 1984.

These riots were the result of Indira Gandhi's murder by her Sikh bodyguards. Gandhi's Congress Party did not interfere in the ensuing massacre of 3,000 Sikhs by the hand of the Hindu majority (cf. Roy, "Democracy "10). The mass killings were not the beginning of the respective groups' ongoing separation but rather a symptom. Hindu nationalism often turned against Indian minorities and will come under closer inspection in the following chapter, as it still plays a significant role in contemporary India.

Singh's employment in the Indian police might be remarkable considering the historical background. However, it is also a paradigm for Peter van der Veer's statement that the quantitative dominance of Hindus in the actual Indian police force echoes social realities (cf. van der Veer, "Writing Violence "264-265). Accordingly, the sentiments in Indian society (currently, Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim tendencies) find themselves represented in the Indian police squad.

Singh himself is continuously reminded of his fragile situation, which might be the source of his sympathy for other minorities (cf. SG 205). He knows too well that his professional position is only the result of historical developments. In other words, he has just been lucky.

Therefore, Chandra uses platitudes about the relationship between religion and insurgency, the continuing corruption of the police, or the extensive presence of secret societies in India. These aspects point to the continuation of Western narratives of criminalizing India. On the other hand, Chandra draws the picture of a compassionate, truth-searching, corrupt, and religious police

officer who does not fit perfectly into any of these traditional exoticizing categories (cf. Herbert 958)

He is corrupt but saves Mumbai and, at the same time, keeps on asking himself why he did it (cf. SG 877). The answer he finally finds is not ideological at all. It is neither of Western nor Indian origin. It is love, and with it comes the acceptance of change and loss (cf. SG 945). Singh abandons any form of Grand Narrative. *Sacred Games* is more traditional than the two other novels in its depiction of the Indian subcontinent as it recounts a number of clichés. It is not devoted to postmodern aesthetics and its crime fiction subgenre but still contains some of their traits like the disbelief in official narratives.⁵⁶ Hence, *Sacred Games* is an excellent example of genre hybridization and illustrates that there is no absolute boundary between the different subgenres of crime fiction. Because of this feature, *Sacred Games* is included in this selection of novels to be analyzed. It is a telling example of the crime fiction genre's general evolution from the classical detective to a physically and emotionally involved detective.

Instead, Sartaj Singh serves as another representation of ethnic detectives who have their fair share of readers. Other examples include Alexander McCall Smith's Mme Ramotswe or Colin Cotterill's Dr. Siri. Like them, Vikram Chandra thoroughly depicts social realities, but unlike them, he is more concerned with his character's philosophical struggles. It is this philosophical quality that *Sacred Games* shares with *The White Tiger*. While the latter novel is drafted in opposition to Western literary tradition, *Sacred Games* more or less follows the different genre conventions. It has less of a revolutionary trait but more of a mosaic of genres. Parts of this

⁵⁶ As Theodore Martin points out in his essay "The Long Wait" *Sacred Games* displays some unusual traits that disappoint readers' expectations informed by classical detective fiction. The two most prominent one are, firstly, the seclusion of the detective to a monogamous relationship, consequently, opposing the rule of asexuality and, secondly, the unresolved threat posed by religious tensions (cf. 169, 174). He continues his argument by adding that the second aspect leaves the detective in a continued state of waiting, which is ultimately transferred to the reader (cf. 180). Notably, the second finding can be seen as proof that *Sacred Games* is not a traditional crime fiction anymore. Instead, it shows aspects influences of postmodern thought, as in this case, the denial of complete closure.

mosaic are traditional, postmodern,⁵⁷ postcolonial or epic components, which make it impossible to define *Sacred Games*' genre.

Overall, all four novels dealt with the issue of India's criminalization. While *The White Tiger*, *The Circle of Reason*, and *The Calcutta Chromosome* come up with an alternative discourse to the former colonial representation of India, *Sacred Games* displays a more traditional approach. Vikram Chandra does refrain, however, from painting a picture in black and white. Rather, he seems to be dedicated to representing the complexity of law and order in contemporary India. Neither the police officer nor the *bhai* are entirely innocent or guilty. They are both pawns of their social system. Chandra also shows interest in philosophical endeavors but finally does not establish a particular postcolonial counter-narrative. Instead, he resorts to the universal principle of love as the answer to accepting social chaos.

The other three novels approach the criminalization of India not so much from a realistic as from a philosophical standpoint. The emphasis on the criminals as protagonists and their respective insights challenge Western ideas of reason and justice. These three novels, therefore, contradict the genre conventions of traditional detective literature. Their attempt at social renewal corresponds with the re-innovation of the detective genre.

Postmodern Criminals Uncovering Indian National Narratives

If one has a look at contemporary India, one finds a highly diverse society. The caste system seems to be overcome, and India has been secularized (cf. Sarkar 273). The social standards are devastating – at least for parts of the population –, while other parts of society are gaining wealth and influence. India is trying to maintain a secular image while facing a struggle over influence from ethnic and religious groups that have been divided since the foundation of the Indian nation-state (cf. Roy, "Democracy" 15-16). In the different states of the Indian subcontinent, one

⁵⁷ In the comparison between *Sacred Games* and Kipling's *Kim* Krupa Shandilya emphasizes the postmodern narrative style in Chandra's novel: In contrast to Kipling's Victorian masterpiece, *Sacred Games* is characterized by a multitude of interwoven plots that play with the expectations of the reader, "suggesting therefore that the path to knowledge is circuitous, arbitrary, and irrational." (348)

can continuously witness upsurges by ethnic groups (Sikhs, Muslims) or by the Communists in Bengalen (cf. Roy, "Democracy" 8-10).

Furthermore, the caste system was only officially abolished. In everyday practice, it still holds its place – albeit only in a slightly different variant (cf. Bayly 316-17). In the worldwide ranking of financially and politically influential states, India may gain more and more significance. Nevertheless, the wealth this progress brings is unequally shared among its citizens (cf. Bayly 318). India is not a uniform entity. Rather it is a nation of extreme contrasts that dramatically affect human life.

While the first part of the analysis focused more on the aspect of generic tradition and the change of protagonist from detective to criminal, the second part will pay more attention to the national circumstances in which the crimes occur. The goal is to provide a detailed analysis of central issues in the national discourse and how they are connected with violence and criminality. Central aspects will be the power relations in the Indian national narrative and the nation's rising global importance. This factor goes hand in hand with the issue of Indian migration and global transnationalism. Can the Western concept of the nation be applied to the subcontinent or has India to come up with variations which are owed to its unique cultural and social situation? Which forms of violence are embedded in the Indian context?

Going back to the Hindu understanding of history one could note that violence is an integral part of Hindu mythology: During the different ages, the forces of Good and Evil fight each other, the virtue of humankind deteriorates and is later forcefully re-instated after the victory over Kali (cf. Dowson 381-83). Ganesh Gaintonde's guru, the organizer of the bomb attack, also refers to the mythological and historical past to ease the doubt the *bhai* has about killing millions in Bombay:

'But think of the picture that is even bigger than that. Think of life itself. Do you think it has no violence in it? Life feeds on life, Ganesh. And the beginning of life is violence. Do you know where our energy comes from? The sun, you say. Everything depends on the sun. We live because of the sun. But the sun is not a peaceful place. It is a place of unbelievable violence. It is one huge explosion, a chain of explosions. When the violence ceases, the sun dies, and we die.' [...]

But think back on your own history, Ganesh. Have not holy men fought before? Have they not urged warriors to battle? Does spiritual advancement mean that you should not take up weapons when confronted by evil?

He reminded me then of Pashurama, that great sage who took up his axe to cleanse the earth. And of Rama himself, most perfect of men, who took his bow and fought against all odds. 'And what about the advice that Krishna gave up to Arjuna on the battlefield?' this strange guru said to me. 'Arjuna wanted to be peaceful. He wanted to retire from the world. Should he

have gone? Should Krishna have let him?

I had to agree with him, no, it was clear that Krishna was correct. I said so, and then Guru-ji told me about the great Shankaracharya, and his defeat of Krakaca's kapalika army. And also about the Sanyasi Rebellion, during which sadhus and faqirs fought against the East India Company. 'We must resist this so-called place which emasculates spirituality and makes it weak, Ganesh,' he said. 'We must see the big picture. We must know when we have to fight to bring peace. We must be strong in our faith. Our entire history, thousands of years of it, gives us examples of this. (SG 576-577)

The argument the guru provides has three steps: firstly, he acknowledges that violence is a universal natural law. Secondly, he refers to major mythological characters who chose to fight instead of remaining peaceful. Lastly, he names historical uprisings. In this way, he connects his act of violence with a collective and universal cause to which every good Hindu is bound. The last step of his argumentation, the combination of mythical and historical struggles, reveals his true background: Hindu nationalism. The guru is neither a purely religious nor a national fighter in the sense of being secular and only believing in the national constitution. He believes in Hindu superiority and the necessity of a Hindu nation founded on religious beliefs.

This mixture of religion and nationalism cannot be viewed as a sign of social backwardness. Indians never saw the nation-state as a secular entity. For them, it is a Christian one, and they, hence, created their institutions out of the nation's reach (cf. van der Veer, "The Secularity of the State" 265). From this perspective, the replacement of Christianity by Hinduism, the religious majority, seems almost logical after India's independence.

Unaware of it the guru applies Western methods of nation-building to India, which, according to him, has fallen prey to faithlessness (cf. SG 509). He creates a national myth that allows the individual, in this case, Gaitonde, to identify with. In allowing this identification, the guru de-individualizes the *bhai*: He is no longer a mere individual.⁵⁸ He is a member of the Hindu band

⁵⁸ Caroline Herbert's analysis of *Sacred Games* in her essay "Spectrality and Secularism in Bombay Fiction" focuses on the represented changes in fiction set in Mumbai after the Ayodhya attacks in 1992. She argues that the uncertainties following this outrage of violence led to the repositioning of Ganesh Gaitonde as a Hindu *bhai*:

Caught between discourses of 'us' and 'them', Ganesh chooses to become majority, and his appropriation of violently masculinist discourses of Hindutva is offered as a strategy of survival in a city increasingly intolerant of ontological ambiguity. Replacing his spectral self, after Ayodhya, with a firmer identity, Ganesh's corporealization as a Hindu *bhai* effects and reflects the transformation of Bombay itself from secular multiplicity to ethnic purity. (961)

Put differently, Ganesh Gaitonde becomes the embodiment of the religious segregation that defined Bombay after said attacks.

of brothers that stands in a long, untarnished tradition that ignores any interaction with other groups.

The de-individualization is a trick by the guru to relieve Ganesh Gaitonde of a guilty conscience:

Twentieth-century totalitarianisms created pioneering innovations in depriving death no less than life of meaning. One's guilt is collectivized and accrues to a class, race, or religion as a whole. Once this process is successfully concluded, the problem of innocence is also easily collectivized. Neither guilt nor innocence are any longer matters of individual conscience; rather, in a sense they accrue to a master race, the historically sanctioned party, or the purified race. Death is life's ontological opposite: It accrues to the degenerate religion, the backward race, and the oppressed class. It is indeed the essence of the twentieth-century ideology to collectivize the spirit of guilt and innocence; therein lies the banality of evil. (Horowitz 71)

Irving Louis Horowitz writes on systematic state-funded genocide, whereas the guru's and Gaitonde's bomb is only one terrorist attack aimed at the destruction of all infidels. The argumentative patterns that the guru displays and Horowitz unveils are, nevertheless, the same. The *bhai* has to respond to his consciousness: Am I guilty if I kill millions of people? In collectivizing individuals and giving those groups easily identifiable traits, the guru makes the question of guilt also a collective one. The individual is relieved of this task. According to Horowitz, this de-individualization is not limited to the victim. The perpetrator is also "reduced to the status of nonperson" (Horowitz 76). In denying an individual human status to the victim and the killer alike, the problem of individual responsibility for acts of ethnic violence is obliterated.

As already explained, the depiction of secret societies / religious subcultures as well as the corruption of the police in *Sacred Games* seems to correspond ostensibly to the stereotypes of the former colonial power Great Britain. In a second step, this issue will be examined in more detail to ensure an analysis of the reasons and methods of the terrorists, which have similarities with the construction of Western nations.

The guru, the leader of the secret society, creates a mythical past due to which other ethnicities and religions should be excluded or annihilated. He provides a foil to identify with, thus collectivizing and de-individualizing the group's members, which allows him to control them and gives him the right to call for sacrifice (cf. SG 576-77). He might argue from a religious

point of view, but his primary goal is a Hindu nation. It is not the religion that poses as a problem here but the firm belief in the nation concept that calls for exclusion.

This thesis is supported by the detective's doubts about his role as a state representative and by the redemption he finds in his new love, which allows him to continue his work (cf. SG 943). None of the social roles he could have identified with resolved his crisis. Instead, a human relationship, which enables him to live as an individual again, restores his faith and consequently allows him to accept the losses he has experienced (cf. SG 945). Therefore, Vikram Chandra does indeed play with certain stereotypes, but a more in-depth reading of *Sacred Games* illustrates skepticism about the Western nation concept, its appropriation to the Indian context, and its usefulness to its inhabitants (cf. Herbert 962).

The site of his destruction needs to be taken into consideration to understand the mechanisms behind the guru's terrorist attack fully. The guru's goal is to destroy contemporary Bombay and build a perfect city according to the laws and rituals of Hinduism:

I could see the logic and progression here, the movement from the outside to the inside. The relationships of these points and angles, the architecture of these constructions, this was the geometry of time and life itself. I had heard, many times, Guru-ji speaking of the ages of man, the proper affiliations of castes and groups, the place of women in a just society, the education of children - and here, in these ashrams, it was all laid out for the discerning eye to see. There was an order here that was the order of Guru-ji's intellect. Reading these landscapes was like listening to a sermon, and I could now see very clearly his vision, his idea for what the country should be, then the whole world. He wanted to transform and uplift all of India into this green-gardened peace, to move it into perfection. Some parts of Singapore had the cleanliness he wanted, but there was no city on earth that had this symmetry, this internal consistency that exactly balanced shops and mediation centers, and let you see the central temple through the precisely aligned arches of the library and the laundry. These buildings and the blue gates looked like the past, like the golden sets on the mythological television serials, but they were Guru-ji's future. This was the tomorrow he wanted to bring to us, the satyug he wanted to create. (SG 813)

The geography and the architecture of future Bombay reflect the re-establishment of Hindu traditions according to the Satya Yuga, the first era of humanity, during which everything was in order (cf. Dowson 381-82). In other words, the place carries cultural and temporal features, as it functions as a symbol of the return of Hindu traditions. Hence, the destruction of contemporary Bombay – as of any other city - equals the annihilation of the existing sign system (cf. Cresswell 13). The extinction of a whole city by war or a terrorist attack is no longer unthinkable after 9/11 – neither in reality nor in fiction. On the contrary, *Sacred Games* is a literary example of cities' vulnerability to war and the policies of destruction to which they fall prey. As Stephen Graham

shows in his essay “Postmortem City,” the changing of a cityscape is always the top priority in wars or terrorist attacks, especially since the 20th century (cf. 170). The violence done to the cityscape undermines the idea of the city as a country’s epitome of strength and progress. Changing the urban geography, thus, inevitably means changing a city’s or even a nation’s narrative. The guru’s total annihilation resembles the historical experience of many European cities after the Second World War:

Thus, in a way, the total bombing of total war – a massive act of *planned* urban devastation in its own right – served as a massive accelerator of modernist urban planning, architecture and urbanism. The *tabula rasa* that every devoted modernist craved suddenly became the norm rather than the exception, particularly in the city centres of post-war Europe. (Graham 176)

Just like the post-war architects found inspiration in the completely destructed landscape, the guru anticipates this moment in which he can re-design people’s living realities. The *tabula rasa* of the urban landscape would be the site of an Indian and Hindu re-definition of identity. Unwittingly, the guru provides an example of an understanding of collective identity that goes beyond genetic determinism. Bringing people from the same ethnic background together is not enough to shape collective identity. Instead, it is necessary to provide symbols and a living reality with which they can identify. Identity is never based on a single factor. On the contrary, it is the result of a continuous discourse (cf. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora “225).

Interestingly, the picture the guru paints of his future Bombay is perfect and neat. This order would be brought about by a crime that opposes the traditional binary: detective and order vs. murderer and chaos. The detective is the one who also recognizes Bombay’s chaotic state and ends up protecting it:

There certainly was a heavy smell that he and Sartaj thought it was a bit unfair of Katekar to single out this locality as especially stinky. The whole city stank at some time or the other. And after all, the citizens of Navnagar had to pile their rubbish somewhere. It was not their fault that the municipality’s collection trucks came by only once a fortnight, to make a dent in this undulating ridge of garbage to their left. (SG 78)

The centers of chaos where most people live huddled together are often the districts where most migrants live. In every way, these districts are the opposite of the guru’s vision: they are crowded, unplanned, unorganized, and smelly. The living conditions of these migrants appear to be unhealthy, a quality that is transferred to the people. Their living places leave an imprint on

migrants and turn them into dirt or bacteria, infecting the Indian system or, more precisely, the Indian social body (cf. Bauman 10). Therefore, the vulnerable state of the migrants who only have very few assets forces them to take cheap quarters, a place which creates meaning in the disfavor of the migrants. The annihilation of Mumbai and the migrants perceived as dirt is the equivalent of the adjustment of the Indian social body.

In the context of the national discourse, this body metaphor is, indeed, typical. The traditional nation discourse envisioned an ethnic unity based on cultural, sometimes even genetic belonging. This entirety of members was supposed to be one entity, one body. The image of migrants as bacteria infecting the national body fits into this representation, as they are the outsiders invading a healthy body.

The body metaphor is, however, not confined to the collective dimension. On the collective level, the guru wants to carve out a new social order/body, whereas Jamila Mirza, on the individual level, is also willing to succumb to transformation. She plans to undergo several plastic surgeries removing and remodeling body parts she dislikes. Her ultimate goal is to become a famous Bollywood actress, moving up in Indian society, and leaving her lower-class existence behind:

Plastic surgery. She [i.e. Mirza] showed me [i.e. Jojo] her plan. She's researched it. She has a little chart of the body and she's got it all marked on that. With prices next to each part. And she knows exactly which doctor is good, what the procedures are. She's got photographs of actresses and models and rich women, Gaitonde, and she knows what each one has had done. You won't believe the kinds of operation all these famous people have had, Gaitonde, and how much this girl knows. This nose is good, she says, but that one's better. She's an expert. She has it all in a file marked "Body". (SG 564)

The analogies between Mirza's plastic surgeries and the guru's attack are discernible. Both of them aim at transformation, the eradication of the ugly, and the establishment of a new purity in the sense of beauty or ethnic uniformity. Once again, purity is nothing conceived naturally but something designed. Mirza's plastic surgeries become a metaphor for the guru's project and the whole Indian nation because she actually manages to become a successful actress and hence functions as a role model for every Indian who wants to participate in the country's new-found upward mobility (cf. SG 226). She is a symptom for contemporary India, which the guru loathes,

but he does structurally and ideologically the same: he roots for a bodily transformation. Without a doubt, the guru is just like Mirza, a part and symbol of Indian society, which is ever since its independence prone to changes. While Mirza embraces the secular capitalist culture, the guru wants to revert it. Nonetheless, these two characters are linked by their transformative culture.⁵⁹ This balancing act of the incorporation of the Western system or the absolute rejection of it can be traced back to the issue of the Other. Jonathan Rutherford stated that the encounter with the Other caused schizophrenia within the British nation (*After Identity* 48-49), but according to Vikram Chandra's novel, this is also true for India. It is stuck between the poles of assimilation and renunciation. It becomes especially apparent in the guru's case and the characters supporting his political view, the Rakshaks, "a muscular right-wing organization [that] was now trying to become a party of statesmen" (SG 17). These Rakshaks demonstrate a strong Hindu nationalism and are modeled after the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, transl. Indian People's Party), a political party in India that gained power during the 1980s (cf. Basu 60). Despite fashioning itself as the real Hindu answer to India's foreign-induced plight, Amrita Basu illustrates that the BJP's culturally and ethnically uniform stance is an illusion:

The BJP's long-term vision is best expressed in the concept of Hindu rashtra (nation-state), a term its leadership constantly uses. When asked to elaborate the traits of Hindu rashtra, BJP leaders express uncertainty, at best defining it negatively as the antithesis of "pseudo-secularism" of the Congress Party. Interestingly, they never concede that the nation-state itself might be of Western inspiration, though they often level this charge at both secularism and democracy. (60)

Like the guru, the BJP wants to exclude foreign components in Indian culture and create a Hindu nation, but these two steps already contain the essential problem of Hindu nationalism. The structure of the nation is a foreign one (cf. Nandy 287). Nevertheless, it allows them to form a

⁵⁹ As Caroline Herbert shows in her analysis of *Sacred Games*, the guru and Mirza are not the only characters associated with disembodiment: Ganesh Gaitonde pursues his business with the help of modern communication tools and "frequently senses his own dematerialization in the face of computer technology." (958). Herbert views the necessity of disembodiment for Bombay's lower classes as a criticism of the current economy and global capitalism because individuals who are unwilling or unable to comply with the new rules are condemned to being dispensable (cf. Herbert 958). In her opinion, Gaitonde is "the secular's nation 'other'" giving a voice to the lower strata of society (957).

Gaitonde, thus, resembles Balam Halwai from *The White Tiger* through his humble origins, his violent social advancement, and his function as a representative of the poor. This impression is reinforced by the first-person narrative voice in both cases.

collective identity that follows ethnic supremacy. That is why the BJP and the guru unconsciously stick with the Western nation concept. Western colonialism, thus, not only led to a schizophrenic reaction in the West. It triggered a similar reaction in the colonized countries that were infused with Western thinking and culture. The result is a country in which it is impossible to neatly differentiate between old and new ways or between local and global traditions (cf. Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" 42-43). India became a country, in which ongoing transformation and loss rule. This lack of political and cultural stability establishes an atmosphere of angst in which violence flourishes. The Hindu nationalist struggle is a struggle against the seeming forces of evil and degeneration. According to Vikram Chandra, this fight is based on instability and fear (cf. SG 576-77, 679).

As a result, Chandra employs several aspects of the national discourse. However, in contrast to his more traditional approach to genre conventions, he chooses to deconstruct many ideas of nation-building. He reveals the de-individualization techniques in the context of ethnic violence, the strategic usage of the cityscape to form a collective identity, as well as the conflicting tendencies of Hindu nationalism that tries to rid itself of Western influences while embracing the nation concept.

The analysis of the concept of the nation illustrates why *Sacred Games* was included in this dissertation: The novel may be less innovative in terms of the genre of the detective novel, but its presentation and deconstruction of the national concept are sophisticated. It does not necessarily require a postmodern aesthetic or philosophy to ensure sophisticated representations of national contexts. Instead, *Sacred Games* may only exhibit tinges of postmodern detective fiction, but its display of the flaws of national thinking is capacious. It is an example of detective fiction's development from a mere entertainment genre to one with the capacity to utter social discrepancies.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*⁶⁰ also focuses on India's transformation, but he is less concerned with Hindu nationalism. Rather, he investigates the role contemporary India plays in the world and connects current phenomena with the time of colonization. The conclusion the protagonist Balram Halwai comes up with can be best illuminated by the light and darkness metaphor he applies to describe his country. According to him, India is divided:

I am talking of a place in India, at least a third of the country, a fertile place, full of rice fields and wheat fields and ponds in the middle of those fields choked with lotuses and water lilies, and water buffaloes wading through the ponds and chewing on the lotuses and lilies. Those who live in this place call it the Darkness. Please, understand, Your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well-off. But the river brings darkness to India - the black river. (WT 14)

While the coastal areas are affluent, the core of the country is still transfixed in rural poverty. The combination of this description with the light and darkness metaphor makes it quite clear which influence Halwai considers the preferable. The coasts are not only where the colonizers landed equipped with the light of reason. They are also the place where one can find fortune. Robbie B.H. Goh explains in his essay "Narrating 'Dark' India in *Londonstani* and *The White Tiger*" that the division of India into a coastal and rural area corresponds with reality to a certain extent:

The novel's spatial symbolism also reinforces this isolation and demarcation of India. The symbolic map of India that Balram sketches early in the novel – an India of "light" and wealth in the coastal regions, and an India of "darkness" in the Gangetic Hindu heartland – is a cultural-economic geography which attributes India's past and continuing prosperity in certain of its regions to its contact with foreign sources via oceanic trade. Like much of the social depiction in the novel, there is more than a grain of truth in it: many of the richer and better-developed regions of India today, such as parts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal states, are coastal areas which have long had economic and cultural contact with the outside world, while many of the poorest and least well-developed states in India today (such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh) are indeed the rural areas of the Hindu heartland. (336)

Goh sheds light on the ties between *The White Tiger* and social reality.

Halwai seems to put another twist to Enlightenment's light metaphor. It is no longer the light of reason but the glimmer of money. In Halwai's opinion, the colonizers did, of course, bring civil progress, but it was progress devoid of its intended values. For him, the arrival of the colonizers

⁶⁰ The postcolonial issues represented in *The White Tiger* are subject to some critical essays. In her essay "Breaking out of the rooster coop" Sara D. Schotland analyzes the violent behavior of young, poor males portrayed in said novel. In turn, Lena Khor is more interested in the subalterns and the question of whether a new design of human rights can be derived from Balram Halwai's triumphant rise from India's lower classes. Like Lena Khor, Megha Anwer focuses on subaltern politics, but in contrast to the first, she concludes that Halwai is not truly a subaltern hero, as he becomes a master himself and, therefore, reaffirms the existing class system (cf. 311). Lastly, Sundhya Walther deals with the usage of the animal metaphor in her essay "Fables of the Tiger Economy." Her main argument is that accepting the aspect of animality as part of their identity empowers the postcolonial characters instead of rendering them powerless as the classical relation between human and animal implies.

meant not the salvation from the pre-historic state, but the installment of a fruitful entrepreneurial system that has his antagonist in the rural Indian lifestyle equaled with darkness. It is in this idyllic place that no profits are made. Lena Khor points out that Adiga's usage of the light metaphor is not only adjusted to the Indian context but also affirms or unveils the existing power structures at the same time:

But that Halwai attaches the element of darkness to the poor and of the light to the wealthy forces us to acknowledge that such ideas and discourse of a lesser class (in colonialist discourse, less civilized; in human rights discourse, possessing less rights; in development discourse, less privileged) persists in our contemporary postcolonial, globalizing world. Moreover, the remapping of colonialist paradigms to class apartheid pushes us to recognize that even though we may not be directly exploiting a class of people deemed lesser, our values and practices nevertheless are premised in some way on their position as lesser subjects, and impact how and why the rich live in "the Light" of the One-third World and the poor in "the Darkness" of the Two-thirds World. (62)

This satirical erosion of the light metaphor goes hand in hand with the detective's disempowerment, whose analytical qualities are grounded in Enlightenment's philosophy. Nevertheless, the traditional association of light with money ridicules the colonizers' missionary illusions and also reflects on contemporary India's policy. While the early Indian state, the rightful successor to the British Empire, had according to Ashis Nandy "a built-in critique of the dominant style of international politics[,] Indian foreign policy is now squarely a part of what the Indian elite sees as the only possible style of handling international relations." (290).

Nandy's argument that current Indian politics gave in to standardized forms of international government can easily be applied to Adiga's usage of light. This metaphor and its derogatory are implications for Indian politics. In the face of global competition over economic and political influence, the Indian government traded its critical role for flawless integration into the global market. Financial success seems to prove this policy right. India has been one of the most promising rising stars on the global market. According to Adiga, it might be making its way into the global capitalist system by disfavoring its rural areas and even cultural traditions, as the dark river is no other than the Ganges, which holds a unique and soul-cleansing position in Hinduism. The rejection of this fundamental spiritual entity, the Ganges, is tantamount to a rejection of India's founding myth of spirituality, which was presented in the introduction to this subchapter.

Adiga reveals that India's political elites, like Halwai, prefer economic success to the supposed unique characteristic of the Indian nation, a spirituality based on tolerance.⁶¹

However, this analysis of *Sacred Games* has already shown that a clear separation between the political establishment and tradition or religion cannot be maintained. The example of the BJP demonstrates that strong Hindu sentiments are also becoming political mainstream. I should, therefore, refine the earlier statement on Adiga's view of Indian traditions. They are not abandoned because they are mere cultural artifacts. They are neglected due to their low profitability. Unlike Vikram Chandra, Adiga does not question how ethnic or religious cultures can be used or abused for political and economic purposes. In his satire, he describes and mocks India's contemporary monetary culture, while other cultural aspects only have peripheral meaning. In his opinion, India has come under the influence of the Western financial system (cf. Khor 49, 58).

The implementation of the capitalist system in India was, as mentioned before, accompanied by a set of values that should seemingly transport India into a better, less barbaric future. Aravind Adiga pays special attention to the instrumental democracy and its distortions. He paints the picture of a society in which democratic rights are sold and integrated into the economic system:

Every now and then, even in a place like Laxmangarh, a ray of sunlight will break through. All these posters and speeches and slogans on the wall, maybe they get into a man's head. He declares himself a citizen of the democracy of India and he wants to cast his vote. That was where this rickshaw-puller had to go. He declared himself free of the Darkness: he had made his Benaras that day. (WT 101)

The purity of Western ideals poses a threat to the inhabitants of darkness. They are exposed to ideas like the equality of men and the right to vote, but they have to keep in mind that these are illusions veiling the only real electoral right they have: selling their votes. Their existence depends on it. The rickshaw-puller is a fool believing in Enlightenment's ideals without realizing the prime rule of Indian society. He should have preferred the shine of money to the light

⁶¹ In his analysis of *the White Tiger*, Robin Goh takes it even one step further and sees Halwai's portrayal of Indian conditions not only as a rejection of spirituality as a unique component of the Indian nation. He speaks of Hinduism itself being responsible for the ongoing oppression of the poor. Balram's actions are thus to be understood as a revolutionary act against the Hindu elite (cf. 334)

idealism. The nation's democratic principles are eroded. Balram Halwai's total affirmation of this situation makes the satirical tone of *The White Tiger* even more apparent, and the violation of democratic rights even more painful.

He also uses the concept of democracy to define the relationship with China in his letter to Wen Jinbao, the current Prime Minister. The relationship between the two uprising Asian nations is traditionally competitive. Balram Halwai openly recounts the advantages China has over India:

I gather you yellow-skinned men, despite your triumphs in sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, still don't have democracy. Some politician on the radio was saying that that's why we Indians are going to beat you: we may not have sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, but we do have democracy.

If I were making a country, I'd get the sewage pipes first, then the democracy, then I'd go about giving pamphlets and statues of Gandhi to other people, but what do I know? I'm just a murderer! (WT 95-96)

Halwai's humbleness in giving political advice uncovers the almost absurd political discourse in India, which from his point of view, overemphasizes ideals in contrast to a pragmatic improvement of the overall Indian living standards. Giving a population an ideology tied to an only seeming progress without delivering the enhancements makes the ideals themselves hollow. This void then allows them to put a system in place that leads to a commodification of human relationships: Politicians pay for people's votes without listening to their voices. The pragmatic Chinese approach lacks according to the quoted literary politicians' Western ideals, but it at least spares the Chinese population the hypocritical promises linked to democracy.

The disengagement of Indians from their country's politics is also highly criticized by Ashis Nandy:

In retrospect, one can hypothesize that the ills of state capitalism in India were actually its goals, and the egalitarian ideology that went with it was paradoxically a successful legitimation of an unequal order. Institutions were designed so that they would not perform their stated functions but meet other needs. The images of the state as a protector and a liberator merely used the ideologies of liberal and Leninist democratic centralism in India to contain full-scale political participation [...] Indians as a politically underdeveloped, ahistorical, less-than-rational collectivity - which for that reason is particularly vulnerable in international politics - is a stereotype that constitutes the underside of the images of the Indian state as the liberator, modernizer, and protector of the Indian people. (292)

Nandy's description of the political elite and the average Indian voters exemplifies similarities to Halwai's light and darkness metaphor. The government designs itself like the colonizers before as the liberator of India while fashioning its population as irrational and uneducated. This stereotype is continuously reaffirmed by the social structures. India has become a society of two

classes.

Balram Halwai further illuminates this two-class society in a physical and straightforward comparison:

See, this country, in its days of greatness, when it was the richest nation on earth, was like a zoo. A clean, well-kept, orderly zoo. Everyone in his place, everyone happy. Goldsmiths here. Cowherds here. Landlords there. The man called Halwai made sweets. [...]

And then, thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947 - the day the British left - the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those who were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies. That was all that counted now, the size of your belly. It didn't matter whether you were a woman, or a Muslim, or an untouchable: anyone with a belly could rise up. [...]

To sum up - in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and men with Small Bellies.

And only two destinies: eat - or get eaten up. (WT 63-64)

These multiple layers of irony criticize every form of power structure contemporary Indians are still entwined in. The dominant one is the current caste system based on the size of the bellies. Halwai's game with the associations of Indians with animals and their eating habits does not merely give the population a cannibalistic touch. It also refers back to the traditional Western stereotype of the colonials' animality (cf. Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" 57). Halwai argues that it was the British who kept up the Hindu caste system in reality. The removal of the zoo/prison bars meant the liberation of criminal animals. Once again, the satirical tone of *The White Tiger* undoes the Indians' criminalization. The blatant affirmation of the former colonizers' stereotype by a contemporary Indian disregards the colonial repercussions and uncovers Halwai's opportunistic behavior. He seizes their line of argumentation to explain and sanctify his success. The only difference between him and the colonizers is once again the interpretation of light: For Halwai it is once more fortune ("the richest nation on earth" (63), whereas the colonizers would point to the rational improvement of the indigenous people that ultimately leads to their accumulation of assets (cf. Mukherjee 25).

Nevertheless, Halwai's statement allows a glimpse of the structural changes that amplify the competitive atmosphere in Indian society. The movement from the caste system to the society of big or small bellies visualizes the significant social and philosophical changes in India: we can observe the development of an individual-based society from a collectively organized

community. The Hindu caste system may have had its problems, but it was far from being a rigid construct. Instead, caste rituals and rules were “reference points to be negotiated, challenged, or reshaped to fit changing circumstances” in pre-colonial times (Bayly 30). A relevant aspect of these negotiations was the social act of marriage that allowed the different castes to realign their status and establish new interconnections (cf. Bayly 53). With the arrival of the British, however, the caste system lost its flexibility, and ritualization between castes thrived (cf. Bayly 27). Aravind Adiga could relate to this fact with the metaphor of colonial Indians as tamed zoo animals. The illustration of a contemporary Indian society consisting of a two caste system depending on the urge to move upwards is an exaggeration by Adiga. Even after the concept of caste had lost its official significance with India’s independence, it still plays a role in everyday practice (cf. Bayly 307). The big belly caste remains a powerful image of Indian desire for success, but it cannot capture India’s complex living realities.

In conclusion, the roots of violence in *The White Tiger* are illustrated as manifold. The introduction of a new social system and new philosophical ideas from the West replaced the existing cultural structures. The physical occupation advanced the willingness for Indian assimilation. With the end of the Empire and India’s release into the global market, the political elite started the continuation of the economically motivated governing and anchored human commodification in Indian culture. Adiga unfolds the economic principle of colonial and postcolonial politics. He uses the satire genre and the character of the likable murderer to invert the standards of politics. Halwai’s likability, which is predicated on his intelligent analysis of society, his humbleness, his curiously steady loyalty to his victim, and his success are the keys to an understanding of the novel. He is not the demonized killer whose evil spirits almost match his opponent’s wits. Instead, he is a product of his society without losing his individuality.

While Amitav Ghosh in *The Circle of Reason*, like Aravind Adiga in *The White Tiger*, addresses people’s entanglement in the financial net of capitalism, he shifts his focus from an almost

exclusively Indian perspective to a global one. Trapped in the global capitalist system are the migrants. Ghosh tells the story of one of them, Alu, on his way west and back again. (cf. CR 420).

Alu's travels echo one of the components of the novel's title: the circle. While the first step of the analysis of *The Circle of Reason* stressed the aspect of reason, the second step will elaborate on the aspect of migration and its relation to different forms of violence and irrationality. Alu's circular movement is but one example of this shape in the book. The motif can already be found on the narrative level of the text and is heavily invested with political views:

The trouble with this village is that there aren't enough straight lines. Look at Europe, look at America, look at Tokyo: straight lines that's the secret. Everything is in straight lines. The roads are straight, the houses are straight (except for the wheels). They even walk straight. That's what we need: straight lines. There's a time and an age for everything, and this is the age of the straight line. (CR 99)

The West is once again the foil India's society compares itself with. While India is characterized as a circular society, the West and Japan are linear. The line is the symbol of progress. It does not have any detours in contrast to the circle, which is an ongoing detour.⁶²

However, the circular motif also extends to the structural level of the text: In every chapter of the novel Alu arrives at a new destination, becomes part of a subculture with an almost new set of characters, is hunted down, and in the end, forced to leave again. That makes *The Circle of Reason* structurally repetitive but somehow disorderly due to "the circling, perambulatory quality of the narrative, which moves between past and present, the city and the country, and from character to character in a highly associative way." (Siddiqi 152). The aspect that makes the circulatory structure repetitive and chaotic is the lack of a goal or a clear direction. Nonetheless, it can trigger a readers' heightened awareness or even frustration because of the unresolved

⁶² Stephanie Jones and Robert Dixon both indicate in their analyses of the aspect of migration in *The Circle of Reason* that Balaram and Alu's home village is already a community of migrants (cf. Jones 435, Dixon 7). This circumstance "deconstruct[s] the distinction between indigenous and migrant people—imploding the terms of native and non-native." (Jones 435) From the starting point of the story, the village already hints at what Alu encounters on his journey to Algeria: changing communities of people in migratory movements.

ending. In this particular case, the circle also corresponds with a migrant's living experience as a person always just passing through and always about to start anew.

The shape of the circle is central in Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of Being, too. His theory of Being is mostly a "Being with." (30). He moves from an anthropocentric philosophical system to a post-human one. Men do not have any metaphysical meaning anymore. We are the site in which meaning is produced and circulated:

If one can put it like this, there is no other meaning than the meaning of circulation. But this circulation goes in all directions at once, in all the directions of all the space-times [les espace-temps] opened by presence to presence: all things, all beings, all entities, everything past and future, alive, dead, inanimate, stones, plants, nails, gods - and "humans," that is, those who expose sharing and circulation as such by saying "we," by saying we to themselves in all possible senses of expressions, and by saying we for the totality of all being. (Nancy 3)

Migrants are the epitome of this circulating meaning. They not only take along their original cultural system and their pasts, but they also have to interact with the new living realities – animate or inanimate – and create a new meaning out of this encounter. They are thrown continuously into changes ranging from new cultures to climate to diet. Their migratory experience allows them to voice a highly diverse "we." It is a "we" that is formed in the circulation of meaning.

The counterpart of the migrants is the tourist. For them, the experience of traveling is an entirely different one due to their financial backup:

Of course other foreigners, mainly tourists, passed through El Oued every year, in a trickle which varied slightly with the seasons, like the height of the water-table. They were French mainly, with a sprinkling of Germans and a handful of Italians. Sometimes they arrived by bus, with rucksacks on their backs and water-bottles which could have emptied lakes. Or else they came in specially equipped jeeps or vans bristling with compasses to help them find their way south to the Mزاب and the Ahaggar - the heart they said, of the Sahara. They often turned at the hospital with upset stomachs or sunburn and talked to her in halting English about the legends of Légionnaires and the Mécharists and the veiled men of the Tuareg; about their childhood dreams of the desert and the promise of dangers and hunger and hardship that had drawn them there. (CR 359)

Travels are for rich people a way to build up a cosmopolitan identity by chasing their childhood dreams. The tourists' money, however, saves them from making the negative experiences that accompany the travels of poor migrants (cf. Siddiqi 164-65). Their diseases and other torments find an easy ailment with the help of their cash. In a sense, they are removed from the environment they wanted to experience. The tourists' money not only protects them from unwanted effects but also allows them to cross national borders repeatedly to gain pleasure. The

case of poor migrants is different.⁶³ They cannot choose their destinations. They are drawn to the places where the money is to become mercilessly incorporated into the capitalist system:

[...] and still the light grew, and it did not matter whether they burnt in al-Ghazira or the moon, any more than it matters to an insect whether a fire burns in a lamp or a furnace, for through a century and a half the same lights have shone in one part of the globe or another, wherever money and its attendant arms have chosen to descend on peoples unprepared for its onslaughts, and for all of those hundred and fifty years Mariamma's avatars have left that coast for those lights carrying with them an immense cargo of wanderers seeking their own destruction in giving flesh to the whims of capital. (CR 189)

The almost religious quality of the capital, illustrated by the mentioning of an avatar and sacrifice of humans, echoes religions that were and are considered primitive in the West. Even so, capitalist culture, as refined as it may be, wants to present itself free from the seemingly pre-modern practice of human sacrifice. The bodies of the working migrants, malnourished, exhausted, sick, or even dead, are not missed in mainstream capitalist culture. While more or less well-off people see new skyscrapers or technologies or even the mere mass-produced clothing as the achievements of capitalism, they mostly disregard the lives that were exploited in the process. Therefore, Aravind Adiga and Amitav Ghosh both view capitalism as the hoard of systemic or objective violence, according to Slavoj Žižek. The priority of profit leads to the devaluation of human life (cf. Žižek 12). Ghosh, furthermore, quite clearly underlines the cannibalistic attribute of capitalism, a characteristic the dominant Western discourse usually associates with cultures it views as primitive. He reverts this argument unveiling the capitalist's

⁶³ Citizens of less privileged states, as Timothy Snyder argues, face more opposition when they try to pass borders, especially to the West. The western countries try “to control the movement of such people [i.e., citizens of less privileged states]” and, thus, “they confirm and reinforce traditional state territorial functions.” (219). The West heavily relies on its police apparatus to keep unwanted visitors and immigrants outside, whereas goods can be traded freely. The re-assertion of the traditional state apparatuses to the disadvantage of citizens of emerging countries goes hand in hand with the preference of citizens of already prosperous countries.

On an economic level, the border has lost its significance: free trade is becoming a reality. The critical factors are humans. Depending on their nationality, they learn that either borders matter less and less or that borders comprise a clear hierarchy in their disfavor. Borders have become asymmetrical membranes that allow leaving but effectively keep undesirable elements outside (cf. Snyder 219).

primitive state.⁶⁴

There is not only the migrant's individual body at stake, though. Health and survival are important issues, but because of their travels, migrants also go through a loss of their original community, their original collective body. This often not completely voluntary separation can also be traumatic and be experienced as a form of violence that needs to be overcome and healed while being abroad:

They had crouched on mats around Zindi, listening to every word. They had lived through everything Zindi spoke of and had heard her talk of it time and time again; yet it was only in her telling that it took shape; changed from mere incidents to a palpable thing, a block time which was not hours or minutes or days, but something corporeal, with its own malevolent wilfulness. That was Zindi's power: she could bring together empty air and give it a body just by talking of it. They could never tire of listening to her speak, in her welter of languages, though they knew every word, just as well as they knew lines of songs. And when sometimes she chose a different word or a new phrase it was like the pressure of a potter's thumb on clay - changing the thing itself and their knowledge of it. (CR 212-13)

The migrants' huddling around the story-telling Zindi are deprived of an immediate connection with their primary culture. Notwithstanding, their collective experience helps them create a new community. The bodily metaphors that Ghosh uses emphasize the migrants' desire for a collective, identity-granting community while also highlighting that the well-being of an individual body is not enough. The instrument of shaping a community is Zindi's narrations. This description of the story-telling resembles the creation of the Universe and Man in the Bible. Zindi, just like God, speaks to create a physical entity (cf. Gen. 1.1-31). Of course, this comparison is not meant as the desecration of the Christian God. Rather, this scene - just like Adam naming the animals and the Tower of Babel⁶⁵ - has become a potent trope in postmodern writing to exemplify the power of narration in shaping our perception of the world. In this

⁶⁴ Capitalism's cannibalistic properties can, however, not exclusively be found in postcolonial literature. On the contrary, as Christian Moser in his analysis of Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* demonstrates, it is also an inherent part of Western literature. (cf. Moser, *Kannibalische Katharsis* 122-24) Furthermore, he also explicates that the tradition to re-evaluate the traditional connection of cannibalism and primitivism is not a contemporary one. Michel de Montaigne, in his essay *Des Cannibales* already illustrates that cannibalism can clearly be understood as a sophisticated cultural rite, whereas he views the European colonials as the real primitives. (cf. Moser, *Kannibalische Katharsis* 58-60)

⁶⁵ In *The City of Glass* by Paul Auster, for example, the naming of the animals by Adam as well as the Tower of Babel are potent stories to convey a paradise-like state of humanity before the crisis of the sign meaning the separation of the signifier and the signified. Put differently, words used to be able to create community through understanding. (cf. 43) After the "fall of language" (43), this is in *The City of Glass* - in contrast to Zindi's narration for the migrant group - not possible for humankind anymore.

quotation, the reference to the creation of the world, according to the Judeo-Christian belief, makes the migrants' need and capacity to start over visible. Narration allows them to integrate into a new community and ends their fragmentation.

Migration means for individuals and newly formed communities always some form of adaptation. Zindi changes words or phrases to redefine the community's idea of something.

Alu, on the other hand, goes through actual physical changes: During his flight to Al-Ghazira, he suffers from boils (cf. CR 181). The "bloody pus" (CR 181) can be viewed as a symbol of his former life, and the burst boils as his readiness to start anew. But is the physical and psychological transformation of the migrant as easy as this image implies? What kind of a relationship does he have to his past, and how can he integrate his cultural roots in the country of his arrival?

The refugees in Lalpukur, where Alu lives with his uncle, reveal an ambiguous answer to these questions:

The people of Lalpukur could not help knowing that a war was brewing across the border; their relatives constantly on the other side never let them forget it. Often they were drummed to bed by the rattle of distant gunfire. But on the whole the fighting was to pass Lalpukur by. And, unlike some of their neighbours, no one in Lalpukur had the energy to join in of their own will. The reason was that the people of Lalpukur were too melancholy. Vomited of their native soil years ago in another carnage, and dumped hundreds of miles away, they had no anger left. Their only passion was memory; a longing for a land where the green was greener, the rice whiter, the fish bigger than boats; where the rivers' names sang like Megh Malhar on a rainy day - the Meghna, the Dholesshori, the Kirtinsha, the Shitolokkha, the majestic Arialkha, wider than the horizon. (CR 59)

Their emotional state characterized by melancholy, and the longing for a place long lost has to be diagnosed as nostalgia. The ongoing war in Bangladesh and their dreams of the green and beautiful homeland, however, exemplify that the source of nostalgia is a time shift, the loss of a cherished time, and not the loss of a particular place. A return to their homeland is not feasible. Thus, they stay in Eastern India, which guarantees their survival.

A more central role plays the needs of migrants and their relationship with their country of origin in the last chapter of the book, Tamas-Death. Ghosh dedicates the whole chapter set in Algeria to the issues of the Indian diaspora, how the transnationals try to keep up their connection with their home country, and how they have to adjust their cultural or religious rituals. After Kulfi's death,

one of Alu's companions, during the rehearsals for Chitrangada, a major Hindu epic featuring Arjuna's wife, the remaining members of the group, and their hosts have to decide on how to perform the burial rites. The argument is not merely an example of varying attitudes towards religion, but also the strictness of traditions:

There is a point. First, I think you should ask yourself whether you as a rational, educated woman wish to encourage anyone in the belief that a bit of dirty water from a muddy river can actually do them any good when they're already dead. This is hardly the time to debate, Mrs Verma said. We can only do what we think is right. Go one, Mr Bose.
Wait a minute! Dr Mishra leapt to his feet. If you are going to do this, you have to do this properly. You can't just pour water from an artesian well down her mouth and pretend it's Gangajal. You can't. There are certain rules.
Never mind the rules, Mrs Verma said. We'll just do what we can. (CR 402)

While Dr. Mishra changes his point of view from the scientific degradation of Hindu burial rituals to a defense of the purity of the very same rituals, Mrs. Verma remains adamant about their adaptability. Dr. Mishra proposes a thinking system with clear divisions that will not allow a mixture, whereas Mrs. Verma advocates for hybridity as she can transfer one cultural system to another. This mere argument makes it evident that the main battleground for the migrants is not in politics, in court, or the media. It is in everyday life. Even if adapted, the cultural practice creates more meaning in their ever-changing world than Dr. Mishra's inactivity, who is preoccupied with wooing other countries with an image of India as a "modern mainstream" nation (cf. CR 381). His desperate bourgeois desire to be part of the global mainstream is far removed from a migrants' reality. They are less afraid of a hybrid existence and know full well that mixed rituals are an adequate response for their existence, while Dr. Mishra is stuck between the rejection of his original culture and the defense of his purity. His behavior reveals his torn psyche.

So far, most attention was dedicated to the point of view of the migrants. Amitav Ghosh also reflects on the capitalist system as a whole, though. He refers back to the earliest days of global trade when, due to the Silk Route, cloth was traded between the ancient cultures of human civilization. He explicates how trade changed societies and languages by making new products available and creating the need for naming them, which often caused wrong ideas about the product itself, for example, "Baumwolle" in German, making it sound like a "misbegotten

wool.” (56). The greed of the trading parties wreaked havoc among human societies and formed a bloodstained history:

Every scrap of cloth is stained by a bloody past. But it is the only history we have and history is hope as well as despair. And so weaving, too, is hope; a living belief that having once made the world one and blessed it with its diversity it must do so again. Weaving is hope because it has no country, no continent. Weaving is reason, which makes the world mad and makes it human. (CR 58)

Thus, weaving carries many layers of meaning for Ghosh: It used to be an essential object of trade that led to wars or exploitation, but as a technique, it belongs to no one but human entirety (cf. also Jones 437). Relieved of the economic context, weaving contributes to sustaining human life and, hence, gives hope. In declaring its usage for ordinary people outside of corporations, Amitav Ghosh reminds the reader of the role weaving played in Gandhi’s struggle for India’s independence. He only wore the well-known white piece of self-woven cloth to demonstrate against the colonizer’s tactic of flooding the Indian market with cheap English cotton products, which ultimately ruined the local industry and drove many people into poverty (cf. Gonsalves 58-62). Therefore, it is not surprising that for Ghosh as for his fellow Indians, the act of weaving has meaning beyond its everyday usefulness. It is a particular gesture that reminds Indians of their successful struggle for independence.

From the perspective of literary studies, weaving also carries different connotations, as the motif of weaving has a long-standing tradition in Western culture that is based on weaving’s connection with the meaning of the word text. The latter comes from the Latin verb *texere*, which means to weave (cf. Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. 17 851). The association of weaving and storytelling is already present in the ancient myth of Arachne, who loses in a weaving competition against the goddess Athena and is turned into a spider (cf. Oxford Companion to Classical Literature 47). In *The Circle of Reason*, weaving is not limited to being a motif on the diegetic level. As Huttunen shows, Ghosh uses the same technique in the creation of the novel itself. While the first part of *The Circle of Reason* is narrated by an omniscient narrator, the second part features several narrative voices, whose personal stories are integrated into the chapter (cf. Huttunen 135-36). As mentioned before, Huttunen views this narrative strategy as an

example of Ghosh's nation of diversity-in-one and calls this "an ethical narrative strategy: the creation of connections with the other while retaining its alterity." (137). The stories by Zindi, for example, become a part of the bigger picture, namely the chapter as a whole without being appropriated by an omniscient narrator. Put differently, Ghosh weaves different narrative perspectives as well as narrative voices together into one greater narrative to create a story revealing the tactics of storytelling itself while at the same time integrating multiple narrative voices and, hence, overcoming the assigning of meaning.

Ghosh, therefore, claims the right of self-definition for the former colonial other, but that does not mean that the ties between the English-speaking Western hemisphere and India were cut. On the contrary, English still holds a decisive role in the Indian educational schedule and is an essential career factor. The curriculum vitae of Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, and Aravind Adiga illustrate the meaning the West still has for India: all of them were at least educated in the West or even continue to live there. Besides, they also chose to write their novels in English, which once again proves the Western influence as well as their hybridity. They are of Indian descent and write on Indian issues, but they write in English and, in the case of Ghosh and Chandra, even live in the US. Their hybrid existence as authors made them vulnerable to attacks from critics that want to preserve 'real Indian' literature in the vernaculars (cf. Williams 25). This criticism represents the attempt to fight the worldwide dominant English market that generates uniform cultural products.

The loss of Indian literary uniqueness cannot be denied when looking at the novels discussed in this chapter. They all are written in a genre foreign in Indian literary tradition. However, that does not make them Western products, either. *The White Tiger*, *Sacred Games*, and *The Circle of Reason* conform with the rules of hybridity. They are neither Western nor Indian products but have ties with both cultural backgrounds. Does hybridity make the works by Ghosh, Adiga, and Chandra inauthentic? Do they harm India's vernacular literary production and should, therefore,

be denied to be seen as voices of the Indian subcontinent? Definitely not. Their hybrid lives and ways of storytelling are also part of contemporary Indian society, which in the worldwide literary market are inarguably favored. Nevertheless, they carve out a way to let alternative voices be heard and draw global attention to India's systemic problems (cf. Goh 332)

Looking back at the introduction to this chapter on India, it can be said that the three crime novels examined illuminate different aspects of the contemporary Indian nation-state. In *Sacred Games*, Vikram Chandra examines the points of friction and conflict between the different ethnic and religious groups, with a particular focus on the Hindu nationalist discourse. For his part, Aravind Adiga traces the effects of the former colonial rule on the contemporary Indian nation-state and analyzes its global rise and the role of capitalism in India. The theme of capitalism also plays a prominent part in *The Circle of Reason* by Amitav Ghosh, but Ghosh interprets it in a global context with a particular emphasis on the group of migrants and refugees. As stated in the introduction, a characteristic feature of Indian national discourse, both secular and nationalist, is the emphasis on tolerance based on spirituality. It is, therefore, not surprising that spirituality is also addressed in the context of crime novels. In *Sacred Games*, for example, spiritual reasons are cited by the guru as a reason for violence against other religions and migrants. Thus, in contrast to both discourses, religious spirituality does not lead to tolerance, which supposedly sets India apart from the Western nations, but is rather instrumentalized to achieve political goals by violent means. In *The White Tiger*, Adiga also shows that spirituality is only a pretext. In his case, however, he underlines the assumption that India is only a money-oriented society. It is merely a political entity in a global financial market that offers no room for spiritual Enlightenment.

The depiction of others in India's contemporary society is also interesting: While Chandra reveals the religious and ethnic upheavals and the resulting violence between the different population groups, Adiga and Ghosh do not represent Indian society in such detail. Instead, they

only differentiate between two social classes: the rich and the poor. In the three crime novels, however, the groups that do not hold enough political power are the victims of exclusion and assault. Thus, all analyzed novels deny a broad understanding of others as a historically present and integrated part of Indian society according to the secular national discourse.

The dialogue with the West is another central element of all three crime novels, although each novel's focus is different. In *Sacred Games*, the transfer and adaptation of the national idea in the Indian context are of particular importance. The guru character makes it evident that he adopts the West's national concept, which is based on ethnic principles, despite his ambition to establish a state in a fundamentally Hindu tradition. In *The White Tiger*, the debate with the West functions on the one hand through the aspect of capitalism and, on the other hand, through the undermining of Western metaphors. Amitav Ghosh, in turn, is ultimately concerned with designing a universal ethic that defies the separating tactics of Western thought.

The adaptation of the crime novel genre for the Indian context is an elementary aspect of the Indian dialogue with the West because this genre is based on theses of the Enlightenment that were imported to India during colonization. It can be observed across the board for all three novels that the focus on criminals allows a detailed account of socio-cultural contexts, which often exposes the hypocrisy of state narratives. That is particularly true of *The Circle of Reason* and *The White Tiger*, whose protagonists operate within a capitalist network. Both Alu and Balram Halwai, despite their destitute starting positions, demonstrate the possibility of agency, albeit with varying degrees of success. In contrast to the US-American detectives, however, their agency is not bound to the subject area of (meta-)fictionality and authorship, but rather to a fundamental right of self-determination. Halwai is neither held back by his modest circumstances nor by the state narrative and Alu, as a migrant, insists at each of his stops that he has the right and need to redefine his identity in this context.

This different representation of agency in *The White Tiger* and *The Circle of Reason* is also evident in both cases through the narrative voices. Balram Halwai, as the first-person narrator, is interpreted by several scholars as the voice of the subaltern. Amitav Ghosh, on the other hand, implements a different ethic of narration in his novel: the initially omniscient narrator gives way in the course of the story to other narrators who communicate themselves and their experiences to the readers without being subsumed under the omniscient narrator.

The examination of Western ideas and their application in a postcolonial context plays a significant role in all three crime novels. Rationality, Enlightenment, the metaphor of light, and the concept of the nation are examined and found to be inadequate. Instead of imposed rules, the protagonists of all three novels insist on their right to self-determination and thus underline, albeit in different ways, the demand of postcolonial critics such as Stuart Hall or Homi Bhabha for a procedural understanding of identity. The result is a rejection of a fixed concept of roles that is to be viewed not only at the individual level but also within the global power relationship, as Halwai's self-perception as a successful businessman and Alu's need for a universal ethic illustrate. Even Sartaj Singh's development in *Sacred Games* from a corrupt Sikh police officer to the savior of Bombay, who operates beyond ethnic and religious lines, makes it clear that the old social limitations must be renegotiated. The postcolonial characters, like Hall or Bhabha, thus demand a dialogical examination of existing identity-building structures. From their point of view of the social periphery, they demand a renegotiation of their individual and collective identity.

6. Sri Lanka: Victims, Perpetrators, and the Question of Guilt

In May 2009, the Sri Lankan military defeated the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eealam (LTTE) and consequently ended the civil war that was generally perceived to go on between the Sinhalese, the population majority, and the Tamils who were striving for separation. The violence that escalated in 1983 was not limited to two opposing political and ethnic fronts (cf. Silva 321). Rather, one has to point to ongoing brutal power struggles within the respective ethnic groups, especially between the followers of different political parties, and attacks on other ethnic minorities like the Muslims (cf. Silva 321-23). Becoming the victim of an assault, therefore, was unpredictable, a fact that undermined every sense of security.

The roots of the conflict are manifold and originate far back in time. During the period of British colonization, the Tamils were preferred to the Sinhalese as the former were granted access to Western education and were given jobs in the public service sector instead of the less lucrative cropping the Sinhalese did (cf. Sabaratnam 185). In the 20th century, especially after Sri Lanka's independence, the Sinhalese fear of the large Tamil population in South India and its potential support of Tamil culture in Sri Lanka became highly problematic for the relation between the two ethnic groups. That, in turn, led to the discrimination of Tamils with regard to education and language. The increased competition for jobs and the dire educational outlooks made a violent struggle for separation attractive for young Tamils in the 70s and 80s (cf. Sabaratnam 203).

Prime Minister Mrs. Bandaranaike's opposition to the World Tamil Conference in Jaffna triggered violent riots that made the moderate TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) flee to Madras, which allowed the LTTE to assume leadership of the Tamil community (cf. Silva 321). The LTTE was the only Tamil party unwilling to give up their weapons to the Indian Peace Keeping Forces that intended to stabilize the region after the riots. Their resistance gained them support from the Tamil community, which finally allowed them to fight at two fronts: against the security forces and the Tamil rival groups. After expelling the Indian forces and annihilating the

other Tamil parties the LTTE ruthlessly pursued its goal of a separate Tamil state by using, for example, suicide bombers to target famous politicians or crowded places (cf. Silva 321-322). The Sinhalese government, on the other hand, responded with military actions to contain the LTTE geographically. Internally, it heavily relied on its police apparatus whose random arrests and tortures were and are infamous among human rights agencies:

The first executive president of Sri Lanka, JR Jayewardene (1978-1989), publically announced that the time has come for each person to look after his own security. [...] Subsequent Sri Lankan heads of state have done little to reverse the statement made by president Jayewardene. While national security is constantly talked about, the government shows no concern for the security of ordinary citizens. In fact, according to the prevalent discourse, the security of any individual can be sacrificed for the abstract notion known as national security. The absolute powers given to the security apparatus to deal arbitrarily with citizens' lives is what in essence national security has come to mean. (Fernando 118)

The Sri Lankan state, therefore, eroded its moral authority, which only contributed to the loss of every sense of security. Sri Lanka's violent maelstrom encompassed every class and every ethnic group. No part of society remained untouched. The undeniable result is a society of mutilated, dead, or vanished bodies.

Their representation in the chosen Sri Lankan postmodern crime fictions is crucial for the counter-discourse of Western values that are exemplified by transnational characters arriving on the island. These postcolonial bodies are evidence of war crimes, tortures, and other forms of violence, which also makes them the starting point of social detection. They are the media for the undoing of the Western binary way of thinking by illustrating how unfeasible these ideas are regarding a potential reconciliation process. Instead, it will be demonstrated how the physical experience of the deformed Sri Lankan bodies initiates a differing philosophical discourse focusing on intimacy and rather than totality.

The second step of this analysis will show that social detection also includes a historical one or rather a detection of the nation-state's historiographic means. The postcolonial bodies are entwined in narrative structures, become historicized, or de-historicized according to the nation's Grand Narrative. The Sri Lankan context offers an alternative to the Western historiography. This approach can, just like the Sri Lankan body discourse, be called 'intimate' because it does not impose one historical version on all private ones but rather values individual stories.

The last step is dedicated to the problems of the transnational detective. The social and historical detection of Sri Lankan society becomes for them who live in the West a detection of their own identity. Their return facilitates a confrontation with their flight, their forgetting, and their acculturation to the West.

At first, however, this analysis will foreground the role of the postcolonial body and its victimization in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Romesh Gunesequera's *Heaven's Edge*.

Additionally, Salman Rushdie's *Fury*⁶⁶ will be employed as a reference point for the representation of the postcolonial body. This novel is not set in Sri Lanka but on a fictional postcolonial island, where an ethnic minority fights for its independence. The parallels to the situation on Sri Lanka are obvious and allow comparisons. It will demonstrate that Sri Lankan issues are not to be regarded separately from the rest of postcolonial literature. Instead, they are to be integrated into a discussion of a postcolonial counter-narrative and the potentially ongoing tactics of colonialism.

Killers everywhere: Civil War and the Postcolonial Body in Sri Lanka

In the novel by Michael Ondaatje, the protagonist Anil, a forensic, arrives in Sri Lanka by order of the United Nations to inspect skeletons found at a historical site to which exclusively government officials have access. Among the historical skeletons, one is found that only dates back a few years and raises suspicions of a political murder. Anil, who was born in Sri Lanka but educated in the West, presses her local partner Sarath to investigate the circumstances of the skeleton's murder, whom she names Sailor. She firmly believes that the scientific proof of the government's involvement in political murders will lead to international intervention and a

⁶⁶ Salman Rushdie's *Fury* is one of his controversially discussed novels. Criticism ranges from the reproach of only providing a superficial explanation for the origins of violence in the American context (cf. Abele n.p.) to the allegation of an unreflected reproduction of the Western value system (cf. Bhattacharyya 153-54).

On the other hand, academics such as Soo Yeon Kim oppose the positions above by concluding that *Fury* "reveals cosmopolitanism and nationalism as false ideologies concocted by an American empire" (65). This analysis, in turn, will point out that *Fury* certainly has a complex approach to the postcolonial discourse, which is particularly evident in the relationship between reality and fiction.

solution for the Sri Lankan dilemma.⁶⁷

Hence, Anil perceives a tie between Sailor's individual body and the Sri Lankan social body. He bears the scars of society's violent struggle, the scars, so many local bodies share, and is according to her a means to free Sri Lanka from its situation:

There had been a continual emergency from 1983 onwards, racial attacks and political killings. The terrorism of the separatist guerilla groups, who were fighting for a homeland in the north. The insurrection of the insurgents in the south, against the government. The counterterrorism of the special forces against both of them. The disposal of bodies by fire. The disposal of bodies in rivers or the sea. The hiding and reburial of corpses. [...] '*The reason for war was war.*' (A 42-43)

The multi-front war produces countless corpses that undergo the same acts of violence and the same disposal as Sailor did. He becomes a representative of Sri Lankan suffering. The autopsy Anil performs on his body is also an autopsy of Sri Lankan society (cf. Knepper 39).

In Sri Lanka, the path to freedom and peace is in Anil's opinion, the notion of truth, which is based on scientific facts that she tries to provide with the help of the analysis of Sailor's body. She is able to determine his cause of death, therefore strengthening a cause and effect assumption:

She could read Sailor's last actions by knowing the wounds on bone. He puts his arms up over his face to protect himself from the blow. He is shot with a rifle, the bullet going through his arm, then into the neck. While he's on the ground, they come up and kill him.
Coup de grace. The smallest, cheapest bullet. A .22's path that her ballpoint pen could slide through. Then they attempt to set fire on him and begin to dig his grave in this burning light. (A 65)

The association of Anil's forensic autopsy with reading reminds strongly of the classical detective fiction and its belief in readability. Anil, like the classical detectives, has faith in the hermeneutic code and science that stereotypically grants an objective approach that guarantees truth according to the Western discourse. In the Sri Lankan context Anil will have to learn that the means of science despite all their forensic accuracy have their limitations, though (cf. Derrickson 140).

The representation of the body in *Heaven's Edge* is quite similar. The protagonist Marc, a third-generation migrant in the UK, returns to an island modeled after Sri Lanka and experiences the

⁶⁷ Ondaatje, Michael. "Anil's Ghost," 51-52. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "A."

ongoing atrocities against its citizens. His lover's abduction and his search for her also make him an enemy of the state. On his flight from the military, Marc views many victims of violence, members of a society in which the brutalized body is the norm:

War here, like everywhere else, was once about land and identity. But after the death cloud in the south everything changed. You see, we were reshaped by gangsters into new collectives held together only by conscription. You could say myopia, no? Not language, not religion, not any of these outmoded notions of nation. After so many years of fighting, violence became ingrained into our way of life. So now we have only thugs for politicians and tyranny in every tribe. Killers everywhere.⁶⁸

Uva, Marc's lover, turns against the traditional socio-cultural categories of a nation and, instead, propagates that Sri Lanka is not held up by a uniform language or a uniform religion. Both components were essential for the Sinhala-Buddhist movement in the 1950s that opposed "the pluralist orientation of the state." Members of these groups "also advocated degrees of future closure against other ethnic groups and religious groups by introducing a hierarchy based on moral appropriateness." (Sabaratnam 162-163). As elaborated before, these exclusions of ethnic or religious minorities have, on the one hand, to be understood as violent acts because they limit a person's freedom and right to self-fulfillment.

On the other hand, they are also prime examples of nation forming and the generation of a Grand Narrative that includes a nation's mythical origin (cf. Gellner 89). This attempt has to be seen in the context of Sri Lanka's independence. The transit from a colony defined by the British Empire to an independent nation-state caused social unrest and the urge for identity re-definition. In orchestrating the ethnic and religious exclusionary technique, Sri Lanka follows the Western paradigm, which illustrates that Sri Lanka's formal independence is only a partial one. It is still influenced by Western propositions.

The violence that Uva names the common denominator of Sri Lanka is not metaphorical but literally affects the whole society and even nature. The government destroys any wildlife outside of its approved plantations and dictates the plants that are to be grown:

"I knew the family that lived here," she said. "They were meant to grow only bitter gourd and radish for the market, but they

⁶⁸ Gunesequera, Romesh. "Heaven's Edge", 37. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "HE."

had young children and got some sugarcane going. It was against the rules. One day the military came and saw the boy eating sugarcane. They tried to catch him and beat him, but he ran away. The soldiers couldn't find him so they burnt the whole place down.“ (HE 29)

The regulation and the violation of human life equals the regulation and violation of natural life.

Thus, the deformation of the individual and human social body extends to the natural body.

Alternatively, the maimed human body is just a symptom of nature's sickness. Humankind and nature are interdependent.

The postcolonial body also bears a collective dimension in Salman Rushdie's *Fury*. Rushdie's main interest lies in the depiction of the creation of a story and its interaction with reality. In the first part of the novel narrated by a third-person narrative voice, the protagonist Malik Solanka is obsessed with a sudden murderous trait in his personality and the option of being the killer of three society girls.⁶⁹ The second part of the novel focuses more on his artistic creation of an online science fiction narrative, which then becomes a reality and is adopted by a radical group on a postcolonial island to carry out its revolution (cf. F 95-259). The postcolonial bodies visibly transform into machines by using masks (cf. F 226). They become dolls with implanted chips.

As Michel Foucault has shown in *Discipline and Punish* the subjugation of the human body creates the soul:

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished – and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives. This is the historical reality of this soul, which, unlike the soul represented by Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, supervision and constraint. [...] The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and the instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (29-30)

It is this soul, the acceptance of the Western value system, that keeps the colonial and the postcolonial human in place, but it is no longer the Christian understanding of the soul that Foucault references. The modern soul is formed through the body, is part of it, and controls it.

The same applies to the generation of the cyborgs:

But in the master program Kronos added a *Prime Directive*: whatever order he gave, the cyborgs and their replicas were

⁶⁹ Rushdie, Salman. "Fury", 4-91. In the following quotes from this novel are going to be highlighted by "F".

obliged to obey, even to the point of acquiescing in their own destruction, should he deem that necessary. He dressed them in finery and gave them the illusion of freedom, but they were his slaves. He gave them no names. There were *seven-digit numbers* branded on their wrists, and they were known by these. [...] And as well as characters – strengths, weaknesses, habits, memories, allergies, lusts – he gave them a value system by which to live. (F 163-164)

The value system given to them is integrated into their bodies. One can state that the postcolonial body, just like the cyborg body, is at the center of a subjugation process by the dominant power – either the West or science.

The collective formation of the postcolonial social body is, however, only a paradigm for the global subjugation of the human body which can also be found in the distant US:

But now living women wanted to be doll-like, to cross the frontier and look like toys. Now the doll was the original, the woman the representation. These living dolls, these stringless marionettes, were not just “dolloed up” on the outside. Behind their high-style exteriors, beneath that perfectly lucent skin, they were so stuffed full of behavioral chips, so thoroughly programmed for action, so perfectly groomed and wardrobed, that there was no room left in them for messy humanity. Sky, Bindy and Ren thus represented the final step in the transformation of the cultural history of the doll. Having conspired in their own dehumanization, they ended up as mere totems of their class, the class that ran America, which in turn ran the world, so that an attack on them was also, if you cared to see it that way, an attack on the great American empire, the Pax Americana, itself.... A dead body on the street, thought Malik Solanka, coming down to earth, looks a lot like a broken doll. (F 74)

The mechanized bodies of the three female US-citizens echo the postcolonial bodies. In contrast to the latter, who assume a globally low rank in the American system of power relations, the former belong to the elite. The thorough rules do not even exempt their leaders; in fact, they are the most adapted. The attack on the three society women has, according to Dirk Wiemann to be seen as “an attack on the great American empire, the Pax Americana, itself.” (155). The similarities between the US and postcolonial citizens as well as the term “American empire” depict Rushdie’s assumption of the continuation of colonial tactics. The global politics of the American empire regulate many spheres from the elite to subaltern bodies.

Overall, the Sri Lankan novels demonstrate the collective approach to the Sri Lankan body, and that harmed individual bodies are no exception in Sri Lankan society but exemplary for the national situation including torture, lamp-postings, and the abduction of children to serve as child soldiers (cf. Silva 19). Sri Lankan society is a violated social body. *Anil’s Ghost* emphasizes the readability of the human body, makes it a subject to logic and science, and consequently a site of truth (cf. A 65). *Heaven’s Edge*, on the other hand, is less interested in any form of abstract truth but stresses the human and natural bodies’ interdependence. Harmony and peace can, therefore,

never be attained without considering nature (cf. HE 187). In *Fury*, the postcolonial body finds itself the aim of subjugation techniques of the American empire (cf. F 55-56). Rushdie focuses in contrast to Ondaatje and Gunesequera less on the representation of actual physical violence but emphasizes the abstract one that integrates the body into a discourse system to control it. All three novels have something in common: They feature a postcolonial body which is still prone to subjugation. In this way, they question the post- in postcolonial studies. How long past the colonial era are we considering that bodies can still be enslaved, mutilated, and disposed of at the will of the once in power? Have only the names of the ones executing the colonial tactics changed?

Doubts about the role of the human body in the achievement of truth arise for Anil as soon as the bodies become inaccessible to analysis. The body of the fictional president Katagula, who becomes the victim of a suicide bombing, dissolves in thin air, thus exemplifying political and social helplessness and chaos (cf. A 294-295). The head of the state has only limited power over his body and is no guarantee for smooth social operations. He is dispensable and replaceable.

The same political discontinuance can be regarded in the actual Sri Lankan context as leading Sinhala politicians, or even prime ministers were among the most preferred targets of the LTTE suicide bombings (cf. Silva 311). Another example for the human body as a non-access to truth is Sailor's skull, whose face is reconstructed by Ananda, a sculptor. Nevertheless, the provided face does not look male. It somewhat resembles Ananda's wife, who disappeared and was most likely killed (cf. A 187). The divergence from the facts, which are Anil's truth becomes Ananda's private closure. The president's and Sailor's bodies deny access to the truth due to an absence of rationality and the overwhelming presence of emotions in the form of hate or love: hate resulted in the disintegration of the president's body and love in the shaping of Sirissa's face on the top of Sailor's skull.

As the lifeless body of Sailor and countless other human victims show, Sri Lankan culture is a culture of absence: an absence of life, of bodies, of body parts that generate different social and cultural needs than in the West which so heavily relies on the presence and tangible evidence that presumably will guarantee absolute truth. Ondaatje's fictional deliberation of the Maipattimunai massacre of 23 young men in 1985 and the ensuing social problems of mourning are not far-fetched from reality (cf. A 42). Sasanka Perera describes similar consequences for the relatives of the victims in Suriyakande: the desperate need for closure makes the relatives resort to an unscientific approach of identification. Clothing or the seeming recognition of teeth is sufficient for them. A DNA test is never run (cf. Perera 5-10). What is unthought-of in the West, the unscientific identification of corpses is essential in the Sri Lankan context. Science, Anil's path to social healing and forgiveness, does not grant any comfort. The narratives of the Sri Lankan lives do not need any scientific basis. It is not practicable.

The essence of Sri Lankan culture and its opposition to the West are best illustrated in an episode with Sarath and Palipana discovering a painting of a mother in a cave that they illuminate with branches on fire:

Years ago he and Palipana entered an unknown rock darknesses, lit a match and saw hints of colour. They went outside and cut branches off a rhododendron, and returned and set them on fire to illuminate the cave, smoke from the green wood acrid and filling burning light. [...] He [i.e. Sarath] remembered how they had stood before it in the flickering light, Palipana's arm following the line of the mother's back bowed in affection or grief. An unseen child. All the gestures of motherhood harnessed. A muffled scream in her posture.

The country existed in a rocking, self-burying motion. The disappearance of schoolboys, the death of lawyers by torture, the abduction of bodies from the Hokandara mass grave. Murders in the Muthurajawela marsh. (A 156-157)

The mother's cradling of an unseen child mirrors Sri Lanka's situation that seems to forever continue its 'rocking, self-burying motion' over the disappearances and deaths of its loved ones. The intimacy between mother and child is echoed by Palipana and his affectionate behavior towards the painting itself. Private moments and intimate physical exchanges, either on an artistic or on a personal level, counteract the brutal reality, but these moments have something in common with torture and murder: the human body. Physicality is both a curse and a blessing.

Emphasizing the human body as a means of experience gains philosophical and political

potential when one reconsiders the painting's finding place and its discovery. This procedure is a reversal of Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Sarath and Palipana come from outside and were exposed to the light of ideas in the way that they are both academically versed. However, that does not grant them access to Plato's absolute truth (cf. Plato 514a-518b). Their studies of abstract ideas are inferior to the truth about Sri Lankan society hidden inside the cave: intimacy. This episode propagates the value of private physical experience that should be preferred to the Western public conquest for universal truth. It denies any metaphysical realm as the site of abstract truth and redirects attention to the human body devoid of any scientific discourse, which is why David Farrier states that *Anil's Ghost* displays "a somatic focus" (86). In the Sri Lankan context, where the human body is so obviously the site of the power struggle between the different parties pursuing their ideal nation-state, it is the very same bodily entity that provides consolation through emotional experience: the boundary between corporeal reality and emotional obscurity is blurred. The Western metaphysical idea of truth cannot be achieved via the body but is inscribed into the postcolonial one.⁷⁰ Violence and affection are truths themselves.

Physical touch and proximity, however, can accomplish forgiveness and healing. After Sarath's death, his younger brother Gamini takes care of the dead body patching up the wounds and simultaneously forgiving Sarath for past arguments (cf. A 289-290). The touching of Sarath's body and not Anil's report to the UN grants his brother inner peace. The trauma cannot be categorized and logically analyzed to grant relief or at least recognition as the situation is handled by the Western-guided UN and its representative Anil: Her attempt to use Sailor as a piece of evidence against the government would help to create a Grand Narrative on which basis the UN could intervene. Nevertheless, it would also take away Sailor's life story, de-historicize

⁷⁰ Teresa Derrickson illustrates that "Ondaatje's novel invites us to question the brand of justice offered to the people of Sri Lanka by a Western-dominated legal institution, the United Nations." (136). She suggests that Anil's mission is, indeed, only a show to promote and sustain Western ideals, instead of genuinely helping the Sri Lankan situation (cf. 144)

him and degrade him to a mere number in the UN-archives.⁷¹ The call for physical intimacy contradicts the de-individualization of victims and their integration into an official narrative, which is the Western approach to give meaning to atrocities. The victims and citizens Anil encounters oppose any univocal representation of the Sri Lankan struggle. They make her and her protected understanding of truth look naïve (cf. McGonegal 97) and instead propose that the trauma should not be subsumed into one Grand Narrative but be told in as many stories as there are survivors.

Hilde Staels displays in her psychoanalytical analysis of *Anil's Ghost* that Ondaatje manages to underline the polyphony of voices through his use of the narrator. The third-person narrator, combined with several focalizations, not only allows for multiple voices to be read but also illustrates the interconnectedness of said voices through the presentation of their drives and affects (cf. 984). Similar to Amitav Ghosh in *The Circle of Reason*, Ondaatje uses the narrative concept of his novel to illustrate his ethical approach of connectedness. The different focalizations allow for a non-hierarchical narrative style that negates a clear interpretation and integration into the grand narrative.

Regarding the recently ended civil war and the question of truth and reconciliation, one could state Ondaatje's disbelief in the salvation of truth for Sri Lanka. He pleads for a multivocal narrative that does not sentence the mutilated, dead, or disappeared bodies to a total absence from history, which would only add to the violence done to their bodies.

In *Heaven's Edge*, the value of intimacy is also highlighted in order to overcome struggles. But in contrast to *Anil's Ghost* physicality is not linked to metaphysical truth but nature, for the protagonist love and nature coincide in his lover's body:

I remembered the scent of her body as though she had just passed by, leaving a spoor - an urgent pheromonal odour - for me

⁷¹ As Antoinette Burton points out it is exactly this difference in beliefs that causes the original rift between Sarath and Anil:

Her conflict with Sarath comes out of the collision between this ideological commitment to bones-as-evidence / bones-as-truth and his own equally deeply held belief that bones offer knowledge(s) rather than truth per se, and that such knowledge(s) are vulnerable to use and abuse by anyone, including the archaeologist, the forensic scientist and, of course, the government supported commission as well. (43)

to follow. But is our lake a pool of sorrow now? I see her curled up in a basket of leaves; her head turned in, her neck bared. My arms are empty; they encompass nothing but air, thinning with each passing moment, and yet I can feel the shape of her being from our last embrace: imperfect but strong. (HE 120)

Uva, named after a famous tea plantation in the Sri Lankan highlands, is not only an eco-warrior but attracts her lover by the accentuation of her bodiliness. Her attractiveness is not merely sexual, though, but also philosophical. Her resemblance to an animal makes Uva a chimera and emphasizes the connection between nature and humans. That points to the creature Garuda, half-human and half-bird, repeatedly stated as a mythical, evolutionary predecessor of humankind (cf. HE 38). The understanding of Uva as a post-human creature is supported by her envisioned unity with nature which, in turn, conforms with Jonathan Rutherford's concept of being earthbound:

To be earthbound is 'to be held to' and 'to be common with', the natural world. To be earthbound does not involve going in search of the blood and soil of one's exclusive national or racial destiny; nor does it involve a nostalgic return to the past, or subjection to the raw vicissitudes of nature. It is not about rejecting the cultures of urban life and returning to cultivating land. It is about the ethical experience of becoming who we are in connectedness to the living and non-living systems that have created us. Individuals are not born free. We make ourselves free, and we do so not in isolation from others but in relation to them [...]. (*After Identity* 125)

Independence and freedom are only achievable with regard to our environment. This emphasis on planetary unity overcomes the Western dualism of culture versus nature, in which culture represents the human elevation above the threatening and untamable natural state. This post-human idea of 'being-earthbound' moves beyond cultural achievements. Rutherford and Uva propagate a new form of identity that is no longer tied to the traditional and exclusionary concepts like the nation but engulfs the global living and non-living. Uva fights the exclusion of nature from this community by setting up a sanctuary garden first near the capital and later after her flight south with Marc in Samandia (cf. HE 35, 223-24).

Her gardens contrast with the English garden of Marc's grandfather due to the lack of regulation and the missing fences (cf. HE 204). The latter is a symbol of possession and exclusion and can be understood as the nation-state's borders. Uva's approach to gardening, in whose center the idea of unity with nature serves as the mythical origin, underscores the Western dominance on different levels: Firstly, she doubts human superiority over nature. This abolition of the culture-nature binary also leads to the countering of its related concepts. The colonial countries shaped,

as elaborated by Etienne Balibar, their colonies in a morally debased way, thus positioning them in a state closer to animality, making themselves appear more advanced (cf. “Racism and Nationalism “57). Uva’s construction of society, however, opposes any national discourse and its belief in the mythical ethnic origin. Ideas of regulation and exclusion of other ethnicities or species do not fit into her concept of unity. Her unwillingness to mark her territory and belonging counter-poses the contemporary liberal discourse that according to Jonathan Rutherford proclaims individualism’s ultimate value:

Today we face a doubtfulness about what the striving to be ourselves is for. What does it mean to feel a sense of self-fulfillment? Consumer culture and its tantalizing promises offers a panacea to fend off this uncertainty. But its effects can be corrosive, because it reconstitutes social activities and relations between people as market relations between individuals and things. The process of commodification leads to an isolating world inhabited by men and women whose social bonds are displaced or depleted. (*After Identity* 11)

Instead of corrosive social bonds and their ongoing commodification, Uva’s approach offers to strengthen human and inter-species relations and consequently challenges many Western ideas that are presumed to bring peace, freedom, and equality to the rest of the world.⁷²

While Uva provides the counter-concept to Western ideas, it is Marc's role to uncover their flaws in the Sri Lankan context. In contrast to Anil, Marc is a transnational character searching for his father and his origins, which is echoed by his attraction to the local woman Uva. She offers him a better understanding of his own identity and an alternative to the Western discourse, which both coincide with intimacy and are ever since their first meeting tied to nature. The erotic relationship corresponds with Uva's myth on the origin of humanity, which features the loving couple, Adam and Eve, in unity with nature (cf. HE 93). In this way, Marc and Uva re-enact the mythical origins before her abduction and try it once more after they meet again in the Sri Lankan south (cf. HE 218). On his trip there Marc encounters many deformed bodies that in combination with his love for Uva trigger his ultimate abandoning of the Western cultural

⁷² Melanie Murray concludes in her analysis of Gunasekera’s novel that the latter can “be read as challenging European discovery narratives which view islands as timeless/peripheral/ahistorical by stressing the island’s vulnerability [...]” (106). Instead, she believes that the elements of Eastern and Western mythology ultimately create cultural hybridity that transcends Western dominance (cf. 106).

hemisphere:

Evolution was not the survival of the fittest. Our evolution must come from the survival of the weak, retrieved against the odds, I realised. It must matter, otherwise why would we care about anyone? How could I feel anything meaningful for Uva, if we were only the random firing of some scattered neurones; the accidental binding of chemicals in a pointless law of cosmic efficiency? I could see then why I had to value life over death? Any life, including mine? (HE 187)

Marc's statement is just like the conclusions to *Anil's Ghost*, a degradation of Western scientific discourse. His disbelief in Darwin's evolutionary theory has political and social dimensions. While the survival of the weak relates to Uva's mythical Sri Lankan unity with nature, the survival of the fittest is a Western concept that now dominates the island. This idea was imposed on the island and very efficiently adapted by its government, which had devastating results for the inferior, postcolonial bodies. They are doubly suppressed: firstly by the West and secondly by their elites mimicking it to keep the existing power relation stable. The survival of the weak proposes not to exert power over a weaker being but to accept and support its life and consequently reaffirm the meaning of love and profound social bonds. Thus, this approach contrasts with a purely scientific definition of human society based on Darwin's theories. It should not always be the strongest individual with the best genes that dominates a community. Marc instead proclaims a human society beyond genetic determinism and, in this way corresponds with Catherine Malabou's plasticity of the brain:

The genesis of the brain, through the two phases of establishing connections and their maturation under the influence of the surroundings, thus makes evident a certain plasticity in the execution of the genetic program. In both cases, the brain appears at once as something that gets formed - progressively sculpted, stabilized, and divided into different regions - and as something formative: little by little, to the extent that the volume of connections grows, the identity of an individual begins to outline itself. (20)

Malabou's main argument is that the synoptical connections in the brain are not pre-determined but are formed according to the environment's stimuli. Thence identity as the result of brain structures still contains the possibility for human agency, as people can, to a certain extent, influence their future experiences. Of course, they cannot control their environment, but they can also not deny that they have a particular responsibility for shaping their brains (cf. Malabou 79). In declaring the brain a historical entity and making it a site of human agency, Catherine Malabou counterposes a solely biological explanation of identity. Like Marc, who insists that his

love for Uva is more than just “the random firing of scattered neurons” (HE 187). Malabou reasons against scientific determinism. Accordingly, Marc sees his love for Uva as a conscious choice in favor of her life philosophy and his cultural roots, which he has never been in touch with before. He opts for a different experience from his UK lifestyle to eventually change from a representative of the survival of the fittest to a representative of the survival of the weak, hence changing his neuronal connections and identity.

Although Sri Lanka has become the place where violence is ingrained into people’s bodies, where every cultural act or every plant to be grown are approved by the social body’s central authority, the government, the striving for agency and freedom in unity with nature cannot be eradicated. The postcolonial body shares its scars with nature and functions as a reminder to change social, historical, and environmental policies.

As argued before, the body in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury* is the site of constant subjugation techniques to create a uniform collective body based on individualized and self-revealing bodies (cf. F 183). The seemingly adjusted bodies occasionally rebel against the existing power structures, as exemplified in the Lilliput riots, the killings of society girls in New York, or Malik Solanka’s own attempt to kill his family. Solanka’s detection of his own and humankind’s murderous tendencies brings to light a combination of two reasons for the will to resort to violence:

Here in Boom America, the real-life manifestation of Keat's fabulous realms of gold, here in the doubloon-heavy pot at the rainbow's end, human expectations were the highest levels in human history, and so, therefore, were human disappointments. When arsonists lit fires that burned the West, when a man picked up a gun and began killing friends, when lumps of concrete smashed the skulls of rich young women, this disappointment for which the word “disappointment” was too weak was the engine driving the killers' tongue-tied expressiveness. This was the only subject: the crushing of dreams in a land where the right to dream was the national ideological cornerstone, the pulverizing cancellation of personal possibility at a time when the future was opening up to reveal vistas of unimaginable, glittering treasures such as no man or woman had ever dreamed of before. In the tormented flames and anguished bullets Malik Solanka heard a crucial, ignored, unanswered, perhaps unanswerable question – the same question, loud and life-shattering as a Munch scream, that he had just asked himself: is this all there is? What, this is it? This is it? People were waking up like Krysztof Waterford-Wajda and realizing that their lives didn't belong to them. Their bodies didn't belong to them, and nobody else's bodies belonged to anyone, either. They no longer saw a reason not to shoot. (F 184)

The failure of the American myth of wealth and upward mobility for everyone creates an atmosphere of recurring disappointments. The adjustment to the American requirements does not

suffice.⁷³ This double isolation from any narrative and any other fellow human being results in lethal fury. The lack of intimacy triggers violence, while love, an equally passionate response, silences the furies (cf. F 206). In this way, *Fury* corresponds with *Anil's Ghost* and *Heaven's Edge*: All three novels propagate the value of physical intimacy and its healing potential.

In *Fury*, the narrator especially turns against the world-dominating American myth of happiness by re-defining the physical and, thus, psychological self. The passion Solanka experiences with Neela breaks the narrative that forms the docile body without harming others:

Life is fury, he'd thought. Fury – sexual, Oedipal, political, magical, brutal – drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. Out of furia comes creation, inspiration, originality, passion, but also violence, pain, pure unafraid destruction, the giving and receiving of blows from which we never recover. The Furies pursue us; Shiva dances his furious dance to create and also to destroy. But never mind about gods! Sara ranting at him represented the human spirit in its purest, least socialized form. This is what we are, what we civilize ourselves to disguise – the terrifying human animal in us, the exalted, transcendent, self-destructive, untrammelled lord of creation. We raise each other to the heights of joy. We tear each other limb from fucking limb. (F 30-31)

Violence and love share fury as a root, a chaotic one that contradicts every sense of order, essential for the creation of subjugated bodies. They are thus not immanently different as even destructive energies can lead to a creative process which originates from the “human animal” in us, a realm beyond our civilized, docile selves:

To cancel the fluxes, to lower our self-controlling guard, to accept exploding from time to time: this is what we should do with our brain. It is time to remember that some explosions are not in fact terrorist - explosions of rage, for example. Perhaps we ought to relearn how to enrage ourselves, to explode against a certain culture of docility, of amenity, of the effacement of all conflict even as we live in a state of permanent war. It is not because the struggle has changed form, it is not because it is no longer really possible to fight a boss, owner, or father that there is no struggle to wage against exploitation. To ask "What should we do with our brain?" is above all to visualize the possibility of saying no to an afflicting economic, political, and mediatic culture that celebrates only the triumph of flexibility, blessing obedient individuals who have no greater merit than that of knowing how to bow their heads with a smile. (Malabou 79)

Within Catherine Malabou's context, the explosions denote the destruction of old synapses and the construction of new ones to liberate oneself from subjugation. Her statement does carry cultural meaning, though, as explosions can also relate to political or social riots against the

⁷³ The representation of the USA in *Fury* is a central aspect of the novel's critical analysis. Stephen Morton sees *Fury* as "the liberal defense of America's democratic values and its foreign policy. (105) Soo Yeon Kim, on the other hand, ultimately interprets Rushdie's criticism of the US system more as an expression of positive affirmation. According to Kim, Rushdie is concerned less with leaving the US sphere of power than with his decentralized situation in the overall context. (cf. Kim 71-73)

For his part, Rodney Stephens focuses his analysis on the USA itself and works out that Rushdie is concerned with re-defining the US place in the world, a fact that is made particularly evident by the fact that in *Fury* numerous European myths about the USA are being reversed. (cf. 351) This analysis comes to a similar conclusion as Rodney Stephens, although its focus is more on the postcolonial context, which is a particularly useful approach to showing how the periphery is trying to re-define the US sphere of influence.

existing system. Therefore, her concept of violence includes the factor of human agency. The violence in *Fury* falls short in keeping its liberating promises because it does not reconnect the human into a social network as love does. Hence, violence is a subconsciously triggered force against subjugation but not as successful as love, which allows chaotic passion that dissolves disappointments by the dominant system to replace them with an interpersonal relationship instead of the continuous belief in self-reliance. Violence may cause an uproar and point to the necessity of a system change, but it does not provide a replacement for the existing myths.

In all novels, the postcolonial bodies become the site of resistance against the retention of Western dominance. They oppose Western philosophical, historical, political, and environmental discourses to create a space for postcolonial commemoration and agency. This place is devoid of rationality and the related scientific discourse that supports the postcolonial bodies' subjugation to political determinism. Instead, it is characterized by privacy and intimacy which remove the bodies from public intervention and attempt to free them from power relations. This finding also demonstrates doubts considering a formal reconciliation process in Sri Lanka, which, even several years after the civil war was declared to have ended, has not begun. A public solution will not ease the private trauma.

Postcolonial History and Narration in the Sri Lankan Context

The question of a coherent national past in the form of an officially approved historiographical text is in contrast to other nations, a current one for Sri Lanka. Its medieval and colonial pasts are researched and documented, but the more recent events, namely the Tamils' strife for a separate state and the Sinhalese defeat of the LTTE, still need to be integrated into a wholesome national narrative. As elaborated before, this creation of a Grand Narrative should not be understood as the accumulation of objective facts but, rather, as a subjective process initiated and determined by political and economic cells in power. Regarding Salman Rushdie's *Fury*, Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, and Romesh Gunesequera's *Heaven's Edge*, this dissertation will

demonstrate which risks and potentials the current development of a national narrative bear for the postcolonial and war-torn state. Each novel illustrates, in its ways, the problematic connection between power and historical writing and creates a possible counter-narrative.

As alluded before, Salman Rushdie's *Fury* is not a novel set in Sri Lanka or on an island modeled after it.⁷⁴ In contrast to Romesh Gunsekera, who pays great attention to the description of Sri Lankan flora, fauna, and geography, Rushdie is more interested in the power struggle itself. Thus, the Lilly-Befluscu island described in *Fury* is an allegory of the postcolonial state. In this way, this novel is also of interest to the Sri Lankan context as it allows us to re-situate Sri Lankan issues within the broader framework of the postcolonial discourse.

The potential for a historical counter-narrative derives from the disintegration of the boundary between reality and fiction. Solanka's science fiction features the scientist Kronos, who travels to a less scientifically-advanced part of his world and builds cyborgs with a self-determinable value system. Over time the cyborgs emancipate themselves from their creator, request an equal status to the indigenous people of the continent, and are therefore perceived as a threat. War begins, and the cyborgs seem to be victorious (cf. F 166).

The cyborgs' attraction for the rebellious Indo-Lillys lies in several similarities: both were created and or exploited by a white man and were stripped off their right to a name but rather referred to with numbers (cf. F 156, 163). For the reader of the novel, another striking analogy is apparent: They are both fictional.⁷⁵

The Indo-Lillys' usage of the cyborg narration and the conformance of the similarities between these groups raise questions concerning reality. The Indo-Lillys in their state of fictionality

⁷⁴ Soo Yeon Kim and Dirk Wiemann both assume that the fictional island state in *Fury* is indeed modelled after Fiji (cf. Kim 63, Wiemann 150)

⁷⁵ Salman Rushdie underlines the aspect of fictionality by creating an intertextual web. As Dirk Wiemann illustrates, Rushdie employs his "well-known textual practice of hodgepodge assemblage" by incorporating references ranging from Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Brecht's *Galilei* (cf. 146). By doing so, he puts the originality of his piece of work forward for discussion and consequently mirrors the Indo-Lillys' situation of secondariness.

embrace an entity that is considered fictional in their fictional world. In other words, they tear down the boundary between reality and fiction and desire overlappings of these two seemingly different realms. These overlappings could even undermine our sense of total reality. How real is our reality? Is fictionality seeping into our world?

These questions that readers of Rushdie's *Fury* have to face are also embedded in the novel itself. Like Sarah Brouillette, I would argue that Malik Solanka also witnesses a world in which the boundary between reality and fiction can no longer be held (cf. 144):

In the minds of children, Solanka thought, the creatures of the imagined world – characters from books or videos or songs – actually felt more solidly real than did most living people, parents excepted. As we grew, the balance shifted and fiction was relegated to the separate reality, the world apart in which we were taught that it belonged. Yet here was a macabre proof of fiction's ability to cross that supposedly impermeable frontier. Asmaan's [i.e. his son's] world – Disney World – was trespassing in New York and murdering the city's young women. And one or more very scary boys were concealed somewhere in this video, too. (F 130)

Fiction strikes back. It can no longer be contained in the realm in which it was assigned.⁷⁶ This aggressive potential of fiction that Solanka first sees in the context of the New York murders resurfaces in the Indo-Lilly rebellion. Nevertheless, at what is this aggression directed? Or where does it come from?

In order to answer these questions, one needs to have a closer look at the Lilly-Befluscu struggle:

“This isn't just a question of ethnic antagonism or even of who owns what,” she said. “The Elbee culture really is different, and I can see why they are afraid. They're collectivists. The land isn't held by individual landowners but by the Elbee chiefs in trust for the whole Elbee people. And then we Big Endia-wallahs come along with our good business practice, entrepreneurial acumen, free-market mercantilism and profit mentality. And the world speaks our language now, not theirs. It is the age of numbers, isn't it? So we are numbers and Elbees are words. We are mathematics and they are poetry. We are winning and they are losing: and of course they're afraid of us, it's like the struggle inside human nature itself, between what's mechanical and utilitarian in us and the part that loves an dreams. (F 158)

Neela, Solanka's lover and an indigenous Indo-Lilly, makes the conflict appear as a clear opposition between individualism vs. collectivism, capitalism vs. socialism, numbers vs. letters, as well as reason vs. emotion. The Indo-Lillys are numbers, and the Elbees are words. As stated before, the white men deprived the Indo-Lillys of their names and trained them. Numbers,

⁷⁶ In her essay “Authorship as Crisis in Salman Rushdie's *Fury*” Sarah Brouillette comes to the conclusion that, with regard to the problem of authorship and the market, *Fury* is to be understood primarily as a reflection of the marginalization of the author: “[...], the book excuses the author from accountability for his position within the market by dramatizing its operations as out of the hands of any one author.” (152). It illustrates that Malik Solanka, as a representative for Salman Rushdie, experiences that one's creation emancipates itself from the author and is made usable in new contexts that have nothing to do with the author's original intentions. Wiemann and Kim share this view (cf. Wiemann 144, Kim 77).

therefore, are only imposed on their culture, ingrained into lives, and created a seemingly natural opposition to the less successful, word-oriented Elbees.

The two fronts in *Fury* dissolve due to the third party that not only transformed the Indo-Lillys but also provides the world-wide profit-oriented context, which accelerates the Lillyput-Befluscu conflict (cf. F 156-59). The Indo-Lillys are at the same time the representatives and the victims of capitalism and neoliberalism, just as the cyborgs are the representatives and the victims of science, another manifestation of numbers (cf. F 163). Nevertheless, both groups are denied equality because they are not originals or natives. They are perceived as imitators or impostors of originality or rather reality (cf. F 158, 189). Hence, Neela's previous description of the Lillyput-Befluscu conflict is wrong. It is not a fight of numbers against words but a fight between the imitation of a number-based society against local originals in the context of a system that values numbers, science, and hence reality (cf. F 158). Without being aware of it, Indo-Lillys contain an aspect of fictionality, even though they fashion themselves to be more real or objective: they were shaped by white men into economically successful beings (cf. F 156). The Elbees, however, ground their argument on their nativeness. They are the first to have lived on the islands and thus the originals. This being-first, being the original, is used by the Elbees to argue in favor of their superiority: They are reality, the Indo-Lillys are fiction.

It is obvious how the Elbees and the Indo-Lillys use the same way of binary thinking to discredit each other: reality vs. fiction, science vs. literature, reason vs. emotion, native vs. migrant. Both sides try to associate themselves with that part of the duality that represents reason or objectivity (cf. Rutherford, "A Place Called Home" 21). It is that part of the duality that is traditionally embraced by the dominant Western discourse. Salman Rushdie, thus, displays both sides of the conflict as imitators of Western dualist thinking. The Western value system itself is not questioned, though. It remains untouched. The Elbees and the Indo-Lillys continue to weaken

each other on Western terms. They are both caught in a vicious circle that sentences them to imitate:

The colonized, her language, and her culture are thus relegated to the position of the inferior, improper copy. The values involved are hierarchically determined and tend to work in one direction only: the original, so to speak, exists as the sole, primary standard by which the copy is judged, but not vice versa; the white man, and the white man alone, is authentic. Condemned to a permanent inferiority complex, the colonized subject must nonetheless try, in envy, to become that from which she has been excluded in an a prior manner. She is always a bad copy, yet even as she continues to be debased, she has no choice but to continue to mimic. She is damned if she tries; she is damned if she doesn't. (Chow 104)

What Rey Chow calls copy, I named imitation or fiction. All terms have the aspect of secondariness in common, but this secondariness creates some space – violently, just in the same way that it was placed in the second position. The imaginary, fictional cyborgs invade reality and start a revolution. Facing the masks of his creation Malik Solanka gets a feeling of imitation, he becomes “the mask’s imitator”, “the counterfeit” (F 239). The collapse of reality and fiction reminds of the simulacrum: “This is the story of a crime - of murder of reality. And the extermination of an illusion - the vital illusion, the radical illusion of the world. The real does not disappear into illusion; it is illusion that disappears into integral reality.” (Baudrillard, i). This quote by Jean Baudrillard mirrors the violence that is involved in the revolution of the Indo-Lillys. Illusion, fiction, the unreal infuse reality and merge with it. Rushdie, however, gives a reason for the uproar of fiction: the Indo-Lillys want to shed their state of fictionality and strive for equality and approval of their nativeness. The violent revolution is far from liberating in its abuses of human rights but rather a desperate attempt to become valued by the Western binary thinking. It is an outcry of disappointment and neglect. The merger of fiction and reality might initially appear as a revolution against oppression by the Elbees, the West, and its value system. Nevertheless, the overcoming of colonial and contemporary history is impossible as the Indo-Lillys remain in the same binary thinking pattern. They only cause temporary unease.

Dirk Wiemann also concludes that the representation of the Lillyput-Blefuscu crisis does not allow the inversion of colonial power structures. He highlights this in his intertextual analysis of Rushdie’s novel. In doing so, he also addresses the unique relationship of *Fury* to Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. Both novels display, according to Wiemann, a pessimistic inversion

of the humanist approach and the idea of utopia (cf. 157-58). Lillyput-Blefuscu is “nothing more than a local appropriation of imperial culture in a grotesque abortive version” (159), a finding that coincides with mine. The Indo-Lillys are not able to overthrow the Western binary to replace it with a functioning concept of alterity or plurality.

What do these findings imply for the relation of reality and fiction and consequently for a postcolonial narrative? Despite the failure of the Indo-Lilly revolution, it becomes clear that fiction is not separate from reality but an integral part of it. Thus, the Western binary is exposed to be constructed. The Indo-Lillys mistake was operating within the dichotomy. They try to create facts to gain a place in history without being aware of the illusionary quality of their wish. The representation in historical writing is not handled according to the principle of objectivity, which would assemble facts and treat them equally. Historical writing is fictional, and it has to be as the human perception of the world is never objective but structured.

The discussion of fictionality is also immanent in Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*.⁷⁷ It mostly centers on Palipana, who used to be a celebrated historian but lost his status when his books were revealed to lack a factual basis. Instead, he demonstrates an approach to historical writing that counterposes the Western one:

Every historical pillar he [i.e. Palipana] came to in a field he stood beside and embraced as if it were a person he had known in the past. Most of his life he had found history in stones and carvings. In the last few years he had found the hidden histories, intentionally lost, that altered the perspective and knowledge of earlier times. It was how one hid or wrote the truth when it was necessary. (A 105)

⁷⁷ *Anil’s Ghost* is one of Ondaatje’s most intensely debated novels. The novel and its representation of Sri Lankan relations have been particularly controversial among Sri Lankan critics (cf. Kanaganayakam 6). Quadri Ismail, for example, holds the opinion that Ondaatje favors Sinhala nationalism and neglects the struggle of the Tamils (25). Kanaganayakam, on the other hand, insists that [o]ne does not wish to privilege Sri Lankan critics and imply that their perspective is somehow more significant than that of Western critics.” (6).

But even among Western critics, some see *Anil’s Ghost* as an apolitical and, therefore, irresponsible novel (cf. LeClair n.p.). A majority of Western critics, however, deal with the subject of global ethics with a particular focus on human rights in times of terrorism (cf. Staels 977, Derrickson 152, Burton 52, Scanlan, “Anil’s Ghost and Terrorism’s Time” 302). Scanlan, for example, concludes that Ondaatje is by no means aestheticizing complex social and terrorist contexts, but instead replicating the feeling of terror for society and the individual. Overall, the discussion, thus, comes down to the issue of representation and artistic freedom, which is amplified by the actual civil war in Sri Lanka as well as Ondaatje’s heritage.

Palipana is not interested in the pillar as a whole. He instead focuses on certain aspects, touches the pillar, and discovers stories that were hidden within the total object, therefore showing a greater deal of respect to sources than common in the Western, solely fact-based historiography (cf. Burton 45 – 46). The analysis of the pillar becomes a private, sensual encounter by the act of touching. While the Western historical writing circles around the Grand Narrative and its believability that rests on the provision of seemingly objective facts, Palipana proposes a subjective meeting with the past that does not aim at a total picture but on the valuation of every individual life story (cf. Siddiqi 200). Alternatively, as Antoinette Burton states in her essay “Archive of Bones”, *Anil’s Ghost* offers its readers not just a narrative about the dangers of excessive faith in empiricism (“hard” evidence), but a reflection on the continued possibility of History itself as an exclusively western epistemological form.” (40). His actions conform with Stuart Hall’s claim for the hearability of all voices to finally grasp history in full (cf. “Old and New Identities “147). Too many voices have been silenced or hidden, as Palipana would put it. They were on the downside of oppression, whose goals were totality and grandeur. However, this totality deprives Western historical writing of an essential component: experiencability..

The main force of a pragmatic Sinhala movement, Palipana wrote lucidly, basing his work on exhaustive research, deeply knowledgeable about the context of the ancient cultures. While the West saw Asian history as a faint horizon where Europe joined the East, Palipana saw his country in fathoms and colour, and Europe simply as a landmass on the end of the peninsula of Asia. (A 79)

While Palipana can research his local culture and history with his senses, the Western ones are removed in three different ways: geographically, historic-philosophically, and sensually. Palipana's reversal of the dominant historical discourse is not only aimed at an abstract Grand Narrative but also globalizing forces. He prefers local history, customs, and rituals to impenetrable and lifeless narratives that come from a distant continent (cf. Farrier 87). Hence, he opposes the association of localism and backwardness, which was established by modern Western thinking and then also played its role in the racial discourse (cf. Dirlik 23). The marginal position of postcolonial Sri Lanka was fashioned as an earlier and therefore backward

stage of cultural evolution in contrast to the West with its Grand Narrative and the notion of absolute truth in which the protagonist Anil, a Sri-Lankan and Western hybrid so strongly believes.

The pairing of Grand Narrative with truth and local, sensual history with fiction is similar, although less complex than Salman Rushdie's *Fury*. In both cases, the postcolonial context is associated with fiction, which tries to undermine the dominant Western representation. Michael Ondaatje discusses the specific use of historiography in Sri Lanka, which in the West equals truth and reality. It falls short in providing the comfort of logic precisely because of the locality it tries to describe:

The most precisely recorded moments of history lay adjacent to the extreme actions of nature or civilization. She knew that. Pompeii. Laetoli. Hiroshima. Vesivius (whose fumes had asphyxiated poor Pliny while he recorded its 'tumultuous behaviour'). Tectonic slips and brutal human violence provided random time-capsules of unhistorical lives. A dog in Pompeii. A gardener's shadow in Hiroshima. But in the midst of such events, she realized, there could never be any logic to the human violence without the distance of time. For now it would be reported, filed in Geneva, but no one could ever give meaning to it. She used to believe that meaning allowed a person a door to escape grief and fear. But she saw that those who were slammed and stained by violence lost the power of language and logic. (A 55)

Sri Lanka's violent state undoes every logic or attempts to capture reality. The accumulated facts lack the personal dimension that Palipana emphasizes. His historiography has, therefore, to be seen as a result of his environment and the Sri Lankan experience.⁷⁸ He understands the past not as something distant and analyzable but as something alive and can be shaped. The ongoing violence changed the perception of time in Sri Lanka. Time stands still, as the endurance of suffering does not seem to end.

Romesh Gunsekera also establishes a counter-model to the Western one. He, however, is less interested in the role that fiction plays in (historical) writing but rather highlights a non-written mythical tradition. These oral myths that are mostly recounted by Uva, a native, display Sri Lanka as the original paradise:

Near Samandia was the place, Uva said, where the first inhabitants of the island had been awakened by butterflies splashing

⁷⁸ In his defense of *Anil's Ghost* Chelva Kanaganayakam also reaches the conclusion that the political concerns of the novel derive from the Sri Lankan context, consequently defending Ondaatje against criticism of Sri Lankan reviews (cf. 21). Kanaganayakam does not deny the universal allegories present in the novel, but instead refers to the Sri Lankan individuals or objects that are all treated with great care (cf. 21).

dew at the dawn of time. The dew formed a lake and their wings a floating stairway spiraling up to heaven. It was here that the first human drowned and ascended to become a god or, according to others, where the first couple - Adam and Eve - were expelled to become real lovers, descending on steps of mortal confetti; their loins swollen, their fingers entwined, their lives ignited. (HE 93)

Strikingly, the myth is a mixture of the Christian tradition and a nature-oriented local one that features the creation of gods and humans. That already exemplifies one quality of the oral tradition: It is open to changes and can adapt. In the Western discourse that might implicate a weakness, as the openness to individual changes does not grant one pure form of the narrative. For the Sri Lankan context, this openness of the oral tradition bears advantages, though. Uva can form a myth that makes the most sense to her. She does not have to rely on a collective mythic origin, which, for example, is shaped for the national narrative in the West. The Sri Lankan myth is not officially accredited.

How much writing can be an act of restriction and dominance becomes apparent in a dialog between the protagonist's grandfather who migrated from Sri Lanka to the UK:

As a boy I have often studied this man's picture while Eldon recounted the adventures in the book. As I examined it once again I heard Eldon's exasperated voice. 'This fellow from England spent twenty years on our island and wrote a whole book about it; I've spent sixty years on his and haven't even written a damn letter.' His old friend Anton who was with him sniffed ungraciously. 'That's that book that inspired Robinson Crusoe, no? Our fellows didn't know what they started when they held that bugger prisoner. (HE 132)

Although Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is not based on someone who stranded on Sri Lanka, it is still the literary prime example of the West discovering the ethnic Other. It illustrates how Crusoe's encounter with the Other "confirms, in his mind, his identity and legitimate authority [...]." (Rutherford, *After Identity* 48-49). Hence, the Other and the European right to superiority have been banned on paper, which created the illusion of truthfulness. Eldon, however, does not try to write about the UK and consequently fix it on paper. It is the West that resorts to writing to give meaning to the world and to guarantee its superiority by unchangeability.

The relationship between written and orally handed-down cultures and the power relations within them are also often addressed by postcolonial critics:

This is the Other that belongs inside one. This is the Other that one can only know from the place from which one stands. This is the self as it is inscribed in the gaze of the Other. And this is the notion which breaks down the boundaries, between outside and inside, between those who belong and those who do not, between those whose histories have been written and those whose histories they have depended on but whose histories cannot be spoken. That the unspoken silence in between that which can be spoken is the only way to reach for the whole history. There is not other history except to take the absences and silences along with what can be spoken. Everything that can be spoken is on the ground of the enormous voices that have

not, or cannot yet be heard. (Hall, "Old and New Identities" 147)

Stuart Hall's allusion to written and oral stories refers to Western dominance based on its written evidence. The tradition of writing and its storage in archives seems to give the West access to (historical) truth. In contrast, oral traditions are said to provide stories that are easy to change and, thus, not able to clarify a situation fully. Hall values oral tradition and even demands that it be given greater cultural significance to understand history as a whole. Although this claim does not seem feasible given the monetary, political, and social power relations that still exist, the image of the countless voices speaking and being heard simultaneously denies the originality and supremacy of Western stories. This denial of authority is what interests Hall. It would lead to the destruction of power relations and instead create a space of interaction and hybridity that finally accepts cultural interdependence. It is therefore evident how close Gunesequera comes to Hall's demand with his representation of written and oral traditions. Both are interested in breaking down the existing power structures by changing the prevailing dominant narrative tradition and giving the oral culture a higher value.

All three novels – *Anil's Ghost*, *Heaven's Edge*, and *Fury* – try to claim agency for the Sri Lankan narrative. While Gunesequera proposes orality to express the Sri Lankan plight, Ondaatje discredits Western historiography by creating a space for fictionality within it and thus complying with the characteristics of historiographic metafiction. Rushdie also identifies the postcolonial island with fiction but argues that the upholding of the Western binary system of reality and fiction weakens its chances of success.

Transnational Detectives

Being transnational in the contemporary world holds many challenges because one has to leave the very own social context, expose oneself to a new culture, and learn its rules while in many cases baring the apparent signs of difference. The protagonists in all novels have to face these

tasks: They return to their home island and try to give meaning to either their own or the national identity. It is a re-discovery of their post-colonial roots.

The protagonists arrive as messengers of the Western system but with the personal or professional urge to analyze the social rules, to make the civil war-torn country accessible, and to finally re-connect with a long-lost part of their identity. This search for their identity is shared by every postmodern detective, but it is not sufficient to claim that Romesh Gunsekera's *Heaven's Edge*, Salman Rushdie's *Fury*, and Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* belong to that subgenre. All detective characters, however, engage in some form of social detection initiated by an actual crime committed on the island. In *Heaven's Edge*, the protagonist Marc travels to Sri Lanka to explore his family history, falls in love with a local woman, and ends up searching for her after her abduction by the government. Malik Solanka in *Fury* investigates the consequences of the American ideology and how it leads to the willingness to kill his wife and to violent outrages in the post-colonial context. Finally, Anil Tissera, an UN-forensic, conducts an autopsy on the victim of a political murder probably instigated by the government. The investigation of the detective's history and identity cannot be separated from the community and its violent experiences. The attempt to solve the crimes is, thus, intricately linked to an understanding of themselves.

The process of identification is, indeed, a very complicated one for the Westernized detectives: They are stuck between the categories of the Self and the Other. The West is as much the Self as the post-colonial is the Other and the other way around. The protagonists undergo a double exclusion, which according to the rules of objectivity and detachment in crime fiction, should grant them a meticulous analysis. Just as the classical detective has a god-like position due to his genius and low sex-drive, the transnational is removed from any social community because of his migratory background.

Despite the analogy of social remoteness, the postmodern transnational detectives are destined to fail. The classical detective has one stable point to speak from, to allocate guilt in the murderous Other, whereas the postmodern transnational detectives lack this stable identity. They oscillate between two poles. The investigated Other is a part of them and cannot be excluded. The traditional approach of the detective, proving the ethnic Other's guilt and expelling him from society, cannot work on a transnational basis.

The detective character Marc has positive associations with Sri Lanka. His grandfather emigrated to the UK, and his father returned to Sri Lanka to fight and die in an undefined war. Having never personally been to the island of his ancestors, Marc travels there to find the places his grandfather and father described. His need to re-connect with his ancestral roots might derive from his family's migratory background:

My father died somewhere in this jungle when I was still a child. My mother took her own life, far from home, not long after. I felt I had never really known either of them; they had hardly ever been around and I had to make do. I grew up with my grandparents, believing I should stay close to home. From an early age I learned to be ultra-cautious. My grandparents themselves had breathed the air of diverse places, but when they spoke of their itinerants' history, I saw only trails of migration that seemed either cruel or futile: the pointless effects of a wayward gene. (HE 16)

Interestingly, Marc's family is as defragmented as its origins. Understanding the nation as a genetically and culturally connected community establishes an analogy between a nation and a family. Therefore, Marc is – just like Christopher Banks in *When We Were Orphans* – characterized by a double absence: neither his family nor his national background is traditionally complete. He can neither access an intact family nor a national history. Instead, migration appears to have a deconstructing effect on him.

To overcome his split identity, Marc travels to an island modeled after Sri Lanka looking for his lost father, the missing part of his family. But his desired reconnection with his origins is blocked by his status of a traveler, a migrant:

'You speak English?'

She nodded, perplexed. Then suspicion seemed to contract the muscles around her eyes again. 'Everyone can, no?'

That was what I had been led to believe too. 'But no one in this place talks,' I said and immediately regretted the tone I had used. At the same time I resented the implication that the surliness I had encountered everywhere was, in some way, my fault. Blood rushed to my face.

She saw that and suppressed a smile. [...] 'You must be the tourist at Palm Beach?'

I thought I had detected a note of disdain in her tone and, for a minute, I was the one without words. I was not a tourist. At least that was not how I saw myself. Neither was I a native. My categories were different and seemed too difficult to explain

to her. I was a man in search of a father, or perhaps in search of himself. The same as everybody else, but on a journey that seemed longer. (HE 14)

Marc's transnational state appears not to be communicable. The absence of evident national roots translates into an absent language. He is not yet able to communicate with his lost roots but instead expects his Sri Lankan environment to unfold and open up to him in English. Marc just slowly realizes that the exchange of words and cultural patterns will not happen on his terms only. His expectation of easy communication rather exemplifies how deeply rooted he is in Western culture. Despite saying otherwise, Marc follows the idea of a tourist and expects Sri Lanka to contribute to his life without making an effort on his own, for example, learning the local language. His lack of a connection with his cultural roots makes him demand Sri Lanka to fill the void and complete him. He aims at a changed perception of his person by utilizing his destination:

However, Marc does not realise that the line between spiritual adventurer and commercial tourist is less clear-cut: His own mission is in accordance with the wishes of any tourist. A tourist's motivation for setting out to new shores has repeatedly been explained as a wish to find oneself and to create balance with nature – though mainly with one's expectation's of nature. The journey itself can be seen as a kind of initiation ritual in which the tourist reduces his everyday life to chaos by the trespassing movement of the journey; experiences new, 'authentic', structures of meaning in foreign and not fully intelligible surroundings; and returns to his old, but newly perceived, norms. (Lemke 293)

Marc's goal to understand Sri Lankan culture and thus his roots can, however, not be achieved as a tourist. He has to grant the undefinability he requests for his status to Sri Lanka as well. In other words, he has to forsake his tourist gaze that imposes meaning on his destination from the outside to generate an only seemingly authentic experience. Marc follows the traditional narrative of traveling as he relates to himself as “the Argonauts, seventeenth-century sailors” (HE 41). These are classic examples of male travelers venturing into an unknown world that is mostly connotated as female. They enter a ‘virgin territory’ and try to acquire it.⁷⁹ The overt sexual connotations of the traveler concept are quickly unveiled by Uva, though: “Desire, my love, is all you feel.” (HE 41). Marc's talk about commitment to her and the island is as Uva points out a

⁷⁹ According to Melanie Murray, the representation of the fictional island in *Heaven's Edge* corresponds with the two dominant concepts of islands in the Western world: the island as Eden and the island as a place to conquer (cf. 105).

mere intoxication. It does not carry any deeper meaning that would further Marc's identification process. He is still part of the Western colonial discourse.

The aspect of the tourist gaze is emphasized by the first-person narrator of the novel. Through Marc's narrative voice, the reader experiences the nameless island and has direct access to his emotional state upon encountering the island. Uva's remark that Marc feels only desire and no deeper emotional connection seems to be directed at the western reader of the novel as well. This impulse triggers a re-examination of one's relationship to non-Western communities. Is one only a tourist and wants to acquire the other culture? How seriously is one interested in it? The fascination for a foreign culture is not the same as knowledge.

Romesh Gunsekera propagates migration as an almost natural law, which leaves the question of the difference between Western traveling and his migrating concept:

I had been the first to notice the new migrants on the Victoria plum tree that spread its long, arching branches over the rose bushes. There were three of them, startlingly green, seeming to climb out of my jungle book then, ripping into the soft mildewed fruit with their bright red beaks. I dragged Eldon out to look at them because the old man had not believed me. 'There are no parakeets in this country, my dear boy.' But I was right; they were parakeets, and they thrived in his garden, the botanical gardens nearby, and all the fruit orchards of southern England adding vivid colours, loud songs and unexpected eating habits to the jetscuffed end of his brittle British century. (HE 180)

The parakeets do not only bring unknown colors and songs to the English island. They also integrate into the local ecosystem, with the result being an ecosystem with greater variety in species. The parakeets do not claim southern England to be theirs but mix with it. Gunsekera's migration concept is a concept of encounter and enrichment. It annihilates cultural boundaries by implying migration to be a natural, borderless process. Marc can only fully achieve the potential of his transnational being by being willing to open up and by realizing that everything changes or migrates. His state is not unique. The tourist gaze, which serves the same meaning-generating process as the detective's analysis, has to be abandoned to bridge the distance between the English and the Sri Lankan culture. The creation of boundaries and categories, which tourists and detectives install, opposes an actual transnational being strictly. There should not be any order, any category, or border. As Marc finds out, every being, human or non-human, is the result of migratory processes. Changes and instability are an existential law, and the transnational has to

realize that the -national is only devoid of any deeper meaning.

As Marc finally settles his issues with his own identity and reunites with Uva in the Sri Lankan jungle, one could rightfully ask why the maybe most crucial element of postmodern crime fiction is missing: the detective's failure. But it is not. Marc is to be proven wrong by a group of soldiers invading their garden. A fight evolves in whose course Marc kills the soldiers, and Uva's fate remains unknown (cf. HE 234). In shooting the soldiers, Marc follows the survival rules of the fittest and has gone from then on to live in "another fragile world for ever altered; riven." (HE 234). The transnational detective becomes a killer. The outside world forces Marc to use its rules, makes him abandon his new-found idea of the survival of the weak, and points to his philosophy's weak spot: It is only a metaphysical idea without any corporeal realities. To protect the embodiment of Uva's and his worldview, Marc has to resort to violence and to metaphorically push the soldiers out of his paradise, which, in turn, illustrates that "paradise is unattainable" (Murry 124). He has forgotten Sri Lanka's primary rule: Violence is ingrained into people's lives. Uva's and his attempt to build their safe haven is an individual one without effects on the social body. At the same time, they are part of the social body and, therefore, have to obey its rule. They are bound to the survival of the fittest, as this is the living reality of Sri Lankan society.

Marc's last experience exemplifies that being transnational and open to change does not mean that one can control the latter.⁸⁰ Humans can make individual decisions and pursue their dreams, but that is not enough to guarantee their own and by far not a community's happiness or survival.

⁸⁰ Shalini Jain focuses on ecocritical aspects in his analysis of *Heaven's Edge*. He underlines the tourist gaze that Marc is prone to when he arrives on the island and meets Uva (cf. 41). In contrast to this dissertation's conclusion, he, however, insists that Marc remains in his Western position, consequently keeping nature on the island as "a gendered, exoticized and colonized entity that is developed in the service of human desires [...]" (44). In Jain's opinion, Marc should not have resorted to violence to protect the sanctuary he built in the jungle. By doing so, he negates all the progress he made with compassion (cf. 45).

Marc's reaction as clearly violent and a reversal of the survival of weakest, but in contrast to Jain, I don't understand it as being entirely inherent in him alone, for the garden is raided. The alternative would have been capture or death. Accordingly, these last passages of the book are less a failure of Marc's development, but rather as an illustration that personal development cannot be successful without a collective one.

Gunasekera, thus, draws on many valuable ideas ranging from post-human identities to global transnationalism but casts a shadow of doubt on their actual implementation, because this would include severe structural changes and the overcoming of dominant Western thinking.

The problems of an outsider are the same for Anil in Michael Ondaatje's novel. She used to live in Sri Lanka until she went abroad to study. Early on in her life, Anil shows the urge for boundary-crossing when she trades with her brother for his middle name (cf. A 67-68). Victoria Cook argues that Anil's trading of names is indeed a transgressive act, as she deliberately chooses a male name, thus crossing gender boundaries and even takes over the male right of naming which goes back to Adam's naming of animals in paradise. The sexual favor she does her brother is also a transgressive act due to its incestuous implications. Anil dares to break cultural taboos (cf. Cook 9-10). On the one side, the sexual favor can be interpreted as a re-imposition of power relations in the disfavor of postcolonial women. On the other side, Anil initiates the deal and is the active part in its pursuit, which, in turn, again counter-poses the traditional gender balance of male activity and female passivity. Hence, one could call Anil a transgressive character who is unwilling to remain within the socially construed boundaries, which also applies to her national background. In contrast to her lover Cullis who is stuck in his marriage and his national identity, Anil is willing to evolve and sever her roots (cf. A 263). She completely embraces Western culture and forsakes the Sri Lankan.

Ever since her parents died, she did not return to the island and forgot the proper use of Sinhalese, highlighting that Anil is no longer a part of Sri Lankan society (cf. Roberts 966). Nevertheless, she visits her one remaining family member, aunt Lalitha, during her business trip: "When Anil leaned back the old woman was weeping; she put her hands out and ran them over Anil's hair. Anil held her arms. There was a lost language between them." (A 22). The only communication still possible for Anil and Lalitha is the physical one. They can express their emotions by touching, but Anil lacks the words she used to have.

This lost language is related to Anil's lost or traded first name that is never mentioned throughout the whole novel. On the large scale theses, absences refer to the lost connection of the detective character with her ethnic roots. Just like in Marc's case in *Heaven's Edge*, Anil's ignorance of the local language bars her from communicating and collecting information on her own. Instead, language becomes the marker of absence, of a hidden, intangible part of the detective. In exchanging her parent-given name, Anil sets off into a direction of an identity alteration. She transgresses borders and boundaries and has to pay her dues in the form of cultural and emotional absences. Interestingly, those losses remain permanent and bring Anil on the verge of failure in a double sense: Neither can she solve the crime independently, as she does not understand the local rules and, rather, finds her own life endangered, nor can she reconnect with her former identity and come to terms with her troubling past.

The impossibility of understanding accompanied by shortcomings of language is a prominent trope in postmodern writing and especially in postmodern crime fiction. *Anil's Ghost* and *Heaven's Edge*, stand in the tradition of such classics as Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, or Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*. All of them found their disbelief in the hermeneutic code on theories of language philosophy, such as the separation of the signifier and the signified, and make their protagonists desperately search God's language, decipher texts for hidden truths, or solve the death of an author. None of them succeed. In Anil's case, her failure is tied to her ethnic background, which poses as an innovative component in language's incapacities to guarantee understanding.

Despite supporting the Western scientific discourse, Anil is also haunted by a Sri Lankan ritual based on spiritual belief:

Years after a body was buried there would be a small shift on the surface of the earth. Then a falling of that stone into the space left by decayed flesh, as if signalling the departure of the spirit. This was a ceremony of nature that always affected her. As a child in Kuttapitiya Anil had once stepped on the shallow grave of a recently buried chicken, her weight driving the air in the dead body out through the beak - there was a muffled squawk, and she'd leapt back with fear, her soul jostled, then clawed earth away, terrified she would see the creature blink. But it was dead, sand in its eyes. Anil was still haunted by what had occurred that afternoon. She had buried it once more and walked backwards away from the grave. (A 20)

Although Anil knows the scientific explanation for the Sri Lankan spirit departure ritual, she still feels haunted by an element of the culture she gave up a long time ago. In the meantime, she was educated according to Western standards and their preference for rationality over emotions. Hence, the departing spirit or the driven out air is another metaphor for an absence in Anil's identity. The departed spirit is a symbol for Sri Lanka as emotions and spirituality have no place in the West, which relies on physical evidence that is represented by the chicken's corpse. Anil may have consciously become Westernized, but there is still an untouchable, mysterious entity in her that she cannot logically explain. The inability to make sense of the ritual's effect on herself does not negate its influence. Instead, the air released by the chicken's corpse becomes the ghostly embodiment of Anil's cultural past. Accordingly, the chicken represents an imminent threat to Anil's seemingly stable view on life. Her absolute belief in the scientific discourse would be shaken as soon as she names the spirit not mere superstition but a reality. Anil's Westernized self leaves no space for anything beyond a rigorous science-based worldview. Instead, she finds herself haunted by her past and Sri Lankan culture which, as shown before, also circles around a bodily discourse but a very different one compared to the Western one. Anil ousts Sri Lankan culture from the physical world and confines it in the realm of superstition. She makes the mistake of believing that the Western approach of the readability of truth with scientific measures is unrelated to superstition or wishful thinking.

The discussion on transnationality in Salman Rushdie's *Fury* is first and foremost marked by the role the US plays in the global context. Rushdie problematizes the US-influence on a product and a personal level. On the one hand, the US is seen as a shopping mecca whose products are desired (cf. F 6). It stands for pure capitalist consumerism in which one's possessions define one's identity:

[...] and Solanka marvelled, once again, at the human capacity for automorphosis, the transformation of the self, which Americans claimed as their special, defining characteristics. It wasn't. Americans were always labelling things with the American logo: American Dream, American Buffalo, American Graffiti, American Psycho, American Tune. But everyone else had such things, too, and in the rest of the world the addition of the nationalist prefix didn't seem to add much meaning. English Psycho, Indian Graffiti, Australian Buffalo, Egyptian Dream, Chilean Tune. America's need to make things American, to own them, thought Solanka, was the mark of an odd insecurity. Also, of course, and more prosaically, capitalist.

(F 55-56)

The US tries to differentiate itself from the rest of the world by selling its philosophy of transformation. However, the need for personal transformation and its connection with ownership bear the risk of commodifying human relationships. Contemporary consumer culture is based on the idea that products shape identity “[b]ut its effects can be corrosive, because it reconstitutes social activities and relations between people as market relations between individuals and things.” (Rutherford, *After Identity* 11). In this way, people are treated as assets or as unnecessary baggage, which ultimately leads to the corrosion of social bonds and increasing insecurity that, in turn, needs to be calmed by even more products or new human assets. The US takes up the leading position in the spread of capitalism and creates the global atmosphere for an ongoing commodification of human relationships so that people worldwide are willing to be reborn within the US-system:

He [i.e. Solanka] had come to America as so many before him to receive the benison of being Ellis Island, of starting over. Give me a name, America, make of me a Buzz or Chip or Spike. Bathe me in amnesia and clothe me in your powerful unknowing. Whilst me in your J. Crew and hand me my mouse-ears! No longer a historian but a man without histories let me be. I'll rip my lying mother tongue out of my throat and speak your broken English instead. Scan me, digitize me, beam me up. If the past is the sick old Earth, then, America, be my flying saucer. Fly me to the rim of space. The moon's not far enough. (F 51)

The idea of re-birth or transformation includes giving up cultural and national pasts to become another uniform member of America. The metaphor of mechanization or digitalization of migrants calls forth the idea of uniformity and, thus, the easier government of the human body, which can just like a computer file be re-arranged, send out, or even deleted in favor of the overall system. Creating uniformity makes the control and selection of valuable life easier. Hence, the US essentially forms the same de-historicized identities.⁸¹

⁸¹ *Fury* is often declared a transnational novel (cf. Zimringa 5, Kim 65). However, the uniform declaration of the novel does not lead to uniform results in the analysis of the text on the concept of the nation and its replacement. While Ines Detmers propagates that Rushdie adheres to the concept of the nation despite all criticism (cf. “Global Minds” 363), Wiemann and Zimringa state that *Fury* transcends the concept of nation, even if cosmopolitanism is not always represented positively (cf. Zimringa 6, Wiemann 152). This analysis shows that despite all obstacles to leaving the US-American sphere of influence, a redefinition of the hybrid self is possible, according to Rushdie, if one faces one's Furies. Consequently, I contradict Ines Detmers in her assumption that the national concept remains the lowest common denominator of the identity-building process after Rushdie.

Salman Rushdie, however, does not only criticize the US-ideology. Through the eyes of Malik Solanka, he also detects a force that brings the US-structure to explode. Since his emigration from India, where Solanka endured sexual abuse by his stepfather (cf. F 221-223), he tried to “shed more skins than a snake.” He divorces two wives, one of whom he even tries to murder and finally flees to the US to re-define himself (cf. F 29). His painful and traumatic experiences during his childhood can be understood as the miniature of a nation and make him regularly cut the strings to any community.

Although his unfinished attack on his wife and son can be seen as the ultimate breakaway effort, I would argue that Solanka is unable to dehistoricize himself. He cannot leave his past behind as the comparison between him and the traditional Indian *sanyasi*, a man who decides to give up all possessions and worldly connections shows:

A sanyasi in New York, a sanyasi with a duplex and credit card, was a contradiction in terms. Very well. He would be that contradiction and, in spite of his oxymoronic nature, pursue his goal. He too was in search of a quietus, of peace. So, his old self must be somehow cancelled, put away for good. It must not rise up like a spectre from the tomb to claim him at some future point, dragging him down into the sepulchre of the past. And if he failed, the he failed, but one did not contemplate what lay beyond failure while one was still trying to succeed. (F 82)

Despite his effort to dissociate himself from his national roots, Solanka demonstrates the reminiscence of India’s cultural influence. He becomes a mixture of Western, primarily American, and Indian culture without being completely homogenous and definably entity. Instead, his new identity is fragmented and contradictory but for Solanka it is still logical and essential.⁸² He unconsciously is a paradigm of Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity which denies traceable original cultures and, rather, propagates the ongoing process of culture formation:

[...] if, as I was saying, the act of cultural translation [...] denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (“The Third Space“ 211)

Solanka is not able to access the powers of his hybrid state, yet. In meeting Neela, another

⁸² In his analysis of *Fury*, Andrew Ng focuses on Gothic elements in said novel. Among other things, he illustrates the similarity between the vampire and the exile, as both “carry within them a collision of alternate positions (dead and alive, outside and inside, self and other).” (379). He even goes so far as to transfer this aspect to postcolonial critics who “must ‘feed on’ the Western theories that underpin their critical projects, and perpetually walk the delicate line between Western/non-Western identifications.” (ibid.)

transnational character and his lover, he faces the troubles of his situation. When she becomes involved in a riot to free her ethnic minority from oppression by her home country's majority, he confronts her and lectures her on her contradictory, transnational needs:

There's a lot riding on it – your uprooted roots are pulling hard. Your paradoxical desire to be part of what you left. And, no, I don't really think you were wearing that mask to hide your face from me, or at least that wasn't the only thing I thought. I also thought you were hiding from yourself, from the decision you've made somewhere along the line to cross a line and become a participant in this thing. You don't look like an observer to me. You're in too deep. (F 247)

He acknowledges that it is an impossibility to leave one's past behind as one can choose to leave but cannot truly transform into a uniform being illustrated by the mask. This mask, a sign of the Western-imposed secondariness of colonials and the global docile body, is just a make-up to cover Neela's ethnic roots and hybrid identity. In realizing her "paradoxical desire" and her denial of being a hybrid, Solanka consciously embraces his very own state. He makes her see that she cannot de-historicize herself and turn into "history's whore" (F 248) who ignores the past, worships the present, and is oblivious of the consequences of her present actions. Instead, Solanka points to historical moments: "That puts you in an impossible situation, where you're risking your honour and self-respect. Here it is, Neela, your Galileo moment. Does the earth move?" (F 249). He lectures her that the decisions we make have to be anchored in where we come from and what we want to stand for. Our decisions are not exclusively tied to our present well-being. Humans are essentially historical beings. In accepting one's roots and the future consequences of one's decision, the human being can leave the US-discourse of constant renewal and transformation as well as the commodification of social bonds and free oneself from the docility of the body.

In the final review of the postmodern crime novels on Sri Lanka, it can be concluded that these, like the Indian novels, have a primary interest in undermining Western ideas, thus strengthening their position and subsequently entering into a dialogue with the West. While the civil war between the ethnic groups is only dealt with peripherally, more attention is given to overriding aspects such as physicality and historiography.

The factor of intimacy as a means of healing determines the representation of postcolonial bodies and historiography. That means a rejection of Western ideals that link the overcoming of trauma to the analysis of physical and historical conditions and their integration into an objective context. In the Sri Lankan novels, however, only an individual and intimate access to other bodies and the past allows insight and, ultimately, the possibility of healing.

Concerning corporeality, it should be noted that the postcolonial bodies in all three novels also have collective characteristics. It is never only about the individual bodies, but also about the collective one, a circumstance that is consistently pursued to the end in *Heaven's Edge*, where the ideal of a posthuman being is postulated as a symbiosis of man and nature.

Similar to the postmodern crime novels from Great Britain, the Sri Lankan ones also show a pronounced interest in historiography and nation. While the British, however, reveal the inadequacies of historiographical techniques in different ways, Michael Ondaatje in *Anil's Ghost*, above all, strives to establish a subjective understanding of history. Salman Rushdie's *Fury* also deals with the permeability of the membrane between reality and fiction and subsequently poses the question of originality and imitation in a postcolonial context.

Regarding the transnational detective characters in the Sri Lankan novels, one can state that they are only able to overcome their respective identity crises after they have faced their past or their roots. Marc and Anil, in particular, have to give up looking at situations from the distance of their Western education. Instead, they must allow proximity in order to find themselves again.

As in the Indian context, the crime novel in Sri Lanka is an imported genre. Further similarities can also be seen in the undermining of Western ideas associated with the crime novel. In the Sri Lankan postmodern crime novels, this includes, for example, the unambiguousness of evidence (e.g., based on autopsies), but also the overriding idea of objective truth.

In addition to the subversion of Western ideas, it should also be noted at the narrative level that the Indian and Sri Lankan crime novels share the strategy of reversing the existing value system

through the narrators. Thus the first-person narrators Balram Halwai (*The White Tiger*) and, to some extent, Ganesh Gaitonde (*Sacred Games*) are interpreted as representatives of the subaltern, who give the underrepresented classes of Indian society a voice on the global stage. Marc, the first-person narrator from *Heaven's Edge*, is, in turn, a representative of the tourist gaze, triggering scrutiny of the same behavior in the reader himself.

In *The Circle of Reason* and *Anil's Ghost*, on the other hand, changing narrators and focalizations are used to implement a new narrative ethic. The result is a non-hierarchical narrative based on connectedness that integrates the voices of different social classes.

7. Postmodern Detectives Re-interpreting National Communities?

Looking back on the analyzed novels, one comes to realize the great diversity within the seemingly small subgenre of postmodern crime fiction. This variety does not only derive from the different topics in different national settings but also from diverging narrative strategies ranging from the dedication to pastiche (*Hawksmoor*, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*) to the usage of motives (e.g., the *doppelgänger* motif in *Operation Shylock*, *Hawksmoor*, *Sacred Games*) or to the degree of metafictional deliberations (e.g., *Anil's Ghost*, *Operation Shylock*). Overall the prime characteristics of postmodern crime fiction are implemented in all chosen novels: The detective is a character destined to fail because of the shortcomings of reason. Signs or clues do not allow meticulous analysis anymore. Arbitrariness is the rule.

This text analysis emphasized three factors: firstly, the tendencies of genre hybridization, secondly the subversion of historical representation and its consequences for the nation concept, and thirdly the handling of ethnic others, including the establishment of invisible power relations. The aspect of genre hybridization contains the exchange of elements between varying subgenres of crime fiction as well as between postmodern crime fiction and other genres. Among the latter historiographic metafiction and meta-autobiographies hold a special place with regard to the chosen novels. The generic conventions of historiographic metafiction and meta-autobiography, of course, directly influence the second research interest, the changed awareness of historical representation.

Sacred Games should serve as the first example of the phenomenon of genre hybridization. It is plainly to be declared a crime fiction. In contrast to the other novels, it appears to be far more traditional, as it demonstrates less philosophical or metafictional considerations, but these are not absent altogether. Additionally, *Sacred Games* pays much attention to social living realities and the current political situation in India. It contains influences from postcolonial writing and historical fiction and, thus, pictures once more the inter-relatedness of genres.

Another traditional, generic boundary would be the one between fiction and non-fiction. However, as Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* exemplifies, this boundary is far from clear-cut. In the novel, Paul Auster investigates his family's past by deconstructing means of identification. Denying clues their traditional attribute to create an identity is a core quality of postmodern crime fictions. Auster fails in assigning a defined identity to his father or his grandmother. In other words, *The Invention of Solitude* shows explicit attributes of postmodern crime fiction despite its official status as a non-fictional text.

Calling *The Invention of Solitude* a non-fiction with crime fiction elements is not yet precise enough, though. It is also a meta-autobiography which is roughly defined by the visualization of the narrative strategies in traditional autobiography (cf. A. Nünning, "Meta-Autobiographien" 49). Auster exemplifies the impossibility of past-oriented self-definition.

Operation Shylock by Philip Roth shows similar tendencies. Roth plays with the generic conventions of autobiography by providing enough information from his own private life. On the other hand, he also employs distinct elements of fiction, which in turn destabilize the assumption of reading an autobiography. Accordingly, *Operation Shylock* could also be counted as a meta-autobiography. Put differently, both texts contain elements of crime fiction as well as of meta-autobiography, a fact that can, of course, be seen as proof of genre hybridization.

The same is true for the relation of historiographic metafiction and postmodern crime fiction. In a number of works, the detective's mission is complemented by an investigation on the accessibility of the historical past, which makes these novels also a matter of interest in the context of the second research interest – the undermining of historical representation and the nation-state. Among these crime fictions *Hawksmoor* destabilizes a linear understanding of time, *Arthur & George* exemplifies the fragmentation of the Victorian age. When *We Were Orphans* demonstrates the subjectively twisted nature of memories, while *Anil's Ghost* presents an intimate alternative to the Western form of historiography. Like the postmodern crime fictions

prone to meta-autobiography, these novels uncover narrative strategies in historical representation. They display the inaccessibility of the past due to the impossibility of the analysis of signs. Consequently, they shatter the national sense of belonging rooted in a national myth or historical grandeur. The impenetrability of the past, thus, functions as the starting point of the detective's re-definition, as the nation as a place of belonging turns out to be a narrative construction.

Coming back to the issue of genre hybridization, these specific combinations of postmodern crime fiction, historiographic metafiction, and meta-autobiography are not a mere coincidence. On the contrary, the genres' interest in the role of narrative strategies in identity formation makes them a complimentary match and underlines Hutcheon's point that meta-narration can be viewed as the postmodern paradigm (cf. Hutcheon 5). A combination of postmodern crime fiction with either historiographic metafiction or meta-autobiography is, thus, held together by the mutual revelation of narrative tactics. The latter either leads to an individual or national destabilization due to an unattainability of the past.

Hence, this phenomenon of genre hybridization is far from uncommon in the subgenre of postmodern crime fiction. One can verify influences between the different subgenres of crime fiction (*Sacred Games*) or between crime fiction and non-fiction (*The Invention of Solitude*). Despite its original generic strictness or allegedly low intellectual standards, crime fiction is far from being an isolated genre. Postmodern crime fiction as a subgenre proves the exact opposite to be true. Said differently, the generic strictness, on the one hand, appears to be a fruitful playground for authors who usually write novels in other genres. On the other hand, crime fiction itself has shown signs of expansion ever since the introduction of hard-boiled fiction. This two-way movement poses as proof of the genre's evolution.

The third research interest – the representation of ethnic others and the nation – proved itself to be the most fruitful, as it leads to the establishment of new ethics for the detective. That becomes

especially visible in the context of postcolonial writing. Crime fiction has never been an original genre in India or Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, postcolonial writers use crime fiction to make their point. In the novels, two significant changes are apparent: the emphasis on the criminal and the postcolonial, sometimes victimized bodies. This re-evaluation of the criminal goes beyond the Western one. The Indian criminals are not mere heralds of arbitrariness. They are epitomes of the postcolonial challenge against the imposed criminalization of the colonies. The character of the postmodern criminal, thus, gains political weight.

Of course, this political dimension is nothing the criminals in Western postmodern crime fiction are entirely lacking. In *Operation Shylock*, Moishe Pipik, for example, also sets out on a political mission to make the Israeli Jews resettle in Europe again. The major difference between him and Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger*, however, is a historical one. The former colonized were purposefully designed as criminals by their colonizers. By adopting this role in the context of postmodern crime fiction, the postcolonial criminals find themselves empowered to challenge their former rulers and their imposed value system. This fact exemplifies, however, that the postcolonial version of the postmodern crime fiction still has to be seen with reference to the Western discourse. The dialogical nature of the postcolonial writers with Western culture can also be proven by the many motives they borrow from Western culture and adapt for their purposes (e.g., the Pentecost community in *The Circle of Reason*, the mythological characters of the Furies in *Fury*). In other words, the postcolonial, postmodern crime fictions are emancipating themselves from an imposed discourse by entering a dialog with the former colonizer culture and by destabilizing the latter's point of view. The bond between the former colonizers and the former colonized is not broken, though.

A different, particularly postcolonial interest in crime fiction is the victim's body. *The Circle of Reason*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Heaven's Edge*, and *Fury* use the postcolonial body to illustrate trauma or metamorphosis. The individual body becomes the representative of the postcolonial society and

its issues. The postcolonial states are condemned to deal with their pasts that still affect their present lives on a political, economic, and social level. Using an individual, postcolonial body as the substitute for the whole states goes back to the classical metaphor of the body politic.

Interestingly, none of the novels remain with the postcolonial body as the site of postcolonial violence and trauma. Instead, the postcolonial bodies become a site of resistance and a re-definition of social systems. In *Anil's Ghost*, for example, Michael Ondaatje proposes a unique postcolonial way of handling history and trauma: intimacy. This physical approach is said to ease traumatic experiences rather than over-rationalization. *Heaven's Edge*, on the other hand, elaborates on the possibility of a post-human society, as the traumatized postcolonial body is extended to the natural body.

In conclusion, the victimized postcolonial body is upgraded in contrast to the dead body in crime fiction. While the latter remains of analytical interest at best, the postcolonial body is the site of a re-interpretation of existing power or social structures. It is no longer doomed to be passive.

The analysis focused on the aspect of the nation in the chosen postmodern crime fictions, as the detective has traditionally been a protector of the Western borders. He is the one to assign guilt and to draw the line between good and evil, as well as insiders and outsiders. One can reason that the postmodern detectives lost the role their forefathers still had in classical detective fiction. Instead, postmodern detectives in their identity crisis re-discover and re-evaluate the nation concept.

All detectives are confronted with the arbitrariness of the nation concept. They come to realize that their nation's myth and historical past are the results of active narrative strategies (e.g., *Hawksmoor*, *Anil's Ghost*), or they find themselves confronted with transnational living realities in today's globalized world (e.g., *When We Were Orphans*, *Heaven's Edge*). Overall, the nation is displayed as a concept devoid of any claim to naturalness.

Instead of the nation as a place of belonging, many of the analyzed postmodern crime fictions postulate alternatives that are no longer tied to ethnic or cultural inclusion. A dominant approach is the emphasis on intimacy in interpersonal relationships. *When We Were Orphans* and *Sacred Games* both end with the (re-)discovery of affection as a foundation for life. In both cases, other ideas of affiliation have been discarded before, but the connection to another individual helps to re-stabilize the fragmented detective identities. In *Anil's Ghost* and *Heaven's Edge*, interpersonal intimacy is even designed as a possible antidote to the civil war trauma. *The Invention of Solitude* actually postulates the caring for another person to be a philosophical imperative.

A slightly different approach can be viewed in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, *The Circle of Reason*, or *Hawksmoor*. All of them proclaim micro-communities as an antagonist to the large-scale nation. Within these small communities, their members find themselves freed from national narratives and try to form a collective devoid of national power structures.

The accentuation of interpersonal intimacy and micro-communities exemplifies a more private understanding of belonging. In fact, it is the privatization of affiliation. This trend within the interpretation of the nation in postmodern crime fiction can be seen as a reaction to globalization. As the correlations of the world become more impenetrable, one can identify a reevaluation of regionalism and private space. Reducing the tendency for the privatization to a mere defense reaction against globalization would not capture the whole meaning of this shift, though.

Retreating to the private sphere contains for postmodern crime fictions an avoidance of invisible power structures. *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* propagates Jewish diaspora communities instead of the State of Israel. *The Circle of Reason* thematizes the value of small transnational communities that do not obey state values. Both examples do so by parallelly uncovering the narrative strategies immanent in the nation-state concept. The interest of the early postmodern crime fictions in language and its capacities seems to translate to a fascination for narrative

strategies in total. As a result, the techniques of the nation concept are exposed, and counter-narratives are established.

Regarding classical detective fiction and hard-boiled fiction, one can also point to the shift from an elevated and independent character to a social being. The detective no longer holds a distinct position in a community but becomes a part of it by committing to a relationship or group. The nation as a meaningful group of belonging may be negated, but the detective as a traditional literary character re-integrates into a social system, a community.

This change in the detective character within the genre postmodern crime fiction can be observed in all chosen novels – except for *The White Tiger*, which features a criminal only while still deconstructing national narratives. It indicates a further evolution of the genre and the latter's interaction with the consulted socio-cultural and philosophical ideas.

The focus of this thesis was on the relation of postmodern crime fiction and the national concept in selected national literatures. Despite the surging number of publications on crime fiction, many issues inherent in this subgenre still need to be analyzed. Among them may be the usage of the subgenre in other works or even national literatures. Especially the postmodern crime fictions that emancipate themselves from being a mere narrative shadow play but invest in socio-cultural correlations might be a fruitful topic for further research. That includes, for example, the connection of postmodern crime fiction and the aspect of gender and sexuality. Additionally, the relation of postmodern crime fiction with other paradigmatic postmodern genres could be of further interest.

Looking back at the overall analysis and the central thesis that the postmodern detective might turn out to be a site of resistance and a conceptual alternative, I find myself proven right. Because of its interest in narrative strategies, postmodern crime fictions not only uncover the constructedness of the nation concept but also postulate varying alternatives based on their nation of origin's point of view.

The text-immanent actions destabilize traditional values (i.e., rationality, national belonging, capitalism, individualism), which is the primary demand of postmodern crime fiction. The genre attempts to unsettle an unquestioned faith in the Western belief system and rather propagates a decentralized self by deconstructing the detective, the epitome of Western narration, and omniscience. In doing so, postmodern crime fictions create an ethical void.

In the confrontation with the other – may it be historical or ethnic – postmodern crime fictions enter into a dialog and design counter-narratives that object a standardized approach to human life and identity. The dialogical approach to identity and decentralization of the self echo the theories by Homi Bhabha (cf. “The Third Space” 211) or Stuart Hall (cf. “Old and New Identities” 147) or even post-human theories such as by Jean-Luc Nancy (cf. 3). The detective is no longer the one to allocate guilt. Instead, the other forces him to re-evaluate his standpoint and, accordingly, his own national and ethical concepts. This new-found dynamism breaches any form of traditional dichotomy and replaces it with a mutual identity-determining process.

8. Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die Figur des Detektivs übt seit der Begründung des Genres des Kriminalromans eine reinigende Funktion für die fiktiven Gesellschaft aus. So ist es seine Aufgabe, kriminelle Elemente zu enttarnen und sie einer gerechten Strafe zuzuführen. In nicht wenigen Fällen ist der Kriminelle jedoch neben seiner Gesetzeswidrigkeit auch durch seine abweichende Ethnizität zur gesellschaftlichen Mehrheit definiert. Arthur Conan Doyles Kurzgeschichte „The Adventure of a Dying Detective“, in der der Mörder seinen eigenen Neffen mithilfe einer asiatischen Krankheit tötet, ist nur ein Beispiel für die Übereinstimmung von legaler und nationaler Grenzüberschreitung. (vgl. 1169-1181)

Im Rahmen meiner Dissertation gehe ich eben diesem Verhältnis von Kriminalität und Nationalität/Ethnizität nach. Ich lege meinen Fokus dabei auf das Subgenre des postmodernen Kriminalromans, das bestimmt durch die Unlösbarkeit der Verbrechen aufgrund der arbiträren Zusammenhänge der Lebensrealität ist. Mit anderen Worten ist der Detektiv nicht länger eine Art allwissender Übermensch, sondern ein zum Scheitern Verurteilter. Der Ursprung dieser philosophischen Wende im Kriminalroman ist der *linguistic turn*. Autoren wie Friedrich Dürrenmatt (*Der Richter und sein Henker*, 1952) oder Vladimir Nabokov (*Pale Fire*, 1962) dekonstruieren die generische Rigidität des Genres und offenbaren dessen narratologischen Prämissen.

Dieses Interesse an narrativen Zusammenhängen ist der wesentliche Verknüpfungspunkt zum Konzept der Nation, das ebenfalls einen Moment der Krise durchläuft. So wurden im Zuge des *linguistic turn* auch die narrativen Strategien aufgedeckt, die jeder Nationalitätskonzeption zu Grunde liegen.

Die Offenlegung narrativer Prozesse im postmodernen Kriminalroman erlaubt mir somit eine Metadiskussion des Nationskonzepts. Das bedeutet, dass die philosophische Annahme des postmodernen Kriminalromans – nämlich die gesteuerte Wahrnehmung der Welt durch narrative

Verfahren – auch die Infragestellung nationaler Verbundenheit begünstigt. Wenn die Nationalität keine natürliche Zugehörigkeit eines Menschen mehr anzeigt, sondern als narratives Konstrukt dargestellt wird, ergeben sich grundlegende Fragestellungen zur menschlichen Identität. Für die literarische Figur des Detektivs, der traditionell die Funktion eines Grenzpostens im Sinne von nationaler und ethischer Transgressionsverhinderung innehat, ergeben sich daraus ebenfalls Fragen einer identitätsstiftenden Neupositionierung. Hält der Detektiv an der westlichen Identitätsstiftung im Kontext eines binären Denksystems fest? Bleibt er in seiner traditionellen Rolle verhaftet (Detektiv – Mörder, Moral – Unmoral, Mitglied einer Nation – Außenseiter einer Nation) oder wird der postmoderne Detektiv eine Figur des Widerstands gegen existente Machtstrukturen? Sein Scheitern birgt das Potential, dass er sich von seiner Rolle als Verteidiger nationaler Grenzen löst, epistemologische Denkstrukturen aufbricht und gegebenenfalls sogar einen Dialog mit den kriminellen und ausländischen Elementen aufnimmt.

Diese kombinierte Analyse des Kriminalromans und der darin repräsentierten Aspekte zu Nationalität und Ethnizität fand innerhalb der letzten Jahre vermehrten Niederschlag in der wissenschaftlichen Forschung.⁸³ Besondere Aufmerksamkeit lag auch auf dem postkolonialen Detektiv.⁸⁴ Folglich sollte die vorliegende Dissertation im Kontext dieser Forschung gesehen werden. Durch die Konzentration auf das Subgenre des postmodernen Kriminalromans unterscheidet sich diese Arbeit jedoch in ihrer Herangehensweise an die Problematik von Kriminalroman und Nationalität. Das Augenmerk liegt im Besonderen auf narrativen Prozessen der Nation.

Die Auflösung nationaler Grenzen ist ein weltweites Phänomen. Daher bediene ich mich bei der Analyse eines komparatistischen Vorgehens, um die Nationalitätsdiskurse in postmodernen Kriminalromanen unterschiedlicher Nationalliteraturen zu untersuchen. Dabei entstammt die

⁸³ Vgl. zum Beispiel *The Foreign in International Crime Fiction*, hg.v. Jean Anderson, Carolina Miranda, Barbara Pezzotti; *Investigating Identities*, hg.v. Marieke Krajenbrink, Kate M. Quinn.

⁸⁴ Vgl. zum Beispiel Siddiqi, Yumna: *Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue*; Mukherjee, Pablo: *Crime and Empire*.

eine Hälfte des zu untersuchenden Textkorpus den westlichen Literaturen Großbritanniens und der Vereinigten Staaten, während die andere Hälfte postkolonialen Ursprungs ist – sie kommt aus Indien und Sri Lanka. Eine derartige Textauswahl ist interessant, da in den Nationalliteraturen Großbritanniens und der USA der Kriminalroman eine lange Tradition hat, während dieses Genre in Indien und Sri Lanka erst nach Ankunft der Kolonialherren etabliert wurde. (vgl. Orsini 436)

Tatsächlich zeichnet sich der Kriminalroman historisch gesehen durch eine beträchtliche Adaptionfähigkeit aus. In der klassischen Detektivgeschichte eines Arthur Conan Doyles ist der Detektiv noch eine rationale „Unperson“, (Kracauer 30) die entrückt von der Gesellschaft Verbrechen löst. Dabei wird er oftmals zu einem Leser des Tatorts, wohingegen dem Mörder die Rolle des Autors zugeschrieben wird. (vgl. Hühn 453-454) Die klassische Detektivgeschichte ist somit eine Affirmation des hermeneutischen Codes – keine Geschichte, kein Code ist unlesbar.

Dass diese Überlegenheit des Detektivs nur dank einer stark konstruierten literarischen Umwelt zustande kommt, wird mit dem Aufkommen des hard-boiled Kriminalromans in den USA deutlich. Das Verbrechen ist nicht länger die Ausnahme in einer eigentlich tadellosen Gesellschaft. Im Gegenteil der Detektiv scheint mitunter die einzige Instanz mit ideellen Werten in der korrupten Großstadtgesellschaft zu sein. (vgl. Tani 29) Er verringert zwar die Distanz zur Gesellschaft, wird aber wiederum dadurch mehr in Mitleidenschaft gezogen.

Der postmoderne Detektiv beerbt den hard-boiled Detektiv insofern, als dass er die Figur des Detektivs, wie oben erwähnt, in seiner Allmacht weiter beschneidet. Sein auf der Undurchdringlichkeit der Welt beruhendes Scheitern unterminiert seine Identität.

Die Identität des Detektivs ist auch ein zentraler Aspekt der ethnischen Kriminalromane, die immer populärer werden, zum Beispiel Colin Cotterill's Dr. Siri-Reihe. In dieser Variante des Kriminalromans ist der Detektiv gezwungen, sich mit seiner Herkunft auseinanderzusetzen. Dieser Umstand ist darauf zurückzuführen, dass der Körper des ethnischen Detektivs ebenso Machtstrukturen unterliegt, was ihm erlaubt, sensibler gegenüber Diskriminierung und sozialer

Ungerechtigkeit zu agieren. (vgl. Christian 2)

Die kurz skizzierte Entwicklung des Kriminalromans macht deutlich, dass das Genre weit entfernt ist von der ihm oftmals angelasteten Eindimensionalität. Stattdessen fanden immer mehr philosophische und soziale Fragestellungen Eingang in das Genre und bereicherten dieses.

Die Krise des Nationskonzepts beruht ebenfalls auf der verlorenen Glaubwürdigkeit seiner scheinbaren Natürlichkeit. Das heißt, dass die Konstruiertheit des nationalen Mythos und der nationalen Bestimmung sowie der damit einhergehende Fortschrittsgedanke infrage gestellt werden.

Dabei war das Verhältnis zwischen den Nationen bzw. zwischen einer Nation und einer anderen Staatsform stets geprägt von Konkurrenz. Gerade zu den Zeiten der Kolonialisierung wurden die jeweiligen Kolonien als minderwertige Staatsgebilde betrachtet, die durch die westlichen Nationen erst noch näher an die Zivilisation herangeführt werden mussten. Damit einhergehend transferierten die Kolonialherren ihr Wertesystem aber auch Alltagsgüter in ihre Kolonien und integrierten auf diese Weise den dualen Denkansatz in ihre Untertanen. (vgl. Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" 42-43) Als Folge glorifizierten die kolonialen Untertanen westliche Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten – ein Umstand, der auch heutzutage noch nachhallt.

Jedoch sind vor allem postkoloniale Theoretiker bestrebt, dieses Machtverhältnis zuungunsten der ehemaligen Kolonien und die Indoktrination der ansässigen Bevölkerung aufzubrechen. Dazu verweist unter anderem Stuart Hall darauf, dass Identität ständiger Produktion bedarf – sowohl auf dem individuellen als auch auf dem kollektiven Level. (vgl. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 222) Daraus erwächst eine besondere Bedeutung des Anderen in der Identitätsfindung. Erst im Dialog mit dem Anderen wird ein Individuum oder eine Gruppe sich seines/ihrer Standpunktes bewusst und somit seiner/ihrer Identität.

Der Andere in den Kriminalromanen Großbritanniens (Peter Ackroyds *Hawksmoor*, Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, and Kazuo Ishiguros *When We Were Orphans*) ist in allen Fällen ein

historischer, in *Arthur & George* und *When We Were Orphans* sogar ein historisch-ethnischer. Ackroyds *Hawksmoor* hingegen ist rein historisch orientiert und stellt die Auseinandersetzung zwischen einem okkulten Mörder zu Zeiten der Aufklärung, Nicholas Dyer, und einem zeitgenössischen Detektiv, Nicholas Hawksmoor, dar, indem sich die Taten des Mörders in der Gegenwart des Detektivs zu wiederholen scheinen. (vgl. Ackroyd 24-25 und 42.) Dabei werden sowohl mit dem Mörder als auch mit dem Detektiv traditionelle Eigenschaften und Elemente assoziiert: Der Detektiv ist der *ratio* verpflichtet, glaubt an seine analytischen Fähigkeiten und gleicht somit einem Leser von Verbrechen. Der Mörder wiederum ist ein Anhänger einer satanischen Sekte, ein Meister der Verschleierung und durch seinen Gestaltungswillen als Architekt eine Autorenfigur. Entgegen den Genrekonventionen der klassischen Detektivgeschichte ist der Detektiv jedoch nicht in der Lage, die Verbrechen zu lösen, sondern sieht sich mit einer Auflösung der klaren Rollenverteilung konfrontiert, die am Ende des Romans in einer scheinbaren Verschmelzung von der beiden Figuren mündet. (vgl. Ackroyd 217) Der Sieg des Mörders gleicht jedoch einer nationalen Krise. Als Vertreter einer satanischen Sekte ist er ein Anhänger einer alternativen Geschichtsschreibung, die sich weder christlichen noch aufklärerischen Werten verpflichtet sieht. Somit unterminiert er die *Grand Narrative* seiner Nation und das Selbstverständnis des Detektivs, der zu einer Schablone des klassischen Detektivs reduziert wird, ohne die geweckte Erwartungshaltung erfüllen zu können.

In *Arthur & George* wiederum wird dem eigentlichen Verbrecher keinerlei Aufmerksamkeit zuteil, da er unentdeckt und unerwähnt bleibt. Stattdessen liegt der Fokus auf dem literarischen Arthur Conan Doyle, der versucht im England des Viktorianismus, die Unschuld des fälschlicherweise angeklagten George Edalji, einem Briten indischer Herkunft, zu beweisen. Während sich die beiden Protagonisten entweder englischen Gründungsmythen oder dem zeitgenössischen Narrativ des Empires verbunden fühlen, (vgl. Barnes 23-24 und 31) müssen doch beide erfahren, dass ihre Annahmen nicht haltbar sind. Der Detektiv Arthur Conan Doyle,

literarischer Vater von Sherlock Holmes, muss sich dem staatlichen Machtapparat geschlagen geben, denn George wird zwar letztlich begnadigt, aber ohne für unschuldig erklärt zu werden. (vgl. Barnes 292-93) Die Aufzeigung von Machstrukturen zerstört die scheinbare heile, viktorianische Welt. Stattdessen wird die Fragmentierung der viktorianischen Gesellschaft sowie die aktive Formung von Narrativen durch den Staat offenbart.

In *When We Were Orphans* stehen wiederum die subjektiven Erinnerungsprozesse des Detektivs, Christopher Banks, im Vordergrund. Das Verschwinden seiner beiden Elternteile in Shanghai während seiner Kindheit ist die wesentliche Motivation für ihn in der Berufswahl und zugleich der Kriminalfall, der ihn zum Scheitern bringt. Als Erwachsener kehrt er nach China zurück, findet jedoch statt seiner Eltern die Erkenntnis, dass er seinen eigenen kindlichen Annahmen nachhängt, die sein Erwachsenenleben verklären. (vgl. Ishiguro 277) Außerdem ist er gezwungen festzustellen, dass Shanghai trotz der dort verbrachten Kindheit nicht länger seine Heimat ist. Trotz seines transnationalen Status ist ihm eine vollkommene Rückkehr nicht möglich. Somit setzt *When We Were Orphans* den Akzent auf die Fälschlichkeit persönlicher Erinnerungsprozesse, die nicht nur die eigene Historie schönfärben, sondern diese auch im Verhältnis zu nationalen und globalen Zusammenhängen exponentiell vergrößern, da Banks in dem Aufspüren seiner Eltern die Lösung des Zweiten Weltkriegs sieht.

Die Auswahl der amerikanischen Kriminalromane beschränkt sich auf die jüdisch-amerikanische Tradition. In Michael Chabons *The Yiddish Policemen Union*, Philip Roths *Operation Shylock* und Paul Austers *The Invention of Solitude* steht in unterschiedlicher Weise das Verhältnis zu den jüdischen Wurzeln und zum Staate Israel im Mittelpunkt. *The Yiddish Policemen Union* folgt auf den ersten Blick den Genrekonventionen der hard-boiled Kriminalromane, während der Detektiv mit seiner dystopischen Umwelt in Form der Auflösung der einzigen jüdischen Enklave in Alaska kämpft. (vgl. Chabon 7) In dieser dystopischen Umgebung fungiert das hard-boiled Genre als eine Art familiärer, nostalgischer Fokus, der im Wesentlichen die Sympathielenkung

übernimmt. Unterstützt wird dieser nostalgische Bezug durch eine Idealisierung der jiddischen Sprache und der jüdischen Exilkultur. Im Gegenzug wird das Narrativ des Staates Israels als institutionalisierte Heimat aller Juden demontiert.

Philip Roths *Operation Shylock* beschäftigt sich ebenfalls kritisch mit der Frage des Staates Israel. Die literarische Figur Philip Roth versucht ihren eigenen Doppelgänger zu stellen, die durch den Aufruf zur Auswanderung aus Israel dort für Unruhe sorgt. Roth sieht sich gezwungen, seine eigene Identität zu hinterfragen und seinen Standpunkt zu Israel zu überdenken. Trotz aller Kritik am dortigen politischen System und dessen Philosophie offenbart sich der literarische Roth letztlich als loyaler US-Jude, da er Geheimnisse des Mossads verschweigt. (vgl. Roth 343) Dieser postmoderne Kriminalroman zeigt durch die mehrfache Besetzung von Philip Roth in unterschiedlichen Rollen (als Autor, Protagonist und dessen Doppelgänger) sowie durch das scheinbare Geständnis einer Geheimdiensttätigkeit autobiographische Züge. Doch die klare Unterminierung traditioneller Identitätskonzeptionen demonstriert eindeutig, dass *Operation Shylock* dem Subgenre des meta-autobiographischen Romans zuzuordnen und somit ein Beispiel für fruchtbare Zusammenführung unterschiedlicher Genrekonventionen ist.

The Invention of Solitude von Paul Auster wird sowohl in der Forschung als auch durch das Marketing des Verlags als non-fiktionaler Text bezeichnet. Nichtsdestotrotz nahm ich *The Invention of Solitude* in die zu analysierenden Romane der Dissertation auf, um Elemente aus dem Kriminalgenre und gleichzeitig die scheinbare Grenze zwischen fiktionalem und non-fiktionalem Schreiben zu untersuchen. Gemeinsam mit *Operation Shylock* veranschaulicht *The Invention of Solitude*, dass diese Grenze permeabel ist. Pfeiler der Identitätsfindung, wie zum Beispiel Fotos, werden in beiden Texten nachhaltig dekonstruiert. (vgl. Auster, *Invention of Solitude* 33) Auch der Rückhalt in einer ethnischen Gruppe, im Falle Austers der jüdischen, wird kaum thematisiert. Stattdessen wirken die wenigen Passagen, in denen Auster über seine Berührungspunkte mit der jüdischen Kultur berichtet, wie Dekor. (vgl. Auster, *Invention of*

Solitude 30) Erst gegen Ende des autobiographischen Textes offenbart Auster seinen Bezug zur jüdischen Kultur: Er liegt in der Notwendigkeit der sozialen Verantwortung des Erzählens begründet. Wie Jonas aus der gleichnamigen Erzählung mit dem Wal im Alten Testament und Anne Frank ist es Austers Aufgabe als Autor, mit anderen in Kontakt zu treten und eine Botschaft zu überbringen.

Die indischen Kriminalromane, die sich der postmodernen Ästhetik verpflichtet sehen, widmen sich vor allem der Figur des Mörders. Dieser Umstand ist vor allen Dingen interessant, weil die indische Kolonialbevölkerung durch ihre britischen Herrscher oftmals in der Repräsentation kriminalisiert wurden. In *The White Tiger* von Aravind Adiga ist der Mörder, Balram Halwai, nicht nur Protagonist, sondern auch ohne jegliche detektivischen Gegenspieler. Im Gegenteil, er ist der Analyst eines typischen indischen Lebens und gleichzeitig dessen Verkörperung. Der Mord an seinem Chef ist nur die Folge des indischen Leistungsprinzips, das das „Auffressen“ der Schwächeren fordert. (vgl. Adiga 63-64) Sein scheinbares Bejahen einer kriminalisierten Darstellung des indischen Volkes geht jedoch einher mit der Unterminierung eines wesentlichen westlichen Ideals – der *ratio* und damit der Aufklärung. Exemplifiziert wird dies durch das Scheitern der Polizei ihn zu finden, während er sich im Glanz seines Kronleuchters ergötzt. (vgl. Adiga 118)

Auch der *bhai*, der Boss der indischen Hindhu-Mafia in Vikram Chandras *Sacred Games*, ist einer der Protagonisten. Zugleich ist er der Antagonist des Polizisten Sartaj Singh, der versucht, die nukleare Explosion in Mumbai durch den *bhai* zu verhindern. (vgl. Chandra 773) *Sacred Games* ist in vielerlei Hinsicht ein konventionellerer Kriminalroman als die bisher analysierten. Nichtsdestotrotz ist er nicht bar jeglichen Interesses an der Macht des Narrativen. Gerade in Bezug auf die Nationalitätsdiskurse der jungen Demokratie veranschaulicht *Sacred Games* ein hohes Maß an Reflektion. So offenbart der Kriminalroman die zugrundeliegenden Mechanismen des hinduistischen geprägten indischen Nationalstaates und dessen Umgang mit seinen

ethnischen Minderheiten sowie Migranten. (vgl. Chandra 17 und 576-77)

In Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* steht ebenfalls das Phänomen der Migration im Vordergrund. Der Protagonist Alu wird Mitglied mehrerer Subkulturen, die aufgrund ihrer finanziell prekären Situation versuchen, alternative Lebensentwürfe zum kapitalistischen System umzusetzen. (vgl. Ghosh 61) Vertrieben von der eigenen indischen Regierung flieht Alu über mehrere Stationen bis Algerien und teilt folglich das Schicksal der Armutsmigranten, die recht- und mittellos nach einem besseren Leben suchen. Dabei steht bei jeder Station die Frage der Redefinition der Identität im Zentrum. In allen Fällen geschieht dies durch die Schaffung eines der Situation angepassten Narrativs, das stets in der Entwicklung einer Subkultur mündet. Der Detektiv, der Alu auf dieser Reise folgt, erinnert nur noch oberflächlich an die klassischen Vorgänger. Es ist im Gegenteil nun der kriminalisierte Aufrührer Alu, der den Begriff der *ratio* für sich einnimmt und Identitäten zuweist – eine Fähigkeit, die im Sinne der Schuldzuweisung ehemals beim Detektiv lag.

Die sri lankanischen postmodernen Kriminalromane setzen sich wie die indischen ebenfalls mit dem Verhältnis der ehemaligen Kolonie zu ihrer Kolonialmacht oder dem Konzept des Westens als Ganzes auseinander. In Michael Ondaatjes *Anil's Ghost* kehrt die gleichnamige Protagonistin in ihr Heimatland zurück, um in den Wirren des Bürgerkrieges ein Skelett für die Vereinten Nationen zu untersuchen. (vgl. Ondaatje 65) Doch ihr Versuch, aus diesem Individualfall den Auslöser für einen UN-Einsatz zu machen, scheitert. Anils Glaube in die Wissenschaft und in eine objektive Geschichtsschreibung werden in dem bürgerkriegserschütterten Land durch einen individuen-zentrierten Ansatz für eine Lösung des Konflikts unterminiert. (vgl. Ondaatje 156-57) Es sind die intimen, zwischenmenschlichen Begegnungen, die die psychischen Wunden des Bürgerkrieges heilen und nicht die westlichen Konzepte der Wissenschaft oder Gerechtigkeit.

In Romesh Gunesekeras *Heaven's Edge* steht ebenso eine transnationale Figur im Vordergrund: Marc kehrt wie Anil auf die Insel seiner Vorfahren zurück und sucht in den Wirren des

Bürgerkriegs nach seiner Geliebten Uva, während er gleichzeitig von Regierungssoldaten verfolgt wird. Die Suche nach der Geliebten ist zugleich auch eine Suche nach sich selbst und nach einer anderen Form des Zusammenlebens. Uva verkörpert nämlich eine Lebensweise in Einklang und nicht in Abgrenzung zur Natur. (vgl. Gunesequera 93) Sie möchte nicht, wie in der westlichen Philosophie üblich, über die Natur herrschen, sondern die Konzepte des Fortschritts und des Darwinismus – im Sinne eines stetigen Kampfes gegeneinander – überwinden. Nach einer langen Fährtenuche durch das Herz Sri Lankas wird Marc wieder mit Uva vereint. Doch ist ihr Zusammenleben im Dschungel nur von kurzer Dauer, da Soldaten in ihr Paradies einfallen. (vgl. Gunesequera 234)

Die Handlung in Salman Rushdies *Fury* spielt teilweise in New York teilweise auf einer postkolonialen Insel, die Sri Lanka insoweit ähnelt, als dass dort ein Bürgerkrieg zwischen zwei Bevölkerungsgruppen herrscht, von denen eine durch die ehemaligen Kolonialherren befördert wurde. Der Protagonist Malik Solanka, der kurz zuvor beinahe noch seine eigene Familie ermordete, wird in diesen Konflikt mithineingezogen, da seine Online-Cyborg-Geschichte von der benachteiligten Ethnie in ihrem Aufbegehren für ihre Zwecke adaptiert wird. (vgl. Rushdie 39, 226) So begibt sich Solanka auf eine Spurensuche nach der Gewalttätigkeit, aber auch nach der Integrität des Menschen, um am Ende seines Weges zu erkennen, dass beides dem Menschen inhärent ist. Die Narrative, in denen der Mensch gefangen sind, können mit Gewalt zwar gesprengt werden, doch kann nur die zwischenmenschliche Interaktion die entstehende Leerstelle der Identität wieder füllen.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich zur Problematik der Nation im postmodernen Kriminalroman feststellen, dass die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Anderen nicht nur das Scheitern des Detektivs herbeiführt, sondern letztlich auch seine Redefinition. Alle Detektivfiguren erleben nach der Erschütterung ihres Welt- und Selbstbildes die Verankerung ihrer Persönlichkeit in sozialen Gefügen. Dabei kann es sich um neue Beziehungen (zum Beispiel Marc in *Heaven's Edge*) oder

auch Gruppen (zum Philip Roth in *Operation Shylock*) handeln. Die Aufdeckung der narrativen Strukturen in Nationalitätskonstrukten führt also zu einer Resozialisierung des Detektivs. Er verliert nicht nur sein hervorragende Analysefähigkeit, sondern folgerichtig auch isolierte Position außerhalb der menschlichen Gesellschaft.

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