The Novel and the Menagerie

Totality, Englishness, and Empire

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Preface

The historian of the future will probably find one of the great movements of world-history in the forces which are at present making for new ideals of imperial unity throughout the British Empire.

—Programme, The Festival of Empire and the Pageant of London (1910)

Mr. Thomas Cook . . . made his countrymen understand what the world was like as a whole. . . . The charm found in Mr. Thomas Cook's narrative is the novelty of the whole.

—W. Fraser Rae, on the story of Thomas Cook and Son travel business (1891)

Britannia has a menagerie that reaches all over the world
She has some animals rich and rare, some treacherous creatures are caged up there.

—“Britannia’s Menagerie,” music hall standard (ca. 1900)

The subject of this book is the imperial animal and its English stories, narratives that foreground the “ideals of imperial unity” and that depend upon a notion of the British Empire as a novel and sometimes charming “whole.” The chapters that follow explore the form of the English institutions that collected exotic animals and the shape of the novel in England over the past two centuries. In these pages I trace the precipitous rise and long subsidence of the zoo, menagerie, circus, and colonial exhibition in England, all prime examples of a rich imperial culture of display. These popular ensembles fashioned and framed a range of narrative practices in relation to a prevailing idea of the empire as a comprehensive whole. In its tents, arenas, enclosures, and caravans, the zoological collection managed both alien beasts and their meanings as it advertised, described, and mounted a
range of exotic displays that evoked and delineated a burgeoning empire. The menagerie’s spaces of exhibition form the backdrop for my explorations of the novel as the distinctive form of English narrative. In particular I describe the novel’s constellation around the notion of imperial totality in the nineteenth century, its emphasis upon detotalization of form and imperial frames of reference in the era of aesthetic modernism, and its nostalgia for formal holism and an abolished exotic at the end of the twentieth century. In each chapter, I have sought to open new channels for understanding the novel as part of an ongoing public discourse of imperial totality, and the menagerie as a site of genesis and management of English stories about the empire.

My title gestures toward a fundamental conjunction of the zoological collection and the English novel, but their relation is far from simple; indeed, much of chapter 1 is devoted to mapping the cultural topography of empire in which both institutions took root and flourished. Broadly speaking, though, my approach to the subject emphasizes two primary roles for the collection of zoological exotica. First, the menagerie appears as a cultural form homologous to the novel to the extent that both the novel and the menagerie share a sense of the empire as the preeminent expression of English spirit, but also as something that England’s domestic cultures struggle to grasp in its total aspect. In this respect, the novel and the menagerie represent comparable imaginative responses to the empire as a dominant, shaping factor in English daily life. They share important aesthetic strategies and cultural logics, and consequently both the novel and the menagerie are illuminated when we read them with one another—the novel as a collection of everyday imaginative practices, and the menagerie as an institution generating and managing narratives of empire. Second, the menagerie mediates the novel’s relation to empire and to Englishness. That is, as a popular and distinct site for the production and direction of narratives of empire, the collection of zoological exotica furnishes the novel with material and figures for its own forms and practices. The appearance of the zoo, the circus, a traveling collection of animals, or an individual beast—tiger, elephant, camel, or boa constrictor, for instance—in the novel invites us to read through the menagerie to the exotic landscape it evokes and imaginatively maps.

The aim of these pages is less to theorize the movement of the English novel since the Victorian era than to historicize and contextualize some key terms in its traditional theory and practice: “life,” “perspective,” and especially “totality” or “whole.” Though the theory of the novel—especially the theory of the novel as a total object in its form and as a totalizing instrument in its aim—is usually understood to begin in earnest with Henry James’s prefaces to his novels, narrative praxis in the nineteenth century implies a set of theoretical principles even when
they are not codified in an apology, pamphlet, preface, or review. Indeed, the chief claim I advance here is that the novel, assumed by critics across two centuries to be the essential literary form of the nation, embodies an ongoing imaginative and theoretical work related to the imperial system. A correlative to this argument is that when the novel introduces zoological collections in its texts, or collects animals and their stories in its own right, the novel can be understood to explore one of its own key contexts and to engage in an important theoretical enterprise in relation to empire.

The most intense novelistic explorations of what Wilma George calls “zoo-geography” in English cultural life took place in the Victorian and modernist periods, and the readings of *The Novel and the Menagerie* are most deeply invested in texts produced in these years. The decades from 1840 to 1930 saw the second British empire spread across the globe and begin to be seriously challenged, both imaginatively and politically. In the realm of the novel, the Victorian years witnessed the consolidation of realist practices in relation to totality as a horizon of possibility. With the gathering front of twentieth-century aesthetic movements and impulses we call modernism, totality—more particularly, imperial totality—ceases to be the cynosure around which the novel’s theoretical universe revolves. As the final chapter and epilogue suggest, however, the problems of geopolitical totality and of the forms of the novel and zoological exhibition remain significant ones at the beginning of the twenty-first century, long after the official end of empire.

The shift in the practical theorization of the novel in relation to imperial holism from realist totality to modernist detotalization might usefully be characterized in terms of Havelock Ellis’s belated treatment of aesthetic decadence. In his 1922 preface to an English translation of J-K Huysmans’s *A Rebours* (1889), Ellis characterizes “classic style” as that which subordinates and harmonizes diverse parts in relation to a whole, and under this definition the theory and practice of the realist novel moved increasingly in the direction of the “classic style” in the Victorian period. By contrast, Ellis identifies “decadent style”—a term which he strips of all moral valences—as that which finds the whole overwhelmed by its parts. This formulation of decadence neatly captures both the experience of, for instance, reading James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (also published in 1922) for the first time and the prevailing sense of the overwhelming demands (imaginative, economic, and political) the colonies made upon the mother country in the surrounding years. While “classic” and “decadent” remain freighted with moral and literary-historical connotations that make these terms unconducive to redeployment, Georges Bataille’s distinction between “restricted” and “general” economies marks a similar distinction to that drawn by Ellis between systems that can be
characterized by principles of holism, conservation, meaning, and integration on one hand, and those marked by loss, expenditure, and constant dissolution of limits on the other. Bataille’s distinction remains relatively unencumbered by deep-rooted aesthetic or moral prejudices, and consequently in the following pages I deploy the coordinates of “restricted” and “general” economy to map the shift in English novelistic practice first over the course of the Victorian, Edwardian, and Georgian eras, and then from modernism to postmodernism. Bataille’s terms also usefully translate into theoretical coordinates a set of aesthetic categories that recur across these pages—for instance, the picturesque which frames up or delineates complete views of empire, and the carnivalesque which confuses and breaches boundaries of domestic and exotic, English and imperial.

The chief contribution *The Novel and the Menagerie* seeks to make to the study of narrative is to historicize the notion of totality in the theory and practice of the English novel, not to offer anything like a beast-theory of Victorian, modernist, or postmodernist narrative *per se*. That is, while I contend that the relation of the English novels treated here to the collection of zoological exotica does important theoretical work in imagining and reconceiving the formal contours of the empire as a whole, it is not the case that all narratives in this period are assimilable to the genre. In exploring narrative praxis in the novel by reading totality along what Susan Stanford Friedman calls the “geopolitical axis” of modern cultural formation—in particular, recuperating imperial zoogeography as a crucial context for English stories—I envision the novel not only as responding and contributing to the situation of colonialism but also as part of a large-scale movement, collective rather than individual, to imagine the form of the empire. Edward Said notes that “the British empire integrated and fused things within it, and . . . made the world one,” but his formulations uncritically accept the invitation of the imperial discourses that promoted the empire’s integration. For all the critical value of seeing global connectedness as an important consequence of integrative imperial cultural practices, criticism has yet to pause over the collective discourse of imperial totality itself, especially in its various English instantiations. To this extent, *The Novel and the Menagerie* seeks to resist the languages of individual “otherness.” Instead, thinking the novel’s relation to empire in the menagerie’s terms discourages an atomistic Hegelian language of “otherness,” replacing it with a rhetoric of shared and widespread cultural work. The discourses of imperial totality that underpinned common cultural practices like those of the menagerie and the novel appear primarily as social rather than psychological formations.

In concentrating on the national as a cardinal social formation, this book participates in recent discussions about Englishness to the extent that both the novel and the menagerie are institutions that put English identities and characters
on display and seek overtly or implicitly to narrate their relation to empire. In “What Is a Nation?” (1883) Ernest Renan proposed the nation as “a large-scale solidarity” and “a daily plebiscite,” outlining a notion of the nation that depends upon the ongoing imaginative work of its constituents. The fact of empire clearly complicates this formulation: when the empire itself is conceived as both an extension of England and an integrated whole in its own right, how does Englishness appear when understood to form just a part of this whole? What distinguishes it from Britishness or from Anglo-Indianness? While recent books like Ian Baucom’s *Out of Place* (1999) and Jed Esty’s *A Shrinking Island* (2004) have broached such questions in the context of English writing in the twilight of empire, none has taken up the question of totality and the relation of parts to whole that both the menagerie and the novel require us to think.

Each of these robust narrative forms grapples in its own way with questions of Englishness as a part of empire and as a whole in itself. As the following pages demonstrate, the exhibition of zoological exotica represents an ongoing and immediate negotiation, delineation, and construction of Englishness and empire (what Homi Bhabha calls the “performative” aspect of national formation), while writing about the English circus, zoo, and menagerie describes an institutional history of the relationship of Englishness to empire (what Bhabha describes as the “pedagogical” aspect of nationhood). Navigating the novel’s interventions in the context of imperial exhibitionary cultures, and thinking them through the mediating channels of the menagerie, means that the novel and the menagerie each triangulate a key set of other terms. The novel finally enables us to see the way in which the menagerie’s zoological narratives put into perspective relations of Englishness and empire, while the menagerie’s collections draw into sharper focus the novel’s means of negotiating the crucial questions of imperial and postimperial Englishness. This pair of triangulations appears rich, dynamic, and varied over the past century and a half, and claims the attention of the pages that follow.
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INTRODUCTION

The Novel as Zoo

Animal Stories and English Style

IMPERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

In the spring of 2002, a remarkable spectacle in the London borough of Newham stirred the imagination of British print media and emerged as a highlight of Queen Elizabeth’s royal Jubilee progress across Great Britain. As a 10 May article in The Daily Telegraph reported, “A giant mechanical elephant, a Bollywood band and a crowd of people of all races and creeds waving the Union flag ensured the Queen a unique welcome to East London yesterday” (fig. 1).1 The Queen’s Golden Jubilee and her national tour served as occasions for the collection and production of stories about England and Englishness, and the moment in Newham generated a narrative of its own. The Times of London foregrounded the Queen’s encounter with “the kaleidoscopic ethnic mix of the East End of London,” construing the “almost life-size tin elephant, electrically propelled on wheels” as an emblem of the changing face of the nation over the half-century of Elizabeth’s reign.2 “When she ascended the throne in 1952, Britain was an overwhelmingly white nation,” the paper noted, but the fantastic figure of the elephant “underlined the largest social change of the Queen’s reign” by indicating the extent to which the nation had become polychromatic. In telling such stories about the shifting composition of England, newspaper reports understood the brilliant elephant in Newham to signal not only Britain’s postmillennial multiculturalism but also a fashionable global significance that the East Enders imparted to England’s sovereign: because she was escorted by the motorized elephant, the Times observed, “the Queen arrived in style.”
Over the past two centuries displays of zoological exotica like the tin elephant in the East End have lent style and form to stories of daily life in England’s familiar spaces, and to the novel in particular. The remarkable display in Newham appeared uncanny, not because it was in any way unsettling but because it was “in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it.” For Freud, the experience of the uncanny marks the disturbing entanglement of the alien and the “old-established,” the homely and the outlandish. The fascinating conjunction of elephant and Queen in Newham likewise mingled the exotic with the familiar, the domestic with the alien, but it was not as unique as media like the *Daily Telegraph* might have wished. It in fact reprised a history of royal entanglements with exotic animals over a century before Elizabeth II’s reign amidst an era of multiethnic “style” in England: before she acceded to the throne, Princess Victoria was a patron of the Surrey Zoological Gardens, which housed her favorite monkey, Jocko; as Queen, Victoria and her family regularly attended spectacles that capitalized upon the exhibition

![Figure 1. Queen Elizabeth II and Runga-Rung Elephant, *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 May 2002. Photograph by Ian Jones/Telegraph Group Limited.](image)
Figure 2. “Mr. Punch’s Celebration of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, 1886,” Punch’s Almanack for 1886, Punch, 7 December 1885. Courtesy Kelvin Smith Library Retrospective Research Collections.
of exotic beasts and people; in 1871 a parade of Sanger’s Circus, complete with live animals, a costumed Britannia, and a Royal impersonator, fell in behind Victoria’s State progress through London; and, as in Punch’s commemoration of Victoria’s 1886 Jubilee, Victorian iconography regularly surrounded Victoria and Britannia with imperial animals (fig. 2). As it did for Queen Victoria and the Royal Family, everyday life for nineteenth-century publics encompassed the experience of zoological collections in displays ranging from Windsor Castle to the Crystal Palace, from Astley’s Circus at Westminster Bridge to Wombwell’s Menagerie in England’s industrial provinces. Indeed, over the past two hundred years Englishness and expressions of its stylistic character—it’s ostensible coolness, reserve, and civility, for instance—have accompanied exhibitions and narratives of empire. These stories and displays provide the historical backdrop for Britain’s current “kaleidoscopic ethnic mix” and multicultural “style.”

This book takes up the relations among these exhibitions and narratives as they find expression in the English novel, the content of which is, in Fredric Jameson’s formulation, “daily life and existential experience in the metropolis”—not only in London, but in the mother country generally. The following chapters map the formal and thematic concerns of the domestic English novel in terms of popular understandings of the way in which the British empire as a whole incorporates and informs Englishness. As a description of how the novel accommodates itself to shifting modes of representing a global empire, this book explores the way that exhibitions of zoological exotica have generated and mingled with a series of memorable narratives of England and Englishness. In this context, it is not surprising that the Daily Telegraph’s vision of Englishness as a “crowd of all races and creeds” should be occasioned by an elephant. For more than two centuries, the overlapping patterns of imperial display and domestic narrative have defined Englishness and its characteristic expressions in the novel. The newspaper accounts of the motorized elephant in East London are just the latest in a series of encounters between displays of exotic animals that make up a genre that I call the “imperial menagerie” and the stories that England tells itself about its character and place in the world.

Interest in the elephant at the 2002 celebration prompted Newham’s ceremonial mayor Sukhdev Marway to credit the borough’s carnivalesque demonstrations on behalf of the Queen to the fact that “many of our people came from other Commonwealth countries, so the monarchy means something to them.” This book takes as axiomatic a correlative observation: that England and its literature have been understood to “mean something” distinctive in
the world to the extent that, for better or worse, English life has been bound up with the empire—“a crowd of all races and creeds,” too—as a complex and comprehensive cultural whole. In *The Expansion of England* (1883), J. R. Seeley effectively argued this point when he asserted that “England owes its modern character and its peculiar greatness” to its early colonial expansion. A century later Gauri Viswanathan detailed the ways in which the modern study of English literature first took shape, not in the British Isles but in nineteenth-century curricula in India; in her account, England’s literature largely owes its modern forms of study and its peculiar canons to what Seeley calls “the English Empire.”

Unlike other nineteenth-century commentators, Seeley conceived the empire as a virtually static totality that was intrinsically opposed to dynamic narrative, concluding his survey of the “English Empire” with an unusual admission: “I have narrated nothing, told no thrilling stories, drawn no heroic portraits, I have kept always before you England as a great whole. In her story there is little that is dramatic.” While Seeley insists upon the distinction between showing and telling, exhibition and narration, displays of the “English Empire” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were written about in accounts that slip indiscriminately from description to narration. What is more, over the course of the last two centuries, keeping before the English public the empire as “a great whole” entailed the telling of just the kind of stories Seeley disavows, in the registers of exhibitionary culture and of the novel alike. These chapters follow a number of such stories as they develop from exhibitions, while exploring menageries and novels for their understandings of the empire as a geographic and historical whole.

The idea of totality has been treated most intensively in the twentieth century by Marxian theorists. English popular and literary cultures across the last two centuries employed exhibitionary languages that represent far more supple and imaginative means of engaging ideas about the empire as a whole than those that rely upon the Hegelian categories of “self” and “other.” Indeed, while English thinkers avoided theorizing totality in the abstract idioms of their Continental counterparts, English exhibitionary cultures figured it richly in their modes of display, in their treatment of exotic animals, and in writing about their relation to empire. The novel also aspired to totality both in its form (a complete aesthetic object) and in its reach (a comprehensive treatment of its world). At roughly the moment that J. R. Seeley opposed totality to narrative, Henry James asserted their homology: “a novel is a living thing . . . all one and continuous,” an “organic
whole,” the “main care [of which] is to be typical, to be inclusive.” By the first decades of the twentieth century, novelists such as Arnold Bennett understood the British empire to model the novel’s totalizing aspirations. And at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Amit Chaudhuri could be found proposing once more that “the novel’s mode of representation, its aspiration, is totality; it presumes the existence of, and also the possibility of representing, a continuous fabric of human and social interrelationship.” What is more, the totality in play in the novel, the fabric of the nation itself, for Chaudhuri is explicitly “imperial England”; it is the empire that makes “this idea of the nation, and the novel, . . . a transcontinental way of ‘being.’” Concurrently with these developments in the theory of the novel, large-scale Anglo-American exhibitions aimed to reveal “the new unity of the globe [and to make] possible its consumption as a single, though diverse, spectacle.” In these fundamental ways, totality played a central role in narratives in the novel and the imperial exhibition alike; the British empire supplied a rich and dramatic field and figure for this totality, even as novels and menageries took the empire as a whole as their problematic field of representation.

**Traveling Culture, the Novel, and the Zoological Cabinet**

The central questions this book raises deal with the ways in which the English represented to themselves a global imperial culture and their place within it, and how the novel as a privileged form of narrative engages such modes of representation in the work of authors ranging from William Makepeace Thackeray to Julian Barnes. My primary claims are that (1) both novels about English daily life and exhibitions featuring collections of exotic animals strive to relate Englishness to a larger imperial totality; and (2) evolving attitudes toward the imperial whole in these two fields of English cultural production—the novel and the menagerie—reveal important things about large-scale shifts in narrative practices between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially the movement from realism to modernism. Michel de Certeau observes that in late capitalism “the novel . . . has become the zoo of everyday practices,” and though one of my aims is to show that this process of “becoming” begins in nineteenth-century writing, the modern novel in England can be productively understood as just such a collection or exhibition of English practices in the midst of a culture of empire.

But de Certeau’s dictum ought also to be reversed. The English menagerie
and its attendant exhibitionary institutions deserve to be read for the narratives they dramatize and disseminate: they tell the story of England's place in the world, recount the shape of the imperial past, and imagine potential futures for England and empire. In exploring the relations among the novel, the menagerie, and the empire conceived as a “great whole,” I assume both that the English novel is a cultural form intimately engaged with everyday imaginative practice and that documents of England's exhibitionary cultures are not dead letters but dynamic narrative media. The English zoo, circus, long-run exhibition, and menagerie are of course not cultural institutions fixed over time but flexible forms with complex and evolving histories of their own: the imperial menagerie is more than a convenient transhistorical metaphor, as a number of recent studies demonstrate. This book looks at the dynamics that such histories bring to the fore, in order to plot the imaginative transactions between the imperial menagerie and the novel, with a special emphasis on the complexly mediated flows from the menagerie toward the English novel and narratives of Englishness in general. While it is true that English literature itself sometimes directly informed exhibitionary cultures in the nineteenth century—spectacular renditions of work by Byron and Dickens appeared in early Victorian circus programs, for instance—in the twentieth century this direct relation weakened considerably, as the gap between the novel as “high” culture and the popular exhibition as “low” culture widened in the era of aesthetic modernism.

The interpretation offered in these pages of the relations among the novel, the menagerie, and print cultures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries challenges, however, the perspective that treats the menagerie as divorced from high culture or has seen it merely as sociological content or context for narrative fiction. Instead, I argue, these relations are complex, deeply ingrained, and interdependent. Indeed, this book assumes with Peter Stallybrass and Allon White “that cultural categories of high and low, social and aesthetic . . . are never entirely separable.” It is not simply that imaginative literature in the form of the novel is “high” and the varieties of the menagerie are “low,” but that literary approaches to the menagerie can themselves appear high or low, honoring the vulgarity and corporeality of the collection, or transmuting it. Such treatments constitute the novel itself as a variable genre defined by a contest of high and low. So, for instance, Arnold Bennett, Angela Carter, and Salman Rushdie emphasize the fleshiness of the animals on show in the menagerie, Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens desubstantiate zoological exotica by emphasizing the beast's symbolic character, and Julian Barnes strips the menagerie of the exotic altogether.
Figure 3. “Punchius Imperator A.D. MDCCCLXXVII,” Punch’s Almanack for 1877, Punch, 14 December 1876. Courtesy Kelvin Smith Library Retrospective Research Collections.
The colonial or imperial character of the exotic is key to the collection of zoological exotica, as John Berger recognized decades ago: “in the 19th century, public zoos were an endorsement of modern colonial power. The capturing of the animals was a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands.” With the fortunes of their empire rising throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the English sustained a robust traveling culture: not only did they set out to explore the reaches of the world and to claim distant spaces under imperial standards, but they also exhibited the artifacts and traces of these extremities at home, including specimens of exotic fauna. In this period, domestic English institutions of imperial display grew rapidly: circuses such as Astley’s assumed their contemporary national and international forms; the Regent’s Park and Surrey Zoological Gardens opened to the general public; Wombwell’s and Atkins’ Menageries traveled across England to show their collections; and, beginning with Prince Albert’s Great Exhibition of 1851, the colonial, imperial, and world exposition—displaying collections of animals in several forms and media—became a mainstay of London’s tourist season. Even pageants staged in the distant spaces of the empire found domestic expression: in the case of the 1877 Imperial Assemblage in Delhi to crown Victoria Empress of India, the government and popular press commissioned paintings and photographs that captured ethnographic and zoological exotica for presentation at home (and which Punch lampooned with relish; see figure 3); and for Edward VII’s and George V’s coronation “Durbars” (1902–3 and 1911, respectively), film companies raced to get moving pictures of the procession of state elephants to London screens.

Such modes of display facilitated a distinctive brand of imaginative travel across global expanses and cultivated the sense in England that the empire was a coherent, integrated, and knowable whole. Novels of the period explicitly register this brand of imaginative travel: in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), Aziz arranges to convey the Western women from the railway terminus to the Marabar Caves across the Marabar Plain on an elephant. The elephant materializes “the East” not only for the English ladies but also for Aziz himself: “That an elephant should depend from so long and so slender a string [of personal connections] filled Aziz with content, and with humorous appreciation of the East.” And in a fanciful instance, Rebecca West’s *Harriet Hume* (1929) suggests the spectacular proximity of organized modes of English travel such as Thomas Cook’s package tour business to the zoological exotic when it indulges a fantasy of a “sight, so familiar to Londoners, of Thomas Cook and his sons riding down to Ludgate Circus in the howdahs
of elephants, wearing Egyptian sun helmets, and commanding Maori attendants, on their way to enable others to enjoy the pleasures of foreign travel.”

Though selective, oddly synthetic, and even misleading understandings might result from the encounters they facilitated, the oriental procession, zoo, menagerie, and circus nevertheless served as important imaginative channels through which domestic English subjects such as Thomas Cook’s clientele apprehended India, and empire more generally, in the nineteenth century.

In surveying what she terms “the animal estate” in Victorian Britain, Harriet Ritvo sketches many of the imperial circuits and networks to which nineteenth-century zoos and menageries were bound, and Richard Altick catalogs a large number of popular nineteenth-century entertainments that included exotic animals, people, and artifacts. Ritvo’s and Altick’s rich investigations document the menagerie’s contributions to a cultural complex of exhibition in Britain that supplied essential material for the domestic imagination of empire. Yet the English novel has received only glancing attention in this context, though it too formed a part of this “exhibitionary complex”: it served as an instrument of display in its own right, staging encounters in England’s domestic spaces between the English and exotic animals and people, as part of a larger print culture that also witnessed a rapid growth in attention to natural history.

Michel Foucault situates the rise of natural history as a discipline at the middle of the seventeenth century “in the gap that is now [around 1657] opened up between things and words,” between the ontological facts of the animal and the narratives and diverse lore that accrued to it. This gap, according to Foucault, marks the shift from undifferentiated zoological spectacles in the early modern period (“the age of the theatre”) to the precise, scientific catalogs and displays characteristic of modernity (the age “of the catalogue”). The forms of the imperial menagerie, however, hardly witnessed such a gap, so thoroughly sedimented were they with narrative, description, and spectacle. The imaginative domain of the menagerie was simultaneously theatrical and catalogic or descriptive, its things and its words complementary aspects of a larger exhibitionary apparatus rather than antagonists posed across a representational or epistemological gulf. Books, pamphlets, newspapers, playbills and promotional ephemera, and broadsheet poems and ballads commented upon and narrated the material forms of exhibition, while the latter depended on the work of print publications to advertise them and to provide the rich narrative frameworks upon which they capitalized. So ubiquitous were these collections of anecdotal
The Novel as Zoo

curiosities that by the end of the nineteenth century, Hilaire Belloc published parodies in the form of *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* (1897) and *More Beasts for Worse Children* (1898), which chiefly offered absurdly unreliable information about animals and described creative means of destroying them.

In general, contemporaneous writing about the menagerie—including the miscellany of natural history—but serves to complement material displays, as narration complements the menagerie’s descriptive apparatus, and as the aesthetic presentation of animals complements the political and social facts of their spectacular exhibition in England. The most prominent of the institutions of the menagerie generated characteristically successful animal stories, and if the menagerie’s function was to manage animals, print genres affiliated with the zoological collection sought to manage the stories generated by the menagerie. The spectacle of the menagerie and writing about it do not check narrative possibilities but rather, as Barbara Benedict writes of collections in general in the period, “[liberate] information for private, implied narratives.” Sometimes, indeed, nineteenth-century displays aimed to impel spectators’ own accounts of their relation to the exotic, as when Astley’s exhorted its patrons to “GO AND SEE THE MIRACLE! That you may say when you grow old, I have seen a Man DRIVE A LIVING LION HARNESSED TO A SPLendid CHARIOT! ON THE OPEN STAGE Make his Bed on a Troop of CONQUERED BEASTS.” The menagerie crucially lends not just impetus (“go and see the miracle!”) but form to such narratives, selecting, arranging (harnessing or making of them a “bed”), and coordinating (or “conquering”) the animals, the conditions of their appearance, and—with the significant exception of the rogue or disobedient animal—their plot.

Other printed ephemera such as the domestic political satire exploited the idea of the “cabinet” as a collection of curiosities and a group of political figures. *The Zoological Cabinet; or, Menagerie of Living Characters* (1832) took as its setting the Zoological Gardens in emphasizing the total management of exotic beasts associated with imperial landscapes:

The place recall’d associations
Of those unthinking brutes’ relations;
Who, once unus’d to bear command,
Now brought from every clime and land,
And here collected, seem’d to me
To live in civil polity.

The place recall’d associations
Of those unthinking brutes’ relations;
Who, once unus’d to bear command,
Now brought from every clime and land,
And here collected, seem’d to me
To live in civil polity.
You here may meet with ev’ry creature,
Of each complexion, and all feature;
And ev’ry character and form;—

... Each animal of every kind;
And here assembl’d,—sure were cause
That there should be controuling laws,
By which the whole should be subdu’d,
Though while the tenants of the wood . . .27

The satirical verse holds up the menagerie as a model that demonstrates the need for imperial management through “controuling laws,” and in particular for the administration of imperial lands so that “the whole” shall be rendered a “civil polity.” And we might understand genre itself as a kind of cabinet or set of “controuling laws” for zoological stories that complement displays of the zoo, circus, or Durbar.

The novel, too, as a kind of zoo of everyday practices, appears a similar sort of cabinet, subjecting “the whole” of English life to “controuling laws” of its own. Yet as a wholly invented genre, the novel as a totality in its own right seems to supplement rather than complement the unifying work of the menagerie and its narratives. In the novel’s negotiation of the “associations” and “relations” of the English to “each animal of every kind,” realist and modernist writers fashioned their own comprehensive views of English life which, in J. R. Seeley’s explication, extended “indefinitely” into imperial space.28 If the novel and other print genres differ in their relation to the zoological collection because the novel as a totalizing genre on its own terms supplements the display while other writing complements the imperial menagerie, nevertheless Victorian and twentieth-century novels, like the zoo, the imperial exposition, and the circus, engage the problem of Englishness in relation to the empire as a dominant whole.

The writing of William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, Arnold Bennett, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, and Julian Barnes intersects at numerous points the forms and conventions of English exhibition, not least those featuring exotic animals. In the work of each of these writers, the imperial menagerie and its traditions furnish material for, and pose obstacles to, the design, content, and logic of the novel. Within both the menagerie and the novel, the figure of the elephant holds a privileged place, and consequently it also holds a privileged place in the pages that follow: the elephant is the
cornerstone of collections of zoological exotica, constitutes a figure for large and unwieldy wholes, and dominates the spectacles informing the work of English writers, as it does in Miss Matty’s apprehension of India’s alien spaces in Gaskell’s Cranford. This is so both because historically elephants constituted the most spectacular and highly touted attraction in displays of zoos, menageries, circuses, museum collections, hunting trophies, and imperial exhibitions, and because figuratively the elephant has long been understood as a trope for an expansive and only indirectly apprehensible totality such as empire. The elephant is a synecdoche both for the menagerie in which it plays its spectacular part and for the empire whose practices and institutions bring it before the English public. Consequently, in the English novel the figure of the elephant serves as an imaginative tracer in the imperial system, an exemplary instance of megafauna marking the historical and rhetorical flows of domestic narrative and imperial exhibition and highlighting their cross-currents.

**English Stories and Imperial Amnesia**

Given the long associations of the elephant with the most exotic aspects of the empire, it is no wonder that the Times in 2002 should find in the mechanical animal at Queen Elizabeth’s anniversary celebrations a striking symbol of a multiethnic, postimperial nation. The elephant, the largest and most prominent of all the beasts in England’s extensive cache of imperial tropes and emblems, had strong associations first with India and then with Africa, the most important imperial landscapes described by mid- and late Victorian exhibitionary maps of the world. In the twenty-first century, narratives of Englishness continue to employ the figure of the elephant and to be oriented by such imperial maps, if only because so much red has disappeared from models of the reconfigured globe. Whatever the claims for its unprecedented character, the exhibition of the mechanical elephant at Elizabeth’s Jubilee responds to two widespread contemporary stories about Englishness from a global perspective. The first story—“familiar and old-established,” to borrow Freud’s words again—enshrines Englishness in its “most potent unifying symbol,” the Queen, in reading the Jubilee as an event of both growing and consolidating global significance. On one hand, the worldwide interest of English-language media in the Queen’s anniversary dramatized the resilient hold that a radiant Englishness maintains over the global imaginary. On the other hand, the parade through
Newham celebrated the continued power of the Commonwealth to compose a shared cultural framework around a core of English symbols and traditions, as, for instance, Mayor Sukhdev Marway suggests in asserting the Commonwealth’s continued allegiance to the Queen.

Describing the spectacle as a celebration of “cultural diversity and social harmony,” as Royal publications did, also defends against the incursion into everyday English life of a second, less sanguine tale of alienation from visions of sociopolitical and cultural integration. While the primary story at Elizabeth’s Jubilee celebrates England’s geopolitical relevance—indeed, its continued visibility on the global stage—this second narrative focuses on England’s increasingly marginal role in the world after decades of decolonization overseas and of political devolution in the British Isles themselves. It has been rehearsed since the 1970s in a welter of books and popular reports about England’s ostensible identity crisis, and narratives of cultural predicament and decline continue to influence English cultural and political thought. As Tom Nairn and Bernard Porter have argued, England’s identity and economic welfare were tightly bound up with its overseas holdings from the late nineteenth century. The appearance of compromised economic and political authority in the twentieth century, they maintain, was inevitable as soon as “Greater Britain” embarked upon its large-scale program of decolonization following the Second World War.

This “breakup” has been one of the most remarkable developments in English political life over the last century, culminating in 1999 with the devolution of legislative power in the United Kingdom and the elections of national parliaments in Scotland and Wales. Anticipating these events in 1998, Jeremy Paxman wrote that “The disintegration of empire is at last hitting the British Isles: the first colonies will be the last to gain their independence.” Splenetic descriptions of English cultural disorientation, estrangement, and decline accompanied political devolution in the UK. Paxman, for instance, argued that without the concept of Great Britain, in which they had invested the balance of their cultural capital, “the English had no alternative identity to rescue them.” That is, while the other nations in Great Britain preserved their local traditions and cultures and therefore had them to rely upon, England had few significant institutions that were not already bound up with those of Britain and its empire. “It is a paradox,” wrote Jonathan Miller in the same year, “that in this reconfiguration of Britain, it is the English themselves who are being left behind in the rush for devolution. Unlike the Scots, Welsh and Irish, who retain a strong sense of national pride and identity, the English are profoundly confused about what
to do amid a disintegrating United Kingdom." The display of the elephant at the Jubilee, one might suggest, is designed to cultivate a sense of English unity in diversity as a practical rejoinder to these theoretical diagnoses of confusion and fragmentation.

Given this fundamental division in accounts of the situation of Englishness, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the line of fracture between the competing national narratives framing the Jubilee cuts across England’s literary topography as well as its political and popular cultural landscapes. Advocating a multiethnic, globally central Englishness, organs like the *Times Literary Supplement* continue to boast that English writers are “unequalled anywhere else, the US included,” and that the nation’s racial diversity and cultural richness fueled contemporary English literary production. On the other hand, the melancholic, postimperial view has been exemplified by critics like Terry Eagleton, who remarked the eclipse of English literary prominence and dated its wane from the early decades of the twentieth century, attributing the decline to the fact that English writers could no longer grasp English life as a whole in an era of political and aesthetic modernism. Such divergent perspectives are thrown into high relief as they bear upon Britain’s most prominent literary award, the Man Booker Prize. Graham Huggan for one deplores England’s stubborn insistence on its “arbitrational cultural role” in the world, a “mantle . . . now assumed by the Booker and its panel of ‘disinterested’ (white male) judges [who] determine what carries ‘intrinsic’ literary value [and] confer legitimacy, from the ‘center,’ on the literature of the periphery.” In contrast, Elaine Showalter, endorsing “protective literary tariffs” for Britain, argues that there is no longer “a uniquely British novel, nor a recognizably British standard of excellence,” only an endangered “British literary culture, a mixture of aesthetic, intellectual, commercial, social, and journalistic elements” threatened by proposals to extend Booker eligibility to American writers. The very legibility and significance of the contemporary novel in England—does it represent the highest aspirations for writing in English, or is it an endangered species?—seem to depend upon correspondingly discrepant narratives of postimperial England’s identity in the world.

On 22 October 2002, five and a half months after the mechanical elephant’s ascent to media prominence at the Jubilee, Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* was awarded the 2002 Man Booker Prize. The novel that rejects the “story that won’t surprise you” and concludes that “The story with animals is the better story” found critics sympathetic to the surprising beasts at the center of the story. Roz Kaveney in the *Times Literary Supplement* praised the
novel’s “meditations on humanity’s relationship with animals, as well as [the] profusion of lyrical passages about fur, feather, and flower” for the way they evoked “the unfamiliar or the barely imaginable.” And the novel featuring zoological exotica, if “the better story,” also proved a popular story: “the triumph of Life of Pi has been hailed as ushering in a new era, in which the People’s Booker reigns,” declared the TLS in evaluating the implications of the 2002 award. Yet however “barely imaginable” the novel’s story might have seemed, its discourse cultivated familiar forms of exoticism and revived the menagerie’s tarnished aura of charm and cultural authority. At least one critic remarked the novel’s unregenerate orientalist perspective—the indulgence in “lovingly lacquered ‘Indianness’”—evident in statements such as “I am Hindu . . . because of elephants standing around to bless.” Martel’s animal story celebrates the zoo and the circus from the very beginning, suggesting that “if an animal could choose with intelligence, it would opt for living in a zoo,” and the narrative turns its teenage protagonist into a circus handler when he subjugates the large Bengal tiger with whom he shares a lifeboat. Life of Pi cultivates a sense of wonder, the unknown, and the exotic, and yet, as James Wood observes, this “magical story is made plausible, and vivid and dramatic, only by the careful application of conventional realist techniques.” While “in essence, [the protagonist] recreates the atmosphere of the zoo” in the boat as he displays his mastery of the exotic beast, the narrative also demonstrates “that realism is narrative’s great master, that it schools even its own truants.” In its subject matter Martel’s novel, hailed as the first winner of the British “People’s Booker,” celebrates the zoo and circus as spaces of human mastery; in its method it champions realism’s mastery of the alien and the exotic. These tendencies are fundamentally those established by the Victorian novel in England. Indeed, the donée of Martel’s story echoes stock performances of the Victorian circus: Astley’s playbill of 11 October 1844 promises the thirty-minute progress of “MR. CARTER The Celebrated LION KING, in an Open Boat, with his Large BRAZILIAN TIGER!” navigating the Thames from Vauxhall to Westminster Bridge.

That the supposed novelty of Life of Pi’s narrative performance was, like that of Elizabeth’s encounter with the mechanical elephant, largely illusory highlights a third notable condition of Englishness diagnosed around the Millennium—what the Economist called an “imperial amnesia.” A vast “memory hole” appeared to have swallowed the empire in England’s home spaces by the end of the twentieth century: “the great figures of British imperial history are now largely forgotten” by the public, and Britain’s ministers under Tony Blair “do not regard themselves as the heirs to the
British empire.” Martel’s book, too, seems to suffer this sort of amnesia, though from a Commonwealth rather than an English perspective: aside from the frame narrative, which gestures vaguely to Indian “stories about the struggle to boot the British out,” Pi Patel’s story offers little sense of Britain’s formative role in India’s history, or of Englishness as bound up with the institutional history of the zoological garden from which the narrative is launched. In its geography, the story arcs across the Commonwealth, from India to Canada, with no awareness of Great Britain’s articulating cultural presence. Indeed, only the Man Booker Prize grants Life of Pi even a slim English dimension: for all its traditional exoticism, and for its reliance upon the familiar paradigm of the “zoo story,” this novel seems curiously unaware of what imperial culture has entailed upon it, both in its subject matter and in its narrative approach. Though Martel himself is Canadian, in Britain this brand of collective forgetting or strategic refusal made possible fresh imaginings of what it meant to be English in the new century, and functioned as the condition of possibility both for the journalistic fascination with the processions in Newham in 2002 and the British critics’ praise of Life of Pi’s “evocation of the unfamiliar.” When the Queen followed the elephant through the streets of London, imperial amnesia rendered the scene a “unique welcome” not just to Royalty, but to narratives of a globally vital Englishness—like Martel’s novel, writing in England largely ignored the indebtedness of its twenty-first-century animal stories to older forms of imperial exhibition.

**Monuments of Empire, Memorials of Completeness**

In a climate in which England appeared to suffer from amnesia about the empire, then, the Queen’s progress through Newham on the heels of a motorized elephant uncannily called up the specters of Victorian stories about England’s political and cultural place in the world, and prompted newer narratives that sought to respond to—or mask—the “disappointment, even shame” of England’s alleged “descent . . . to second-rank industrial nation” without the empire. Simultaneously overlooked or forgotten by accounts in the Times and the Daily Telegraph proclaiming the novelty of the Queen’s parade through East London is the fact that the elephant is just one of many exotic figures or emblems that pervade the English cultural landscape; the material traces of the imperial past, in which England was the centerpiece of an empire that was regularly described as an integrated and indissoluble whole, persist across twenty-first-century England and the
contemporary London cityscape. Just as the motorized elephant and “the splendidly bearded and turbanned” figures in Newham enable the Queen to arrive “in style,” remainders and reminders of the empire continue to lend the mother country a novel “style.” Despite the prevalence of official, white “imperial amnesia,” black Britons themselves have recognized the persistent influence of imperial policies and rhetorics in contemporary English culture. That imperial institutions and monuments survive in England is apparent not least to writers who, like Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi, have written about the long half-life of imperial attitudes and frames of reference in the political and cultural environment of postcolonial England.

Remnants of zoological engagements with empire endure across England’s physical and cultural landscapes in monuments and museums; in a smattering of zoos, circuses, and wildlife parks; and in libraries and bookshops. Like the divergent narratives of Englishness and English literary culture, the stories that these traces and artifacts themselves foster have varied in tenor over the years, conveying both airs of celebratory nostalgia and strains of alienation and disorientation. The opening chapter of Hugh Kenner’s *A Sinking Island* (1988) resonates with both of these qualities as it dramatizes the way that narratives of Englishness, empire, and literary history become entangled and confused in the iconography of menageristic display. Kenner casts the year 1895 in the role of “the best of times,” a halcyon period before the rise of international modernism, before the English language “had ceased to be simply the language they speak in England,” and before the English literary establishment ceded its authority as the primary arbiter of literature in English. In Kenner’s formulation, Queen Victoria’s “memorial to the prince she mourned” embodies this late Victorian stability in the form of “a large eclectic masterpiece, guarded by stone lions and bedecked with proud standing-marble denizens of empire, the whole especially intimidating when it loomed through a morning fog. The book its stone prince held was not the Bible casual viewers took it for, but the Catalogue of the Exhibition of 1851.” Kenner’s reading of the Albert Memorial in South Kensington as a kind of fossilized version of England at the end of the nineteenth century is striking, with its emphasis on the monument guarded by England’s own regal lions, embellished by representatives of its imperial holdings, shrouded in London’s bituminous mists, and presided over by that great emblem of modernity, the catalogue of the Great Exhibition.

Yet in describing this “especially intimidating” whole, Kenner unwittingly conflates two Victorian monuments and mistakes the animals in England’s imperial iconography, for there are no English lions flanking the Albert
The Novel as Zoo Memorial, as there are at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, but rather a camel, representing Africa; a bison, symbolizing the Americas; a bull, standing for Europe; and an elephant, signifying Asia. The Trafalgar monument to Horatio Nelson, who died during the reign of George III, was erected in 1843, at the very beginning of the Victorian age and before the Prince Consort's 1851 Great Exhibition had been conceived; the monument in Kensington Gardens to Albert was not completed until 1875, well after the success of the 1862 International Exhibition, and shortly before Britain crowned Victoria Empress of India in 1877. The lions are early Victorian in conception; the bison, bull, camel, and elephant mark the transition from mid- to late Victorian England. The Trafalgar marker commemorates a national triumph in the Napoleonic Wars, while the South Kensington memorial appears a monument to an empire swelling to global proportions.

Kenner's conflation of early and late products of Victorian culture highlights the fact that Albert's fin-de-siècle tableau presents a view of the English Prince Regent in which he is surrounded not by Landseer's English lions but by allegorical avatars of alien spaces, which do not merely “bedeck” the monument as a kind of satellite ornament but rather provide the frame for the way England's Prince Consort is to be remembered. If the Albert Memorial's Prince appears to preside over Asia and the elephant, these latter two nevertheless signal his dependency upon them by appearing to “guard” him. Albert himself was equivocally English at best (only securing the full confidence and affection of the English people after his brilliant organization of the Great Exhibition), and the iconography of the monument suggests that the signs that guarantee his Englishness (and that bind up this “intimidating” whole) are extrinsic to the nation's own symbolism. As it did with regularity across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Englishness emerges into view here as a result of totalizing engagements with, and displays of, the world—and such displays were frequently of a zoological character.

While the Imperial Institute down the Exhibition Road in South Kensington is long gone, in the first decade of the twenty-first century the importance of empire to the institutions of Englishness remains in evidence in the petrified remnants of the Memorial's menagerie, recalling what Kenner characterizes as “the best of times,” an era during which, Jeremy Paxman adds, “the English knew who they were.” That period was, however, less a time of unbridled exuberance, confidence, and stability than of remarkable and often troubled transition both for the empire as a whole and
for England’s modes of narrating its own identity in relation to that whole. In these years, even such a voluble supporter of empire as J. R. Seeley was compelled to acknowledge the “bewilderment our Indian Empire produces” in the English imagination, while a revolution in the pastures of the aesthetic, especially in the domain of narrative, resulted in what Richard Ellmann calls an “English literature out of countenance.” As they preoccupied the English imagination in their own distinctive ways, the novel and the menagerie crafted reflections of, and formulated responses to, imperial desire and bewilderment.

In 1947, when the empire was embarking upon its first major postwar project of decolonization, George Orwell reflected upon the past century as a time of dramatic change in English daily life, observing that “not much more than a hundred years since the distinguishing mark of English life was its brutality. The common people . . . spent their time in an almost unending round of fighting, whoring, drunkenness, and bull-baiting.” The striking difference of modern life a century later led Orwell to ask, “What had these people in common with the gentle-mannered, undemonstrative, law-abiding English of to-day?” One answer is that the “brutish,” licentious English of the early nineteenth century had in common with a Churchillian England—“stoical, homely, quiet, disciplined, self-denying, kindly, honourable and dignified”—a burgeoning empire that gave definite form and style to modern English identity and to the novel alike. Since the publication of Orwell’s book, England has not been able to take for granted such a makeup; the second half of the twentieth century was a period in which the British empire, the United Kingdom, Great Britain, and English identity itself appeared at times to be falling into diminished and disoriented forms. A quarter-century before Orwell and the movement toward large-scale decolonization, in his 1920 “Notes on the English Character” E. M. Forster was already worrying that “the shrinkage of the globe” in the twentieth century as a result of increasing political and technical interconnection revealed that “the English character is incomplete.” Forster’s perception of incompleteness represents a striking contrast to the connotations of the stone elephant prostrate at Prince Albert’s feet, which serves as a reminder of an age in which the empire was once understood as a frame for, and an extension of, the solidity, integrity, and character of England itself.

This contrast between convictions of solidity and holism, on one hand, and perceptions of incompletion and fragmentariness, on the other, is crucial to the story of the novel’s evolution alongside English exhibitionary cultures. Discourses of imperial holism played an important role both in
The configurations of the zoological imagination and in modernism’s dis-
countenancing and reorientation of literary form, with which Eagleton and
Kenner associate the decline of England’s preeminence in letters. Between
Victoria’s accession to the throne and the end of George V’s reign, percep-
tions of England’s centrality in a total global field (“Our Empire [which] in
itself is a whole world”) gradually and fitfully gave way to views that such
a whole itself was a political and cultural impossibility in both exhibition-
ary and literary registers. This historical trajectory follows an arc similar
to that of conceptions of the English novel across these centuries: where
Henry James asserted in 1888 that “it would take much more courage than
I possess to intimate that the form of the novel as Dickens and Thackeray
(for instance) saw it had any taint of incompleteness,” Virginia Woolf later
faulted her predecessors for fostering “so strange a feeling of incompleteness
and dissatisfaction” in their novels.

Cool Britannia and the Economy
of the Imperial Household

“Completeness,” whether in geopolitical or aesthetic arenas, implies bound-
edness, a sense of limits and expectations fully met. Writing about these
fields renders the ideas of wholeness, comprehensiveness, and integrity in
economic terms, and the promise of national and imperial integration rises
into view in nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives always under the
threat of insufficiency or excess. The tension between totality and incom-
pleteness or superfluity marks the cultural transactions of the novel and the
menagerie in fundamental ways as they engage the relation of Englishness
to empire. While the “exhibitionary complex” in England sought to exercise
and bolster “the power to command and arrange things and bodies for
public display,” this disciplinary order was always vulnerable to the strange
savageness of the exotic animal. The menagerie, as its derivation from the
Middle French term for the administration of a home or farm suggests, is
a site of management and of ordering the otherwise unruly economy of the
imperial household (including alien bodies, practices, and stories), and the
novel’s forms of narration across the nineteenth century also became modes
of managing imperial attitudes and energies. Not only in its purportedly
savage and strange rhetorical place but also in its corporeal agency (animals
were sometimes spectacularly violent in breaching the fourth wall of the
display), the exhibited beast appeared to embody excess and to threaten the
power to command and to arrange. Likewise, the English novel as a kind of zoological cabinet sought to arrange, present, and manage domestic and imperial narratives—though, crucially, however much it labored, it never quite contained the cultural energies it strove to bring within its compass.

In exhibitions, narratives, and analyses of the empire as a whole since the nineteenth century, a complex calculus of excess and restraint has frequently accompanied appraisals of the English character. In this period a prevailing sense emerges that early modern England was a culture beset by excess and brutality, a conviction eloquently expressed by Orwell, while Englishness in high modernity is characterized by coolness and reserve, the central position of Forster. For the latter writer, the English character can be described in terms that are explicitly economistic: whereas “the Oriental has behind him a tradition . . . of kingly munificence and splendour” and “feels his resources are endless,” Forster observes that “John Bull feels his are finite” and indulges a fiscal and emotional restraint associated with “middle-class prudence.”

In defining Englishness in terms of frugality and over against the “Oriental,” Forster’s account is typical of modern discourses of Englishness that emerge from nineteenth-century encounters with empire.

The contrasting tropical poles of English coolness and oriental warmth, of Western humanity and civility and Eastern savagery and bestiality, and of European restraint and African or Asian license define the rhetorical field for treatises, exhibitions, and novels about Englishness and empire. As in Forster’s essay, the most consequential distinction in this field opposes excess to restraint. Sometimes this opposition defining Englishness appears historical, ancient national tendencies serving as a foil to the English character in modernity: while the eighteenth-century English public gave free rein to spectacular displays of licentiousness in Orwell’s reading, the modern English appear reserved and restrained. At other times, Englishness rises into view against the backdrop of images of imperial exoticism: in Forster’s essay modern English parsimony opposes Asiatic “munificence” and extravagant expenditure. As in these English novelists’ notes on the national character, so also in spectacles and dramatizations of empire English reserve emerges as a dominant trope concomitantly with the projection of excess onto the alien, whether in the guise of the premodern past or the contemporary exotic. This tropical landscape of imperial excess and English prudence functions as the setting for the complex cultural transactions among domestic narrative and imperial imagination, the novel and the menagerie.

The disappearance of the overt markers of English excess such as bullbaiting from public life in the twentieth century leads Orwell to wonder,
“Where are [the brutish English] gone?” John Lockwood Kipling entertained the notion that “brutal Britons” might have gone to India to teach animal cruelty, as drunkenness, to Indians. But English popular excesses did not sail altogether for the colonies with imperial administrators and transported criminals. Rather, in the nineteenth century the bullbaiting English, along with their profligate behavior and their national literature, went to see the imperial menagerie in all its forms. As they bound themselves imaginatively to ideas of the empire as a whole, a domestic English public (including the Royal Family) indulged a passion for the zoo, the circus, the traveling exhibition, the London pantomime, the lavishly illustrated volume commemorating imperial assemblages, and the cinema boasting films of oriental spectacles. Exhibitionary engagements with the empire in the nineteenth century sought to regulate domestic English excesses in part by staging them in the imaginative arenas of the oriental and the imperial: they rendered excess spectacular in such a way that it could be disavowed as the province of the other. Likewise, literary realism as it was codified toward the end of the nineteenth century sought to order its material so as to contain unseemly emotion and to render the social whole in appropriate perspective. But such excesses remained domestic affairs—the novel and the menagerie are in the final instance English displays—and returned to haunt the symbolic registers of modernism. The inscription of violence in the writing of D. H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, and James Joyce might, for instance, be read as responses to the failure of an imperial Englishness to articulate itself satisfactorily as an integrated and settled totality.

Victorian discourses of realism and of imperial totality were often rendered (though, as we shall see, they did not always function) as symbolic economies in which meanings, energies, and materials were arranged under principles of conservation. This conception is visible in Seeley’s assertion that the empire would not “infect us at home with Oriental notions or . . . [cost] us money or [hamper] our finances. It is self-supporting, and is held at arm’s length in such a way that our destiny is not very closely entangled with its own.” The systemic form of the principle of conservation is the capitalism that matured simultaneously with imperial expansion and with the consolidation of principles of literary realism. Toward the end of the Victorian period, convictions of the English empire as an integrated whole, established and maintained by practices of careful conservation and management, yielded to an emerging suspicion that insufficiency, excess, and incalculability serve as the dominant imaginative principles for Englishness in its relations with empire. By George V’s reign, modernist narrative and
prevailing discourses of imperial totality tended to assemble around figures of what Fredric Jameson calls a “generalized loss of meaning” that resulted in part from the increasingly untotalizable horizon of empire. In other words, excess, rupture, and incongruity became prominent in the style and form of the modernist novel in England in an implicit acknowledgment of the increasing difficulty of conceiving domestic English experience in relation to a total world empire, especially one threatened with the open revolt of India and Ireland. After the dissolution of the empire, the signs of discontinuity and imperial crisis encoded in modernist forms find a rich afterlife in the overt thematics of postcolonial writing by Carter, Rushdie, and Barnes. In the postimperial novel, the legacy of modernist practices is visible in the refusal or failure of the exhibitionary impulse to order, as technologies of display are subordinated to the overflowing and unmanageable forces of postmodern irrationality. Bill Ashcroft finds such overflow a characteristic of writing after empire, proposing that “excess is usually present in postcolonial writing,” even that “the post-colonial place is itself ‘excess.’”

For Ashcroft, the central figure for theorizing postcolonial excess is Georges Bataille, who distinguishes “restricted” from “general economy,” emphasizing a fundamental difference between prevailing philosophical emphases upon restraint and excess. Bataille’s concept of “general economy” appears as a notion of an untotalizable whole, one in which the permanent, formal closure of a Hegelian or Marxian (“classical”) totality is impossible. In his conception, the notion of totality in any register—political, commercial, symbolic, or libidinal—always appears an economic configuration. Bataille distinguishes a conventional idea of restricted economy, in which material, energies, and forms are conserved within closed systems, from his own conception of the whole of social and cultural life as a complex structure governed by dynamics of loss, dissipation, excess, and the dissolution and reinscription of limits. He describes the former as a “restricted economy” and the latter as a “general economy.” General economy as (anti-)totality is characterized by an excess that ensures that the totality appears whole only insofar as it is characterized by a constant loss of its wealth and profusion of energies, a loss that implies a continual dissolution of the limits that define it as a whole:

When one considers the totality of productive wealth on the surface of the globe, it is evident that the products of this wealth can be employed for productive ends only insofar as the living organism that is economic mankind can increase its equipment. This is not entirely—neither always
This process of “dissipation” performs a kind of alchemy, in which wealth is figured in a range of symbolic registers that define broadly a society’s cultural formations.

Bataille’s “general economy” neatly captures the modern—as opposed to mid-Victorian—sense of the empire as untotalizable: throughout the nineteenth century, empire itself promised a productive and prodigious “increase in equipment” for Englishness, but when it began to run up against its political, economic, and cultural limits, “deficit operations”—imperial wars in South Africa and Europe, for instance—and discourses of dissipation, decadence, and decline tended to dominate. Even at the height of convictions that the empire did or could function as a smoothly integrated whole, extravagance in the form of zoological “spoils of empire”—hunting trophies, ivory, and menageries that teemed with imported specimens, for instance—marked the surpluses generated by imperialist activity. Like totality itself and the lines separating spectator from spectacle, England from empire, excess and restraint are largely dependent upon perception of limits and their observation or transgression. Hence the distinction between restricted and general economies is primarily an attitudinal one. And it is just such a shift in perceptions of and attitudes toward the imperial totality that describes the trajectory of English writing—in the novel and about the menagerie—from the Victorian to the modern period.

To the extent that each of the interrelated stories that preoccupy these pages—about the movement from restricted to general economy, about shifts in the perception of empire from totality to dissolution, and about the novel’s affinities to the menagerie—turns upon the moment of aesthetic modernism, these accounts should be understood as complementing other narratives that describe the emergence and afterlives of modernism in England in relation to colonialism itself or to a material history bound up with the processes of imperialism. Because the chapters to follow consider the novel as an exhibitionary instrument whose representational practices are entangled with the “zoo stories” of the imperial menagerie and its “exotic captives,” they are in dialogue both with studies of animals and their iconography and with recent exhibition studies. In concentrating on the interchange and complexly mediated flows between the novel and the menagerie, however, this project necessarily forgoes a comprehensive account of modernism’s rise and of the novel’s philosophical engagement.
with totality in the early twentieth century. It does not attempt a comprehensive history of imperial displays and international exhibitions and zoos, either, since a number of recent studies have ably and eloquently described these institutions. This book chiefly aims to trace previously unmapped lines of filiation between the novel and the menagerie, in narrative registers both high and low, and invites a rethinking of the aesthetic notion of totality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as informed by the politics of empire in general, and the zoological imagination in particular.

The novel’s relations with the imperial menagerie are marked by flexibility and contingency, and however consistent and resilient certain of their practices seem to be, neither the English novel nor the English menagerie can be explained exclusively by reference to a totalizing imperial imagination. Against arguments that aesthetic modernism is an “immediate consequence” of or response to the imperial world system, I maintain that though they are certainly consequences of the imperial world system, modern forms of the novel respond in highly mediated ways to representations of this system. The traffic and display of exotic animals constitute just one significant line of mediation, and as a domestic English institution the menagerie itself is bound to empire in no simple way—its forms of representation are dependent upon communication and transport technologies and upon class-based ideologies, for instance. E. M. Forster maintained a healthy skepticism about fiction’s debts to historical imperialism, denying the power of the empire to determine the forms of fiction. “A mirror does not develop because an historical pageant passes in front of it,” he wrote in 1927. “Empires fall . . . but to those people writing . . . it is the feel of the pen that matters most.” While it is surely the case that Queen Elizabeth’s Royal progress and her Golden Jubilee more generally were unlikely to “develop” the novel in England, it is entirely appropriate to expect that the novel, a reflective narrative form, engaged more or less directly the cultural dynamics governing the Queen’s sensational encounter with the steel elephant in Newham. Indeed, it may be that the selection of Life of Pi as the “People’s Booker” in 2002 acknowledges that the novel taps the same narrative veins as the Jubilee festivities: the strange encounter of an Indian boy and a tiger in transit along the edges of the Commonwealth in important ways constitutes the mirror image of the Queen’s convergence upon the elephant at the heart of the old empire. Forster acknowledged that “If human nature does alter [the novel] it will be because individuals manage to look at themselves in a new way.” Over the past two centuries the imperial menagerie has offered one such evolving way in which English subjects “managed to look at themselves” in relation
to empire, and not only the ephemeral moments at the Jubilee but also the enduring traditions of the novel in England bear the mark of these reflections and refractions, these ways of seeing Englishness and empire.

The Playbill

The mature discourse of the novel and common narratives of the exhibition depend upon a stock of characters and spaces that sometimes overlap: showmen, performers, and exotic animals, on one hand, and the circus ring, the parade, and the scene of exhibition, on the other, constitute the materials out of which both are fashioned to differing extents. Yet the cultural transactions among the novel and the menagerie are fluid and complex and do not yield a descriptive model through which the menagerie could be understood to inform the novel, or the novel the menagerie, without a high degree of mediation. The development of the novel and the rise of the modern circus, menagerie, and zoo accompanied a series of other significant historical developments in the early part of the nineteenth century: the advent of modern orientalism, the shift away from an older mercantilist colonialism and toward a state-centered free-trade imperialism, Hegel’s articulation of the possibility of a total History in the Phenomenology, the Romantic insistence upon formal and philosophical holism, and the advent of technologies of mass exhibition (the diorama, moving panorama, cyclorama, and scale model, for example). All took place at roughly the same historical moment at the beginning of the nineteenth century and yet there is no invariable, determinate relation among all of these phenomena. They are, however, assimilable—however complexly—under the structural dominant of imperialism, which in England requires thinking imperial totality and imperial difference simultaneously.81

The idea of the British empire as a whole, which England both formed a part of and was held apart from, performs the essential work of mediating the formal narrative concerns of the novel and the menagerie. These genres represent homologous forms of cultural production and representation that respond to the common cultural experience of an empire growing rapidly as an expansion of the English nation, Seeley’s “English Empire.” An undeniable factor in English sociocultural life, the burgeoning empire nevertheless exceeded the bounds of the readily known: in 1924 G. K. Chesterton looked on the empire with awe, concluding that “It seems to me that man has made things almost too great for his own imagination to measure.”82 Technologies,
practices, and narratives of exhibition constitute imaginative responses to this difficulty, and though the form of the empire was frequently taken for granted, these exhibitionary approaches to the imperial whole were largely responsible for rendering it material—if still very much imaginary—for an English domestic audience.

The key constitutive factor for both the novel and the menagerie, and the one governing the narrative relations between the two, is the discursive presence of empire—not only as an imposing if sometimes oblique situation or theme in their narratives but also as a formal injunction to totalize. The discourse of totality, along with the rhetorical and aesthetic principles that rely upon it, informs English narratives and exhibitions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and defines the complex imaginative transactions among them. Conceived as a comprehensive whole, England’s empire provides the novel and the menagerie with a shared sociopolitical backdrop for their stories, whether domestic or colonial: a setting, in the broadest sense. Even more, the formal relation to the empire as a totality defines the novel and the menagerie as homologous forms. The novel and the circus, zoo, and exhibition aspire to describe English experience in relation to an empire understood as a whole; or perhaps better to say, they *fashion* Englishness in relation to the empire as a whole—that is, they work actively to forge from their imaginative stock, especially exotic fauna, a distinctive unity for England and its scattered imperial holdings.

Novelists and menagerists alike took as their more or less explicit aims the presentation of a national culture, one that was never confined to its narrowly defined political borders but stretched to encompass first the British Isles and then a global empire. The menagerie rendered Englishness and empire through a popular rhetorical program spanning a range of strategies from allegory to naturalism: it arranged, presented, and told stories about the exotic animals in its collections in order to furnish the widest array of spectacles, to attract the broadest audience, and to draw the most comprehensive view of alien natural and cultural landscapes. The English novel responded to a parallel imperative: as a line of critics and novelists stretching from Henry James to Amit Chaudhuri contends, the chief charge of the novel is to totalize, to render life itself as a comprehensive whole—typically from the vantage of the novel’s native soil, England. The menagerie’s deliberate and public strategies of totalizing England’s relation to empire provide both a substantive map and a popular vehicle to guide the novel’s work of totalization, especially visible in those signal moments in which the novel introduces exotic beasts. In such episodes the relationship
that the novel establishes with the menagerie depends less upon metaphor, in which the novel appears in the borrowed trappings of spectacle or exhibition, and more upon metonymy or synecdoche: both the novel and the menagerie are parts related to the imperial totality, and key components of an imperial exhibitionary culture vested with the responsibility to relate its stories.

There are, of course, important attitudinal differences between the novel and the menagerie, and even among forms of the menagerie. Collections of exotic beasts and people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries chiefly indulged English curiosity about empire from the direction of novelty and spectacle, and they foregrounded the exotic, the extravagant, and the extraordinary in their displays and narratives. On the other hand, and especially in its domestic guise, the novel took as its starting point a presumption of verisimilitude, engaging English curiosity through a set of strategies that orient themselves in relation to a rhetoric that asserts the fundamental truthfulness of its narratives. Yet discourses of the menagerie also regularly asserted zoological collections’ fidelity to the real, while the novel offered glimpses of the spectacular. The attitudinal differences between the novel and the menagerie begin to dissolve over the ground upon which they both work, the empire as a dominant whole that encompasses and informs Englishness. The notion of an imperial totality furnishes a central framework—though not the only one—for understanding the novel’s cultural work and aesthetic form, and one that the history and the aesthetics of the menagerie begin to open to us.

Chapter 1 begins to explore this framework by turning to a discussion of the notion of totality as a central concern in popular conceptions of empire, the menagerie, and their aesthetic presentations. The chapter treats the menagerie as a site for the management and arrangement of narratives of the empire as a whole, a rich field governed by a pair of antithetical aesthetic impulses, toward the picturesque, on one hand, and the carnivalesque, on the other. The picturesque serves a narrative function both in the novel and the menagerie, and a cultural function in English national discourses, of delineating empire as a particular kind of whole; exotic animals in general, and the elephant in particular, serve as keynote figures for the imagination and narration of imperial totality. In the cases of both the menagerie and the novel, a series of aesthetic strategies (particularly in the domain of the visual) serve to articulate and manage conceptions of imperial totality, and militate against a countervailing tendency in imperial representation toward what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White term simply “transgression,” and which the menagerie served in the mode of the carnivalesque.
The second chapter turns toward a series of mid-Victorian novels that engage imperial exhibitions, either in their subject matter as in the case of Gaskell's *Cranford*, or in their mode of presentation, as in the showmanship framing Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). The chapter concentrates on the stories of the Victorian circus in an extended reading of Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) that explores the implications for a rapidly maturing realism of the novel's strategy of excluding non-English acts and beasts from its portrait of the circus. Chapter 3 investigates the maturation of realism and its encounter of limits: by contrast with Dickens's highly selective rendition of the circus, Arnold Bennett embraced the carnivalesque aspects of traveling exhibitions, too; yet the menagerie exposes the limitations of his totalizing realism. Bennett has long been understood as a novelist who documents the intimate textures of provincial life, but the provincial focus of much of Bennett's writing is crucially marked by material cultures of empire. Bennett's best-known novel, *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), demonstrates the way in which the traveling menagerie of the 1860s disrupts the fixities of provincial life, and the narrative holds an elephant accountable for the death of mid-Victorian England.

Virginia Woolf announced her allegiance to a modernist emphasis on aesthetic innovation by repudiating the fiction of Bennett, particularly *The Old Wives' Tale*, and where chapter 3 argues that imperial culture intrudes violently upon the provincial English life narrated by Bennett, chapter 4 considers the ways in which Woolf encodes such intrusions as images of detotalization, in figures such as the decaying elephant or the circles that expand and dissolve throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The rich emblem of the elephant across Woolf's fiction, particularly in *The Waves* (1931) and *The Years* (1937), furnishes an index of the extent to which Woolf's own narrative stylistics are predicated upon a loss that is intimately bound up with the question of imperial disorientation, alienation, and dissolution. At its center, this chapter treats Woolf's essay on the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, “Thunder at Wembley,” in relation to her modernist manifestos “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” and “Character in Fiction,” in which she challenges Edwardian notions of realism in both exhibitionary and novelistic practice.

In the wake of the modernism that Woolf's essays announce and her novels exemplify, and after the movements toward decolonization that her writing anticipates, the exhibitionary cultures of empire and the narrative practices they entail would seem obsolete. After all, traveling menageries are all but extinct, circuses have begun to divest themselves of animals, and
zoological gardens find themselves fundamentally rethinking their purpose and practices. Chapter 5 suggests, however, that the novel in English continues to engage with the traditional rhetorics of exhibition, whether in the magical realism of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), in the feminism of Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* (1984), or in the poststructuralism underpinning Julian Barnes’s ambivalent “condition of England” novel, *England, England* (1999). The celebrated arrival of the “postcolonial moment” does not obviate exhibitionary modes or the rhetoric of the imperial menagerie. Englishness and its “Anglepoised” counterparts still find themselves articulated in relation to notions of (post)imperial totality, if not through nostalgia for a lost empire, then through anxieties about the impact on England of new chapters in the history of globalization.
The foregoing chapters have argued that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the novel and the menagerie appear homologous cultural forms, collections of materials bound to a notion of empire through their efforts to imagine geopolitical totality. What is more, the collection of zoological exotica over these centuries constitutes a significant line of mediation between the evolving form of the domestic English novel and the shifting configurations of empire in the English imagination. These two key English cultural formations—the novel and the menagerie—have accommodated themselves to one another through their shared capacities to exhibit, reflect, and model imperial totality. At the center of this rich relationship, both the novel and the menagerie have traditionally depended upon the wild beast’s authenticity, its strong association with localities exotic to England, and its assimilability to national-imperial frameworks. At the opening of the twenty-first century, however, the menagerie’s underpinnings appear more contingent than at any point in the past two hundred years. Imagining the collection as fundamentally inauthentic, as Julian Barnes does in the body of writing discussed in the last chapter, profoundly changes the relation of the novel and the menagerie, while the increasing globalization of the zoological collection disembeds fauna and environment from traditional imperial frameworks and locales.

In the new century the zoo remains a powerful vestige of the most recognizable and influential forms of the totalizing exhibition of wild beasts, far more robust than the circus or taxonomic display. Yet the zoo’s dependence on live zoological exhibits, its capacity to evoke exotic locality, and its tendency to express geopolitical authority have all diminished in recent decades. In England, indeed, the logic of the menagerie seemed to be turned inside out in August 2005, when the London Zoo displayed a collection
of eight white Britons in the Bear Mountain exhibit (fig. 24). Though just two months earlier there had been widespread outcry against the Augsburg Zoo’s prominent display of black Africans in its African Village exhibit for its echoes of nineteenth-century colonialist ethnographic displays, the naïve claims made for the English exhibit—that it constituted “the world’s first ‘human zoo’”—similarly overlooked the colonial histories of the zoological exhibition. When, for instance, a Nigerian spectator looked upon the British subjects in the zoo and complained, “They’re not doing much, are they?” it significantly reversed the old imperial strategies in which the exotic is framed as a whole and spectacularized for a domestic audience. In 2005 the London Zoo’s totalizing efforts—to complete its collection by adding the last specimen, the white Briton—rendered Englishness itself a kind of primitive spectacle. It would seem that Johnnie Bull no longer runs Britannia’s global menagerie, as he does in the nineteenth-century music-hall standard; rather, he appears on show to the world as a curiosity in his own right.

The zoo’s composition has undergone other sweeping changes. Most notably, zoos have moved away from the authentic animal as guarantor of their spectacles. They have, for instance, substituted artificial animals for live specimens; divested themselves of keynote animals, including elephants; exhibited fantastic, artificial megafauna such as animatronic dinosaurs; and foregrounded theme-park environments at the expense of the animals themselves.
On one hand, these environments are often simulacral, offering up misleading or confused conjunctions of past landscapes—Disney’s Maharajah Jungle Trek® in its Animal Kingdom, for instance, appears nostalgic for both Asian and South African sites of British imperialism. On the other hand, the menagerie’s exotic stock has increasingly drifted from its exclusive association with “native” localities: crocodiles now inhabit the marshes of East London, wallabies plague England’s motorways, and estates of England’s landed nobility have become “safari parks” that house giraffes, zebras, rhinos, and monkeys. Further afield, herds of elephants wander the hills of Tennessee, and a series of evolutionary biologists have gone so far as to suggest the large-scale relocation of African megafauna to North America to “restore” large vertebrates comparable to those that vanished thirteen thousand years ago. In a few years, if zoos retain their commitment to the display of live animals, it might well prove difficult to distinguish “exotic” from “native” species in anything except a historical sense.

Indeed, the exotic animal no longer seems the primary means by which to foster imaginative travel to the world’s far-flung reaches. Instead, this function is increasingly borne by simulated environments in the zoo’s spaces. In general, the zoo has in recent years separated exhibition from its totalizing ambitions, isolating zoological totality as that which must be conserved on one hand, and turning exhibitionary technologies and frames—rather than the exotic beast—into the primary objects of display. At one end of things is the Frozen Ark project, a collaboration among the London Zoo, the London Museum of Natural History, and the University of Nottingham, and others, which freezes samples of endangered animals in order to establish a comprehensive DNA collection for the long-term preservation of species, and simultaneously maintains a database of these specimens as well as “a global list of animals needing to be sampled.” The Frozen Ark represents the epitome of the menagerie’s emphasis on totality as conservation, striving after a complete zoological catalogue but removing specimens altogether from the scene of display. On the other hand, Microsoft’s Zoo Tycoon 2® (2004), a game in which players build zoo exhibits and maintain virtual animals, represents the extreme version of menagerie as exhibition. “Zoo Guest Mode” and “Photo Safari Mode” permit forms of spectatorship that bypass the authenticity of the animal or locale, and instead the simulacrum—and the technologies through which it is constructed—is exhibited as the primary exotic novelty. A “Dinosaur Digs” expansion pack permits players to house dinosaurs and Ice Age animals in their zoos as well, echoing zoos’ own turn toward the display of mechanical, extinct beasts.
these divergences from the traditional roles of the zoo, totalizing geopolitical associations still attach themselves to exhibitions of animals, but primarily in nostalgic, historical senses. The Combe Martin Wildlife and Dinosaur Park in southwest England expresses a longing for lost worlds in its emphasis upon extinct megafauna, while the West Midlands Safari Park’s promise to patrons that they can “track down the African Big Five in the UK” suggests African megafauna as similarly lost from their native continent—and might also harbor a longing for an imperial Africa lost in the previous century. For the zoo, zoological totality has become a relic or vestige of the past to be conserved in databases and “frozen arks” away from the world’s view, while the scene of exhibition is increasingly dominated by the simulacra of exoticism rather than by the beast itself.

Andrea Levy’s novel Small Island (2004) might be understood to represent a kind of analogue to these inversions and revisions effected in the English menagerie. Levy’s narrative contemplates the reconfiguration of the empire during and after the Second World War, particularly the influx of black colonial subjects. Her prefatory section, set in the African pavilions at the Wembley Empire Exhibition of 1924, exposes the simulacrual origin of English notions that a multiracial Britain emerged only with postwar immigration from the colonies some two decades later. The exhibition reveals both imperial savagery and English civilization to be factitious. The scene at Wembley also highlights the discrepancies that dominate the novel: between imperial ideals and English parochialism, between English global ambitions and local inabilitys to manage domestic affairs, and ultimately between black Britain’s new expansiveness and England’s “smallness” in the midst of its empire’s postwar homecoming. As it seeks to rewrite the history of postwar black Britishness, the novel simultaneously looks backward to a moment prior to the landmark immigration wave of the late 1940s and 1950s, and longs for a new integrity, both in its content and in its form. Levy’s two “small” islands of Jamaica and Great Britain, no less than Julian Barnes’s England, England and Anglia in England, England, represent cultural wholes adrift in a postimperial world, and the novel poses as a kind of totalizing exhibition in its own right—the novel’s title might be understood to allude to the novel itself, suggesting the strategies of miniaturization that were hallmarks of the Empire Exhibition and reversing the gaze of Wembley and the zoological collection by miniaturizing England, rather than its empire. At the very least, Small Island—as a characterization of the novel itself and as a description of postwar England—like recent zoological collections suggests totality as the object rather than objective of display.
In the instances of Barnes and Levy, the totalizing form of the collection—whether Barnes's display of English creatures or Levy's constricted island as a counter-exhibition to Wembley—attaches to the notion of geopolitical survival rather than expansion. That is, Barnes and Levy—like Jeanette Winterson's revision of Noah's story in *Boating for Beginners* (1985)—offer up ark stories about reimagining the contemporary cultural situation as a new kind of whole, rather than conventional zoo stories about the extensive-ness and integrity of an expanding empire. These stories are certainly about the varieties of English creatures and their strategies for survival—whether Barnes's postimperial Anglians at the end of the century or Levy’s black Britons disembarking from ships like the *Empire Windrush* in 1948. Yet I wish to suggest by way of conclusion that we might understand this ark to be as much like the biblical Ark of the Covenant—the essential totalizing form that harbors narrative authority as its kernel—as it is like Noah's ark or the *Windrush*, the totality built up from the representative, synecdochic materials it incorporates (“two of every kind” of animal or colonial subject). The totalizing form of the contemporary zoo has floated free of the authenticity of exotic beast, of the animal's association with localizable elsewheres, and the collection's amenability to current national-imperial frameworks. So, too, narrative as ark or zoo has been weaned from its dependence upon the typicality of its materials and its English frames of reference, as Winter-son's novel, which incorporates deliberate anachronisms and allusions from across the Anglophone world, illustrates. In place of the collection's authentic specimens that gesture toward imperial referents, the ark as totalizing form might be understood to drive contemporary narrative independent of its content. The novel displays itself as a curiosity of totality, rather than as a totalizing instrument, and empire at best exerts a spectral power in these narratives, like the dusty contents of the Ark of the Covenant smuggled from Africa in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). Despite the film's evocation of Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling’s visions of empire, the famous closing scene of that film in which the ark is crated and warehoused makes a case that in form—from ark, to crate, and ultimately to warehouse, in a sublime *mise-en-abîme*—the new law is inscribed, rather than in its dusty contents or desert homelands.

The focus of this book has been totality as a powerful regulative principle for the menagerie, for the novel, and for the empire in Britain over the past two hundred years. The conclusions of these final pages both represent the logical culmination of the idea of totality as imparting essential form and mark a historic divorce of the alliances among these terms. While the novel
and the zoo remain homologous responses to a contemporary geopolitical situation, the menagerie has steadily drifted from its emphasis upon geopolitical specificity and its strategies of affiliation to the real, and the novel no longer takes as its aim the contemplation of empire from the vantage of the domestic English subject. Though the exotic beast is disappearing from the zoological collection and the imperial whole that underpinned the novel over the past two centuries has dissipated, nevertheless totalizing form itself—that of the zoological park or garden, and that of the novel—appears to have become the exotic animal. “We are by no means finished with totalities,” wrote Arkady Plotnitsky in the last decade of the twentieth century. “They are powerful beasts . . . and we can never quite escape them.”

Like-wise, though the past century stripped the British empire of pretensions to global totality, and even of the fiction that the empire could be understood as an integrated whole, in the opening decade of a new century we are hardly finished with the idioms of totality entailed upon us by the discourses of imperial totality and its cultural affiliates—at least, we have yet to learn to do without the imaginative work enabled by the zoological display and by the novel. Indeed, well beyond the limits of the empire, we can observe that the exotic animal is no longer captured and managed by the Western subject as an exercise in empire-modeling. Rather, the “powerful beast”—the totality itself—claims postimperial English subjects as its own and, like the human zoo in Regent’s Park, offers them up for forms of exhibition and narration yet to come.
Notes

Preface

3. Friedman, Mappings, 109.

Introduction

1. Davies, “East End.”
4. In his 1920 essay “Notes on the English Character,” E. M. Forster holds responsible the English middle classes—characterized by “solidity, caution, integrity, [and] efficiency” (3) as well as by coldness and emotional restraint (7)—for both “the rise and organization of the British Empire” and “the literature of the nineteenth century” (3).
8. Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest, 3.
10. As a definition of “exhibit” (5), the Oxford English Dictionary offers “A showing, producing in evidence, display,” while the word’s etymology suggests a “holding out” or showing forth. To narrate, by contrast, is “to give an account of” (1a). In popular cultural practices, however, the distinction between display and storytelling is hardly observed: exhibitions of exotica almost always furnish accounts of distant reaches of the empire, while accounts of England’s elsewheres often narrate stories precisely as a showing forth or “producing in evidence” local details of, say, Indian daily life.
18. “Traveling culture” is James Clifford’s phrase to describe the ways in which culture “comes to resemble as much a site of travel encounters as of residence” (*Routes*, 25).
20. West, *Harriet Hume*, 125. While West’s vision has no historical basis, Cook’s did open a branch office devoted to the transport of Indian princes, sacred bulls, Bengal tigers, and elephants to Britain (Swinglehurst, *Cook’s Tours*, 82).
24. At times these miscellanies drew explicitly on the institutions of the menagerie, as for instance in *Jumbo’s Picture Book of Natural History* (1883) or Camden’s *Travelling Menagerie* (1873). The text of the former is mostly descriptive, while that of the latter is shaped as narrative.
29. On the history of the elephant’s figurations, see Scigliano, *Love, War, and Circuses*.
33. Ibid., 13.
36. Terry Eagleton attributes the decline in “indigenous English writing” to an “inability . . . to ‘totalise’ the significant movements of its own culture” (Exiles and
Émigrés, 15). Cf., however, Joshua D. Esty’s argument in “Amnesia in the Fields” that Eliot, Woolf, and Forster were able to do just this via the pageant play.

38. Showalter, “Coming to Blows.”
41. J. C., “NB.”
42. Wood, “Credulity.”
43. Martel, *Life of Pi*, 47.
44. Ibid., 18.
45. Wood, “Credulity.”
47. “The British Empire: Imperial Amnesia.”
49. Owen, “Where We Went Right.” Owen registers a strong dissent from the “declinist” point of view he summarizes.
51. See, for instance, Rushdie, “The New Empire within Britain.” In *Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi decRIES the lingering imperialist obsessions in Britain in exploring the experiences of his mixed-race protagonist: one character notes that “Everyone looks at [him], I’m sure, and thinks: an Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we’ll hear now from him. And [he’s] from Orpington” (141).
53. Ibid., 9.
54. The only lion associated with the memorial was removed from William Theed’s design for Africa in the conceptual stage and replaced by the camel (Bayley, *Albert Memorial*, 106).
59. Ibid., 12.
63. Lidell, “My Zigzag British Empire Tour.”
64. James, “Art of Fiction,” 3.
70. In “Surgery for the Novel,” Lawrence wondered what would happen if “a bomb were put under the whole scheme of things,” and desired “some convulsion or
cataclysm” to wrench the novel from its contemporary forms (116, 115). Wyndham Lewis’s Blast 1 (1914) hoped to be just such a bomb, while Virginia Woolf identified Joyce’s Ulysses with an attempt “to outrage [and] to destroy the very foundations and rules of literary society” (“Character in Fiction,” 3:3).

72. For a discussion of imperial discourses of surplus and empire, see Bivona, Desire and Contradiction, 113–27. For an outline of the theory of “the ethnological unity of the whole” empire, see Seeley, Expansion of England, 47–50.
74. Ashcroft, “Excess,” 34, 42.
75. Bataille, Accursed Share, 22, emphasis in original.
76. See, for instance, Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism”; Crawford, Devolving English Literature; North, Dialect of Modernism; Torgovnick, Gone Primitive; and a number of essays in Booth and Rigby, Modernism and Empire.
77. “Zoo stories” is Randy Malamud’s label for “a wide range of cultural descriptions (and often reactions against) [zoos’] existence” (Reading Zoos, 12). Harriet Ritvo calls the animals in Victorian menageries “exotic captives” (Animal Estate, 205).
79. E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 34.
80. Ibid., 220.

Chapter One

2. Ibid., 63–64.
3. Sketchley, Mrs. Brown and King Cetewayo, 89. For a comprehensive bibliography of the Mrs. Brown books, see Topp, Victorian Yellowbacks and Paperbacks.
4. Stallybrass and White, Politics and Poetics of Transgression, 39, 41.
19. Ibid., 222.
20. Ibid., 229.
22. Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman*, 201.
23. “Wombwell’s Menagerie at Windsor Castle.”
27. See, for instance, Val C. Prinsep’s characterization of it as “a gigantic circus” in *Imperial India*, 29. *Punch* concluded that the lavish dress and elephants’ elaborate trappings belonged in a Christmas pantomime (“Manager Beaconsfield’s Transformation Scene,” 12).
32. Henry I established a Royal Menagerie at Woodstock to house his lions, leopards, and camels—“animals which England does not produce,” as William of Malmesbury described them—but it did not endure even so long as to form the core of his grandson Henry III’s collections. See Edward Bennett, *Tower Menagerie*, xiii, and Hahn, *Tower Menagerie*, 13.
39. Letters to Edward Cross (undated; 29 July 1833; and 7 June 1833), British Library Surrey Zoological Garden Collection (Th.Cts.51), Vol. 1.
42. Disher, *Greatest Show on Earth*, 276–77. Sanger bought Astley’s Amphitheatre at Westminster Bridge in 1871 and managed it simultaneously with his other traveling shows until 1893 (*Seventy Years a Showman*, 197, 230).
43. The Tower Menagerie reflected interests of the state, while the Exeter ‘Change Menagerie was a commercial enterprise. Yet animal keepers moved easily
between the Exeter ‘Change Menagerie and the Tower Menagerie, and though the Tower Menagerie was a Royal institution, nevertheless Edward Cross termed his Exeter ‘Change collection “The Royal Menagerie.”

44. Quoted in Picturesque Guide, 42.
45. Ritvo, Animal Estate, 211.
47. Ritvo, Animal Estate, 213.
48. Quoted in Picturesque Guide, 42. The phrase “the mere exhibition of animals” does not appear in the prospectus itself but is the Guide’s gloss of the prospectus.
50. Prospectus quoted in ibid., 42.
51. Ibid.
52. Catalogue of the Animals, 1.
58. Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier, Zoo, 73.
60. Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier, Zoo, 80.
61. Bostock, Menageries, Circuses and Theatres, 149.
62. See, e.g., Middlemiss, Zoo on Wheels.
63. Scotsman, 10 April 1872, quoted in Bostock, Menageries, Circuses and Theatres, 7.
64. Steedman, African Glen, 4, 7–8, 11.
65. Illustrated Description, 3; see also Grand Moving Diorama [of] Hindostan.
66. Astley’s playbill for 27 March 1826 also promises a representation of “The Royal Rath or Carriage Drawn by Elephants,” alongside a “PROCESSION OF THE SACRED WHITE ELEPHANT” (British Library Playbills 171). Whether the Rath’s proprietors hired the display out to Astley’s or the circus sought to compete with the Egyptian Hall is unclear, but both appearances of the carriage depend upon the zoological exhibition to certify that the representation of the carriage is “correct, authentic and costly,” as Astley’s advertised it.
68. Ibid., 4.
69. Broadside handbill, Now Exhibiting, 1, 4.
70. Quoted in ibid., 1.
72. Weaver, Exhibitions and the Arts of Display, 2.
73. “The Colonial Exhibition—India.” Peter Hoffenberg argues that the essential work of the long-run exhibition was to “create the ideas and forms of ‘Great Britain, India, and our Colonies,’ as well as binding together these polities” (An Empire on Display, 20).

74. Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886, lix.

75. Cundall, Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 24.

76. Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886, 248.

77. Sketchley, Mrs. Brown at the International Exhibition, 74.

78. Knight, The Exhibitions, Great White City, 37.


80. Cross, Companion to the Royal Menagerie, 2.

81. Empire of India Exhibition 1895, 5–6.

82. These are typical descriptions of the circuses’ assemblages, in this case taken from Astley’s playbills in British Library Playbills 173 (26 December 1854), Playbills 172 (13 October 1845), and Humphreys, The Memoirs of J. Decastro, 55.


84. “Surrey Zoological Gardens,” 2.

85. Qtd. in Knight and Sabey, The Lion Roars at Wembley, 12.

86. Gilpin, Three Essays, 19, 14.

87. H. P. Robinson, Pictorial Effect in Photography, 35.

88. Ibid., 21.


90. Fortescue, Narrative of the Visit to India, 2.

91. Newman, Indian Peepshow, 291.


95. Sketchley, Mrs. Brown on the Prince’s Visit to India, 22.

96. Ibid., 104.

97. Burt, Delineation of Curious Foreign Beasts; Edward Bennett, Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society Delineated.


100. Quoted in Bayley, Albert Memorial, 100.

101. The Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial, quoted in Bayley, Albert Memorial, 17.


104. Stallybrass and White, Politics and Poetics of Transgression, 39, 41, 42.


106. Reed, King and Queen in India, 87.


108. Frost, Old Showmen, 305

109. These are associations exploited in, for instance, the title of Judd’s The Lion and the Tiger.

110. Samuel Johnson gives “Ivory; the teeth of elephants” as his second definition
of “Elephant” in his Dictionary.

111. Speaight, History of the Circus, 85.


113. Ibid., 64.

114. “The Blind Men and the Elephant” was set to music and published in 1906 in the Novello School Song series, which also included a preponderance of songs celebrating Britain as an imperial power.


116. These lines form the epigraph to “The Irish Avatar.”

117. “Freaks of Mr. Wombwell’s Elephant.”

118. “Elephants and Their Keepers.”

119. The phrase derived from the attraction of the lions in the Tower Menagerie. By 1832 Kidd’s New Guide to the “Lions” of London included among the chief metaphorical “lions” Astley’s Circus, the Regent’s Park Zoo, the Surrey Zoological Gardens, and the Zoological Society Museum.

120. Palmatier, Speaking of Animals, 337.

121. Kipling, Beast and Man in India, 334–35.

122. Ibid., 335–36.

123. Parks, Wanderings of a Pilgrim, 2.frontispiece and 2.121.


125. See, for instance, Correct Detail of the Destruction and John Taylor, Life, Death, and Dissection.

126. Anonymous account, quoted in Frost, Circus Life and Circus Celebrities, 75–76.

127. “The ‘Zoo’ Elephant Who Will Not Go to America.”


129. Saxon, P. T. Barnum, 292.


132. James, “World went mad,” 138. See also Fitzsimons, Barnum in London, 168; and Barnum, Barnum’s Own Story, 430.

133. “Jumbo.”

134. Sketchley, Mrs. Brown on Jumbo, 7.

135. Ibid., 3, 75.


137. Ibid., 8.

Chapter Two

1. Disher, Greatest Show on Earth, 157. Tyrwhitt-Drake notes that “the heyday of the travelling circus may be said to have been from 1850 to 1900,” and he calls this period “the good old days” (English Circus and Fair Ground, 17).

2. Dickens letter to Edwin Landseer, 13 June 1847, in Letters, 5:89.

4. Ibid., 160.
5. Ibid., 160–62.
6. Ibid., 39.
11. Ibid., 263. These jokes are not merely the property of the wag at the auction, Old Sedley, and Osborne: the narrative itself makes a joke of the fact that Jos makes inquiry “at the door of the Elephant Hotel” (630).
12. Ibid., 418.
13. Ibid., 28. Astley’s advertised its dramatization of “Blue Beard, or Female Curiosity!” on several occasions, including 1 September 1828, when it promoted the spectacular arrival of “BLUE BEARD seated on a Real Elephant.” See the British Library Playbills 171.
15. Ibid., 93.
18. Forster review of *Vanity Fair*, 54.
19. Charlotte Brontë letter to W. S. Williams, 14 August 1848.
23. Ibid.
25. Gaskell, *Cranford*, 112. When Peter returns to Cranford from India, he plays upon just such desires: “I don’t think the ladies in Cranford would have considered him such a wonderful traveller if they had only heard him talk in the quiet way he did to [the Rector]. They liked him the better, indeed, for being what they called ‘so very Oriental’” (154). Patrick Brantlinger reads the discrepancy between Peter’s exotic tales and the “tame, monotonous realm of domestic routines and responsibilities” as illustrative of a fundamental “antithesis” between the imperial and the domestic (*Rule of Darkness*, 12). Yet, I would argue, from the point of view of domestic Cranford, Peter’s tales (“so very Oriental”), like the elephant and Jos Sedley’s stories of tiger hunting, seem to establish an imaginative bridge from the one realm to the other, however inaccurate.
28. Ibid., 30.
29. Dickens letter to Elizabeth Gaskell, 18 February 1854, in *Letters*, 7:278.
33. In “Astley’s” Dickens applauds the “scenes in the circle,” defying “any one
who has been to Astley’s two or three times not to be amused” by its performances (106–7). The repertoire of “scenes in the circle” at the time of Sketches by Boz included the “SURPRISING and SAGACIOUS TRICKS” of the elephant arranged by Edward Cross of Exeter ‘Change (1 September 1828), and by the middle of his career promised “monkeys on coursers” (7 February 1848); among its other offerings, Astley’s featured regular “SIMULACRE of ... the FINAL TRIUMPH of BRITISH POWER in INDIA!” (27 April 1829) and other British military campaigns. See British Library Playbills 171 and 172.

34. Dickens, “Some Particulars Concerning a Lion,” 677, 680, 676.
37. British Library Playbills 171, 14 October 1839.
38. Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, 563.
39. See, for instance, “Elephants, Fossil and Musical,” which concludes that “Droves of elephants, then, have lived where we live.”
40. Dickens, Mystery of Edwin Drood, 1.
41. Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, 749.
43. Tyrwhitt-Drake in 1946 noted that “Only once, back in the ‘eighties, has an elephant been born in this country,” and that elephant either was stillborn or died immediately after birth (English Circus and Fair Ground, 145).
45. Dickens, “Mr. Booley’s View,” 217.
46. Illustrated London News, 9 November 1850.
47. Dickens, “Mr. Booley’s View,” 217.
49. Dickens, “Mr. Booley’s View,” 217.
51. Ibid.
53. Quoted in John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, 1:121.
56. British Library Playbills 173 (Astley’s, 5 December 1853). Paul Schlicke describes the “Wise Elephants of the East” as “the most celebrated novelty of the 1853–54 circus season” (Dickens and Popular Entertainment, 163).
57. Dickens, Hard Times, 1990 ed., 15, 27. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references are to this edition.
58. Schlicke, Dickens and Popular Entertainment, 163. Simpson’s “Hard Times and Circus Times” traces analogues between Sleary’s Circus and Astley’s.
60. Tyrwhitt-Drake, English Circus and Fair Ground, 144.
61. Stoddart, Rings of Desire, 97.
63. Ibid., 51. See also Dickens’s letter to Charles Knight of 17 March 1854
(Letters, 7:294), which reveals that the narrator’s voice is indistinguishable from that of Dickens on this point.

65. Dickens, Hard Times, 47.
66. Dickens, letter to John Forster, February 1854, in Letters 7:282. See also Butt and Tillotson, Dickens at Work, 203.
72. Leavis, Great Tradition, 231; Dickens, Hard Times, 89.
73. Williams, Culture and Society, 93.
74. Dickens, Hard Times, 149, 215.
75. Williams, Culture and Society, 95.
77. Ibid., 312–13.
80. Dickens, Hard Times, 11.
81. Ibid., 218, 208.
82. Compare Pleasant Riderhood’s “vaporous visions of far-off islands in the southern seas or elsewhere (not being geographically particular)” (Our Mutual Friend, 407). Like Rogue Riderhood’s daughter, Dickens’s narrators often seem to evoke far-off places without “being geographically particular.”
83. Dickens, Hard Times, 95.
84. Ibid., 174.
85. Ibid., 90.
86. Ibid., 218.
87. Nunokawa, “For Your Eyes Only,” 152.
88. Dickens, Hard Times, 37, 139.
90. Dickens, “Chinese Junk,” 72. It is perhaps worth remarking that Dickens’s conclusions about the junk do not differ substantially from those provided in the official guide, which concludes above all that the Chinese “unconquerable prejudice, the innate and utter contempt for everything foreign, is a hindrance to all improve-
91. Dickens, Hard Times, 204.
92. Bivona, Desire and Contradiction, 114.
93. Ibid., 115.
95. Hobson, Imperialism, 201.
96. Ibid., 202.
97. See “Chinese Junk,” in which Dickens asserts that “It is pleasant, coming back from China by the Blackwall Railway, to think that . . . in our civilization, we sacrifice
absurd forms to substantial facts” (74). The asserted superiority of fact over fancy here suggests that in *Hard Times* Dickens chiefly objects to facts that have no fanciful forms sacrificed to them. In other words, facts can only seem “substantial” as a result of an encounter with fancy. This is the conclusion Martha Nussbaum draws about the novel as a whole, understanding the opposition between fact and fancy to be resolved dialectically in the form of the novel itself. In *Poetic Justice* she argues that “The novel speaks not of dismissing reason, but of coming upon it in a way illuminated by fancy” (44).

98. Dickens, letter to Charles Knight, 30 December 1854, in *Letters* 7:492.
100. Leavis, *Great Tradition*, 233.
103. In *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*, Schlicke notes that at Astley’s “during the week of 12 December 1853 characters from *Oliver Twist* were impersonated on horseback, and for two weeks in February roles from *Pickwick* were enacted” (154). Dickens seems to have been quite enthusiastic about the show ring that kept his stories in circulation.

106. Ibid., 14.
107. Ibid., 204.
108. Ibid., 207.
109. Ibid., 209.
110. Ibid., 208, 209.
111. Transportation to penal colonies is threatened elsewhere in the novel (112–14), so it is not clear that Tom’s escape differs so dramatically from the alternative.

113. Ibid.
114. Ibid., 212.
117. Ibid., 22.
118. Dickens, “Noble Savage,” 198, 201. As Jeff Nunokawa observes, “The African is not only the object of occidental surveillance . . . but also a character whose native aspect is an exhibition” (“For Your Eyes Only,” 147). It is just this “native aspect” of the circus’s exhibition that Dickens elides.

120. Ibid., 197, 202.
121. Ibid., 202.
122. Catherine Gallagher glosses the description of Coketown as a savage in these terms: “These separate metaphors and similes coalesce into a single image of Coketown as a jungle, an image that was used by advocates of ‘internal missions’” (*Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, 160).

Notes to Chapter 3

125. Dickens, “Gin-Shops,” 182.
126. Dickens, “Scotland Yard.”
129. Wills, “Forty Years in London,” 257.
136. Ibid., 47.
137. Cf. John Kucich’s claim “that Dickens replaces what Bataille would call a
restricted economy . . . with a general economy” (“Repression and Representation,”
68). Kucich is concerned primarily with the circulation of individual psychic ener-
gies, while the focus here is on the totality of social energies that Dickens binds in the
service of a commercial-industrial mode of production.

Chapter Three

1. R. M. Ballantyne’s *The Gorilla Hunters* (1861), for instance, offers a humorous
piece of dialogue in the middle of Africa: “I’m a student of nature myself, and I have
picked up a little useful knowledge in the course of my travels. Did you ever travel so far
as the Zoological Gardens in London?” (8). In *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), H.
G. Wells’s narrator presumes familiarity with the zoo in noting that Moreau’s “creatures
did not decline into such beasts as the reader has seen in zoological gardens” (198).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 28.
7. Ibid., 26, 28.
8. Ibid., 27.
9. Ibid., 29.
10. Ibid., 36–37.
11. Ibid., 37.
13. Virginia Woolf, “Character in Fiction,” 3:421, 430; Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and
the novel are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

16. Ibid., 342.
18. Arnold discusses the “note of provinciality” in literature as indicating a “remoteness from . . . a centre of correct taste” in “The Literary Influence of the Academies,” 245. In the preface to *Culture and Anarchy*, he identifies “provincialism” with “loss of totality” and “culture” with the process of “disinterestedly trying . . . to see things as they really are” (36, 30).
21. See Hynes, “Whole Contention.” For a reading of the exchange between Bennett and Woolf that emphasizes the role of gender rather than class in the debate, see Daugherty, “Whole Contention, Revisited.”
22. Arnold Bennett, review of *Room of One’s Own*, 225.
29. See Pechell, “Paradise of Women,” and “Adventurous Woman Traveller.”
30. “D’you Know?”
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid. The description of Constance appears in Bennett’s *Journal* (25). A character in *The Regent* (1913) describes the Five Towns as “the most English place I’ve ever seen” (38).
37. “Uncolored” is Rebecca West’s characterization of the Five Towns in “Arnold Bennett Himself.” She finds Bennett’s writing marked by a “preference for the uncolored stuff that lasts over the colored stuff which wears into holes, which is characteristic of English provincial life.”
39. Ibid., 109.
47. Warrillow, *Arnold Bennett and Stoke-on-Trent*, 12.
9. Ibid., 104.
50. Ibid., 102.
51. Quoted in Reid, “Interpreting the Festival Calendar,” 126–27. In *Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent* (1843), John Ward observed that “A custom formerly prevailed [in Burslem], of adorning the church on the Wake Sunday with branches of trees and shrubs, and was understood as having reference to the dwelling of the Patron Saint, John the Baptist, ‘in the Wilderness’” (269–70). For excellent discussions of the wakes traditions in Lancashire and in the area surrounding Birmingham, see Reid, “Interpreting the Festival Calendar”; Poole, “Lancashire Wakes Week” and “Oldham Wakes”; and Walton and Poole, “Lancashire Wakes.”
52. Scarratt, *Old Times in the Potteries*, 76.
55. For instance, Ebenezer Hunt’s *The Rush-Bearing* complains that the wakes “are bad in their institution and hurtful in their consequences to Morality” (6); and *Conversation Between William and James at a Country Wake* indicts “the abominable wickedness of a Wake” (8).
59. “A Fight Between Zulu Chiefs.”
60. *Embellished History*, 47.
61. *To Mr. Wombwell*.
63. “Wombwell’s Menagerie” (1849).
64. In *Studies in the Sources of Arnold Bennett’s Novels*, Louis Tillier suggests that “The episode [involving the elephant] can probably be traced to a small fact of local history. On April 13, 1872, when Bostock and Wombwell’s circus was at Hanley for the Wakes, an elephant ran amok without warning, lifted a boy in his trunk and crushed him against a wall with his head and tusks” (49). This incident could not have occurred at the wakes, however, since the season ran from June to November, and the Stoke wakes were held in the first week of August (Edwards, *Potters* 8), so the carnivalesque setting for the scene is Bennett’s invention. Moreover, as both the *Staffordshire Sentinel* and *Staffordshire Advertiser* from 1872 make clear, the elephant was aggravated by the boy, who was throwing stones in the elephant’s mouth. Bennett’s narrative therefore also strips all provocation from the incident of the elephant’s madness. See “Boy Killed by an Elephant at Hanley” and “Killed by an Elephant.”
65. When Bennett’s literary estate was auctioned in 1936, Sotheby listed among his “Notes for Plots” a cutting of “the original of the dead elephant episode used in ‘The Old Wives’ Tale,’” which appears to have had to do with the difficulty of disposing of an elephant’s corpse, rather than with the violent behavior of the elephant or its execution (*Catalogue of Manuscripts*, 18). The clipping likely recorded the death
of Wombwell’s elephant Abdellah, who died after eating a yew tree in September 1898 in Hanley (Middlemiss, *Zoo on Wheels*, 53 plate 76).

67. Ibid., 103.
70. Ibid., 228.
73. Ibid., 231.
74. Edwin’s vision of a host of people “under the empire of one horrible idea” bowing before “a strange and savage god” recalls Conrad’s Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), who famously asserts that “What redeems [imperial conquest] is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to” (10).
75. Arnold Bennett, *Author’s Craft*, 27.
77. Ibid., 103.
78. Ibid., 271, 436. Constance explains to Sophia that the elephant and camels are there because of “Barnum’s, you know. They have what they called a central depot here, because it’s the middle of England” (500).
81. Ibid., 112.
82. Ibid., 110.
83. Ibid., 113.
84. Ibid., 116.
89. Quoted in ibid., 41.
90. Quoted in ibid.
93. In *Politics and Poetics of Transgression* Stallybrass and White cite *The Old Wives’ Tale* as an example of a text in which an increasingly capitalist society “locat[es] its most powerful symbolic repertoires at borders, margins and edges, rather than at the accepted centres, of the social body” (20–21).
Notes to Chapter 4

Chapter Four

5. Ibid., 22.
7. The rhetoric that represented imperialism as a way to reclaim remote provinces from their darkness also ensured that those remote provinces appeared dark in the first place. For a detailed account of the progressive “darkening” of Africa, for instance, see Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 173–97.
9. See Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*.
12. In *The Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf curiously introduces tigers and elephants into South America: as night falls on the travelers in Santa Marina, the narrator observes that “here in the darkness . . . the houseless animals were abroad, the tigers and the stags, and the elephants coming down in the darkness to drink at pools” (100). The incongruity of these animals in South America suggests Woolf’s general desire to evoke colonial space, and perhaps the influence of Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle* (1913), set in Ceylon.
13. Hegel, for example, emphasizes the “circle rounded and complete in itself” as “a real totality” in *The Logic of Hegel* (quoted in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 226).
15. As Caserio asserts in *Novel in England*, Woolf “identifies novelistic art with the separation” of holistic aspirations from their achievement, and her work chronicles “missed encounters of all kinds—political, historical, social, personal” (76).
21. Ibid., 393.
22. Ibid., 375.
23. Ibid., 376.
24. Ibid., 354.
25. Ibid., 335.
26. Ibid., 389.
28. Ibid., 312n1.
29. Ibid., 288.
30. Ibid., 289.
31. The vision of elephants drinking at pools is a recurrent one in Woolf’s writing. In addition to those noted above, see “Nurse Lugton’s Curtain” (1924), in which a whole host of animals is loosened from the print of Nurse Lugton’s curtain fabric while she sleeps, and wanders off to a lake. There “the elephants drank; and the giraffes snipped off the leaves on the highest tulip trees” (161).

33. Ibid., 312n.
34. Virginia Woolf, Years, 390.
35. Ibid., 390.
36. Ibid., 398, 399, 401.
37. Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, 30, 38.
38. Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, 35.
39. Bhabha, Location of Culture, 1.
40. Ibid., 1–2.
41. Virginia Woolf, Years, 391.
42. Ibid., 392–93.
44. Empire Exhibition advertisement, 12 April 1924.
47. Sadleir, “Why Only Dickens?” If a duel, Bennett nevertheless offered no counterblast to Woolf’s assault.

48. On 21 May 1924, eight days before attending the Empire Exhibition, Woolf delivered “Character in Fiction” to T. S. Eliot for his consideration for publication in The Criterion. The exhibition clearly did not determine the shape of “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” or “Character in Fiction”; there are, however, discernible logics linking Woolf’s separate critiques of realism in “Character in Fiction” and “Thunder at Wembley,” and this connection—rather than any possible causal relation—concerns me here.

52. Eric Pasold quoted in ibid., 112.
53. A column in the Graphic, titled “As an Australian Sees Wembley,” noted that the exorbitant cost of the exhibition would be worthwhile “if Wembley served no other purpose than to foster this sense of unity among the British race throughout our scattered Empire.”
54. Quoted in Knight and Sabey, Lion Roars at Wembley, 12.
57. “As Others See the Exhibition.”
58. Knight and Sabey, Lion Roars at Wembley, 93, 95.
59. Ibid., 52, 55, 57, 59, 67.
60. The term “Great Exhibition” was often used casually in describing Wembley, and handbooks traced the history of the 1924 and 1925 Empire Exhibitions back to the Hyde Park Exhibition of 1851. In the spring the Graphic offered an article on three summer “Exhibitions in the Making”: the Empire Exhibition, the zoo aquarium, and the Royal Academy. In August the same paper noted that Wembley’s competing attractions had left “the popularity of London’s Zoo . . . undiminished” (“Familiar Faces at the Zoo”).

61. Knight and Sabey, *Lion Roars at Wembley*, 102, 103. The portion of the three-day pageant that depicted the conquest of India seems to have been the most exotic. It “include[d] a state procession of Jehangir, the Great Mogul, in which is seen a group of elephants,” in an oriental scene that reprised a typical tableau from the Romantic theater and the Victorian pantomime (“£100,000 Pageant of Empire”).


64. Arnold Bennett, *Author’s Craft*, 23, 27. Sir Lawrence Weaver, director of the UK Exhibits at the Empire Exhibition, noted that “Exhibitions were an English invention” and argued that “their development should be studied with care by a commercial community which owes so much to them” (*Exhibitions and the Arts of Display*, 5).


68. “The British Empire in Microcosm.”


75. Ibid., 28.

76. Ibid., 33.

77. Empire Exhibition advertisement, 24 May 1924.


84. Virginia Woolf, *Diary* 2:305. In criticizing the Edwardians in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Woolf makes a similar complaint about “how feeble a voice and how flimsy a body” their characters exhibit (3:385). In “Character in Fiction” she laments, “The literary convention of the time is so artificial” (3:434).

86. “Pioneers of Empire XX,” 62.
87. “Pioneers of Empire I,” 238.
88. “Pioneers of Empire XIII,” 574–75.
89. Ibid., 574.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., 3:410.
95. Though Woolf here appears in accord with Punch in criticizing Wembley’s organization and marketing, it would be a mistake to see Woolf, Roger Fry, Punch, and E. M. Forster as a unified front of “modernists” opposing Arnold Bennett, George V, G. K. Chesterton, and the Illustrated London News as champions of retrograde, jingoistic methods. The Empire Exhibition of 1924 is a particularly visible site (though not the only one) in the modernist period over which a broad range of figures and institutions struggled to define new relations between contemporary modes of representation and the politics of empire.
98. Ibid.
100. Ibid., 229.
102. “Pioneers of Empire XXI,” 118.
104. Ibid., 3:436.
105. Weaver, “‘The Palace of Industry’”; Bennett, Author’s Craft, 14.
106. Virginia Woolf, “Character in Fiction,” 3:426, 425, 432. I invoke here Michel de Certeau’s distinction between place and space: “In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” (Practice of Everyday Life, 117).
108. Ibid., 3:432.
109. Virginia Woolf, “Nature at Wembley,” 35. In opening the 1925 version of the Wembley exhibition, the King declared, “It was a happy inspiration to make housing and home building a central feature of the Exhibition. For the foundation of the Empire is in the home” (quoted in Knight and Sabey, Lion Roars at Wembley, 114). In figuring the Edwardian novel as house and proclaiming its destruction, Woolf might also be acknowledging “home” as the foundation of empire, fully a year before George V’s speech.
Notes to Chapter 4

116. Ibid., 3:434.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid., 3:435.
119. Ibid., 3:434.
121. Ibid., 243.
124. Ibid., 35.
129. Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, 48.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid., 71.
132. Virginia Woolf, Years, 311, 310.
133. Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts, 198.
134. Ibid., 192.
137. Noel Annan quoted in Hussey, Virginia Woolf A to Z, 265.
140. Virginia Woolf, Waves, 144.
141. Ibid., 146.
142. Ibid., 232.
143. Ibid., 286.
144. Ibid., 296.
145. See, for instance, former viceroy of India Lord Curzon’s speech at Birmingham on 11 December 1907, in which he argued against those anti-imperialists who desired “the strengthening of the centre of the Empire, instead of wasting our force upon its outskirts.” Instead he advocated shoring up “the economy of the imperial household” so that “the concentric rings shall continue to revolve round the central star,” England. In unapologetically mixing these metaphors, Curzon weds the economic metaphor of domestic space to the systemic imagery of Copernican solarity. See Curzon of Kedleston, “Speech at Birmingham,” 354, 355.
146. Virginia Woolf, Waves, 292.
Notes to Chapter 5

149. Ibid., 22.
150. Ibid., 94.
151. Ibid., 201.
152. Ibid., 223–24.

Chapter Five

2. Ibid., 64, 444, 454.
3. Djuna Barnes wrote about the Hippodrome in New York City, which did feature zoological exotica, as Laura Winkiel notes, but she treated it primarily as a form of American entrepreneurship (“Circuses and Spectacles”).
5. Adorno, Minima Moralia, 50.
6. Ibid., 116.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 115.
10. Quoted in Rae, Business of Travel, 135.
11. Woolf, Years, 335.
18. Ibid., 95.
19. Ibid., 94.
26. Ibid., 51.
28. Ibid., 365.
31. Ibid., 116, 537.
32. Ibid., 83–84.
38. Ibid., 458.
39. Ibid., 319.
40. Ibid., 546.
41. Ibid., 359.
42. Ibid., 84.
44. Ibid., 117.
47. Rushdie, “Step Across This Line,” 375.
49. Ibid., 162.
50. U2, “Where the Streets Have No Name.”
54. This is true even of Stoddart’s *Rings of Desire*, which mentions Carter’s novel only in passing and as part of a discussion of how female aerialists have been represented in the twentieth century.
56. Carter, interview with John Haffenden, 89.
59. Ibid.
60. Sally Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, 131.
64. Carter, interview with Haffenden, 89; Carter, *Nights at the Circus*, 279.
70. Ibid., 106.
71. Ibid., 105.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., 106.
74. Ibid., 146.
75. Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman*, 159.
78. Ibid., 125, 117.
79. Ibid., 117.
80. Ibid., 117–18.
81. Ibid., 118, 178, 122.
82. Ibid., 173.
83. Ibid., 171.
84. Ibid., 178.
85. Ibid., 238.
86. Ibid., 285.
89. Ibid., 206.
90. Ibid., 231.
91. Ibid., 265.
92. Ibid., 278.
93. Ibid., 273–74.
94. Ibid., 285.
95. Ibid.
96. Baucom, *Out of Place*, 166, 189.
98. Julian Barnes, interview with Freiburg, 51.
103. Julian Barnes, interview with Birnbaum.
105. Ibid., 75, 6, 7, 8.
106. Julian Barnes, interview with Birnbaum.
107. Julian Barnes, *Letters from London*, 69, 44–45. John Major’s father, Barnes notes, was a circus performer before going into business selling garden gnomes. Nicholas Ridley, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, sought without success to pay the Turks and Caicos Islands so they would be independent of the UK.
108. Ibid., 160.
109. Ibid., 269.
111. Pateman, Julian Barnes, 73.
112. Ibid., 75.
114. Ibid., 40–41.
117. Julian Barnes, interview with Freiburg, 64.
119. Ibid., 28.
123. Ibid., 252.

**Epilogue**

2. “Row Over German Zoo’s Africa Show.”
4. Szalwinska, “Don’t Feed the Humans.”
5. See, e.g., “Houston Zoo Admits a Snake Was a Fake.”
6. Phil Milford, “Philadelphia Zoo.”
7. Alderson, “Rector on Wild Wallaby Watch.”
8. For instance, Lord Bath’s home, Longleat, claims to host the first safari park outside Africa and was opened to the public in 1966. See http://www.longleat.co.uk.
14. See http://www.wmsp.co.uk.
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——. “Gin-Shops.” In Sketches by Boz, 182–87.
——. “Greenwich Fair.” In Sketches by Boz, 111–18.
——. “Mr. Booley’s View of the Last Lord Mayor’s Show.” Household Words 36 (30 November 1850): 217–19.
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