

Passing : the Irish and the Germans in the fiction of John Buchan and Erskine Childers

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Passing: the Irish and the Germans in the Fiction of John Buchan and Erskine

Childers

The concept of Othering as crucial to the production and bolstering of national identities is by now a critical commonplace.¹ Sometimes, however, the process of Othering is not a simple binary affair, but is triangulated in ways which cause perceptions of national characteristics and attitudes to be blurred and displaced. I want to argue that something of this sort occurs in both John Buchan's and Erskine Childers' complex representations of English national identities as triangulated by fears and fantasies about Irishness and Germanness (with, in Buchan's case, the further complication that Irishness is imagined as inherently negroid). In both these authors, I shall seek to show, representations of Germanness become inextricably imbricated with those of Irishness.

Though the reigns of both Victoria and Edward were marked by periodic anti-German feeling and scares about German invasions, as in George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) and Saki's *When William Came* (1913),² in many novels of the period there is also, paradoxically, great stress on the essential similarities between the English and the Germans in race and in language.³ In Rider Haggard's *She*, for instance, the very English Holly has the first name of Ludwig, and a common motif is the Englishman whose German is so perfect that he can pass unsuspected as a native (as in *The Riddle of the Sands* and John Buchan's Hannay stories) or vice versa, as when the supposed First Sea Lord in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is revealed to be a German impostor impenetrably

disguised (something which might perhaps have been not entirely dissimilar to the fears expressed about the possible clash of loyalties which Prince Louis of Battenberg might have experienced had he been left in the post). Just as Professor Challenger can hardly be differentiated from his ostensible opposite the apeman in Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, so Germans and Englishmen tend to blur. Perhaps partly because of this, when hostility is, as so often, displaced and deflected onto the Irish instead, it tends to be accompanied by an overwhelming stress on their physical difference (often imaged as due to differing racial origins) and their immediately recognisability as alien. Germans may pass, but Irishmen, in these novels, cannot, and it is onto Irishmen that the full weight of evolutionary discourse and scientific racism is often unleashed.

I John Buchan

This is particularly apparent in the fiction of John Buchan. In her 'John Buchan - An Untimely Appreciation', Gertrude Himmelfarb remarks that 'Buchan had confidence not only in his knowledge, but also in his opinions, attitudes, intuitions, and prejudices' (p.48).⁴ Among those prejudices, one stands out with particular clarity: he did not like the Irish.⁵ His attitude is made quite plain in many places. In *A Prince of the Captivity* (1933), Adam Melfort's irresponsible wife, who allows him to go to prison to shield her, is specifically said to be Irish;⁶ in *Castle Gay* (1930), Dougal's view of Scotland is that 'we've sold our souls to the English and the Irish',⁷ and he laments '[h]ere am I driving myself mad with the sight of my native land running down the brae - the cities filling up with Irish' (p. 30). Ireland has already proved fatal to the husband of one of the

characters, who died of pneumonia after ‘a bitter day in an Irish snipe-bog’ (p. 57), and later the narrative voice openly endorses Dougal’s dislike when it asserts that ‘[t]he Scottish Communist is a much misunderstood person. When he is a true Caledonian, and not a Pole or an Irishman, he is simply the lineal descendant of the old Radical’ (p. 160). In one of Buchan’s short stories, ‘The Last Crusade’, a character says ‘McGurks does not love England, for it began with strong Irish connections’;⁸ in another, ‘Tendebant Manus’, in which George Souldern makes his name as a politician because of:

the Irish business, when he went down to the worst parts of the South and West, and seemed to be simply asking for a bullet in his head. He was half Irish, you know. He wrote and said quite frankly that he didn’t care a straw whether Ireland was inside or outside the British Empire, that the only thing which mattered was that she should find a soul, and that she had a long road to travel before she got one. He told her that at present she was one vast perambulating humbug, and that till she got a little discipline and sense of realities she would remain on the level of Hayti...such naked candour and courage was a new thing and had to be respected.⁹

Left to itself, Souldern’s speech might perhaps have been perceived as maverick; but the voice of endorsement comes in at the end to label it unequivocally as ‘candour’ and ‘courage’.

In many of these passages, it is clear that the primary mainspring of Buchan’s anti-Irish feeling is political. As well as the more obvious reasons which a man of his deeply

conservative inclinations might have had to dislike the Irish, though, Buchan also has an additional, rather surprising reason, one which is indeed implicit in the comparison of Ireland with Hayti: he persistently associates the Irish with blacks, whom he also despised, habitually terming them ‘kaffirs’.¹⁰ The connection is by no means unique to Buchan. Dymphna Callaghan comments on the extent to which in the Renaissance the Irish were conceived of as being as racially other as blacks,¹¹ and in Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World* (1912) Professor Challenger looks at the journalist Malone and mutters ‘Round-headed...Brachycephalic, grey-eyed, black-haired, with suggestion of the negroid. Celtic, I presume?’. When Malone confirms that he is an Irishman, Challenger is satisfied: ‘[t]hat, of course, explains it’.¹² Buchan’s use of this association is visible as early as his first published novel, *Prester John*, in which the rather repellent hero Davy Crawford outwits the native leader Laputa by pretending to be drunk: ‘[i]n five minutes I had made the room stink like a shebeen’.¹³ But the idea is at its most prominent in *The Three Hostages* (1924), the novel most saturated in imagings of Irishness.

The Three Hostages may have been published sixty-five years after *The Origin of Species*, but it is still very much part of the same mental world as the fiction closer to and more obviously influenced by the ideas of evolution. It may indeed be thought deliberately to evoke *The Lost World* when Mary terms Medina ‘a god from a lost world’.¹⁴ There is the obsession with ancestry so common in fiction influenced by Darwin: on Hannay’s first sight of Newhover he notes that ‘[f]rom his look I should have said that his father had called himself Neuhofer’ (p. 73), we hear much of Medina’s

descent, and Hannay jokes of Mary that ‘if her pedigree could be properly traced it would be found that she descended direct from one of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus who married one of the Foolish Virgins’ (p. 32); this also quietly asserts the continuing imaginative hold of the biblical account of human origins, as does the doctor when he tells Hannay that his prescribed cure is ‘a prescription that every son of Adam might follow with advantage four times a year’ (p. 113). There is also an echo of Hamlet, which, with its suggestion of a recognisable continuity in human nature, was a staple of anti-evolutionary writing, when Hannay notes that ‘London is always to me an undiscovered country’ (p. 77).

Above all, there is the reliance on physiognomy so familiar from the obsession with the measurement of skull-size which had branched out from Darwinian theory. Hannay refers to Greenslade’s ‘candid eyes and hungry cheek-bones’ (p. 13) and notes that the supposed Kharama has a ‘brow...straight and heavy, such as I had always associated with mathematical talent’ (p. 118). Here, as in Buchan’s *Greenmantle*, with its open homage to Haggard, this is in turn inflected by the sense that the experiences and collective cultural consciousness of Englishmen have been indelibly shaped by their experience of empire, which even informs their language when Greenslade tells Hannay ‘I belong more or less to the same totem as you’ (p. 13) or Tom Machin fulminates that ‘it’s up to the few sahibs like him in that damned monkey-house at Westminster to make a row about it’ (p. 117), while Sandy longs for the days when the English ‘regard[ed] all foreigners as slightly childish and rather idiotic and ourselves as the only grown-ups in a kindergarten

world. That meant that we had a cool detached view and did even-handed unsympathetic justice.’ (p. 60).

But it is not so much evolution as its ‘dark side’, degeneration, which above all concerns Buchan in this tale of the ‘ghastly throw-back’ Medina (p. 134).¹⁵ Greenslade warns Hannay that ‘you can’t any longer take the clear psychology of most civilized human beings for granted. Something is welling up from primeval deeps to muddy it’ (p. 14), to which Hannay, exhibiting the same attitudes as had inspired the scouting movement, responds ‘[w]e’ve overdone civilization, and personally I’m all for a little barbarism. I want a simpler world’ (p. 14). Hannay’s taste for barbarism is soon sated, however, as Macgillivray gives him an awful warning: ‘[t]he moral imbecile, he said, had been more or less a sport before the War; now he was was a terribly common product, and throve in batches and battalions. Cruel, humourless, hard, utterly wanting in sense of proportion, but often full of a perverted poetry and drunk with rhetoric - a hideous, untamable breed had been engendered’ (p. 23). However, Macgillivray is by no means deterministic in his attitude to the phenomenon, suggesting rather that ‘all this desperate degenerate stuff is being used by a few clever men who are not degenerates or anything of the sort, but only evil’ (p. 23). An overarching moral schema is thus asserted, and Hannay too subscribes to it when he interprets an event as ‘one of those trivial things which look like accidents but I believe are part of the reasoned government of the universe’ (p. 41) and when he notes that Gaudian ‘seemed to have been sent by Providence’ (p. 141). Indeed the introduction of Gaudian clearly signals the extent of the novel’s allegiance to older rather

than newer paradigms, for Gaudian is German and has previously been pitted against Hannay when the latter was spying in Germany, but here, all animosity and national rivalries forgotten, he gladly assists his erstwhile opponent in rescuing one of the three hostages from his villainous, Irish-led captors.

It proves, in fact, to be not those who fought in the war but those who did not who have inherited troubles and enmities from it. Early in *The Three Hostages*, Greenslade, Hannay's doctor, sets the scene for what is to follow by explaining that there is a dislocation of the mechanism of human reasoning, a general loosening of screws. Oddly enough, in spite of parrot-talk about shell-shock, the men who fought suffer less from it on the whole than other people. The classes that shirked the War are the worst - you see it in Ireland.

(p. 13)

Greenslade's prejudices prove to be shared with interest by Hannay's police contact, Macgillivray:

The moral imbecile, he said, had been more or less a sport before the War; now he was a terribly common product, and throve in batches and battalions. Cruel, humourless, hard, utterly wanting in a sense of proportion, but often full of a perverted poetry and drunk with rhetoric - a hideous, untamable breed had been engendered. You found it among the young Bolshevik Jews, among the young gentry of the wilder Communist sects and very notably among the sullen

murderous hobbledehoy in Ireland.

(p. 23)

That Ireland is going to be closely involved in this story becomes apparent when Hannay tries to remember the lines of a jingle: 'It came out as "fields of Erine", and after that "the green fields of Erine". Then it became "the green fields of Eden"' (p. 38). This is a clue that will eventually lead him to Gospel Oak, where he will find the old Irish mother of the villain, Medina.

When Buchan first hears of Medina, he supposes that the man is 'some sort of a Dago', but Greenslade replies, 'Not a bit of it. Old Spanish family settled here for three centuries...Hold on! I rather believe I've heard that his people live in Ireland, or did live, till life there became impossible' (p. 43). In fact, Medina in person instantly impresses Hannay, but this is perhaps hardly surprising, given what Macgillivray has to say about the superficial charm of the Irish:

Look at the Irish! They are the cleverest propagandists extant, and managed to persuade most people that they were a brave, humorous, talented, warm-hearted race, cruelly yoked to a dull mercantile England, when God knows they were exactly the opposite.

Hannay glosses this by adding, 'Macgillivray, I may remark is an Ulsterman, and has his prejudices' (p. 47).

Soon, however, Hannay begins to see through Medina (the reader, having been informed that '[h]e had the kind of head I fancy Byron had' [p. 42], may have been even quicker off the mark). Though 'the face with its strong fine chin made an almost perfect square' (p. 50), Hannay notices a more sinister feature:

The way he brushed his hair front and back made it look square, but I saw that it was really round, the roundest head I have ever seen except in a Kaffir. He was evidently conscious of it and didn't like it, so took some pains to conceal it.

(p. 51)

The association between Irish and blacks is rapidly developed.¹⁶ At the club where Medina conceals one of his three hostages, '[a] nigger band, looking like monkeys in uniform, pounded out some kind of barbarous jingle' (p. 97); when Medina spits in Hannay's face, '[i]t was such a filthy Kaffir trick that I had some trouble in taking it resignedly' (p. 106). Much is made of the strange language in which Medina's mother speaks to him: 'it may have been Choctaw, but was probably Erse' (p. 107), and Medina seems far more African than Irish when he 'talked of the sun like a fire-worshipper' (p. 223).¹⁷ Choctaw Indians, as Buchan doubtless knew, had been cited by his fellow-Scot Carlyle as the antitheses of chivalry.¹⁸ And when Hannay describes to Sandy how he is keeping up his pretence of friendship with Medina, he says, '[t]here's been nothing like it since Uncle Tom's Cabin' (p. 127). As the narrative progresses and Medina's behaviour deteriorates, the roundness of his head is increasingly remarked on: '[i]t was pretty clear that he was mad...His head used to seem as round as a bullet, like nothing you find even in the skulls of cave-men,' (p. 205); later, when Hannay thinks he's been foiled and that Medina will win, he notes bitterly that 'I saw the hideous roundness of his head' (p. 241).

But Medina of course does not win. As in Prester John, the climax here is played out as a chase, and while in Prester John Africa is repeatedly imaged as Scotland, ‘Machray in calm weather is the most solitary place on earth, lonelier and quieter even than a Boer farm lost in some hollow of the veld’ (p. 255). There is even a reference to the Young Pretender here again, as Hannay thinks of how ‘Mary and Peter John would be having tea among the Prince Charlie roses’ (p. 274), and Hannay, too, has to escape by climbing up a chimney (p. 276). We have already been drawn to make the comparison between Scotland and Africa when we are clearly invited to see the wildness which lurks in apparently civilised Britain, as when Hannay notes that ‘I was visited again by the fancies which had occupied me coming through Berkeley Square. I was inside one of those massive sheltered houses, and lo and behold! it was as mysterious as the aisles of a forest’ (p. 66) and then ‘left the houses of the well-to-do behind me, and got into that belt of mean streets which is the glacis of the northern heights’ (p. 76), leading him to conclude that ‘London is like the tropical bush - if you don’t exercise constant care the jungle, in the shape of the slums, will break in’ (p. 77). The climax comes while Hannay is out performing the English gentleman’s proper duty of policing his wildlife and preserving the purity of its breed - something which has in fact been a motivating force all along since one of the things which drove him to take the case was what he learned about the youngest hostage:

It seemed that the boy was a desperately keen naturalist and would be out at all hours watching wild things. He was a great fisherman, too, and had killed a lot of

trout with the fly on hill burns in Galloway. And as the father spoke I suddenly began to realize the little chap, and to think that he was just the kind of boy I wanted Peter John to be.

(p. 31)

Significantly, he describes himself early on as being ‘as fit as a hunter’ (p. 76); at the end, he is specifically engaged in purging an estate where inappropriate creatures have been allowed to flourish, since Archie’s Uncle Alexander ‘refuses to let a stag be killed unless it’s a hummel or a diseased ancient. Result is, the place is crawlin’ with fine stags that have begun to go back and won’t perish till they’re fairly moulderin’. Poor notion of a stud has my uncle Alexander...’ (p. 258). Hannay himself makes no such mistakes, noting that ‘I saw two shootable stags, and managed to get within range of one of them, but spared him for the good of the forest, as he was a young beast whose head would improve’ (p. 261), but showing no such forbearance to ‘a big stag with a poor head, which clearly wanted shooting’ (p. 265). The similarity between the stag and Medina is obvious: ‘[t]he head, as I suspected, was poor - only nine points, though the horns were of the rough, thick, old Highland type, but the body was heavy, and he was clearly a back-going beast’ (p. 266). Both atavists, both ‘back-going’, and each characterised entirely by their head, both are predictably shot by Hannay, the only difference we are invited to register between the two acts lying in the quality of the ‘excitement, such as I had never known before in any stalk’ (p. 268). Medina is essentially no different from the sheep Hannay has seen earlier, ‘infernal tattered outlaws, strays originally from some decent flock, but now to all intents a new species, unclassified by science’ (p. 275), and Hannay regards his killing of him as providential (p. 277).

To some extent, though, Buchan's open hostility to Medina may well undo itself. A notable feature of much of his writing is his tendency to double names and terminology, apparently unconsciously, in ways which work not to separate allies from enemies but to align them. Even in his first novel, *John Burnet of Barns*, the hero and the villain are first cousins; John Burnet condemns the 'air of exceeding braggadocio which clung to all who had any relation to Gilbert Burnet', but he uses the same word of himself too, trusting that he has now 'outgrown the braggadocio and folly of youth'.¹⁹ In *The Blanket of the Dark*, not only are Peter and Simon linked by both loving the same woman, by being mistaken for each other, and for splitting between them the two names of the apostle Simon Peter (as we surely notice in a novel where another character is named Gabriel Messynger), but a misprint confuses Simon with Peter's helper Solomon.²⁰ In *The Courts of the Morning*, the conquistador Radin is the opponent of Janet Roylance, née Raden; in *Mr Standfast* (1919) Hannay records that 'Archie and I set out to reconnoitre...We had crossed the lines, flying very high, and received the usual salute of Hun Archies'.²¹ Later, in *The Free Fishers*, the Merry Mouth is the name both of the heroes' ship and of the inn where their enemies will rendezvous,²² while in the short story 'Sing a Song of Sixpence', the part-English President of a South American country faces his Irish would-be assassin and says 'Superb! The best Roman manner'. The Irishman asks, 'Damn you, what's your game, Ramon?', and the play on Roman / Ramon is accentuated when the other assassin, Manuel, fires his gun and the owner of the apartment, Sir Edward Leithen, sees 'a plaster bust of Julius Caesar tumble off the top of

my bookcase'.²³ In all of these cases, apparent differences blur and shade into each other as the ostensible oppositions are collapsed by this emphasis on similarity.

The same effect is found in *The Three Hostages*, in the significant links between Dominick Medina and Ludovick Arbuthnot (Sandy's real name). Medina may resemble a 'Kaffir', but Sandy in disguise has a face 'like an Arab' (p. 118); similarly, Medina's round-headedness may be repulsive, but Davy Warcliff too is 'a poor little round-headed boy of ten' (p. 25; here, though, part of the point may be the old canard that an adult black exhibited the same level of mental development as a European child). Equally, the many hints that Medina's particular brand of degeneracy may be homosexuality are strangely balanced in the clear suggestion of homoeroticism in Hannay's own appraisals of men: '[h]e was about my own height, just under six feet, and at first sight rather slightly built, but a hefty enough fellow to eyes which knew where to look for the points of a man's strength' (p. 49).

Most suggestively, in Greenslade's initial 'clues', Medina's mother is imagined as 'an old blind woman spinning in the Western highlands' (p. 12). We are thus alerted to a potential slippage between the categories of Scotsness and Irishness, already implicit in the slippage between Medina and Sandy and the way Newhover is described as having 'cheek-bones like a caricature of a Scotsman' (p. 75), and also evidenced in Sandy's recall of his one electioneering speech:

The chief row was about Irish Home Rule, and I thought I'd better have a whack at the Pope. Has it ever struck you, Dick, that ecclesiastical language has a most sinister sound? I knew some of the words, though not their meaning, but I knew that my audience would be just as ignorant. So I had a magnificent peroration. "Will you men of Kilclavers," I asked, "endure to see a shasuble set up in your market-place? Will you have your daughters sold into simony? Will you have celibacy practised in the public streets?" God, I had them all on their feet bellowing "Never!"

(pp. 55-6)

The Scots, here, are at least as gullible as their threateningly close Irish neighbours. When Sandy develops his dislike of the Irish to Hannay, he calls Medina 'a ghastly throw-back...hollow and cruel like the fantastic gods of their own myths' (p. 134), and blames his behaviour primarily on his mother: 'I've never met her, but I see her plainly and I know that she is terrible' (p. 133). Hannay agrees with him: 'She looked like Lady Macbeth' (p. 134). But Lady Macbeth, of course, is not from the Irish past, but from the Scottish; and when Hannay towards the close of the book tells Medina, 'You should be scotched like a snake' (p. 239), the dangerous elision silently occurs again. The narrative of *The Three Hostages* may try to paint the Irish black, but the awkward fact of their affinities rather closer to home, with Buchan's own compatriots the Scots, keeps resurfacing to haunt it.

II Erskine Childers

Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), a book much admired by Buchan,²⁴ also considers Irishness and Germanness in the context of a possible war between England and Germany, but to very different effect. Childers' plot eerily echoes and inverts that of the great sensation-novel of 1862, *Lady Audley's Secret*, which, I have argued elsewhere, is strongly influenced by Darwinian theory. Just as in Braddon's novel two apparently different women prove to be the same, so here two seemingly different men prove to be the same, and once again the identity is revealed by writing (it is also the page torn out of the log which first alerts Carruthers to the presence of a mystery, and the letters of the alphabet prove to provide the key to the cipher). Once again, moreover, the revelation is achieved by means of the chumminess of two English males, triangulated in both cases by a woman called Clara, and in an echo of another Braddon preoccupation, the cultural uses of Arthurian legend, the Christian name of Davies, the young sailor whose knowledge of the sea will forestall a German invasion of England, is Arthur. There are also echoes of Bram Stoker, another (and also Irish) writer much interested in evolution, in the way in which identity is presented as written: Clara, the English girl pretending to be a German, is actually described as a 'plagiarism', just as identity in Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* proves to be inherently inscribed within the letters of Margaret Trelawny's name. Furthermore, although there are no actual black characters in the novel, awareness of race as well as of nationality is never far away: the quintessentially English Carruthers notes that 'I have read of men who, when forced by their calling to live for long periods in utter solitude - save for a few black faces - have made it a rule to dress regularly for dinner in order to maintain their self-respect and prevent a relapse into barbarism',²⁵ while Davies notes approvingly that 'we want a man

like this Kaiser, who doesn't wait to be kicked, but works like a nigger for his country, and sees ahead' (p. 119).

Despite being so very English, Carruthers, like so many Buchan heroes, can pass effortlessly as a German. Davies' letter of invitation remarks 'I know you speak German like a native' (p. 31), and Carruthers himself notes that 'I had gone to France and Germany for two years to learn the languages' (p. 32) and is sure that 'I should pass in a fog for Frisian' (p. 233). Davies himself - who had an 'unintellectual forehead' (p. 38) - does less well with foreign languages, speaking a pidgin German on whose deficiencies Carruthers never fails to comment, but it is notable that his bad German is also matched by bad English spelling, as though competence in the two were somehow linked.

Moreover, in various parts of the novel spoken German is represented as English, and there are hints of threatening blurrings between the two supposed antagonists: Carruthers wonders, not unreasonably, whether they aren't turning into spies themselves (p. 108), and when Carruthers reads Dollmann's book he finds that the style 'reminded me of Davies himself' (p. 217), while Dollmann's ultimate defence is to pretend to have been working as a British agent all along (p. 313).

Nevertheless, the book repeatedly insists that Englishness and Germanness are distinguishable. Davies is instinctively sure Dollmann is English, even though he seems to speak German 'like a native': 'It was something in his looks and manner; you know

how different we are from foreigners' (p. 97). Davies is, of course, proved right, as is obvious to Carruthers when he meets Dollmann's daughter:

Never did his 'meiner Freund, Carruthers,' sound so pleasantly in my ears; never so discordantly the "Fraülein Dollmann" that followed it. Every syllable of the four was a lie. Two honest English eyes were looking up into mine; an honest English hand - is this insular nonsense? Perhaps so, but I stick to it - a brown, firm hand - no, not so very small, my sentimental reader - was clasping mine. Of course I had strong reasons, apart from the racial instinct, for thinking her to be English, but I believe that if I had had none at all I should at any rate have congratulated Germany on a clever bit of plagiarism. By her voice, when she spoke, I knew that she must have talked German habitually from childhood; diction and accent were faultless, at least to my English ear; but the native constitutional ring was wanting.

(p. 199)

Both Davies and Carruthers like Germans. Davies thinks von Brüning 'looked a real good sort, and a splendid officer, too - just the sort of chap I should have liked to be' (p. 97), and we are assured that the Kaiser (who is later inadvertently to rescue Carruthers) is 'a splendid chap, and anyone can see he's right. They've got no colonies to speak of, and must have them, like us' (p. 101). Equally, they do not like the English traitor Dollmann, and have little time for several aspects of English officialdom: Carruthers consistently dodges his employers at the Foreign Office, and is well aware of how little it achieves (p. 120), and Davies, who despite his genius for navigation has been balked of the naval career of which he dreamed, firmly declares that '[t]hose Admiralty chaps want waking

up' (p. 108). Nevertheless, they believe that the two should be kept separate, and it seems implicit in the narrative that Davies would not have married - or even loved - Clara Dollmann had she really been German. (Her stepmother, who has a 'notable lack of breeding', is 'unmistakably German' [pp. 257-8], and 'hybridism' is twice condemned [pp. 49 and 71].)

If the English and the Germans are ultimately distinguishable, however, the English and the Irish may be more thoroughly entangled. Childers, whose own career was of course in Irish politics (and whose twin loyalties ultimately got him executed), has introduced into the book an understated but firmly developed strand of imagery which points unmistakably in the direction of Ireland, and specifically of religiously-based disagreement. Though German words everywhere else are grammatically and orthographically correct, we hear repeatedly of the Seven Siels, with the insistent echo of the Seven Seals. As in Buchan, religious discourse also proliferates elsewhere. We hear of 'a perfect Ararat of sand' (p. 158) and of how 'the banquet was never celebrated. As at Belshazzar's feast, there was a writing on the wall; no supernatural inscription, but just a printed name; an English surname with title and initials, in cheap gilt lettering on the back of an old book; a silent, sneering witness of our snug party' (p. 203). Carruthers is sure that his part in the adventure is providential. At first he complains that '[o]f course the club was a strange one, both of my own being closed for cleaning, a coincidence expressly planned by Providence for my inconvenience' (p. 31); then after thinking over Davies' invitation he 'went back to my chambers to bed, ignorant that a friendly

Providence had come to my rescue' (p. 33). Davies, by contrast, is unwavering from the first: 'Not that Davies ever doubted. Once set on the road he gripped his purpose with child-like faith and tenacity' (p. 121).

Davies, of course, has something to cling to, because he is convinced of the validity of his 'channel theory'. 'Davies had nothing but the same old theory, but he urged it with a force and keenness that impressed me more deeply than ever' (p. 155); 'The channel theory had become a sort of religion with him, promising double salvation' (p. 216). As the narrative progresses, the religious overtones of the channel theory become more pronounced, with Davies noting '[a]nd so that outworn creed took a new lease of life' (p. 247). And just as Childers himself must have hoped for religious reconciliation in Ireland, so Carruthers' originally variant belief gradually aligns itself with Davies, as he 'work[s] out my own salvation' (p. 310) and even exclaims 'Holy Saints!' (p. 311). Beneath the ostensible narrative of Germans and English, it seems, an Irish dimension lurks once more, and in this book as in *The Three Hostages*, any discourse of Englishness and Germanness proves to be inevitably triangulated by Irishness. But whereas for Buchan differences between English and Germans prove to be small and easily overcome as compared with the massive gulf that separates English from Irish, for Childers it is Germanness that is essentially set apart, while his representations of Englishness become subtly identified with issues of Irishness.

Lisa Hopkins

Notes

¹ For discussion of Othering, see for instance Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322.

² On the invasion story vogue, see for instance R.J. Dingley, 'Count Dracula and the Martians', in *The Victorian Fantasists: Essays on Culture, Society and Belief in the Mythopoeic Fiction of the Victorian Age*, edited by Kath Filmer (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 13-24, pp. 14-15.

³ On Teutonism, see for instance David Glover, "'Why White?': On Worms and Skin in Bram Stoker's Later Fiction", forthcoming in *Gothic Studies*, 2000.

⁴ Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'John Buchan - An Untimely Appreciation', *Encounter* (September, 1960), pp. 46-53, p. 48.

⁵ For his personal dislike of them, see Christopher Harvie, 'Second Thoughts of a Scotsman on the Make: Politics, Nationalism and Myth in John Buchan', *Scottish Historical Review* 70:1 (April, 1991), pp. 33-56, p. 41, note 1.

⁶ John Buchan, *A Prince of the Captivity* [1933] (Edinburgh: B & W Publishing, 1996), p. 5.

⁷ John Buchan, *Castle Gay* (London: J.M. Dent, 1983), p. 12.

⁸ *The Best Short Stories of John Buchan*, edited by David Daniell, 2 vols (London: Panther, 1984), vol. 1, p. 66.

⁹ John Buchan, *The Runagates Club* [1928] (Far Thrupp: Alan Sutton, 1996), p. 136.

¹⁰ On the occurrence of this assumption elsewhere in contemporary thought, see for instance David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 36-7, 39, and 165 note 53, and L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishmen in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), p. 1 and *passim*.

¹¹ Dympna Callaghan, 'Re-reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*', in *Women, 'Race', and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 163-177, p. 165. On the link between blackness and Irishness in the Renaissance, see also Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 6-7 and pp. 145-6, and Andrew Murphy, *But the*

Irish Sea Betwixt Us: Ireland, Colonialism, and Renaissance Literature (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), pp. 11-32.

¹² Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 26.

The novel's images of Irishness are multiplied when they encounter a bog in Maple White Land (p. 99). For comment on the history of racialised abuse of the Irish, see Ian Duncan's introduction to the novel, pp. xviii-xix. David Daniell points to the closeness between *The Lost World* and Buchan's 1902 story 'No-Man's-Land' (*The Interpreter's House* [London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1975], p. 26).

¹³ John Buchan, *Prester John* [1910] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), p. 89.

¹⁴ John Buchan, *The Three Hostages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 183.

¹⁵ For a discussion of Medina in terms of degeneracy, see also William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 249. Greenslade also discusses the 'revivified social Darwinism' of John Macnab (p. 250).

¹⁶ On the importance of skull size and shape in contemporary theories of race, and on the ways in which black men's skulls in particular were weighed and evaluated, see for instance Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 24, and Susan

Sleeth Mosedale, 'Science Corrupted: Victorian Biologists Consider "The Woman Question"', *Journal of the History of Biology* 7 (1978), pp. 1-55, pp. 8-9. Typically, Conrad's Marlow has his head measured by a doctor before embarking for Africa. (*Heart of Darkness* [1902] [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973], p. 16).

¹⁷ Though Susanne Hagemann suggests that the most obvious parallel is between Medina and De Valera ('Marginality: A Bifocal Approach to John Buchan's *The Three Hostages*', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 44 [1996], pp. 240-8, p. 241, note 3).

¹⁸ Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 130.

¹⁹ John Buchan, *John Burnet of Barns* [1898] (Edinburgh: B&W Publishing, 1994), pp. 243 and 292.

²⁰ John Buchan, *The Blanket of the Dark* [1931] (Edinburgh: B & W Publishing, 1994), p. 136.

²¹ John Buchan, *Mr Standfast* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), p. 190.

²² John Buchan, *The Free Fishers* [1934] (Edinburgh: B & W Publishing, 1994), p. 160.

²³ The Runagates Club, pp. 99 and 100.

²⁴ See Cecil Degrotte Eby, *The Road to Armageddon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 30.

²⁵ Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* [1903] (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1952), p. 27. All further quotations from the novel will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.