

British or English?
The Manifestation and Reception of
British Identities Represented in the
Man Booker Prize

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Abstract

This thesis examines how British identity is represented in the Man Booker Prize shortlists and winners. Through a quantitative analysis, it discusses the occurrences of identities among the authors and novels represented in the prize. This analysis examines the preference of an English identity in contrast to Welsh, Scottish and Irish identities. Moreover, it features an examination of the position of non-Western authors appearing in the Man Booker Prize as tokens. The analysis of themes and settings represented in the shortlisted and winning novels positions the prize as mediated by nostalgia for British cultural heritage and as featuring a preference towards postcolonial novels. Case studies of the critical responses to two winning novels illustrate the critical reception of these identities. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), because of its vast success, exemplifies the role of postcolonial exotic identities within the prize. *Midnight's Children's* represented identities contrast with James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), which has undergone fierce criticism for its representation of a Scottish, marginalised identity.

Keywords: Man Booker Prize, British identity, Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, James Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*

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Introduction

Today, almost fifty years after the Man Booker Prize's inauguration in 1968, the first time awarded in the following year, this British literary prize has become a household name and is regarded as one of the most prestigious and influential literary awards in the world. A study of each year's nominees and winners should reveal a preference for novels that feature postcolonial themes, and this has become a solid point of debate within the discussions of the awards' postcolonial status. The award represents a paradoxical attitude towards national and international identities. Many critics, such as Nicola Pitchford (2000), Graham Huggan (2001) and Richard Todd (1996), have pointed out the history of the Booker-McConnell Company, the founder of the prize, in colonial business. Established in the nineteenth century, the company transported sugar and later built its own plantations in Guyana, and therefore could, as Pitchford argues, represent a "typical colonial business" (696). In order to illustrate this contradictory reputation of the Man Booker prize as a postcolonial literary patron, Graham Huggan, in *The Post-Colonial Exotic*, cites the following poem by David Dabyeen about Booker as a cruel plantation owner abusing his female workforce:

Wuk, nuttin bu wuk

Maan noon an night nuttin bu wuk

Booker own me patacake

Booker own me pickni.

Pain, nuttin bu pain

Waan million tous'ne acre cane. ("Song of the Creole Gang Women", qtd. in Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* 2001, 106)

In the 1950s, during the time of post-war decolonisations, the Booker Company abandoned the manufacturing processes in Guyana and redirected its attention towards business and commercial concerns within England, among them the effort to create a cultured reputation. In the early 1960s it established a book division, which bought copyrights of popular fiction authors, such as Agatha Christie and Ian Fleming. Because this proved to be a lucrative business, the company found the Booker Prize for literature in English a few years later (Huggan, *Post-Colonial Exotic* 2001, 107). This was an attempt to establish the Booker Company as a household name, and to promote its investments within the United Kingdom (696).

This study questions this paradoxical identity that the Man Booker Prize represents through a quantitative analysis of its shortlisted nominees and winners. It questions what the Booker Prize novels and their authors reveal about the award's preference for a certain type of British identity. Moreover, through two case studies of awarded novels, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), it examines the critical receptions of the identities these novels represent. With the inclusion of the United States to the eligible countries, a definite ending of the prize's distinct 'British' feature may be noted, a prospect that has received much debate in the media recently. Therefore, it is relevant to examine the types of British national and regional identities present in the prize before 2014, and what the role of the postcolonial novel within this representation is.

In his article "The Postcolonial Exotic", Huggan draws upon Pico Iyer's argument about how the Booker company has "evolved into a postcolonial patron:

through its sponsorship it celebrates the hybrid status of an increasingly global culture” (24). Contemporary English literature represents many types of national identities, as a result the United Kingdom’s past status as an Empire and its continuing relationship with its former colonies. “The Booker Prize acknowledges and embraces this plurality”, providing authors the opportunity of “writing back to the former empire” (24). Huggan also responds to Richard Todd’s *Consuming Fictions*. Todd is interested in defining the Booker’s success, and its influence on the literary market, for which he examines the prize’s rules, methods of judging, and how the eligibility of countries manifests itself into the prize. This eligibility is what establishes the Booker Prize as markedly different from American literature, because by incorporating literature of Britain’s former colonies, British literature is pluralist and multicultural (77-78). Todd examines the prevalence of post-colonial authors in the prize up until 1995, and concludes that the incorporation of these authors on the Booker’s shortlist raises Britain’s awareness for a pluralist society through revealing that non-British English language fiction not only means fiction from the United states (83). However, Huggan responds to Iyer’s and Todd’s observations about the raising awareness of the postcolonial novel, by arguing that this prevalence also serves the Booker and its affiliated publishers for commercial gain, which establishes the postcolonial as a commodity that serves as a particular market strategy (“The Postcolonial Exotic” 1994, 24).

As a consequence, a contradiction among postcolonial nominees and winners themselves emerges; Huggan argues that while postcolonial authors wish to subvert the center-margin construction through writing back to the empire, their status as marginal authors evaporates once they are assimilated through the Man Booker Prize into mainstream culture (“The Postcolonial Exotic” 1994, 24). Huggan explains how

exoticism sells, because postcolonial novels offer a different and more exciting view of the world that Western readers are both unfamiliar and fascinated with (26). These cultural differences are transformed into a “tourist spectacle”: and this foregrounding of exoticism within the literary market does not assist to subvert constructions of Otherness, but merely creates “the illusion of cross-cultural reciprocity” (27). As a consequence to this commodification of the exotic, Huggan argues, the postcolonial novel has been transformed into another cliché (27).

Sharon Norris discusses this contradictory element surrounding the Booker Prize from another perspective; she discusses the Bourdieusian theory of corporate sponsorship within the context of the award, in order to reveal how the prize both functions as a site for social reproduction and symbolic violence (139). Pierre Bourdieu was a French thinker who concerned himself with the power dynamics of the cultural, and in this case, literary market. His argument centres around the restrictions that corporate sponsorship imposes on the literary market, which is vital in understanding the foregrounding and excluding of certain themes and identities within the Man Booker Prize. This sponsorship compromises the artistic and intellectual autonomy of the authors, and Norris questions whether the literary award assesses its winners on solely aesthetic grounds, or in relation to particular social values (141). Arguably, these social values are more important, since the Booker McConnell Company has done much to eradicate its reputation as a former colonial business. Norris also provides arguments that reinforce Huggan’s perception of the awards’ use of the exotic as a market commodity, because she argues that the prize has remained conservative in other aspects. Norris emphasises the prevalence of Oxbridge graduates, especially among the judges, but also among the nominated authors, and associates this with the “kudos attached to [this] degree”, because of their high level

of social, cultural and economic capital (145-146). Because of this fairly socially homogenous background within the judges' panel, the basis on which the novels are judged is rendered questionable, which is strongly connected to Bourdieu's criticism about who has the right to make any such judgments about a 'best novel' (147). Whereas the prize can be argued to remain "a site of social reproduction" (147), Norris does point out that some small changes have occurred within the diversity of Booker prize nominees; for instance, she argues that the attitude towards sexuality has become more liberal, with several instances of explicitly gay novels in the shortlists and in 2004 the first openly gay winner Alan Hollinghurst with his novel *The Line of Beauty* (149). Be that as it may, this is only one instance that provides evidence against the rather conservative attitude of the award, and Norris asserts that this suggests that some categories, e.g. (homo)sexuality, are more open for discussion than the categories of class, education and gender (149).

Norris also touches upon another important issue, which is the fact that "[t]o date, only one Scottish novel has ever won (James Kelman's *How Late it Was, How Late*, 1994), and in general, Scottish writers make the Booker Prize shortlist only when there is a Scot on the judging panel" (150). Such statements render the prize's attitudes towards different types of national and regional identity more questionable. Kelman's novel narrates the life of Sammy, an ex-convict, unemployed Glaswegian who finds himself in trouble with the police and subsequently turns blind. The novel is written in the Glaswegian dialect, and the more than four thousand mentions of the word 'fuck' has invigorated fierce discussions around the novel's supposedly vulgar and obscene content. In "How Late It Was for England", Nicola Pitchford further discusses this problematic Scottish presence within the Booker Prize. She uses Kelman's winning novel as a starting point for the debate around the award's attitude

towards different types of national identities. Through the criticism surrounding this novel, she demonstrates the impossibility of celebrating Man Booker Prize winning novels as indicators of British and English identities (694). Moreover, she also emphasizes the importance of Booker controversies in order to comprehend the prize's attitude towards identity, because they reveal how these ideas continue to be articulated through "high culture" (693-694). Booker controversies are debates around nominees and winners that have, for their appearance on the prize, provoked criticism about what they represent. Todd argues that these controversies have "in many respects actually been the making of the Booker Prize" (64). Critics and reviewers each year claim that the Booker jury has made the wrong decisions in accessing the contestants, but because of the attention brought to these criticisms, Todd observes the prize's popularity is manifested by "getting it wrong" (64).

The Man Booker Prize was founded during the time in which English identity within a class based system was being questioned and no longer represented what it was before the world wars; the rise of the welfare state lowered the boundaries between classes and allowed for more participants in higher education, and the increasing globalisation resulted in Britain's growth as a multicultural society. On 4 October 1968, the Booker Prize issued its first press release, in which the company expressed its hopes that henceforward authors would "not need to be censored, imprisoned or labelled outrageous and controversial before hitting the headlines" (qtd. in Norris 143). This statement suggests the Prize's openness towards a pluralist, multicultural identity, as an award that assesses every type of identity equally. However, as has been discussed above, this attitude remains very conservative in many areas and is highly controlled through corporate sponsorship. Indeed, as was suggested in the *Sunday Telegraph* in 1992, it appears that Booker nominees were

selected on the basis that “no shortlist would be complete without a writer with an exotic name for the TV presenter to mispronounce on the big night” (qtd. in Pitchford 699). This suggests the paramount importance of a pluralist shortlist of national identities as part of a staging embedded in the values of Booker as an institution. The prize, established within a cosmopolitan society with London at its centre, in an attempt to establish the Booker Company as a household phrase and to obliterate its colonial heritage, raises some interesting questions about the identities it prize represents, and how much of this identity is inherently British or English.

With the Man Booker Prize’s expansion in 2014 to include nominees from America as well, the question is raised about whether or not this Britishness continues to remain relevant to the award itself, with the only criteria being that the novels are published in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the fact that England, opposed the other parts of the British Isles, represents the majority of the judges panel and nominees, raises questions about the values attached to both Englishness and Britishness. As Pitchford notes in accordance with Homi Bhabha’s theory of Otherness, English identity has, both in its colonial and postcolonial period, been constructed through differentiation with the Other (694). Englishness, therefore, is characterised by what it is not, e.g. in how it opposes to what the Other, the exotic, represents. The term Englishness, rather than Britishness, is used here, because by examining the Booker candidates, Englishness is established through comparison with the postcolonial exotic novel, in line with Huggan’s argument, and not through inclusion of the entirety of the British Isles.

To examine what the British identity represents within the Man Booker Prize, a quantitative research will be conducted that examines the type of identities present in shortlists and winners, from the establishment of the Booker Prize up until 2013.

The types of identities that will be considered are national identities, e.g. Ireland and the Commonwealth countries eligible to the prize, and regional identities, for example the prevalence of Englishness opposed to Britishness. Moreover, the genres and settings of the nominated and winning novels will be analysed in order to further comment on the prize's British identity. The data from this analysis will be considered to gain an insight into how these identities are established within the prize, and what this reveals about what types of identity the prize represents.

To supplement this analysis, it is of equal importance to examine individual instances of Booker novels themselves. A comprehension of how exactly these identities are established, can only be realised through a close analysis of case studies. This thesis contains two studies of novels that have won the Booker Prize and have generated debate around judges and critics because of the identity that they represent. Their responses are important to take into consideration, because they reveal how this type of British identity is perceived and established in high culture and the media, and how the Booker novels confirm or oppose these views. The first study examines Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which received the award in 1981. It was subsequently awarded the title 'Booker of Bookers' in 1993, representing the best novel of the Booker's twenty-five year history, and was elected as 'The Best of the Booker' for the prize's fortieth anniversary celebration in 2008. Rushdie is Indian-born British and has been shortlisted three other times after his win in 1981. The amounts of praise and celebration surrounding this novel render it a noteworthy instance within the Booker's history, because it could possibly represent a type of identity that the prize ultimately favours above all other instances. *Midnight's Children* serves as an example of the type of postcolonial identity that the Man Booker Prize represents. It is thus worth considering what this novel continues to be

praised for when it is discussed in the context of the prize, to gain an insight into how the award perceives Britain's multicultural identities. Secondly, James Kelman's *How Late it Was, How Late*, already briefly introduced above, will be discussed. This novel represents a Scottish and a lower class identity, and is an important example of both the manner in which Booker controversies are established and responded to, and in the discussion of how marginal identities are represented within the Man Booker Prize's British identity.

These novels are relevant for what they represent in terms of identity and how these identities are critically responded to. Therefore, the close analysis of the plot and content of primary literary sources will not be taken into consideration in this discussion. As a substitution for this serve the responses that judges and critics have made to the novels, and therefore articles and reviews from newspapers are important to this study. Because the majority of critical debates about identity within the Man Booker Prize serve to gain an understanding of the mechanisms of corporate sponsorship (Norris), and to comprehend the notion of the postcolonial exotic as a commodity to the consumer market (Todd and Huggan), in this study they are relevant only in creating a context to the data provided by the quantitative analysis and case studies. The quantitative analysis that examines the manifestation of the different types of identities, alongside the responses that judges and critics offer to the novels and authors, are the main body of this research. The first chapter features and discusses the quantitative analysis. The next two chapters each discuss one case study, in the order in which they were introduced above. In the conclusion, the findings will be combined and discussed in light of each other, in order to create a final overview about the manifestation and reception of British identity in the Man Booker Prize.

Chapter 1: Quantitative Analysis of National and Regional Identities Represented in the Man Booker Prize Shortlists and Winners

In order to create an overview of the types of identities present in the Man Booker Prize's selection of shortlisted nominees and winners, this study conducts a quantitative analysis. It focuses on national and regional identities. As discussed in the introduction, many claims about the identities that are represented within the prize are made, but a complete overview of these has not yet been provided. Therefore, it is relevant to closely examine identities present among the shortlists and winners, in order to validate or subvert certain claims. This quantitative analysis examines the identities present from the first time the prize was awarded, in 1969, up until 2013, the last year of the prize's exclusion to the United States. This chapter charts both the nominated authors and novels of each year's shortlists, in an attempt to create a complete portrayal of the variety of identities.

This analysis encompasses the shortlists between 1969 and 2013, which includes the 2010 'Lost Man Booker Prize.' This prize was awarded to commemorate novels of 1970 that had been excluded from the prize, after a change in the prizes' rules from awarding novels retrospectively to awarding each year's 'best' publication. This quantitative analysis does not, however, include the 1993 or the 2008 nominations for the twenty-fifth and fortieth year anniversary 'Best of Booker' celebrations, as these will be discussed in the next chapter in relation to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), which won both awards. While this analysis examines forty-six shortlists, the prize was awarded to two authors in the years 1974 and 1992, which renders a total of forty-eight winners. Moreover, while each year should conventionally have six nominees in its shortlists, a number of exceptions do

exist. Shortlists have been expanded to include seven nominees, but have at other instances contained five, four, or even, in 1975, two novels. This provides a final amount of 267 examined entries. This study assesses the identities of authors and novels through reading biographies and summaries provided on the Man Booker Prize website, and reviews in newspapers, journals, and readers' blogs. The findings of this research remain an attempt, though, and do not provide a fully accurate account of identities. Because this study does not have a second examiner to validate the claims that are made, the possibility of mistakes in both measuring and calculating the identities remains. Moreover, identities can never completely be measured objectively, as, for example, some might read a novel as postcolonial, while others may interpret it differently. It is also not within the scope of this thesis to closely examine every single nomination. Consequently, a novel may discuss racial issues through a marginal character, which would not have led it to be included as a postcolonial novel in this analysis.

Firstly, this analysis examines the national and regional identities of shortlisted authors and each year's winners. Authors are divided into national identities, and in order to assess the regional identities of British authors, a second analysis distinguishes between British identities. While some authors are easily categorised, such as Ian McEwan as British and English, or Thomas Keneally as Australian, some national and regional identities are more problematic to define. Some authors have double nationalities, and others represent their marginal ethnicities in their writings while they have adopted the British nationality. As a consequence, this analysis does not categorise the authors in national identities based solely on their nationalities. J.M. Coetzee, for example, is listed as South African, even though he migrated to Australia in 2002 and adopted Australian citizenship in 2006. This

decision is based on the fact that Coetzee has lived in South Africa for the majority of his life, and represents this country in his novels. Kiran Desai, who represents her Indian ethnicity in her writing, is listed as Indian, even though she has lived in the United States since she was a teenager.

Authors listed as British represent identities that are similarly difficult to define. Therefore, a second analysis among all British authors is made to represent their regional identities and ethnicities. This includes the distinction between Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and English, but also British subjects born in the ex-colonies and immigrants who have become British. Salman Rushdie, for example, born in Bombay, acquired British citizenship. He is therefore listed first as 'British', and in the second table, which differentiates between British identities, as 'Indian.' The identities in this table represent the authors' places of birth, which may or may not coincide with a former/double nationality. This is similarly problematic. Lawrence Durrell is listed under a British identity as 'Indian', because this was his place of birth. However, he was the son of British colonials, and therefore not of Indian ethnicity. Zadie Smith, the daughter of an English father and a Jamaican immigrant mother, is listed as 'English', even though this does not fully apprehend her ethnic identity, which she does represent in her writing about racial issues. Thus, while for the majority of authors, their national and regional identities are easily defined, the generalisations this analysis makes in order to create a concrete overview of these identities, also fails to fully represent the complex identity of others. However, these generalisations must be made in order to gain an insight into the award's national and regional identities. This problematic aspect of distinguishing between complex identities, however, is valuable in itself. It represents the difficulties that arise in

assessing authors in literary awards based on the ethnicity that they represent, as this ethnicity is never straightforwardly defined and slippery to interpretation.

“Figure 1” illustrates the national identities of all shortlisted authors, and “Figure 2” differentiates between the multiple British identities. The percentages provided after each listing indicate their representation within the shortlist (“Figure 1”), and within the British national identity (“Figure 2”).

National Identities of Shortlisted Authors

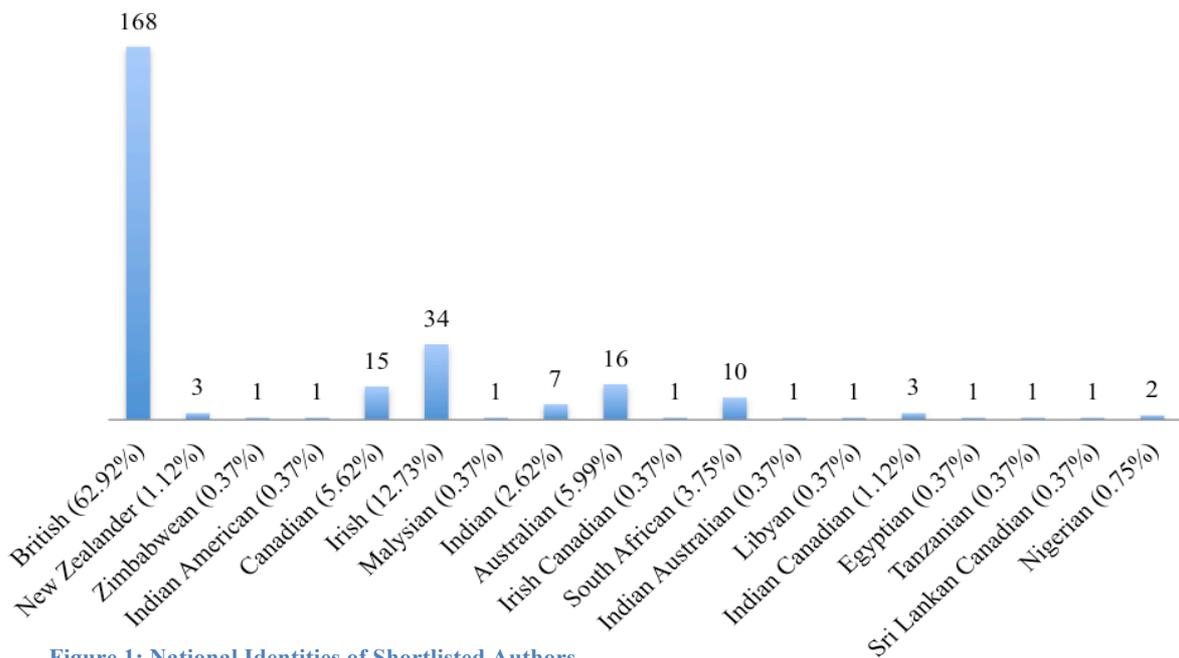


Figure 1: National Identities of Shortlisted Authors

British Identities of Shortlisted Authors



Immediately apparent is the prevalence of British authors above any other national identity, and the majority of English authors within this identity. The shortlist consists of 168 British authors, which entails that ninety-nine authors represent the remainder of countries eligible for the Man Booker Prize. 109 of these British authors are English, which encompasses 40.82% of the entire shortlist. This group is significantly larger than any other identity, as the second largest is Irish, which represents 12.73% of the prize. It signifies that, as 40% of all nominated authors are English, a representative shortlist should contain two or three English authors. It confirms the fact that the Man Booker Prize is indeed dominated by Englishness, at least in regards to its authors.

The table charting the national identities somewhat subverts the notion that the prize, as discussed in the introduction, favours a postcolonial representation of identities. The largest national identities, apart from British, are Irish, Canadian, Australian and South African. Its authors, although from former colonies of the United Kingdom, represent white, Western identities. The largest non-Western identity is Indian, which consists of seven authors, which is 2.62% of the entire shortlist. Other non-Western identities, such as Nigerian, Malaysian and Zimbabwean, constitute a minor part of the shortlist.

The data in “Figure 2” both confirm and subvert this representation. As already noted, English identity dominates, although other British identities remain unrepresented. The shortlists feature twelve Scottish authors, which represents 7.12% of all British identities and 4.49% of all the shortlists, and encompasses the second largest group within the British identity. Thus, the difference in nominations between English and any other group is substantial. Nine Welsh authors were shortlisted, 3.36% of the British identities and 3.37% of all shortlists. Northern Ireland represents

the most marginalised group within the United Kingdom itself, as it consists of only five shortlisted authors, which is 2.98% of the British identities and 1.87% of all shortlisted authors. One of the Northern Irish authors is Brian Moore, who was nominated thrice. Moore migrated to California in 1966, before he wrote any of his novels that would later be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Although these novels, most significantly *Lies of Silence* (1990), represent Northern-Irish identities, the most representative author of Northern Irish identity within the prize was not resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their publications. This emphasises the slipperiness of selecting authors for the identities they represent. Similarly, authors not belonging to certain identities may still represent them in their writings. The Canadian author Yann Martel, for example, won the prize in 2002 with *Life if Pi*, an exotic adventure novel about an Indian boy.

Another interesting occurrence appeared while assessing the identities of the shortlisted authors. While the Man Booker Prize is acclaimed as one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the world, which guarantees fame and a rise of sales for its authors, some novels have gone out of print since their appearance on the shortlist, and one nominee appears to have been lost in history entirely. This is Terence Wheeler, who was shortlisted in 1970 with *The Conjunction*. Not even the Man Booker Prize website provides any concrete information about this author, as his biography page mentions no more than his year of birth and the names of the three novels he has published (“T W Wheeler” par. 1). Judging from his name, though, it should be fairly safe to assume that Wheeler is a British author, but as no other information could be found about his regional identity, he is listed within the British identities as ‘unknown’. *The Conjunction* has long gone out of print, and only on a reader’s blog some information about the novel was provided. Jean Baird, a blogger,

writes about her difficulty finding this novel, and she mentions that it was never published in paperback (par. 9). Baird reveals that *The Conjunction* is set in 1962, and its plot discusses military tensions in India (par. 10). She is not surprised that the novel has been forgotten in history, though, as she finds the narrative and writing style confusing and “can’t believe” she has “read the whole thing” (par. 11). Another blogger, Benjamin Judge, mentions the same difficulties in obtaining a copy of the novel and he critiques *The Conjunction* as “a bit racist” (par. 7). Taking these two reviews as the only concrete information available, *The Conjunction* is presumably a colonial narrative. The case of Wheeler provides two interesting perspectives into the Man Booker Prize. Firstly, it demonstrates that the literary award cannot fully guarantee success for its authors. Secondly, taking the opinions of these two bloggers as a starting point, the judges themselves might not always make the ‘right’ choices in assessing novels, as *The Conjunction* seems to have acquired no public interest and appears to contain an offensive attitude towards race.

The identities of shortlisted authors should be compared to the winners, in order to make further observations about the over-representation of English identity and the under-representation of others. “Figure 3” illustrates the national identities present in the Man Booker Prize winning authors, and “Figure 4” provides a distinction between the British identities.

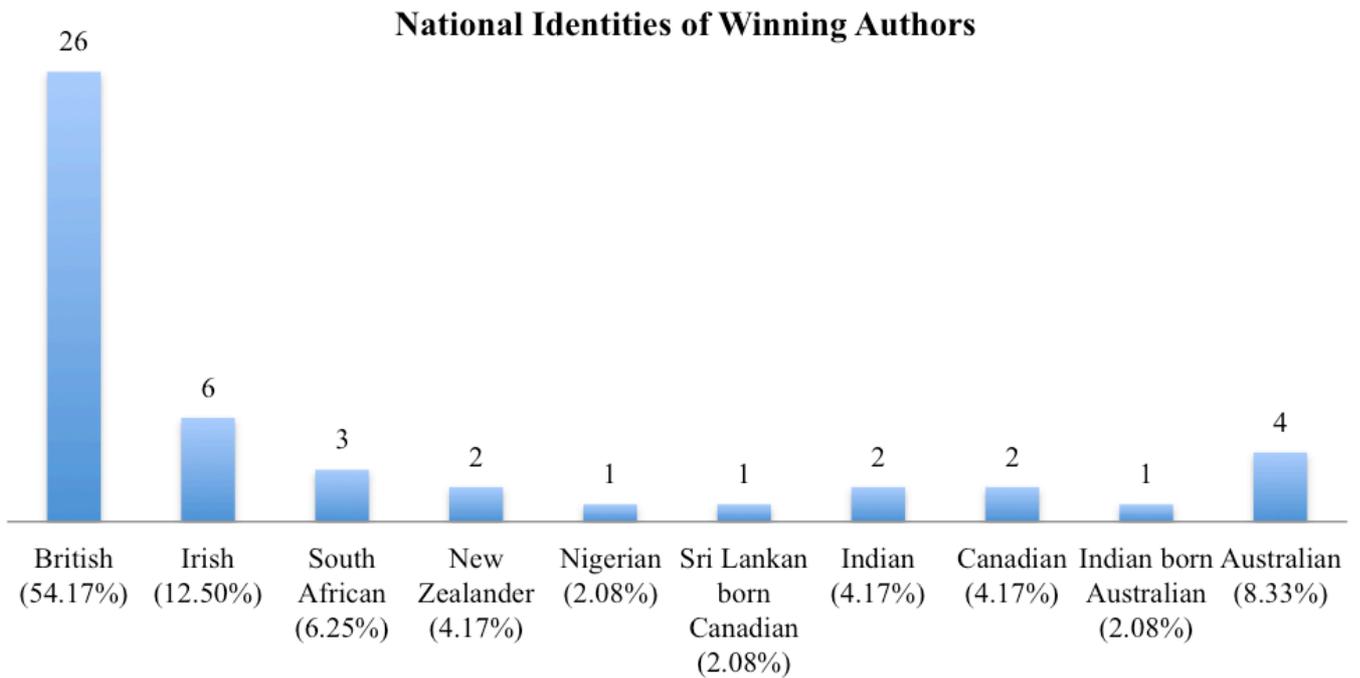


Figure 3: National Identities of Winning Authors

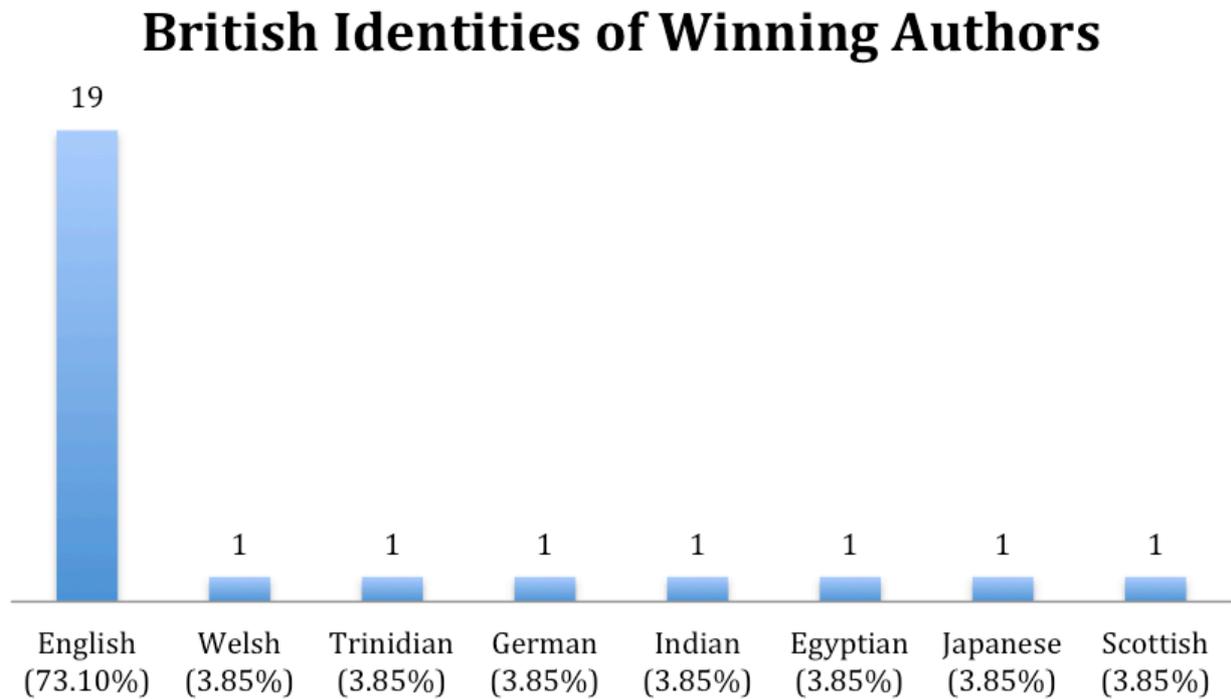


Figure 4: British Identities of Winning Authors

What is again remarkable is the prevalence of British authors, twenty-six, which constitutes of more than half of all winners (54.1%), as well as English authors within this identity; nineteen English authors were awarded the Man Booker Prize, which encompasses 73.10% of the British winners, and 39.58% of all winning authors. This strongly reinforces the bias towards English identity within the prize. Irish (six authors) and Australian (four authors) are the two other largest groups, but the divide between these and the prevailing British/English identity is evident. Moreover, many non-Western national identities present in the shortlist have been lost. The Sri-Lankan born Canadian author is Michael Ondaatje, who won the prize in 1992 with his novel *The English Patient*. Descendant from European colonial settlers and having adopted the Canadian nationality, however, Ondaatje does not straightforwardly represent a non-white, non-Western identity. Among the authors that do represent this identity is the Nigerian Ben Okri, whose novel *The Famished Road* won in 1991. However, these occurrences are rare, and the one Nigerian, two Indian, and the one Indian-born Australian author, as exceptions to the English and Western-identity favoured bias, all emphasise this rule.

Equally biased is the distinction between British identities of the winning authors. Any non-English British representing identity occurs once, which reinforces the bias towards English authors. Moreover, many of the shortlisted British identities are also lost. The Egyptian born British author is Penelope Lively, whose novel *Moon Tiger* won the award in 1987. She is the daughter of white, British parents and thus not ethnically Egyptian. Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*, 1981), Kazuo Ishiguro (*The Remains of the Day*, 1989) and V.S. Naipaul (*In a Free State*, 1971) are the only British, Man Booker Prize winning authors who represent non-Western identities.

This, in accordance with the marginalised appearances of such groups in the shortlists, fails to adequately reflect Britain's contemporary pluralist society.

“Figure 4” also demonstrates how British does not fully reflect the entirety of the British Isles in the Man Booker Prize. Already apparent in the shortlisted authors, the fact that only one Welsh (Bernice Rubens' 1980 novel *The Elected Member*), one Scottish (James Kelman's 1984 novel *How Late it Was, How Late*) and none Northern Irish authors have been awarded the prize, demonstrates the fact that Britishness and Englishness, in terms of authors, are almost interchangeable categories. English authors, thus, are most likely to be awarded the prize. Less likely, but still remarkable, is the likelihood of Irish authors to win. Ireland is certainly the second biggest group that is represented within the prize, both in the shortlists (thirty-four authors) and among its winners (six authors).

An article in *The Guardian* discusses this “unnoticed bias of the Man Booker Prize” towards an English identity, while marginalising its other regional identities (Bisset par. 1). Alan Bissett (2012) argues that when a critically acclaimed English author, such as Ian McEwan or Julian Barnes, is excluded from the shortlists, it raises heated discussions (par. 3). In contrast, when critically acclaimed Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish authors do not make an appearance in the shortlists, it remains unnoticed (par. 3). For example, Irvine Welsh' 1993 novel *Trainspotting*, which is nowadays regarded as an important work of Scottish literature, was excluded from the 1993 shortlist after two judges threatened to resign (par. 2). Bissett supports this theory through using statistics: Scotland encapsulates 0.2% of the entire Commonwealth population (par. 6), and with one Scot as 2.08% of all winning authors, this identity is essentially overrepresented with regards to population. However, England represents 2.5% of the Commonwealth population (par. 6), and

with nineteen instances it represents 39.58% of all winning authors. This, to Bissett, represents a “huge, undeniable bias” (par. 6). Bissett also argues that “Booker is far more generous to former British colonies than it is to home Celts” (par. 4). However, the tables above demonstrate that this is not entirely true. Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and India have won the award multiple times, but, because these provide only six to two authors, the large divide between English and non-English remains. Furthermore, other African, Asian or Caribbean Commonwealth identities that have been shortlisted, have never won. Thus, it appears that merely a selection of Commonwealth countries is represented among the winning authors, which does not represent the entirety of non-English identities. Through the marginalisation of non-English, British identities, it does emphasise a certain ranking of occurrence within the prize, which consists firstly of English Authors, secondly of Western, non-British identities, such as Irish and Australian, and lastly of non-Western Commonwealth, Welsh, Scottish and Northern-Irish identities.

The prevalence of English authors, though, is somewhat undermined through a close examination of authors that were shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize at multiple instances. “Figure 5” contains the national identities of all authors that were nominated for the Booker Prize more than once, and “Figure 6” distinguishes between the British identities of these authors. The percentages, provided between brackets after every entrance, indicate the amounts of each identity within in their own categories. “Figure 7” and “Figure 8” provide the percentages that authors with multiple nominations occupy among their own identities.

National Identities of Authors Nominated Multiple Times

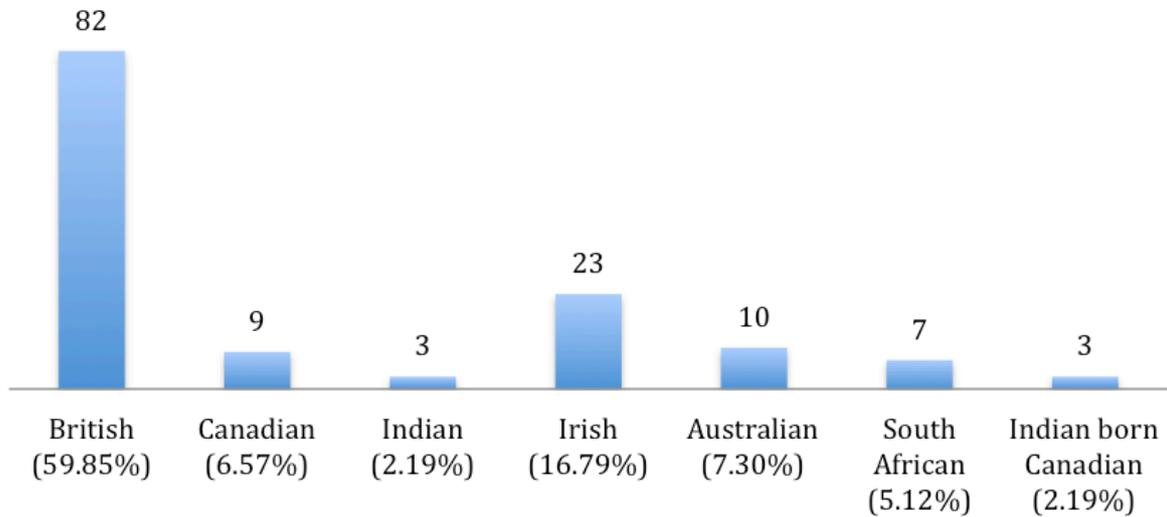


Figure 5: National Identities of Authors Nominated Multiple Times

British Identities of Authors Nominated Multiple Times

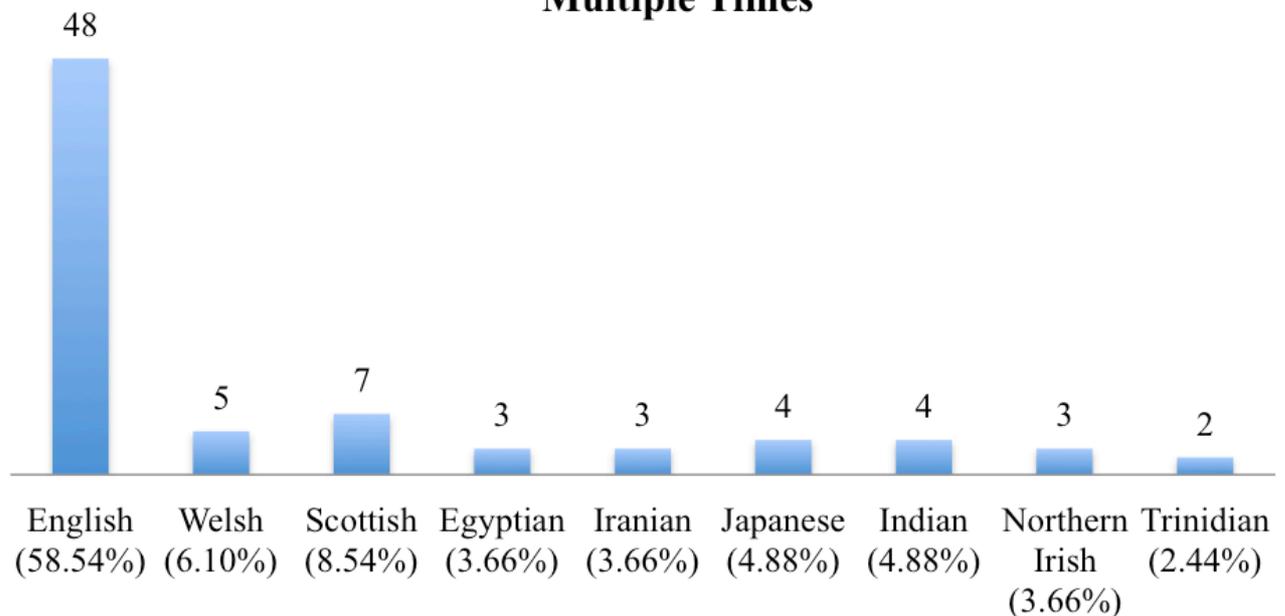


Figure 6: British Identities of Authors Nominated Multiple Times

Percentages National Identities of Multiple Nominated Authors

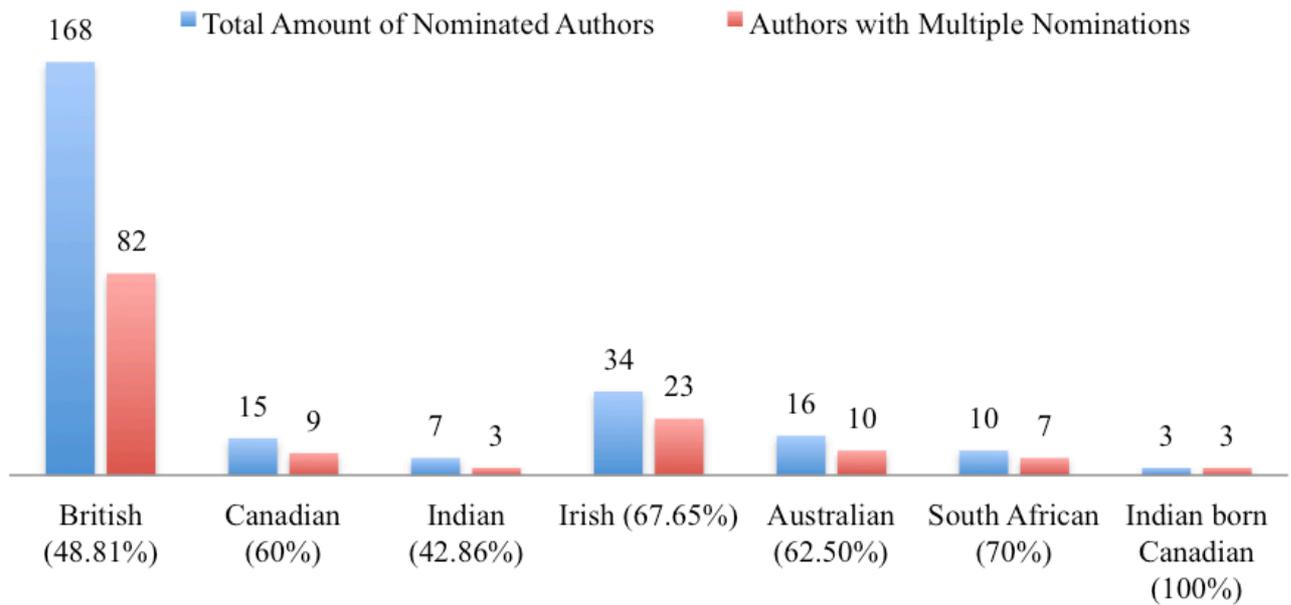


Figure 7: Percentages of National Identities of Authors with Multiple Nominations

Percentages British Identities of Multiple Nominated Authors

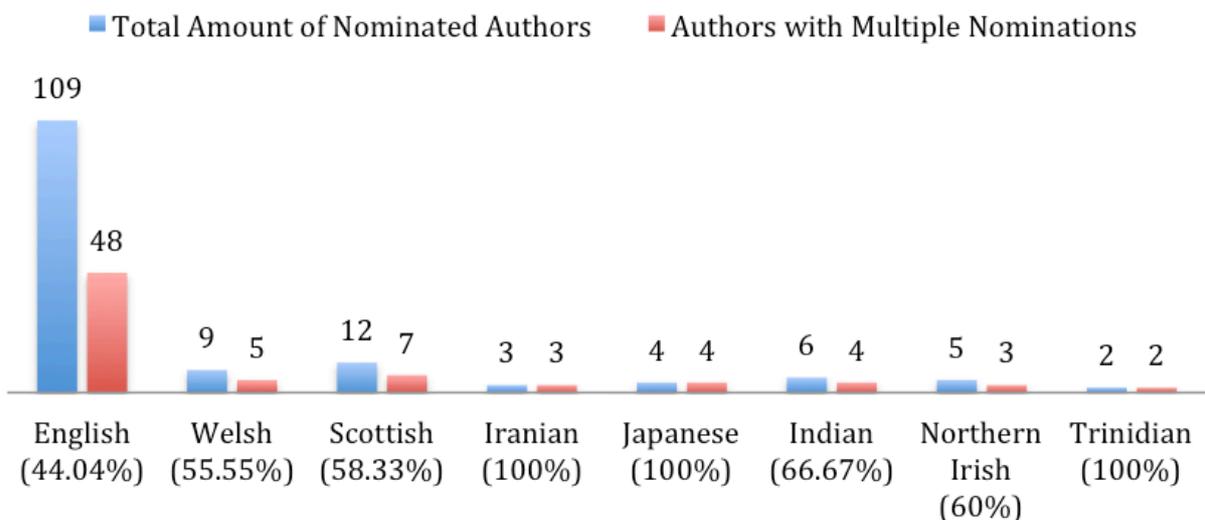


Figure 8: Percentages of British Identities of Authors with Multiple Nominations

Authors who were nominated the most often are Iris Murdoch (Irish, and nominated six times, in 1969, 1970, 1973, 1985, 1987 and won in 1978), Beryl Bainbridge (English and nominated five times, in 1973, 1974, 1990, 1996 and 1998), Margaret Atwood (Canadian, and nominated five times in 1986, 1989, 1996, 2003 and won in 2000) and Ian McEwan (English and nominated five times, in 1981, 1993, 2001, 2007 and won in 1998).

Firstly, the prevalence of British and English authors is once again remarkable. This may be expected, considering the majority of all shortlisted authors is English. However, as discussed in the introduction, Sharon Norris argued how the Man Booker Prize, while showcasing a more progressive attitude towards sexuality and extending the literary canon to represent a variety of cultures, has remained conservative in other areas, such as class and education (p. 149). This conservative attitude, as this quantitative analysis has proven, should be expanded to national and regional identities as well. “Figure 1” provides a variety of eighteen national identities, and “Figure 5” shows that only seven of those identities are represented by authors who have acquired multiple nominations. The same is applicable to “Figure 2”, which provides a variety of twenty different entries of British identities, while “Figure 6” shows that only eight of those represent identities whose authors have reoccurred at multiple shortlists. Furthermore, the majority of non-English entries of authors with multiple nominations are represented through a single author; for example, the Japanese born British author is Kazuo Ishiguro, who was nominated four times (in 1986, 2000, 2005 and won in 1989). What this demonstrates is firstly the fact that, while the statistics in “Figure 1” and “Figure 2” may provide a portrayal of the prize that is relatively various, some of the non-English identities are represented merely by one author who was nominated in multiple shortlists, which somewhat

subverts this variety. Secondly, it draws attention to the fact that national and regional identities, which contain a variety of authors who acquired multiple nominations, are more conservative categories. In other words, the Booker appears to be more inclined to nominate English authors that have already made a previous appearance in the prize. It is thus less likely to nominate beginning or less well-known English authors, which creates a conservative attitude towards this group. The same could be argued for other Western, non-English groups, because the majority of authors that represent South-African, Canadian, Australian, Irish, Welsh, Scottish and Northern-Irish identities have also received multiple nominations. Adopting a more conservative attitude towards assessing novels by Western authors, thus, also reinforces the notion that non-Western identities appear in the prize as tokens. These authors, as tokens, may appear in the Man Booker Prize not so much for the literary merit of their novels, but for the Other and postcolonial identities their writing represents. Through adopting a different method of assessing non-Western authors and novels, the prize reinforces what Huggan identifies as an “Anglocentric discourse of benevolent paternalism” (*The Post-colonial Exotic* 2001, 111).

However, in an attempt to gain a more complete overview of the identities present within the prize, this analysis must also take the topics and settings of the shortlisted and winning novels into regard. To assess British and postcolonial identities, this analysis has examined six categories. Firstly, the postcolonial encompasses any type of narrative that displays colonial or postcolonial discourses, narratives that feature the exotic, issues of race, and narratives to which postcolonial theory can be applied. This encompasses straightforwardly postcolonial novels such as Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland* (2013) and Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), but it also incorporates novels such as Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The*

Remains of the Day (1989), which engages with postcolonial theory through portraying Britain's decline as an empire. Moreover, not exotic, but equally postcolonial, are the narratives of Irish independence, such as J.G. Farrell's *Troubles* (1970), which won the 'Lost Man Booker Prize' in 2010. It does not, however, contain narratives about the World Wars, even though these are also mediated through themes of empire. The second category examines the amount of immigrant narratives present within the prize. Immigrant narratives are also listed in the postcolonial category, but as these narratives serve to provide a depiction of contemporary, multicultural societies, it is relevant to approach this sub-category with more attention.

Thirdly, because of the prevalence of these novels in the shortlists, the historical novel should be analysed. This analysis asserts that historical narratives are those that are mediated by events in the past, and adheres to a strict definition of the historical genre and setting, in an attempt to create well-defined boundaries. Any novel that is, either in its entirety or as a substantial part, set thirty years before its publication date is considered a historical novel. Marked as historical novels, but also differentiated by their own category, are novels that discuss the First and Second World War. Novels included in this category are not only war narratives, but also narratives that contain events at the backdrop of either wars, or are strongly influenced by the consequences of these. The next category encompasses historical novels that discuss British history and are set within the United Kingdom. The best-known examples of these are Hilary Mantel's winning novels *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring up the Bodies* (2012). The last category contains all novels that feature the United Kingdom as a main or substantial setting, either contemporary or historical narratives, and does not include Britain's former colonies. "Figure 9" contains the

amount of shortlisted novels that correspond to one or more of these categories, and “Figure 10” contains all winning novels. The percentages between brackets indicate the area they occupy within all 267 shortlisted novels (“Figure 9”) and within all forty-eight winning novels (“Figure 10”).

Shortlisted Novels Genre and Settings

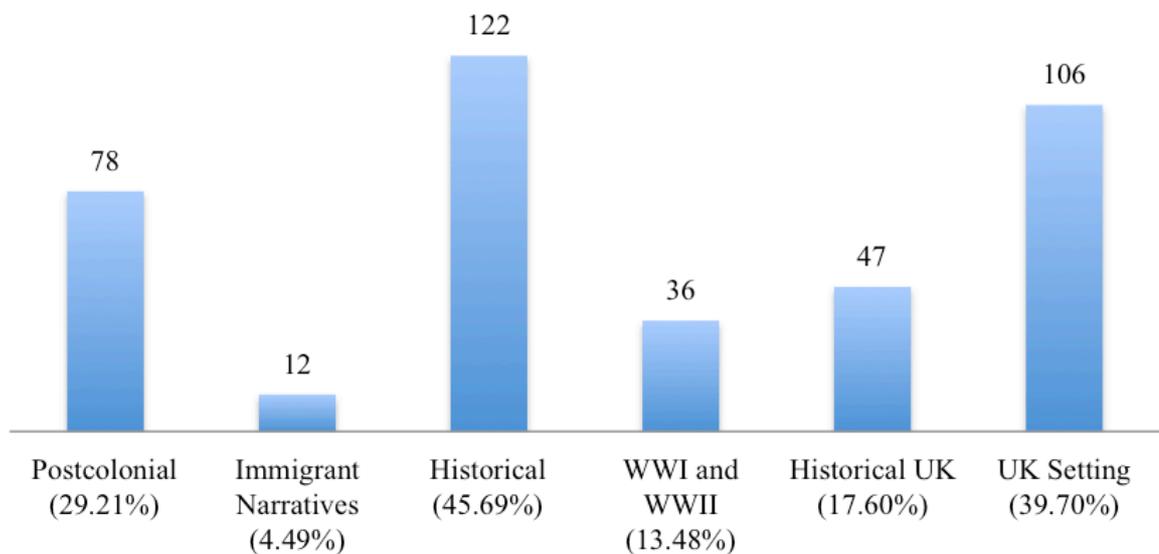


Figure 9: Genres and Settings of Shortlisted Novels

Winning Novels Genre and Settings

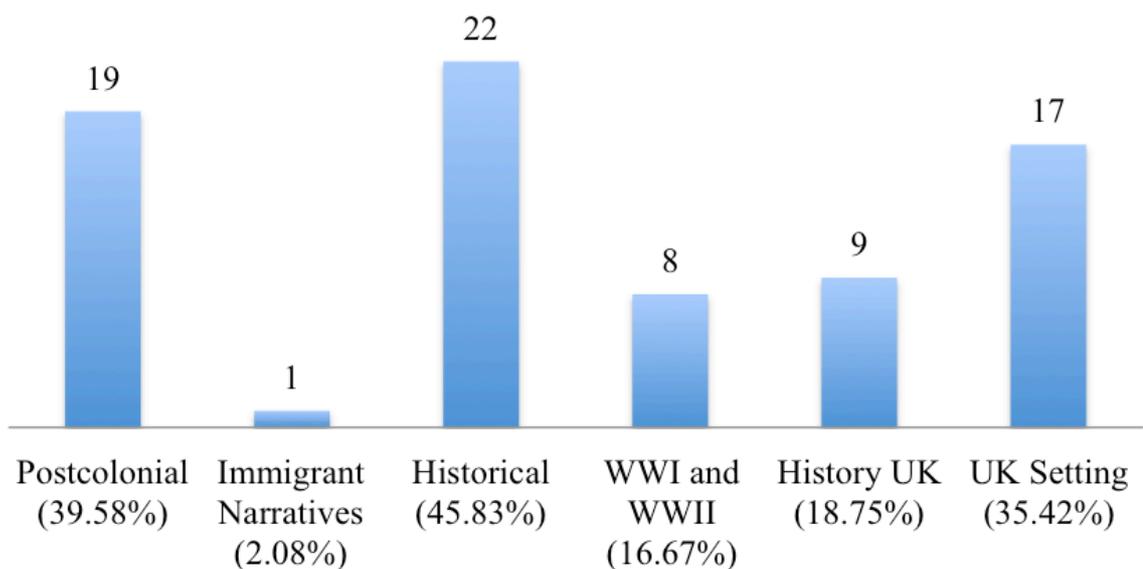


Figure 10: Genres and Setting of Winning Novels

Seventy-eight shortlisted novels feature postcolonial narratives, which represents almost one-third of all shortlisted novels. This, more so than the appearance of authors from marginal identities, supports the fact that the Man Booker Prize demonstrates a strong favour towards the postcolonial. It indicates that nearly two novels within each year's shortlist discuss this topic, and it is thus understandable that this has attracted critical attention. Postcolonial narratives encompass 39.58% of all forty-eight winning novels, which is higher than the place they occupy in the shortlist, and this thus demonstrates a certain favour in the awarding of these novels. The fact that, in contrast, only twelve immigrant narratives have been shortlisted, and only one of these (Kiran Desai's 2006 novel *The Inheritance of Loss*) has won, provides evidence for the fact that while exotic narratives are popular, postcolonial narratives that reflect the contemporary pluralist society of the West remain fairly underrepresented.

The high amount of novels with settings in the United Kingdom reflects the prevalence of British shortlisted and winning authors. However, this does not imply that these narratives all feature Britain's contemporary society. Almost half of all shortlisted novels contain historical narratives, thirty-six of which surround the World Wars, and seventy-four of which are set in the United Kingdom. Their appearances among winning novels represents a similar division, with twenty-two winning historical narratives, eight war narratives, and nine that discuss British history. Together, the awarded postcolonial and historical narratives represent almost the entirety of all winning novels, although it must be noted that some postcolonial narratives are also listed as historical narratives. *The Remains of the Day*, for example, was published in 1989 but is set in the 1920s to 1950s, which renders it, alongside a postcolonial narrative, also a historical novel.

Genres and settings provide evidence for the fact that British identity in the Man Booker Prize is for a substantial part mediated through what it is not, or what it was in the past. In her article “The Politics of Loss”, Ronit Frenkel discusses the prevalence of Indian and South African authors. She argues that such narratives fulfil Britain’s stereotypes through postcolonial themes of suffering, oppression of women, violence, racial prejudices, and corruption (80). When these countries are represented through narratives of perpetual suffering, it reinforces the notion of third world victimhood and settles postcolonial narratives as places of bitterness and suffering through determinism. This represents such countries, as a result to colonialism and racism, as places of loss, and it renders postcolonial narratives as discourses that are controlled by the inability to process such traumas (80-85).

This quantitative analysis confirms and contributes to Frenkel’s argument, because of the fact that loss, in terms of the Man Booker Prize, must not only be understood as trauma and suffering as a result to colonialism. Loss, because of the prevalence of historical narratives, also signifies a loss of Britain’s past culture and the major interest in British heritage. Because of the favourability of postcolonial and historical narratives, it is apparently more attractive to nominate and award narratives about what the contemporary society does not represent, than to what it does represent, such as pluralism through immigrant narratives. Identities of the Man Booker Prize, then, are both mediated through nostalgia for the past and through differentiation with other cultures. These representations, however, are carefully controlled by nominating particular cultural identities. A conservative selection of Western authors controls Britishness through the bias towards English authors and the marginalisation of other British identities. Through the selection of non-Western

authors as tokens, it appears that the prize manifests identity through differentiation and the consumption of the exotic.

The next chapter examines this consumption of the exotic and its representation in the Man Booker Prize through the case study of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Chapter three examines the marginalisation of non-English British identities through the discussion of Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*.

Chapter 2: Case Study - The Exotic Identities of Salman Rushdie and His Novel

Midnight's Children

The first case study examines the critical reception of Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981). This is a historical and postcolonial novel, and is set in Bombay, India. The narrator, Saleem Sanai, is one of the children born at the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947, when India gained independence from British rule. Starting in 1915, Saleem's tale, written in the style of magical realism, follows India's colonial history and the country's struggles after gaining independence. Apart from winning the Man Booker Prize in 1981, it won the prize's 'Booker of Bookers' competition for its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1993 to commemorate the best of Booker winners. It also received the title 'The Best of the Booker' for the prize's fortieth anniversary in 2008, which allowed the public to vote on a selection of six of the best Booker Prize novels to date. However, it was not always guaranteed that Rushdie would win the award. 1981 judge Hermione Lee explains that *Midnight's Children* was "by no means an easy winner" (par. 27). Rushdie won by three votes to two, even though the chair, Malcolm Bradbury, in favour of D. M. Thomas' *White Hotel*, tried to argue that he should have the over-ruling vote as chair. After winning, though, Rushdie celebrated instant success for his depiction of the exotic. Rushdie was nominated twice more, with *Shame* in 1983, and the *Satanic Verses* in 1988. As a result to this *Midnight's Children* success, which established Rushdie's status as one of the most important postcolonial authors, it is worth examining what their identities entail, in order to apprehend the significance of postcolonial novels and authors within the British identity the Man Booker Prize represents.

Because of the novel's success, Rushdie now represents one of the most influential postcolonial authors. Stephen Levin argues that Rushdie has become the embodiment of postcolonial literary practice, and is often used as a symbol of authority on postcolonial systems (487). However, the praise of *Midnight's Children*, as Levin argues, celebrates the universal aspects of postcolonial theory, which obscures the novel's specific regional elements. These attempts to transform the novel into an international symbol of the postcolonial, or "the global novel", deny its specific iconography (487). In other words, such readings deny the specific local aspects of the novel to create a universal embodiment of postcolonial themes. They transform *Midnight's Children* into an international image "of inclusive cosmopolitanism", which reflects a hegemonic process of the West ascribing a universal postcolonial identity to ex-colonies (488). Rushdie himself dismisses the global, universal postcolonial literature as "a figment of the imperial imagination" (qtd. in Huggan, "The Postcolonial Exotic" 1994, 25). This entails that any such universal identities among postcolonial Man Booker Prize novels are constructed. For winning the 'Booker of Bookers' at the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1993, judges W.L. Webb and David Holloway praised *Midnight's Children* through this approach; they stated that the novel contains "a magical element echoing the work of South American novelists" (qtd. in Huggan, "The Postcolonial Exotic" 1994, 28). Huggan identifies this as a "double commodification" of the novel, because through aligning it with the works of South American novelists, it not only emphasises the appeal to the novel's foreignness, but also markets Rushdie's magical realism, a style frequently attached to South American literature, within a system of global, foreign literature (28). The marker of magical realism is used to align Rushdie's novel with other types of foreign literatures, imposing a constructed, shared identity on these works.

Shortly after its publication, a review of *Midnight's Children* appeared in the *New York Review of Books* by Robert Towers (1981), an American critic and novelist. Towers situates the novel within foreign systems of religion: “though written by a Muslim and concerned at considerable length with the militant (and militaristic) Muslim state of Pakistan, *Midnight's Children* impressed me as profoundly Hindu in its sensibility” (par. 1). Towers then lists the aesthetics of the Hindu religion, which he visualises in connection to the novel, such as “hooded cobras”, “flying nymphs”, and “elephants, monkeys” (par. 1). By opening his review in this manner, the novel’s impression is immediately situated through the visualisation of the stereotypical markers present within Western perceptions of the exotic. At the end of the review, Towers makes an insightful statement that settles this global appeal identified by Levin to *Midnight's Children*, by arguing that the novel is attractive not to American, but to Commonwealth readers: “yet I doubt that it will reach a very wide audience in this country. It is long; its scene and subject-matter have no automatic appeal for Americans” (par. 24). He recognises the significance of postcolonial narratives to the former British Empire, and explicitly situates America outside of this tradition. The appeal to *Midnight's Children* revolves around the international, postcolonial system of the Commonwealth; a novel that could win a British prize, but which does not contain the same appeal to outsiders of the British imperial context, according to Towers.

Despite Rushdie and the novel’s global identities, though, they are mostly characterised through their Indian, exotic otherness. To Huggan, *Midnight's Children* “provides the most bizarre example of an oppositional novel that has paid the prize of its own commercial success”, because the novel has become the embodiment of its own critique of exotic commodification (“Prizing Otherness” 422). Huggan argues

that Rushdie's novel is revisionist in its approach, because it demonstrates the unavoidable ideological character of history (422). In other words, Rushdie, through his representation of history in *Midnight's Children*, argues that history is always ambiguous and open to subjective interpretations. Moreover, according to Huggan, the novel also critiques the commodification of India through its representation of the exotic (424). It exhibits the stereotypes present in Western conceptions of exoticism, such as snake charmers, genies, fakirs and totems, which advertise their markedly Other, non-Western status ("The Postcolonial Exotic" 1994, 27). These stereotypes function for Rushdie to subvert the ideological representation of history and the tendencies to generalise the whole of the Indian continent into a unifying process. Huggan identifies this generalising process as "a hunger to consume" for the novel's Western readers, because through the depiction of these exotic stereotypes, it feeds the desire for entertainment through a fantastical, Other world (28). The novel's success, then, produces a misrepresentation of Rushdie's original intentions, and winning the Man Booker Prize has transformed *Midnight's Children* into the type of commodity that it attempts to undermine. While Rushdie critiques the commodification of India through *Midnight's Children's* narrative, the Booker Prize has come to represent this commodifying process (Huggan, "Prizing Otherness" 424). Consequently, Huggan argues, Rushdie is "not so much" rewarded "for having written against the empire but for having done it so amenably, with such obviously marketable penache" (424). Because of the contexts in which such novels are consumed, winning the Man Booker Prize attaches an identity of exhibiting the exotic Other to the novel, despite what the novel's intentions are. The fact that those exotic markers and stereotypes are present within the novel, no matter what they represent,

leads it to be read in a certain way. Huggan asserts that Rushdie becomes the embodiment of this “inevitable contradiction” (“The Postcolonial Exotic” 1994, 24).

This identification of Rushdie and *Midnight's Children* as mystical and fantastical is apparent in a review of the novel on a website about fantasy and science-fiction literature. In an article entitled “India’s Superheroes” (2009), Jo Walton, an author, praises the novel for its representation of India. She claims that *Midnight's Children*

is a very Indian book. Not only is it set in India, written by an Indian writer in an Indian flavour of English, but the theme is India’s independence as reflected in the life of one boy and his friends. Even the superpowers are especially Indian, connected to Indian Mythology rather than to Western myths that give us American superheroes. (par. 4)

Responses to *Midnight's Children* such as Walton’s demonstrate the tendencies to emphasise exotic Otherness and overlook any other identities. Moreover, Walton states that “*Midnight's Children* invites you to immerse yourself in India they way you would with a fantasy world” (par. 5). Rushdie is then constructed as a voice representing the Other through the exotic appeal that readers find in his works. Rushdie, through magical realism, invites his readers into a fantasy world, which positions him, alongside the novel, as a representative of this identity. This demonstrates the tendency to dismiss Rushdie’s international status in favour of his Indian identity. However, Rushdie is Indian-born British, and has lived and travelled all over the world, including England and the United States, and he writes in English, not Indian.

Huggan also argues that readers attempt to read *Midnight's Children* as a collective representation of India. As a result, Rushdie's deliberate subversion of history has, especially for mass-market audiences, turned out to be misinterpreted ("Prizing Otherness" 422). Moreover, winning the Man Booker Prize induces both the author and the novel with an identity of authority and authenticity, according to Huggan (*The Post-Colonial Exotic* 2001, 71). In his essay *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie responds to this:

many readers wanted [*Midnight's Children*] to be history, even a guide-book, which it was never meant to be; others resent it for its incompleteness [...]. These variously disappointed readers were judging the book not as a novel, but as some sort of inadequate reference book or encyclopedia. (qtd. in Huggan, "Prizing Otherness" 422-423)

Huggan identifies a desire to transform Rushdie into a cultural spokesperson, a representative status of India, which he refers to as "Rusdieitis"; a condition with fixates on the instant celebrity, spokesperson status of Rushdie and consequently forgets any prior Indian history (*The Post-Colonial Exotic* 2001, 70). Connected to this is the desire for historical accuracy, which overlooks the fact that Rushdie deliberately distorts history (70). These fixations are a result to the identities of authenticity and authority that winning the Man Booker Prize imposes on Rushdie.

Clark Blaise, a Canadian author, wrote a review of *Midnight's Children*, entitled "A Novel of India's Coming of Age" (1981), which exemplifies Huggan's argument about Rushdie and his novel as starting points to Indian history and culture. The article's title situates *Midnight's Children* as the first novel to successfully

represent Indian literature to global literary scene, and the rest of the review follows this theme. Blaise argues that “the literary map of India is about to be redrawn” (par. 1). To him, Indian fiction “has been missing [...] a different kind of ambition, [...] a hunger to swallow India whole and spit it out”, and that “in *Midnight’s Children*, Salman Rushdie has realized that ambition” (par. 2). These statements illuminate the popular approach to *Midnight’s Children* that continues to resonate in contemporary reviews. This is the inclination, identified above by Huggan, to create a representative voice of *Midnight’s Children* as one that encompasses the entirety of India’s complex history and culture. Blaise also mentions that “*Midnight’s Children* sounds like a continent finding its voice” (par. 9), which suggests that the complexity of India has never properly been voiced before and subsequently denies the existence of any previous Indian literature. However, it also ascribes authenticity to this particular representation of India, as Rushdie has been the first to find this “voice”. Blaise concludes by questioning “how Indian is it?” and responds: “very Indian” (par. 10). The novel’s appeal, then, is situated in its representation of foreignness. Blaise recognises the novel’s exotic markers and praises Rushdie for his authentic representation of these. Rushdie’s success, as Blaise also implies, positions *Midnight’s Children* as a starting point to Indian fiction; Michael Gorra complains that “too much new Indian fiction has carried the birthmark of *Midnight’s Children*” (qtd. in Huggan, *The Post-Colonial Exotic* 2001, 73). All other Indian novels that appear in the Man Booker Prize are discussed in relation to the novel’s context and content.

In an article entitled “Why *Midnight’s Children* Is a Deserving Winner” (2008), which responds to *Midnight’s Children* winning the 2008 ‘The Best of the Booker’ competition, James Walton emphasises Rushdie’s identity of authenticity. He

describes the novel as “a book that is unlike any written before, but also unlike any written since” (par. 8). To Walton, Rushdie’s achievement is his originality and authenticity. Walton also scrutinises the voting system of the fortieth anniversary competition, by relating that, through an online public voting system anyone could vote “whether they’d read the book or not” (par. 4). Winning ‘The Best of the Booker’ competition, then, does not only reinforce *Midnight’s Children’s* popularity, but it also emphasises the novel’s and its author’s celebrity status, because if anyone can vote, more obscure novels will be overlooked in favour of novels with established reputations. Moreover, a result to *Midnight’s Children’s* fame, it appears as if this novel has become the embodiment of the Man Booker Prize and its success. When the Booker’s influential and prestigious status is mentioned, references to *Midnight’s Children* often appear. In *The Telegraph*, for example, a 2001 article explains the impact that winning the prize has on authors, and mentions that winners “will follow in the footsteps of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*” (“Prestigious Prize” par. 2). This demonstrates how Rushdie has become an indicator of success inextricably linked with winning the Man Booker Prize.

Rushdie himself occupies an ambiguous space in terms of his national identity. Huggan argues that for Indians, Rushdie represents the administrator of Western, metropolitan fantasies about the exotic Other, because he represents these identities in his novels (*The Post-Colonial Exotic* 2011, 70). This positions Rushdie as non-Indian, despite of his ethnicity. Simultaneously, Huggan identifies Rushdie as part of an elite, highly mobile group of cosmopolitan authors (70). Huggan argues that Rushdie’s success is unthinkable without this international, metropolitan context of English-speaking culture in which the Man Booker Prize is also produced (70). Rushdie himself reinforces this cosmopolitan status by stating that “it is perhaps one

of the more pleasant freedoms of the literary migrant to be able to choose his parents” (qtd in Huggan, “The Postcolonial Exotic” 1994, 29). However, the approach to Rushdie’s migrant, mobile identity within the context of British literature is more ambiguous. While Rushdie was born in India, he spent most of his education and working life in Britain, but the West denies his identity as British. Huggan argues that critics continuously stress the fact that he is an outsider and ethnically Indian (*The Postcolonial Exotic* 2001, 85). This is what has come the light in the discussion of reviews and responses to the novel, which all stress its Indian aspects and do not discuss Rushdie’s Britishness. Huggan concludes that through these representations, Rushdie’s identity is established as an author who, despite participating in the west, belongs outside of it and remains the Other (85).

Some reviewers, however, do stress Rushdie’s British identity in relation to his position within the British literary tradition. This further complicates Rushdie’s identity. In *The Guardian*’s “The 100 Best Novels” (2015), Robert McCrum situates *Midnight’s Children* between Indian and British literature. He writes that the novel represents a mixture of East and West, and that it “revolutionised” Indian English novels “by marrying the fiction of Austen and Dickens with the oral narrative tradition of India” (par. 1). This review embodies an approach to *Midnight’s Children*’s that, while clearly establishing its Indian identity, also aligns it with the British heritage of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. The fact that Rushdie received a knighthood in 2007 for his services to British literature also signifies his contribution to British culture. In response to this, an article in *The Guardian* by Lisa Appignanesi (2007) positions him as “the Dickens of our times” and as “undeniably amongst the greats of British literature” (Appignanesi par 1-3). Furthermore, the article recognises *Midnight’s Children*’s contribution to the Man Booker Prize as raising it “to

international prominence” and “liberating” literature to allow the voices of other non-Western authors, such as Kiran Desai (par. 3-4). Both Rushdie and the novels are recognised not only as hallmarks of British literature, but also as the starting point of the Booker’s success with regards to postcolonial novels. Rushdie’s identity, from this perspective, both aligns itself with the British literary canon, and reinforces his international status through a particularly non-Western representation within English literature.

The identities imposed on Rushdie and his novel are marked by a continuous process of displacement. *Midnight’s Children* has gained the status of a ‘very Indian’ novel, a commodity representing the exotic Other that it essentially is trying to critique. The fact that the exotic markers are present within the novel, despite of Rushdie’s intentions, lead the novel to be consumed as an exotic commodity. The Man Booker Prize’s status, in itself raised to further success by this novel, attaches an identity of authenticity to *Midnight’s Children*, which leads it to be read as a guide-book to Indian history and culture. Rushdie is transformed into a cultural spokesperson, who is at once Indian, a British immigrant with a knighthood, and metropolitan. This complexity of Rushdie’s position, not fully belonging in any of these categories, also testifies against an essentialist understanding of identities. It appears that the comprehension of Rushdie’s, and subsequently also *Midnight’s Children’s*, identities, is fully subjective to its reading contexts. However, having won the Man Booker Prize, the identity of exoticism and cultural Otherness are the most prominent in the Western, mass-market culture.

Chapter 3: Case Study - Regional, Scottish Identities in James Kelman and His Novel

How Late It Was, How Late

James Kelman, with his novel *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), is the first only Scot to date to win the Man Booker Prize. He was nominated once before in 1989 with *A Disaffaction*. The fierce criticism that his win provoked represents one of the best-known Booker controversies. *How Late It Was, How Late* was both praised and criticised for its use of the Scottish vernacular and its representation of the lower classes. The criticism reveals the differentiation between English and other British regional identities. Sharon Norris points out that Scottish authors are only nominated for the shortlists in the years when there is either a Scottish or an American judge present (150). In 1994, there were two Scottish judges: Alan Taylor and Alistair Niven, and alongside Kelman, one other Scottish author was nominated for the shortlist, George Mackay Brown with *Beside the Ocean of Time* (150). Contrary to other Man Booker Prize winners, winning the award did not guarantee Kelman with success. Joan McAlpine (2009) points out that, according to Kelman, “winning the prize damaged his career by making his work harder to sell” (par. 1). The controversy that was raised over the novel “deterred publishers from promoting subsequent books” (Kelman, qtd. in McAlpine par. 2). Kelman claims: “the hostility, the attacks interfered with my work in a way that I don’t think ever really recovered” (qtd. in McAlpine par. 5). This situates Kelman, along with the identity his novel represents, as contrasting to other winners. The marginal space that Kelman occupies, representing a British regional identity within the Man Booker Prize, alongside the critique he received for his representation of the Scotland, render the identities of Kelman and his novel worth investigating.

How Late It Was, How Late is a contemporary novel that follows a few days in the life of Sammy Samuels in Glasgow. Sammy, unemployed and an ex-convict, represents the underclass, a class lower than the working class, because of his complete redundancy in society. The novel is written entirely in the stream-of-consciousness technique. Through representing both Sammy's voice, as well as the narrative framework, in the Glaswegian dialect, Kelman deliberately positions the novel as Scottish. At the opening pages, Sammy finds himself in a fight with the police and subsequently loses his eyesight. Readers follow Sammy's struggles with bureaucracy in his attempts to receive compensation for his blindness. The novel reveals that Sammy is trapped in a bleak existence, as a victim of bureaucracy and class prejudice.

The novel's language, characterised by a large amount of swearing, has become subject to fierce criticism. The first responses after the novel's publication already reveal this tendency. Blake Morrison wrote a review for the *Independent* entitled "Spelling Glasgow in Four Letters" (1994), in which he estimates four thousand occurrences of 'fuck' or a variant of this word, approximately ten on each page (par. 1). Morrison regards this swearing positively, though, as distinctive to Kelman's method of narration, which reflects a documentary style: Kelman "writes what he hears, without judgment or condescension" (par. 2). This praise recalls an amount of authenticity within Kelman's representation of Glasgow, because it is not mediated through any systems of value. To Morrison, the use of swearing and the bleak outlook on Sammy's life within this representation, reflects the manner in which "Kelman denies his audience the lounge comforts he associates with the 'posh' English novel" (par. 6). This response recalls an identity that is deliberately non-

English in its narrative style and content. However, this non-English aspect has become the source for other critics to dismiss the novel's literariness and seriousness.

One of the 1994 Man Booker Prize judges, rabbi Julia Neuberger, was fiercely opposed to awarding the prize to Kelman's novel. In an article for the *Independent*, Robert Winder (1994) reported on her response to the judges' collective decision. She called the choice "a disgrace", and said to be "really unhappy" because "Kelman is deeply inaccessible for a lot of people", and that she was "implacably opposed to the book" (qtd. in Winder par. 2). Gillian Harris (1994) reported on Neuberger's response in the *Scotsman*, quoting her summarising the novel's plot as "just another drunken Scotsman railing against bureaucracy" (qtd. in Harris par. 20). This dismisses the Scottish identity Kelman represents in his novel. "Railing against bureaucracy" could be regarded as Kelman critiquing the neo-imperial institutions mediated through class prejudice that Sammy encounters, which represents a type of postcolonial critique apparently not recognised by Neuberger. Moreover, she is quoted elsewhere as calling the choice "a travesty of the prize and a disgrace to the state of the novel in Britain and the English language" (qtd. in Jones, 277). These remarks differentiate Kelman's use of language as inferior to an assumedly superior type of language worthy, according to Neuberger, of the British novel.

Simon Jenkins, in an article in *The Times* entitled "An Expletive of a Winner" (1994), made a similar denouncing response to Kelman. He satirises the judges' choice of Kelman as an "apogee of political correctness" (20). This positions Kelman as a token within the prize, a position regularly filled by non-Western, postcolonial authors. Jenkins adds that the judges "wanted to give awfulness a break. Here was a white European male, acceptable only because he was acting the part of an illiterate savage" (20). Jenkins implies that Kelman is awarded for a discourse of Otherness

and postcolonialism, which he misappropriates, because this discourse does neither belong to him, nor to the identity the novel represents. Moreover, he denounces the novel as a mere transcription of “the rambling thoughts of a blind Glaswegian drunk” and as “literary vandalism” (20). Jenkins’ address to Kelman’s representation of Scottishness is derogatory, because he implies that it should not be taken seriously, and that it, as Neuberger also implies, has no place in British literature. The identity Kelman represents, according to Jenkins, is both false and unworthy of the Booker Prize. Such responses demonstrate how some marginalised identities represented through postcolonial critique are more favourably received in the prize than others. Kelman’s novel is, from these perspectives, unworthy of a position with the British literary canon, which renders his marginal identity inferior to other British identities, namely English.

Gerald Warner (1994) identified Kelman as “all tattoos, head-butting and the ‘f-word’” (par. 3), and he dismisses the novel as a “Sparticist spit-and-sawdust theme park” (par. 5). This entails that the rough reality Kelman represents does not exist, as if it is fantasy world. However, in contrast to appealing fantasy worlds of exotic postcolonial novels, Kelman’s version is not attractive. Warner refers to the language as “monotonously foul-mouthed” and the culture he represents as “not properly a ‘culture’, but the primeval vortex of undevelopment that precedes culture” (par. 7-8). Moreover, the “gutter” themes Kelman represents signify “cultural degeneracy” (par. 9). Warner’s response to Kelman’s representation of the Scottish identity lingers on the borders of racism. He regards it as a primitive, unworthy manifestation of identity that is highly inferior to Warner’s expectations of what proper literature should represent. Nicola Pitchford identifies these types of responses as manifestations of a British culture in which “only England has the right to elevate its peculiar local

culture to the level of high culture” (711). The Man Booker Prize, through its eligible countries, aspires to create a universal representation of identities within English-language fiction. However, responses such as Jenkins’ and Warner’s signify cultural imperialism, because they appear to imply that Kelman’s variety of a regional Scottish identity does not belong in British literature and the Man Booker Prize.

Scots themselves also critique Kelman’s representation of Scottish identity. Many of their initial responses to Kelman’s win express regret about his representation of Scotland. Stuart Wavell (1994) published an article in *The Sunday Times* a week after the winner’s announcement, reporting that “Scots suspect that the hated London literary coterie has had the last laugh by selecting James Kelman’s classic stereotype of drunken lowlife in Glasgow” (3). The “hated London coterie” differentiates Scottish literature as outside of and opposed to the English literary centre of London. Wavell argues that Kelman’s novel strengthens the Scottish stereotypes of “hard-drinking” and “hard-living”, which is what the negative reviews discussed above indeed responded to (3). Alastair Campsie, a Scottish author and journalist, accuses Kelman of “letting the nation down with foul-mouthed language” (Wavell 3). Campsie asserts that “Kelman knows that if he walked into a Govan pub and talked like that in front of women, he would get gubbed” (qtd. in Wavell 3). The former Labour MP of Falkirk West responded similarly: “I think he goes over the top with the f-word. Nobody in Scotland or anyone else uses so many” (qtd. in Wavell 3). Moreover, the Saltire Society, promoting Scotland’s culture, refused to support Kelman’s novel, stating that “it’s an unfortunate portrayal of Scotland” (qtd. in Wavell 3). Allan Massie, a Scottish author, admits that “what [Kelman] has offered is a slice of Scottish culture, but it’s by no means the whole thing”, and he questions Kelman’s legitimacy to speak for the working classes (qtd. in Wavell 3). Lastly, Brian

Wilson, former Labour MP for Cunninghame North, responds to these stereotypes: “people get fed up with caricatures when they feel they are being misrepresented. I think the idea of the literary establishment in search of the noble savage is pretty suspect” (qtd. in Wavell 3). This idea of the “noble savage” reinforces the belief that Kelman was awarded the prize for solely for representing a type of postcolonial discourse. Wavell ends his article by stating that “few Scots, however, appear to have read the book; Waterstone’s bookshop in Glasgow sold only 13 copies last week”, which demonstrates Kelman’s unpopularity among his own people (3). Pitchford identifies these responses as the Scots regarding the prize as “a patronising insult” (713). To them, Kelman misappropriates the Glaswegian identity of the lower classes, and through winning the Man Booker Prize, it reinforces the Scottish derogatory stereotypes in the perspectives of English readers. Kelman, deliberately positioning the novel as representing the marginalised Other, is critiqued by both the English centre and by fellow Scots for having done so. It also reinforces the notion that Kelman represents a token among the Man Booker Prize winners, because it reflects this ‘patronising’ awarding of marginalised identities, which responds back to Jenkins’ critique.

Kelman did, however, also receive praise for his novel. To Sam Jordison (2011), a journalist writing for *The Guardian*, Kelman is “one of the best winners in the prize’s history” (par. 1). Unlike Jenkins, Jordison argues that Kelman’s use of expletives benefits the text: “Kelman gives ‘fuck’ shades of meaning and builds the rhythm of his sentences around it beautifully, and he asserts that attacks on his language resemble mere “snobbery” (par. 2-3). He does insist that “contrary to what Jenkins may claim, this is a literate novel”, and aligns Kelman with authors such as Franz Kafka, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, placing him within a European

literary tradition (par. 7). Janette Turner Hospital (1994), writing for the *Independent*, argues that Kelman resembles a “poet and magician, he snaps his fingers, shakes verbal sorcery out of his hat, and plies the ancient prosodies of enchantment” (par. 3). These responses, though, refer to Kelman’s writing style, and do not necessarily praise his depiction of Scottish identity. Kevin Williamson (2012), writing for *Bella Coledonia*, a website celebrating Scottish culture and independence, does praise Kelman’s depiction of identity. He identifies anti-Scottish racism in the Man Booker Prize, and points out that that Irvine Welsh’ *Trainspotting* (1993) was removed from the shortlists after “two of the judges threatened to resign” (par. 25). To him, this represents an act of “elitism, prejudice and barely concealed racism at work [that] is palpable, offensive, and has its origins in a class who think literature should be all about them” (par. 25). Williamson identifies Kelman as “a hero to me, a dogged intelligent articulate class warrior at the forefront of a determined growing movement to establish the cultural and political legitimacy of Scotland’s many spoken languages” (par. 21). Similar to the responses by other Scots represented in Wavell’s article, is the acknowledgement of the English literary centre that suppresses marginalised voices within the United Kingdom. However, Williamson celebrates Kelman’s representation of Scottish identity as an act of cultural legitimation, and does not regard Kelman’s apparent representation of derogatory stereotypes, as identified by the responses in Wavell, as a problematic depiction of Scottish culture. This could indicate that the responses offered in Wavell are more concerned towards representing Scotland as ‘equal’ in high culture to England, and thus assess the novel on the same terms that English reviewers such as Neuberger, Jenkins and Warner do.

James Wood was one of the 1994 judges in favour of awarding Kelman’s novel. He reflects on the judging process by writing that Kelman represented to most

of the judges “a significant and consistently challenging writer, whose experiments with vernacular speech and internal monologue had produced some of the most stubbornly interesting work in recent British Fiction” (par. 1). Kelman’s literary merit to Wood represents more than his artistic use of language: “it is not Kelman’s sociological seem that is narrow – he writes about Glasgow’s white, Scottish poor, the class into which he was born” (par. 2). Alan Taylor, one of the two Scottish judges of that year, responds to the criticism of Kelman’s representation:

what was most galling, though, was not the infantile stereotyping, faux metropolitan sophistication and crass attempt at humour, it was the disgraceful, insensitive and pathetic portrayal of Kelman as some kind of ‘illiterate savage’ who had somehow managed to muster enough sentences to complete a book. (par. 7)

Jenkins’ derogatory remarks remind Taylor of the patronising depiction of Robert Burns, a well-known Scottish romantic poet, as a “heaving-taught ploughman” (par. 8). He points out the problematic attitude of the cultural elite towards outsiders of the British literary scene. As demonstrated above, this scene has a preconceptualised notion of what British literature should represent, which Kelman’s representation of a marginal identity does not belong to. The responses of these two judges subvert the idea that Kelman was awarded the prize as representing a token. Wood and Taylor praise both Kelman’s literary use of language and his choice of subject. They do, however, also clearly manifest Kelman and his novel as markedly different from the accepted literary norms, reinforcing Kelman’s fixed outsider identity.

Kelman deliberately creates this outsider image to the London literary scene. His identity is inextricably linked with his Glaswegian roots. Carole Jones mentions the biographical notes on his novels that state: “James Kelman will live and probably die in Glasgow” (277). Pitchford quotes Kelman’s reaction to his first time being nominated for the prize in 1989 with *A Disaffection*, declining to be present at the awards dinner, because he had “better things to do than swan around with the literati” (qtd. in Pitchford 701). Moreover, winning the award five years later, he attended the ceremony in “a casual suit” without a tie (Pitchford 701). In his acceptance speech at receiving the award, he criticised the systems of neo-imperialism present in language and literature:

I see [my work] as part of a much wider process, or movement, toward decolonization and self-determination: it is a tradition that assumes two things: the validity of indigenous culture; and the right to defend in the face of attack. It is a tradition premised on a rejection of the cultural values of imperial or colonial authority, offering a defence against cultural assimilation, in particular imposed assimilation. (qtd. in Jones 278)

This responds to the criticism surrounding Kelman’s use of language and representation of culture. From his perspective, the cultural elite engage in neo-imperialism through foregrounding a certain type of literature and denouncing others as “savage” or “cultural degeneracy” (Jenkins, Warner). By referring to his culture as “indigenous”, Kelman recalls colonial systems of oppression within Britain; the literary, English centre denounces and oppresses marginalised voices. British literature, from this perspective, is regulated by English, cultural elite identities,

which suppresses the voices of regional identities such as Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish. Kelman asserts: “my culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that right” (qtd. in Jones 278). Jones argues that Kelman thus characterises his writing “as a weapon of anti-colonial cultural resistance” (278). In an interview with Duncan McLean (1995), Kelman elaborates on the validity of his use of language: “they obviously don’t realise that language is culture – if you lose your language you’ve lost your culture” (qtd. in McLean 112). Moreover, Kelman does not regard his use of expletives as swearing: “when you use the term ‘swearing’ it’s a value. I don’t accept that it’s swearing at all” (qtd. in McLean 112). To Kelman, the attacks on his language are about “suppression, the standard English literary voice won’t allow it. I mean, the term ‘fuck’ can be used in 17 different ways, one of which is the cause of its exclusion” (qtd. in Winder par. 9). In other words, Kelman regards his use of language as a means of expression that is inextricable linked to his cultural identity. Kelman resists the artificialities in English literature in order to create a real, authentic impression of culture through his use of the Glaswegian dialect. The fact this depiction is denied by the English literary centre emphasises its preference for artificiality.

By identifying the language and culture as his, Kelman aligns himself with the identities his novel represents. He is thus consciously positioning himself as a spokesperson of Scottish lower-class culture. He also deliberately portrays his culture as representing the marginalised and oppressed Other. However, from the responses present in Wavell’s article, Kelman’s fellow Scots assert that this identity is inaccurate and reinforces negative stereotyping. Moreover, the responses from Neuberger, Jenkins and Warner suggest that this type of identity is inferior to the British literature represented by the Man Booker Prize. It appears, then, that Kelman’s

novel is less suitable for the Man Booker Prize's literary market and reading public because of the regional, Scottish identity it represents. In contrast to postcolonial novels on the prize, representing a marginalised identity was not positively received amongst the literary circle of the Man Booker Prize.

Conclusion

In many critical debates the Man Booker Prize is established as a British literary award favouring postcolonial novels and authors. As Graham Huggan has argued, this representation of postcolonial novels features a commodification of exotic identities (“The Postcolonial Exotic” 1994, 24). Moreover, Sharon Norris asserts that nominated novels continue to be assessed on conservative grounds, as she argues that the panel of judges is characterised by an English identity of cultural and academic capital (145-146). These arguments render the identities featured among the Man Booker Prize shortlists and winners questionable. The contradiction between an overrepresented group of English authors alongside the preference for postcolonial novels, raises questions about the type of British identity the Man Booker Prize represents. This study’s quantitative analysis demonstrates that with regards to the authors in the prize, British is almost interchangeable with English, because 40% of all shortlisted authors and more than half of all winners are English, while Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish authors encompass a significantly smaller part of the prize’s selection. This analysis also subverts the belief in a preference towards exotic identities among the authors, because the other groups with significant amounts of nominations and winnings represent Western, non-British identities, namely South African, Irish, Canadian and Australian. Non-Western, alongside Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish identities, remain underrepresented in contrast to these groups. The fact that many of the British and non-British authors representing the West have received multiple nominations, underscores the fact that the prize adopts a more conservative attitude towards this group. In contrast, many non-Western authors appear only once on the shortlists, which suggests that these groups are assessed differently and appear

on the prize as tokens; they are not so much nominated and awarded for their literary merit, but for the identities they represent. The analysis of the themes and topics of shortlisted and winning novels does correspond to a preference of postcolonial identities, though, as almost 40% of all winning novels represent postcolonial themes. This, alongside the prevalence of historical novels, a substantial part of which are set in the United Kingdom, provides the impression that the prize's British identity is mediated by nostalgia for its past heritage and culture, and by differentiation with postcolonial themes and settings. The underrepresentation of immigrant narratives underscores this, because it does not reflect Britain's current pluralist and multicultural society.

The preference for identities of the exotic Other, as identified by Huggan, manifests itself in the popularity of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981). The fact that alongside its win in 1981, it won the two Booker anniversary competitions, suggests that this novel represents an identity that is favoured above all others featured in the prize. Despite Rushdie's critique of ideological representations of Indian history and the commodification of exotic stereotypes, the novel, as a result to winning the Man Booker Prize, has become the embodiment of this commodification. The reviews have proven that Rushdie is praised for his authentic representation of India, which ascribes validity to his account and consequently transforms it into a guide-book of Indian history and the starting point of British Indian literature. Moreover, the general appeal of *Midnight's Children* is Rushdie's representation of India, which, through portraying the exotic, manifests itself to readers into a type of fantasy world. The popularity of this novel, and the fact that it is generally discussed in relation to the Man Booker Prize, reinforces the perception of the prize as a patron to postcolonial literature. *Midnight's Children's* vast success

foregrounds the postcolonial novel within the Man Booker Prize, and obscures other identities featured among the Booker Prize shortlists and winners. The fact that the novel is always discussed in relation to its exotic identity falsely represents the award as favouring international identities, while the quantitative analysis has proven that English authors remain the substantially largest group represented in the prize.

James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, which won the Man Booker Prize in 1994, represents a Scottish, regional identity. Kelman's representation of the Scottish underclass through his use of language has rendered both the author and the novel subject to fierce criticism. English reviewers such as Simon Jenkins and Gerald Warner demonstrate a tendency to dismiss Kelman's featured Scottish identity as unworthy of British literature. This subsequently positions this identity as inferior to the English identities. Kelman also received critique from his fellow Scots, who expressed fear that *How Late It Was, How Late* reinforces derogatory Scottish stereotypes. Other reviewers, such as Kevin Williamson, but also the 1994 judges James Wood and Alan Taylor, however, do praise Kelman for his cultural representation and his use of language. The Glaswegian dialect and Kelman's documentative style of narration render the novel authentic in its portrayal of a marginalised identity. To Kelman, his language is inextricably linked with his culture, and he deliberately positions himself and the identity his novel represents as outside of the English literary circles. Language is used as a medium of critique, from Kelman's perspective, to validate British regional identities that defer from English norms. These are regulated through cultural neo-imperialism, which is represented in the responses of Jenkins and Warner. This type of critique also renders the novel as displaying a marginal Scottish identity that is othered by comparison to the Englishness featured in the Man Booker Prize.

In this respect, Kelman's novel compares to other Man Booker Prize novels that feature postcolonial critique. However, while many postcolonial authors, such as Rushdie, receive praise for their authentic portrayals of non-English cultures, Kelman's portrayal of an othered identity is criticised. It appears, then, that *How Late It Was, How Late* is too authentic, too realistic, in its visualisation of Scottish culture, because the language and method of narration, along with its underclass character and milieu, are too deviant from English cultural norms. The Other world portrayed in *How Late It Was, How Late*, is not similarly appealing as *Midnight's Children's* reception as a fantasy world. Scottish culture, while also marginalised and representing the Other, does not compare to an exotic portrayal that allows readers to endorse in a type of fantasy spectacle, and is therefore, in its harsh reality, an unappealing depiction of a marginalised culture. British Identity represented in the Man Booker Prize, then, is marked by a contrast. Britishness and Englishness are almost interchangeable categories, which stresses the prizes Englishness and obscures other British regional identities. The genres and settings of novels, however, appear to display a preference for narratives that represent either a differentiation from British culture through postcolonial exotic novels, or nostalgia towards Britain's cultural heritage featured in historical novels. Exotic postcolonial novels are appealing because of the non-British fantasy worlds they display, which is reinforced through the success and praise of *Midnight's Children*. *How Late It Was, How Late* has been less successful because both in narrative style and content it opposes Englishness.

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