

Glasgow's Doulton Fountain and Postcolonial Heterotopia in "There's the Bird that Never Flew"

Mariangela Palladino and John Miller

In 1888, the world's largest terracotta fountain was unveiled at Glasgow's Empire Exhibition in Kelvingrove Park (see fig. 1). Rising to a "height of 50 feet and surmounted by a life size statue" of Queen Victoria,¹ the Doulton Fountain was designed by Arthur Ernest Pearce at the request of his employers, the Doulton company, a pottery manufacturers whose notable achievements in domestic and industrial stoneware had resulted in the knighthood of their founder, Henry Doulton, in the previous year and were to see the firm granted a royal warrant in 1901. Depicting the four imperial territories of Canada, Australia, India and South Africa, the monument comprises a striking visual intertext with the 1872 Albert Memorial in London, which, with its comparable representation of four continents, provided a self-confident announcement of Britain's influence in the world. Just a decade after the Treaty of Berlin, the Doulton Fountain, as an incarnation of cosmopolitanism, reiterated the nation's — and Empire's — global status at a time of continuing colonial expansion and accelerating commodity culture. As such, the fountain and the Exhibition that housed it comprise what Anne McClintock describes as "the metaphoric transformation of imperial time into consumer space — imperial progress consumed at a glance as domestic spectacle".²

One hundred and twenty years later, this monumental figuring of colonial relations is revisited in Zoë Wicomb's short story "There's the Bird that Never Flew" in the 2008 collection *The One That Got Away*. In particular, Wicomb addresses the fountain's evocation of imperial South Africa in its new location in Glasgow Green where it was moved in 1898. The story begins with Jane, a South African tourist with Scottish ancestry, wondering, as she visits the Doulton Fountain, "who sculpted the water carriers?"³ This question provides the basis for an extended reflection on the origins and continuing significance of this work of public art in a postcolonial era. For Wicomb, a voluntary exile from South Africa, resident in Glasgow since the 1990s, the city is a prominent location in her work, particularly in relation to South Africa. Vital to both its imperial significance and its function in Wicomb's story, therefore, is Doulton Fountain's embodiment of the relationship between places. In this essay, we will call this interspatiality. The glance proposed by McClintock encompasses both the civic space the monument occupies and the colonial margins it evokes, commemorating the ongoing power relations between centre and periphery. Where the official catalogues and special magazine editions emerging from the Exhibition depict the fountain's interspatial dimension as universal, univocal and coherent, Wicomb, by contrast, presents an alternative framework characterized by particularity, polyphony and fragmentation. Importantly, as these competing texts revolve around the fountain, they exemplify divergent cultural paradigms of the body: from the sanitized to the excessive, from the obscured to the visible. Wicomb animates the Exhibition's static vision of interspatial relations and offers a different reading of the way commodities regulate spatial and social interactions, revising the hegemonic Victorian culture of spectacle with intimate attention to the local and the organic.

Correspondence to:

Dr John Miller 0.66, School of Literature and Creative Writing, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ.
Email: John.W.Miller@uea.ac.uk

Dr Mariangela Palladino, 8-9 Lilybank Gardens, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow,
Glasgow G12 8RZ. Email: Mariangela.Palladino@glasgow.ac.uk

¹ *Elliot's Guide*, 31.

² McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 214.

³ Wicomb, *The One That Got Away*, 65.

Foucault explored the spatial interactions between disparate sites under the heading “heterotopias”. Originally a medical term referring to a dislocation of body tissue from its usual position, heterotopia is “a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live”.⁴ It appears only marginally in Foucault’s oeuvre: in a short passage at the beginning of *The Order of Things*, and in the 1967 lecture to a group of architects, “Of Other Spaces”. The cultural geographer Edward Soja describes Foucault’s principles of heterotopology as “frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent[seeming] narrowly focused on peculiar microgeographies” that are “deviant and deviously apolitical”.. “Foucault romps through the principles of heterotopology with unsystematic autobiographical enjoyment and disorderly irresponsibility”, he contends.⁵ Notwithstanding Soja’s critique, Foucault’s heterotopia has featured prominently in urban geography and architecture, but less so in literary studies or, more pointedly for our purposes here, postcolonial studies. While a systematic elaboration of the implications of Foucault’s heterotopia (were one possible) is beyond the scope of this paper, aspects of his principles inform the interplay of spaces at the heart of the Exhibition and are here mobilized to interrogate Wicomb’s short story.

“There’s the Bird That Never Flew” intervenes in Glasgow’s civic history, recasting a heritage marked with the signatures of imperial power. Contemporary official reports of the Empire Exhibition emphasize the grandiosity and regal appeal of the event and its custom-built premises. Queen Victoria arrived “through applauding crowds and streets gay with flags”⁶ as this unrestrained celebration of burgeoning Victorian commodity culture’s capitalization of the empire’s resources met with royal approval. Gathered under one roof were, in the words of the *Pen and Pencil* magazine special issue marking the event, “huge exhibits”, “wonderful appliances”, “splendid assortments” and “beautiful manufactures”.⁷ *Elliot’s Popular Guide*⁸ for visitors to the Exhibition offers, among its practical information, a plethora of lavish advertisements for commodities (the “medicinal blend of old matured Scotch whiskies”, tailor-made gloves, Pears soaps), services (patent fatigue remedies) and amenities (hotels, the city’s best lemonade, excursions to the surrounding hills).⁹ The continuity of the Glasgow Exhibition with other such events is clearly indicated by *Pen and Pencil’s* use of the Poet Laureate Tennyson’s ‘Ode Sung at the Opening of the International Exhibition’, written in praise of the 1862 London occasion:

All of beauty, all of use
That one fair planet can produce,
 Brought from under every star,
Blown from over every main,
And mixt, as life is mixt with pain,
 The works of peace with works of war.¹⁰

Tennyson’s verse captures the late nineteenth century’s fusion of utility and aesthetics, a connection that hinges on the imagined singularity of one “fair planet”. Rhyming the essential aspects of commodity culture, “use” and “produce”, the poem exemplifies the interspatial relations that come together in one site “from under every star”. Rather than a disparate globe of diverse nations and cultures, the Exhibition epitomizes commodity culture’s fantasy of colonial

⁴ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”, 24.

⁵ Soja, *Thirdspace*, 159.

⁶ Walker, *Catalogue: The State Visit*, 4.

⁷ *Pen and Pencil*, 10.

⁸ *Elliot’s Popular Guide to Glasgow and the International Exhibition, with Excursion Notes*, served as the main reference for the event’s visitors: “The greatest good for the greatest number’ is the guiding principle in the compilation of this condensed but comprehensive guide [...] Attention is paid to everything which the ordinary visitor will be anxious to know, and the various matters of interest are arranged in the most get-at-able manner”. *Elliot’s Guide*, 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Tennyson in *Pen and Pencil*, 1.

coherence. The interspatial gathering so important to Tennyson's lines is also apparent in the architect James Sellars's orientalist vision for the main Exhibition building. As a commemorative edition of the *Art Journal* explains:

Mr James Sellars [...] has started evidently with the conviction that such a building should be indeed "a pleasure house", suggestive in both line and colour of something far removed from the dull routine of daily life. [...] The effect produced upon both eye and mind is one of pleasant exhilaration. It would charm away even the depressing influences of dull weather and hard times. The style, by a happy thought on the part of the designer, is altogether Moorish. In Mr Sellars's own words, "the architectural treatment of the building is oriental in character" [...] the result is a most effective realization of "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" — it suggests the Alhambra and the "great pavilion of the Caliphate."¹¹

Contrasting sharply with "the grey monotony of Glasgow streets",¹² Sellars's aspiration promises exotic architectural influences selected from diverse historical and geographic arenas and buttressed by intertextual references. Sellars's "pleasure house" hints towards Coleridge's "pleasure dome" alongside the explicit citation of the *Arabian Nights*, offering a romantic alternative to the Dickensian echo of "hard times". This intertextual tension between urban realism and the exotic corresponds to the intimacy of utility and aesthetics: the productive and technologically advanced (but rather grim) west is set alongside — and is reshaped by — the fantastic east.

Foucault's third principle of heterotopia helps to elucidate the overtly Orientalist flavor of Sellars's design for the Exhibition building:

The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. [...] The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.¹³

Correspondingly, the Empire Exhibition showcased the world's wonders and marvels under one roof, functioning as the "umbilicus" of the empire, a site of global interconnections nourishing and nourished by its colonial peripheries. As Doulton bluntly announced of the fountain in an 1890 public speech to the city: "it symbolises the Empire".¹⁴ The monument's depictions of Britain's colonial outposts are therefore invested with grandiloquent significance. Each of these compositions consists of a man and a woman accompanied by "various emblems of the history of the industrial occupations of the people" of the realm depicted "together with some of the leading mineral, vegetable and animal products of those countries".¹⁵ The Doulton Fountain thus functions for the viewer as a window onto the colonial margins that also generates a perspective on the imperial centre. But in representing colonial space the fountain obliterates complicated histories by solidifying them into a static image. As Wicomb points out in her story, "even the Indians, in spite of the man's turban, seem modeled on the same white people"; the fountain homogenizes diversity into its bland imperialist vision.¹⁶ The effect of this exercise in imperial

¹¹ *Art Journal*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", 25.

¹⁴ McKenzie, *Public Sculpture of Glasgow*, 170.

¹⁵ *Glasgow City Archive*, cited in *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁶ Wicomb, *The One That Got Away*, 75.

symbolism is to empty the colonies of everything but their barest utilities, replacing history with a safely hegemonic vision of the empire. Like Foucault's "smallest parcel of the world", the fountain offers a visual representation of totality where the image of the overarching sovereign functions as the navel of the Empire. Importantly, this nutritive relationship is reciprocal: the splendid assortments and beautiful manufactures indicate the return of colonial fertility to the centre.

Specifically, the Exhibition epitomizes Glasgow's long-standing and deeply ingrained involvement with Britain's mercantile and imperial interests. More particularly still, as the 1888 edition of the *Art Journal* commented, it was in "the American trade" that Glasgow "laid the sure foundations of her prosperity, and by degrees entered into commercial relations with nearly every part of the globe".¹⁷ Glasgow, as one of the British ports most intimately involved with the trade in slave-produced goods, encodes a dark history in its grand municipal architecture and in the imperialist decorations contained in its green spaces. And while the Exhibition looks back to the "sure foundation" on which Glasgow flourished, it also promised to extend its triumphant message into the future. Its significance for the people of Glasgow and for Britain as a whole is exemplified by Robert Walker's contribution to the Exhibition catalogue:

It is not my purpose here to speak of good the Exhibition did, the lessons it taught, the means of rational enjoyment it afforded two thousand of our busy workers; the brightness it suffused through the grey life of a toiling multitude; or even the practical common sense that directed its operations and insured its success. All these, although their effects will permanently remain, are now matters of history that future chroniclers will dwell on when they tell the story of our town.¹⁸

Walker was a prominent figure in the Glaswegian art world, extensively involved in planning and marketing the Exhibition as secretary of its art section and a member of its general council. His insistence on *the* story of our time posits a monolithic representation of events: a univocal, cast-iron version of history. Set apart from everyday life the Exhibition is a beacon of imperial achievement, suffusing its brightness through the lives of the city's residents, as if it embodied a form of secular sacredness. As Foucault has it, "we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space".¹⁹ The Exhibition, then, represents a space of celebration that vouchsafes a particular vision of time. Again, in Foucault's words:

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world.²⁰

Foucault's "glaciation of the world" echoes the monolithic concept of history embodied by Walker's account through which the heterogeneity of events is crystallized into a frozen homogeneity.

Ironically, Wicomb's story fulfills Walker's prophecy that the Exhibition would provide material for "future chroniclers". Despite the grandiose aspirations attached to the fountain, as Jane explores the sculpture on a rainy Glasgow afternoon, "the extravagant memorial to Queen Victoria" reminds her rather of "her mother's stories of the Griqua rain sisters". "Young women in starched kappies and large behinds who stumbled across the desert"²¹ represent an

¹⁷ *Art Journal*, 1.

¹⁸ Walker, *Catalogue: The State Visit*, 3.

¹⁹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

emblematic thawing of Walker's glaciated history and an alternative kind of history to that constituted by Foucault's "dead men". This recollection of the rain sisters stimulates a longer meditation on the interconnections between Glasgow and South Africa. Jane explores at length the relationship between these two locations while recalling Auntie Trudy's unsolicited recommendations for her and her new husband Drew's honeymoon to Scotland. Along with the coats to be worn "even if it is summer over *there*", Auntie Trudy whispers to Jane that she "should take along some pantyhose".²² "Her own daughter", she remembers, "had come a cropper way back in the seventies. People didn't even know what she was talking about, asking for pantyhose".²³ In reinforcing cultural difference and emphasizing linguistic variety between Scotland and South Africa, this extract utilises commodity culture as a signifier of relative advancement: "So much", she concludes, "for their overseas modernness".²⁴ The emerging interspatiality of Wicomb's text frequently revolves around the dichotomy of "here" and "there". As Jane examines the abundance of water "fountaining, spouting, or gushing from gargoyles", she notes that "even *here* [...] where it rains all the time, where water is commonplace, people are still diverted by such displays".²⁵ The abundance of water in Scotland implies antonymic conditions between the two locations. The fountain's watery spectacle, framed by Glasgow's weather, functions as a metonym for the wider "here" that elliptically suggests a second term of reference, Jane's South African "there".

Jane's sense of the relationships between these distant geographical locations culminates in her "squatting down to make notes on the South African woman" in the sculpture.²⁶ The depiction of South Africa (see fig. 2) features a standing farmer "of European race",²⁷ conspicuously bearded and in a wide-brimmed hat, with one hand on his rifle and the other clutching his bandoleer. Seated beside him is what contemporary written records identify as a "native woman",²⁸ with her left arm resting on a spade and a robe thrown across her body to leave one breast and one foot exposed. This erotic representation is enhanced by the vines and maize gathered beneath her right arm, as the fertility of the land is mapped onto her sexual availability. An ostrich looms behind them. South Africa is reduced to a small number of traits, a metonymic transposition of its "essence". Its wealth of mineral resources is suggested by the symbol of a spade. Agricultural productivity is epitomized by grapes and maize, while with ostrich farming in its early stages, the towering bird evokes the domestication of the colonial wilds, a dominance that is further exemplified by the white man resting on his gun with the woman sitting tamely by his side. Rather than a "native woman", Wicomb's text speaks without hesitation of a "girl" and of her unashamed "miscegenation".²⁹ Her "matter-of-fact intimacy" with the man standing next to her, however, may be more complex than Wicomb's story seems to allow, given the Exhibition's situation between successive Boer wars. If the white farmer is read as a Boer his evident relationship with the woman asks uncomfortable questions (from a British imperialist point of view) of the "white" presence in South Africa, and about Boer identity as such. Beside their apparent age difference, the Boer and the "native" girl exemplify two distinct social statuses and ethnicities in contrast to the harmonious equalities of the fountain's other imperialist groupings. Representing a man and a woman from equivalent socio-economic contexts and age groups, the statues portraying Canada, Australia and India are uncomplicated by racial differences.

But it is the South African "girl" who figures more centrally in "There's the Bird that Never Flew". Alluding to the nineteenth-century occasional poet Andrew Geddes Bain's "crass"

²² Ibid., 68, our italics.

²³ Ibid., 69.

²⁴ Ibid., 69.

²⁵ Ibid., 67, our italics.

²⁶ Ibid., 76.

²⁷ "Fountain for The Glasgow Exhibition", 199.

²⁸ Ibid., 199.

²⁹ Ibid., 76.

figure of Kaatje Kekkelbek, Jane decides “that [Kaatje] is what she’ll call the woman”.³⁰ With Bain’s roots in Thurso, in the far north of Scotland, and a lifetime spent in South Africa in a variety of colonial roles including exploration, road engineering, military service and trading, he constitutes an archetype of the individual’s participation in imperial expansion. Wicomb’s text recalls him as a “fine road engineer”, who should, however, “have stuck to roads”.³¹ Kaatje’s inclusion in Wicomb’s narrative indicates engagement not only with the material object of the fountain, but also with the imperial processes, and even more prominently the texts surrounding it. Wicomb’s story is concerned with texts from its outset as Jane initiates a previously unforeseen dialogue between the postcolonial present and the imperial past. Drawing upon a range of narratives vis-à-vis South Africa and Glasgow, Wicomb “[re]casts [the fountain] into words”, allowing it to exceed the constraints of colonial discourse. Such a movement hinges on the crucial relation between language, identity and place that Wicomb explores in her critical work on the “orthodox critical position on the writer’s physical location”:

Postcolonial theory does address the question of place, of how the postcolonial writer revises the empty space of colonialism and through writing and naming turns it into place; its concern is with the related concept of identity formation and the link with language.³²

As part of the process of translating anonymity into locality, “There’s the Bird that Never Flew” takes Wicomb’s critical stance much further — perhaps most notably through embodiment, to which we’ll return. Indeed, besides naming the South African “girl” and thereby “revising the empty space of colonialism”, Wicomb articulates the dialectic between *here* and *there*. She fosters a dialogue between South Africa and Glasgow through specific linguistic connections: through the “familiar” and “comforting” Glaswegian “yous”, for example, that reminds Jane of Drew’s “Cape Town relatives”.³³ The intimate connection between Glasgow and South Africa is revisited later when Margaret, the cleaner at Jane and Drew’s hotel, pronounces “world” so that it sounds to Jane “like the Afrikaans ‘wêreld’”.³⁴

Wicomb’s systematic challenge to the fountain’s imperialist texts is brought to a close by a brochure found in the hotel foyer. Featuring a picture of Glasgow’s coat of arms, this municipal narrative introduces the legend of St Mungo, patron saint of Glasgow. As Jane recites the ditty commemorating Mungo that she learnt from Margaret,³⁵ Drew is reminded of a corresponding Afrikaans riddle as Glasgow and South Africa entwine yet again through language. While Glasgow’s coat of arms illustrates St Mungo’s miraculous recovery of a lost ring as a salmon carries it in its mouth, Wicomb’s text assigns an alternative ending. Jane loses her wedding ring by the fountain and Margaret reassures her that “St Mungo will keep an eye”.³⁶ Jane, however, derides this insistence on the miraculous power of Glasgow’s patron to restore the ring: “no fricking fish is likely to dart from the fountain with her ring in its mouth”.³⁷ Jane’s

³⁰ Ibid., 76.

³¹ Ibid., 73.

³² Wicomb, “Setting, Intertextuality”, 145.

³³ Idem, *The One That Got Away*, 74.

³⁴ Ibid., 74.

³⁵ Associated with the city of Glasgow’s coat of arms which represents a tree with a bird perched in its boughs, a bell, and a salmon with a ring in its mouth, the ditty tells the legend of Glasgow’s patron saint, St. Mungo (originally known as St. Kentigern) and his miracles; this serves as the basis for Wicomb’s title:

There’s the tree that never gren,

There’s the bird that never flew,

There’s the fish that never swam,

There’s the bell that never rang.

(D. Macleod Malloch, *The Book of Glasgow Anecdote*, 149).

³⁶ *The One That Got Away*, 78.

³⁷ Ibid., 79.

lack of faith in St Mungo's promise indicates a larger mistrust in the grand narratives that surround the fountain as Wicomb's text replaces and challenges the univocality of colonial discourse by introducing a heteroglossic dimension. Rather than one voice disseminating an officially-sanctioned history, Wicomb instead emphasizes the coexistence of different voices.

Continuing the engagement of Wicomb's story with hegemonic, municipal discourses, Jane reads "the leaflet on the Doulton fountain".³⁸ A series of questions challenge the authority of such texts, announcing a significant discrepancy between existing narratives of the fountain and their postcolonial revision. As Jane ponders "Can a monument be a work of art?",³⁹ Wicomb's text unsettles further the status of the fountain, and shatters the aura of grandeur insisted on by Walker and others. The short story's heteroglossic nature unfolds through several intertwining voices; these in turn, as in the case of Jane, produce different narratives concerned with the fountain. While she depicts the daily events of her honeymoon with Drew, Jane both narrates and imagines other versions of the interspatial involvement of Glasgow and South Africa. Through her meeting with Margaret in the foyer we learn of her "Highland people [going out] to South Africa a good two hundred year ago when the country was brand new",⁴⁰ that a fire on their ship seized the emigrants "burnt to a cinder" and had "blown [them] overboard, well before they were even inside of the promised land".⁴¹ Preceding this narrative, Jane imagines the relationship of Mr Ellis, the ostrich's modeller, with his wife; their story attaches South Africa to the fountain with humdrum domesticity that complements the human dimension of the cleaner's account. In accordance with these patterns, Jane emphasizes the ordinariness of the girl depicted in the fountain: Kaatje "occupies her space with ease, not regally like Victoria, for she feels no need to claim space, no need to assume an imperious pose".⁴² This account is narrativized further when Jane encounters Drew and explains to him

the minutiae of the monument, of how Kaatje Kekkelbek [...] sits nonchalant in her niche. Jane is ravishing in red. Her eyes flash, and she waves her arms and hands by way of demonstrating. Has she had more than usual to drink? They walk back to the hotel in the rain, her head leaning on his shoulder.⁴³

While articulating yet another narrative around the fountain, this extract introduces a bodily register to Wicomb's exploration of language. Walker's universality of history — embodied by the fountain — is broken down by the attention to the particular: the multiplication of voices revolving around the edifice is coupled with the embodiment of voice. "There's the Bird that Never Flew" features a plethora of deictical expressions that ground the text in its Glasgow location; the imagined and tangible interlocutors and Jane's voyeuristic and sensorial experience are articulated in relation to the environment. In contrast to the stasis of the fountain, Jane's inebriation animates the scene, her uncontrolled bodiliness set against Kaatje's statuesque complicity with colonial orthodoxy.

Meanwhile, the rain counterpoints the fountain's artificial water-cycle. Wicomb's dual emphasis on the Glasgow weather and on the consumption of food and drink signifies an attention to internal and external processes that inserts the Doulton Fountain into a specific timeframe. While looking at the fountain, "the rain is bucketing down and [...] Jane retreats to the Winter Gardens. She sips slowly at the carrot and coriander soup, trying to make it last, for once it is finished she'll not know how to remain comfortably at the table".⁴⁴ After Drew breezes

³⁸ Ibid., 65.

³⁹ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 73.

⁴¹ Ibid., 74.

⁴² Ibid., 77.

⁴³ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 72.

in and quickly departs, she decides to “stay out of the rain for a while [...] and takes out her notebook and pen and orders another cup of tea”.⁴⁵ Meteorological references form a continual reminder of this bodiliness’ emplacement in the Glaswegian environment. At the beginning of the story we learn that Jane “hated getting wet, hated the discomfort of damp clothes and [...] would rather read in the room and venture out if and when the weather improved”.⁴⁶ Returning to the fountain on the second day, Jane reflects that “it promises to be dry, and she ought to have another look, for what else might she have missed in the blur of rain”.⁴⁷ Her preoccupation with the weather also leads her to imagine Kaatje’s experience of the foreign climate, although the statue appears “immune to the cold and the rain, presumably acclimatized by now”.⁴⁸

Margaret in similar vein offers an organic, degraded account of the fountain; she is dismissive of its grandeur, remembering its inglorious past before restoration. She recalls the monument being a dump “all in a mess, the fountain dead, statues without noses, the queen’s head lopped off as the winos threw their bottles of Buckfast at the figures, and the dogs shat in the dry moat”.⁴⁹ The reference to the tonic wine Buckfast, a beverage of choice of Glasgow’s destitute and disenfranchised, is a cultural signifier of the failure of Walker’s imperial promise. The “toiling multitude”, rather than embodying Britain’s notional continuing greatness, operates as a symbol of Glasgow’s post-imperial decline, grotesquely emphasized by the dog shit in the moat. The casual actions of drunks and pets, framed by the cleaner’s familial connections with South Africa, indicate Wicomb’s intimate attention to local happenings that foreground a more tangible, humdrum historical dimension. Wicomb’s challenge to the durability of imperialist ideology encapsulated by the fountain is emphasized by Jane’s recollection of the bolt of lightning that struck the fountain in 1888, displacing the Queen’s “newly-modeled head, killing her outright”.⁵⁰ While the city council modestly intended to replace the Queen with an urn, the Doulton company, “drunk with the glory of empire, had a second, imperious Queen Victoria made”.⁵¹ The giddy enthusiasm behind the duplicate Queen, however, results only in the “bottles of Buckfast” thrown at the figures in postcolonial and post-industrial Glasgow, as Empire’s ghost now solicits irreverence instead of respect, let alone glory.

Furthermore, Walker’s insistence on the future effects of the Exhibition and the fountain are debunked by Jane’s anticipation of forgetfulness. She walks “around the fountain a number of times”; it appears unremarkable as she wonders: “Will she remember all the tiers? Will she be able to describe the structure adequately?”⁵² The durability of imperial ideals Walker imagined slips already into absence before her eyes, as the fountain’s compromised presence develops into invisibility firstly for Jane, as the fountain’s “tableau is so blurred”,⁵³ then for Margaret, as she pronounces that “she hasn’t seen it”.⁵⁴ Walker’s “toiling multitude”, the indigenous working class, embodied here by Margaret, offer only indifference to the monument that was supposed to suffuse their grey lives with brightness, but disappears in “the blur of rain”.⁵⁵ Wicomb undoes the universal and definite municipal discourse, shrouding the fountain in ambiguity as Glasgow’s civic memory of Empire descends once more into the fallibility of human forgetfulness.

The mortal dimension portrayed by Wicomb, then, obscures the inherent durability of this municipal edifice as the reader becomes conscious of the object’s existence in time and local space, its grandeur consistently blurred by the weather. A more organic register replaces the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

timelessness promoted by Walker's account. While celebrating the real and the ordinary, "There's the Bird that Never Flew" erodes the empty, imperial simulacra and its aura of eternity. Solidifying an image of South Africa, the Doulton Fountain imposes centuries of history on one place with the aim of confining it to memory. In his discussion of heterotopic dimensions of museums and libraries, Foucault reminds us that

the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity.⁵⁶

Wicomb's emplacement of the fountain in relation to bodily experience, consumption, movement and the weather functions as a challenge to the monumental, insensate image of South Africa conveyed by the fountain. The immobility theorized by Foucault as an archetype of the nineteenth-century conceptualization of time is disrupted by the fluidity of Jane's reiterated pacing round the monument: "walking slowly around the railing of the monument"; "walk[ing] around the fountain a number of times".⁵⁷ The fountain's transit from Kelvingrove Park in 1898 constitutes a further irony: rather than "inaccessible" to the "ravages" of time, the relocation of the Doulton Fountain following the Exhibition's closure was the subject of significant debate. Moved to Glasgow Green (in the working class east end of the city and a site that, in the words of eighteenth-century industrialist James Watt, is a potent "focus of popular sentiment"⁵⁸) the fountain is anything but the "perpetual and indefinite" repository of accumulated time, "imperishable and unpervious to atmospheric influences",⁵⁹ as the 16 March 1888 issue of the *British Architect Journal* insists.

Rather, Wicomb's embodiment of history involves fragmentation, refuse and excess, in opposition to the obsessive bodily regulation of late-Victorian culture that emerges in the texts surrounding the Glasgow Empire Exhibition. Indeed, Doulton & Co. figure in the *Official Catalogue* and other contemporary accounts and guides to the event not only as the producers of the imperial artistry of the fountain, but also in a more domestic mode as the nineteenth century's lavatory makers *par excellence*. As Walker announces, "Messrs. Doulton & Co. have a reputation that is world-wide and as old as the century. This reputation is fully maintained by their exhibits at Glasgow".⁶⁰ Alongside a large selection of pottery and the monumental fountain, "Doulton also exhibits a very important collection of sanitary appliances".⁶¹ Accordingly, Doulton & Co.'s advertisement in the Exhibition catalogue provides an inventory of its products and toilet mechanisms:

Pumps, Pans, Store Jars, Condensing Worms, Retorts, Acid Cocks [...] Lavatories of all kinds, Water-Closets, Flushing Syphons and Tanks to work drop-by-drop supply, Grease and Sewage-gas Interceptors, Bath Fittings, Valves, etc. The Thirlmere Syphon Closet tank. The Edinboro Quick Discharge Closet tank. Patent Self-adjusting Joint for Draw Pipes, Silicon Treads for Steps.⁶²

⁵⁶ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", 26.

⁵⁷ Wicomb, *The One That Got Away*, 67-71.

⁵⁸ McKenzie, *Public Sculpture of Glasgow*, 164.

⁵⁹ "Fountain for The Glasgow Exhibition", 199.

⁶⁰ Walker and Davidson, *Pen and Ink*, 15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶² *Official Catalogue*, 84.

While this wide range of sanitary appliances foregrounds the hygienic necessities of metropolitan living, it also entails a drastic effacement of lavatorial habits as they are simultaneously paraded *and* removed from view. As Inglis puts it, “the water *closet* is a technology that occupies an enclosed space, allowing defecation to occur away from prying eyes. [...] As a result, bourgeois physiology seemed to meet the symbolic demand of its toiletry habitus: the human body’s defecatory capacities could be effectively denied as even existing”.⁶³

The nineteenth century brings about a more technologically effective system to accommodate what Žižek calls “the traumatic excess” of the human body.⁶⁴ In this instance toilets act as utopian places, which (as Boyer argues) “efface the body to escape to a non place outside all places, where they can dream of a bodiless body more beautiful, powerful and swift than in reality”.⁶⁵ Doulton’s numerous sanitary implements safely channel bodily products and excess into a system of hygienic regulation that is complemented by a careful aesthetic arrangement. Describing the Exhibition’s “furnishing and Fittings”, the *Catalogue* celebrates Doulton’s

Lavatories and Retiring Rooms fitted up with [...] tip-Up Basins in Polished Mahogany and other Hardwood Enclosures, with mirrors, and Tile Backs, and Marble Tops. The Urinals, with Marble and other divisions etc., and flushes with their Automatic Flush Tanks; Tiled Floors and Dados, The Vestibules, Floors and Walls are Tiled, introducing Hand-painted Panels, and Borders in Lambeth Faïence Ware.⁶⁶

From this detailed, even poetic, account of the Exhibition’s toilets, it emerges that even the most basic bodily functions are included in the spectacle of imperial history. The cornucopia of lavatorial Victoriana featured in the Exhibition’s documents demonstrates that, as McClintock writes in *Imperial Leather*, “the Victorian bathroom is the innermost sanctuary of domestic hygiene and by extension the private temple of public regeneration”.⁶⁷ McClintock’s “public regeneration” has to be understood in intimate relationship with the nineteenth century’s commercial advancements: the proliferation of technological, medical and cosmetic prostheses of the bourgeois body. The body disappears into the commodity, it is displaced from its organic realm. This pattern is also apparent from many other advertisements figuring in the 1888 event’s catalogue: corsets, oriental pearl dentifrices, patent remedies for fatigue and exhaustion. Walker’s prophecy about the Exhibition’s permanent legacy in time uncannily foretells the role played by consumerism: “more than merely a symbol of imperial progress, the domestic commodity becomes the agent of history itself”.⁶⁸ The body is paradoxically thus both historicized and de-temporalized: while involved in the historical processes of commodification heralding the empire’s economic and social advance, it is also sanitized of its organicity. Doulton’s plethora of toilet mechanisms replaces the corporeal with, as Foucault writes of heterotopia, “a space that [is] as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled”.⁶⁹ Similarly, Inglis elaborates on Bakhtin’s reflection on the development of the body, driven by commodity culture:

As Mikhail Bakhtin argues, throughout early modernity the severe and renunciative figure of the puritanical bourgeois comes to dominate the landscape of the bodily imaginary, in antithesis to the figures of medieval representation which much more

⁶³ Inglis, “Dirt and denigration”, 217.

⁶⁴ Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies*, 5.

⁶⁵ Boyer, “Main Mirrors of Foucault”, 54.

⁶⁶ *Official Catalogue*, 57.

⁶⁷ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 214.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁶⁹ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”, 7.

openly and directly represented the human body's faecal capacities. The body of the figure of *homo economicus* was "strictly completed, finished [...] isolated, alone, fenced off from all other bodies".⁷⁰

The imperial centre conceals the body of *homo economicus* behind mahogany and other hardwood arrangements, metonyms of colonial possession. The heterotopical function of Doulton's lavatories and monument fuse imperial territories into municipal displays that promise the Empire's unhindered durability.

This durability encompasses a teleological image of history in which Glasgow's population is released from the obligation of toil into a new world of leisure that the Exhibition represents. As Walker put it:

Is it any wonder that if in the serious struggle for existence and development, those who were in the thick of the combat had little time to think of the graces of life, of the gentle arts that come with leisure, of the culture that is the result and the crown of independence earned by self-denying work [...] The International Exhibition of Glasgow — an accident as it may seem to most — was truly an outcome of the experience of generations.⁷¹

The outcome of the industry of generations, eulogized by Walker, is ultimately the displacement of labour from the imperial centre to the colonial periphery. The productivity embodied by Doulton's composition of South Africa facilitates the "graces of life [...] the gentle arts that come with leisure" that for so long, in Walker's depiction, have been denied to Glasgow's toiling multitude. The fountain is an emblematic representation of this historical process: colonial expansion, therefore, resides in the centre of Glasgow, heralding the imperial promise that Wicomb undercuts. Ironically, Aunt Trudie's Royal Doulton Bone China tea cups, introduced to Jane and Drew "as if they were posh cousins with double-barrelled names",⁷² reproduce the fantasy of social and economic advancement inscribed in Victorian commodity culture. The failure of Doulton's project is exposed by her re-emplacement and re-temporalization of the monument. Such re-imagining of the relationship of time and space opposes the municipal version of heterotopias. Foucault identifies another category with a radically different conceptualization of time:

[T]he heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. [...] a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; [...] heterotopias [...] are those linked [...] to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, [...] . These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal [chroniques].⁷³

The liquidity of Wicomb's narrative, metonymically evoked by the rain and bodily processes, develops the nineteenth-century discourse of sanitation and encapsulates the process enunciated by Foucault. An unintentional yet uncanny resonance of Duchamp's influential and controversial artwork "Fountain" (1917), the Doulton Fountain, made by toilet manufacturers and displayed alongside sanitary wares, ends up as a repository of human waste. The fountain functions as a parody of the imperial aspirations from its inauguration: the empire is thus figured as a toilet, a sewer, and a place of shame. Furthermore, the fountain itself, it must not be forgotten, is a vessel for the movement of liquid that, despite the promise of imperial durability, is always permeated

⁷⁰ Inglis, "Dirt and denigration", 214.

⁷¹ Walker, *Catalogue: The State Visit*, 1-2.

⁷² Wicomb, *The One That Got Away*, 68.

⁷³ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", 25.

by elemental and organic processes. Wicomb bestows a new ontological dimension to the representation of South Africa in Glasgow. Recasting South Africa into the more liquid temporality of literature allows it to exceed the spatial constraints of the fountain. Postcolonial text exceeds the imperial simulacra as Wicomb's narrative populates the "empty space of colonialism" with multiple voices, situating the monument within its specific place and temporal dimension.

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