Reading 'Fundamental British Values' Through Children's Gothic: Imperialism, History, Pedagogy

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Abstract This paper reads the U.K. Government's "fundamental British values" project alongside two children's Gothic novels, *Coram Boy* (2000) by Jamila Gavin and *City of Ghosts* (2009) by Bali Rai. In 2011 the U.K. Government outlined what it described as "fundamental British values" (FBV), making it a requirement for U.K. schools to promote these values. Many critics have shown that the root of FBV lies in Islamophobia and imperialist nostalgia and suggested that the promotion of "British" values in school will exclude minority groups already under siege from racist elements in contemporary Britain. Other critics argue that the promotion of FBV reduces opportunities to explore issues of belonging, belief, and nationhood in the classroom. This article argues that the Gothic fictions of Jamila Gavin and Bali Rai offer a space in which to critically examine British history (and so, its values) in a way that is acutely relevant to these education contexts. *Coram Boy* and *City of Ghosts* use the Gothic to interrogate aspects of British history elided by the FBV project. That is, they point to Britain's imperial and colonial history and offer a rejoinder to the Government's insistence that "British Values" equate to democracy, respect for the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance of those from different faiths and religions. Furthermore, Gavin's and Rai's use of the Gothic

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creates a space in which the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in FBV can be explored. However, their "gothicized" histories of Britain do not render the idea of shared values invalid. The diversity and interconnectedness of the characters offer an alternative version of identity to the patronising and arrogant FBV project, which is aimed at promoting a national identity based on sameness and assimilation. Rai and Gavin look to Britain's past through the lens of the Gothic not only to refute nationalism and racism, but also to offer a productive alternative that gestures towards a more cosmopolitan vision of identity.

Introduction

A picture of Queen Elizabeth II; images from a Royal Wedding; a Beefeater palace guard; a London bus and a bust of Winston Churchill. These images connote stereotypical ideas of "Britishness" associated with the aristocracy, the capital city, military victory and, above all, whiteness. Such images adorn school displays across England in state schools required by the U.K. government to promote "fundamental British values" (FBV), a policy that has been in place since 2011. These values were first outlined in the U.K. government's counter-terrorism strategy, *Prevent*, and later made into educational policy via official "Teacher Standards" documents. All teachers are required to uphold and promote "fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs" (Department for Education, 2011, p. 1). Many scholars and commentators on education have expressed concerns about the policy's ethical and pedagogical objectives (e.g., Richardson, 2015; Versi, 2015; Lander, 2016; Maylor, 2016; Panjwani, 2016). This article draws on some of these criticisms and shows how the policy works with a curriculum that "whitewashes" Britain's imperial past. I will open a dialogue between two recent novels by British authors and this new, value-laden educational context in order to suggest that contemporary children's Gothic provides a much-needed counterpoint to an increasingly racist and nationalist rhetoric that is being promulgated by the Department for Education in modern Britain. Jamila Gavin's *Coram Boy* (2000) and Bali Rai's *City of Ghosts* (2009) both use the Gothic to challenge the whitewashing of British history and, furthermore, gesture towards alternative shared values and a more cosmopolitan vision of British identity.[1]

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[1] Throughout this article, I will frequently append the adjective "British" to words like "identity" and "history," when it might seem that I am discussing England and Englishness only. The reason for this is that the policy under scrutiny here (the FBV project) uses "British" to identify a national identity for U.K. citizens, even though it rarely accords with a common understanding of this term. That is, the FBV project is educational policy only in schools in England and Wales, for Scotland has its own education system; furthermore, this use of the term Britishness also excludes Northern Ireland. What is happening here, then, is a conflation of Britain with England, and an assumption that Englishness equates with Britishness. The use of the word "British" in the rhetoric examined echoes a nostalgic idea of "Britain" (rather than the more modern political term, the U.K.) that echoes a 19th century discourse of the British

Both *Coram Boy* and *City of Ghosts* draw on the apparatus of the Gothic, including, for example, ghosts and hauntings, descriptions of body horror and transgressive violence, and villainous character types recognisable from classic Gothic literature. These novels also produce what Chris Baldick calls the "Gothic effect," which results from the combination of "a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration" (1992, p. 19). Characters face either physical entrapment (in *Coram Boy*, one of the protagonists is captured by a slave trader) or psychological trauma, the latter providing a crippling sense of claustrophobia (a Sikh soldier in *City of Ghosts* is trapped in Amritsar, debilitated by traumatic memories of the First World War). Both novels also structure their narratives around a fearful inheritance from the past that erupts into the present. Thus Co*ram Boy,* which spans two generations, centres on the sins of the past (in this case those of a corrupt merchant) returning to disrupt the present, with both positive and negative consequences; whereas *City of Ghosts* moves backwards in time from 1940, following the historically accurate assassination of a British Official in London by a survivor of the Amritsar massacre, to the massacre itself, demonstrating how the event extends, as unhealed trauma, beyond 1919. More generally, these stories, involving slavery, corruption and violent colonial rule, posit that Empire itself has bequeathed a fearful inheritance for modern-day Britain that is still unresolved. The novels also chart various descents into "disintegration," from those of individuals to the more general disintegration of family groups and decline in social cohesion. This said, such disintegration is usually healed in the bittersweet endings that gesture hopefully towards possible future configurations of family, society and nation.

Although I am suggesting that these texts use Gothic tropes to critique hegemonic ideologies and the legacy of imperialism in Britain, it is recognised that the Gothic can be both conservative and radical. Patrick McGrath is just one of the critics who has praised the Gothic's "transgressive tendency" and "political potential" (1997, p. 159), whilst others rightly point out the mode's conservative origins (e.g., Durant, 1982). Thus, as Jacqueline Howard has argued, "we find strong, mutually exclusive political claims being made for the Gothic" (1994, p. 4). Howard suggests that the Gothic is neither conservative nor radical, but a "plural form" with a "highly developed" propensity for "multiple discourse" (1994, p. 16). Certainly, although Gothic has been used in the service of conservative politics and racist ideologies, it is a dialogic mode, and is therefore open to multiple political and ideological projects. Thus postcolonial writers have long used the Gothic to challenge the legacy of imperialism and reveal the traumas of colonialism (e.g., Punter, 2000; Khair, 2009; Ilott, 2015). As Andrew Smith and William Hughes argue, the ambivalences and ambiguities of the Gothic "provide a space in which key elements of the dominant culture can be debated" (2003, pp. 3–4), allowing postcolonial writers to rework older anxieties about earlier narratives of

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Footnote 1 continued

Empire. I retain the adjective "British" in my own analysis to deconstruct the assumptions about identity and history that underlie it.

empire. In *City of Ghosts* and *Coram Boy*, the Gothic provides an imaginative space in which to challenge dominant historical narratives and contest hegemonic ideas about British history and identity. Indeed, Gavin and Rai are "writing back" to Empire in the sense suggested by Bill Ashcroft et al. in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), although as citizens of Britain rather than as "peoples formerly colonized by Britain" (2002, p. 1). As I have argued elsewhere, postcolonial Gothic written within and about the former colonial centre is concerned with the repercussions of imperialism, with experiences of racism, dislocation, and alienation within Britain itself (Buckley and Ilott, 2016, p. 403). Using aspects of the Gothic mode, even elements of what Patrick Brantlinger has called the "Imperial Gothic" (1990), Rai and Gavin draw attention to Britain's past in order to address ongoing inequalities in the present.

Both novels make use of the Gothic to link Britain's imperial history to its supposedly "post-imperial" present. Set in eighteenth-century Britain, *Coram Boy* focuses on a friendship between two boys. Alex Ashbrook is the heir to an aristocratic title and estate, whose wealth lies in the country's nascent imperial trade, whereas Thomas is a poor ward of the cathedral school. Both boys dream of becoming musicians. Alex flees his domineering father to pursue his musical career in London. However, though he has no knowledge of the boy's birth, Alex has fathered a child with a ward of the family. The girl, Melissa, is forced to give the child to the unscrupulous "Coram Man," a peddler who takes payment for the removal of unwanted babies, offering to take them to a charitable hospital in London. The "Coram" Hospital, or "Foundling Hospital," was a real institution, established in London in 1739 by a philanthropic sea captain, Thomas Coram. It was dedicated to the education and welfare of deserted young children. In the novel, the hospital reveals the poverty, abuse and exploitation that forms the underside of the nation's growing wealth. For every wealthy landowner and admiral, there are dozens of starving families and abandoned children. The hospital is also a site of corruption. Its benefactors enjoy high status for their charitable donations, whilst also making money from slavery and other exploitative forms of trade. Unfortunately, for many of the rural poor, most babies taken by the "Coram Man" end up in shallow roadside graves. However, the Coram Man's son takes pity on Melissa's baby, Aaron, and delivers him safely to the hospital. The narrative then shifts forwards some years. Aaron is poised to leave the foundling hospital and enter an apprenticeship with his music teacher, Thomas. Aaron and his friend Toby, the child of an African slave, unravel a sinister plot by the hospital's benefactor, Mr Gaddarn, to sell the foundlings into slavery. Toby is forced to serve in Gaddarn's household and suffers abusive treatment by members of London's elite. In twists of plot typical of a Gothic novel spanning multiple generations, Toby and Aaron manage to gain the assistance of Thomas, now a music teacher, and Alex, who still does not know that he has a son. Together they uncover Gaddarn's scheme, revealing that he is the unscrupulous "Coram Man" of the early chapters. After escaping from a slave ship leaving the Thames, Aaron and Toby finally make their way to the Ashbrook estate, where Alex and Aaron are united. *Coram Boy* reminds readers that the wealth of the United Kingdom lay in imperial trade and slavery and reveals the corruption and

hypocrisy at the heart of many British institutions. Thus Gavin questions dominant narratives of British history that nostalgically celebrate the imperial past.

Likewise, *City of Ghosts* focuses on Britain's imperial past, telling a story often ignored by triumphalist versions of British history. Bali Rai depicts colonial India in the early twentieth century, fashioning his Gothic tale from the events leading up to the massacre of civilians by the British military in Amritsar in 1919. The plot focuses on a cast of characters, each with a different role and fate that is tied up in the massacre. Two of the characters are boys from the local orphanage. One is in love with a rich girl, whose father has forbidden their marriage. The other boy is deeply scarred by an incident from his youth in which his mother was killed by British soldiers. Both boys find themselves drawn into a plot by local agitators to disrupt a planned peaceful protest. The other main character is an older man, Bissen Singh, an opium addict and First World War veteran. In a series of flashbacks, the book reveals that Singh fought for the British and was wounded on the front lines. Bissen recalls the time he spent recovering in a military hospital in England and his romance with a young English nurse, Lillian. Tragically, he is forced to return to India because the British government did not grant colonial soldiers the right to live in the country that they served in the war. The boys and Bissen are caught up in the unrest sweeping through the city, which Rai suggests was the fault of the British rulers, depicted in the novel as incompetent and self-serving. The book explicitly draws on Gothic tropes not only in its depiction of the villainous British, but also in its structure, which switches between three timelines to explore how the trauma of colonial violence persists into the present and shapes the future.

As these plot descriptions suggest, the novels draw on Gothic tropes and the Gothic's abiding themes of trauma and haunting. In so doing, they undercut assumptions about British superiority inherent in the FBV project and, instead, problematise triumphalist narratives of British history favoured in current educational policy. However, Rai and Gavin also move beyond critique to chart alternative figurations of British values and identities. To explore this affirmative impulse, I shall draw on the social theory of cosmopolitanism, as expounded by Kwame Anthony Appiah (2007), Robert Fine (2007) and Robert Spencer (2011). Reading these novels through this conceptual lens shows that they offer a number of alternative values; namely, they promote intercultural dialogue, productive exchanges between past and present and, finally, celebrate British identity as being pluralistic, whilst suggesting that wider notions of human rights should underpin any sense of national affiliation. What I will call the "cosmopolitan Gothic" of these novels sits in contradistinction to the nationalist rhetoric that increasingly colours educational policy in the U.K. Indeed, these novels are well-placed to engage with this new educational context. *Coram Boy* is already included in the English curriculum. The play adaptation by Helen Edmundson (2005) features in the Drama GCSE and English GCSE exams studied by students aged 14–16. Likewise, Bali Rai is a "recommended read" on the Key Stage 3 Curriculum (the English syllabus for students aged 11–14) and he has a GCSE exam text, *Rani and Sukh*, studied by older pupils. Both Rai and Gavin are active within educational circles, visiting schools and libraries to work with readers. However, my analysis of their work does not involve any discussion of how these works are currently being

used in the curriculum. Instead, I am interested in how these works can usefully inform a dialogue about FBV and the current history curriculum, perhaps pointing to the ideological underpinnings, crucial omissions and problematic assumptions of the latter. I see my analysis of the novels as the first step towards finding new uses for such postcolonial Gothic works within education, where they might promote a dialogue about cosmopolitan ideas of shared values and a recognition of the pluralistic nature of national identity.

Fundamental British Values and Education in the UK

The FBV project began life in the U.K. Government's controversial counter-terrorism strategy, *Prevent*, developed following the 7th July bombings in London in 2005. *Prevent* targeted communities perceived as being at risk of recruitment to terrorist activity. *Prevent* documents, circulated by the Tory-led coalition government which came to power in 2010, articulate FBV as involving "democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs" (HM Government, 2011, n.p.). *Prevent*, and the education policies that followed, equates religious extremism (implicitly associated with Islam) with opposition to British values. The requirement to uphold and promote these values was made statutory for teachers in 2012. The government offered further advice to schools on how to promote FBV following the so-called "Trojan horse affair" of 2014, which suggested that state-funded schools were being infiltrated by Islamic fundamentalists. The story broke in various newspapers and via the BBC, who reported on a leaked letter in which Islamists claimed responsibility for installing new head teachers at schools in Birmingham. The letter was a hoax (Holmwood and O'Toole, 2017, p. 10) but media attention prompted the government to announce that education ought to have a larger role to play in the *Prevent* strategy. They insisted that schools should promote FBV and assess pupils, making reports to the police where necessary. The intrusion of the *Prevent* agenda into schools via the FBV project has provoked widespread criticism. A recent report on "safeguarding and radicalisation" suggests that referrals by education staff are "overzealous" and "inappropriate" (Chisholm et al., 2017, p. 6). Teachers themselves report discomfort about allowing students to express their views in class and are anxious that they might have to report things students have or, indeed, have not said, to the police (Huqoqi, 2017).

FBV have emerged out of a pervasive discourse of Islamophobia and racist scaremongering, which, thanks to an interplay of media and political power, has become the language of official government policy. FBV are implicitly defined in opposition to Islam, which has become synonymous with notions of "extremism" and "radicalisation." Farid Panjwani (2016, p. 330) argues that the underlying assumption of the FBV project is that radicalisation is an ideological issue and, consequently, it assumes that countering Islamism is key to countering extremism. Thus FBV implicitly exclude Muslims from the category of "Britishness." Panjwani's research shows that many Muslim teachers feel the FBV project is motivated by a suspicion about the Muslim community and will therefore alienate

Muslim youth (2016, p. 338). The teachers in the study also insisted that they saw no conflict between Islamic values and FBV, but recognised that this conflict was assumed by the policy (p. 337). Coupled with the Islamophobic assumptions of FBV is an insistence on assimilation. The Tory-led Coalition government explicitly rejected multiculturalism, instead promoting the idea that minority cultures should assimilate to "mainstream" British society. In 2011, a speech by the then Prime Minister David Cameron clearly targeted Muslim communities: "Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives […] We've even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values" (Cameron, 2011, n.p.).

As Uvanney Maylor argues, Cameron's implied "racist discourse about how people naturally prefer to 'be with their own kind'" forms the background to the FBV project and its implicit opposition of "us" and "them" (2016, p. 316). The discourse of "us" and "them" also reveals how problematic is the concept of "tolerance" in the FBV policy. Tolerance of "different cultures" and "segregated communities" is regarded as not desirable, even though tolerance of different faiths and beliefs is to be promoted. This confusion over the idea of tolerance arises because the FBV project marks some citizens as deserving of tolerance whereas others are not. Herein lies a further danger with the FBV project, which suggests opposition to and demonisation of minority cultures.

Gothicizing History: British Villainy and Violence

My analysis of *Coram Boy* and *City of Ghosts* is undertaken in the light of the FBV project, for I see these novels as incorporating some of the criticisms of the policy outlined above. My analysis also takes into account current practices in history education in the U.K., which I see as working alongside the FBV policy in that both elide aspects of Britain's imperial past in their celebration of Britain. Government amendments to the history curriculum in 2013 and 2014 included a push by David Cameron for every schoolchild to learn about "great" British documents, such as the Magna Carta, which underpin so-called "British Values" (Shipman and Griffiths, 2014). With these recommendations, Cameron can be seen to be supporting a narrative of superiority, presenting Britain as a progressive democracy. Accordingly, requirements for the teaching of history suggest students should learn "how Britain has influenced the wider world" (Department for Education, 2013). These policies prompted criticism from teachers and academics. Writing for *Teaching History* magazine, teacher Abdul Mohamud laments that Empire has "become a somewhat neglected aspect of our history teaching because of the various controversies it challenges us with" (2016, p. 4). Academic historian Deana Heath (2016) also decries the changes in policy as a whitewash, noting that while the curriculum does cover aspects of Empire, it avoids tackling the actual impact of Empire on colonised peoples or exploring its ongoing effects. Changes to educational policy enacted by Cameron and Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education between 2010 and 2014, echo an imperialist notion of education expounded at the height of Empire. For example, a 1905 Board of Education report

argues that schoolboys ought to "learn something of their nationality […] and how the mother country in her turn founded daughter countries beyond the seas" (Board of Education, 1905, p. 61). Joseph Bristow's study of children's literature in this period uses sources such as this to show how imperialism shaped the ideological dimensions of subjects studied in school (1991, p. 20). This imperialist strain in history education, which resurfaces in the reforms enacted by Cameron and Gove, has a perceptible effect on attitudes towards Britishness. A 2016 poll found that four out of ten Britons viewed the Empire as a good thing and colonialism as something of which to be proud (Owen, 2016, n.p.). The promotion of FBV in schools has done little to recognise Britain's history of brutal colonialism, undemocratic military rule over territories like India and Ireland, and a marked *in*tolerance for local languages and traditions.

As suggested in the summaries above, the Gothic elements in *Coram Boy* and *City of Ghosts* provide a counter to the historical narrative promoted by Cameron and Gove. Indeed, both novels draw on a process Robert Mighall calls "gothicization." As he argues, "the Gothic is a process, not an essence […] an attitude to the past and the present, not a free-floating fantasy world. Epochs, institutions, places, and people are Gothicized, have the Gothic thrust upon them. That which is Gothicized depends on history and the stories it needs to tell itself" (1999, p. 25).

City of Ghosts "gothicizes" Amritsar in its title, suggesting the city is haunted by the massacre of civilians by British troops in 1919. The story deals directly with a haunting (the ghost of the mother of one of the characters), but its characters are also ghosts because their fate in the massacre is already sealed. Many of the characters are "ghosts" of historical personages, resurrected by Rai to reproach Britain for its role in the violence. In contrast to Rai's "gothicized" colonial India, narratives favoured by the current education policy position Britain as a progressive and benevolent force. For example, Heath notes that students in British schools learn about Britain's first contact with India and then of Indian independence, but know nothing of what happened in-between. She argues that this makes possible a "triumphalist historical narrative that renders Empire a positive historical force" (2016, n.p.). Instead, *City of Ghosts* emphasises the violence and injustice imposed by colonialism. Likewise, *Coram Boy* emphasises aspects of history elided by the curriculum: Britain's role in the transatlantic slave trade. This provides a useful counter to the education curriculum, which either ignores slavery altogether or displaces its legacy onto the U.S.A. via the civil rights movement, offering a narrative of emancipation that sidesteps the connection between slavery and Britain's Empire (Heath, 2016).

Gothicization is not only achieved by drawing attention to elements of history elided in dominant narratives, but by using the character types and structural patterns of the Gothic to recast specific periods of British history. Gavin turns to the eighteenth century, generally perceived as a period of Enlightenment and rational progress. The villain of the novel, the Coram Man, poses as an aristocrat, his cruelty and scheming echoing both Horace Walpole's Manfred (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1764) and Ann Radcliffe's Montoni (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794). However, in contrast to these archetypes, the Coram Man is not a European aristocrat: he is a

British merchant with social status and financial capital. Already profiting from the legal transatlantic slave trade, the Coram Man, Mr Philip Gaddarn, uses his status to sell children illegally into prostitution overseas. As Jerrold Hogle (2012, p. 498) asserts, eighteenth-century Gothic Romance, in its more conservative figuration, looked to a "falsified" medieval past, which was constructed as barbaric in comparison to the writers' enlightened present. In Gavin's novel, however, the terrifying past is the late eighteenth century, a period of incipient modernity in which Britain built much of its imperial wealth. Gavin thus relocates the barbaric antiquity of Gothic Romance, typically figured as medieval Catholic Europe, to eighteenth-century London where the villains are British merchants and officials, not foreign "others." The early Gothic novels, on which Gavin draws, constructed a modern "English" identity in opposition to an imagined barbaric, Catholic past. For example, Robert Miles argues that Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) presents Catholic Otherness and medieval barbarity as "abject material […] that must be expelled from the national body to allow its hygienic imagining" (2001, p. 61). Miles argues that the Gothic emerges in this period in conjunction with and in support of an incipient nationalism, which not only mobilised nostalgia for a lost "Merrie England" but also conceived the nation as modern (2001, p. 54). In relocating the Gothic "cusp" identified by Miles and Hogle to the very period that first produced Gothic writing, Gavin reverses the process of expulsion and "abjection" enacted by those classic texts.[2] Here, the Gothic lurks within British government buildings, aristocratic mansions and on the dockside of a bustling, commercial London.

Accordingly, British officials and merchants are cast in the role of villains. However, this villainy is not rooted solely in the malevolence of character required by the Gothic, but is more properly the result of the character's position in an economic and political structure dependent on racism and exploitation. Gavin's primary villain, Mr Gaddarn, a peddler turned respectable merchant, displays villainous tropes borrowed from the eighteenth-century Gothic tradition. Yet, this villainy is also implicated in an exploitative political and economic structure. Gaddarn indulges in immoral decadence, he schemes to cheat others, and he is an imposter, adopting a fake name to gain influence. Gaddarn was once Otis Gardiner, as noted earlier, a rural pedlar who received money for unwanted babies, burying them in shallow roadside graves rather than delivering them to orphanages. Gaddarn reveals the hypocrisy of respectable society: he is complicit with MPs, merchants and wealthy landowners, who are all keen to rid themselves of unwanted familial and financial burdens. He is a metonym for an economic system comprised of all manner of legal exploitation: merchant shipping in the orient, the slave trade, gambling on the stock exchange and "speculation" in the South Seas (Gavin, 2000, p. 225).

Later in the novel, Gaddarn's illegal slavery and prostitution ring, run under the cover of his support for the charitable Coram Hospital, is shown to be an extension

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[2] "Abjection" is the term used by Hogle to describe the process by which early Gothic texts cast their own age as enlightened by "throwing off" anxieties and tensions about progress onto an imagined barbaric past.

of the exploitative global commerce that made Britain wealthy. Gavin suggests that London is all too eager to believe the veneer of Gaddarn's respectability. He exploits the hypocrisy of the wealthy, their desire to disavow the source of their wealth. Glasses "clink" and pleasantries are exchanged during a business deal to smuggle Coram orphans out of London into prostitution (p. 238). Drawing on the Gothic language of decadence, Gavin depicts respectable merchants and aristocrats as ugly and grotesque. "Large, white hands, all powdered and ringed" (p. 297) paw at Coram orphan, Toby, when he is forced to serve in Gaddarn's household. Gaddarn's wealthy guests ogle the slave boy's black skin and his orientalist garb as they eat and drink to excess. The decadence of Gaddarn's parties echoes the callous treatment of the poor by the rich seen throughout London. Gavin describes "fine ladies and gentlemen in exquisite wigs and hats, jackets, gowns and silver-buckled shoes [who] picked their way through the city or skimmed lightly over the mayhem in their carriages like glittering fairies, as if all the filth and the sorrows of the world were completely invisible to them" (p. 120).

Gavin also uses the language of Gothic villainy to reveal the corruption at the heart of British institutions, undercutting the notion that respect for the rule of law is a fundamental British value. In *Coram Boy*, corruption envelops MPs and magistrates as well as local parish committees and charitable foundations. Pompous landowner, magistrate and MP, Admiral Bailey, is discovered to have diverted money from orphanage funds whilst fathering babies that wound up in Otis's graves. At the end of the novel, Bailey uses his money and influence to escape justice. Even those who exhibit a genuine concern for the welfare of others cannot escape corruption by implication. For example, Toby knows he cannot tell his guardians at the Coram Hospital about the treatment he receives at the hands of Mr Gaddarn because the hospital relies too much on the merchant's money: "They won't want to believe me" (p. 184). Thus, the name of the benevolent founder of the Coram Hospital becomes tainted. This corruption of the Coram name begins when Otis Gardiner adopts the sobriquet of "Coram Man" as part of his scheme to profit from unwanted babies. Instead of evoking Christian virtue and charity, the name recalls the "many little bodies [dumped] along the highways and byways to London […] all the time the name, Coram, Coram, Coram was repeated and repeated like a prayer, as though the very name invoked paradise" (p. 120). Gaddarn's rise to a position of power thus makes a mockery of the virtue associated with the hospital and reveals the hypocrisy of social reform and the self-serving motives of charitable benefactors.

Rai, too, casts British officials in the role of villain. There is nothing admirable nor triumphant about the British military and government officials charged with governing Amritsar. They drink brandy as the city slides into chaos, their behaviour echoing the decadence of classical Gothic villains. They are deaf to the entreaties of the local community, which simply becomes "invisible" (Rai, 2009, p. 158). However, Rai also shows that Amritsar is divided by racial inequality, the British living "well in their part of the city, away from the overcrowded alleys of the old town" (p. 161). Rai's military officers—some of whom are depictions of real historical personages—simply cannot see this inequality. Thus they display self-serving cruelty as they discuss "the machinations of the political beast [that] helps

keep our Empire together" (p. 342). The word "machinations" is military code for underhand tactics, which include deliberately agitating the locals to justify violence. In one scene, where a peaceful protester attempts to reason with his captors, this man is left shaking his head and asking, "where is the decency?" (p. 156). Although there are obvious malevolent villains, such as the scheming Lieutenant-Colonel Smith who sends agitators into the crowd of protestors, other characters are part of a colonial power structure that dictates their actions. One exasperated officer, Rehill, realises that British policy is to blame for the instability in Amritsar but he also acknowledges that a show of military force is required to maintain the fragile power dynamic upon which colonial rule is dependent (p. 158). Rai shows the British as panicked, scrambling to assert their imperial authority whilst vying with one another for position and influence.

In addition to its depiction of villainous colonial military officials, *City of Ghosts* also provides a rejoinder to narratives of British history that glorify Britain's role in war, including the First World War. In 2014, the then Education Secretary (Michael Gove) publicly intervened in a debate about how the First World War ought to be remembered and taught in schools, lambasting unpatriotic depictions such as those offered by "left wing academics" (Shipman, 2014). Gove's insistence that depictions of the First World War be patriotic concealed both the imperial underpinnings of the war and its treatment of colonial subjects. *City of Ghosts* provides stories that reveal what such patriotic narratives conceal. Through the character of Bissen Singh, a shell-shocked war veteran forcibly returned to India by the British government, *City of Ghosts* foregrounds the role of colonialism and imperialism in the conflict, elements often scrubbed from public memorialisation in Britain today. The novel does this by drawing parallels between the slaughter on the front lines and the massacre at Amritsar, linking them through the language of trauma to a shared origin: in imperialist ideology. As the book reaches its violent climax, Rai describes colonial officials and military captains making their preparations to quell a meeting of anticolonial protesters at Jallianwalla Bagh. Captain Rehill notes the amassing of a "special force" of non-Punjabi Indian troops, armed with rifles and *khuhuris*, with "a sense of dread" (p. 363). This scene is followed by an explosive "RA-TAT! RA-TAT-TAT!" that signals a transition into one of Bissen's recurring nightmares about the front lines. In his dream, Bissen is assailed by bullets as he runs desperately through "mud and guts," encountering the gored corpse of a fellow soldier, Gobar Sigh Negi (pp. 364–365). Ten pages later, the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh unfolds. This time, events are focalised through the perspective of a young man, Gurdial, but his experience echoes Bissen's dream. He runs and stumbles "through the smoke [...] beneath his feet were bodies [...] the stench of blood, guts and death made him want to retch" (p. 379). Thus Rai forges an emotive connection between colonial violence and the First World War through the smoke-filled chaos of battle, the wounds inflicted on innocents, the visceral images of death and the way survivors are haunted by ghosts of the fallen. Indeed, the ghosts of the massacre provide the Gothic title for the novel.

In drawing a connection between colonial violence and the violence of the trenches, the novel tempers modes of remembrance that glorify the war dead as

patriotic martyrs. Bissen's perspective offers an explicit critique of militaristic British nostalgia, as he wonders

> what had made him leave his beautiful homeland for the horror and savagery of war? A war in which the main protagonists looked exactly the same. A war in which fat, overfed, red-faced commanders ordered young men to go out and die for the sake of a mile of land; land that was charred and smoking and soaked in blood and guts. A war in which young men had to kill other young men or face being shot for desertion by cowards who hid well behind the front lines. (Rai, 2009, p. 219)

Bissen's rhetoric recalls Siegfried Sassoon's "Finished with the War: A Soldier's Declaration" (1917), which argued that the war was "evil and unjust." The image of the "charred and smoking" land covered in "blood and guts" echoes the work of soldier poets, which Rai also uses in his description of Bissen's nightmare and of the massacre itself. In terms of "British Values," Bissen's experience of fighting for Britain does nothing to convince him of the superiority of his colonial rulers, nor demonstrates their tolerance and sense of justice: "Was this really the country he had almost given up his life for?" (Rai, 2009, p. 274). This question resonates with the FBV project because it asks readers to interrogate nationalistic narratives. During the centenary of the First World War, historian Sam Edwards also suggested the necessity of asking questions about dominant historical narratives, arguing that it is necessary "to complicate how we commemorate the First World War so that the previously neglected and forgotten might be remembered" (2013, n.p.). In its emphasis on the brutality of war and its revelations about the unfair treatment of colonial soldiers, *City of Ghosts* provides one such complication. The novel uses the Gothic to transform Amritsar into a "city of ghosts," linking colonial and military violence. Thus it provides an important rejoinder to patriotic narratives of war and in so doing complicates the concept of British Values.

The Imperial Gothic and Whiggish History

Rai and Gavin draw on established Gothic tropes to draw out anxieties about Empire missing from contemporary discourse. More specifically, *City of Ghosts* uses aspects of the "Imperial Gothic," a form of British fiction that flourished between the 1880s and the 1920s, identified in Patrick Brantlinger's study *Rule of Darkness* (1990). Brantlinger suggests that the three principal themes of the Imperial Gothic are "individual regression or 'going native'; an invasion of civilisation by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world" (1990, p. 230). For Brantlinger, Imperial Gothic betrays "anxieties characteristic of late Victorian and Edwardian imperialism both as an ideology and as a phase of political development" (1990, p. 236). These "anxieties" included the racist fear of "degeneration" as well as a more nuanced social critique that suggested imperialism was "a retrograde social development" (p. 236). Imperial Gothic thus confirms stereotypes about "barbaric" colonial others whilst also expressing anxiety about the imperial project. This ambivalence is

typified by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which expresses the horrors (and failures) of colonialism in Africa, but also perpetuates racist ideas about degeneration.

Drawing on aspects of the Imperial Gothic, including its depiction of atavism in villainous figures such as the agitator, Hans Raj, who incites the young men of Amritsar to violence at the behest of the British, Rai makes explicit the form's contradictions to offer a more robust critique of imperialism. Rai also reverses the topography of *Heart of Darkness* by suggesting that the darkness emanates from the imperial centre, rather than at its periphery. The imperial centre and the city of London are "gothicized" through their portrayal as the sources of a violent brutality that spreads outward. This notion of emanation is central to Gothic fiction, which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests is characterised by its obsession with contagion (1981, p. 256). Thus *City of Ghosts* opens in London, not India, showing Britain as the epicentre of a contagion. One character describes the halls of Westminster as the "heart of the beast that had taken hold of his motherland" (Rai, 2009, p. 2). For the survivors of the massacre at Amritsar, the "smoke-filled darkness" of their trauma is rooted in London, not India. Likewise, Gavin's *Coram Boy* depicts London in the language of the Gothic, with descriptions of "men, women and children slumped in doorways or under arches of bridges, dying of gin and starvation" (2000, p. 120). In bustling ports, boys are sold to the navy, beaten and "tossed" into the hold of a ship bound for North Africa (Gavin, 2000, p. 29). In her reminder that Britain's commercial enterprise was supported by military and naval aggression, and by emphasising the deprivation lurking on its underside, Gavin also suggests that violence and degradation emanate from the imperial centre.

Gavin's and Rai's use of the Gothic to characterise the imperial centre as the source of violence and intolerance counters assumptions underlying fundamental British values. Many of the policy's critics have argued that there is nothing distinctly "British" about these values. To claim that they are is not only arrogant but also hypocritical, given the U.K. government's support for undemocratic regimes around the world (Panjwani, 2016, p. 337). Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen, also highlights the conceit of the FBV project, calling it "parochial, patronising and arrogant" in an open letter to Michael Gove (2014, n.p.). This arrogance is undercut in the Gothic of Rai and Gavin, which disrupts a "Whiggish" notion of history also found in conservative Gothic texts (Mighall, 1999, p. 7). Indeed, the notion of history espoused by Cameron and Gove in their education reforms echoes that identified by Mighall in early Gothic texts, which dramatise a conflict between the representatives of modernity and those who attempt to hinder progress. Mighall notes that the protagonists of these novels are "alienated from their age," typically conceived as the barbaric past, and act as "ambassadors of modernity." Villains, on the other hand, "do their best to thwart progress, as perceived from the vantage point of the present" (Mighall, 1999, p. 7).

Rai and Gavin partially employ this Whiggish perspective on the past, referring to barbaric events and depicting the struggles of characters who seem to belong to a

more progressive era. However, as Gavin notes in her blog about *Coram Boy* as history, she also wants "the reader to make comparisons with their own experience of contemporary life" (2011, n. p.). Gavin suggests continuity between the practice of child labour and slavery, located in Britain's past, and their continued presence in places such as India today. Though this implies, somewhat problematically, that modern India is barbaric compared to modern Britain, the novel reminds readers that barbaric exploitation has its roots in the former imperial centre and the practices of colonialism. Gavin repeats the image of manacled slaves, "shivering," "naked," and "shuffling" up the gangplanks to merchant ships on the River Thames, bound for America, Barbados and Honduras (2000, pp. 128, 182, 225). Here, Gavin manipulates the arrangements of the so-called "triangular trade." Typically, ships left British ports ready to receive slaves on the west coast of Africa, transporting their cargo from there to the Americas. However, by insistently repeating the image of slaves on the Thames, Gavin positions London as the central point of this trade.[3] Here, the barbarity of the "Great Ocean of Darkness," with slaves "crammed deep down in the skyless, airless, dark-as-hell holds" (Gavin, 2000, p. 233), is intimately connected to Britain's wealth. Anyone with substance or status in the novel is connected with slavery. Thus *Coram Boy* explores Britain's past in ways elided in the history curriculum, which, as discussed above, also tends to adopt the Whiggish view of progress.

City of Ghosts explicitly undercuts the Whiggish notion of history through its nonlinear temporal structure, which forces readers to confront the trauma of the massacre in the opening pages. The imperial past haunts the present of the narrative and its future trajectory: the massacre cannot be escaped. The novel opens with a frame narrative which depicts the real-life assassination in 1940 of a British Official in London by a survivor of the massacre. The event marks a waypoint between the events of the main story and the readers' present. The murderer, Udham Singh, kills in cold blood: the assassination is a political act. However, the narrator delves into the traumatic roots of Singh's violence, offering a visceral depiction of the massacre that is yet to occur in the main narrative. The "ghosts" of Amritsar haunt Singh; as he expresses it, they "poke me with their bony fingers and scream at me with their disembodied voices" (Rai, 2009, p. 191). Later, the novel returns to Singh, showing him as he was prior to the massacre: an advocate for peaceful demonstration against British rule. Thus the novel suggests that Singh's act of murder was not the result of inherent barbarism but part of a causal chain in which violence begets violence. In this latter portion of the novel, Singh's insistence that nonviolent resistance will induce the British to be reasonable rings hollow, undercut by readers' knowledge of the coming massacre and of Singh's eventual crime. Thus the temporal structure of the novel disrupts the schema whereby the present is the successful outcome of a conflict between the forces of barbarism and progress. Rather, the forward motion of the narrative is a spiralling descent into violent retribution.

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[3] London was the main port until 1698, but in the eighteenth century, it was first Bristol then Liverpool. Thus, Gavin's emphasis on London is also anachronistic.

Cosmopolitan Conclusions

Coram Boy and *City of Ghosts* employ the Gothic to interrogate aspects of British history elided by education and political rhetoric. The texts write back to fundamental British values, interrogating the hypocritical assumptions behind their formulation. Yet the novels also emphasise such values as friendship, moral integrity, mutual respect, forgiveness, the importance of dialogue with others, and inclusive models of family and community. Such values might provide alternatives to those suggested in documents supporting the teaching of FBV. Beyond these moral themes, the texts suggest a wider application of civil and human rights than is implied by *Prevent* and the FBV project. Finally, the novels imagine an open and multiple sense of British identity in contrast to the narrow stereotypes peddled by those infected by imperialist nostalgia.

To understand this aspect of the novels I want to draw on cosmopolitanism, a philosophical and social theory that deconstructs imperialism and nationalism in order to propose an alternative system of social organisation. Robert Fine defines cosmopolitanism as "a collective endeavour to build a science of society founded on a claim to universalism. Its basic presupposition is that the human species can be understood only if it is treated as a single subject, within which all forms of difference are recognised and respected" (2007, p. 10). Cosmopolitanism aims to counter the natural-seeming construct of the nation state as central to identity and social organisation. British nationalism is particularly problematic because of its intimate connection to the ideology of imperialism. As Benedict Anderson notes, colonial racism was a major element in the conception of Empire and British nationalism, which generalised "a principle of innate, inherited superiority" (1991, p. 150). Thus British nationalism today is often founded on racist assumptions about the inherent superiority of white people and often works alongside a nostalgic desire for Britain's former status as an imperial power. As Gurminder Bhambra (2017) argues, for example, a resurgence of nostalgic nationalism and a lack of knowledge about Britain's imperial past lies behind much of the "Vote Leave" campaign, which led to the United Kingdom voting to leave the European Union in 2016. Although there exists a radical tradition arguing for a different sense of nationalism, the nationalism evoked by politicians such as Cameron and Gove in their education reforms and promotion of FBV is rather more conservative. As those who have critiqued the FBV project argue, the concept of Britishness employed by the policy can operate as an exclusionary discourse. Cosmopolitanism opposes nationalism, arguing that nation states mark some peoples as not deserving of the rights gifted by the state. This exclusion operates in Britain today: non-native immigrants cannot easily access state healthcare and benefits; asylum seekers are detained in horrific conditions; migrants and their British-born children are routinely denied residency; European Union citizens are regarded as bargaining chips in the government's Brexit negotiations; and young British Muslims are often on the receiving end of hate crime and police surveillance. These are just some of the groups of people who find themselves excluded from the rights gifted by the nation state. Certainly, they are not beneficiaries of so-called British values.

Cosmopolitanism underwrites the critique that there is nothing specifically "British" about FBV, suggesting that "shared" values might be a better designation than one linked to the limiting logic of nationalism. In the aftermath of the 2016 EU referendum, in which a narrow majority of the British electorate voted to leave the European Union, many disappointed citizens rejected the outcome of the vote by declaring that they were "citizens of the world." The U.K. Prime Minister, Theresa May (2016), scorned these sentiments, responding, "if you're a citizen of the world, then you're a citizen of nowhere." May was not only arguing against so-called "Remainers," but also against the key tenets of cosmopolitanism and with Greek philosopher, Diogenes, from whom the phrase "citizen of the world" derives (Laertius, 1952, p. 65). May's comment implicitly levelled a threat against the self-declared "citizens of nowhere": a threat to remove their rights, since rights are only accorded to citizens of the nation. In contrast, cosmopolitanism asserts that the right to have rights should be a universal value (Fine, 2007, p. 4). The Gothic represents one cultural form with the capacity to develop cosmopolitanist thought, weaving into its critique of imperialism a reminder that British identity is multiple and rich, and could be inclusive of peoples and communities that nationalism often excludes. Through their revelations about the disenfranchised and traumatised subjects of British imperial governance, these novels suggest that what is needed instead is a social formation in which human beings can find "mutual recognition as equals in the context of our multiple differences" (Fine, 2007, p. 13). That is, Rai and Gavin use the Gothic to critique existing structures and ideologies and, in so doing, look for a cosmopolitan solution that might "address the needs of those who are outside or on the margins of the nation" (Fine, 2007, p. 10).

Cosmopolitanism does not sit easily alongside postcolonialism, but the two are reconciled within the context of these children's novels. In his careful defence of cosmopolitanism, Robert Spencer (2011, p. 22) acknowledges the critiques it has attracted from various postcolonial scholars, including the accusation that cosmopolitanism is guilty of celebrating a diverse and tolerant society before it has arrived. The solution to this is to adopt the "minoritarian cosmopolitanism" suggested by Sheldon Pollock et al., who assert the necessity of building a cosmopolitanism from the perspective of the victims of inequalities created by post-imperial globalisation (2002, p. 6). *Coram Boy* and *City of Ghosts* adopt minoritarian perspectives on British history and identity, telling the stories of those excluded from national narratives. Rai and Gavin draw attention to inequalities and power differentials that persist from the past into Britain's present. As such, they gesture towards cosmopolitan conclusions, but in the realisation that "cosmopolitanism is yet to come" (Pollock et al., 2002, p. 1). Spencer (2011, p. 24) also explores the charge that cosmopolitanism is simply a way of legitimising the capitalist status quo: the exploitation of people and resources in a global market. For most people, the world is not comprised of global "flows" that give them the freedom to move between cultures and create hybrid identities. The "gothicized" histories recounted in these novels counter this utopian conception of cosmopolitanism by emphasising the origins of global trade in imperialism. The forced migration that slavery involves, as depicted in *Coram Boy*, for example, offers a savage critique of the global market in its infancy. In Gavin's novel, the community

of friends forged from the shared trauma of their exploitation provides an alternative model of a cosmopolitan society. In defence of cosmopolitanism, Spencer argues that it has "substantive political goals […] agitating for cultural dialogue, for just institutions, for social and democratic equality and for the disinterested application of international law" (2011, p. 24). Likewise, Gavin's exploration of Britain's imperial trade points to the need to root out corruption in state institutions, and to ensure social and democratic equality for those at risk of exploitation or abuse by those in power.

As well as providing an alternative to the arrogance underlying the FBV project and its blindness to power relations, cosmopolitanism also promotes a multiple conception of identity. This is important because another critique levelled at the project is that it encourages teachers to impose a singular conception of Britishness and downplay the contribution of minority ethnic cultures (Maylor, 2016, p. 319). In contrast, what I suggest might be termed the "cosmopolitan Gothic" of these novels points to the contribution of non-white citizens, colonial subjects and people of colour to British history. Thus City of Ghosts and Coram Boy accord with Appiah's notion of a "multiple and overlapping" cosmopolitan identity that is reconcilable with local loyalties (2007, p. 16). As he asserts, "once, to be English, you had to imagine your ancestors were recorded a millennium ago in the Doomsday Book. Now a Rohit or a Pavel or a Muhammed or a Kwame can be English" (2016, n.p.). Appiah's words seem utopian, blind to the difficulties a "Muhammed" faces in contemporary Britain, but Rai's and Gavin's work complements this notion of cosmopolitanism, drawing attention to the histories of migration that produced the "multiple and overlapping" British identity that Appiah celebrates. These novels are keen to applaud the diversity of British identity, without forgetting the inequalities and exploitation on which this diversity is founded. In early twentieth-century imperial Britain, exclusive policies of citizenship prevent City of Ghosts' Bissen Singh from remaining with his wife in England. The novel holds out bittersweet hope for their romance, but Lillian's letter to Bissen, informing him of the birth of their child in England, arrives too late. Though Bissen dies in the massacre at Amritsar, his English child offers a hopeful image of positive intercultural connection and a more generous, multiple sense of British identity, even though, in contemporary Britain, this sense of belonging is under threat. Likewise, Coram Boy concludes by offering a hopeful image of a new kind of family. The Ashbrook family, torn apart by the schemes of Mr Gaddarn, is reunited in a reconstituted form at the close of the novel. The new family includes Toby, the orphaned child of a slave, as well as Melissa, the poor ward of the family, as the new mistress of Ashbrook. The reconstitution of the family enacts a healing of the trauma of the past, as "the children of the crying woods faded away" (Gavin, 2000, p. 319). Thus both novels gesture towards Spencer's "responsible cosmopolitanism […] grounded in the complex lived reality of the world's citizens" (2011, p. 33). This "cosmopolitan Gothic" suggests values and community structures in which difference can be safeguarded and encouraged.

Finally, these "cosmopolitan Gothic" novels emphasise the importance of intercultural dialogue in constructing national identity and civic values. City of Ghosts begins from the minoritarian perspective of a murderer and offers multiple

viewpoints on the massacre in Amritsar, which it does not view as finished history. The novel exhorts its readers to interrogate the construction of history—not least "official" versions—and includes an appendix of "Historical Notes" that offer a gloss on the author's choice to present events and characters in a certain way. In one scene, a character exhorts one of the young men to think about what has shaped their view of Indian history and identity:

> "The British want to teach *their* history," she explained patiently, "and Indians want to teach *theirs*. No doubt it is the same the world over. But do you really learn the truth or simply another person's version of it? […] next time you learn something, ask yourself why you did so and in whose interest."
> (Rai, 2009, p. 235)

This statement suggests a cosmopolitan mode of thought, in which no one view commands the whole, and in which intercultural exchange is the best way to find shared values or common ground. Following Richard Burton's proposition that truth is a shattered mirror and that no shard reflects the whole (qtd in Appiah, 2007, p. 5), Rai's novel exhorts readers to engage with other viewpoints and values and, crucially, to use their imaginations even to place themselves in the position of those who have committed terrible acts.

Ulrich Beck (2006, p. 21) argues that there is nothing new in diversity and the mixing of peoples, but that what cosmopolitanism can help with is an "awareness" of this, leading to "its self-conscious political affirmation." Rai's and Gavin's Gothic histories affirm the diversity of British identity at a time of heightened nationalism, racism and imperialist nostalgia. The novels balance their critique of imperialism with an affirmatory vision of identities all too often excluded in notions of Britishness. The novels also suggest alternative values that affirm difference whilst asserting the importance of the right to have rights. I believe Gothic fiction has a role to play in the much-needed process of de-colonising education, called for at all levels, from elementary to higher education. This decolonisation is particularly necessary in Britain, where the history curriculum teaches nothing of the cruelties of colonialism and where fundamental British values promote an imperialist vision of British identity.

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