

Anachronistic Periodization: Victorian Literature in the Postcolonial Era or Postcolonial Literature in the Victorian Era?

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Literary historians generally define the Victorian Age as an epoch starting either with the passage of the First Reform Bill (1832) or as the period between Queen Victoria's ascendance (1837) and her death (1901).¹ The period markers are two major political events. However the complexity of the Victorian era cannot be confined within the span of seventy years. Both the intensive exchange between the British Empire and its colonies that was palpable across the nineteenth century and the residues of the colonial past that linger in the present demonstrate that there exist multiple points of thematic interface and historical overlapping between the Victorian period and the postcolonial era. The topical continuity of British imperialism between Victorian literature and postcolonial writing remains particularly noteworthy. This essay explores the Victorian colonial legacy in postcolonial writing so as to elucidate the linkage of the two literary periods. Disclosing the Victorian residue in V. S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, the essay proposes that these two texts be studied as a geographical and historical extension of Victorian literature, and that Naipaul and Ishiguro be alternatively defined as Victorian authors.

In one orthodox understanding of history, each epoch is marked by its heroic figures, while each literary era is characterized by the writers of its time. When one thinks of the Victorian period one immediately associates it with Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens. These writers mark their time just as the period would claim them. The mutual determination of an author and his or her epoch seems rather straightforward. However in some cases the seemingly systematic partition of literary history generates some of the most preposterous presentations of celebrated authors.

¹ Both the *Norton Anthology* and *Our Literary Heritage* define the Victorian era as an epoch starting with Queen Victoria's accession (1837). *Heritage* decides that the era ends at the end of the century, while *Norton* does not consider it concluded until the year of the Queen's death (1901). On the other hand *The Literature of England* collapses the Victorian and Edwardian eras into one period, which begins with the Queen's accession and ends with the start of the First World War (1914).

At the intersection of the Victorian period and the Edwardian age several prominent writers confusingly fall between two thrones. Their presence in two eras calls into question the logic of existing schemes for partition. Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) is customarily grouped with twentieth-century novelists while his contemporary Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1939) is placed with Victorian writers. Background information about an author alone apparently fails to explain the complex operation of epochal categorization. As David Perkins observes, literary taxonomy is chiefly dictated by six factors: “tradition, ideological interests, the aesthetic requirement of writing a literary history, the assertions of authors and their contemporaries about their affinities and antipathies, the similarities that the literary historian observes among authors and/or texts, and the needs of professional careers and the politics of power in institutions” (254). Perkins’s observation clarifies the two sets of conflicting criteria for assessing Conrad and Doyle, as well as the persistent contentions of attempts at classifying Thomas Hardy. It also clarifies the implications of categorizing Naipaul and Ishiguro as both postcolonial and late Victorian novelists.

Doyle began writing in 1879 and most of his major works, such as *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890), were published by the end of the century. Unlike Doyle, Conrad did not learn to write in English until 1886; his first work, *Almayer’s Folly*, was published in 1895, and most of his celebrated pieces were published at the turn of the twentieth century. In addition to dates of publication, the emergence of innovative ideas plays a vital role in determining how authors are grouped. Most literary historians tend to justify Conrad’s modernity by his themes. His work seems to resonate with that of Modernists such as James Joyce in its exploration of the inner self. In the case of Conrad and Doyle taxonomy is determined less by the authors’ biographical details than by the dates of their major publications and the styles of their writing. While a number of literary historians judge that Conrad’s writing pioneered the Modernist movement, others subscribe to the idea that Doyle should be grouped with Victorian authors because his major works were published before the end of the Victorian age.

If attention to the dates of their major publications and to the moments of their ideas’ flourishing has somewhat succeeded in positioning writers in relation to their contemporaries, these criteria fail to locate Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) in a fixed historical node. Hardy’s early works were rejected; he did not succeed in charming his contemporary readers until the publication of *The Return of the Native* in 1878. His other major writings, such as *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), came in the latter part of the century. The chronology of his publication indicates that the author concluded his career as a novelist with *Jude* in 1895, and started publishing his first collection of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, in 1898. Hardy’s career as a poet lasted until his death.

While some literary historians double-canonize Hardy in both Modern and Victorian literatures, others position him in either of these two contending eras. The third edition of the *Norton Anthology* ascribes to Hardy's fiction the received features of the Victorian period. It notes that he elaborated in his fiction what Dickens and Thackeray were most concerned with: "the behavior and problems of men in a given social milieu" (Ford 2275). Yet as Hardy changes genre these alleged Victorian attributes seem to evaporate. The same edition of the *Norton Anthology* assigns Modernist features to his poetry. Hardy's poetic style is reported to have made a drastic departure from that of Tennyson and Arnold: "The sad-sweet cadences of Victorian self-pity are not to be found in Hardy's poetry, which is sterner, as though braced by a long look at the worst" (Ford 2277).

Though *The Literature of England* groups Hardy with Modernist writers it stresses more the continuity of his two genres than their differences: "They both contain the same philosophy and are couched in similar styles--plain, rather old-fashioned, with a wealth of attention to Anglo-Saxon words, phrases and folklore, gritty and often rather awkward in expression, but inevitably strong." Nearly all of his masterpieces present "the losing struggle of individuals against the twin pressures of nature and social forces, which gradually destroy them" (Anderson and Holzkecht 1093). The themes in Hardy's poetry are said to remain consistent with those of his fiction; both characterize human beings as powerless creatures at the whimsical sway of God.

Hardy's style is studied either as a corollary of the larger political situation or as a reflection of the literary context. Some scholars configure the essential constituents of his work so they correspond to the transition from the reign of Queen Victoria to that of Edward VII. Others associate Hardy's style(s) either with the epochal traditions that shape him or with the trends he initiates. *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* alone contains two essays with different perspectives on the writer's poetic propensity: juxtaposed are Dennis Taylor's "Hardy as a Nineteenth-Century Poet" and John Paul Riquelme's "The Modernity of Thomas Hardy's Poetry." Of Hardy's double position as a Victorian Modernist (or Modernist Victorian) H. M. Daleski asks succinctly: "Are Modernists, this is to say, essentially late Victorians? Or if there is a prevailing feeling of alienation in Modernist literature, of personal futility, should this be related to the overwhelming effect of urban life in the twentieth century?" (179).

Hardy's alleged transition from Victorian novelist to Modernist poet manifests what Raymond Williams characterizes as the coexistence of dominant, residual, and emergent forces. The seeming transition of Hardy (or any long-lived and volatile writer) is simply a dramatic example of the emergence of a common development. Sometimes the partition of literary periods imposes an arbitrary grid on unremitting creativity, dissecting an author's on-going process of self-evolution into different phases.

The complexity of positioning Hardy in literary history evinces the simultaneous rationality and arbitrariness of literary division. Every categorization exhibits a methodological arrangement until it is juxtaposed with others; the juxtaposition of contending classifications results in the revelation of inherent anarchy.² Taxonomy, as Jerome McGann aptly states, attempts “orderly, expository, and linear arrangements . . . at a perpetual brink of Chaotic transformation” (168). The inherent chaos McGann observes in authorial categorization is equally noticeable in period partition, for both tasks endeavour to tame the disorder. The confusion of epochal division is particularly noticeable when an era is ideologically named.

Perhaps, one of the most perplexing terms in contemporary academic discourse is *postcolonialism*. Though as a term *postcolonialism* was not coined until the demise of most European empires in the middle of the twentieth century, as a phenomenon or attitude it has existed for as long as colonialism. Postcolonial literature therefore is not necessarily written after the independence of Britain’s former colonies. A significant number of postcolonial classics were actually composed prior to the postcolonial era. Widely acclaimed as postcolonial writers, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan were already writing in the 1930s, long before the independence of India in 1947. Chinua Achebe published *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, years before Nigerian decolonization in 1963 (Skinner 4).

The problems of defining the postcolonial era parallel the difficulties of attempting global periodization. Jerry H. Bentley cautions that the epochal markers of a given society do not always accord with occurrences elsewhere. Jean-Pierre V. M. Herubel and Edward A. Goedecken similarly contend that “history is often thought of in segments based upon time periods and national geography” (80a). Indeed if the phrase “the postcolonial era” is meant to declare the demise of European dominance, it can only be successfully applied locally, and even that success must remain contestable.³

To unveil the imbrication of the postcolonial era and the Victorian period, one may consider Noël Carroll’s remark on postmodernism. Carroll holds that no historian can write a complete global history in the present because he or she simply cannot analyze future developments in retrospect:

² McGann’s observation reminds us of Foucault’s contention in *The Order of Things*, for both attend to the macrocosm of epistemological systems and paradigm shifts. Foucault reminds us that the order of things does not disappear, but is only replaced by a new order. This cautious approach to taxonomy parallels McGann’s consciousness of the intrinsic fallacy in historical synthesis.

³ Anne McClintock contends that the term *postcolonialism* is “prematurely celebratory” because “the singularity of the term effects a re-centering of global history around the singular rubric of European time” (11). Linda Carty’s questions about post-imperialism voice a similar concern: “What does the prefix ‘post’ in postimperialism entail? Why is the concept being invoked now? What is the significance of the notion of postimperialism when for the vast majority of people in the world, the conditions of imperialism still exist?” (39).

Writing a genuine historical narrative of t1 requires hindsight. To propose a historical narrative of t1--a narrative that reveals the significance of t1--requires knowledge of subsequent events, such as the consequences of t1--that occur at t2. Thus, the historian must be located temporally at t3 in order to say what is significant about t1 in light of t2. It is only because the historian knows what happened at t2 that the historian is able to pick out the details--from the welter of things that happened at t1--that are relevant to the story. (162)

Carroll's observations about contemporary historians' hasty attempts at documenting postmodernism offer equal insight into the absurdity of efforts to categorize the postcolonial era.

What Carroll dismisses as contemporary historians' "preoccupations of the present" is not singularly a postmodern phenomenon. The attempt to mark the current period as the postcolonial era rests on a similar fallacy; in neither case do historians retain the temporal distance that enables them to survey the consequence of certain past events. Carroll's argument is challenging (and perhaps disturbing) when applied to the Victorian era. If the postcolonial era (t2 or t3?) continues the Victorian era (t1) in variations, then there is probably not a t3 (perhaps not even a t2) for historians to write retrospectively about. It is even more disconcerting to complicate Carroll's temporal theorization with the concerns that Bentley, Herubel and Goedecken express about geographical diversity – that is, adding p1 (place 1), p2 (place 2), or even p3 (place 3) to the original axis of t1, t2, and t3. The center of empire stands as p1, the edge of empire as p2, and any position outside these opposing ends of British imperialism as p3.

Although Carroll insists that the historian must be temporally located at t3, he does not specify where the historian must situate him or herself geographically. The end of an era in one geographical location may not concur with that of another geographical location. To borrow Williams's language, the residual in one society may very well be the dominant or emergent in another. Long after Britain marched toward the era of imperial disintegration, its former colonies are still in many respects embroiled with the empire's colonial legacies. To some extent the Victorian era is indefinitely lingering because of the continual reinterpretation and representation of that colonial affiliation. With both temporal and spatial factors in mind, we may contend that postcolonialism is a historical phase (t3) defined by the center of the empire (p1). Yet ideologically postcolonialism has emerged since t1 and remained alive at t2. It is from the standpoint at the edge of empire (p2) that one glimpses the continuity of colonial resistance.

Though frequently labelled postcolonial writing, V. S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1988) tackle certain Victorian residues. In the space that remains this essay illustrates that Naipaul and Ishiguro are belated Victorian writers. They come from the peripheries of empire but finally find their voice to articulate their views to the imperial center. Contemporary Britons are

delayed readers who at last have the ears to listen to what earlier colonial discourse condemned as cacophony.

An ethnic Indian, Naipaul was born in Trinidad in 1932, completed his university education in England in 1950, and later started his writing career there. For the first twelve years he resided in England as a transplanted indigene, for Trinidad did not declare independence until 1962. *Enigma* fictionalizes Naipaul's journey in search of his place and identity from the British colony of Trinidad to the countryside of England. It blends Naipaul's personal story with the history of colonial Trinidad. When depicting the writer-narrator's migratory experience, Naipaul interweaves scenes of an English garden with Trinidadian plantations to evoke the correlation of transience and transplantation. On an excursion to London, the narrator comes to realize the disparity between his fantasy and reality. He is disillusioned by the fact that "the grandeur belonged to the past" and that he has come "too late to find the England, the heart of empire" (130).

The narrator recalls that among the Indian community in Trinidad the poor look back to India, which has become more and more idealized in their memories. Meanwhile the rest look ahead and outwards to the England where they believe life truly begins. But neither India nor England could grant the twice-transplanted Indian Trinidadian a sense of belonging. The narrator sees his English landlord and himself as diametrically opposed in every way:

[C]onsidering his family's fortune had grown, but enormously, with the spread of the empire in the nineteenth century, it might be said that an empire lay between us. This empire at the same time linked us. This empire explained my birth in the New World, the language I used, the vocation and ambition I had; the empire in the end explained my presence there in the valley, in the cottage, in the grounds of the manor. But we were--or had started--at opposite ends of wealth, privilege, and in the hearts of different cultures. (191)

The contrast between the English landlord and the Trinidad immigrant mirrors that between the English garden and the Trinidadian plantation.

Looking at a well-groomed English garden, the narrator reminisces about his childhood:

As a child in Trinidad I knew or saw few gardeners. In the country area, where the Indian people mainly lived, there were nothing like gardens. Sugarcane covered the land. Sugarcane, the old slave crop, was what the people still grew and lived by; it explained the presence, on that island, after the abolition of slavery, of an imported Asiatic peasantry. (224)

Through reference to gardening Naipaul has his narrator unfold to us the history of indentured Indian labor. Indentured emigration from India to Trinidad began in 1845. Laborers were brought to Trinidad on a five-year bond with a promise of "a free passage" back to India at the end of the term. While some workers eventually returned to their homeland, most of them settled in the adoptive land (Marshall 284-5). The relocation of

indentured laborers makes up merely a minute portion of the global dispersion occasioned by Victorian imperialism. Britain's expansion in the nineteenth century not only set in motion emigrants, colonists, and traders from England proper, but also drove a large-scale dislocation among the indigenes. The mass migrations between the edges and the center of the empire and among the colonies themselves result in an irresolvable problem: where do the dispersed really belong?

In *Enigma* Naipaul tackles this perennial question of belonging. In one scene he depicts an encounter between the narrator and an old lady who used to live in the cottage where he presently lodges. Watching the lady seeking memories at every corner of her former residence, the narrator is deeply dis comforted by his own presence:

Embarrassed, in the presence of the old lady, by what I had done, I was also embarrassed to be what I was, an intruder, not from another village or county, but from another hemisphere; embarrassed to have destroyed or spoilt the past for the old lady, as the past had been destroyed for me in other places, in my old island, and even here, in the valley of my second life, in my cottage in the manor grounds. (318)

In disclosing his uneasiness at a place he does not belong, the narrator alludes to a twice reversed infringement. As he consciously notices, the narrator (the former indigene) becomes "an intruder" in the old lady's childhood home, while she (the subject of the former empire) trespasses upon his ancestral land in India, birthplace in Trinidad, and present dwelling in England.

In his analysis of *Enigma*, Timothy Weiss considers Naipaul's resolution of a colony-metropolis dualism as an attempt to "to reinterpret and understand anew in the face of fracture and breakdown in today's postcolonial, multicultural societies" (107). In addition to the rupture in the multi-ethnic society of Britain that Weiss notes, *Enigma* interprets the colonial relationship anew by defying the generic boundaries of history and fiction. The free narrative flow between contemporary England and colonial Trinidad evinces a generic heterogeneity that intrigues critics. As Helen Hayward observes, *Enigma* consists of "an innovative and elusive blend of autobiography, fact and fiction," and "[its] subtitle, 'A Novel,' absolves Naipaul from the requirements of fidelity to the facts of his life" (60). Judith Levy also notes that the subtitle "adds elements of postmodernist refusal of closure by disrupting linearity of narrative and chronology, by conflating past, present, and future, by the employment of both repetition and gaps and by recycling beginnings into ends and ends into beginnings" (121). *Enigma*, as Hayward and Levy duly state, epitomizes a tactful intertwining of the past and the present, the personal and the public, and the factual and fictional.

As a postcolonial text *Enigma* strives to renew our understanding of the colonial connection by relating the narrator's present condition to his homeland's colonial past. As an autobiography it illuminates the larger historical and cultural context of global dispersion through an individual's migratory experience. This chronological and positional double movement

not only destabilizes the generic boundaries that concern Hayward and Levy, but also unsettles the temporal punctuation that structures our sense of history. With its fluid movement in time and frequent reference to history, *Enigma* resists the grids of literary periodization: it is simultaneously a contemporary story situated within the framework of postcolonial dislocation and a personal memoir contending with the public documentation (or more precisely, construction) of Britain's imperial history.

Generic heterogeneity also features in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. In her study of *Remains*, Meera Tamaya considers Ishiguro "unique among post-colonial writers," for he "uses that consummately economical and British literary form--the novel of manners--to deconstruct British society and its imperial history" (45). In addition to the unusual blend of convention and innovation, Ishiguro is distinct from most postcolonial writers in his unique position within the empire-colony dualism. Born in Japan in 1954, Ishiguro immigrated to England when he was only six and has lived there since. Though a naturalized alien like Naipaul, Ishiguro does not come from a former colony of Britain. Since Japan has never been colonized by any Western power Ishiguro cannot be grouped with Naipaul in the category of the indigenous elite. The postcolonial quality of *Remains*, as Tamaya astutely observes, derives from Ishiguro's subversive attempt to re-interpret the Empire in the face of Britain's post-war social reconfiguration, and to trace the imperial past through the fragmented remembrance of an aging manservant

Ishiguro's *Remains* parallels Naipaul's *Enigma* in its dual temporality: both texts foreground a recent story against the backdrop of a more remote past. Published in 1988, *Remains* is set against the backdrop of England in 1956, from which point the narrator, Stevens, reminisces about three decades of service at Darlington Hall. Lingered in his memory are ineffable doubts about Lord Darlington's wartime decisions and regret about his own blind loyalty. Stevens's motorcar journey (as well as his travelogue) purposefully begins in July of 1956, when Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. As the date signifies the denouement of Britain's global dominance, the return of the canal inevitably invokes a fraction of its imperial past.

In 1875, the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, purchased from the bankrupt Egyptian Khedive the shares of the Suez Canal at the price of 3.9 million pounds. The ostentatious gesture declared to the world Britain's enormous interest in the region. This interest soon developed into an ambition of territorial expansion. In 1882 Britain's occupation of Egypt ensured its control of the canal and dominance in the area; it was not until the Suez Crisis in 1956 that Britain's supremacy come to its finale (Fieldhouse 115). Set in the narrating present of 1956, *Remains* alludes to a remote past of the Victorian period when the empire reached its zenith, and tackles the ideological residues of this past that continue to linger in Britons' collective psyche. Stevens's obsession with "greatness" and

“dignity” evinces an anachronistic adherence to these remaining values. As Susie O’Brien astutely observes, *Remains* attends to “an opposition between what are commonly regarded as Victorian values—formality, repression, and self-effacement, summed up under the general heading of ‘dignity’—and those associated with an idea of ‘America’ that has expanded, literally into a New World—freedom, nature, and individualism” (788). Submitting the principles of his conscience to the superior of a social hierarchy, the butler mistakes servitude for “greatness,” and self-repression for “professionalism.”

This confusion perhaps explains why Stevens considers the conference of March 1923 the crucial moment of his own professional development and of Lord Darlington’s political career: “[Lord Darlington] had not been initially so preoccupied with the peace treaty when it was drawn up at the end of the Great War, and I think it is fair to say that his interest was prompted not so much by an analysis of the treaty, but by his friendship with Herr Karl-Heinz Bremann” (71). A misapprehension of loyalty also prompts the butler to rationalize his lord’s misdeeds. He explains that Darlington, out of chivalrous generosity, cemented a strong alliance with Bremann during the inter-war years, and that this friendship regrettably implicated him in Nazism and anti-Semitism.

The butler’s defense of Darlington’s Nazi connection exemplifies the interplay of revelation and concealment that features in Stevens’s narration. He starts with high-minded talk of professionalism, explicitly addressing his fellow butlers as follows: “the likes of you and I will never be in a position to comprehend the great affairs of today’s world, and our best course will always be to put our trust in an employer we judge to be wise and honourable, and to devote our energies to the task of serving him to the best our ability” (201). But as Stevens continues his conceited speech is soon reduced to sheepish self-justification: “How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington’s efforts were misguided, even foolish?” (201). The longer we listen to Stevens’s monologue, the more we suspect that he is exculpating himself from Darlington’s wartime treachery, circuitously transforming the wise and honorable Darlington into a misguided fool.

Naming Stevens’s equivocalness as “insoluble aporia,” Kathleen Wall holds that the unreliable narration renders “truth” problematic because Stevens’s account of events is neither convincing nor complete, and thus leaves the reader to wonder what actually happened (37). Deborah Guth characterizes the paralysis in *Remains* as “submerged narratives”; she contends that the text intrigues us “both for what it says and for what it whispers” (126). Though deploying different terms, Guth and Wall each refer to the fallibility of Stevens’s remembrance in representing interwar and post-World War II Britain.

Anthony F. Lang Jr. and James M. Lang share with Wall and Guth an interest in the unreliability of Stevens’s account, but they place emphasis

on the intersection of personal perspective and public discourse, individual supposition and collective truth. The Langs suggest that as a “value-laden” narrator Stevens exemplifies the blindness and insight inevitable to any recounting of historical events. They also note that instead of presenting history simply as “a repository of facts,” *Remains* “lays bare some complex assumptions that underlie the construction of causal historical narrative” (211). They maintain that the text is a “historical fiction” in which “Stevens’s self-interested narrative strategies” resemble those deployed in “the memoirs or recollections of actors in real historical events” (ibid.).

One may immediately notice personal postulation in Stevens’s remembrance of the Boer War. He recalls that while he was still a boy his elder brother Leonard was killed fighting in it. Prowling in his deceptively placid memory are bitterness and anger toward the controversial conflict. He considers the Boer war “a most un-British attack on civilian Boer settlements,” and criticizes that “it had been irresponsibly commandeered with several floutings of elementary military precautions, so that men who had died, [his] brother among them—had died quite needlessly” (40). Stevens stands as an unusual narrator of history, for he gives a personal account of monumental events during which he had the opportunity to witness decisions, and yet had no power to sway them. Only in retrospect does Stevens belatedly denounce the decisions of the ruling class and lament their consequences for the general public. If Stevens’s comments on historical events voice the rarely noted view of a servant, the unreliability of his memory may very well correspond to the disparity between the prominence he once aspired to and the triviality he has actually inhabited.

Stevens’s nostalgia for Britain’s imperial splendour and denunciation of the ruling class’s political decisions evinces a conflicted perspective. As the aging butler questions the loyalty he has devoted to Lord Darlington, he cannot help but ask himself what “dignity” remains in the service he once took pride in (243). The conflict Stevens suffers occasions the chronological oscillation of his remembrance. In *Remains* temporal references are manifold: the butler-narrator’s reminiscence in 1956 serves as a starting point from which the storyline is thrust back to the inter-war era, the anti-climax for the British Empire, while the collective memory is transported farther to the Victorian period, the pinnacle of the empire’s expansion. Attending to the Victorian remnants in post-war Britain, *Remains* presents a waning empire whose former glory can only be glimpsed in reminiscence, and yet the dire consequences of its faulty policies continue to haunt the present.

Enigma bears strong affinity with *Remains* in this respect. Coming from the corner of the empire, the Trinidadian writer-narrator discloses his observation of Britain from the 1950s to the 1980s. Autobiographical as the storyline may appear, *Enigma* alludes to a time period preceding the author’s first arrival in the 1950s. The Victorian era is subtly (but

intentionally and persistently) evoked as the narrator recalls his visit in 1950 to an old man, an invalid drifter from a non-English country now in a London boarding house:

If, as I thought (though at the age of eighteen I had no means of assessing the age of old people), he was now about eighty, it meant that he had been born in 1870. Born in the year Dickens died; the year Lord Alfred Douglas was born; the year the Prussians defeated the French. Or, considering it from another angle, the year after Mahatma Gandhi was born. As a young man he would have known people whose memories went back to the early decades of the nineteenth century; he would have lived among people to whom the Indian Mutiny was a recent affair. Now, after two wasting wars, after Gandhi and Nehru, he was ending his days in one of the big houses of Victorian London, a part of London developed in the Victorian time. (145)

The mention of the Indian Mutiny is not accidental. For Naipaul it unfolds the link between Britain's colonization and the dispersion of the likes of the Trinidadian narrator and the invalid old man. He correlates his personal transience with the communal dislocation of Indians when they were brought to Trinidad as indentured laborers. Throughout the narrative the history of Indian laborers is constantly referenced, and it is particularly elaborated in the concluding pages. *Enigma* thus foregrounds preceding epochs that may at first seem to serve as the backdrop to the narrator's reminiscence. It then gradually unfolds the causality of British imperialism and global dislocation from the perspective of a former indigene as constructed by Naipaul.

Remains and *Enigma* present the British Empire from viewpoints on the peripheries, which are belatedly recognized in the imperial center because they differed from the official perspective. Perhaps Jacques Derrida's theorization of *différance* best articulates the delay and alterity that these two texts feature. The elements of temporality and spatiality in *différance*, as Derrida contends, are exchangeable because "this temporization is also temporization and spacing, the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time" (123). Postcolonial texts such as *Remains* and *Enigma* emerge belatedly not because they were absent in the colonial period but because their differences were suppressed then and have been deferred to this day. The prefix *post-* in postcolonial thus refers to a viewpoint that is temporally behind (deferred) and spatially beside (differed). Combining Carroll's investigation of historical distance with Derrida's theory of spatiotemporal interchangeability, we may add that what the former empire (p1) defines as the postcolonial era (t3) can be readily translated into the colonial era (t1) during which the formerly colonized (p2) interpret from their own viewpoints.

Exploring the residues of the Victorian era from the position of the ideological other, *Remains* and *Enigma* inspect anew an officially concluded era that in reality still maintains a lively presence. They reveal to us that the subjects and motifs of British imperialism continue to intrigue contemporary writers, that the Victorian period extends far beyond the nineteenth century, and that postcolonial texts do not emerge

after the demise of the British Empire, but always exist as the voices of its differed or deferred others. The multiple temporal references and generic fusions of *Remains* and *Enigma* unsettle established schemes of literary division. Likewise, the topical concerns of Ishiguro and Naipaul prompt us to ponder Daleski's rhetorical question about Hardy's double-canoncity: "Are Modernists, this is to say, essentially late Victorians?" The question may be rephrased to elucidate the double position of Naipaul and Ishiguro: Are postcolonial writers essentially belated Victorian authors?

This essay concludes with a proposition that *Enigma* and *Remains* be alternatively classified from the perspective of p2 (the imperial margin) as deferred Victorian literature, and that Naipaul and Ishiguro be dually canonized as late Victorian and postcolonial writers. Interweaving remnants of the Victorian past with occurrences of the postcolonial present, both authors unfurl the thematic continuity of colonial ambivalence between two sequential epochs of presumably ideological antithesis.

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