“We’re full”: Capacity, finitude, and British landscapes, 1945-1979

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Abstract

The language of urban fullness and finitude has long had an active political life in British
politics and popular culture. After 1945, however, ideas of the finite, overspilling British city,
teeming with inert masses of working class people, drove the development of paternalistic state
urban reconstruction and new town programmes. More infamously, postwar immigration
anxieties often used a sinister metaphorical language of flooding and drowning to describe the
arrival of people from Commonwealth countries as catastrophic. Despite this shared
conceptualisation of British landscapes as finite, embattled, inert spaces, the interrelationships
between these ideas of “human floods” have largely been treated separately by historians. This
article proposes that these histories can be traced in terms of their shared cultural logic of
landscape finitude and capacity, as part of a post-imperial reimagining of heritage and national
identity. Through reading representations of postwar immigration and urban overcrowding
together, a wider preservationist political logic can be seen entrenching and defending ideas of
urban and national finitude against a range of post-imperial ideological and demographic
change. Through tracing symbolic representations of borders and population fullness, this
paper gestures towards a more integrated history of post-imperial landscape politics and their
role in shaping policies and practices of exclusion in postwar Britain.

Introduction

The idea of the human flood, or masses of humans moving across landscapes in ways that are
metaphorically described in terms of fluid dynamics, is neither a historically new idea in the
twentieth century, nor is it one which is restricted to British culture. Even so, this idea of
mass human movement as likened to the movement of water was a dominant political

language in Britain throughout the twentieth century. Drawing on a range of political preoccupations including fears of overpopulation, and eugenic concerns about dilution or defilement of the national whole, metaphors of mass human movement across the British landscape have been consistently represented in terms of fluid metaphors. From metaphors of aquatic monstrosity such as "Octopus London" to the postwar state's concern with pre-emptive "decanting" of "overspill" populations, these metaphors have played a key role in the development of urban planning's professional language.[1]

The language used by urban planning to frame its regulation of human movement and the structuring roles of cities has not only referred to movement within the nation, however, but has been consistently shared with languages used to describe the movement of humans from outside Britain. Migrants from colonised and Commonwealth countries in particular have been described in terms of "influxes" and floods, and depicted in dehumanised masses which move like "waves". These rhetorics have frequently shared a preoccupation with the ability of particular landscapes to function as containing forms, imposing structure on human floods, and on the malleable forms of heritage and identity.

While some of these shared patterns have been identified by historians, the cultural history of landscape representation has been fragmented across subdisciplinary approaches to the study of spaces and meanings in postwar British history. Within these fragmented disciplinary approaches, however, recent cultural histories of urban planning have gestured towards more synthetic historical theorisations of landscape politics which interpret this as a key field of research in its own right.[2] Similarly, cultural histories of isolated spatial forms such as roads, queues, and "non-places" such as roadside verges, such as those undertaken by Joe Moran, have indicated the fruitful historical potential of centering the meanings of landscape forms as topics of historical analysis.[3]

[1] Clough Williams-Ellis, *England and the octopus* (Glasgow, 1975 [1928]); Wolfgang Voigt, "The garden city as eugenic utopia," *Planning Perspectives* 4, no. 3 (1989); Patrica L. Garside, "'Unhealthy areas': Town planning, eugenics and the slums, 1890–1945," ibid.3, no. 1 (2007); Chris Renwick, "Eugenics, Population Research, and Social Mobility Studies in Early and Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain," *The Historical Journal* 59, no. 03 (2015); David Redvaldsen, "Eugenics, socialists and the labour movement in Britain, 1865-1940," *Historical Research* 90, no. 250 (2017).
[2] Otto Saumarez Smith, "The Inner City Crisis and the End of Urban Modernism in 1970s Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* (2016); Sam Wetherell, "Pilot Zones: The New Urban Environment of Twentieth Century Britain" (University of California, Berkeley, 2016).
[3] Joe Moran, "History, memory and the everyday," *Rethinking History* 8, no. 1 (2004); "'Subtopias of Good Intentions': Everyday landscapes in postwar Britain," *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 3 (2007); *On Roads* (London, 2009).

Broader cultural analyses of Britain's relationship to its imperial legacy have emphasised the role of landscape symbolism and metaphors in articulating and normalising categories of social inclusion and value. Paul Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* has argued that postwar cultural fixations on "greatness" and "prestige" have drawn on "the power of the landscape … as the dominant element" in expressing grief about Britain's "loss" of empire.[4] The generative iterative power of such affective metaphorical languages has been explored in Sara Ahmed's theorisation of "sticky" racialised metaphors of containment and exclusion, which has highlighted the significance of fluid metaphors in this process.[5] Georgie Wemyss' historical sociologies of bordering practices have also linked these discursive practices to experiences of space, arguing that the "selective loss of memory about British colonialism" is constructed with reference to the functions of British landscapes, thereby imposing spatialised "hierarchies of belonging" which divert attention from imperial legacies.[6]

This article therefore proposes a historical reading of the cultural representation of landscape forms in political rhetoric, mass media, and popular culture as finite containers which hold fluid, inert masses of people, and also hold malleable and vulnerable social meanings. This approach intends to bring together studies of metaphorical forms, postcolonial social theory, cultural histories of urban planning and of immigration, in order to trace the shared conceptual framework which underpinned evolving rhetorics of landscape finitude and capacity. Tracing these themes from the formation of the postwar welfare state in 1945, through to the election of the Thatcher government in 1979, this article proposes that evolving language used to articulate ideal forms of landscape has functioned not only to define and emplace national identity narratives, but also to encourage their regulation by the state, through controlling the "flows" of human movement within and across borders.

Decanting the overspill: spatial logics of postwar planning

Throughout the development of urban planning as a professional discipline, the concept of human movement as fluidity has been integral to conceptualising the nature of planning "problems" and the types of solutions which the discipline provides. The influence of eugenics on the early development of British urban planning has been well explored,

[4] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial melancholia* (New York, 2005), 115.
[5] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, (Edinburgh, 2015).
[6] Georgie Wemyss, *The invisible empire: white discourse, tolerance and belonging* (Farnham, 2009), 12,20.

particularly with reference to the idea of urban improvement as a method of improving not just quality of life for its population, but the "quality" of that population as well, as measured through health, productivity, and educational achievement.[7] Early urban planning advocates therefore conceptualised their new field of expertise in terms of improving cities through applying scientific principles of regulation and control; these were primarily focused on the regulation of landscape forms, but with the goal of regulating the potential action of people who lived in and on them.

These conceptualisations of bordering and containment developed into a more explicit language of fluidity and regulation during the language of wartime urban planning committees and documents, and emerged as a key and central tool used in the postwar Attlee government redefinition of the role of the British state.[8] "Town and Country Planning" policies relied on a conceptualisation of pre-emptive expert intervention and control, undertaken by the state, as a method of constraining and directing the impact of capitalism on the landscape, by providing pre-emptive controlled structures into which population growth and economic growth could be directed.[9] This desire to control the "flow" of human movement across the landscape was embedded in the new language of state sponsored planning. New town populations were to be "decanted" from overcrowded cities, which were "overspilling" their population.[10] New estates constructed at the edge of existing towns and villages to hold surplus or excessive populations drawn from cities also took the term "overspill" estates.[11] This type of controlled "dispersal" would prevent the slow "trickle" of urban sprawl outward from established cities, or the more drastic "flood," which would subsume the countryside. At the same time, work to increase the efficiency of existing urban

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[7] Garside, "'Unhealthy areas'"; Renwick, "Eugenics, Population Research, and Social Mobility Studies"; Redvaldsen, "Eugenics, socialists and the labour movement. "

[8] Bob Giddings and Bill Hopwood, "From evangelistic bureaucrat to visionary developer: The changing character of the master plan in Britain," *Planning Practice & Research* 21, no. 3 (2006): 4-18.

[9] David Edgerton, "Science and the nation: towards new histories of twentieth-century Britain," *Historical Research* 78, no. 199 (2005); Anthony Alexander, *Britain's New Towns: Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities* (London, New York, 2009), 22-26.

[10] This overview draws on the discussion of metaphorical representations of Milton Keynes outlined in Lauren Pikó, "Milton Keynes and the Liquid Landscape, 1967–78," *Landscape Review* 16, no. 1 (2015); "Mirroring England? Milton Keynes, decline and the English landscape" (University of Melbourne, 2017). See this use in debates on legislation in HC Deb 29 January 1947 vol 432 cc947-1075; HC Deb 20 May 1947 vol 437 cc2190-287.

[11] Overviews of this language can be found in "Anatomy of the Green Belts," *New Society*, 4 January 1973, p. 9–12. See also Mark Clapson, *Invincible green suburbs, brave new towns: social change and urban dispersal in post-war England* (New York, 1998); pp. 5-30.

spaces took the form of consolidating housing into higher-densities, including tower blocks, as methods of increasing urban capacity and concentrations.[12]

Alongside these demographic transformations, British cities were also undergoing transformation through the increasing numbers of migrants arriving from Commonwealth countries after 1948. Peter Fryer's landmark work *Staying Power,* which drew in part on his own journalistic experience covering the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* and subsequent arrivals, argued that early phases of migration did not encounter the high levels of hostility and discrimination which would develop towards the late 1950s.[13] This is not to say that these earlier arrivals did not experience discrimination, but rather, that the particular type of discriminatory political rhetoric which came to such prominence during the time of the Notting Hill riots in 1958 took time to develop.[14] In doing so, the use of a rhetoric of flows across borders and into cities, which was in need of containment, would be taken up as a method of explaining Britain's experience of postwar Commonwealth migration.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, while occasional journalistic mention to the "flow" of migration into Britain was made, British print media primarily used terms like "trickle," "stream" and "flood" to describe migration patterns into other countries, with Australia, Canada and America particularly frequently being described as receiving "heavy flows" and "floods" of migration.[15] This type of language tended to focus on flows of displaced persons following the Second World War, and significantly, it tended to posit the country receiving the immigration as a receptive container for them.[16] Such language was increasingly used in British media during the later 1950s, however, in order to characterise the cumulative effects of Commonwealth migration over time as being too great for British cities to withstand, and therefore to be in need of "restriction".[17] The language of "influx"

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[12] Patrick Dunleavy, *The politics of mass housing in Britain, 1945-1975: a study of corporate power and professional influence in the welfare state* (Oxford, New York,1981), 1, 32; Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower block: modern public housing in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland* (New Haven, 1994), 94.

[13] Peter Fryer, *Staying power: the history of black people in Britain* (London: 1984), pp. 372; Evan Smith, *British Communism and the politics of race* (Leiden; Boston, 2018), 38-39.

[14] For discussion of this to the symbol of Windrush, see Matthew Mead, "Empire Windrush: The cultural memory of an imaginary arrival," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45:2 (2009), p. 137-149.

[15] Typical examples include "Alien Immigrants In Australia," *Times* 13 February 1947, p. 3; *Economist* 23 August 1947, p. 325; "Regulating the Flow of Immigrants," *Financial Times,* 25 August 1952, p. iii.

[16] "Immigration to the New World," *Economist,* 7 June 1947, p. 896; "Australia Wants 40,000 Britons," *Daily Mail,* 8 August 1952, p. 3. See this with reference to displaced persons to Britain in *Times,* 4 October 1958, p. 6.

[17] Examples include "West Indian Migrants,"*Times* 21 November 1956, p. ; *Times,* 27 October 1959, p. 8; HC Deb 29 October 1958 vol 594 cc197.

was repeatedly used from late 1954 in The Times to characterise Jamaican immigration to Birmingham, with one report characterising this as "an uncontrolled regular intake of immigrants [which] swells the unceasing inflow from the rest of Britain."[18] Such concern about people "pouring in" was frequently understood with reference to urban planning policies of dispersal, where existing urban overcrowding was understood to render cities too overcrowded to take more population.[19] The rhetoric of influx would be consolidated in media responses to the 1958 Notting Hill riots which described the causes as arising from the presence of West Indian people in London in too great a number, rather than the activities of the white "Teds" who incited the violence.[20] The construction of the riots as being due to "racial tensions" posited conflict as deriving from the presence of migrant populations in cities, and as leading to violence on otherwise "peaceful streets."[21] This framework of attributing violence to presence reframed hostility to immigration itself as deriving from legitimate concerns around social integration, and constructed "race problems," as opposed to the problem of racism, as a domestic political concern.[22]

Underlying these concerns during the late 1950s and early 1960s in particular were anxieties about changes in flows of power as well as of people. The porous nature of British borders being encroached upon through foreign influence was also seen in terms of responses to declining British geopolitical influence, and intertwined with this, anxieties regarding increased American political and cultural power.[23] Much of this foreign influence was articulated in terms of American cultural encroachment, particularly as manifest through the expansion of leisure based consumer goods, television and music, and the visibility of

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[18] "Jamaican Influx At Birmingham," *Times*, 22 October 1954, p. 5.

[19] "West Indian Influx," *Financial Times*, 7 February 1955, p 4; "The West Indian Influx," *Sunday Times*, 4 August 1957, p. 8; "Should we let them keep pouring in?", *Daily Mail,* 2 September 1958, p. 4. See this language used in in letters to the editor in *Daily Mail,* 24 March 1954, p. 4; *Daily Mail,* 20 June 1956, p. 4.

[20] One notable exception was the *Economist's* argument that "firm measures were needed – against roughs not immigrants." *Economist*, 6 September 1958, p. 713. Cf. "Racial Fights In London," *Times,* 1 September 1958, p. 8; "Coloured Men Warned," *Times,* 1 November 1958, p. 3.

[21] "Should we let them keep pouring in?", *Daily Mail,* 2 September 1958, p. 4; "Coloured Influx May be Slowed," *Daily Mail,* 8 September 1958, p. 5; "Keep down coloured influx says Tory," *Daily Mail,* 30 October 1958, p. 7.

[22] Robert Miles, "The riots of 1958: Notes on the ideological construction of 'race relations' as a political issue in Britain," *Immigrants & Minorities* 3, no. 3 (1984): 269-71. See legacy of this in the use of "influx" to discuss "race relations" in "Coming to Stay," *Times Literary Supplement,* 23 September 1960, p. 615.

[23] Examples include "America! America!" Evening Standard, 2 September 1968, 21; James McMillan and Bernard Harris, *The American Take-Over of Britain* (London, 1968). For a historical overview of this trend, see Lawrence Black, "Whose finger on the button? british television and the politics of cultural control," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 25, no. 4 (2005); John F. Lyons, *America in the British imagination: 1945 to the present* (New York, 2013).

advertising such as posters and billboards.[24] The risk attached to the "flow" of American cultural influence, "streaming" into Britain and being passively "absorbed" was partly viewed in terms of class, with interest in American culture seen as a potential risk primarily for working class people, and as a marker of "low" taste. This conflation of American cultural influence with suburban consumerism, interpreted as a dystopian signifier of cultural malaise, was a dominant theme in the adoption of Ian Nairn's term "subtopia" by journalists more broadly critiquing "the values of suburban living" as fundamentally foreign.[25]

The cultural response to these changes to the makeup and function of cities drew on the shared metaphorical language of fluidity across borders, and containment within boundaries, specifically with reference to the urban landscape. The early 1960s has been identified historically as representing a peak in what Jim Tomlinson has theorised as "declinism"; that is, the ideological privileging of Britain's relative economic decline as a primary method of understanding contemporary politics.[26] This period saw an increased political preoccupation with arresting the nation's "decline" which spread into a diagnostic culture of journalism and cultural analysis, where understanding Britain's changing world role was framed in terms of a moralistic search for "what's wrong with Britain."[27] Reading across much of the "state of the nation" journalism and political analysis published during this time, however, these works also offer extended subjective, affectively laden responses to perceptions of absolute imperial decline, primarily expressed through grief at the transformation of British cities.[28] Malcolm Muggeridge's frequently quoted essay 1963 for *Encounter* framed the loss of national status in terms of foreign cultural influence, the changing aesthetic of urban design, and technological change, all understood as divergences from a greater past, and all measured through the appearance of the nation's streets, through

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[24] Precedents for this reading were drawn from Williams-Ellis, *England and the octopus*; J. B. Priestley, *English journey* (London, 1934). See also 'Campaign against Squalor', *The Times*, 5 July 1957; Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, 1956), p. 355-58.

[25] "Artist-engineers in Industry," *Times*, 9 July 1955; T.R. Fyvel, "This New England II: The Stones of Harlow, Reflections on Subtopia," *Encounter* June 1956; Ian Nairn, *Your England and how to defend it. A cautionary guide* (London, 1956). See analysis in Moran, "'Subtopias of Good Intentions'," 408-09.

[26] Jim Tomlinson, *The politics of decline: understanding post-war Britain* (Harlow; New York, 2000) p. 1-7; "Thrice Denied: 'Declinism' as a Recurrent Theme in British History in the Long Twentieth Century," *Twentieth Century British History* 20, no. 2 (2009): 246.

[27] Tomlinson, *Politics of Decline,* p. 23-42; Matthew Grant, "Historians, the Penguin Specials and the 'State-of-the-Nation' Literature, 1958-64," *Contemporary British History* 17, no. 3 (2003).

[28] Key examples include C. P. Snow, *Science and government*, (Cambridge, 1961); Michael Shanks, *The stagnant society: a warning*, (Baltimore, 1961); Anthony Sampson, *Anatomy of Britain* (New York, 1962); Arthur Koestler and Henry Fairlie, eds., *Suicide of a nation? An enquiry into the state of Britain today* (London, 1963). See overview of this context in Guy Ortolano, *The two cultures controversy: science, literature and cultural politics in postwar Britain* (New York, 2009).

which change formed a "pellucid …flow".[29] Novels such as *Late Call* and *The Adaptable Man* also represented postwar urban planning policies such as new towns and "overspill" as representative of wider cultural "influxes" and even invasions, where the onset of cultural change was understood as a defeat of particular visions of traditional value.[30] This theme of grief at the experience of post-imperial decline has also been analysed as a theme in Agatha Christie novels from this late period, where it is frequently explicitly linked causally to visible markers of social change [31]

This mapping together of immigration, dispersal politics, modernist urban planning, and wider cultural changes into a singular rhetoric of national status and vitality was partly facilitated through the idea of the state of the nation as being made legible through the state of the landscape. In this sense, fluidity rhetoric provided a method of conceptualising potential solutions, in terms of identifying which "flows" needed to be reversed or contained. The idea of the border of the nation as a bulwark against human floods shares a rhetoric of proactive regulation as a necessary force for preservation with the planning ideas of "overspilling" urban space. These regulatory languages both rely on dehumanising masses of people by likening them to inert fluids, and positing elite expert intervention and control as absolute and necessary tools of containment.

From floods to "crisis," 1962-1970

Sheila Patterson's anthropological study of West Indian migration to London, published in 1963 and widely available in an abridged Penguin paperback form in 1965, suggested that despite an initial "sense of strangeness … on first seeing large numbers of coloured people in the streets" during the late 1940s, that "today this feeling is gone."[32] She went further to conclude that "coloured people [sic] have become an accepted part of the British urban landscape, if not yet of the community."[33] This claim, already optimistic at the time of its publication, would be challenged by the drastic escalation of political languages of exclusion during the remainder of the decade. By time of Patterson's writing, the 1962 Immigration

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[29] Malcolm Muggeridge, 'England, Whose England?', in Koestler and Fairlie, *Suicide of a nation?*, 29.
[30] Angus Wilson, *Late call* (London, 1964); Janet Frame, *The adaptable man* (London, 1965); Janice Morphet, "New Towns in the Novel: A Reflection on Social Realism," *Planning Practice & Research* 18, no. 1 (2003).
[31] Christopher Prior, "An Empire Gone Bad: Agatha Christie, Anglocentrism and Decolonization," *Cultural and Social History*, online first (2018).
[32] Note the full title of the first edition; Sheila Patterson, *Dark strangers: a sociological study of the absorption of a recent West Indian migrant group in Brixton, South London* (London, 1963).
[33] *Dark strangers: a study of West Indians in London*, (London, 1965), p. 329.

Act had been passed with the explicit intent of curtailing the overall numbers of Commonwealth migrants, drawing in part on the prevailing political sense that the presence of black and Asian Commonwealth migrants in British cities was itself a cause of "racial tension."[34] The Act was intended by the Conservative Party as a way of restricting the "influx" of migration.[35] By 1965, however, the increasing number of applicants under the new voucher scheme aroused the concern of the newly elected Labour government, whose White Paper on *Immigration from the Commonwealth* of that year explicitly used fluidity rhetoric to frame the task of "control[ling] the entry of immigrants so that it does not outrun Britain's capacity to absorb them."[36] While the Wilson government passed the 1965 Race Relations Act ostensibly to restrict the rise of "racialism," the political weaponisation of immigration, using the language of a finite and embattled landscape, continued to escalate over the course of the decade.

A key event in this process was the speech made by Conservative MP Enoch Powell to a Conservative Association on 20 April 1968, which has become known as the "Rivers of Blood" speech.[37] This speech has been widely analysed in terms of its rhetorical construction, including its possibly deliberate misrepresentation of its central classical allusion.[38] What is crucial for the purposes of this article, however, is the way in which Powell's speech deliberately invoked a spatialised network of metaphors of fluid movement over landscapes, which drew on existing antipathies and fears, but which heightened them through overlaying further apocalyptic, violent imagery which conceptualised the stakes in terms of survival and "blood." This was framed as a "speculative prophecy" of what would be to come if immigration to Britain was not further regulated.[39] Powell's language describing immigration was one of "inflow" which he argued needed to be replaced by "outflow". The anecdote of the elderly woman, menaced by immigrants who "moved in … one house after another" along her street, posits an oppressive streetscape where "flows" of faceless migrants contain and trap embattled white residents. This highlights the way in which ideas of urban change spatialised a racist narrative of embattlement, through the description of the woman who had

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[34] Miles, "The riots of 1958," p. 271-272.
[35] Smith and Marmo, *Race, gender and the body,* p. 29-30; 47-48.
[36] HMSO, *Immigration from the Commonwealth* (London, 1965), p. 6. For discussion of the complex historiographical debates around the Smethwick byelection's role in this process see Smith, *British Communism and the politics of race*, 75-78.
[37] The most extensive exploration of the context and contents of this speech can be found in Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the making of postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), 206-63.
[38] Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and rhetoric: the persuasive power of metaphor*, (Houndmills, 2011), 109-37, 335-37.
[39] Ibid, 112.

"lost her husband and both her sons in the war" only to see her "quiet street [become] a place of noise and confusion." In this context, Powell's claim that he "seem[s] to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood" draws on the language of streets overrun with depersonalised masses of people, and overlays this with explicitly threatening imagery which combines flows of water with the abject flow of blood.[40]

Crisis, droughts and swamps, 1970-1978

While Powell was dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet by Conservative Party leader Edward Heath after this speech, it notoriously emboldened the language with which racism and anti-immigration views could be expressed.[41] In addition to this, it also created a precedent for apocalyptic political rhetoric regarding national vitality and survival, which Edward Heath would help to escalate further during his prime ministership from 1970. As the postwar global macroeconomic Bretton Woods settlement was becoming increasingly precarious, the Heath Government responded with a series of short-termist economic policies which greatly fuelled inflation, combined with explicitly punitive trade union policies which exacerbated its impact.[42] In responding to these economic challenges, Heath's tendency to characterise isolated economic challenges in militant terms of embattlement and national defense, such as during the 1972-3 Miners' Strike and the three-day-week, drew heavily on the established traditions of declinist political culture in the early 1960s, but by directing it at events in the present, helped foreshorten the trajectory of decline into one of contemporary crisis.[43]

This tendency to understand the impacts of short term economic challenges, and of longer-term trends in social change, as not only part of a long decline but as symbolising an imminent crisis of survival, would escalate still further during the aftermath of the Labour Government's receipt of an IMF loan in 1976 in order to stabilise sterling values.[44] The state of the nation, as if Britain was facing a potentially terminal imminent crisis, was a prominent

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[40] The reading of abjection in the context of immigration is derived from Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects : Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2013), 27.
[41] *Enoch Powell and the making of postcolonial Britain*, pp.237.
[42] Alwyn Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis? Britain in the 1970s* (London, 2008), pp. 21.
[43] The CCCS analysis of Heath's discursive techniques and processes as a part of creating an 'organic crisis' narrative can be found in Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the crisis: mugging, the state, and law and order* (New York, 1978); Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire strikes back : race and racism in 70s Britain* (London, 1982). See also Robert Saunders, "'Crisis? What crisis?' Thatcherism and the seventies," in *Making Thatcher's Britain*, ed. Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge, 2012,) pp. 25-42.
[44] Joe Moran, "'Stand Up and Be Counted': Hughie Green, the 1970s and Popular Memory," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 70 (2010): p. 177.

theme in political rhetoric, media representations, and as a theme in popular culture during the mid-1970s.[45] This political escalation has been well analysed more broadly elsewhere, particularly with reference to the way in which the apocalyptic tone of these fears diverged substantially from the economic realities faced by the British state.[46] Even so, however, this cultural experience of crisis is particularly significant because of the way it functioned as a heightened expression of affective responses to changing ideas of national identity, which "mapped together" a range of post-1945 changes to British domestic and international politics, social norms, aesthetics and demography, into a singular antipathy to the fact of change itself.[47]

Part of this evolution in the rhetoric of landscape involved contrasting concepts of urban hollowness or emptiness to that of fullness and overcrowding. [48] During this period, cities such as London were no longer described as overcrowded and in need of "overspill" to avoid flooding the countryside with sprawl; rather, after the impact of the IMF-imposed austerity had hit, new towns in particular were criticised in this period for having been too extravagant in "draining" inner cities of population and of government funding, leaving them "hollow" and in decline.[49] The concept of "inner city decline" or "crisis" most often described a lack of government funding, and while Department of Environment investigations showed that new town programmes had not been funded at the expense of inner city policy, this causal link continued to be made in media coverage.[50] Compounding this was the finding that population projections made in the South East Study in 1961, which had formed the basis for the expansion of new town and overspill programmes throughout that decade, had not been borne out, and therefore dispersal programmes had led to a greater population decline over time.[51] A related use of this rhetoric of "inner city decline" was in euphemistic, racialised terms, which linked the "draining" of white working class populations to the "influxes" of Commonwealth immigration. The relative understanding of white

[45] Schofield, *Powell and the making of postcolonial Britain*, pp. 265-69.

[46] Colin Hay, "Chronicles of a Death Foretold: the Winter of Discontent and Construction of the Crisis of British Keynesianism," *Parliamentary Affairs* 63, no. 3 (2010).

[47] Hall et al., *Policing the crisis*.

[48] The discussion of "hollowness" and crisis here draws from the framework explored in Pikó, "Milton Keynes and the Liquid Landscape," p. 40-41; "Mirroring England?," p. 148-150.

[49] Examples include "'Hollow Ring' in London," *Guardian*, 11 January 1977, p 5; "The Supercity They're Content to Leave Behind," *Guardian*, 6 August 1977, p 15.

[50] "In confidence: Cost effectiveness of new towns," in *Milton Keynes Development Corporation papers* (Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, 1976); Otto Saumarez-Smith, "Central government and town-centre redevelopment in Britain, 1959-1966," *The Historical Journal* 58, no. 1 (2015); Saumarez Smith, "The Inner City Crisis,"

[51] Department of the Environment, *Strategic plan for the South East: review 1978* (London, 1978).

populations being "decanted," only to be "replaced" by migrants, posits a continuity of flows of human movement into and out of the same urban containers; however the presence of immigrant populations was an "inflow" which was understood as foreign, and as causally associated with declining imperial status.[52] Even though decades of anxious policies had focused on the need to "decant" and "disperse" populations from inner cities, their very success was now being framed as having created a drought, which in turn had opened more space in British cities for immigrant populations to flow into.

The "hollow" city was a theme taken up by more apocalyptic political readings of political crisis which used this idea of the cities drained of meaning as well as population. Within this framework, the idea of national heritage as a jewel, a commodity or precious resource contained within particular landscape formations was a common theme; one primarily expressed in terms of its being squandered, lost or eroded. Some of this type of coverage focused on Britain's being "drained" through interactions with global economic forces such as the IMF and the EEC, who were described in the *Financial Times* in 1975 as "drain[ing] away… Britain's lifeblood".[53] Two frequently analysed cultural representations of mid-1970s crisis culture, Margaret Drabble's novel *The Ice Age* and Hughie Green's political outburst on the ITV light entertainment programme *Opportunity Knocks*, both used these languages of national heritage as a commodity or "semi-precious stone" which had been "overspent" through the government's concession to foreign powers in the form of the IMF loan, leaving the nation emptied of its binding heritage.[54] Preservationist campaigns for urban heritage in this period drew on similar frameworks of social meaning as locked within vulnerable landscape forms, with both rural and urban heritage preservation using language of finitude and crisis to justify the protection of their chosen sites.[55] In the coverage of these related campaigns, the inability of postwar planned landscapes to contain meaning was a central theme, with their sterility and emptiness explicitly contrasted with the richness of

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[52] Examples include "Anxieties Over Immigration," *Times* 29 June 1976, p. 15; "MP queries official figure for coloured population," *Times,* 13 May 1977; p. 6.
[53] "Life Blood Draining Away," *Financial Times,* 16 May 1975; pg. 16. Cf. Hay, "Chronicles of a Death Foretold."
[54] Margaret Drabble, *The Ice Age* (Harmondsworth, 1977), 215; Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, pp. 54, 104; Moran, "'Stand Up and Be Counted'."
[55] Cf. Christopher Booker and Candida Lycett-Green, *Goodbye London: an illustrated guide to threatened buildings* (London, 1973); George Henry Norman Haines, *Whose countryside?* (London, 1973).

unchanged historic buildings and rural landscapes, which had accumulated generations of social resonances.[56]

More explicitly left-wing critiques of state planning also emphasised the experience of "slum clearance," "deindustrialisation" and demographic changes to the form of cities as having eroded the foundations of a sense of identity for white working class communities. The erosion of "heritage" through dispersal of working class housing was central to the influential 1960s studies by Peter Willmott and Michael Young, and similar themes were explored in the 1970s journalism of Jeremy Seabrook.[57] Seabrook's work for *New Society* and *New Statesman* throughout the 1970s consistently argued that changes in the urban fabric of industrial cities and towns drove experiences of social disconnection amongst white working class people, which in turn drove them to the absolute rhetoric of the National Front.[58] Such causal associations linked disenfranchisement, a lack of political communication and control appeared in broader critiques of Britain's "declining" industrial power, and an ensuing void of meaning in a single causal chain.[59]

Such critiques of postwar paternalism and the rate of social change often presented a causal link between landscape change, existential threat, and adoption of far-right exclusionary identity politics without critique, even where the politics themselves were presented as undesirable. One key example of a critical synthesis of the above themes which nonetheless implicitly reinforced their framework was the 1976 play Strawberry Fields by Stephen Poliakoff, published in 1977.[60] Strawberry Fields is set at roadside motorway sites and service stations, new historical forms that accompanied the growth of Britain's motorways, rolled out from 1959.[61] The main characters are of a group presented as a conservationist National Front, whose ideology is focused on the maintenance of "historic" boundaries between rural and urban life, and between ethnic groups, as markers of purity and

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[56] "Giving Streets a head," *Guardian,* 1 March 1976, p 16; "Shore's Pledge on New Towns," *Guardian*, 19 March 1977, p 5B; *Guardian*, 25 May 1977, p 2; see also Booker's contributions in "Saturday column," *Daily Telegraph* July 6, 1974; "Mr Silkin's Fantasy," *The Spectator* 2 July 1976; "Shoring up planning disaster," *The Spectator* 1 October 1976.
[57] Peter Willmott and Michael Young, *Family and kinship in East London* (London, 1957); *Family and class in a London suburb* (London, 1960); cf. Jeremy Seabrook, *The unprivileged* (London, 1967); *City Close-Up* (London, 1971); *What went wrong? working people and the ideals of the labour movement* (London, 1978).
[58] *What went wrong?*, 234-40; see further discussion of this in Pikó, "Milton Keynes and the Liquid Landscape, 1967–78," p. 42-43.
[59] Cf. Anthony King, *Why is Britain becoming harder to govern?* (London, 1976); Jeremy Seabrook, "A return to Wigan Pier," *New Society,* 6 January 1977; Isaac Kramnick, *Is Britain dying?: perspectives on the current crisis* (Ithaca, 1979).
[60] Stephen Poliakoff, *Strawberry fields*, (London, 1977).
[61] Moran, *On Roads*, 23-38.

prestige. A final monologue posits that "[if you] scrape back the grass" of an English field, the bones of cumulative previous generations can be seen under the soil; this vitalist reading of national cohesion reads landscape as a mystical bridge between past and present which is vulnerable and tangible. This integral meaning is contrasted with the sterile motorway, which cannot be "scraped back" and whose slick unabashed newness resists the accumulation of meaning.[62] This rhetoric is presented as organically deriving from a sense of disconnection from social bonds through witnessing swift urban change, both through the transformation of forms, and through postwar immigration. This establishes the premise on a singular narrative of visible difference: where any and all change to Britain's post-1945 status, or to an ideal of "greatness" however defined, is experienced as grief and loss. This highlights how the political left also reproduced languages of scarcity and overspent landscape finitude, which necessarily drew on racialised and closed heritage and identity narratives.

It was this well established framework of understanding the boundaries of the nation as a finite container which informed Margaret Thatcher's 1978 Granada TV interview, where she alleged that "people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture."[63] This not only very closely mirrored the use of fluidity metaphors from Powell's 1968 speech, but also mirrored the absolute rhetoric of the nation being subsumed and even eradicated by an external flood. Again, while political and media criticisms of Thatcher's rhetoric focused on the choice of fluidity metaphor and its implicit violence, there was little criticism of its underlying principle that Britain's finite containment of an absolute, singular identity risked being lost and subsumed by immigration.[64]

In "The Great Moving Right Show," published in 1979, Stuart Hall argued that:

> *'Powellism' won… because of the magical short-circuits which [it] was able to establish between race and immigration control and the images of the nation, the British people and the destruction of 'our culture, our way of life.[65]*

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[62] Poliakoff, *Strawberry fields*, 48. This reading builds on Pikó, "Mirroring England? Milton Keynes, decline and the English landscape," 141.

[63] "Mrs Thatcher fears people might become hostile if immigrant flow is not cut," *Times,* 31 January 1978, p. 2. Full transcript is available at "Margaret Thatcher Foundation Archive," https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103485, accessed 1 May 2018.

[64] For example, Commission for Racial Equality chairman David Lane refuted the language of swamping by emphasising that the numbers were declining, not that swamping was a thing which could occur. Immigration Going Down, Says Lane, *Financial Times,* 3 March 1978, p. 8.

[65] Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show," *Marxism Today* (January 1979): p. 19-20.

While this connection was made in "Rivers of Blood", this article has shown that by centering the concept of landscape as a containing force, that Powell drew on a longer history, and this continuity helped render it a form of "common sense" which Thatcher was able to draw upon in 1978.[66] By grieving the experience of change itself, generalised critiques of postwar change shared a language of catastrophic flooding, heritage containment, continuity and loss with the far right, and used it in similar ways to characterise the dissolution of social bonds and the failure to reconstitute new ones. The pervasiveness of this language suggests it functioned more deeply than aesthetics, but referred to a shared, racialised understanding of how landscapes actually functioned relative to human movement, and acted as containing forces for a closed, finite and singular national identity which could only experience change as a threat.

Conclusion

While writing this article, a furore was playing out in British politics around the BBC's decision to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech by broadcasting a reenactment.[67] Much of the criticism of the speech focused on the way in which the politics it encoded were not "over", but were actively playing out in the present; for example, in the way that on the same days as these debates were taking place, that UK Home Office officials were investigating and deporting British citizens who had emigrated from the Commonwealth before 1962, due to their failure to meet retrospectively applied documentary requirements under the "hostile environment" policy.[68] Powell's notions of "increasing outflow" have been highlighted as explicit policy of the Cameron and May Conservative governments, under whose governance the Home Office set targets for deportation with full awareness that people who had migrated under the documentary requirements of earlier periods would be disproportionately affected.[69]

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[66] Ibid., 14.

[67] BBC.com, "BBC defends Rivers of Blood broadcast," http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43745447, 12 April 2018, accessed 1 May 2018.

[68] Nadifa Mohamed,"Britain's hostile environment has been a century in the making," Theguardian.com, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/29/britain-hostile-environment-century-making-migrants-brutality-windrush-scandal, 29 April 2018, accessed 1 May 2018.

[69] Joe Watts, "Amber Rudd admits deportation targets are used by Home Office after denying it," Independent.co.uk, 26 April 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/amber-rudd-home-office-deportation-targets-windrush-david-lammy-a8323076.html, accessed 1 May 2018.

The very pervasive nature of fluidity metaphors is what makes attunement to their uses and functions so crucial. This article does not seek to provide a full map of the complex entanglements of these metaphors' historical development and use over time, however it is intended to highlight some trends in the use of dehumanising metaphors have functioned and been normalised. In this context, it is useful to consider in closing that the catastrophic, exclusive use of fluid metaphors is not inevitable. One response from 1968 to Powell's speech, made by a Birmingham Reverend, suggests that far from being a "river of blood," a more accurate vision of the Midlands' future would be one nourished by "clean fresh water made up of the many tributaries of mankind".[70] This views fluidity not as disastrous, but as invigorating: a future-focused vision which sees the possibility for enrichment through change. While the weaponising of language of containment and floods cannot be simply overridden with alternative constructions, the convivial image of intermingling and cultural nourishment this vision proposes is a valuable counterpoint to the threat of "swamping" and eradication. To interrogate and historicise languages of conclusion is partly to render them contingent; and therefore, to point to ways in which things could be otherwise.

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[70] "These things just had to be said," *Birmingham Post,* 22 April 1968, p. 1.

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