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ENOCH POWELL'S ISLAND STORY

In 1959, Enoch Powell wrote a review of Wilfred Thesiger's *Arabian Sands*, a chronicle of the author's solo journeys across the 'Empty Quarter' of Arabia. Described by Sir John Glubb in the *Sunday Times* as 'perhaps the last, and certainly one of the greatest, of the British travellers among the Arabs.' Thesiger epitomised the ascetic Englishman in search of an authentic native culture and the limits of his own will power and endurance. As with Lawrence before him, Thesiger's hostile world was the modernity of his own society; his journeying an escape from its domesticity. And like Lawrence, Thesiger fashioned the desert and the Bedu into a simulacrum of his own homoeroticism and narcissistic longing for self-becoming. Powell was captivated:

What is it about deserts that tugs at the hearts of men? Even those who have only touched the hem of the desert ... know what it was that Thesiger repeatedly sought and found in the centre of the Arabian emptiness, and they would, or think they would, go back again to get it if that were possible... The secret lies perhaps in the desert not as a mere environment, but as something travelled over, which seems to remove the purpose from journeying and substitute in its place a kind of time-less contentment, almost as though the soul were soothed by this emblem of its own metaphorical journey across the desert of the world. The desert is the true setting of the words: *navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse*. [It is necessary to navigate but not necessary to live]

Powell's fascination with Thesiger lay in his own boyhood obsession with the desert travellers Burton, Blunt and Doughty. What these men held in common, and what Powell spent a lifetime attempting to emulate, was their journeying without a worldly purpose; their

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confrontation with the desert as symbolic of what Lawrence called 'death in life'. These men were the heirs of the seventeenth century pilgrims in search of a spiritual home, indifferent to the worldly and sensual. Fated, driven by the seduction of death and their need to subjugate their bodies, they pursued life to the centre of the desert, to the point at which its nature threatened to extinguish their cultural identities. It is here, Powell imagined, that they found their 'timeless contentment'.

Powell's own life was an attempt to reproduce this external compulsion of the desert, to construct an unyielding personal intellectual and theological order which would structure and contain his instinctual and emotional life. He once informed a journalist, 'I'm at home in an environment where rules are strict but external... Liberty of thought is consistent with willing submission, enthusiastic submission, to a formal ordered existence.' In an interview in 1994, Terry Coleman asked him if he was a believing Christian.⁴ He replied; 'I am an obedient member of the Church of England.' Loyalty and identification with the rules and rites of the institution were paramount; he would believe what he was commanded to believe. Sensing disingenuousness, Coleman pushed him to elaborate; 'what *did he* in conscience believe?' Powell replied; 'God knows what I believe: you only know what I'm saying.' For Powell, the formal syntax of his religious and political language was a protective carapace around the inner world of his beliefs and feelings. His play on the words 'God knows' suggests that what is there is an absence.

In 1943, Powell had the opportunity to discover the 'timeless contentment' of the North African desert. As a Lieutenant-Colonel and an intelligence officer he undertook a two week journey from Algiers to Cairo, travelling by lorry in the company of Major Michael Strachan. The experience was no metaphorical narrative of spiritual asceticism. The sandy wastes offered none of their mythic negation, only a frustrating tendency to sabotage the banal but necessary chores of daily life. Strachan later wrote a humorous account of Lieutenant-Colonel Powell's dangerous ineptitude as a driver and the shambles of his cooking.

The fire smouldered dejectedly until he teased it with a gill of petrol, and then it sprang up and singed his moustache; and when he assaulted the sausages the tin counter-attacked and cut his finger; the water refused to boil and while he was not looking tipped itself over into the fire. 'Oh the

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malice - the cursed diabolical malice of inanimate objects!' muttered the Professor ferociously between clenched teeth. 'Here, let me help', I said. 'You keep away,' he snarled. 'If they want to be bloody-minded, I'll show them, by God I will,' booting the empty sausage tin into a cactus bush.

Strachan's light-hearted descriptions of 'cold and flabby' sausages and 'tea-leaves... on top of a grey, tepid liquid' mocked the serious-minded pretensions of Powell. But they also suggest an explanation for his later political career as an English nationalist. Powell was a man who was only ever to touch the hem of the desert. In his introduction to *Arabian Sands*, Thesiger wrote; 'I went to Southern Arabia only just in time. Others will go there ... but they will move about in cars and will keep in touch with the outside world by wireless. They will... never know the spirit of the land nor the greatness of the Arabs.' History and the 'winds of change' were to rob Powell of empire and thwart his own imperial mission. If Powell imagined his heroes had discovered serenity in the centre of the desert, his own earthly quest uncovered nothing but a feeling of emptiness. More than any other figure of post-war Britain, he gave vent to this feeling of profound and irreconcilable loss; of Empire, of identity, of belonging. It was a loss he sought to resolve in his poetry, his religion and his political life. In the end, it was his mythologising of English nationalism which would form his imaginary, ascetic desert journey; his pursuit of 'death in life' - 'to have a nation to die for and to be glad to die for it-all the days of one's life.'⁶

The Hallucination of Empire

Before the outbreak of war, Powell had spent eighteen months as the Professor of Greek at Sydney University. On 4 September, 1939, the day after war was declared, he resigned and returned to England. He enlisted as a private in his father's old regiment, the Royal Warwickshires, but his period in the ranks was short lived. A Brigadier on an inspection asked him how he liked the work. Powell replied with a Greek proverb and found himself dispatched to an officer training programme at Aldershot, the first of a series of courses before being posted to North Africa in 1941. In Cairo he was assigned to the Intelligence and Plans Division as Secretary to the Joint Intelligence Committee, Middle East. The crucial factor in the desert war was U.S

industrial-military power. Not only did Powell develop a contempt for the Americans' lack of finesse in military strategy, he felt a growing distrust of their geopolitical ambitions. 'By the end of 1942 it was clear to me... that for the survival of the British Empire what was overwhelmingly important was that the Far East - India and the Far East - Burma and the Far East - would be recovered by Britain before they were occupied by the United States.'⁷ Powell's desert journey was his first move in securing a transfer to the war in the Far East. In August, 1943, he left Cairo for India, as Secretary to the Joint Intelligence Committee India and South East Asia. He harboured an ambition to be a part of the fighting and on his journey he approached Orde Wingate, with an unsuccessful request to join his Chindit campaign in Burma.

In *The Times* of 12 February, 1968, Powell recalled his two years in India. 'I fell head over heels in love with it. If I'd gone there 100 years earlier, I'd have left my bones there.' He taught himself Urdu, cycling from New Delhi to outlying villages to practise the language. 'It was one of the glories of the British Empire in India that they regarded it as desirable for officers up to the highest rank to identify themselves with the life and language of the country.' But his identification with India was a highly circumscribed affair. Powell avoided the Indian intelligentsia. It was the peasants and their archaic cultures of caste and religion which attracted him. His loyalty lay with the fading glory of the Raj, its rigid codes of etiquette and the Pukkah Sahibs whose self-enhancing mystique of power ruled over the multitudes. The pomp and circumstance of the colonial hierarchy and the disciplined existence of army life provided Powell with his ideal world. When he told his biographer Andrew Roth that the army was the happiest time of his life, it was more specifically the army in India. His conservatism and need for social conformity left him incapable of recognising the nationalist aspirations of the Indian people. The concept of self-determination, both personal and political had no place in Powell's mind's eye, nor in the parody of Late Victorian India he identified with. On a journey through Bihar, he was struck by a 'blinding revelation': 'I was the only Englishman within, thirty, forty, maybe fifty or sixty miles, and *that this was apart of the natural order of things*.'⁸ Powell had imbued the myths of indirect rule. It was an attitude - arrogant, myopic, even unbalanced - that he brought to his administrative work.

By 1944, with the war effectively won in Europe, the British turned their attention to the political future of India. Powell was promoted to Brigadier and appointed Secretary to the Reorganisation Committee

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responsible for deciding the future of the Indian army. He was a dominant figure on the committee and travelled extensively, garnering opinion and facts for its Final Report. He was also responsible for writing one of the key chapters - recommending twenty-five years before the Indian Army was ready for independence. The logic of Powell's argument was impeccable. The Indian army needed five thousand officers with the right educational qualifications. Only three per cent of Indian men with these qualifications held commissions in the army. A committee had just reported that this number could only be increased by two per cent a year. Therefore, Powell deducted, it would take twenty-five years before the Indian army had its full officer corps. Until then it must rely on British officers to command it. His argument was meticulous, but it owed more to the academic analysis of a Greek text than the real politic of British imperial rule; and he failed to recognise Indian antipathy towards the British as responsible for the low level of recruitment to the army. Powell's failure to account for contemporary political realities discredited other sections of the Report and his recommendations were quickly dismissed as off the mark. He did not appear to have been embarrassed by this setback. India had prompted his Pauline conversion to imperialism and his idealisation of the Raj left him floating in a dream world. He was now about to manufacture himself as a man of destiny. 'I was determined to do something', he told Roth, 'to stop the disintegration of the Empire which seemed imminent.'⁹ He would enter politics:

I thought of how Burke had said 160 years earlier that the keys of India were not in Calcutta, not in Delhi, they were in that box - the Despatch Box at the House of Commons. I decided at that time that I must go there.¹⁰

Powell arrived back in England on 27 February, 1946. He was 33 years old. He had already achieved the distinction of becoming a professor at the age of 25 and the youngest Brigadier in the British army. With these credentials he was quickly recruited into the Conservative Party, where 'Rab' Butler was endeavouring to organise its intellectual renaissance. After an interview with David Clark, the Director of the Conservative Research Department, Powell began work in the Conservative Parliamentary Secretariat, alongside two other newcomers, Iain Macleod and Reginald Maudling. He was made joint head of the Home Affairs Department and Secretary of the Party's India Committee. In

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1947, he was chosen as a by-election candidate for the safe Labour seat of Normanton in Yorkshire. His speech to the adoption meeting was an apocalyptic rallying cry for Empire: 'If there is a way for the Empire to survive ... it can only be because through Britain is liberty and independence preserved. If that is not true, then we will perish in proving it otherwise.' Seven months later, in August, India was partitioned. The central figment of his dream world was shattered. His reserved, disassociated comment; 'One's whole world had been altered' - offers little insight into his feelings, but the trauma compelled him to spend the night walking the streets. To Powell, the two hundred year long link with India *was* the empire; every other possession had been acquired for the sake of maintaining that link. India had gone, but he could not come to terms with its implications for the rest of the empire. He simply resolved to work harder for its preservation and unity.

Indian independence was the beginning of the end. Its immediate effect was a redefinition of the old concept of British citizenship as being based on being 'a subject of the King'. In 1948, the Labour government introduced the British Nationality Bill which would make a distinction between British subjects who were citizens of the United Kingdom and those who were Commonwealth citizens. The Bill ensured that the great majority of British subjects in the colonies and dominions would continue to have the legal right to settle in Britain. Their allegiance however, would no longer be to the British monarch. Powell and a number of other Tory imperialists tried to persuade the Conservative Party to vote against the Bill. He later explained his position in the *Birmingham Post* (6.11.52): 'the Crown is the great link which binds the Empire together in a common loyalty. But the British Nationality Act of 1948 took away allegiance to the Crown as the basis for British citizenship ... citizens of the ... Indian Union were expressly given all the rights and privileges of British subjects, though repudiating the King as their sovereign.' Powell failed to persuade the Party to vote against the Bill and, contrary to his own regressive opinions, the official party document, *Imperial Policy*, published in 1949, accepted the implications of Indian independence for the Commonwealth. The document became one of the intellectual cornerstones of One Nation Toryism and laid the ground for Harold Macmillan's 1960, 'winds of change' speech. Already the demarcation lines within the Conservative Party around the issue of race and nation were being drawn. Nevertheless, despite its permissiveness, The British Nationality Act represented the first step in the post-war racialising of

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immigration policy. As if to symbolise the moment, the SS *Windrush* arrived in May with 417 Jamaicans in search of work and a new life. It was they, rather than the hundreds and thousands of Irish and European immigrants, who signified the coming post-colonial struggle over the meanings of English ethnicity.

On 17 December, Powell was adopted as the candidate for Wolverhampton South-West. A reporter from the *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, interviewing the new candidate, described Powell's 'blinding revelation' of the 'tremendous force for good the Empire was.' On 23 February, he won the seat in the General Election, campaigning as an old fashioned imperialist. India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon were already independent nations, but he was determined to stem the retreat. His maiden speech in the House of Commons, two months after India had declared itself a republic, was emphatic in his refusal to contemplate the end of empire. Powell advocated the recruitment of a new colonial army which would replace the Indian army and defend 'His Majesty's Dominions as a whole throughout the world.' Indian independence had simply reinforced his dogged disregard for the emerging post-imperial world. The moment of reckoning arrived at the 1952 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. A number of heads of newly independent states objected to the Queen's formal title. It had an outdated and imperial ring to it: 'By the Grace of God of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Dominions beyond the Sea, Queen, Defender of the Faith.' The Royal Titles Act of 1953 introduced a title which would account for the new Commonwealth sovereignties: 'By the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of her other Realms and Territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.' The semantics of the new title - the 'other Realms and Territories' - fractured the symbolic union of empire, and with it Britain's imperial preeminence. Powell rigorously opposed the Bill in a Parliamentary speech.

That unity we are now formally and deliberately giving up, and we are substituting what is, in effect, a fortuitous aggregation of a number of separate entities... By recognising the division of the realm into separate realms, are we not opening the way for the other unity - the last unity of all - that of the person of the Monarch to go the way of the rest?

Unity, what he defined as a 'corporate identity' in which 'all the parts recognise that in certain circumstances they would sacrifice themselves

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in the interests of the whole', was the bedrock of his political beliefs. His venom was reserved for the Commonwealth leaders who had proved themselves incapable of such self-sacrifice. They were 'the underlying evil': 'We are doing this for the sake of those to whom the very names 'Britain' and 'British' are repugnant.' The linguistic entity of the British empire was dead, and the Suez crisis of 1956 would destroy the last vestiges of its moral and political legitimacy. The colonial peoples he had been willing to sacrifice his life for had rejected him. His shock at their 'ingratitude' was the decisive moment of his political career. That obscure and archaic play on semantics precipitated his turn to England as a new source of corporate identity. His bereavement, and the invasive, persecutory quality he ascribed to those who had disillusioned him, would later fuel his virulent, nationalist assault on her imaginary enemies. But by 1953, Powell was a man expelled to the hem of the desert, its meaning no more than badly made tea and burnt sausages.

The following year, Powell recanted his faith. On 12 July he presented a paper to the Conservative Political Centre Summer School entitled; 'The Empire of England.' In his meticulous style, Powell detailed the historical inevitability of the end of Empire. Seeley's ideal of imperial federation and the social-imperialism of Joseph Chamberlain, which had once inspired him, had been illusions: 'the unstable compromise of Imperial government by the Parliament of Great Britain could not in the long run endure.'¹² Parliament could not maintain its jurisdiction over peoples who owed their allegiances to other sovereignties. He concluded:

the disintegration of that sovereignty which was known until some years ago as the British Empire is for the most part neither accidental nor due to the errors of policy or perversities of intention, but is the inevitable consequence of the political institutions of the United Kingdom and the character of its former and present dependencies.¹³

The paper marks Powell's political and intellectual position on the end of Empire. Empire he states, 'was a self-delusion'. He had already adopted a similar terminology in his article for the *Birmingham Post* (6.11.52): 'To most of the world outside it seems that the British Empire, if it does not already belong to the past, has a short lease of life. Only here in England, like a nation of Rip van Winkles, do we live in a dream world of undisturbed complacency'

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Twelve years later, in April 1964, Powell turned once more to what he called the 'national hallucination' of empire. In a series of influential articles in *The Times*, he set out a Conservative, political agenda which was to anticipate the Thatcher revolution. In his second, 'Patriotism Based on Reality Not on Dreams', he condemned the Commonwealth as a 'gigantic farce', and appealed for a clean break with Britain's imperial past.

The change in Britain's relative power and position in the world since 1939 has imposed a colossal revision of ideas on Britain ... which draws most strength and inspiration from that position and power. In the course of this revision, self-deception has been employed on the grand scale and has served a purpose. Now the wounds have almost healed and the skin formed again beneath the plaster and the bandages, and they come off.

It is hard not to conclude that Powell was speaking about his own damaged psyche. The following year he declared that his own wounds were irreparable.

One can never resolve in the span of a human lifetime that kind of a revolution [the end of empire] without the marks being left of a struggle. I confess to you that for all that I write, for all that I think, for all that I try to demonstrate to myself and others I shall go to the grave with a conviction at the back of my mind that Her Majesty's ships still sweep the oceans of the world in case there should be any hostile warships which it might be necessary to sink. That hallucination will be there when the mind stops.¹⁴

In 1968, in a book review, Powell referred to this hallucination as an 'English sickness'. 'One feels like a doctor sitting in the middle of an epidemic with the sovereign vaccine on his shelves, and the population will not take it.'¹⁵ He concluded: 'so the psychoanalysis through which lies the cure for Britain's sickness has to be twofold: first we must identify and overcome the mythology of the late Victorian empire; then we must penetrate to deeper levels and eradicate the fixation with India from our subconscious.' The review was published five months after Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech had catapulted him into public consciousness, and into the print columns of political commentary. Drawing upon his recent visit to the United States and his perceptions of its racial conflict, Powell predicted that the mass immigration of

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New Commonwealth citizens to Britain would result in a racial war: 'As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see "the river Tiber foaming with much blood".¹⁶ A period of fifteen years had passed between the collapse of his idealisation of empire and this apocalyptic vision. His championing of racial incommensurability unleashed an ethnic populism -Powellism- which launched a frontal assault on the class paternalism of post-war Toryism and helping to pave the way for Thatcherism. To understand this transition and the virulence of the politics in which it culminated, we can follow his own advice. But it is not only the patient who needs to be examined. The doctor is also in need of attention.

*Jack's Clarinet: 'It doesn't do to awaken longings that can't be fulfilled.'*¹⁷

John (Jack) Enoch Powell was born on 16 June, 1912 in a semi-detached house in Flaxley Lane, Stechford, near Birmingham. His father, Albert Powell, was the son of a general merchant from Staffordshire. In 1909, at the age of 35, he had married Ellen Breese, fourteen years his junior and the daughter of a Liverpool policeman. Both were primary school teachers and products of the Victorian artisan class. Albert Powell had earlier divested himself of the moral strictures of its fundamentalist Methodism, by converting to Anglicanism. Powell described his father as having an 'agreeable temperament', 'a warm presence ... and another boy around the place.'¹⁸ In contrast, his mother was a Tory and a puritan, with a Victorian drive for education and self-improvement. Despite her atheism, she held to the basic principles of her class culture, imparting its moral sobriety and its rigid codes of conduct to her only son, for whom she possessed a driving ambition. After his birth, she gave up her job and devoted herself to his care and his education. 'My childhood is very much my mother... She was also my first teacher... from the very beginning, right up to the sixth at grammar school, she took a part in my learning, encouraging me and helping me and very much working with me.'¹⁹

Powell's mother was the dominating presence in the household. Her financial economies and emotional austerity ruled the household with a parsimonious rigour. 'My mother used to quote St Paul: eat what is set before you asking no questions.'²⁰ As a schoolgirl she had taught herself Greek and she set out to cultivate the same assiduous attention

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to detail in her son. She began with the alphabet when he was two and had taught him to read in a year. 'My earliest recollections are of my mother putting up the alphabet round the kitchen wall so that I could learn it - and my saying the most elementary lessons to her standing on a chair in the kitchen, while she worked at the stove or the sink.' By the time he was four he was reading Harmsworth's encyclopaedia. His precocity earned him the nickname of 'The Professor'. Patrick Cosgrave, one of Powell's biographers, recounts the story of a local girl who used to visit the eight-year-old, Jack Powell. He would invite her to choose a book and return it the following week. 'This I did, and to prove that I *had* read it he would ask me a lot of questions about it. I was four years older, and it was terrible if I couldn't answer the question correctly.'²² According to Cosgrave, the eight-year-old Powell organised a debating society amongst local children and in one session argued that Bacon, and not Shakespeare, had written *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His mother's tuition not only determined his leisure activities. It ensured that he became, in his words, a "prize-scholarship winning, knowledge-eating" being.²³

Powell won a scholarship to King Edward's School in Birmingham, where he was remembered as a loner. An old classmate recalls, 'he was really unlike ... any other schoolboy one had known. He was austere. One seldom, if ever, had seen him standing against a wall with his hands in his pockets, just talking. He didn't play games... He was either at his books or he was walking purposively from A to B with a goal in mind, with either his books or his clarinet under his arm.' At 17, he won a scholarship to Trinity College Cambridge. Here he established a personal regime of unremitting austerity. He locked himself away in his room and worked from 5.30 am to 9.30 pm, venturing out for lectures, meals and visits to the library. His only pleasure was a daily evening walk to the train station - 'I simply picked a place to walk to, and back from. The station seemed a good destination.' Powell's social autism ensured him the majority of the classics prizes and no friends. The local head of the 'Old Edwardians' paid him a social call: 'as I remember it there was no fire, there were no pictures, Powell was sitting in his overcoat with a rug across his knees and ... he was surrounded by eighteenth century folios... I said: "Hello Powell, would you like to come to tea?" and he said "No." I'd never met this response before... I walked over to his mantelpiece and leant on it and took out a cigarette and he said "Would you mind not smoking!" And so I left.'²⁴ Powell's own version of his reclusiveness is less acerbic. 'I

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didn't know [there was anything else to do ... the social life of a college was a social life completely unfamiliar to me - even the sheer mechanics of it, of how to tie a bow tie, were unknown to me].²⁵

Powell's childhood revolved around books and words and the acquisition of knowledge. Years later he wrote: 'For all my life has been about words: manuscript words, printed words, spoken words. Thinking, loving, fighting, striving have always revolved around words - not mere words, but words, because apart from words men are but as brutes.'²⁶ Biographical accounts of his childhood (Lewis 1979, Roth 1970, Cosgrave 1986, Pedraza 1986) make no reference to play - emotion and desire appear entirely absent from his early years. Powell's own distinction between words and brutishness suggests that he used language and learning to set himself apart from feelings and bodily impulses. His love of the clarinet offers the only glimpse of a life other than one of strenuous scholasticism. At fifteen, he wanted to be a composer or conductor and to sit a scholarship for the Royal Academy of Music. The clarinet was an instrument of the disciplined and formal structures of classical music, but for Powell it also featured in band music, suggestive of more anarchic, emotional rhythms. His parents (but perhaps chiefly his mother) argued that book learning was more important and dissuaded him from pursuing a career in music. 'Cambridge it had to be, and I put my clarinet away for the last time: I've never looked at a sheet of music since.' Fifty years later, asked why he rarely listened to music, he answered: 'I don't like things which interfere with one's heart strings. It doesn't do to awaken longings that can't be fulfilled.'²⁷ There was to be no more illicit fantasies of band music. Powell's nascent exuberance was firmly suppressed beneath the intensive, singular activity of reading, fuelling an overweening ambition to become a classical scholar.

Powell's disavowal of pleasure was in the name of ambition - 'This was how one got on and up.' But it left the problem of how to manage his emotional life. At Cambridge, he adopted the poet and classics scholar A.E Housman as his role model - another outsider, ill at ease amongst the ruling classes. 'Here was someone who for whole decades had survived the heart-chilling loneliness of Cambridge. Could I not manage to resist it with the same stony manfulness?'²⁸ Powell followed the poet's advice;

Courage, lad, 'tis not for long:
Stand, quit you like stone, be strong.²⁹

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It was Housman's 'moral fervour', and his ability to teach; 'Patiently, resolutely, with the power and precision of a steel machine,' which inspired Powell. 'Not the least part of my good fortune was to encounter early ... the enduring inspiration of A.E. Housman's courage in the "mental fight".'³¹ Powell had already been introduced, at the age of fifteen, to the 'mental fight', through the work of Thomas Carlyle. Housman confirmed Carlyle's ideal of manliness - earnest, high-minded, chaste and driven by ambition and a sense of duty.

there was the detonation of *Sartor Resartus*: I still hear, when I recall the first reading of those intoxicating pages, the gentle hissing of the incandescent gas mantle above the table where homework was done, and the tone of my father's voice saying that I would find Carlyle as great an experience as he had done at the same age.

Carlyle's promotion of self-denial reflected his own contradictory feelings about being a writer - an activity his father considered unmanly and domesticated. His solution was to redefine the status of intellectual work: strenuous mental effort replaced physical labour as the sign of a man's innate quality. In contrast, abandoning this struggle for a life of ease and pleasure was to fall into the feminising realm of idleness. Powell's puritanical work ethic and self-denial emulated Carlyle's heroic and manly intellectual. His intellectualism confirmed his masculinity; it was retentive and industrious rather than imaginative and creative, involving painstaking analysis and criticism of ancient Greek texts. In later years, to read and listen to Powell is to be aware of his meticulous attention to detail, his carefully chosen sentences and exacting syntax, the precision of his diction and the preeminence he gives to logic. His discourse acts like a procrustean defence against desire and emotional need, controlling language into a flattened intonation imbued with an exaggerated display of rationality. As Housman's poem concludes:

And I stepped out in flesh and bone
Manful like the man of stone.

Powell learnt to sculpt his language into a hard protective shell.

His reading of Carlyle had introduced him to German culture and a passion for Nietzsche. His infatuation with the transcendental world of German Romanticism prefigured his later love of India. It provides an

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illustration of the relationship between his inner world of feelings and the outer realm of language.

The year in which I opened a German grammar for the first time was 1927... I knew that something had happened in my life and would go on happening. It is trite to say that it was the language of which I had dreamt. But it conveys exactly what I experienced at the time. It was to me as if this language had waited all this time to be discovered just by me and to be absorbed by me. I dived into it like a familiar body of water and I could swim right away.

This linguistic experience was accompanied by 'all possible romantic and exciting feelings'. It was the discovery of a dual world; 'of fantasy and romantic magic and a world of mental strength and philosophical courage.'

German was 'sharp, hard, strict, but with words that were romance in themselves, words in which poetry and music vibrated together.' It was a language of firm boundaries, which both expressed and contained his unfulfilled longings. Such identifications became the idiom of his life. In adulthood, the external compulsion of institutions, regulated and disciplined his body and sexuality. His loyalty to concepts like 'The Crown' and 'Empire', and his fundamentalist religion, displaced his sensuality into an abstracted higher cause. He pursued bourgeois propriety to the point of parody because it emphasised convention and code over spontaneity and feeling. Powell feared his longings were potentially boundless and needed the security of clearly defined limits. Nevertheless he literally lost himself in his immersion into German culture and his 'head over heels' love affair with India. Melanie Klein has argued that these kinds of unrealistic idealisations, spring from 'the instinctual desires which aim at unlimited gratification'.³⁵ Powell's description of empire as an hallucination was psychologically correct; in its denial of reality it symbolised the illusion of gratification.

Powell's love for music, for German culture and for empire were attempts to resolve the split between his self-denying world of language and his emotional life; to bring words to repressed, unconscious feelings. This relationship between language and feeling is the key to understanding Powell's metaphor of the desert as symbolic of a lost unity of 'timeless contentment'. It can also explain why, in pursuit of this unity, he was drawn to the 'corporate identity' of empire; it

explains too, the intense struggle, the sensibility of fanaticism, which he brought to its defence. Freud has defined an identification as 'the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person.'³⁶ The shape and the feel of later political and cultural identifications have their genesis in this emotional tie to the mother. Like hallucination, idealisation is a defence against the fear of her absence; and Powell's idealised India, like his fantasy of the desert, was a sublime symbol of the continuity of his mother's presence. Independence destroyed its possibility, and symbolised his abandonment, in a place which he had no language to describe. Because language comes to replace attachment with the mother and to represent the child's own instinctual life, an unresolved attachment means there is a failure of linguistic representation. Loss and separation can be felt, enacted and dreamt, but it cannot be spoken about or thought because it exists anterior to language. This crisis of self does, however, find its way into representation through metaphor, in particular it seeks expression through the adoption of political and cultural identifications. Powell's identifications with Germany and later with India were metaphorical attempts to transfer unconscious predicaments into a familiar language and assimilate them into the ordered structure of his intellectualised world. But when these identifications failed him, when his idealised world was shattered, he was confronted with that wordless original loss: a loss of meaning.

In 1934, Powell was elected a fellow at Trinity and began work on his lexicon of Herodotus. His first academic essays were printed in German journals and he began travelling to Europe, to visit libraries. Hitler had become Chancellor in January 1933 and there were already documented reports of pogroms, arrests and German bellicosity. But his passion for German culture did not extend to any recognition or consideration of this political climate. On 30 June, 1934 Hitler launched his attack on the Brownshirts in the Night of the Long Knives.

I cannot escape the impression that the decisive date was for me the first of July 1934, which was when the news of the Rhoehm massacre reached England. I still remember clearly how I sat for hours in a state of shock, shock which you experience when, around you, you see the debris of a beautiful building in which you have lived for a long time... So it had all been illusion, all fantasy, all a self-created myth. Music, philosophy, poetry, science and the language itself - everything was demolished, broken to bits on the cliffs of a monstrous reality. The spiritual home-

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land had not been a spiritual homeland after all... Overnight my spiritual homeland had disappeared and I was left only with my geographical homeland.'

Like his clarinet before and empire after, Powell's renunciation was total: '1934 was also the year in which I recognised it would come to war... The enemy was to be Germany and at stake was the freedom of England. From then on Germany, although still an abstraction, was for me the enemy... All the aspects which had seemed to me so wonderful and lovable took on a new appearance ... a new pattern which let one recognise the threatening danger and illuminate it.' What was loved became hated. 'Germany' (and this pattern was later to be repeated with the Commonwealth leaders) became the source of persecutory feelings which threatened to destroy him. His spiritual homeland was reduced to meaningless lines of cartography; he was living on the hem of life, devoid of a centre. Fated by this meaninglessness he sought his recompense in war. 'I was, if you like, fatalistic. There was nothing I could do to change the course of events, nor their outcome.'³⁹ It was a war Powell did not expect to survive. It offered him the solace of death.

Without a sense of purpose or belonging, Powell turned to poetry to give voice to his 'painful emotions'. It was an activity he would pursue intermittently for the next sixteen years - a form of internal dialogue with himself. In his Foreword to his *Collected Poems*, he recalled how his personal pain demanded an outlet, 'In Tennyson's and Housman's Cambridge I was not ashamed to break off my work on Greek Lexicography to "cry out" in the vein they had made available.'⁴⁰ His first book of poetry, published in 1937, has a succession of images of 'youth doomed to die', threnodies which also express his own death wish:

As clear as light, sharp as a knife,
A truth springs in my breast:
There are but two things, death and life,
And death of these is best (p50)

Of the two final poems addressed to his mother, the first begins like Brooke's 'The Soldier'

When I am gone, remember me
Not often. But when in the east

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Grey light is growing, and the mind
With fears and hope is clouded least,
Then, in the hour I love best,
And where I still reflected find
All that I ever sought to be,
I will return to you as one
New risen from the grave, as clear
As now you seem, and as dear
As when I slept beneath your breast
Before I saw the sun (p51)

The second concludes with the unconscious wish behind his idealisation of Germany and later of empire and nation.

Mother, with longing ever new
And joy too great for telling
I turn again to rest in you
My earliest dwelling (p52)

This search for meaning of life in an undifferentiated union with his mother was an impossibility. But, like Rupert Brooke before him, he rediscovered meaningfulness in war. In contrast to the wistful, sometimes tortured, melancholy of his other poems, he celebrates the beginning of war with an exuberant, sexual imagery. War is a bride that he embraces.

Their faces all, both man and boy,
With a lover's flush are fired:
They haste with swinging steps of joy
To meet their long-desired;

And every eye is glistening
With hope no more denied;
For now the marriage-morn will bring
The bridegroom to the bride (p65)

She is also the harbinger of death:

O thou that takest
The hearts thou makest,

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And them thou breakest,
Behold I die (p66)

But Powell, of course, did not die. To his everlasting shame he survived the war and sought to repay his debt in service to the nation.

Enoch Powell's Island Story

In the early summer of 1950, Powell wrote his final book of poems; *The Wedding Gift*. It had been inspired by his love for an unnamed woman: 'Like a powerful hallucinatory drug, it unsealed again the necessity and the capability to write poetry. Dawn after dawn the stuff rose in my throat and would have choked me, had I not got it down and licked it into shape.'⁴ But his love was unrequited and the romantic tenor of the early pages is overtaken by a fatalistic religious imagery. The final two lines of the last poem are a dramatic turn to God; 'I rise, and take the bitter sop, and go, / Whispering, 'Lord, 'tis I!' (p189) With the end of the Indian empire and now his failure in love, Powell was in need of a new, metaphorical home. Previously a militant atheist, he made another Pauline conversion and found a home in the Church of England. 'I was proud enough and English enough to see that it was a goodly inheritance from which, like a prodigal son, I had so long deliberately exiled myself.'⁴ For Powell this 'ancestral home' was not just the national church; it extended to what he called the 'Church Universal'. It was an identification, like his attachment to empire, that provided him with a metaphor of wholeness of which he was a small part. 'I had been compelled to acknowledge a truth that is corporate, and when I had done so, I noticed that the loyalties I had lived with in war and peace had been corporate too.'⁴⁴ Unlike empire, the church could offer him a logos which would never abandon him. With this ontological security, he adopted a Christianity of punishing and unremitting harshness, dismissing more liberal theology as a 'sugary, romantic, cosy religion, suitable to match the Welfare State.'⁴

The post-war period was one of change and consolidation in his life. In January 1952, to the surprise of his colleagues, Powell - who had given all the appearances of being a confirmed bachelor - married Pamela Wilson, the daughter of an Indian army Lt-Colonel. In May of the following year his mother died after a long illness. In 1954 his first daughter was born and at Christmas a year later his father died. Powell

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ceased to write his poetry. What had been a compulsive need to express his feelings vanished: 'One cannot be content just to answer: "It stopped"... The vision, once experienced, cannot be dismissed. If there was a river, the river went underground; but underground it must have been flowing still. The metaphor helps.'⁴⁶ His need to 'cry out' was to resurface in his nationalist politics: 'The words, and the compulsion to utter them, are drawn, I suspect, from the same source, though long since hidden underground, as the poetry.'⁴⁷ But it was a river that was still meandering across the plains; in the meantime, he was getting on with making a political career for himself. After the victory of the Conservatives in the 1955 General Election, Anthony Eden made Powell Secretary to the Ministry of Housing, where he worked on the 1956 Rent Act. In 1957 Eden resigned and Harold Macmillan emerged as the new Prime Minister. Powell was appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury, alongside Nigel Birch as Economic Secretary. Peter Thorneycroft was made Chancellor of the Exchequer. The team were the forebearers of economic monetarism. A year later, after serious disagreements with Macmillan over the control of inflation, all three men resigned. Powell had established himself as a rising star who would not let loyalty to the party leadership stand in the way of his principles. Over the next two years, writing in periodicals such as *The Stock Exchange Gazette* and *The Banker*, he developed his monetarist economics. His temperament and upbringing were well-suited to its promotion of the retentive control of the money supply and its moral approbation of the work ethic and thrift.

By 1958, the question of immigration from the colonies and Commonwealth had moved in from the fringes of political debate. The summer had witnessed a series of white pogroms against black immigrants in Notting Hill, Dudley and Nottingham. In the House of Commons, the Tory MP Sir Cyril Osborne demanded immigration controls in order to safeguard the white population from the prospect of a 'chocolate coloured Afro-Asian mixed society'. In the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury called for controls to safeguard the 'English way of life'. Osborne approached Powell for support in organising an anti-immigration group within the Tory Party. Powell declined to give it - but not because he opposed control in principle. In 1956, in his first published comment on immigration, he had distanced himself from the crude bigotry of Osborne. Speaking to the Wolverhampton Branch of the Institute of Personnel Management, Powell defined the problem of immigration as a problem of citizenship. What was needed was a rede-

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definition of citizenship determined by a person's place of birth/ It was a language which evaded the old imperial rhetoric of racial inferiority in favour of the incommensurability of cultural differences. To Powell, the origins of the problem of immigration lay in the capitulation of successive governments to the demands of Commonwealth leaders, whose unreasonable demands were epitomised, in his eyes, by the Royal Titles Act of 1953. In 1959, there were 4000 immigrants, mainly rural Jamaicans, living in Wolverhampton; but Powell showed no interest in making an issue out of their presence, prepared to bide his time for the right moment. In the following year, his appointment as Minister of Health coincided with the expansion of the NHS and recruitment of overseas ancillary workers, doctors and nurses. Powell praised their contribution. When the newly formed British Immigration Control Association met him after a meeting held in Wolverhampton, he politely opposed their views.

In 1961 the Conservative Government responded to the anti-immigration campaigners and introduced the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill. It was a half-hearted affair; a number of Ministers were lukewarm in their support and press commentary was unfavourable - *The Times* of 14 November, declared it a 'bad Bill' and for a brief moment the *Daily Express* supported the Labour opposition. But the following year, despite a minority of Tory MPs opposed to it, the Bill became law. It upheld the distinction between citizens of Britain and its colonies and citizens of independent Commonwealth countries. The latter were now subject to immigration control unless they were born in Britain, held passports issued by the British Government, or were included in passports held by persons in either of these two groups. Other Commonwealth citizens seeking to enter Britain were divided into three categories and had to apply for an employment voucher. Category A was for those with a specific job to come to; Category B was for those with a recognisable skill or qualification in short supply. Everyone else came into the last category, C, preference being given to those who had fought in the war. The law served a similar function to the Aliens Act of 1906, introduced to control the entry of Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. Even the most vigorous campaigners for this earlier Bill, had refused to admit in public they were motivated by anti-semitism. English racism had adopted a fastidious manner of denying its prejudices, and supporters of the 1962 law issued similar loud protestations against accusations of racism. Nevertheless, despite their claims to the contrary, the main clauses of

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the Commonwealth Immigrants Act were designed to control the entry of black Commonwealth citizens into Britain .

Powell's reticence about publicly articulating an anti-immigration politics began to change in 1963. Macmillan, his health bad, had resigned and Alec Home, in a Machiavellian series of manoeuvres, had beaten 'Rab' Butler to the premiership. Powell, believing Home's behaviour had been corrupt, refused to serve in the cabinet and began to distance himself from the Party hierarchy. In July, he served notice on the political orthodoxies of the party leadership. He told an audience in Bromsgrove that an era was passing and it was time for the Conservatives to reassert themselves as the party of free market capitalism.⁵ In April 1964 his three articles appeared in *The Times*, advocating the centrality of the market, attacking the economics of the welfare state and calling for the privatisation of the nationalised industries (see p123). At stake was the soul of the Conservative Party and the future of the nation:

Tacitly almost, the Conservatives had agreed to drop their distinctive badge: you can almost feel them wince when they sing 'Land of Hope and Glory' at the Albert Hall. It hurts more than the union jack in which the speaker's table at meetings of the faithful always has to be swathed. It hurts- and pain is a symptom of something still amiss.

Powell was preparing to go over the heads of the Tory leadership, making a political turn to his own petit bourgeois values of patriotism, economic self-sufficiency and hard work. Nationalism was the ideological cement which would bond these values into a cross-class appeal to 'the people'." On 22 April, in a speech to the Royal Society of St George, he proclaimed his vision of England. The power and the glory of the empire had gone, but in the midsts of the 'blackened ruins' there remained; 'like one of her own oak trees, standing and growing, the sap still rising from her ancient roots to meet the spring, England herself.' It was the task of his generation to reclaim their English heritage, to rediscover that earlier generation of Englishmen who had lived before the 'expansion of England', and had been untainted by empire. In language reminiscent of his most bathetic poetry, Powell led his audience back to the 'brash adventurous days of the first Elizabeth': 'there at last we find them ... in many a village church, beneath the tall tracery of a perpendicular East window and the coffered ceiling of the chantry chapel.' He asks these imaginary Englishmen a rhetorical question:

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Tell us what it is that binds us together; show us the clue that leads through a thousand years; whisper to us the secret of this charmed life of England, that we in our time may know how to hold it fast.
What would they say? (p145)

His own answer lapses into pastoral excess:

They would tell us of that marvellous land, so sweetly mixed of opposites in climate that all the seasons of the year appear there in their greatest perfection; of the fields amid which they built their halls, their cottages, their churches, and where the same blackthorn showered its petals upon them as upon us (p145)

This sentimental, rustic wonderland is embodied in three enduring principles of Englishness; its unity under the Crown in Parliament, its historical continuity and its racial homogeneity. The political institutions of England have evolved out of this pastoral idyll, like works of nature.

The deepest instinct of the Englishman - how that word 'instinct' keeps forcing itself in again and again! - is for continuity; he never acts more freely nor innovates more boldly than when he most is conscious of conserving or even of reacting.

From this continuous life of a united people in its island home spring, as from the soil of England, all that is peculiar in the gifts and the achievements of the English nation (p145)

And what binds and symbolises this 'continuous life' is the 'English kingship'. This, Powell declares, is England's unalterable truth which no 'Hanoverian' or 'Headships of Commonwealths' can undermine.

Powell had embarked upon his version of Britain's island story; narrativising 'the people' into a renewed 'corporate identity' of 'The Nation'. In a speech in Dublin, on 13 November, he argued that such stories and myths were essential to the meaning of nationhood: 'All history is myth. It is a pattern which men weave out of the materials of the past... what I am saying is that a nation lives by its myths... The greatest task of the statesman therefore is to offer his people good myths and to save them from harmful myths.'⁵³ Good myths represent the corporate imagination of the people and form the essence of their well-being:

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As with individuals, so it is with that mysterious composite being, the nation: or - to speak less figuratively and more accurately - as it is with individuals in their personal lives, looking inward, so it is with them in their corporate lives, when, looking outward, they see themselves as a larger entity, and feel in their own persons the ups and downs of fortune, the hopes and fears, the regrets and aspirations, which they attribute by an act of imagination to the nation, as though it were a sentient, living being (p136)

This myth of nation parallels Powell's own personal quest for a corporate identity and his compulsive need to idealise the object of his identification. 'Old England' - 'sentient and living' - is 'the timeless contentment' of maternal love he yearns for. Powell's island story is the product of his search for symbolic equivalents of this love, an attempt to secure his precarious hold over it and establish a language which might speak of his own longing and despair. This internal narrative immures his imaginary nation in a golden age which will come again. The more his Messianic narrative evokes the panacea of a golden age, the more impossible becomes its closure around a future moment of national self-becoming. Because it is the projection of a wish for a plenitude which has never existed, it can never be actualised and it continuously deconstructs the historical and racial continuity it is supposed to promote. The future is collapsed into a nostalgic longing for a mythical past and breeds an irrational politics of struggle and reaction which can never realise its ends. In danger of becoming a narrative of self-immolation it must translate its pursuit of its idealised object into an attack on imaginary enemies who thwart its rebirth.

On 10 October, in the *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, Powell identified the enemies of 'Old England':

No doubt, like other groups, the immigrants will often wish to retain for a long time some of their distinctive customs and beliefs; but the idea of them as an unassimilated element of our society, living apart in certain districts and following only certain occupations, is insupportable.

His description of immigration adopted two critical images which were to become persistent features of his anti-immigration speeches.⁵⁴ The first was a fixation on numbers:

In 1963, the only complete calendar year since control came into force, there was a net admission of 50,000 coloured immigrants. Surely no one

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can imagine that, with a million already here, this country is capable of assimilating a further twenty million coloured immigrants every twenty years.

The second was his fear of their concentration into small, unassimilable areas - 'It is the ten per cent and more of the considerable areas of population which present the real problem.' His language evokes an image of potentially endless, teeming fragments which enter the 'sentient, living being' of England, coagulating and hardening into nuggets which block and threaten her instinctual life. In his essay on paranoia, Freud argued that an individual's internal conceptions of reality can be suppressed and distorted and enter consciousness as external perceptions.⁵⁵ Powell's twin imagery of invasive fragments and unassimilable lumps are the representations of his own infantile defence mechanisms against the dread of his mother's absence. If such a feeling of dread is too great for the infant's immature ego to contain, it is attacked and broken into pieces. Such a predicament has, if any, only the rudiments of linguistic representation. Consciousness of the reality of her absence has been denied and repressed, but it remains a psychical reality. The fragmented sounds and images that constitute the only mental representations of this predicament in the boy's psyche return him always to that wordless non-signifiable dread. He is fated: without separation there can be no language and without language there can be no resolution to this predicament. The black and Asian immigrants who had once constituted the anonymous, passive backdrop to Powell's idealisation of empire, and who, through his splitting and projection became the persecutory cause of the loss of his loved empire, have now come to symbolise the return of the repressed. Fragments which coalesce into that life-denying, unassimilable emptiness.

In October 1964, Labour narrowly won the General Election and Harold Wilson became Prime Minister. Despite the successful racist campaign fought by the Tory candidate Peter Griffiths in nearby Smethwick, Powell's election references to immigration were mild. Race was now becoming a significant public, political issue in the country. In January 1965 the annual report of the Medical Officer for Health for West Bromwich noted the high birth rate amongst immigrants. It followed on from the 1963 annual report made by Dr Galloway, the Medical Officer of Health for Wolverhampton, which claimed that Commonwealth immigrants had produced 22.7 per cent

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of all births and 30.4 per cent of hospital confinements.⁵⁶ The Labour government, reversing its previous liberalism, signalled its support for tighter restrictions on immigration with a white paper on 'Immigration from the Commonwealth'. The 1962 law had exempted a large number of East African Asians from immigration control and they now began to arrive in Britain, creating a focus for the growing racial antagonism. On 3 February, Alec Home, Leader of the Opposition, called for tighter immigration controls, assisted repatriation and the vigorous pursuit of illegal immigrants. Two days later, Sir Cyril Osborne placed a motion on the order paper in the House of Commons calling for the banning of all future immigration. One hundred and sixty two Conservative MPs, including Powell, supported him.

In March, a group of Wolverhampton councillors met with Powell to bring his attention to the medical reports and to register their fear that white people in the Midlands could become a racial minority. On 21 May, Powell ended his reluctance to speak out on immigration. In a speech to the women's branch of his constituency association he warned of the threat posed by the birth rates of resident immigrants. This new outspokenness was probably linked to the coming election for a new Conservative leader. Three men were seeking to replace Home: Edward Heath, Reginald Maudling and Powell himself. A firm stand against immigration could win him votes from the right wing of the Party. On 21 July the results brought a conclusive victory to Heath; Powell only managed fifteen votes. His growing authority within the Party had been severely dented; but despite this, Heath made him Shadow Secretary of State for Defence. For the next two years, Powell maintained a low level but persistent interest in the politics of immigration. Then, in early 1968, the Labour government introduced the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act, designed to limit the numbers of East African Asians entering Britain to 1500 annually. On 9 February, in a speech to the Walsall Conservatives, Powell launched a vehement attack against the Government's immigration policies. The tenor of his rhetoric had undergone a dramatic change; it sounded personal.

There is a sense of hopelessness which comes over people who are trapped or imprisoned, when all their efforts to attract attention and assistance bring no response. This is the kind of feeling which you in Walsall and we in Wolverhampton are experiencing in the face of the continued flow of immigrants into our towns.⁵⁷

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Meanwhile, the liberal Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins had introduced the Race Relations Bill. Powell had been inundated with letters of support after the publicity of his Walsall speech and he was anxious to try another, more potent anti-immigration speech. There was now a growing rift between himself and Edward Heath and, following in the footsteps of his forebear, Joseph Chamberlain, he wanted to build himself a Midlands, power base. The Shadow Cabinet met on 11 April to discuss the Bill and race relations and immigration in general. Powell was due to give a speech in Birmingham, to the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre on 20 April. He left the meeting assured that what he planned to say was consistent with party policy.

There were only 85 people in the audience, but the Birmingham speech was headline news the following morning. It transformed Powell from an interesting politician of the Tory Right into a national figure. His erstwhile colleague, the MP Angus Maude, described it as 'a sensation unparalleled in modern British political history... With a single entrance last April, Mr Powell succeeded in upstaging all the leading politicians of the day, and he has remained ever since firmly up-centre with the limelight full on him.'⁵⁸ Powell was probably correct in his belief that his speech fell within the accepted policies of the Conservative Party. What created the furore was its tone of unrepentant rage. Having begun in a sober vein he quickly adopted a personalised style.⁵

A week or two ago I fell into conversation with a constituent, a middle-aged, quite ordinary working man employed in one of our nationalised industries. After a sentence or two about the weather, he suddenly said: 'If I had the money to go, I wouldn't stay in this country.' I made some deprecatory reply, to the effect that even this government wouldn't last forever; but he took no notice, and continued: 'I have three children, all of them been through grammar school and two of them married now, with family. I shan't be satisfied till I have seen them settled overseas. In this country in fifteen or twenty years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man' (pl29-30).

With a rhetorical flourish, Powell had conjured up the archetypal 'Englishman' of the skilled working class - a class fraction who were on the cusp of transforming British politics with their turn to Conservatism in the 1970s. It was they, not he, who had identified the problem of immigration. It was his duty to speak out for them - 'I

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simply do not have the right to shrug my shoulders and think of something else.' Powell extrapolated current numbers of immigrants to claim that by the year 2000 there would be, 'in the region of 5-7 million - whole areas, towns and parts of towns across England will be occupied by different sections of the immigrant and immigrant descended population.' What had to be done, he claimed, was official Conservative Party policy, was to stop the 'inflow' and promote 'the maximum outflow'.

It almost passes belief that at this moment twenty or thirty additional immigrant children are arriving from overseas in Wolverhampton alone every week - and that means fifteen or twenty additional families of a decade or two hence... It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre (p131)

Powell then turned to the impact of immigration on the white English population: 'For reasons which they could not comprehend ... they found themselves made strangers in their own country.' And, with a liberal interpretation of the two Midlands medical reports, themselves of dubious integrity, he claimed: 'They found their wives unable to obtain hospital beds and their children unable to obtain school places, their homes and neighbourhoods changed beyond recognition, their plans and prospects for the future defeated.'

But, worse still, the white Englishman found himself a persecuted minority in his own land. People were afraid to speak out:

what surprised and alarmed me was the high proportion of ordinary, decent, sensible people, writing a rational and often well-educated letter, who believed that they had to omit their address because it was dangerous to have committed themselves to paper to a Member of Parliament agreeing with their views I had expressed, and that they would risk either penalties or reprisals if they were known to have done so (p134).

Finally, Powell challenged political liberalism: 'integration' of New Commonwealth immigrants was a 'dangerous delusion'. They would never give up their cultural heritages. But more than this, there was a growing force acting against integration: 'vested interests in the preservation and sharpening of racial and religious differences, with a view to the exercise of actual domination, first over fellow-immigrants and then over the rest of the population.' This was the true source of the

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problem - the liberal establishment, the politicians and journalists and intellectuals who had abrogated their duty to uphold the integrity of the nation, the welfare professionals who were promoting the language of multiculturalism and the Race Relations Bill - 'the very pabulum they need to flourish'. Powell's underground river carrying the language of his unfulfilled longings had reached its apocalyptic full flood: 'As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'.

The following day, Powell, who claimed to be taken completely by surprise at the turn of events, was the subject of blanket press coverage. Heath immediately sacked him from the shadow cabinet and the majority of the press and political commentators heaped opprobrium on his head. In the Monday edition of *The Times*, the editorial was headed, 'An Evil Speech'. The Conservative MP Humphry Berkeley accused Powell of being a new Oswald Mosley (something he later retracted in his biography of Powell). The *Spectator* carried an attack on Powell by Auberon Waugh, who made the perceptive comment that what had upset the political establishment more than his racial language, was his refusal to play the game; 'the prophet has not been behaving like a gentleman.'⁶⁰ Powell had destroyed his chances of ever rising in the Conservative Party, but he had succeeded in establishing himself as a spokesman for 'the people'. On Monday morning, 45,000 letters arrived at his London home. Within days he had received 100,000 letters. Overwhelming in their support, they came from people of all classes. Only a small minority employed a language of racist abuse. The majority emphasised the cultural incommensurability of New Commonwealth immigrants and the threat this posed to their national identity. For example:

No Briton wants to see his traditional way of living, the country he has loved and fought for, lose its identity, and particular character through the over great acceptance of too many peoples of quite different cultures and ways of life.

Both the *Daily Express* and the *News of the World*, with a combined readership of 11.3 million, had supported him. On 23 April, meat porters at Smithfield market struck in sympathy with Powell. In the afternoon, thousands of London dockworkers marched on Parliament demanding 'free speech' for Powell and an end to his victimisation. A delegation of dockworkers emerging from a meeting with him, told the

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waiting press; 'it made us proud to be British.'⁶²

Powell now believed himself a tribune of the people. On 16 November, in a speech to the Bournemouth Rotary Club, he declared that his Birmingham speech had; 'revealed a deep and dangerous gulf in the nation ... a gulf between the overwhelming majority of the people throughout the country on the one side, and on the other side a tiny minority with almost a monopoly hold upon the channels of communication, who seem determined ... to blind both themselves and others.'⁶³ Few on the Left could make sense of this new phenomenon of Powellism. The standard commentary was to dismiss him as an 'unbalanced' and 'dangerous' demagogue. But Tom Nairn, in an incisive analysis, published in *New Left Review* in 1970, recognised Powellism as 'a preliminary ground breaking exercise', presaging a potential new phase of authoritarian government.⁶⁴ Even he could not foresee Margaret Thatcher's historic routing of the Left in 1979. It was one of the intellectual architects of the coming, right wing hegemony, the historian, Maurice Cowling, who understood Powellism as the first major assault on Britain's post war, welfare consensus. Writing in the Personal Column of *The Spectator*, he identified the main target as the permissive, metropolitan, liberal intelligentsia. Powellism represented; 'the struggle to destroy the insufferable moral condescension characteristic of certain sections of the British ruling elite when it addresses the English people.'⁶⁵

On 18 May, 1970, Harold Wilson announced a General Election. During the election campaign Powell was at the height of his political influence. On 13 June, in a speech in Northfield, Birmingham, he declared that Britain was under attack from an enemy within. The enemy was manifested in terroristic students, demonstrators, the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland , but most of all in race.

The exploitation of what is called 'race' is a common factor which links the operations of the enemy on several different fronts ... 'Race' is billed to play a major, perhaps a decisive, part in the battle of Britain, whose enemies must have been unable to believe their good fortune as they watched the numbers of West Indians, Africans, and Asians concentrated in her major cities mount toward the two million mark.⁶⁶

It was a speech of paranoid delusions and a contempt for notions of fairness and justice, and democratic politics generally. To Powell, these were merely ruses employed by a minority, whose 'devilish' techniques

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of media control and brainwashing had rendered the majority passive and helpless, abandoning England to those who hated her. Answerable to nobody but himself, he pulled British politics in his direction. The Conservatives won an unexpected victory in the election. For Maurice Cowling, Powell played a decisive part by drawing in new classes of support and changing the climate of opinion. The Conservatives had promised there would be 'no further large-scale permanent immigration'. In 1971, they introduced the Immigration Act confining the right of abode to citizens of Britain and the colonies who were patrials. The new Act scrapped the old system of vouchers. Anyone who was not a patial had to obtain a work permit which could be renewed annually, effectively turning them into migrant labourers. At the same time, by qualifying the notion of citizenship to place of parental and grand-parental birth, the Act progressively took away the right of black Commonwealth immigrants to settle in Britain. When the Thatcher Government, elected in 1979, introduced the 1981 British Nationality Act, the Conservatives cemented the racially discriminatory immigration laws into a new definition of citizenship. Powell's loathed 1948 Nationality Act was finally buried.

Powell's political legacy is similar to the underground stream of his metaphor. It continues to flow, quietly, unobtrusively, its adherents content not to make too public a show of their political debt to a man who went beyond the pale.⁶ To end, I want to return to a key image in Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech. He has just described how the white English are becoming a persecuted people in their own land. He chooses one illustration. It is a letter written to him by a woman in Northumberland, concerning an elderly woman who is living in his constituency.

Eight years ago in a respectable street in Wolverhampton a house was sold to a negro. Now only one white (a woman old-age pensioner) lives there. This is her story. She lost her husband and both her sons in the war. So she turned her seven-roomed house, her only asset, into a boarding house. She worked hard and did well, paid off her mortgage and began to put something by for her old age. Then the immigrants moved in. With growing fear, she saw one house after another taken over. The quiet street became a place of noise and confusion. Regretfully, her white tenants moved out.

The day after the last one left, she was awakened at 7am by two negroes who wanted to use her phone to contact their employer. When

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she refused, as she would have refused any stranger at that hour, she was abused and feared she would have been attacked but for the chain on the door... She is becoming afraid to go out. Windows are broken. She finds excreta pushed through her letterbox. When she goes to the shops, she is followed by children, charming, wide-grinning piccaninnies. They cannot speak English, but one word they know. 'Racialist', they chant. When the new Race Relations Bill is passed, this woman is convinced she will go to prison (p134-135).

Questioned about the veracity of this story, Powell has never produced the letter as evidence.⁶⁹ Whether a figment of his or someone else's imagination, this is Powell's island story - the imperial 'black peril' brought home. A white mother, his mother, the signifier of all her son's unfulfilled longings, besieged by black males, persecuted, her life slowly being extinguished. Racial difference confronts him with the paranoia that he will lose his precarious hold on the maternal object. His concern is narcissistic if he allows the maternal object to die, his own sense of aliveness will wither. The son must save his mother/nation, even at the risk of his own life. If he is fated never to leave her, then he must be prepared to defend her, for she holds the key to his life; in the end all he can do is die for her.

Notes

- 1 Quote from frontispiece to Wilfred Thesiger (1984), *Arabian Sands*, Penguin.
- 2 Enoch Powell (1959), 'Escape to the Void' in *National and English Review*, December issue, p. 199-200.
- 3 Andrew Roth, (1970), *Enoch Powell Tory Tribune*, Macdonald, p.7.
- 4 Terry Coleman, *The Guardian*, Aug. 27th, 1994.
- 5 Michael Strachan (1952) 'Educating the Professor', *Blackwood's Magazine*, February issue.
- 6 Berkeley, p.128.
- 7 Patrick Cosgrave (1989), *The Lives of Enoch Powell*, The Bodley Head, p.81.
- 8 Cosgrave, p.87.
- 9 Roth, p.41.
- 10 Berkeley, p.51.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p.52.

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- 12 Enoch Powell (date not known), 'The Empire of England' in *Tradition and Change Nine Oxford Lectures*, Conservative Research Department, p.49.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.53.
- 14 Quote taken from Cosgrave, p.59.
- 15 Enoch Powell (1968), 'Imperial Sickness', the *Spectator*, 13 September. Review of Colin Cross, *The Fall of the British Empire, 1914-1968*, Hodder and Stoughton.
- 16 The full text of the April 20th, Birmingham speech is in Berkeley, p.129-137.
- 17 Howard Pedraza (1986), *Winston Churchill and Enoch Powell*, London, p.81.
- 18 Roth, p.12.
- 19 Cosgrave, p.31.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p.37.
- 21 Roth, p.11.
- 22 Cosgrave, p.37.
- 23 Roth, p.12.
- 24 Cosgrave, p.43.
- 25 Roth, p.18.
- 26 Enoch Powell (1986), in Alville Lees-Milne and Derry Moore, eds. *The Englishman's Room*, Viking, p.118-121.
- 27 Pedraza, p.81.
- 28 Enoch Powell (date not known), 'A Personal Recollection of A.E. Housman', *Housman Society Journal*, Vol. 1, p.27.
- 29 From poem LI of 'A Shropshire Lad', by A.E. Housman.
- 30 Enoch Powell (1990), 'A.E. Housman' in *Housman Society Journal*, Vol.16, p.48.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p.49.
- 32 Enoch Powell (1962) 'Thin but Thorough' in *The Times*, 27 September.
- 33 Roth, p.17.
- 34 Roy Lewis (1979), *Enoch Powell Principle in Politics*, Cassell, p.15.
- 35 Melanie Klein (1946), 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' in Juliet Mitchell, ed. *The Selected Melanie Klein*, p. 182.
- 36 Sigmund Freud (1921), 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' in *PFL*, Vol.12, p.137.
- 37 Roth, p.24.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Cosgrave, p.53.
- 40 Enoch Powell (1990), 'Foreword' to *Collected Poems*, Bellew Publishing, p.vii.

- 41 Powell made these comments in Sue Lawley in Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* in the mid-1980s.
- 42 Powell (1990), p.ix-x.
- 43 Berkeley, p.32.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p.32-33.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p.37.
- 46 Powell (1990), p.191.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p.m-192.
- 48 Paul Foot (1969), *The Rise of Enoch Powell*, Penguin, p.32-33.
- 49 See John Solomos (1993), *Race and Racism in Britain*, Macmillan.
- 50 See John Wood (1965), *A Nation Not Afraid The Thinking of Enoch Powell*, Hodder and Stoughton, p.24-29.
- 51 As with so many of Powell's varying political loyalties and identities, his shift to populism involved the idealisation of an object or person. In 1977, Powell's biographical study; *Joseph Chamberlain* was published (Thames and Hudson). His political manoeuvring follows a remarkably similar pattern to Chamberlain's career and suggests that he emulated the myth of the heroic outsider who sought political power by appealing to the people over the heads of corrupted party machines. Powell's subsequent resignation from the Tory Party over their pro-European politics in 1974 and his appeal to voters to support Labour can be partly explained by Chamberlain's own behaviour - 'Three times ... he was the agent of defeat and even of destruction to the political party in which he lived and worked.' (p.151)
- 52 John Wood, *op.cit.*, pp.143-146.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p.136-143.
- 54 For example, see Powell's speech in Wolverhampton on 11 June, 1970 which is consumed with his concern over numbers and their concentration: 'So - number is of the essence, and geographical concentration is of the essence, and each multiplies the effect of the other.' John Wood, (ed) (1971), *Powell and the 1970 Election*, Elliot Right Way Books, 1971, p.101.) Powell described the consequence of this effect to a public meeting of the Hampshire Monday Club in Southampton on 9 April, 1976. 'The nation has been, and is still being, eroded and hollowed out from within by the implantation of large unassimilated and unassimilable populations - what Lord Radcliffe once in a memorable phrase called 'alien wedges' - in the heartland of the state.' Richard Ritchie, (ed), *A Nation or No Nation? Enoch Powell*, Elliot Right Way Books, 1978. In the 27 September issue of the *Spectator*, 1968, Quintin Hogg, MP took issue with Powell's use of numbers, quoting T.E. Utley's *Enoch Powell: The Man and his Thinking*,

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- William Kimber. See also, Paul Foot 1969.
- 55 S Freud, (1911c[1910]), 'Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)', *PFL*, Vol.9.
- 56 See Paul Foot *op.cit.*.
- 57 Cosgrave, p.242.
- 58 Angus Maude MP (1968), 'Enoch Declares War' in the *Spectator*, 22 November.
- 59 Berkeley, p.129-137.
- 60 Auberon Waugh (1968), 'Black Powell' in the *Spectator*, 26 April.
- 61 See Diana Spearman (1968), 'Enoch Powell's Postbag' in *New Society*, 9 May. Also see Diana Spearman (1971), 'Enoch Powell's Election Letters' in John Wood (ed), *Powell and the 1970 Election*, *op.cit.*.
- 62 C.C. Aronsfeld (Circa 1970), 'Challenge to Socialist brotherhood British dockworkers and coloured immigrants' in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Institute of Jewish Affairs, Vol. 2, No.4, July Aug.
- 63 Text of the Speech appears in Enoch Powell (1969), *Freedom and Reality*, B.T. Batsford Ltd.
- 64 Tom Nairn (1970), 'Enoch Powell: the New Right' in *New Left Review*, No.61, May-June.
- 65 Maurice Cowling (1968), 'There's been a revolution here, too.' in the *Spectator*, 24 May. For a discussion of Cowling and the Peterhouse New Right and their relationship to Enoch Powell see Gill Seidel (1988), 'Culture, Nation and 'Race' in the British and French New Right' in *The Ideology of the New Right*, Ruth Levitas (ed), Polity Press.
- 66 The full text of the speech is reprinted in John Wood, (ed), (1971), *Powell and the 1970 Election*, Elliot Right Way Books, p.104-112.
- 67 Maurice Cowling (1971), 'Mr Powell, Mr Heath, and the Future' in John Woods, *ibid.*
- 68 In 1993, Powell gave the third Ian Gow Memorial Speech to a little known organisation called the Friends of the Union, a group of right-wing intellectuals dedicated to the preservation of the Union and who operate in a similar fashion to the prewar Round Table organisation *The Guardian*, 4 February, 1995). In recent years a number of right-wing historians have adopted a Powellite, nationalist interpretation of postwar British geopolitics. Two in particular herald an attempt to assert a right-wing hegemony over the history of post war Britain: John Charmley in *Churchill's Grand Alliance: The Anglo-American Special Relationship, 1940-57*, 1995, and Andrew Roberts in *Eminent Churchillians*, 1994. This right wing intellectual offensive parallels the fortunes of the Tory right, and its future within the Conservative Party hangs in the balance. In the 1995 Conservative

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Party leadership election, Roberts (a principal member of Friends of the Union) was a close aide and spokesman for John Redwood. Another Powellite connection to the leadership contest was Greville Howard, Powell's personal assistant from 1968 to 1972 , who made his house available to Michael Portillo as a campaign HQ (*The Guardian*, 3 July, 1995). Powell's official biography, in the hands of Simon Heffer, will reflect the perceptions of right wing Conservatism. But there has also begun a wider rehabilitation of his reputation. Robert Shephard, whose previous biography of Iain Macleod gave intellectual weight to the more liberal wing of the Conservative Party has produced a biography of Enoch Powell, published in 1996 (Hutchinson). As Powell nears the end of his life, there will be, no doubt, an attempt to construct him as the great statesman we never had.

⁶⁹ See Paul Foot *op.cit.*