

“PER OMNIA SAECULA SAECULORUM” OR “INKABA YAKHO IPHI?": INDIGENEITY IN ALEX LA GUMA AND AIDAN HIGGINS

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Both Alex La Guma, in relation to South Africa, and Aidan Higgins, in relation to Ireland, stress a vital relationship between subjectivity and territory. Both also vividly bond social consciousness to an indigenous sense of rootedness in place, and for both it is a place of ancestors from which subjectivity emerges and to which it returns. This surprises given the metaphysical rather than materialist concepts with which this figuration aligns. They also share a complex decolonizing vision contextualized in both instances by the Marxist understandings of class and settler colonialism that shaped postcolonial discourses of the 1960s. Hence, this article draws on theories of indigeneity in contrast to theories of social conflict based on class to consider the importance of situatedness and belonging in two colonial and postcolonial novels of South Africa and Ireland. In *Langrishe, Go Down* (1966), Higgins presents the struggles of the Anglo-Irish Langrishe family in Ireland amidst their despairing collapse, but he does so in a postcolonial moment and in the generic conventions of the Big House novel. In contrast, La Guma's *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972) viscerally depicts the struggle against apartheid in South Africa by coloured and black South Africans as well as the tensions between English and Afrikaner communities. Both novels were written looking to the past, and a very specific moment in the past. Both also locate an indigenous identity in the bond to physical space: that is, a localist understanding of indigenous peoples in their traditional territories, which doubles as an ancestral bond marked in both books by a language that is not the author's mother-tongue, Latin and isiXhosa. For Higgins, Imogen Langrishe's deep bond to the land emerges in Latin after her sister Helen's failed attempt at integration, and for La Guma we see Elias Tekwane's indigeneity expressed in isiXhosa. For both, this bond reflects a materialist understanding of conflict and change, yet in the same moment it expresses a metaphysical identification with ancestors and situated-

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ness in territory. The language inheres in a tradition that is bound to ancestors and the repetition of ancestors in the land despite the macro-level materialist discourse of class conflict emerging from economic conditions. Moreover, both authors wrote their respective novels during an absence from the homeland. It is more surprising, though, that both books first developed in South Africa: Higgins's novel was first sketched during his time in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and La Guma's was only completed during his exile.

172 This article argues for an overlapping notion of indigeneity in their works articulated using critical Aboriginal Studies while exploring the materialist emergence of identity. The key tension, then, is not between both authors' progressive politics nor the real differences between their Irish and South African settings—the tension is the *in-betweenness* of their shared difficulty articulating a form of indigeneity and artistic expression that does not conflict with a materialist history and the theoretical precepts of their anticolonial vision. This is to say, both La Guma and Higgins work to express a metaphysical localist understanding of indigeneity while retaining the characteristically materialist notions of decolonization of the 1960s. Rather than a faulty logic, this understanding of colonialism and indigeneity is plural and reflects the “in-between” nature of their experiences.

TRANSPLANTING/TRANSLATING DISCOURSES OF INDIGENEITY

Much critical discourse on indigeneity has relied on the political and juridical apparatus of the over-determining state and accompanying forms of economic development.¹ In American Indian studies, the cosmopolitan/nationalist conflict reflects this,² and it is most recently visible in Sean Glen Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks*, which uses Fanon's materialist discourse amidst localist indigeneity. In an Australasian context, David Welchman Gegeo provides a strong example of the emphasis on legal status through customary ownership in Malaita against the legal fiction of *terra nullius*, although the bonds of spiritual kinship and a metaphysical bond to place remain present:

First and foremost, place (*kula ni fuli*, literally, “place situated in source,” that is, place of one's existential foundation) in this context refers to the geographical or physical location of Kwara'ae district on Malaita. Second, place refers to genealogy, that is, one's location in a Kwara'ae kin group, both in the present and reaching backward and forward in time. Third, place means having land or the unconditional right of access to land in Kwara'ae through genealogy and marriage. (493)

Apart from the basis of Gegeo's argument in the place/space conflict that emerges as Kwara'ae populations migrate, the emphasis remains clearly on the embeddedness of the indigenous in land and the relational bond between generations that forms

a metaphysical belonging to kin and ancestors beyond the typical operation of the difficult word “culture.” For this context, indigeneity, ethnicity, and culture do not operate as synonyms nor as metonyms for the same subjectivity. In a kindred yet contrasting fashion in the Canadian First Nations context, Len Findlay has given a characteristically provocative exhortation to “Always Indigenize!” that again takes up the juridical and political implication of indigeneity as inhering in the vital bond to the land that goes beyond mere residency:

In the (human) beginning was the Indigene. This hypothesis is a necessary but inscrutable pretext for the historical and current distribution of our species in diverse groupings across the globe. With oral and written histories of a recoverable past have come difference and conflict, competing versions of residency, conquest, settlement, entitlement, and the limited circulation and decidedly mixed benefits of Indigenous status. It seems fair to say that all communities live as, or in relation to, Indigenes. (Findlay 308)

Nonetheless, the language here, if not Findlay’s implication, returns to such matters as conflictual claims to indigeneity or possession of a particular place. The conflict then is between “*kula ni fuli*, literally, ‘place situated in source,’ that is, place of one’s existential foundation” (Gegeo 493) and the materialist assertion that “there is no *hors-Indigène*, no geopolitical or psychic setting, no real or imagined *terra nullius* free from the satisfactions and unsettlements of Indigenous (pre)occupation” (Findlay 309). As Findlay realizes, the conflict is politically unproductive, and hence he shifts his own project to “a strategically indeterminate provocation to thought and action” (309), on which ground the *English Studies in Canada* 2004 Readers’ Forums dedicated to responses proves his provocation—most other critics simply set the two matters beside each other without considering their potential incompatibilities. That is, the juridical and political processes that permit a challenge to settler colonialism stand in contrast to the same indigenous epistemologies and relational ontologies nurtured from the bond to land.

Highly kindred conflicts have emerged in geographical and political analyses of indigeneity and western knowledge systems more generally beyond those of class conflict and social change. Ana Deumert takes up the conceptual problem of migration and explains that “In the South African context, moving from the village to the city does not imply a decisive move from one place to another, but rather the opening up of a new place/home without abandoning the previous place/home. Thus, rural-urban migration is...a series of interlocking, shuffling movements” (55). Because of this interlocking spatiality and anchor to ancestral space, “the village remains for many the ‘true’ home, the place of the forefathers where important ancestral rituals are practiced. The urban home is always second to the rural home as cultural rituals have to be performed at the place of origin in order to be meaningful” (55). As a symptomatic overlap, however, we see the “moving targets” of increasingly deterritorialized indigenes taken up by Breckenridge and Appadurai (i) as well as the generalized homelessness expressed by Edward Said of “exile [as] the unhealable rift

forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (49) without falling victim to the “spatial incarceration of the native” identified by Liisa Malkki (28-31). Most recently, Sarah Hunt has contrasted her experiences as a Kwakwaka’wakw scholar inhabiting both scholarly and communal spaces, leading her to suggest “The situatedness and place-specific nature of Indigenous knowledge calls for the validation of new kinds of theorizing and new epistemologies that can account for situated, relational Indigenous knowledge and yet remain engaged with broader theoretical debates” (Hunt 31). Like Findlay’s, this “engagement” permits overlapping and contradictory knowledge systems to productively work together. In the introduction they give to the same issue, Emilie Cameron, Sarah de Leeuw, and Caroline Desbiens more directly challenge critical reluctance to use “accounts of Indigenous knowledges and practices as evidence of ontological pluralism and as sources of new modes of thought” (Cameron 19), which leads them to bolster the “new kinds of theorizing” called for by Hunt as relational yet “engaged with broader theoretical debates.”³ Such a relational engagement between indigenous studies and theories of class conflict rely, for Hunt’s geographical interests, in the situatedness of the different discourses, much as both Higgins and La Guma rely on rearticulating indigeneity in a non-indigenous art form: the novel. Hunt contends, in relation to her own experience moving between sites of knowledge exchange, “it must also be asked what it means for Indigenous knowledge to be moved from spaces of lived Indigenous governance and culture, such as a potlatch ceremony, to a conference session on ontology with very few Indigenous people and little space for Indigenous methods of teaching and learning” (Hunt 31)? The death of metanarratives would be, in this instance, not a result of postmodernism *per se* but also the plurality of situated epistemologies.

To the point, the re-articulation of liberation and speech also risks ventriloquism and silencing. By proxy, my use here of specific theories of indigeneity for an analysis outside of their culturally and indigenously embedded context must acknowledge the limitation of transplanting or translating such materials to the South African and Irish contexts under analysis. Caught up with but also distinct from the tension between situatedness in land and conflict between social classes (both of which may be used to analyze the materials here, though I contend both are insufficient on their own) is the nation state and the notion of independence articulated only within its larger paradigm, which has infiltrated both discourses of indigeneity and decolonization. As Maia Ramnath notices, the operations of state power observed in the racism and colonialism to which both La Guma and Higgins respond also reflect the operations of state power domestically: “A restive or insurgent colony was even better than a pacified one as a laboratory for states to develop their military, bureaucratic, disciplinary, policing, and surveillance capabilities. Here administrators tested new techniques for future application to domestic security in the metropole” (18). In this sense, embeddedness in land or the unity of heterogenous groups in overarching categories of class may risk the articulation of localist experiences through the over-

determining context of the state or nation-state, such that “The nationalist fairy tale culminates in the marriage of (spiritual) nation and (physical) state” (Ramnath 20). Again, as with Findlay’s “strategically indeterminate provocation,” the challenge is in this spiritual/material conflict, and again, the matter is largely resolved by setting the challenges beside each other. As noted, Coulthard addresses this problem in detail, relying on Marx’s primitive accumulation thesis and Fanon’s understanding of race and class in decolonization while also contending “one of the most significant differences that exist between Indigenous and Western metaphysics revolves around the central importance of land to Indigenous modes of being” (60). Indeed, Coulthard sees “the position that land occupies as an ontological framework for understanding *relationships*” (60), which leads him via Peter Kulchyski to distinguish dispossession in temporal (Western) versus spatial (Indigenous) terms—yet, the materialist/metaphysical conflict remains juxtaposed not resolved. The emergence of subjectivity from a spiritually vital and relational entanglement with locale and kinship then positions itself in symmetry with social constructivist ideas of the subject as constituted through conflicting material forces understood through class. And in fiction, both Aidan Higgins and Alex La Guma do precisely this—they permit the two conceptualizations (materialist and metaphysical) to co-exist as a reflection of their own lived in-betweenness, within which these conflicted bases for subjectivity co-exist in parallax.

OBSCURED PLACE *IN THE FOG*

La Guma’s *In the Fog of the Seasons’ End* presents the anti-apartheid struggle in a progressive context leading to what is implicitly a violent revolutionary movement at the end of the novel when the escaping ANC activists move to Zimbabwe for insurgency training. Their increasing consciousness of their class position becomes the fuel for revolutionary change. La Guma was an executive member of the South African Coloured People’s Organization and a member of the Communist Party following his union organizing activities. He went into exile in 1966 after trials, imprisonment, and house arrest, after which he became the chief representative in the Caribbean of the African National Congress (Field, *Alex* 55, 49, 164). The basis for the book derives from La Guma’s anti-apartheid work in the ANC, incarcerations, and his own deep Marxist beliefs (Field, *Alex* 183; Balutansky 82, 106). The same themes play out across La Guma’s writing career from short stories to novels. Across *In the Fog of the Seasons’ End*, the fate of an unnamed torture victim in the opening chapter causes much tension for readers who are unsure if the victim is the protagonist Beukes or his close colleague Elias Tekwane (also called Hazel). Both are, of course, false names used to protect real individuals in La Guma’s at least partially historical novel, and both names carry allusive weight. While the protagonist Beukes is mixed-race, his double in the novel, Elias Tekwane, is amaXhosa. In La

Guma's narrative, set around the 21 March 1960 Sharpeville massacre, "Hazel was the code name for Elias Tekwane. When he was born his mother had really named him after his great-grandfather, but...the missionary, who always found it difficult to pronounce indigenous names, had said 'We'll call him Elias'" (La Guma 72). This continuous renaming away from his indigenous name, twice over, implicitly reflects the settler practices of displacement and recasting of indigeneity as deviance. Nonetheless, despite the economic inequalities and racial segregation that the character experiences, La Guma uses kinship and repeated images to bind Elias to the land itself and his ancestors' embeddedness in locality: "Elias could not remember his father.... News arrived that Tekwane had been killed in a mining accident near Johannesburg; he was buried hundreds of feet below ground, deeper than any of his ancestors had been buried" (La Guma 73). The trope repeats several times, and in Elias's work crew, a man remarks on wanting to attend a funeral for "my brother who has joined the ancestors" (124). As the scene continues to juxtapose descriptions of ancestral values against the lived experience of apartheid (76-77, 81-82), "The blood stirred in [Elias] in spite of the torpor, and his mind switched to the tales told by the old people of the village, of the battles fought by their ancestors" (124). The effect is a shutter between ancestral embeddedness in the land understood spiritually, set in obversion to material exploitation understood through Marxist materialism and the economic conditions that give rise to the superstructural ideology of racism⁴—Elias moves between his blood in the ancestral land to the class struggle, shuttling between the two ever more rapidly as the novel moves to its conclusion. Even as Elias grows into a labour organizing position and a mode of social awareness founded on African Socialism drawn from the South African Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions in the African National Congress, his new role and life in the city are expressed through the spiritual bond to place and ancestors, which marks his indigeneity as distinct from his class position.⁵

The emphasis on class-based analyses in this body of criticism distracts critics from the vital importance of indigeneity to the same scenes and others in La Guma's *oeuvre*. Cecil Abrahams describes the novel's interests, such as counter-revolutionary bourgeois freedom, in clearly Marxist terms: "Like the artisans and the lower middle classes that have succeeded in rising slightly above the living standards of the majority of their compatriots in the urban slums and ghettos, many of the oppressed care little about the plight of the majority and instead wrap themselves inside a cocoon of unreality" (110). In a kindred vein, Nahem Yousaf contends La Guma's "characters very clearly move from a position of unfocused individualism to collective strength, from impotent anger to oblique theorizing about their subordinate positions, before finally arriving at the epiphanic realization that tyranny must be met with collective resistance, even violent resistance" (132). These sentiments find their most explicit expression in David Maughan Brown's contention that the novel "locates revolutionary activity firmly in the economic and social conditions of the people rather than in the individual's reaction to his or her personal experience of oppression" (21).

Jabulani Mkhize cements the framework by convincingly expressing how

the early novels were suggestive of Georg Lukács's assertion that 'in any protest against particular social conditions, these conditions themselves must have the central place' in the narrative, [but] in [*In the Fog of the Seasons' End*] it is as though La Guma is saying: now that you have learnt about the socio-economic conditions that the oppressed have to contend with...., interest in this work lies in the forces working towards the changing of the status quo rather than in the exposition of the social contradictions of racial capitalism as such. (Mkhize 915)

The most recent reinforcement of the point appears when Roger Field argues the novel shows "more advanced and politically developed Marxists.... [who see] that race as a social construct and economic exploitation are intimately connected" (*Alex* 183). La Guma's insistence on a Marxist paradigm for discussing decolonization and the anti-apartheid movement is abundantly clear in both his works and the critical literature, as is the nuanced and theoretically informed nature of this insistence and its movement toward collective rather than individualist action. That it developed during the growth of Marxist literature of decolonization, such as Frantz Fanon's and Albert Memmi's works, should be expected since this was the dominant paradigm of the moment prior to the Foucauldian expansion of postcolonial criticism by Edward Said later in the decade, moving to institutional forms from class conflicts. However, by developing the critical discourse in this manner, critics find that the parallel "bourgeois" or what might even be called by some "primitive" or "pre-modern" notions of indigeneity become a scotoma, a blind-spot that we cannot squint around to notice in their vitality and recurring importance to the novel. Indeed, for Mkhize, "Tekwane is initially a naïve country boy whose father dies in the mines" and "his subsequent actions are not guided by political consciousness until he meets a fellow prisoner, Mdlaka,... [who] serves as his political mentor [and] recruits him to the movement" (Mkhize 921). This understanding of the novel's most poetic descriptions as naïve is striking, particularly because of the adeptness of Mkhize's reading and deep sympathies for the aesthetic functions and formal traits of the text. Hence, contrasting his description against the novel's depiction of indigeneity, land, and kinship traces out the scotoma that such a view induces.

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In Elias Tekwane's rise in labour organization as a part of the anti-apartheid movement (which really *must* be understood in the Marxist terms outlined above), he also relocates or re-indigenizes himself in the city rather than the country in a manner that does not comfortably work in the materialist paradigm:

Elias had not returned to the countryside after that. He felt that the brown, eroded land, the little dwellings on the scrubby hillside held little for him. Besides, his blood had dripped onto the hard grey surface of a city sidewalk, and it was as if it had taken root and held him there.... Elias recalled the warmth of the pavement against his face and the smell of dust as he lay there. (La Guma 132-133)

This moment, and several subsequent involving land and blood, may be understood through the amaXhosa question *Inkaba yakho iphi?*, where is your navel? Following

on the tradition of burying the afterbirth, the query calls for the ancestral place of belonging, affiliation, status, and social identity (Midgeley 40). Elias's bond to the land arises from this indigenous understanding of belonging, just as he is tied to the land by his father's burial and again bound to the city after his blood mingles with the place. These are not naïvely misunderstood moments of class conflict confused by a false consciousness of indigeneity—they are a parallel indigenous epistemology on an equal footing with the proletarian epistemology, and La Guma cultivates both in the novel for the reader. Amidst the organization of labour and the struggle to nurture revolutionary change through an overturning of the class struggle by the rise of the proletariat, the novel repeatedly imagines the spiritual bond between indigenous populations, embeddedness, and land. And despite the contradictory nature of these two knowledge systems, they coexist in La Guma's narrative.

178 This spiritual element of indigeneity, a rootedness in place and deep bond to the earth, then frames our understanding as readers of the novel's gruesome depiction of Elias's bloody torture and death. In a flashback to the same work detail in Elias's past in which he meets and is radicalized by Mdlaka, "A man who had gone over to wake [Tsatsu] had come back saying, 'He is not asleep. He has gone to his ancestors, and may they receive him with more kindness than he has met with in this world.' The old man had lain on the heap of rubble like a bundle of discarded old clothes" (La Guma 156). The repetition of ancestors and the corpse's entanglement with "rubble" (suggesting he is *of* the land itself rather than merely an inhabitant) would be only a further emphasis of the importance of ancestors and land to the amaXhosa, except that the same man and image repeat during Elias's torture (172) and again during his death. The imagery repeats in tandem with "the ghosts gathered" and "the ghosts drifted along the hazy horizon and beckoned to him to come to join them" (173). In this manner, Elias's blood on the floor during his torture mingles thematically with the blood that binds him to the city and the rubble of the old man entangling him with the land itself, just as Elias's blood marks the country space, the village where he was born, and the kin *to* and *of* whom he was born. To make this blending clear, La Guma describes how for Elias while dying "the smell of dust on the paving was in his nostrils; blood trickled into his neck from his scalp where the policeman's club had caught him on the morning of the strike meeting" (173), and as he drifts to unconsciousness during his torture while remembering this previous strike (poignantly recalled in the present tense), his mind returns to the locations of his youth: his home village as the answer to *Inkabe yakho iphi?* Where is your navel? Then, set off in its own paragraph, La Guma presents "*Uya kuhlasela-pi na? Where wilt thou now wage war?* The ghosts of his ancestors beckoned from afar" (174) as free indirect discourse, and as Elias lies dying the same shifting language from isiXhosa to English recurs with the image of his return to his ancestors, for "Far, far, his ancestors gathered on the misty horizon, their spears sparkling like diamonds in the exploding sun" (175). If we fail to link the scenes and their thematic import, La Guma reminds us as readers to

Think of something, the pain said; something in which you believe, like love. Old Tsatsu was dead on a heap of rubble by the road, a collapsed dummy, something unimportant left aside. 'He is not asleep but gone to his ancestors'.... Far down in the darkness, darker than any tomb, another miner was dispersed beyond recognition under infinite tons of fallen rock and gold. (La Guma 172)

Hence, the bodies in the ground, including his father's in the mine that he ostensibly does not even remember, just as with the buried afterbirth of Elias's entry to the world, all frame the meaning of his life blood spilling again into the ground as a repetition of how he had bled while beginning his path in underground anti-apartheid labour organizing. The spiritual element of his relation between blood and earth expands this time because it occurs in service of a revolutionary decolonization movement predicated on materialist understandings of class, though the spiritual meanings are in ample evidence in the same moment.

LANGRISHE, GO DOWN TO THE EARTH

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Higgins presents a marked contrast to La Guma. His writing career developed *after* Irish independence (Higgins was born five years after independence), he eschews overt politics, and his work takes up the indigenization of the Anglo-Irish settler population through religious conversion and ever-increasing bonds (and failures to integrate) to the land itself. *Langrishe, Go Down* is his most famous work and grows from the influence of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. It predates *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* by only six years, and both books have overlapping composition periods. In the novel, Higgins blurs together several Irish landscapes while drawing on a heteroglossic range of competing and contradicting narrative voices. These two qualities—uniquely Irish locales and layer upon layer of narrative perspective—are attributed to Higgins's admiration for and emulation of Joyce,⁶ but the initial drafts for the novel in Higgins's notebooks emphatically root the novel's sense of place in his experiences in South Africa. This is a detail that has, to date, eluded critical studies of his works.⁷ In these early drafts, Higgins's "Irish" sketches are interspersed with observations of the landscapes around him in South Africa and Zimbabwe as well as the populations with which he was in close contact, often with sketches of Irish and African peoples and localities literally recto/verso or on facing pages—in the manuscripts from 1956-1960, Ireland and Africa are intimately entwined.⁸ This reconfigures *Langrishe, Go Down* by emphasizing its international origins and method of composition. These textual bonds between South Africa and Ireland reconstruct critical perspectives on the novel's politics. The novel's origins in South Africa and the importance of these images in its development also suggest a broader cultural context of decolonization and apartheid-era race politics, which inform and run parallel to his novel's representations of the decay and decline of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy following independence in 1922 amidst a deep struggle over how popu-

lations belong to the land and claim indigeneity or belonging.

Higgins traveled through Africa in a marionette troupe in the 1950s and spent two years in South Africa. During this period, he first sketched the materials that became *Langrishe, Go Down* as a novel, and my comments here are based on several weeks working through the extraordinary Higgins fonds of the University of Victoria Libraries. The same materials sit behind the 1960 short story “Killachter Meadow,” which preceded but overlaps with *Langrishe, Go Down*. His composition method focuses on rich epigrammatic jottings that begin to develop into character and landscape sketches, often taken from one place and put to a different use elsewhere. These early expostulations and epigrams are mined or quarried for materials developed more fully in later, larger projects. Moreover, Higgins reuses the notebooks for autobiographical data, such that “Fiction is frequently reinvented as autobiography, and vice versa, until it becomes apparent that Higgins sees little difference between the two” (Murphy 16). As an instance, he recalls acquiring a copy of Djuna Barnes’s

180 *Ryder* while in South Africa, which he had been unable to procure in Europe:

But, lo, an African postman glistening with honest sweat came ambling up the path, taking from his postbag a neat package which he held up and called Bwana Higgings. It was a rare find. Basil Fogarty, a Scot with a bookstore in Port Elizabeth, had traced and procured the unprocurable—an American first edition of Djuna Barnes’ 1938 [sic] novel *Ryder* (Horace Liveright of New York). He had lain his hands on a novel I had been after for years. (Higgins, *Donkey’s* 262)

In this relatively simple example, we see allusions in the novel (to Barnes and *Ryder*) deriving from notes in the South African diaries that become the draft for *Langrishe, Go Down*, and again resurfacing in the autobiography years later. When *Ryder* becomes identified as Helen’s book in the notebook drafts for *Langrishe, Go Down*, the political import of her Ascendary class position and the role of allusion in the novel become clear (Higgins, “Notebook 3.1” n.pag).⁹

A trend emerges in these notebooks. Higgins’s experiences in South Africa are recorded, and his notebooks function much like commonplace books in which he records scraps of other books and poems. These landscape visions of South Africa, his own experiences, and his sketches then become landscape scenes of Ireland, which are later revised into *Langrishe, Go Down* (Higgins 84), such as Killachter Meadow (Higgins, “Notebook 3.1” n.pag).¹⁰ These landscape observations also blur into ethnography, and just as he blurs the Langrishe sisters into the Irish landscape (their colours and lives rising very literally from the land, just as they stand over the grave and ponder the Irish earth they will return to), he also sketches African characters in the same notebooks and draws their imagery from the land, comparing the indigenous amaXhosa populations to the earth itself, the roots embedded in the earth, and the vegetative fruit of the soil (Higgins, “Notebook” 3.1)—the passage, marked 20 July 1960, with a sketch of the African population described as part of the earth, is preceded by and faces the draft of the passage that becomes in *Langrishe, Go Down* the “pond in Killadoon” (169), both of which fall only a page after the draft

of Imogen's remembrances of her love affairs used in the novel and another note to Barnes' *Ryder* as one of Helen's books (Higgins, "Notebook 3.1" n.pag).¹¹ The drafts for *Langrishe, Go Down* and sketches of African indigeneity are literally entangled across the notebooks with the localities and themes of embeddedness bleeding into each other across the pages or across a single page.

Although *Langrishe, Go Down* was first published in 1966, its composition as such began in 1960 based on 1956-60 notebooks and grew out of the "Killachter Meadow" story (Dukes 190; Mahon 72) first published in *Felo de Se* in 1960 (also from the South African notebooks), and its setting is in 1932-1938 Ireland on the cusp of World War II, for which German interests in Ireland as a neutral country and potential point of entry to Britain were strong.¹² Higgins structures the narrative in three distinct periods: 1937, 1932, and then 1938. By 1937, the Langrishe family has fallen deeply into decay, illness, and poverty. In 1932, the Patriarch of the family has recently died, and his daughter Imogen is in a love affair with their German tenant, Otto. The allegorical parallels are clear for the period with references to the Spanish Civil War in the opening section, and Rüdiger Imhof contends that "Otto is the very essence of fascism. Otto comes into Imogen's life in 1932, the same year that Hitler came to power. Otto dominates Imogen, humiliates her and finally drops her aging body when fresh sexual occasion arises," which leads him to further stress "The manner in which Otto despises and oppresses Imogen is comparable to the manner in which fascism regarded Europe" (37). Concluding in 1938, the fall of the family is complete, as is the abandonment by Otto, and the scene is readied for Irish neutrality in the Second World War, yet the Langrishe family has become a part of the locality. By 1966, when the novel was published, much of the political weight of the Langrishe family's position as a part of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy was less intensely felt, and Higgins only identifies them as such twice (90-1). Political opinion of the period had shifted, and the rural imagery does not *overtly* take up political activism with the Great House dominating the rural landscape—similarly, the embeddedness of the Anglo-Irish in the house and the Irish in the land articulates the heritage of colonialism. The Irish Catholic Higgins, however, blurs these divisions: the great house has fallen into decay scarcely a decade after Irish Independence; fifteen years after Independence, the ancient Langrishe family is a virtually dead bloodline in desperate poverty; and any cultural values that had once been inherent in the estate are utterly lost. The simple fact of the family's Ascendancy class does not stir the reader in the same way it would in Joyce or Yeats, and by way of comparison it does not compel the reader as would Afrikaner or Boer landholders or figures of state authority in La Guma.

To extend the point of their integration and Higgins's difference from La Guma, the Langrishe family is buried generation after generation in the cemetery, an image that recurs across the book. Imogen has knowledge of the ancient kings of Ireland to whom Otto refers as her Kings (87), and she is profoundly tied to the land as home. She has become Catholic, and the reader does not learn of the family's position in the Ascendancy until long after their ties to the landscape as a hereditary home are

already well-established in the book. Helen Langrishe, in 1937, in her most sustained scene in the novel, confronts her own future grave, her mother's grave in the Catholic cemetery, as well as her family graves—she does so while in conversation with a local grave digger who expounds on “compulsory tillage” as the way to “halt emigration, the bane of Ireland” (39). His son died in World War I in France, and Helen shakes her head in agreement that the Irish youth should be kept at home rather than sent to fight in another war, anticipating Irish neutrality in World War II and implicitly her loyalty to Ireland rather than Britain. This scene repeats later in the novel as Otto recounts his own injuries during the Great War, which blurs the national lines (and Otto is himself cast as a ginger-haired, green eyed German of uncertain parentage who colonizes the now indigenous former colonizers). As Imhof notices, “there are, in the first and last [sections], repeated references to actual political events during the 1930s, such as the bombardment of Madrid or the final downfall of Austria.... By these means, a political backdrop is established” (Imhof 30). The same indirect expression characterizes Higgins's depiction of the Langrishe sisters in their differing relations to Irish identity and ties to their home on the cusp of a great conflict between their hyphenated Anglo-Irish identities.

This, however, sets the two sisters in contrast with each other, much as Elias Tekwane contrasts against Beukes in *La Guma* (and both contrast against the juxtaposed Afrikaners, Boers, and English South Africans). Imhof is concise in Helen's failings and inability to integrate herself into the postcolonial reality of Ireland despite her posturing over belonging to the locale:

Although she [Helen] has lived in the country all her life, she does not know the “bus-route on this road” (p. 18). Significantly, neither has she been able to adopt an appropriate relationship towards the history of the land (p. 39) and the history of her family.... Cut off from the people, the land, its history and the history of her home, she lastly is constrained to acknowledge that she is likewise cut off from its religion. (31)

As the final proof of her alienation, Imhof returns attention to the tragicomic moment of closure for Helen in the novel, for “her coffin does not fit into the grave, which the gravediggers have dug wide enough and deep enough, but not long enough” (Imhof 32). Helen's attempts at integration fail—the land does not accept her. Vera Kreilkamp also emphasizes the importance of class conflict in Higgins: “Typically the rise of the Catholic middle-class accompanies the decay of the Big House. Higgins's novel focuses on two Anglo-Irish sisters, Helen and Imogen Langrishe, whose purposeless lives reflect the decay of their class; the Langrishe sisters neither work, nor form enduring relationships, nor bear children” (28). The distinction, however, is that Helen's failings as outlined by Imhof do not preclude her sister's falling in status into the church, into the lower class, and into the land. It is also a class conflict depicted from a quarter century remove.

In these respects the degeneration and death of the Langrishe family seem a generation away from representations of the Ascendancy in the decades surrounding Irish Independence, and for the good reason that *they are* a generation apart

in composition and the audience's mind. The power of the Anglo-Irish, however, is already implicit in the opening epigram from Barnaby Rich's *A New Description of Ireland*, which refuses the reader any opportunity to casually set aside the politics of colonialism:

If I should set downe the fluttish and uncleanly observations of the Irifh, as well as of the men, as the Women, but especially of those manners & Conditions whereunto they inure themselves in the remote Places of the Countrey, I might fet downe such unnevent & loathfome Matter, as were unfit for every queafie stomacke to understand of. (Higgins, *Langrishe* n.pag)

This prefaces our perspective on the importance and bias of the Langrishe family's Ascendancy history, which begins to make more sense, especially working in tandem with Otto, who becomes the final, painful love-interest of the last of the family's lineage, resulting in their stillborn child: the death of the bloodline and the race, in effect, and the end of their colonization in their moment of indigenization via Imogen's conversion, class fall, and embeddedness in place.

With regard to class conflict, the Afrikaners in Higgins's autobiography *Donkey's Years* are described as a leisured and cultured class with power based on ownership of the land and the means of production, living amidst plenty while the indigenous populations suffer. The parallels in the notebooks for the novel to the Ascendancy class on this point are compelling, and though Higgins does not emphasize the role of the Langrishe family in the Irish Ascendancy, it remains present and palpable—when the manuscripts are included, it becomes inescapable. Nevertheless, the novel itself is set in a period prior to its composition, and by tracing the death of the Anglo-Irish tradition and heritage, Higgins is, in effect, prophesizing the demise of the National Party and the Ascendancy it represented in South Africa. To return full circle to the example of Djuna Barnes's 1928 novel *Ryder* and its appearance in life, the notebooks, an allusion in the novel, and then as a scene in the autobiography, there is a continuation of the scene previously quoted:

He had laid his hands on a novel I had been after for years... The postman, who knew his place, handed it to his Baas, who handed it to his guest; the old German jaw most resolutely set.

'You must respect our ways.' (262)

The book, the writing, and Higgins's own developing novel *Langrishe, Go Down*, were in effect placed into the hands of the landed gentry, and only then passed to him on condition of respect. In this manner, the opening of *Langrishe, Go Down*, with its Anglo-Irish colonial gaze, finds its origins in the sentiment Higgins described years later in *Donkey's Years*:

The full force of Afrikaner bigotry, the laager mentality in whose language the strong

words were *Voortrekker* (helot), *braai* (bigot), *veld* (patriot), *kaffir* (a racist jibe)... All words were spoken in their language with relish, assurance and familiarity, as of something you could not take away from them; the hard ring to it echoed their innermost convictions: This lind is ours min. (Higgins, *Donkey's* 269)

The same problem with English appears famously in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen Daedalus realizes that he cannot translate the term "tundish" for his English tutor (Joyce 165), although in fact the Irish use of the term derives from English in the first place, which Joyce uses to widely-cited effect. In Higgins' version of this problem, "In plain fact the English he [Otto] spoke was in many respects a foreign language to her [Imogen], its terms of reference obscure to one who had never bothered to read very much beyond E. Philips" (*Langrishe* 153). Notably, Otto's Londoner English confused the Anglo-Irish Imogen, and comparison to La Guma's use of isiXhosa and Afrikaans is hard to avoid.

This is, in effect, the crux of my thesis. Helen Langrishe, the older sister of Imogen, 184 later in 1937 walks the landscape that claims and consumes her. In this winter land, she retreats to her sole room inside the dilapidated Great House: "I live here. The greasy road leads into the village. My village. My Kildrought. I cycled there for groceries 'to be charged for.' What more is there to say. It seems I have lived here all my life and will very likely die here. History begins and ends in me. In me, now, today" (Higgins, *Langrishe* 72-3). In this short moment, Helen stakes her Irishness, beginning with the blunt though dying words "I live here," though she is also ultimately naïve and fails in her claim. This sentiment repeats the haunting sense of ownership, though her deep poverty and debt encourage the reader to recognize this as a sign of longed for belonging rather than possessing: "My village. My Kildrought." With this immersion, she recognizes "History begins and ends in me." This is quite literally true. Her bloodline dies in her generation. As Sam Baneham notes, it is also "a metaphor for the death of a social class and of a colonial order" (172), but the matter does not settle in its first occurrence.

Watching such a scene drafted in South Africa, with images of indigenous African bodies tied to the land itself, and watching such a scene run in tandem with Higgins's autobiography in which landlords dominate an indigenous population in a manner allusively bound to the Ascendancy, this scene reflects the dying Ascendancy in South Africa as well. Helen attempts to bind herself to the land in an extended stream of consciousness passage:

As it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be, world without end. Invasion after invasion; occupation after occupation. Silent mills, bear testimony. Overgrown ruins, bear silent testimony. Round towers beloved of King John, bear testimony. Disused graveyards, bear testimony. Broken monument of the Geraldines, bear testimony. Joe Feeny, bear testimony. History ends in me. Now. Today. (Higgins, *Langrishe* 73-4)

As one of the invaders and occupiers, this moment is Helen Langrishe's transition to identify herself as part of the land in the Republic of Ireland, and her phrase that binds her to the Irish landscape, "world without end," repeats some fifty pages later

with Imogen. Helen fails in her claim, and we have proof of her failed comprehension of Irishness when her coffin cannot fit in the earth (Higgins, *Langrishe* 241). However, Imogen resolves the conflict by falling, going down, and joining the Irish in class, faith, and bond to the land. When Imogen is taking mass and thinking “*Per omnia saecula saeculorum...*and that too was strange...*Saecula saeculorum...*did it mean world without end?” (127), she recuperates her sister’s failure through the repetition of Helen’s incomprehension of the same phrase (73). In Imogen’s moment, she “knelt at the back of the church among poor-class women in shawls and laboring men” (127), and in the page immediately following she asks “did it mean world without end” (126), thereby finalizing her transition and belonging. This scene points to a moment in 1960 when Higgins’ eyes were only loosely considering the end of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, but his gaze was trained carefully on South Africa, a living settler class, and an indigenous identity based on locality.

CONCLUSION: THE LANDED AND THE INDIGENE

The comparison of the two novels in a context of indigeneity reveals how the typical juridical and political processes that permit a challenge to settler colonialism stand in contrast to the indigenous epistemologies and relational ontologies nurtured from the spiritual bond to land. By permitting the two (materialism and the *deus loci*) to co-exist, La Guma and Higgins resist becoming Breckenridge and Appadurai’s deterritorialized “moving targets” (i), and as already noted they resist Said’s description of “exile [as] the unhealable rift... between the self and its true home” (49) nor the “spatial incarceration of the native” (Malkki 28-31). Both La Guma and Higgins show characters deeply tied to indigenous forms of identification, a connection to ancestors, and most particularly embeddedness in the land. However, both also show the same characters with migratory capacities, with Elias relocating to the city without becoming any less indigenous and with the Langrishe family (or at least Imogen) as Anglo-Irish after Irish Independence yet still of their village even while representing the demise of a colonial class. This is a sympathy Higgins’s originary notebooks and other works quarried from them do not extend to Afrikaners. Moreover, for Higgins, the complication that sets him beside La Guma is not only deterritorialization but the fact that the notebooks for his depiction of the decline of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy repeatedly describe or depict indigenous South Africans and Zimbabweans as tied deeply to the land and then transfer these same sentiments or expressions from Africans to the Irish and potentially the falling Anglo-Irish. In one notebook, he will describe and sketch an African subject with short hair like the roots in the land, perhaps unintentionally emphasizing the deep bond to earth expressed by La Guma, and then the same emphasis on place and land develops in the novel’s drafts, often on facing notebook leaves. Regardless of intentions, the effect sets a metaphysical or spiritual context for indigeneity beside a materialist understanding of the class

conflict expressed through settler colonialism. Yet, for La Guma amidst the struggle itself, this embeddedness in land and ancestors can only happen for Elias Tekwane, the amaXhosa organizer, while the mixed race Beukes is instead characterized by continuous alienation from the land expressed through his ceaseless, grueling nomadism. Likewise, the freedom fighters must leave the state and cross the border for guerilla training in Zimbabwe. In contrast, Higgins's post-colonial vision offers a continued critique of the class conflict while suggesting a possible reconciliation through the integration of the Anglo-Irish into the land, faith, and memories of ancestors in Imogen. Even in their demise, the Langrishe family's fall is also their moment of belonging, in a sense finally reconciled in Imogen's Catholicism, class, and eventual bond to place. For La Guma and Higgins, colonial and postcolonial discourses of indigeneity and the class struggle run in parallax, incompatible but in perpetual parallel, and with a pleading potential for reconciliation made possible by the pluralist nature of such engagements.

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NOTES

1. For non-statist alternatives, see Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt's *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World* and Maia Ramnath's *Decolonizing Anarchism*, both of which work against the ready equation of decolonization projects with nationalism or statism.
2. That is, the conflict between cosmopolitan approaches to Native American writing such as Gerald Vizenor's and Arnold Krupat's versus the nationalist stance of Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior.
3. Although it does not directly relate to the matter under discussion, Hunt's precocious contention linking site-specific knowledge calls for serious consideration: "Indigenous knowledge and the work of Indigenous thinkers (scholars, elders, community leaders, activists, community members) contain a wealth of place-specific practices for understanding how categories of being are made possible within diverse Indigenous cultures. So how can Indigenous ways of being and knowing become legitimized within theorizations of ontology, given the ongoing (neo) colonial relations that shape geographic knowledge production?" (Hunt 27). The provocation is that, like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, indigenous knowledge systems and the academic enterprise may be too discomfited for integration, or that mutual engagement will depend upon a level of respect that places the differing knowledge systems and discourses in a symmetrical relationship.
4. As Fields explains in his biography, the Marxist figuration was dominant: "His belief that ultimate recognition depended upon coloured affirmation of the historical role of the African working class shifted explanation and agency away from the murky world of identity politics to more predictable terrain of class analysis and struggle" (*Alex* 226).
5. La Guma's Marxism is both clear in the text and well evidenced in life, such as his position in Cuba after his exile from South Africa and his literary celebration in Russia and in Russian translations.
6. It is also possible that La Guma alludes to Joyce's *Ulysses* during Beukes' protracted shaving scenes at the beginning of the novel and based on his perambulations about the city, much like his established use of Hemingway later in his career (Field, "Across" 214-228).
7. While critics have certainly noticed Higgins's international travels and commented on it, the typical pattern is per Morris Beja's fine article "Felons of Ourselves: The Fiction of Aidan Higgins," in which the language of prisons in *Langrishe, Go Down* is noticed as a part of a larger trend for such imagery

among his other writings, including *Images of Africa: Diary* (1956-60). Hence, even where it appears, Higgins's experiences in Africa are not taken as a central influence on the explorations of his later literary works—the essays of *Aidan Higgins: The Fragility of Form* are replete with references to his time in Africa, but how this shapes *Langrishe, Go Down* remains muted. This parallel between nations in the early stages of the novel entails an expansion of existing scholarship on Higgins.

8. This is most evident in the remarkable third notebook (Higgins, “Notebook 3.1” n.pag).
9. It is also worth noting the “Go Down, Matthew” chapter of Barnes’s *Nightwood* as an influence on Higgins’s title.
10. A problem with dating surrounds the same scene since it is dated 1960 in the notebooks, but Higgins was already receiving feedback on it from Samuel Beckett on 22 April 1958, which ensures its composition in Africa and secures the African influence on both *Langrishe, Go Down* and the short story that preceded it, “Killachter Meadow” in *Felo de Se*.
11. Independent of the work of this article, the plural states of Higgins’s masterpiece (there are major differences between the first and second editions) and the complete notebooks through to corrected ts. states held at the McPherson Library, University of Victoria, all call out for serious scholarly attention. Few books have as complete an archival history in one location as *Langrishe, Go Down*, and in Higgins the allusive vitality of the novel and its apartheid politics only become clear when working through the notebooks prior to the first ts. I am thankful for SSHRC funding that permitted me two years research in the University of Victoria Libraries, during which I spent several weeks exploring and digitizing the Higgins Fonds.
12. For Mahon, Higgins made “his ceremonious debut with a fine short story entitled ‘Killachter Meadow,’ about the decline of, yes, a Big House near Celbridge, County Kildare, a theme taken up at greater length and to memorable effect in his first novel *Langrishe, Go Down* (1966)” (72). On the same theme, Dukes stresses that “The novel is an extended development of the first story, ‘Killachter Meadow’ in the collection *Felo de Se* and, as Higgins has pointed out in his memoirs, the novel is a trickily fictionalized handling of autobiographical materials, materials deployed in the first volume of those memoirs, *Donkey’s Years*” (190). The critical point here is that “Killachter Meadow” and *Langrishe, Go Down* overlap since they draw from the same source materials, though *Donkey’s Years* postdates the archival fonds by seven years. What is not visible without the archival manuscripts, however, is the extent of the African influence on Higgins’s depictions of Ireland in “Killachter Meadow” and *Langrishe, Go Down*.

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