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## ***Gegen deutsches K.Z. Paradies*. Thinking about Englishness on the Isle of Man during the Second World War**

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the intellectual output of the internees held captive as ‘enemy aliens’ on the Isle of Man during the Second World War. Looking at their interactions with local and national knowledge communities, including some Methodist priests who were responsible for introducing the internees to British political culture, it analyses how the social environment of internment created common intellectual experiences, which in turn led members of this involuntary community of displaced German-?：“speaking scholars to form particular conceptions of Englishness in the postwar era. This case study is placed in the context of wider debates about periodisation, the relationship between land-based, oceanic and other site-specific perspectives on the British Isles, as well as the entanglements between liberty and encampment in European and global contexts.

### **Keywords**

Forced displacement, internment, captivity, camps, experience and theory, Second World War, new British history, island studies and intellectual history, local intellectual history, site-specific intellectual history, cultural history of isolation

This paper is concerned with the history of thinking about Englishness in a particular location. The academic study of Englishness, a term I will use here to describe a range of concepts related to ideas about national character, identity, and aesthetic style, has often been prompted by present political crises which pertained to the political relationship between England and Britain, as well as Britain, Europe and the wider world. Such crises included debates about UK accession to the European Economic Community in the 1970s, the 1990s devolution of powers within the UK, preoccupations with the decline of empire, and, currently, Brexit.<sup>1</sup> Among the most obvious points of reference for present discussions of the English national character is the conceptualisation of Englishness during the Second World War, connected to government-sponsored propaganda campaigns such as ‘Keep calm and carry on’ (newly commercialised in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf J. G. A. Pocock, ‘British history: a plea for a new subject’, *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975): pp. 601–24; Peter Mandler, ‘Against “Englishness”: English Culture and the Limits to Rural Nostalgia, 1850–1940’. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 7 (December 1997): 155–75; ; Krishan Kumar, *The Idea of Englishness: English Culture, National Identity and Social Thought* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), 2.

the 1990s), and the speeches of Winston Churchill.<sup>2</sup> Like no other victorious nation except, perhaps, Russia, Britain has built its national narrative around that victory, making it compete with and in some respects outdo the story of empire. Identifying character traits that were supposedly ‘English’ was a central part of that endeavour. Despite the apparent ubiquity of the connection between wartime mobilisation and national stereotyping and self-stereotyping, however, this article argues that there is still much to be learned from the social mechanisms through which ideas of Englishness circulated during the war, particularly beyond the boundaries of national communities.

In his important study of the ‘English national character’, Peter Mandler emphasised how the Second World War witnessed a dual relationship to the idea of Englishness: on the one hand, the rise of patriotic notions of ‘king and country’, and on the other hand, a certain embarrassment, at least in liberal circles, concerning this kind of overt patriotism.<sup>3</sup> Other observers have noted this ambivalence when contextualising one of the most famous wartime essays, George Orwell’s ‘The Lion and the Unicorn’, in which he argued that the ‘gentleness of English civilization’ has always been ‘mixed up with barbarities and anachronisms’.<sup>4</sup> Generally, throughout the mid-twentieth century, the increasing number of foreigners producing works in English in which they discussed the English national character deserves a closer look. Why, at a time of relative decline of publications on Englishness by English authors, did foreign authors begin to offer this type of good on the conceptual market?

At a general level, the growing discourse around Englishness in the twentieth century can be seen as the product of wider migration flows to the English-speaking world, first from Eastern Europe in the wake of the Russian Revolution, then from Nazi-occupied Europe. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1950s, there were a number of acclaimed contributions to the genre in a range of cultural spheres. Perhaps most prominent among them were scholars and artists working in new industries such as radio and film. Paul Cohen-Portheim, an Austrian travel writer, published *England: The Unknown Isle* (1930); G.J. Renier, who had come to Britain after the outbreak of the First World War, and the Belgian Emile Cammaerts, wrote

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<sup>2</sup> Cf., for instance, Andrew Marr’s *The Making of Modern Britain* (BBC 2, 2009); Andrew Marr, *The Making of Modern Britain: From Queen Victoria to VE Day* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2009). Richard Toye, *The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill’s World War II Speeches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven [Conn.]; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 193.

<sup>4</sup> George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (Harmondsworth: Middx Penguin Books, 1988), first published in 1941. For interpretations of this essay in the light of Orwell’s own politics, see Gregory Claeys, ‘Patriotism, and Orwell’s Politics’, *The Review of Politics*, 47:2 (Apr., 1985): 186-211; and Peter Lowe, ‘Englishness in a Time of Crisis: George Orwell, John Betjeman, and the Second World War’, *The Cambridge Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1 September 2009): 243–63.

*The English: are they human?* (1931) and *Discoveries in England* (1930).<sup>5</sup> Still in the 1930s, the Hungarian-born Korda brothers who moved from a range of previous locations in central Europe set up ‘London films’ to make films sympathetic to the soft power of the British empire and to English history, such as the patriotic *Fire over England* (1937) about the English victory over the Spanish Armada, and many films based on Edwardian English fiction.<sup>6</sup> In 1943, another Hungarian, George Mikes, wrote *Hot to be an alien*, a humorous but warm look on English manners and customs. In 1955, the German-born art historian Nikolaus Pevsner gave a series of highly acclaimed lectures on the BBC on ‘The Englishness of English art’, which soon afterwards became a book.<sup>7</sup> Ideas of Englishness produced by non-British authors proliferated in academic scholarship as well. The sociologist Norbert Elias opened up a new field of scholarly research, the sociology of professions, with an historical analysis of British naval power. Geoffrey Elton (born Gottfried Ehrenberg) published *England under the Tudors* (1955). The historian Edgar Feuchtwanger published a biography of Benjamin Disraeli.<sup>8</sup> Also in the 1950s, the Russian-born Boris Anrep created a set of visual mosaics called ‘Modern virtues’ for the National Gallery, which would be more aptly termed ‘English virtues’, since it featured famous personalities from modern British political, cultural and scientific life in their association with virtues such as ‘Defiance’ (Winston Churchill) or ‘Pursuit’ (the astronomer Fred Hoyle).<sup>9</sup>

However, the precise circumstances of the production of such narratives of Englishness call for further inquiry. Why were so many publications on Englishness in the 1950s which praised England's virtues as a haven of liberty, democracy, and the rule of law, as Mandler put it, ‘wheedlingly solicited by Continental supplicants’?<sup>10</sup> This article cannot claim to have provided an exhaustive answer to this question, yet it hopes to offer some insights into this aspect of the social history of the idea of Englishness through a small case study. The common migration background of the above-mentioned authors is only one element of the story. A further distinctive feature of the list above is that the Germans, Austrians and Hungarians

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<sup>5</sup> A fuller list and some interesting reflections on 1930 as a turning point in British interest in foreign perceptions of English character s is available in Peter Mandler, *The English National Character*, 176 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Karol Kulik, *Alexander Korda: The Man Who Could Work Miracles* (London: Virgin Books, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (London: The Architectural Press, 1956). On Pevsner, see especially, Stefan Muthesius, ‘Germanness, Englishness, Jewishness, Scientificness, Popularization?’, in *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (London: Routledge, 2017), 57-73, and Peter Draper, ed., *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (London: Routledge, 2017), passim.

<sup>8</sup> Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party. Conservative Leadership and Organization after the Second Reform Bill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). i

<sup>9</sup> Lois Oliver, *Boris Anrep: The National Gallery Mosaics* (National Gallery London, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Mandler, 197.

among the authors and artists had shared the experience of having been classified and, in most cases, interned as ‘enemy aliens’ during either the First or the Second World War. This article will examine to what extent this internment experience could have provided a setting for thinking about Englishness which influenced subsequent outputs. Most of these authors coming from Germany and Austria-Hungary – Cohen-Portheim, Mikes, Pevsner, Elias, and a range of others -- spent time as British internees on the Isle of Man, where they were exposed to systematic lectures on English and British history, as well as self-guided study.

The internment of civilians as so-called ‘enemy aliens’ in Britain was a wartime practice which was first developed systematically in the First World War but has its roots in British attempts to root out revolutionary sympathies at the time of the French Revolution.<sup>11</sup> During the First World War, the island was transformed from a holiday destination into a site of internment camps for 23,000 men of enemy nationality – mostly Germans, Austrians and Italians. The island’s status as a Crown Dependency demanded some form of contribution to the war effort, but hosting internees also offered a way to compensate for the economic damage ensuing for the island economy due to the war.

During the Second World War, the British government fell back on this precedent, often reflected in terms of bureaucratic continuities in the administrative history of the island, and once again used its relations with a range of Crown Dependencies and Dominions, including the Isle of Man, as well as locations in Australia and Canada, to set up camps for so-called enemy aliens.<sup>12</sup> As in the previous war, British Home Secretary Sir John Anderson was looking for a place ‘sufficiently removed’ from areas of military importance, the Manx Chamber of Trade came up with a suggestion to repeat the experiment. Initially, even though ca. 73 000 foreign nationals were classified in Britain as ‘enemy aliens’, these were to be examined by tribunal and only a small fraction – around 500 – were to be interned; but fears of a ‘fifth column’ emerged after the fall of Norway in 1940, and the policy was extended to a much larger number. It is now believed that about 14,000 civilians – about 80% of them Jews from

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<sup>11</sup> On the history of the Isle of Man as a site of internment in both World Wars, see Richard Dove, ed. *‘Totally Un-English’? Britain’s Internment of ‘enemy Aliens’ in Two World Wars*. Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, 7.2005 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005); John Grimson, *The Isle of Man: Portrait of a Nation* (London: Robert Hale, 2009); Harold Mytum and Gillian Carr, eds. *Prisoners of War: Archaeology, Memory, and Heritage of 19th- and 20th-Century Mass Internment* (New York: Springer, 2013); Connery Chappell, *Island of Barbed Wire: Internment on the Isle of Man in World War Two* (London: Robert Hale, 2005). On civilian internment in the First World War in comparative perspective, see Matthew Stibbe, ‘Civilian internment and civilian internees in Europe, 1914-1920’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 26: 1-2 (2008): 49-81.

<sup>12</sup> At the Isle of Man Public Record Office (IoMPO), I examined especially A 28/1, which includes Defence Regulations (1939), as well as S17/1/2320 and 29749/2/45, the Chief Secretary’s Office on War arrangements.

continental Europe, the majority of them men, but women also – were interned between 1940 and 1946. These civilians classified as dangerous to British national interests in wartime had a different status from prisoners of war (POWs), which meant that they were outside the jurisdiction of the Geneva Convention as well as military supervisions by such organizations as the International Red Cross, even though organisations such as YMCA volunteered to supervise conditions in these camps as well. The government allowed the informal development of barbed wire universities and other cultural initiatives, such as camp newspapers and art exhibitions. There were a total of ten discrete camps on the Isle of Man in the Second World War, spread across different port cities in the island. Most of them were male only, but there were two camps which included women, children, and married couples, each with a slightly different regime of cultural life, as I will discuss in more detail.

What I am interested in is how camp experience might have affected the development of political concepts which circulated in the postwar period. The intellectual lives of those interned as ‘enemy aliens’ in the Isle of Man provide rich material for understanding how ideas can develop over time and in social contexts. My chief hypothesis is that camp experience served as a laboratory in which ideas of Englishness were imposed on forcibly displaced Germans and Austrians in the 1940s and 1950s. Even though many of them had left-leaning sympathies, when it comes to ideas of Englishness, they became the unlikely transmitters of older, Victorian, and often conservative notions of Englishness to postwar Anglophone audiences at a time when ‘indigenous’ authors had long abandoned such tropes. However, as I will also show, this was not the only ‘intellectual consequence’ of the internment experience.

Generally, within European historiography, interest in the cultural history of civilian internment has concentrated on Germany or France, especially the history of DPs (displaced persons) at the end of the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> In this broader framework, for a long time the British case, with its history of internment on the Isle of Man and a few other locations on the mainland, has been something of a niche topic within British historiography on the war. For nearly forty years, account of the Isle of Man by François Lafitte stood alone against the backdrop of broader histories of the Second World War which emerged in the shadow of master narratives as Winston Churchill’s own *History of the English-speaking Peoples*.<sup>14</sup> Then came several moments in which more light was shed on this history. One was in the 1980s when the

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Anna Holian, ‘Displacement and the Post-War Reconstruction of Education: Displaced Persons at the UNRRA University of Munich, 1945–1947’, *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 02 (May 2008): 167-195; Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Winston Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. Bloomsbury Revelations edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). Originally published in 1956.

Home Office archives enabled new research into the subject, which yielded a particularly wide range of discussion of the place of Jews in wartime Britain. One historical account by Ronald Stent even appeared with a cover showing the arrest of an old rabbi and a young man wearing a kippa.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, since the 1990s, scholars began to address in a critical light the experience of particular refugee groups in Britain.<sup>16</sup> The history of civilian internment complicates received accounts of the war as Britain's 'finest hour', and yet does not appear to compromise them to the extent to which, say, the rounding up of Jews and Germans in Vichy France compromises the French memory of the war. In many ways a typical institution of modern warfare, the camp has increasingly been recognised by cultural historians as a framework in which people come into contact with others to create, in the words of Harald Mytum, an 'inward looking world' of their own.<sup>17</sup> Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley have written about the peculiar character of 'captive audiences', looking at British prisoners of war in the Second World War, while Jordana Bailkin has introduced 'encampment' as a category of analysis for modern British history more generally.<sup>18</sup> Connery Chappell has provided a contextualisation of internment in both wars as a way of making sense of the history of the Isle of Man, while more recently, Rachel Pistol has produced a valuable comparative study between British and American internment policies in the Second World War.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, I find not only that the links between the history of internment in the Isle of Man and broader strands of modern British, European, and even global historiography, remain underexamined, but that such a contextualisation and reframing might offer an interesting case study for new, more 'site-specific' approaches to the intellectual history of Englishness.

Drawing on a combination of a fresh look at existing scholarship and new research, I propose that it is possible to examine the history of knowledge in this particular context of

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<sup>15</sup> This enabled research such as that by the Gillmans, Ronald Stent, *A Bespattered Page? The Internment of 'His Majesty's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens'* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1980); Connery Chappell, *Island of Barbed Wire: Internment on the Isle of Man in World War Two* (London, 1984); Gerhard Hirschfeld, ed., *Exile in Great Britain*, German Historical Institute London (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1984); Marion Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1988), David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (eds.), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1994), and others.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Stefan Manz and Panikos Panayi, eds., *Refugees and Cultural Transfers to Britain* (London: Routledge, 2013)..

<sup>17</sup> Harald Mytum, 'Deciphering Dynamic Networks from static Images. First World War Photographs at Douglas Camp', in Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum (eds.), *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 148.

<sup>18</sup> Jordana Bailkin, *Unsettled: Refugee Camps and the Making of Multicultural Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley, 'Captive Audience: Camp Entertainment and British Prisoners-of-War in German Captivity, 1939-45', *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 5:1 (2014), 58-73.

<sup>19</sup> Connery Chappell, *Island of Barbed Wire: Internment on the Isle of Man in World War Two* (London, 1984); Rachel Pistol, *Internment during the Second World War: A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

internment in a way that can address insights from the historiographical debates around ‘new British’ history. These debates have emerged in waves since around the time of the 1973 referendum, which decided in favour of British accession to the European Economic Community, and centre around the question what it might mean to account for Britain’s historical relationship with both Europe, the Commonwealth, and the wider world, in a new critical light. At that time, John Pocock called for new approaches to British history which would account for the subjectivity of Commonwealth societies in an age after empire and also enable a kind of divorce, or at least a separation, of British historiography from the historiography of European nation-states.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent generations of historians remained divided over the interpretation of this call, which has been variously interpreted as a modest plea to consider the Commonwealth as a worthy subject of study, to a radical demand for a new way of linking Britain and the world in the past in a post-national age which would give equal weight to its four ‘national’ kingdoms, to an expectation that Britain ought to engage with its ‘former white world’, as James Vernon put it, perhaps at the expense of other subjects.<sup>21</sup> Independently of Pocock’s call, although often in dialogue with it, in the meantime, a new wave of scholarship linking Britain to the world through an imperial as well as a more ‘transnational’ lens has since emerged.<sup>22</sup>

I believe that a focus on internment on the Isle of Man provides a missed opportunity for understanding the way Britain’s specific ‘oceanic’ identity, the history of different nationalisms in the British Isles, and strands in continental European history, intersect in specific historical crises in a way that is manifest in intellectual history.<sup>23</sup> More recently, the field of intellectual history has come under pressure to think of itself in more global terms, yet how exactly the geographically specific nature of the global might link to the theoretically ‘a-

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<sup>20</sup> Pocock, ‘British history: a plea for a new subject’; see also his restatement of the views in J.G.A. Pocock, ‘The New British History in Atlantic Perspective: An Antipodean Commentary’, *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 490.

<sup>21</sup> For a critique, see David Armitage, ‘Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?’ *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 427; for a defence of Pocock’s project as a non-parochial and critical new imperial history, see Richard Bourke, ‘Pocock and the Presuppositions of a New British History’, *The Historical Journal*, 53:1 (2010): 747-770; and, passim, Tehila Sasson, James Vernon, Miles Ogborn, Priya Satia, and Catherine Hall, ‘Britain and the World: A New Field?’ *Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 4 (October 2018): 677–708, 686.

<sup>22</sup> For the new imperial history and its implication for the study of Englishness, see Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Duncan Kelly, ed. *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Antoinette Burton, *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> John Belchem has indicated that the history of the Isle of Man more generally could be seen in this light, but then did not proceed to do so. See John Belchem, ‘The Little Manx Nation: Antiquarianism, Ethnic Identity, and Home Rule Politics in the Isle of Man, 1880–1918’, *Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 2 (April 2000): 217–40.

territorial' conception of the field remains to be developed.<sup>24</sup> There are studies of *ideas* about spatial order in intellectual history, but not as many explorations of spatial contexts and the particular constraints they offer for ideas.<sup>25</sup> In this context, the situation of the Isle of Man with respect to the cultural and intellectual history of Britain could be seen as offering an opportunity for doing a site-specific study of intellectual history with, nonetheless, transatlantic and continental implications.

The remainder of this paper falls into three parts. The next part provides a general overview of the political and institutional context of internment history as a double-edged experience of both liberty and incarceration. The second part concentrates on camp newspapers as places where the interactions between internees and outsiders are reflected in discourse, with a focus on Manx, English and British culture and history. The third part attempts some generalisations about conceptual formations in the internment context.

### **1. 'Imperium in imperio': internment in the haven of liberty**

Neither an idyll of ancient custom, nor a place for the history of Britain's unfinest hour, the Isle of Man has always been a place of new connections but also of parallel lives.<sup>26</sup> In the twentieth century it was also, I shall argue, a place which allows us to understand the peculiar relationship between intellectual isolation and the production of national and professional identities. As Godfrey Baldacchino, one of the founders of *Island Studies Journal*, put it, islands generally can be 'platforms for the emergence of national identity and for the affirmation of cultural specificity'; islands also have 'innovative forms of sovereignty'.<sup>27</sup> The island provided historians and politicians alike with a foil for discussing anything but its own history. For British politicians of the late Victorian era who were debating the constitutional future of Ireland, the Isle of Man was the land of 'Home Rule', as historian Stephen Walpole had put it; in the 1970s, the island served as a case study of 'devolution'.<sup>28</sup> Even a cursory look

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<sup>24</sup> On new British history, see; on Global Intellectual History, see Samuel Moyn (ed.), *Global Intellectual History* (New York, 2015). See also the authors contributing to Darrin McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds, *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014).; for quantitative approaches, see also Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the discussion in Daniel S. Allemann, Anton Jäger, and Valentina Mann, 'Introduction: Approaching Space in Intellectual History', *Global Intellectual History* 3, no. 2 (4 May 2018): 127–36.

<sup>26</sup> Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 4 'Island Chains', 162–222.

<sup>27</sup> Godfrey Baldacchino, 'Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal', in *Island Studies Journal*, 1:1 (2006): pp. 3–18.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Walpole, *The Land of Home Rule. An Essay on the History and Constitution of the Isle of Man* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893); David Kermode, *Devolution at Work: A Case Study of the Isle of*

at the wartime history of the coverage of the Island in the British press suggests a bifurcated preoccupation, on the one hand, in the liberal press, with internment, and on the other hand, in the more popular press, with the comparative affluence of the island because of its exemption from food rationing and the continuously low taxation even in wartime.<sup>29</sup>

More recently, both island and more broadly, maritime studies have focused on the plural forms of sovereignty and transnational connections between societies. How might such a connected history pan out for an intellectual history of the Isle of Man? Will it revise ‘traditional spatial considerations in world historiography’, as oceanic history supposedly do?<sup>30</sup> What I aim to do now is less ambitious than the demand to go both oceanic and global, criticising ‘methodological nationalism’.<sup>31</sup> In a way what I am advocating is a form of ‘methodological localism’, but of a kind which accounts for the special circumstances of cultural transfer in wartime.

The Isle of Man, a small landmass in the middle of the Irish Sea with the status of a British Crown dependency, is known for a range of different things, depending on who you ask: a site of the TT motorbike races for some; an archaic place where birching persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; one of the ‘Celtic’ connections in the British Isles, shrouded in mists; or, on the contrary, one of Europe’s oldest democracies with its parliament going back to the Viking age, Tynwald; finally, since the 1970s and especially in the rise of the digital economy, it has become renowned as the epitome of neoliberalism and a tax haven specialising in e-gaming. For intellectual historians – and cultural historians more broadly -- two relatively short episodes in the history of this island stand out, which have to do with the island’s history in the two World Wars. During this time, the British government used its relations with the Crown Dependency to set up camps for so-called enemy aliens. Largely to assuage cases of what was then called ‘melancholia’, they licensed the informal development of barbed wire universities and other cultural initiatives, such as camp newspapers and art exhibitions, in which a certain amount of ‘fraternization’ with the local population was allowed.

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*Man* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1979), and, more recently, *Offshore Island Politics: The Constitutional and Political Development of the Isle of Man in the Twentieth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001)..

<sup>29</sup> Cf. ‘The truth about the Isle of Man “paradise”: Two eggs and bacon for breakfast and 2s6d income tax’, *The Sunday Express*, 16 November 1941.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram, eds., *Oceanic Histories* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, ‘Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology,’ *International Migration Review* 37 (2003): 576-610; Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées,’ *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte/Cahiers d’Histoire des Littératures Romanes* 14 (1990): 2.

In terms of public opinion, there were two turning points in public opinion about internment, both in 1940: one, immediately after the German occupation of Norway in June 1940, which made the threat of internal ‘quislings’ a more real danger; and the other, less than a month later, when the SS *Arandora Star*, on which internees from the Isle of Man were being transported even further, to different locations in Canada, was sunk when the ship hit a German torpedo. The doubly tragic fate of these internees, most of whom had fled Nazi-occupied Europe, became a particular focus among a range of pressure groups who demanded the release of the remaining prisoners using a range of pressure channels, from debates in Parliament to informal communication networks.<sup>32</sup> Around 120,000 letters a week were delivered into the internment camps, which, as the *Manchester Guardian* relayed from the commentary of an MP, “gives you an idea of the number of friends these people have, and all their friends seem to be writing to the Government.”<sup>33</sup> Leading public voices against the policy included the Bishop of Chichester, who was in contact with the émigré-founded Free German League of Culture in Great Britain.<sup>34</sup> Other pressure groups included Jewish, Christian, a range of non-denominational welfare organisations, as well as a number of associations of exiled national groups including the Czechs, Germans and Austrians, and the High Commissioner of Refugees.<sup>35</sup> One particularly prominent pressure group could be described as founded on grounds of professional solidarity, and was formed on the initiative of Lord Beveridge and his circle of progressive reformers. The Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, which coordinated an effort to write letters in support of individual internees, demanded rethinking the entire category of internment.<sup>36</sup> The disparate character of these organisations only highlights the stark contrast between the supposedly clear-cut status of ‘enemy alien’ from a governmental point of view, and the widely divergent identification of this group in civil

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<sup>32</sup> See File Reports from Mass Observation, ‘Public Opinion and Morale, 1939-42’, Box 1, 1234, 1278, 1795; Debates in both Houses of Parliament on 6 August 1940. See also letters to the Editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, e.g. Letter by Mary Hills, 28 August 1940; Letter by F.E. Koch, 25 June 1941; articles including ‘Boy, Canada: Father, Australia’, *Daily Mirror*, 7 August 1940; ‘More aliens to be released: but policy of general internment to stand’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1940, 4. See also HO 144 21254/700450/13 and 19, FO 916 2580, folio 50. For an overview of government, MI5 and MI6 responses to public opinion, see Peter and Leni Gillman, *‘Collar the Lot!’: How Britain Interned and Expelled Its Wartime Refugees* (London ; New York: Quartet Books, 1980), esp. chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Italian dies for Britain’s sake’, *Daily Mirror*, 16 April 1941.

<sup>34</sup> On fears regarding the Bishop’s visit to Douglas, see ‘Manx Attack on Bishop’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1940, 7.

<sup>35</sup> For a full list of organisations working in support of internees and lobbying against internment, see François Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (London: Libris, 1988), 5. See also Gerhard Hirschfeld, ed. *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler’s Germany* (Leamington Spa/Warwickshire: Berg [u.a.], 1984).

<sup>36</sup> See Esther Simpson and R. M. Cooper, *Refugee Scholars: Conversations with Tess Simpson* (Leeds: Moorland Books, 1992), and Jeremy Seabrook, *The Refuge and the Fortress Britain and the Flight from Tyranny* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

society at large. Despite the differences in the make-up of these solidarity groups, there were essentially two lines of arguments which were used in the context of these debates. One argument went along the lines of highlighting the low degree of danger posed by these, mostly Jewish, internees to the British war effort, and underlined, on the contrary, the danger for their own life which might result from a possible attack of Germany on the Isle of Man. The other line of argument concentrated on the reputational damage which the practice would signify for Britain as a nation. As one MP, Victor Cazalet, put it then, the practice was ‘totally un-English’ because it deprived civilians of liberties which they had supposedly sought by fleeing to Britain. By endorsing this policy, the government ‘have given some material to the German broadcasters as regards conditions in this country and the fact that we are now starting to pursue the Nazi policy of interning every Jew in the country.’ In conclusion, Cazalet, said: ‘Frankly, I shall not feel happy, either as an Englishman or as a supporter of this Government, until this bespattered page of our history has been cleaned up and rewritten’.<sup>37</sup>

Rather unusually, given wartime conditions of censorship even in democratic states, in 1940, not long after the Arandora star incident, the British government proceeded to commission just that history in which the story would be ‘cleared up’ – with a quotation from Cazalet printed prominently at the start of the Introduction.<sup>38</sup> For forty years, the resulting book by a young Oxford graduate, François Lafitte, published in a special series by Penguin, remained the standard account of the episode, and one that presents the British policy with remarkably open criticism as a ‘lamentable study of muddle and stupidity’.<sup>39</sup>

What helped keep the story of internment in the Isle of Man separate from general accounts of British history was that it was not one of the ‘British Isles’ but, as a Crown Dependency, like the Channel Islands, occupies a middle ground between colony and metropole. Since the First World War, the emergency powers covering Britain had to be adapted in the Manx context reflecting this dual status. The Emergency Powers Defence Bill, which was drafted in 1938, just before the Munich agreement deferred the war, was circulated to the Manx authorities for proofreading. The redacted versions reveal that colonial blueprints were used to draft the Manx extension of the bill, in which the powers are extended to

a) the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands

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<sup>37</sup> MP Victor Cazalet in a House of Commons debate on 10 July 1940. Hansard, volume 362.

<sup>38</sup> Lafitte himself in the introduction to his book, *The Internment of Aliens* (London: Penguin, 1940), did not speak about the official commissioning process which led to his research and publication of his book. This was detailed later in Peter and Leni Gillman, ‘Collar the Lot!’: *How Britain Interned and Expelled Its Wartime Refugees* (London ; New York: Quartet Books, 1980), xi.

<sup>39</sup> Lafitte, *Internment* (1988), 9.

- b) Newfoundland or any colony
- c) to any British protectorate
- d) to any territory in respect of which a Mandate of the League of Nations has been accepted by His Majesty, and is being exercised by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and
- e) (to the extent of His Majesty's jurisdiction therein) to any other country or territory being a foreign country or territory in which for the time being His Majesty has jurisdiction.<sup>40</sup>

The list of territories included thirty-seven geographical entities ranging from Aden and Barbados to Ceylon and Cyprus, to Palestine, Uganda and Zanzibar.

This colonial context is not only jurisdictional but also reflects a longer cultural preoccupation with anxiety of domination and difference exhibited by Manx authors. "We are fast becoming Anglicised, owing to the great influx and rush of English visitors"<sup>41</sup>

In the period around 1900, Manx residents were becoming anxious about their involuntary Anglicisation. Local lore would soon be all but forgotten, and yet it was crucial to the Manxmen to state their independence.

Albert Edward Lamothe, a clerk of the Peel Magistrates' Court and also a freelance folklorist.

In the centre of the British Isles, midway between England, Ireland, and Scotland, dropped, as it were, in the middle of three great countries, Nature has planted the Isle of Man, which, although an integral portion of the United Kingdom, enjoying many advantages in common with the British. Empire, is yet an imperium in imperio [...] possessing a species of Home Rule, an autonomy under the Crown, and a separate Manx Church. But it never was entirely independent.

Just as his own family history was connected to the maritime location of the island, its links to privateering, Lamothe showed how the island's unique intellectual culture was indebted to other places --- and yet developed separately from it. He was the descendant of a French surgeon who had come to the Isle of Man in 1760, aboard a privateer brig. The study of folklore itself – a study of peculiarity but in multiple contexts. In fact the pursuit of Folklore studies in Europe had been first popularised in England, where a Folklore society had been founded in 1883. But Lamothe also points to two other kinds of connected peculiarities on the island. One is the history of Nonconformism. Both Quakers and Methodists were prominent here. One Methodist priest, Reverend John Quine, produced his own history of the island in 1911.<sup>42</sup> Manx

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<sup>40</sup> IoMPO, S17/1/2345 29749/20/2 (F1), Emergency Powers Defence Bill.

<sup>41</sup> A. E. Lamothe, *Manx Yarns. Witty, Wise, and Otherwise* (Douglas, Isle of Man: The Manx Sun Ltd, 1905).

<sup>42</sup> Rev. John Quine, *The Isle of Man* (1911).

Methodism thrived particularly in the period from 1775-1851. But seen in another light, nonconformism was actually a source of connection with England, particularly, the communities in the Northern cities such as Liverpool, which historians such as E.P. Thompson have examined as quintessential elements of what makes the English working class English.<sup>43</sup> A second source of interest for Manx intellectual history is the history of its special legal regimes.<sup>44</sup>

These anxieties about Manx peculiarity and its gradual erosion through Anglicization heightened significantly in the course of the twentieth century. From the Manx perspective, then, the fear of Anglicization was then further coloured by a fear of being exposed to German attack by being forced to house potential Nazis who would facilitate a German occupation on the island.

The ‘enemy aliens’ were subjects of enemy states suspected to be a danger to Britain, but who had originally come to Britain as a political haven fleeing Nazi and fascist rule on the continent. This situation gave rise to an intellectual community with very peculiar modes of communication and interaction with the wider world. Its isolation and monitoring by various authorities enables a detailed and granular understanding of the way various kinds of information can be processed to form ideas or concepts, but also the multiple and divergent paths that such conceptual formation can take even from common roots.

## **2. The Isle of Man and the idea of Englishness**

As early as 1941, the Imperial War Museum began discussions to initiate the collection of camp newspapers for their holdings on the history of the war.<sup>45</sup> Two of them, the *Onchan Pioneer* and the *Pevenil Guardsman*, had a total of 47 and 129 issues respectively. The analysis in this section is mostly based on the *Onchan Pioneer*, a publication which was associated with the internment camp at the town of Onchan just north of the main port of the Isle of Man, Douglas, and ceased publication in 1941; and *Sefton Review*, which included a book review section linked to the camp library in Douglas. There is also further evidence of active ‘Anglicisation’ through the camp context in the camps for women and youth at Port Erin,

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<sup>43</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963).

<sup>44</sup> Kermode, D. G. *Offshore Island Politics: The Constitutional and Political Development of the Isle of Man in the Twentieth Century*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001. The Labour Party and reform. Samuel Norris during World War I, Angela Kneale and others in the aftermath of World War II.

<sup>45</sup> The National Archives (TNA), HO 215/437. 1941. Imperial war museum discussion on collection of camp newspapers.

largely through memoirs which are held in manuscript form at Manx Heritage. In 1941 and in 1945, the YMCA inspected the camps in the Isle of Man, leaving some reports now accessible at Kew alongside Home Office documents.<sup>46</sup> Other materials covering the camp include correspondence between the War office and the government of the Isle of Man held in Douglas.<sup>47</sup>

In the relatively short period of its existence, nearly exactly a year, the *Onchan Pioneer* reflected in detail the proceedings at the informal ‘Popular University’ which internees had set up at the camp. There was also a separate youth initiative for education, since the camp at Onchan included a number of refugees who arrived there as teenagers. Before 1941, internees were most strictly prevented from accessing information from the outside world via newspapers or radio and relied almost exclusively on word of mouth from new arrivals, or external lecturers who came to address them in the internment context. Contributors to this newspaper, which by law had to be published in English to be accessible to camp censors, also exhibited a high degree of reflexivity regarding their own linguistic evolution as they developed gradual mastery of English but ended up with a pigeon language between German and English which, in allusion to Onchan, they labelled ‘Onsch’.<sup>48</sup> A key characteristic of the so-called Popular University was that, despite the high density of academics among the internees, it was not led by either of them but by two comparative mavericks: the artist and adventurer known as Jack Bilbo, and Heinz Kiewe, who was a specialist in the history and practice of knitting and subsequently published a range of books on the subject. In 1940, the university, which met in the public gardens of an enclosed area behind some Douglas boarding houses, had registered 600 individual lessons attended by a total of 16250 listeners.<sup>49</sup> The listeners, as the internees of this camp, were all male, and aged between 16 and 60.

In one of the early issues of the newspaper, the editors wrote a statement which offers an insight into the internees’ own approach to the functions of culture in the camp as a coping mechanism with the injustice as well as inconvenience of internment. One key feature of the university was that it was born from the spirit of cabaret and humour, since the organisers had previously organised a Cabaret at a transit camp, Kempton Park racecourse in Surrey, where they were gathered prior to being shipped out to the Isle of Man. Still in that transit camp, after the cabaret, ‘serious lectures in English’ were started as well. But the idea of a camp university

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, HO 215/57 and HO 215/107.

<sup>47</sup> Isle of Man Public Record Office, S17/1/2345 29749/20/2 (F1) Chief Secretary’s Office War arrangements. Emergency Powers, and passim.

<sup>48</sup> *Onchan Pioneer*, 6 April 1941.

<sup>49</sup> *Onchan Pioneer*, first issue, 27 July 1940, 6.

came on the third day of the internment of what the editors called ‘1500 civilized Europeans’, a number which describes the internees of Onchan camp alone. The principles of the university were quite unlike those of any established academic institutions outside captivity:

The Popular University does not agree with the illusion of leadership, of primadonnas, of paid jobs, of business inside the camp.

If therefore we talk of spiritual leaders we mean those people who come forward on their own impetus without charge, without humbug and without blackmail; who come forward to organize others into a bond of friendship for the sake of all.

Whilst groupleaders and houseleaders, petitioners and egoists [sic] lost nerves and time in hopeless struggle with senseless paragraphs, others went to lectures and strengthened their spirit by hearing and by understanding what great people – by chance interned with them in the same camp – had to tell them.<sup>50</sup>

From the records of the camp newspapers, it becomes clear that the internees speak of themselves in a vocabulary which includes words such as ‘refugees’, ‘internees’, or ‘Europeans’, as well as ‘Jews’ – since there was a predominant number of Jewish expatriates from the continent among the enemy aliens – but never, of course, as Germans or Austrians, which was how many of them would have identified themselves previously. Their reflexivity is best captured through the humorous refrain of a cabaret song which was later attributed to Norbert Elias, the now famous sociologist:

Ich weiss, man tat hier fuer uns sehr viel  
Was war schon York, Huyton, Press Heath?  
Es sind Douglas, Ramsay, Onchan und Peel  
Gegen deutsches K.Z. Paradies,  
Das Home Office warf sogar fuer uns an  
Die White Paper red tape machine.  
Wir sitzen im Stacheldraht –  
x-tausend Mann  
Trotz zwei Dutzend Kategorien.<sup>51</sup>

[I know, they did a lot for us here  
What’s to say of York, Huyton, Press Heath? [the names of transit camps on the mainland]  
For Douglas, Ramsay, Onchan and Peel [sites of internment on the Isle of Man]  
Are, in comparison with the German Concentration Camp, Paradise!  
The Home Office even turned on  
The White Paper red tape machine.  
We sit here behind barbed wire –  
x-thousand men  
Despite a dozen categories.]

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<sup>50</sup> *Onchan Pioneer*, 23 August 1940, 3-4.

<sup>51</sup> *Onchan Pioneer*, 16 March 1941.

They also referred humorously to the classification of threats which the British government had set up initially to distinguish between enemy aliens who are enough of a threat to warrant internment and those who are not. In the eyes of the university organisers, their lectures were for ‘people who were out to gain new knowledge bridged the gap between B and C classes, religious sentiments, political parties, Jews of the East and Jews of the West.’ They called it without hesitation a “Ghetto of intellect”.<sup>52</sup>

Among a range of subjects, the courses in the popular university covered British culture and history. While most other subjects were covered by the internees, those related to the history and culture of Britain were often handed over to visitors: Manx Reverend John Duffield in Onchan and, in Port St Marry, Methodist Harry Johnson, spoke to the internees about subjects such as Wordsworth’s poetry, and what was called the ‘English point of view’, but also on local Manx history and customs;<sup>53</sup> and an English novelist who was known as a science fiction writer, Olaf Stapledon, who was employed by the War Office to lecture to troops as well as internees across Britain, gave lectures on the British constitution and the history of democracy<sup>54</sup>, while a Mr Hughes lectured on ‘English humour in poetry’.<sup>55</sup> Alongside a master narrative of Britain, internees were also exposed to accounts of Tynwald, a small mound near the town of Douglas where every 5 July the laws of the island were proclaimed, supposedly in continuation of an old Viking ritual. John Duffield, the Methodist priest, reproduced in his lectures a version of Manx history which he had written in a magazine for his Manx parishioners in the interwar period:

It is customary to speak of the assembly at Westminster as “The Mother of Parliaments,” but that Manx gathering [...] is older than Westminster. For over a thousand years the free people of the island have met together for the proclamation and ratification of their laws. Tynwald Hill, with its soil from the ancient parishes, is a symbol of the freedom and the antiquity of the island kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

Still at the *Onchan Pioneer*, the German Quaker Richard Ullmann wrote a lengthy piece analysing what he believed to be quintessential about British attitudes to history and future through the eyes of a much-quoted speech by Benjamin Disraeli:

Still, if ever Europe by her shortsightedness falls into an inferior and exhausted state, for England there will remain an illustrious future. We are bound to Communities of the NEW WORLD and those great States which our own plenting [sic] and colonizing

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Governor among the Aliens’, *The Camp*, 6 September 1940. In Pistol, ‘Enemy alien’, 43n26.

<sup>54</sup> Cf, Robert Crossley, *Olaf Stapledon: Speaking for the Future* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 299.

<sup>55</sup> *Onchan Pioneer*, 6 April 1941, 159-63.

<sup>56</sup> John Duffield, *Kirk Christ Rushen of the Isle of Man* (Port Erin: Quine and Cubbon, 1935), 7.

energies have created, by ties and interests which will sustain our power and enable us to play as great apart [sic] in the times yet to come as we do in these days and we have done in the past. And therefore ... I say it is for Europe, not for England that my heart sinks.<sup>57</sup>

A study of the book review section of *Sefton Review*, the camp newspaper from neighbouring Sefton Hotel in Douglas, shows a very scant collection of relevant books on the subject of English or British history or culture. Among other books, it included Ian Hay, *Pip*; Robert Graves, *Lawrence and the Arabs*; André Marois, *The Silence of Colonel Bramble*, which, as the review put it, was considered ‘by many to be the best composite sketch showing what the English gentleman at war is like’ – a book which itself covered the history of the First World War; *Britain* by Mass Observation. It also included a book on the language of sailors, William W Jacobs, *Many Cargoes*. ‘Miscellaneous yarns in sailors’ language, excellent stores full of wit, humor and sarcasm.’<sup>58</sup> Other camp newspapers, such as *The Camp*, reported a dearth of books, which, unlike POW camps, were not administered centrally. At Hutchinson camp in Douglas, some 7,600 volumes were available, which an estimated 60% of internees had used at some point during internment. However, many of them complained about the lack of decent literature as a key aspect of their internment experience.<sup>59</sup> In January 1941, newspapers were allowed into camps, however, which changed the experience of internees significantly. The YMCA also took charge of administering the provision of books in this context.<sup>60</sup>

Peter Mandler, whose own historical periodization of Englishness centred on a body of sources chiefly made up of ‘works in which the English tell themselves in public who they are’, has charted the historical evolution of ideas of Englishness from high Victorian fashions for ‘Teutonism’ to a competition between accounts of Englishness which are located variously in England’s Celtic or Anglo-Saxon past. This gives a compelling explanation for the success of the historian J.R. Seeley’s paradigm of a new imperial vision of England as a “now pre-eminently a maritime, colonising and industrial country” [Seeley’s phrase] which appealed to liberals and conservatives alike.<sup>61</sup> The picture which emerges from the camp provisions (and self-provisions) in English history and culture is one of a Victorian substitution of Britain with England; British and English are used interchangeably, in a Seelyean mold, as discussed by Morefield and Bajji in this volume; there was also a strong link between liberty, Englishness,

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<sup>57</sup> Richard Ullmann, ‘Die Refugeefrage in England’, *Onchan Pioneer*, 27 July 1940, 3.

<sup>58</sup> *Sefton Review*, 25 November 1940, 241.

<sup>59</sup> *The Camp*, 14 January 1941. Cited in Rachel Pistol, fn 74.

<sup>60</sup> HO 215/349. YMCA reports on books distributed to POWs and internees.

<sup>61</sup> Mandler, pp. 100-114.

and empire. The only notable difference to these rather canonical visions of Englishness was the presence of local Manx history with its rival narrative of liberty through the history of Tynwald.<sup>62</sup> Yet, as Mandler and others have indicated, particularly since the 1930s, the British discussion has been influenced by perceptions of foreigners as well. One might also add that ‘English’ ideas of Englishness ought to be further complicated not only by the Irish, Scottish, or Welsh identities of their authors – most clearly, Mandler himself does this by discussing Edmund Burke; but also with reference to smaller nations of the British Isles.

The internees were exposed to a peculiar mix of local and national knowledge communities, and the chief connection to British political culture happen with the mediation of Methodist and Quaker clergy.

### **3. Internment experience and the conceptual formation of Englishness**

In their memoirs, several internees testified to the peculiarity of what Michael Pollack has termed the ‘concentration experience’ – the shared fate of people who have been interned in camps.<sup>63</sup> In this concluding section, I would like to reflect how this experience might shed light on conceptual formation in this context. The experience of internment as a framework for cultural or intellectual history has been largely the remit of social historians or biographers, especially those who are interested in non-military aspects of the war.<sup>64</sup> The historical study of Englishness, particularly scholarship influenced by the new imperial history or recent approaches in cultural history, has so far not accounted for it.

In the British case, I would argue, the ‘concentration experience’ sharpened a sociological gaze on the present, with its desire to classify different types of mentality and perception. Like other forcibly displaced and exiled people, the internees had to rely on memory and recollection over exploratory forms of referencing, which gave rise to a great amount of abstraction and generalisation. Thus Nikolaus Pevsner, for instance, charted his *Outline of European architecture* during internment when he did not have access to books. In interviews and letters, the sociologist Norbert Elias also reflected on the experience of

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<sup>62</sup> Mandler, *The English National Character*, 5. See also Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire*.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Pollack, *L'expérience concentrationnaire* (Paris, Métailié, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> Indicative examples include, for the United States: Ron Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College: Reeducating German POWs in the United States during World War II* (Princeton, 1995); France: Denis Peschanski, *La France Des Camps: L'internement, 1938-1946* (Paris : Gallimard, 2002); for Germany: Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, eds. *Kriegsgefangene Des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Gefangennahme, Lagerleben, Rückkehr: Zehn Jahre Ludwig Boltzmann-Institut Für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung* (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 2005); for Britain in global contexts: Gillian Carr and H. C. Mytum, eds. *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity behind Barbed Wire* (Routledge, 2012).

internment as a factor for his work.<sup>65</sup> After the end of the Second World War, Norbert Elias published an article called ‘Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession’, a first of an intended series of studies which came out in the *British Journal of Sociology* in 1950.<sup>66</sup> Elias’s first piece of writing after internment, the article on the British naval profession from 1950, constituted a shift away from his earlier work on German and French society, but not one that openly acknowledged his own ambivalent acquaintance with Britain. The aim in that article was to ‘make macrostructures visible through microstructures’.<sup>67</sup> In this case, the macrostructure was the British Empire, the microstructure, the naval profession. ‘How could a gentleman become a tarpaulin without losing caste, without lowering his social status?’, he asked. The naval officer corps consisted of nobles and gentlemen bourgeois, also known as tarpaulins. In order for the navy to expand both in the military and the commercial sectors, Elias discovered, ‘there must be a mixture in the Navy of Gentlemen and Tarpaulins’ (Elias 1950: 309). It was through the social and psychological integration of skills and attitudes associated with nobles and craftsmen that the British Empire had expanded. Only the first, more abstract, piece was published in Britain. Exceeding the remit of a study of the professions, this article took the view that Britain’s more meritocratic navy, compared to its rivals, guaranteed the success of its empire.

There is also a second, unpublished essay, however, which complicates this otherwise very pro-British story. In the unpublished draft to the second article, Elias explores the conflict through two personas of the Elizabethan era, Francis Drake (as emblematic ‘tarpaulin’) and Thomas Doughty (emblematic for the gentlemen). In this article, only published in the Dutch journal *De Gids* in 1977, the Atlantic (notably, Patagonia), becomes the site where the conflict of hierarchies gets fought out to the last. Doughty, who was unwilling to recognise Drake’s superiority in rank (which had been backed back home by the empress herself), was convicted of treason and court-martialled. Here, the Atlantic, in an interesting analogue to the story of Captain Cook, once more becomes the sight of a reconfiguration of justice. As a sociological fact, naval officers were a philosophical impossibility, as Pepys expressed: among the officers,

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<sup>65</sup> Rotman, David. ‘Trajectoire intellectuelle et expérience du camp : Norbert Elias à l’île de Man’. *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 52–2, no. 2 (2005): 148. Dunning, Eric, and Jason Hughes. *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology: Knowledge, Interdependence, Power, Process*. London, UK : New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rhmc.522.0148>.

<sup>66</sup> Norbert Elias, ‘Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1:4 (Dec., 1950), 291-309.

<sup>67</sup> René Moelker, ‘Norbert Elias, maritime supremacy and the naval profession: on Elias’ unpublished studies in the genesis of the naval profession’, in *British Journal of Sociology*, 54:3 (September 2003) pp. 373–390.

‘the seamen were not gentlemen and the gentlemen not seamen’.<sup>68</sup> In sum, it was neither the seaman nor the gentleman, but the middle between the two, the tarpaulin, who became the driving force of British imperial expansion.

Elias’ own thoughts on the ambivalence of his camp experience were supported by the example of interwar Indian-Irish writer Aubrey Menen, whose 1947 novel *The Prevalence of Witches*, who satirises the utilitarian tradition of thought set in the imaginary Indian location of Limbo (based, in turn, on Aldous Huxley’s 1920 novel, *Limbo*). Both works expose the inner corruption of Europe’s discourse of the upper classes and nobility through short, poignant conversations. Elias cites one of them at length:

“I shall send you books so that your children can read them.”

The headman said, " Thank you for your gift ", and raised his hands in salute as one must do whenever anyone offers you something in Limbo. But then he dropped his hands and said with a touch of impatience, " Is not that like the man who gave the village a tiger and then gave the village a gun to shoot it with ? "

A roar of approval . . . came from his listeners. " We have no books and so we do not need to read." From Aubrey Menen, *The Prevalence of Witches*, p. 94.

The point of the analogy, for Elias, was that there was no utilitarian explanation for professions like the naval profession; rather, they emerged and developed in the form of trial and error, like civilisation itself, in a form that was beyond good and evil, like giving a tiger together with the shotgun, ‘experienced craftsman’ and ‘military gentleman’ (294). Another former internee, Otto Neurath, argued in a paper published just after his release from internment that it was in the English character to shy away from the extremes of obedience to authority or anarchy prevalent on the Continent. The English, he argued, ‘neither rule nor obey’.<sup>69</sup>

Conceptual formation occurred in a grey zone between ‘serious’ and in ‘humorous’ contexts, often in parallel, in ways which mirrored the two central cultural institutions of the camps, the Cabaret and the University. The British postwar pop artist Eduardo Paolozzi, who had been interned on the Isle of Man, claimed another fellow internee, Kurt Schwitters, as a

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<sup>68</sup> S. Pepys, *Naval Minutes*, ed. by J. R. Tanner (London: Navy Records Society, 1926), 119.

<sup>69</sup> Otto Neurath, ‘International Planning for Freedom’, *New Commonwealth Quarterly* (April 1942), 281-292; (July 1942), 23-28.

key influence for his early 1950s work BUNK which used contemporary collages from the colourful and joyful 1950s popular press but blended them with uncanny images of war planes and other ‘uncomfortable’ reminders of recent experience.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, it is important to note that Englishness was, of course, not the only national concept which emerged from the camps. Some scholars found interest in the local Manx history, integrating it within the wider European context of Viking rule, while others contributed to a more cosmopolitan form of science.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. The idea of Englishness after the Second World War

Throughout its history, the notion of Englishness was tied to ideas of democracy and anti-despotism which established the close proximity between ‘Englishness’ and ‘liberty’, as Thomas Jones’ article shows. Because the English were so apt at securing their own liberty, they were also expected to provide a secure haven for those fleeing political persecution elsewhere – even though, as Anne Schult has argued, this was not always the case: in the twentieth century, above all, those escaping the reach of Nazi government and occupation. By the twentieth century, several competing notions of ‘Englishness’ existed alongside each other. First, the republican and Whig notion of ‘liberty’, which had evolved from a Tacitean spirit of resistance to tyranny to modern ideas of democratic self-government. Englishness came to be associated with monarchical abuse of power, to the notion of an ethnically grounded, potentially globally reaching imperial superiority.<sup>1</sup> Notions of Englishness have emerged in a range of discourses and genres, such as humorous travel writing, parliamentary and other political debates, literary fiction, poetry, political theory, the prose of journalists and of private letter writers, through radio broadcasting and TV, etc.. They have been articulated in different languages, including English, and also in visual form, for example, in painting and through the architecture and iconography of public buildings.

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<sup>70</sup> Paolozzi BUNK. Robin Spencer (Ed): *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writings and Interviews*: ‘The Critic as Artist: 1987. “Sculpture and the Twentieth Century Condition,” Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 272 Schitters included in 1944 exhibition “The World of Imagination” at Jack Bilbo’s Modern Art Gallery in London.

<sup>71</sup> Archaeologist Gerhard Bersu and his partner, both internees, were allowed to undertake digs for the Society of Antiquaries during their internment which significantly expanded the understanding of the Isle of Man and its position at the time of the Vikings. Other intellectuals contributed to British public life not through ideas of Englishness but through work on more ‘cosmopolitan’ aspects of science, such as statistics or mathematics, as in the case of Sir Carl Moser or Hermann Bondi. For his papers, see Manx National Heritage Archives, IM 147 MS 09865. See also Chappell, *Island*, 97-98.

The political study of Englishness has always been embedded within the historiography on empire, war, and conflict, whether it is linking Joan of Arc's question 'Does God hate the English?' to the Hundred Years' War, the impact of wartime propaganda in the twentieth century on ideas of Englishness, or the new work on the Anglosphere and Greater Britain.<sup>72</sup> But in these contexts, historians of political thought – unlike cultural historians like Peter Mandler -- have been generally more interested in concepts to which ideas of Englishness were linked – notions such as the 'ancient constitution', 'liberty', 'empire', or 'democracy' – than Englishness itself.<sup>73</sup> The local perspective might suggest ways of reversing the focus by asking how exactly Englishness came to be attached to these notions around the time of the war.

Thinking is a social process, comprising personal reflections on ideas and experiences. As such it feeds off impressions, conversations with, and ideas of others, and occurs in a variety of institutional settings. There is a difference in focus between studying ideas and concepts which are more fully developed by individual or collective authors in the form of papers, books, or other authorised statements; and trying to understand the more fluid process itself by which people exchange ideas, share observations, record sometimes short-lived and underdeveloped commentary, or experiment with new cultural practices in response to an unexpected situation. Several newspapers which were produced by internees in the Isle of Man camps, reflected the social and cultural life in the camps.

A key aspect of this 'concentration experience' was the entrenchment of canonical approaches to culture within this context which, outside the camp experience, may well have become superseded. In the camp context, a largely Victorian, or, more precisely, Seelyan' conception of Englishness with concepts of imperial power and liberty was imprinted upon an involuntary intellectual community. While it was internally diverse, on the whole the active members of this community who had left a paper record by getting involved in the camp newspaper or publishing subsequently were left-leaning, often with a background in activism in social democratic organisations on the continent. Even in camp settings, the control of content does not predetermine the evolution of ideas. Nonetheless, it constrains the range of ideas available and affirms a largely canonical vision of Englishness which was closer to the

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<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, Colls, Robert, and Philip Dodd, eds. *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, 2nd ed (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) (first ed. 1986); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>73</sup> For indicative examples for the trajectory of the field, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law a Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957); H. N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (1961); Z. S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans*, 2d ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962); Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, and others.

worldview of the Victorians than to contemporary English society – though some of that is available too through camp libraries (e.g. Mass Observation etc.) The internees came away with a peculiar idea of Greater England – not a state to rule the world like Seeley’s Britain, but still a soft power of liberty and democracy which – despite occasional lapses – might perhaps save the world, at least ironically speaking. In the end, the slow process of exposure to Victorian ideas of Englishness which internees went through could be described as a process of intellectual naturalisation.

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