Zadie Smith and the Form of the Historical Novel: Review of Zadie Smith, *The Fraud*

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Zadie Smith did not want to write a historical novel. We know this because she has repeatedly told us so in essays and interviews accompanying the publication of her most recent work, *The Fraud* (2023).[1] And yet, a historical novel she did write. While Smith's fiction has often related feelings of social density and change through lengthy chronologies exploring generational difference, *The Fraud* is her first 'proper' historical novel and neo-Victorian biofiction. Set over several decades in the nineteenth century, the novel imagines the interconnection between two real-life characters on the fringe of the historical record. On the one hand, we have Eliza Touchet, cousin by marriage, housekeeper, advisor, and former lover of the popular novelist William Ainsworth (1805-1882). On the other, the text features Andrew Bogle (1801-1877), an emancipated Jamaican who becomes a person of interest and witness for the defence during the Tichborne affair, a sensational legal saga that occupied the public imagination during the 1860s and 1870s. Touchet and Bogle only briefly cross paths, but they face similar challenges as they rub shoulders with some of the nineteenth century's most famous figures. For the most part, respect, security, and a sense of purpose elude the protagonists, whose particular outcomes prove bittersweet.

Smith's status as one of the twenty-first century's most prominent authors ensures that *The Fraud* will have a large audience. At the same time, many readers will likely complain about the difficulty the novel presents in its obscure references and challenging form. Unlike the authors of nineteenth-century historical romance, who frequently use their works to dramatise

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historical events and catalogue the habits, values, and languages of cultures on the verge of disappearance, Smith – writing in a world where 'history' is only ever a few clicks away – allows descriptions of her novel's historical context to occupy a secondary position. Events are referred to but rarely elaborated on. Instead, the novel's chapters weave together brief, disjointed, and occasionally impressionistic episodes that only gradually cohere into something resembling a traditional plot. While these features demand a laser-like focus from the reader, Smith's powers of characterisation and self-conscious centring of underexamined perspectives highlight *The Fraud*'s position as a significant accomplishment, both in terms of her own artistic development and the neo-Victorian novel. In this review essay, I would like to do two things: first, provide an overview of *The Fraud*'s plot; and second, comment on how its innovative narrative form revives and updates the neo-Victorian novel's historicity – that is, its attention to time's existence and movement.[2]

Like many of Smith's novels, *The Fraud* begins with a *bang*, opening *in medias res* in 1864 as a boy from a nearby construction firm arrives at the Ainsworth house on St. James Road to investigate a large hole in the second floor. As we soon learn, the floor has collapsed under the immense weight of the Ainsworth library. The hole is a striking metaphor that works on at least two levels: by the 1860s, both the literary reputation and personal finances of Ainsworth – whose *Jack Sheppard* (1839-40) once outsold Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) – have fallen apart, much like the house on St. James Road. Surveying the mountains of dusty books and papers that litter the room, the boy observes that "the sheer weight of literature you've got here, well, that will put a terrible strain on a house, Mrs. Touchet" (p. 6) – a conclusion to which Eliza, herself long-wearied by her relationship to the house's inhabitants, can only readily agree.

Eliza emerges in subsequent pages as William's protector: managing the household, shielding Ainsworth from criticism, and nudging him away from the historical subjects that have preoccupied his career. Yet her position within the home has become precarious in recent years, as Ainsworth has married his former housemaid, Sara, a rough-born woman forty years his junior. As the narrative proceeds, we not only follow Eliza with the Ainsworth clan towards a new beginning in more economical lodgings in Hurstpierpoint, but also travel backwards in time, to the point at which she arrived in Ainsworth's house several decades prior as a young widow. Like much of

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England, Eliza becomes fascinated with the Tichborne Affair of the 1860s, in which an imposter (variously referred to as The Claimant, Thomas Castro, and Arthur Orton) attempts to secure the sizable inheritance of Roger Tichborne, who likely died in a shipwreck off the Brazilian coast. The narrative juxtaposes Eliza and Sara's routine travels to London to observe the trial, with retrospective scenes showing Eliza's involvement in literary parties, abolitionist meetings, and provocative sexual encounters (both with William and her cousin Frances, William's first wife).

Smith intensifies our impression of Eliza's marginalisation in the present through the strategic use of a third-person limited omniscient form of narration. The narrative frequently comes close to Eliza's thoughts and perspectives, occasionally lapsing into free indirect discourse, while nevertheless creating an air of mystery around her past. As the very real 'fraud' of the Tichborne affair plays out before the public eye, Eliza wrestles with questions of her own identity. Smith teases the reader with news of Eliza's aspirations to write fiction, for instance, as well as her still-unclaimed right to an inheritance of two hundred pounds per annum, a legacy rooted in her deceased husband's family ties to the cotton trade (a business Eliza abhors by virtue of its connection to slavery). Without revealing too much of the plot, the outcome of Eliza's narrative focuses on her desire to make a positive impression on the world. Eliza, who forms the moral and intellectual centre of the novel – and with whom we are encouraged to identify most directly as readers – is, like so many of us, hampered by her position and blind to her own arrogance.

Eliza's struggles are thrown into relief against the experiences of Andrew Bogle, who somewhat surprisingly becomes a central figure in the second half of the novel. At first, Bogle is little more than a sideshow, appearing in the distance as part of the carnivalesque atmosphere surrounding the Claimant's campaign for recognition. Yet unlike the Claimant (whose bombastic and absurd populism parodies latter-day Trumpism), Bogle brings "a dignity hard won" to the case (p. 111). Although Eliza initially imagines that "the Tichbornes' old negro is feeding [the Claimant] information in exchange for payment" (p. 55), she quickly finds herself sharing the public's fascination with Bogle's story. During the first of several rallies which Eliza attends with Sara, the narration steps back from the moment to remark that

DOI: 10.5281/nvs.v15i2.369

> [l]ater, Eliza could never decide whether it was the influence of the crowd or some mysterious and mesmerizing aspect of Bogle himself that had worked upon her […]. It seemed that never in her life had she been more curious to hear a man speak. (p. 112)

Eliza's fascination with Bogle, however, is thwarted in this particular moment, turning her desire to hear him speak into a driving force for the remainder of the narrative.

The question that emerges during the Claimant's ensuing civil trial – some of which is related via courtroom transcripts of Bogle's actual testimony – is whether it is possible for Bogle to be sincere, given that the Claimant is an obvious fraud. It is a question whose answer takes on new dimensions in the aftermath of the Claimant's arrest and charge with perjury following the civil case. As the courtroom empties and the crowd takes to the street, Eliza approaches Bogle and asks him to tea. During their conversation, Eliza, having positioned herself as an occasional writer for Ainsworth's publication, *Bentley's* (another apparent 'fraud'), enquires into Bogle's relation to the Tichbornes, as well as his connection to the "terrible trade" (p. 238). What begins in the next chapter as a first-person account of Bogle's life thereafter takes on a peculiar extended shift into an omniscient third-person account of a more distant past, beginning with the capture of Bogle's father, Anaso, in Africa and his transport to Jamaica in 1775.

During these passages, we learn that Bogle was spared the physical hardships of slavery. Working primarily in the house at Hope Plantation in St. Andrews, Jamaica, he "was understood to be, like his father, good with inkpots, wax seals, letters, errands, overseeing, gun-polishing and animal husbandry" (p. 268). When control of the estate changes hands through marriage, Bogle finds himself travelling with Edward Tichborne – the agent of the new owner, the Duke of Buckingham – to London, where he becomes a trusted confidant to Tichborne during his attempts to impress upon the Duke the family's troubled finances. The Duke's excessive spending and entertaining at Stowe House, a massive four-hundred-room estate, have left the family one hundred and fifty thousand pounds in debt. While in England, Bogle learns of the Christmas Rebellion of 1831 in Jamaica and, later, of Abolition, which the narration describes as a "freedom that was not quite freedom" (p. 311), presumably in reference to the apprenticeship system

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introduced for Caribbean ex-slaves after emancipation. Tichborne, meanwhile, leaves the Duke's services and assumes the name of Doughty before inheriting his own estate at Tichborne Park. When he passes away some time later, Bogle is essentially abandoned by the remaining Doughtys/Tichbornes and ostracised in British society for his race. From there, he and his sons travel to Australia, where he becomes involved in the Claimant's scheme many years later.

During these chapters, the narrative does not answer the question of whether Bogle truly believes the Claimant is, in fact, Sir Roger. What the novel does do, however, is greatly complicate our impression of Bogle by speculating on his experience, sidestepping narrative tendencies towards sentimental and heroic characterisations of blackness. Like Eliza – who brings the experience of a mature, single woman to the foreground – Bogle is a very different character than what we typically find in novels *of* and *about* the nineteenth century. Unlike the heavily mediated and relatively flat black characters of most Victorian fiction, he is an historical enigma that both Eliza and Smith seek to crack.[3]

In so doing, *The Fraud* underscores Bogle's isolation as a Black Briton. Interestingly, Bogle does not speak through reported speech during the extended turn to a third-person limited omniscient perspective in his history – even as the section takes pains to include the voices of others. Instead, Bogle occupies a narrative position that corresponds to his place in British society: that of the silent observer. This position takes on a peculiar dimension midway through the section when, during his initial trip to England, we are told that

> Bogle had grown used to silence, and to standing like a statue, eyes straight ahead. He found ways to occupy himself. The patterns in wallpaper. The sconces round lamps. The carvings on a fireplace. The paintings on walls. If there was a negro face in a corner of any painting, anywhere in a room, he prided himself on finding it in a moment – he supposed he was homesick. (p. 282)

In the lines that follow, the tension between Bogle's outward stoicism and inner feelings reaches a breaking point. Standing near his employers at Stowe House, Bogle catches a glimpse of a boy in a painting who resembles a fellow

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slave he knew in Jamaica. The narrative briefly describes how "Bogle felt a throb of sadness welling in his throat, and swallowed hard", before slipping into free indirect discourse to note, "How he looks like Ellis! Oh, how homesick I am!" at the chapter's close (p. 282). This sublime conclusion – which brings the reader close to Bogle's thoughts while nevertheless maintaining a barrier between Bogle and the reader – devastates without lapsing into sentimentality. Here we find a rare glimpse of Bogle's desire to express emotion, as well as the need to keep that emotion under wraps. As such, he begins to take on the appearance of something more than a historical footnote. At the same time, however, Smith refuses to bring the ex-centric character in from the historical margins to assume the role of a full protagonist, rejecting the typical restorative move of many neo-Victorian historiographic metafictions, biofictions, and neo-slavery narratives, such as Sara Collins's *The Confessions of Franny Langton* (2019).

The return of Bogle as a speaking character comes at the end of the section, about three-quarters of the way into the novel, in a brief chapter titled 'What is Real?'. There Bogle describes his return to England and shares a news clipping of the reward for information regarding Sir Roger's whereabouts. The rationale for the preceding shift away from Bogle's conversation with Eliza comes into focus following their meal when we discover that Eliza rushes home to compile Bogle's narrative into a manuscript, itself called *The Fraud*.[4] Like the snippets of court testimony, newspaper clippings, and real-life historical artefacts found in the novel (and set in bold for emphasis), Bogle's fictional narrative is thus retroactively positioned as a 'found document', drawn from Eliza's manuscript. Its title, however, remains ambiguous. Is it a reference to the Claimant (perhaps the most obvious choice)? Or is it meant to signify Bogle, who is himself likely also a fraud (however justified he may be in his actions, given his marginalisation)? Another possibility, of course, is that the title may be a reference to its author Eliza, who not only misrepresents herself to Bogle but also remains secretive about her aspirations to write throughout the novel.

While *The Fraud* could easily culminate with the discovery of Eliza's manuscript, Smith continues the story beyond this scene for the last of the novel's eight volumes. As we move towards the conclusion, the narration highlights the tragic dimensions of each character's life. Eliza, desperately longing for human connection, discovers that two of her husband's grandchildren from a previous marriage, themselves impoverished and

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desperate, have inquired upon their right for a possible claim to her legacy – a development that places Eliza in conflict with her attorney and her own self-interest. Meanwhile, Bogle, having again faded into the background, faces increased hardships upon the Claimant's repeated legal failures, losing a small annuity from the family and receiving a pauper's burial upon death. As the narrative briefly moves into the 1870s and 1880s in later chapters, it is not Bogle but his son Henry, who comes into the foreground as Eliza's acquaintance, debating economic, racial, and gender inequality. In the closing pages, Eliza contemplates Ainsworth's death, leaving the question of her conflicted feelings for him – and her future – open to speculation. While her manuscript lay "on her dressing table upstairs, liberated from its usual hiding place" (p. 450), with her name (and not the pennames she had previously contemplated) bestowed on its title page, the questions of its publication and whether it will find an audience remain, like so many questions in this novel, unresolved.

As the preceding summary suggests, *The Fraud* is a dense, difficult, and often messy work. For this reason, it is entirely appropriate to ask, who, exactly, is this novel intended for? As a Victorianist whose research centres on what happened to the historical novel after Scott – and who has read and enjoyed much of Smith's work previously – I assumed the answer was someone like myself. But I am also familiar with Smith's desire to experiment and her refusal to be typecast, a tendency that has at times left me frustrated and unfulfilled. I first read *The Fraud* as part of a Zoom-based reading group with roughly a dozen other scholars and writers, most with backgrounds in the nineteenth century and, although we were an educated, enthusiastic, and engaged group, many of us found ourselves struggling with the novel. Specifically, we were frustrated that Smith failed to draw from Dickens (who is one of several literary figures to appear in *The Fraud* as a peripheral character) and establish a prominent 'connexion' between the stories of Eliza and Bogle. While Smith's comedic tendencies and powers of characterisation are as strong here as they have been since perhaps her first novel, *White Teeth* (2000), *The Fraud* seemed almost self-consciously designed to frustrate our expectations. Time and again, the narrative pleasures we found in Ainsworth's literary circle and the circus surrounding the Claimant's campaign were cut short almost as quickly as they were begun to make space for a more abstract exploration of Eliza and Bogle's respective experiences.

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In the months since that initial reading, I have come to see this outcome as an intentional move on Smith's part. *The Fraud*'s historicity does not stem from dramatising actual historical events or replicating previous models of historically dynamic fiction. Instead, it hinges on the calculated disruption of comforting (and entertaining) stories like those concerning Ainsworth and the Claimant. I make this claim understanding that, while Smith may not have initially wanted to write a historical novel, she has a clear grasp of the genre. In a *New Yorker* essay published in the lead-up to *The Fraud*'s release, 'On Killing Charles Dickens', Smith contrasts her previously held belief that writing about the past is almost always "aesthetically and politically conservative" in nature (Smith 2023b: 17) with her experience of reading complex and sophisticated works of historical fiction, such as Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1951), Daniel Kehlmann's *Measuring the World* (2005), and Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* (2009), though interestingly, she references no neo-Victorian novels.[5] From the aforementioned novels, Smith learned what historical fiction's supporters have long understood, namely, that

> [n]ot all historical fiction cosplays its era, and an exploration of the past need not be a slavish imitation of it. You can come at the past from an interrogative angle, or a sly remove, and some historical fiction will radically transform your perspective not just on the past but on the present. (Smith 2023b: 17)

In practice, the "transform[ed]" perspective Smith speaks of here has often been understood in Lukácsian terms as an awareness for one's position in the midst of ongoing historical processes. At the same time, the development of new literary forms in response to the challenges of relating a dynamic view of imperial and global history has required some of the most significant updates of Georg Lukács's theorisations of literary realism and a nation-oriented historical novel (see, e.g., Esty 2009; Jameson 2013: 259-313; Goodlad 2015; and Duncan 2017). In the remainder of this review essay, I would like to tease out the relationship between *The Fraud*'s form and its historicity, bearing in mind its impressionistic style and global reach.

Readers will quickly notice that *The Fraud*'s chapters are extremely short, rarely spanning more than two or three pages (and in some instances

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limited to a single paragraph). These sketch-like chapters are presented in an eight-volume format that conjures associations with George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), a novel which Smith previously discussed in an essay collected in *Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays* (2009). There Smith argues that our enduring attachment to "the strength of Eliot's example and to the nostalgia we feel for that noble form" should not reduce contemporary fiction to mimicry (Smith 2009: 40). Instead, she suggests that "[w]hat twenty-first-century novelists inherit from Eliot is the radical freedom to push the novel's form to its limits, wherever they may be" (Smith 2009: 41). Through the chronological leaps between chapters in *The Fraud*, Smith revises and updates the eight-volume format of Eliot's example to relate a lengthy narrative that stretches roughly a hundred years. The scattered chronology of the chapters (many of which include direct dates and locations in their titles and framing) grapple with the epistemological challenges of representing the history of British slavery and ensuing generational inequalities that follow Abolition over the *longue durée*.

As an illustration of this point, early in the novel, Smith juxtaposes a brief chapter titled 'A Ladies' Outing, 1830', in which Eliza and Frances attend an abolitionist meeting, with another chapter entitled 'A Ladies' Outing, 1870', in which Eliza volunteers to accompany Ainsworth's young wife, Sara, to the Claimant's rally. References to Frances through Eliza's focalised thoughts in the latter chapter thus carry with them a sense of urgency they would otherwise be missing in a more temporally bound realism. The latter chapter begins by emphasising continuity with the lines "Spring came, again", before indirectly contrasting Eliza's lively social life of the 1830s with her sense of "confinement" in the present, trapped as she has been at the "window seat" in the Ainsworth home for most of the preceding winter (p. 103). Eliza's abrupt announcement that she will accompany Sara – a woman with whom she has a strained relationship – to London is met with shock by Sara's daughter Clara, who can't help but ponder, "You and Mama? Out … *together*?" (p. 103, original ellipses and emphasis). Yet for readers, Eliza's motivation and ensuing interest in Bogle are much easier to process, coming as they do in the context of Smith's carefully arranged narration.

While individualised memory like that which we gain access to via Eliza is an important part of how Smith negotiates these shifts, a related goal involves interrogating dominant theories of historical change. Consider, for instance, Eliza's trip to the Great Exhibition of 1851, related in a retrospective

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scene towards the end of the novel. During that visit, Eliza is mostly unimpressed with the "mechanical commodes for which one paid a penny" and the "exotic 'bays', each representing some aspect of the nation's global industry" (p. 409). Her feelings shift to annoyance, however, when she reads a review of the event by Dickens and Richard Henry Horne in *Household Words*, describing Britain's move "in a right direction towards some superior condition of society – politically, morally, intellectually, and religiously" (p. 410). In their article, Dickens and Horne implore the reader to "[c]onsider the greatness of the English results", comparing them to "the extraordinary littleness of the Chinese" (p. 411). As they note, with light irony:

> Go from the silk-weaving and cotton-spinning of us outer barbarians, to the laboriously-carved ivory balls of the flowery Empires, ball within ball and circle within circle, which have made no advance and been of no earthly use for thousands of years. (p. 411)

For Eliza, the denigration of Chinese artistry here falls flat. As the narrator observes, those "ivory balls, offering infinity in the palm of your hand, had been, for Mrs Touchet, the only moment of sublimity – the only touch of the sacred – to be found in the whole crystal warehouse" (p. 411). While the Crystal Palace was intended as a monument to the cultural supremacy of British modernity, Eliza is not fascinated by that story so much as the very things it defines itself against.

Eliza's reaction to Chinese puzzle balls (sometimes also called 'Devil's Work Balls') will undoubtedly stand out for readers familiar with John Ruskin's 'Nature of the Gothic' (1853), itself published shortly after the Great Exhibition. Much like Ruskin's critique of the modern systematic production of glass beads, which does not provide "occasion for the use of any single human faculty" when compared with the more traditional handiwork of a goldsmith (Ruskin 1853: 88), Eliza's preference for the carved ivory balls values their labour and craftsmanship above the by-products of relatively recent inventions like the modern power loom, a mechanised device that emphasises speed and efficiency at the expense of human artistry. For Eliza, as for Ruskin, a society that does not pride itself on the craftmanship of its workers, and which is so willing to actively discredit the achievements

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of other civilisations, can never truly consider itself 'advanced' or 'progressing'.

Yet *The Fraud* ultimately shows how seductive the Whiggish myth of progress is to all of us, Eliza included. Only several chapters but twenty-five years later, Eliza finds herself resorting to a familiar narrative of incremental progress during a conversation with Bogle's son, Henry, following her participation in the Hackney Down Riots of 1875, in which fences surrounding what protestors had deemed communal lands were pulled up and burned. Exuberant from this act of civil disobedience, Eliza puts her foot in her mouth during their conversation, comparing the tarred hands of protestors to those of "minstrels" and asking Henry, whose "cupboards had been bare for some time", for tea (p. 441). Henry, meanwhile, finds himself increasingly frustrated with the "old woman" who "did not appear to understand that grazing rights meant far more to a poor man than the space for a walk" or "that a city park, once fenced all around was a place where a city council could then prohibit any gatherings of poor or agitating men" (p. 441). When Eliza expounds upon "the slow and steady expansion of the franchise" (p. 441), Henry finally lashes out against her belief that change takes time.

With his ailing father lying in the next room, Henry launches into an attack on Eliza's notion of freedom and rights:

> Justice has no time . . . It is eternal, it is now, it is yesterday, it is tomorrow. Every man that is branded like cattle feels that pain infinitely: it echoes across all time and all space. Joan of Arc still burns. The poor soul bound hand and foot and thrown from the *Zong* still sinks to the bottom of the sea, along with five hundred more just like him, and they all drown eternally. I tell you that those who suffer *cannot wait*. No more can I. And I confess that I am not one of these people who believe it makes so great a difference if the gaoler speaks softly to his prisoner or throws a stone at him. (p. 444, original ellipses and emphasis)

While leaving Eliza shaken, this encounter also provides her with the sense of an unbridgeable divide between Henry's and her own experiences. As the narration observes, among the several lessons she extracts from the exchange is the following: "this essential and daily battle of life he had described was

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one she could no more envisage living herself than she could imagine crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a hot air balloon" (p. 445). Eliza, aspiring novelist and advocate for racial equality, is thus forced to reconcile those beliefs with Henry's critique of Whig history and his characterisation of her as the most unflattering of stereotypes: the naive progressive white woman.

Eliza's difficulty in comprehending Henry's experience, along with her reliance on the same progressive myth that she criticises elsewhere, highlight the very contradictions that have made it difficult for many to come to grips with various social, political, and economic realities of the British world system. While scholars of Empire have well-established the interconnection of imperial centre and periphery in various contexts over previous decades and England's multicultural past has figured prominently in major events like the opening ceremony for the 2013 Summer Olympics in London, the rise of ethno-nationalism surrounding the Brexit debate remind us that this history is by no means fully accepted and secured amongst the public more generally.[6] As much is also borne out by recent acrimonious debates about 'wokism' and 'cultural wars' in Britain's politics and press. Equally if not more importantly, the structural inequalities built into the history of Empire themselves leave imprints upon the present in ways that have not and cannot be addressed by an incremental approach. Read alongside the novel's chapter on the Great Exhibition, Eliza's exchange with Henry, coming as it does just pages before *The Fraud*'s conclusion, thus provides an important – if easily overlooked – attempt to link the novel's various themes. The aspirations that elude Eliza and the Bogles are an extension of conversations and debates also shaping the present. Yet to bring them into view requires turning away from the distractions of celebrity culture and scandal, however much we, as readers, may wish to bask in those pleasures.

Having had time to reflect on *The Fraud*, I am impressed by Smith's aspirations and execution. While she may not have wanted to write a historical novel, Smith has successfully produced a thought-provoking exploration of race, particularly as it relates to our historical inability to identify with the Other. Eliza's strained conversations with the Bogles, and her potential to transcend those barriers through fiction, suggest the power of Smith's own project, providing evidence to support Ian Duncan's recent claim that "the historical novel still finds work to do" in the present, with contemporary novelists, particularly women and authors of colour, "sifting the ruins of empire, traversing the war zones and migration paths of empire's wake"

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(Duncan 2017: 383). Whether Smith's readers will be patient enough to appreciate her rich and complex story remains to be seen. Nevertheless, I have full faith that *The Fraud* will be essential reading for scholars of the historical novel and neo-Victorian literature for many years to come.

Notes

1. See, for example, Smith's 2023 article 'On Killing Charles Dickens', in which she describes the process by which she came to write *The Fraud*.
2. For more on historicity and literature, see O'Dell 2023: 423-426.
3. In this sense, Bogle perhaps functions somewhat akin to the Aboriginal Mathinna in Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008).
4. Neo-Victorian aficionados might be reminded of Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997), in which the ambitious author-figure Tobias Oates (a thinly veiled version of Charles Dickens) appropriates Maggs's story for his forthcoming novel.
5. She does, though, briefly mention "Colm" (Smith 2023b: 16), presumably Colm Tóibín, known for his neo-Victorian biofiction of Henry James, *The Master* (2004).
6. On the relationship between centre and periphery, see, for instance, Hall and Rose 2006 and Price 2006. On the rise of ethno-nationalism post-Brexit, see Valluvan and Kaira 2019, which introduces a special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* on the subject.

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