

**THE INVENTION OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS:
THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF ENGLISHNESS AND
AUTHENTICITY IN JULIAN BARNES' *ENGLAND, ENGLAND***

"I am interested in what you might call the invention of tradition. Getting its history wrong is part of becoming a nation."

Julian Barnes in an Interview¹

"What happened to the truth is not recorded."

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*²

Abstract: Many recent British novels display an intense interest in 'Englishness', in the myths, traditions and attitudes that are regarded as typically English, a topic which is also a major concern of contemporary literary criticism and cultural history at large. The present article is concerned with the construction and parodic deconstruction of Englishness in Julian Barnes' novel *England, England* (1998), which was shortlisted for the Booker prize in 1998. It is argued that the novel juxtaposes competing versions of and discourses about Englishness, and provides highly self-conscious reflections upon both the invention of cultural traditions and the questionable notion of historical authenticity. The first part of the article provides a thematic and formal analysis of Barnes' fictional exploration of those invented traditions known as Englishness. Focusing on the relation between the authentic and the replica, the second part investigates how the content and form of *England, England* self-consciously examine and deconstruct the notion of authenticity. The third part explores the epistemological implications of Barnes' novel, in which the deconstruction of the notion of historical authenticity serves to lay bare the processes involved in the invention of cultural traditions, deconstructing the notion of an 'authentic' Englishness located in a remote past. A brief summary which evaluates Barnes' achievement against the background of current historical, cultural, and literary explorations of Englishness concludes the article.

I.

In the "Acknowledgements" to his 1992 novel *English Music* Peter Ackroyd makes an observation that is very pertinent both for his own novels and for a significant trend in contemporary British fiction: "The scholarly reader will soon realize that I have appropriated passages from Thomas Browne, Thomas Malory, William Hogarth, Thomas Morley, Lewis Carroll, Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe and many other English writers; the alert reader will understand why I have done so."³ As anyone who is familiar with Ackroyd's fiction will know, a

¹ Julian Barnes in Penelope Denning, "Inventing England" *The Irish Times* 8.9.1998, an Interview about his novel *England, England*,

<http://www.ireland.com/scripts/search/highlight.plx?TextRes=Julian%20barnes&Path>.

² Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* (London: Picador, 1985) 65.

³ Peter Ackroyd, *English Music* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) no page number.

great part of our interest in his novels indeed derives from their high degree of intertextuality, their intense engagement with 'Englishness', and the fascinating challenge they offer to the 'scholarly reader' of trying to identify the host of intertextual references. With regard to *English Music*, some of the allusions, e.g. to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Thomas Campion's poetry or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective stories, are obvious enough. What is arguably much more interesting than merely solving such an intertextual and intellectual crossword-puzzle, however, is to come to grips with the question addressed to the 'alert reader', namely to figure out the significance of the intertextual dialogue with the voices of England's cultural history. The complex network of literary allusions does more, perhaps, than anything else to turn Ackroyd's novel into an echo-chamber of England's cultural history.

Ackroyd's *English Music* is, of course, not the only recent British novel that displays an almost obsessive concern with the notion of Englishness. Among the many novels that focus on a literary exploration of England's past, its cultural memory, and its national identity are such well-known works as John Fowles' *Daniel Martin* (1977), Jonathan Raban's travelogue *Coasting* (1986), Andrew Sinclair's "Albion triptych", consisting of his novels *Gog* (1967), *Magog* (1972) and *King Ludd* (1988), Adam Thorpe's *Ulverton* (1992) as well as Antonia S. Byatt's and Graham Swift's novels. Though this remarkable trend in contemporary British fiction has not gone unnoticed, as a number of recent publications on the topic testifies,⁴ little effort has been made to ascertain the exact nature of contemporary literary reflections upon Englishness. In one of the few scholarly articles devoted to Andrew Sinclair's *Gog*, Peter Wolfe calls the novel "England's Greatest Tourist Attraction" and asserts that the "language, incidents, and characters making up the action fuse in a ganglion of Englishness".⁵ The same observation could be made with regard to many other recent British novels which display "deliberate 'Englishness'".⁶ By contrast, the form and function of the engagement with Englishness in the other novels mentioned above has yet to be ascertained.

Despite the obvious thematic similarities between these novels there are also a number of significant differences, most of which can be attributed to radically different aesthetic functions

⁴ Cf. especially the articles collected in the special issue on *Englishness* which Stephan Kohl guest-edited for *anglistik und englischunterricht* 46/47 (1992). Cf. also Hermann J. Schnackertz, Peter Ackroyd's Fictions and the Englishness of English Literature", *Anglistentag 1993 Eichstätt: Proceedings*, ed. Günther Blaicher, Brigitte Glaser (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994) 493-502.

⁵ Peter Wolfe, "England's Greatest Tourist and Tourist Attraction: Andrew Sinclair's *Gog*, *Magog* (1967, 1972)", *Old Lines, New Forces. Essays on the Contemporary British Novel, 1960-1970*, ed. Robert K. Morris (Rutherford/N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson UP 1976) 151-180, 151. See also Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1979 [1971]) 77, who emphasizes "the almost obsessive quality of Sinclair's concern for the English past, and his feeling for myth, which he sees as overtaking history".

⁶ Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994) 361.

that the concern with Englishness fulfills in each particular case.⁷ In some novels, it amounts to little more than a nostalgic evocation of the past, A.N. Wilson's conventional historical novel *Gentlemen in England* (1985) being a case in point. As Bradbury rightly emphasizes, much postmodernist historical fiction, however, has nothing to do with mere nostalgia since it explores "a complex way not just of recovering the life of the past but of relating fiction itself to an earlier tradition" and of "making the relations of past and present narratives a matter for self-conscious literary examination".⁸ By locating history and Englishness in the 'Here and Now', Ackroyd's novels, for instance, illustrate T.S. Eliot's poetic evocation of a state in which past, present, and future are one.

In yet a third strand of novels that focus on England's cultural history and memory, a revisionist impact prevails. This is particularly obvious in novels that explore Britain's imperial past, e.g. Paul Scott's and James Gordon Farrell's historical novels: "Throughout, one can observe a painstaking deconstruction of attractive and longstanding myths: the superiority of 'English civilisation', benign colonialism, Ireland the beautiful mother, native regret of imperialist retreat".⁹ By focusing on marginalized phenomena and on the perception of historical events in the minds of ordinary characters, such revisionist historical novels present "a decentred view of history".¹⁰

Another kind of postmodernist historical novel, the species that Linda Hutcheon has christened historiographic metafiction,¹¹ is mainly concerned with epistemological issues related to historiography. Novels that belong to the latter category include Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) and *A History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters* (1989), Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger* (1987) und *City of the Mind* (1991), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983), Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983) and Nigel Williams' *Star Turn* (1985) and *Witchcraft* (1987), to name but a few.¹² The focus of these novels, however, arguably lies less on

⁷ For a functionalist typology of postmodern historical fiction, cf. Ansgar Nünning, "'Beyond the Great Story': Der postmoderne historische Roman als Medium revisionistischer Geschichtsdarstellung, kultureller Erinnerung und metahistoriographischer Reflexion", *Anglia* 117.1 (1999): 15-48.

⁸ Bradbury 1994, 361, 406.

⁹ D.J. Taylor, *After the War: The Novel and England since 1945* (London: Flamingo, 1994) 53.

¹⁰ Margaret Scanlan, *Traces of Another Time: History and Politics in Postwar British Fiction* (Princeton/N.J.: Princeton UP, 1990) 10.

¹¹ Cf. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) and *A Politics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989). Cf. also Susana Onega, "British Historiographic Metafiction in the 1980s", *British Postmodern Fiction*, eds. Theo D'haen, Hans Bertens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993) 47-61.

¹² For a detailed account of historiographic metafiction see Ansgar Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion. Bd. 1.: Theorie, Typologie und Poetik des historischen Romans. Bd. 2.: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungstendenzen des historischen Romans in England seit 1950* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995).

an exploration of *English* history and Englishness than on an enquiry into the epistemological status of history, historical explanations, and historiography.

When Julian Barnes' most recent novel, *England, England*, was published to wide, albeit not unanimous critical acclaim in 1998, some critics wondered why the novel was not awarded the Booker prize, for which it was shortlisted: "Nominated for the Booker [Prize] in 1998, it is far more satisfying than Ian McEwan's *Amsterdam*"¹³, the novel which won the award, the *Complete Review* opined. Other reviewers criticized that *England, England* was just another novel dealing with what have by now become well-known themes and outworn clichés like authenticity and "one of [Barnes'] favourite themes - the elusive nature of memory, which is all tied up with confusions about individual and national identity."¹⁴ And other critics observed that the exploration of "the philosophical distinction between the real and the replica or, in this case, its representation in memory or history" was the major aim of this novel.¹⁵

Even though no reviewer or critic has yet pointed out that Barnes' latest novel could be subsumed under the wide umbrella term of historiographic metafiction (something which can probably be put down to the simple fact that the worlds of journalistic criticism and scholarly work published in academe have by now drifted oceans apart), it would indeed be easy enough to enlist *England, England* as yet another paradigm example supporting Hutcheon's theories. After all, Barnes' novel displays all of the typical features which, according to Hutcheon and other critics, are the hallmark of this particular kind of postmodernist fiction: Yes, like other historiographic metafiction, *England, England* is "both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay[s] claim to historical events and personages".¹⁶ Yes, Barnes' novel also reflects that feature which has been the major focus of attention in most of the critical work on postmodernism, a self-conscious assessment of the status and function of narrative in literature, history, and theory: "its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past".¹⁷ And once again yes, using history as both a reference to the 'real' past world and as a discursive construct, *England, England*, just like historiographic metafiction in general, "differs substantially from the use of history in the traditional historical novel where history, as a group of facts which exists extra-textually and which can be represented as it 'really was,' is never in question".¹⁸ And yet, it would arguably be seriously misleading at best, missing

¹³ *Complete Review*, <http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/barnesj/england.htm>

¹⁴ Ong Sor Fern, *The Straits Times Interactive* 24.10.1998, <http://web3.asia1.com.sg/archive/st/4books/b102406.html>.

¹⁵ Andro Linklater, "A very English Whimsy", *Bookshelf* 27.8.1998, <http://www.theherald.co.uk/bookshelf/archive/27-8-1998-21-50-50.html>.

¹⁶ Hutcheon 1988, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Alison Lee, *Realism and Power: Postmodern British Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 35.

the point(s) of Barnes' fine novel completely, at worst to categorize it as just another example of historiographic metafiction, as I hope to show.

The remarkable achievement of Barnes' latest and arguably most ambitious novel to date, this paper argues, lies neither in perpetuating a number of clichés about the English¹⁹ nor in defining the characteristic 'Englishness' of English culture or history, nor in providing yet another fictional illustration of the curiously reductive postmodern thesis that history is nothing but a 'verbal fiction', to use Hayden White's (in)famous, but hardly very felicitous phrase. Rather, it can be located in the ways that *England, England* explores, constructs, parodies, and deconstructs those 'invented traditions' known as 'Englishness'. As Barnes put it in an interview, the novel is concerned with what "you might call the invention of tradition". The novel incorporates a host of diverse traces of the English cultural past, including many myths and legends, juxtaposes competing versions of and discourses about Englishness, and explores the complexity of any account of a nation's organically grown cultural memory and identity. Barnes' novel, therefore, not only expresses a wide range of versions of Englishness, but it also provides highly self-conscious reflections upon both the invention of cultural traditions and the questionable notion of historical authenticity. The two epigraphs thus reflect some of the issues that are of crucial importance for anyone trying to come to terms with the intricate structure of Barnes' novel and the significance of the host of references to Englishness.

Using this as a point of departure, the present article seeks to examine the ways in which *England, England* thematizes and explores the invention of cultural traditions, by constructing and deconstructing both 'Englishness' and the notion of authenticity. Following a brief preliminary introduction to Barnes' previous novels and their concern with history and historiographic issues, the first part of the article will provide a thematic and formal analysis of the construction and deconstruction of Englishness in Barnes' novel. The second part attempts to illuminate how the content and form of *England, England* self-consciously examine and deconstruct the notion of authenticity, while the third part focuses on the epistemological implications of the invention of cultural traditions. A brief summary which tries to suggest lines of investigating Englishness in the context of cultural studies concludes the article.

II.

Although Julian Barnes' novels are not only very well-known, but have also become the subject of an already significant body of research,²⁰ a brief preliminary introduction to those of his novels which display a major concern with history and historiographic issues may be in order

¹⁹ That is not to say, however, that the novel does not thematize the sort of cultural stereotypes that George Mikes wittily portrayed in *How to be an Alien* (London: Allan Wingate, 1946).

²⁰ For an almost up-to-date survey of Barnes criticism see Merritt Moseley, *Understanding Julian Barnes* (Columbia/S.C.: South Carolina UP, 1997).

so as to provide a backdrop against which the thematic and formal features of *England, England* can be gauged. As a host of reviewers recognized, the two works which are of particular relevance in the present context are his fictional metabiography *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) and his hybrid novel *A History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters* (1989).²¹ What these two novels have in common with a great number of other contemporary British novels is a preoccupation with history and the problems involved in the reconstruction of the past.²² Critics agree that they represent a "new type of historical novel":²³ "the self-reflexive historical novel relates a series of events that have taken place in the past, but focuses on the ways in which these events are grasped and explained in retrospect."²⁴ Like Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987), *Flaubert's Parrot* is not so much a conventional fictional biography as a new kind of literary metabiography, a novel in which metabiographic reflections become one of the main issues.²⁵ Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters* provides a paradigm example of the blurring of genre conventions that has become one of the hallmarks of the new ways in which the past is represented in contemporary British fiction.²⁶ As the ironic title already indicates, the novel

²¹ Previous criticism on *Flaubert's Parrot* has focused mainly on the forms and functions of intertextuality; cf. Michel Petit, "Gourstave Flubear': l'intertextualité contrastive comme procédé métafictionnel dans *Flaubert's Parrot* de Julian Barnes", *Historicité et métafiction dans le roman contemporain des Iles Britanniques*, ed. Max Duperray (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1994) 121-138; Erhard Reckwitz, "Intertextualität postmodern: J. M. Coetzee, Foe; John Fowles, A Maggot; Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*", *Wie postmodern ist die Postmoderne?* eds. Kunibert Bering, W. L. Hohmann (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1990) 121-156; James B. Scott, "Parrot as Paradigms: Infinite Deferral of Meaning in 'Flaubert's Parrot'", *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 21.3 (1990): 57-68. For an general introduction, see Elisabeth Bronfen, "Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*", *Kindlers Neues Literatur Lexikon*, Bd. 2 (München: Kindler, 1989) 242-243.

²² Cf. Ina Schabert, "Die Postmoderne und danach: Geschichtserfahrung im englischen Roman der Gegenwart", *Ästhetik der Geschichte*, ed. Johann Holzner, Wolfgang Wiesmüller (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft. Germanistische Reihe 54. Universität Innsbruck, Institut für Germanistik, 1995) 213-237; Martin Löschnigg, "History and the Search for Identity: Reconstructing the Past in Recent English Novels", *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 29.2 (1996): 103-119; Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion*, Bd. 2.

²³ Del Ivan Janik, "No End of History", *Twentieth-Century Literature* 41.2 (1995): 160-189, 161. Cf. Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996) 142f., who makes a somewhat vague distinction between "historical and historicised fiction".

²⁴ Elisabeth Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet: Postmodernist Innovations of the Historical Novel* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991) 90.

²⁵ For an analysis of the historiographic and epistemological implications of Barnes' novel and a reading in terms of its status as a fictional metabiography, see Ansgar Nünning, "'How do we seize the past?' Julian Barnes' fiktionale Metabiographie *Flaubert's Parrot* als Paradigma historiographischer und biographischer Metafiktion", *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 31.2 (1998): 145-171.

²⁶ Cf. Isabelle Raucq-Hoorickx, "Julian Barnes' *History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters*: A Levinasian Deconstructionist Point of View", *Le Langage et l'Homme: Recherches Pluridisciplinaires sur le Langage* 26.1 (1991): 47-54; Wolfgang Hallet, "*A History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters*. Ein Hinweis auf Julian Barnes' postmoderne Weltgeschichte", *anglistik und englischunterricht* 49 (1993): 137-148; Maria Lozano, "How You Cuddle in the Dark Governs How You See the History of the World': A Note on Some Obsessions in Recent British Fiction", *Telling Histories. Narrativizing History*,

undercuts the pretensions to objectivity, continuity and totality that are generally associated with positivist historiography. *A History of the World* illustrates that the dynamics of historical events elude every attempt to delineate them comprehensively or objectively:

History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us. [...] And we, the readers of history, the sufferers from history, we scan the pattern for hopeful conclusions, for the way ahead. [...] The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections.²⁷

A number of thematic and formal parallels between Barnes' previous novels and *England, England* notwithstanding, his latest novel represents a significant new departure in a number of ways. First and foremost, *England, England* exemplifies the great current interest in the fictional exploration of Englishness, something that was only a marginal concern in his earlier novels. Second, it is revisionist in at least two ways: it questions and revises conventional notions of Englishness, and it also expresses revisionist notions of historical authenticity. Third, the novel provides ample support for the view recently put forward by Nicole Fugmann that "*postmodern genres expand rather than just problematize our historical understanding*".²⁸

As a brief glance at the plot of *England, England* shows, the notion of Englishness is of central importance to the novel, which is set in the early years of the third millennium. The first part, entitled "England", depicts memories of the female protagonist Martha Cochrane, who tries to remember significant events of her childhood, while being highly sceptical about the 'truth' of these recollections. Later on, the mature Martha is employed by the billionaire Sir Jack Pitman, an egomaniacal and megalomaniacal mogul who bears more than just a passing resemblance to Robert Maxwell and Rupert Murdoch. Pitman's great idea is to make a fortune by building an essence-of-England theme park on the Isle of Wight. The realization and success of this scheme are depicted in great detail; though the description abounds with satire and wit, the whole plan appears less and less absurd as the story commences. As Barnes pointed out in an interview, the idea of rebuilding famous monuments in the context of a tourist attraction is not without precedent; after all, there is a plan "that an Italian consortium is going to rebuild ancient Rome called 'Roma Vetus' [...] in 100 acres outside Orvieto where everything will be in much better

Historicizing Literature, ed. Susana Onega (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995) 117-134; Heinz Antor, "(Post-)Moderne Historiographie und Biographie im englischen Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts: Virginia Woolf und Julian Barnes", *Fiktion und Geschichte in der anglo-amerikanischen Literatur*, eds. Rüdiger Ahrens, Fritz-Wilhelm Neumann (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998) 415-430; Rudolf Freiburg, "'Just Voices Echoing in the Dark': Geschichte als literarisches Genre bei Julian Barnes", *ibid.* 431-458.

²⁷ Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters* (London: Picador, 1990 [1989]) 242.

²⁸ Nicole Fugmann, "Situating Postmodern Aesthetics: Salman Rushdie's Spatial Historiography", *REAL. Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature 13: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Herbert Grabes (Tübingen: Narr, 1997) 333-343, 334.

shape and you can see it all much more easily. And they're going to have chariot races".²⁹ Although Martha has a love affair with Paul Harrison, the personal "Ideas Catcher" of 'Sir' Pitman, and manages to chair the enterprise for a short period of time, she is forced to leave the island in the end. She is not unduly dismayed about the turn of events, however, since she had never believed in the project, anyway, and had grown increasingly dissatisfied with her relationship with Paul, which in spite of her efforts had gradually degenerated into as much of a fake as the project itself. The last part of the novel delineates the experiences of an aged and lonely Martha, who settles down in a de-industrialised England, still searching for truth and meaning.

The structure of the novel highlights the concern with the state of England, whose fictionalized development is represented in three different stages. Martha's earliest memories consist of her repeatedly assembling her beloved jigsaw-puzzle 'Countries of England'. A day at a fair organized by an Agricultural Society and her subsequent efforts to grow beans and win a prize also loom large in Martha's remembrance, depicting an image of a rural setting in which goats, cows and flowers evoke a pastoral atmosphere.³⁰ In this section of the novel, two central themes are introduced: the analogy between the memory of an individual and a country, and patriotism. As Martha realizes, her difficulties in trying to recover a true memory of her childhood are similar to those of "a country remembering its history".³¹ Throughout the novel, Martha seeks "for truths about origins, her own and England's."³² In an interview, Barnes emphasizes the analogies that exist between the ways people constantly reorder their personal memory and what has been called the invention of national traditions: "Getting its history wrong is part of becoming a nation. And we do the same thing with our own lives. We invent, ransack and reorder our childhood."³³

The second theme which runs through the novel involves the glorification of national history. The patriotic view of history satirized in Barnes' novel is exemplified by the peculiar way history is taught at Martha's school, viz. by "chants of history" (11) i.e. by rhyming rote in a simplified, albeit highly memorable way. The teacher - who manages to present history in a manner which inspires more reverence and awe than religion - tells the children "tales of chivalry

²⁹ Barnes also cites other examples and stresses that he had already been working on the book for six months when he heard that "an Isle of Wight councillor said they ought to become independent." See Denning 1998.

³⁰ This conforms to a typical conception of English ruralism, as Doris Schmied, "The Countryside - Ideal and Reality", *anglistik und englischunterricht* 46/47: *Englishness*, ed. Stephan Kohl (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992) 71-82, 80, suggests: "An inherent element of English ruralism is the retrospective glorification of the countryside of one's childhood and youth".

³¹ Julian Barnes, *England, England* (New York: Knopf, 1999) 6; see also 85. Subsequent page references will be to this edition and appear in brackets following quoted extracts.

³² Valentine Cunningham, *The Independent* 29.8.1998, <http://www.independent.co.uk/books/stories/BR001804.htm>.

³³ Denning 1998.

and glory, plague and famine, tyranny and democracy" (12) that grip the imagination. At the beginning of the novel, Martha's childhood thus corresponds to the 'infant' state of rural England.

An altogether different stage of Englishness is presented in Part II, entitled "England, England". Having taken a poll to determine which things potential visitors primarily associate with England, Sir Jack Pitman and his steering committee - which also includes Dr. Max, a celebrated historian especially hired for the project - set about exploiting the only thing England has that is still thought to be valuable: "You - we - England - my client - is - are - a nation of great age, great history, great accumulated wisdom." (41) The Pitman company therefore rebuilds all that England was renowned for, celebrating English culture of yesteryear on the Isle of Wight, which is renamed 'England, England'. Sir Jack thus tries to capitalize on the late-twentieth-century British obsession with national heritage that is manifested, for instance, by 'living history'-ventures and theme parks like Wigan Pier or the Black Country Museum by building something that is both similar and yet unrivalled and on an altogether more gigantic scale: an 'original reproduction' (oxymoron intended) of England's genuine cultural heritage. All the historical sites - including the major battlegrounds, Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, Anne Hathaway's cottage, and the grave of Princess Di - are to be situated within easy visiting distance, with Harrods being conveniently placed within the Tower of London. In 'England, England', a replica of Old England which reproduces the original metonymically, tourists can meet icons like the King and Queen of England, chat with historical celebrities like Samuel Johnson or Nell Gwyn, share pastoral idylls with shepherds, and even encounter myths, Robin Hood's Band of Merry Men being especially popular with the visitors. Being turned into a miniature version of England, the island project is so successful that it gradually begins to replace Old England; tailored to tourists' tastes, who prefer the carefully designed simulacrum embodying all the standard clichés to the real thing, the island also prospers economically, while Old England, bereft of tourists, gradually falls into decay, slowly reversing the process of industrialization.

Part III, "Anglia", the action of which is situated in 'Old England' (i.e. the 'real British Isles'), depicts the result of this economical regression: In contrast to the prospering island, 'Old England' has finally degenerated into a hybrid and de-familiarized version of 'rural England', in which farming has become dependent on the weather again, pony carriages are the major form of transport, foreign trade is virtually non-existent, and one has to dial O for Operator. The final short section - like the first part roughly twenty-five pages in length - describes a return to a pre-industrial world, in which Martha spends her old age. Despite the fact that the narrator describes the setting as "neither idyllic nor dystopic" (265), it is a curious amalgam of dystopian fiction and a regression to an idyllic, rural England.

Far from being merely a transparent reflection of certain 'essential' facets of Englishness, Barnes' novel is self-consciously concerned with exploring both the nature and genesis of

national identity and the question of how established versions of Englishness have come to be invented and upheld. The tourist scheme provides a realistic framework both for a thorough examination of the many aspects of Englishness and for the way in which versions of Englishness are constructed in order to serve the needs of the present. Planning to build a perfect replica of people's conceptions of England and Englishness, Sir Jack asks his Concept Developer to take an opinion poll on the "Top fifty characteristics associated with the word England among prospective purchasers of Quality Leisure. Serious targeting. I don't want to hear about kids and their favourite bands." (60) The polling takes place world-wide, because the idea is to attract as many visitors from as many countries as possible. Since the heterogeneous list of fifty quintessences of Englishness is of central significance for both the novel and the widespread current concern with the notion of Englishness, it deserves to be quoted in full.

1. ROYAL FAMILY
2. BIG BEN/ HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
3. MANCHESTER UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB
4. CLASS SYSTEM
5. PUBS
6. A ROBIN IN THE SNOW
7. ROBIN HOOD AND HIS MERRIE MEN
8. CRICKET
9. WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER
10. IMPERIALISM
11. UNION JACK
12. SNOBBERY
13. GOD SAVE THE KING/ QUEEN
14. BBC
15. WEST END
16. TIMES NEWSPAPER
17. SHAKESPEARE
18. THATCHED COTTAGES
19. CUP OF TEA/ DEVONSHIRE CREAM TEA
20. STONEHENGE
21. PHLEGM/ STIFF UPPER LIP
22. SHOPPING
23. MARMALADE
24. BEEFEATERS/ TOWER OF LONDON
25. LONDON TAXIS
26. BOWLER HAT
27. TV CLASSIC SERIALS
28. OXFORD/ CAMBRIDGE
29. HARRODS
30. DOUBLE-DECKER BUSES/ RED BUSES
31. HYPOCRISY

32. GARDENING
33. PERFIDY/ UNTRUSTWORTHINESS
34. HALF-TIMBERING
35. HOMOSEXUALITY
36. ALICE IN WONDERLAND
37. WINSTON CHURCHILL
38. MARKS & SPENCER
39. BATTLE OF BRITAIN
40. FRANCIS DRAKE
41. TROOPING THE COLOUR
42. WHINGEING
43. QUEEN VICTORIA
44. BREAKFAST
45. BEER/ WARM BEER
46. EMOTIONAL FRIGIDITY
47. WEMBLEY STADIUM
48. FLAGELLATION/ PUBLIC SCHOOLS
49. NOT WASHING/ BAD UNDERWEAR
50. MAGNA CARTA (86-88)

As this eccentric list already indicates, the construction of Englishness and its concomitant deconstruction are intricately intertwined in the novel. Although it would be tempting to go through the whole list and comment on each feature of Englishness in turn, limitations of space preclude the possibility of offering a comprehensive analysis of the way the fifty quintessences are explored in the novel. The following interpretation will therefore focus on an examination of those items that are shown to be of central importance in *England, England*.

The myth of Robin Hood - "a primal English myth" (150) - is given particular attention by the Pitman committee. The managers realize at once that it has great potential; after all, it embodies ideals like freedom, (justified) rebellion, and the brotherhood of man, and provides an attractive rural setting. Moreover, the project managers initially assume that everyone knows what the legendary Robin and his 'Merrie Men' actually did in Sherwood Forest. The fact that popular beliefs generally do not correspond to historical reality is unimportant, as John Fowles stresses in his essay "On Being English but Not British": "What Robin Hood was, or who he was, in the dim underwoods of history, is unimportant. It is what folk history has made him that matters."³⁴

But even such a seemingly straightforward feature of Englishness as Robin Hood and his Merrie Men turns out to be full of pitfalls. Although Concept Developer Jeff stubbornly insists that everyone knows exactly what the merrie band stands for, he is at a loss to provide any clear account of them. Were there any women present - after all, there is a long tradition of female outlawry, and Robin is a sexually ambiguous name - and were there any homosexuals among

³⁴ John Fowles, "On Being English but Not British", *Texas Quarterly* 7 (1964): 154-162, 158.

them? Since feminist visitors as well as gays might object to a gang of heterosexual outlaws with just one woman among them, Dr Max, whose favourite phrase is 'That's not my period', is asked to clarify the issue. But the historian's knowledge about medieval manners and his interpretation of old myths about Hood only complicate the issue; Dr Max comes up with a number of unresolved problems, and the committee even toys with the idea of having two gangs, each embodying the expectations of different groups of visitors. The "repositioning of myths for modern times" (152), turns out to be a very complex issue in this case. The project managers begin to realize that even the values and attitudes embodied by Hood and his gang may be in need of adjustment, and as a result "old-fashioned attitudes to wildlife, over-consumption of red meat" (228) are attenuated in order to make the domestic lifestyle of the gang palatable for a contemporary audience. Thus the Miller's son bakes ten-grain bread, and the ox roasted by Friar Tuck consists of "moulded vegetable matter oozing with cranberry juice" (ibid.).

Barnes' deconstruction of the Hood myth as a quintessential item of Englishness is not limited to exposing the vagueness and the 'politically incorrect' aspects of that myth, but he goes so far as to illustrate what may happen if the nostalgic embodiment of Robin Hood's Band really begins to act like the original. Not only do the 'merrie men' hunt for their own food, thus decimating the carefully preserved animals in the Heritage Park, they also steal poultry and vegetables, complain about the presence of homosexuals among them, and demand the right to "ambush the Sheriff's men anywhere" (230). In short, they really behave like unscrupulous outlaws who are a threat to the community. Barnes' treatment of the Robin Hood myth thus suggests that even a popular myth may contain unfavourable connotations which, if they were specifically English, would not project a very flattering image of the nation.

The development of some of the characters who impersonate famous Englishmen further underscores the discrepancy between the contemporary image of allegedly representative English traits and historical reality. The island is crowded with actors representing well-known personalities who flaunt specifically 'English' qualities. Visitors are offered the attraction of spending an evening in the company of a typically English personification of wit, and dine with Dr Johnson at the local alehouse, the Cheshire Cheese. Although - or rather because - the committee manages to find an actor who has internalized Johnson's characteristics to an astonishing degree, visitors' complaints against him soon fill a huge file, stating

That he was badly dressed and had a rank smell to him; that he ate his dinner like a wild beast [...]; that he was either bullyingly dominant or sunk in silence [...]; that he was depressing company; that he made racist remarks about many of the Visitors' countries of origin; that he was irritable when closely questioned; that however brilliant his conversation might be, clients were distracted by the asthmatic gasping that accompanied it (213f.)

What they complain about is, in short, that the talented actor behaved exactly like Dr Johnson.³⁵ If Joseph Addison was right in identifying "that gloominess and melancholy of temper, which is so frequent in our nation"³⁶ as one of the hallmarks of a distinctly English mentality, tourists are evidently less than delighted when they are actually confronted with it. The 'English malady' may be English, but it is not accepted as such by visitors, who prefer and demand an idealised version of Englishness that is adjusted to the tastes of the present.

Another problem the project managers are faced with results from attractive features which Englishmen are supposed to lack. Besides the difficulty of coming up with a sound, harmless wit who might substitute for Dr Johnson at the Cheshire Cheese,³⁷ they find it hard to select a historical person who might personify the typically English sex appeal, something which, given the current preferences of tourists, is held to be a necessary addition to the list of English characteristics. Dismissing candidates like Oscar Wilde and Lord Byron, Sir Jack hits upon Nell Gwynn, the most popular of Charles II's mistresses: "Won the hearts of the nation. And a very democratic story, one for our times. Perhaps a *little* massaging, to bring her into line with third millenium family values." (97) However, more than just a little massaging of historical facts is required, for Gwynn referred to herself as "the Protestant whore", had various lovers at the same time, and gave birth to at least two illegitimate children. Moreover, by today's standards, she was still a child when she began her affair with Charles. The committee, however, decides to forget about the children, her lower class origin, her morals, and the unfortunate pederastic implications. Instead, visitors get what they "expected her to have been. Raven hair, sparkling eyes, a white flounced blouse cut in a certain way, lipstick, gold jewellery, and vivacity: an English Carmen." (190) The final comparison provides a revealing comment on the existence of quintessentially English sex: Even after tampering with history to a remarkable degree, all the project can come up with is a southern beauty, as different from the stereotype of English girls as she could possibly be. As a final twist of irony, the simile implies that the committee did not manage to get rid of all the unsavoury connotations, after all, for the protagonist of Bizet's opera has working class origins and two lovers at the same time. Although the committee's activities involve the consideration and illustration of a host of allegedly typically English traits, their construction of Englishness goes hand in glove with its involuntary deconstruction.

³⁵ When summoned by Martha, this theme-park Dr Johnson talks in direct quotations from his eighteenth-century counterpart. Johnson's eccentricity and melancholy is not set in relation with his genius; as Barnes explained in an Interview with Lesley Hazleton, "Author Julian Barnes", *The Seattle Times*, 12.4.1999, <http://archives.seattletimes.com/cgi-bin/teaxis.mummy/web/vortex/display?storyID3716166>, he rejects "the romantic idea of genius stemming from neurosis, illness or violent eccentricity."

³⁶ *Critical Essays from The Spectator by Joseph Addison with four Essays by Richard Steele*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970) 201.

³⁷ Martha's task is not an easy one: "An evening with Oscar Wilde? Obvious dangers there. Noel Coward? Much the same problem. Bernard Shaw? Oh, the well-known nudist and vegetarian. [...] Hadn't Old England produced any wits who were ... *sound*?" (218)

In addition to English myths and famous personalities, many of the best known geographical sites as well as specialities of the English cuisine are reproduced in 'England, England'. The project features such sites as the White cliffs of Dover, Stonehenge, and Shakespeare's grave and such indispensable items of food as Devonshire Cream tea and Yorkshire pudding, thus highlighting the fact that any notion of 'Englishness' is likely to impose a highly artificial unitary image of the country's real homogeneity. The listing of typically English food fills more than a page, including items like plum duff, game chips, and "Poor Knights of Windsor" (94), while non-English specialities like Irish Stew are not even discussed, and even porridge is banned for its Scottish associations. This parochialism is only toned down with regard to drinks; in addition to eighty brands of warm beer, there is Island wine "served by the jug" (94), as well as a selection of armagnacs and single malts, sporting neutral, non-hibernian brand names.

The project's selection of items that are accepted as representative of Englishness thus favours attributes associated with nostalgic views of Olde England. This tendency is also inherent in the list of the fifty quintessences, whose items overwhelmingly refer to bygone days. Bent on exploiting popular preferences and the great esteem in which the countryside is held in England, Pitman's committee completely neglects modern features of England, concentrating on shepherds tending their flock, bobbies, beefeaters, bowler hats.³⁸ The novel, however, implicitly criticizes Sir Jack's method of poll taking, which deliberately keeps clear from kids' tastes and pop-bands. One important icon of Englishness, the Beatles, makes its way into the novel despite Sir Jack's preferences. When questioned whether the English weren't a proud race, having defeated Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler, Martha answers by quoting a title from a song, "'With a little help from our friends.'" (47) The name of her lover and colleague, Paul Harrison, provides an allusion to the names of Paul McCartney and George Harrison; when the inhabitants of Anglia are unable to identify the 'Land of Hope and Glory', some villagers think it is "a hymn in deference to the vicar, and others an old Beatles song" (272). By highlighting the project's obsession with the past and by obliquely suggesting that present day pop music may be an important facet of Englishness as well, Barnes exposes the one-sidedness that characterises not only the Pitman's project, but many contemporary explorations of Englishness, which overwhelmingly locate 'true' Englishness in the past.

³⁸ For a discussion of ruralism as a hallmark of Englishness see Doris Schmied, "The Countryside", 1992. Christopher Harvie, "The English Railway Enthusiast", *anglistik und englischunterricht* 46/47: *Englishness*, ed. Stephan Kohl (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992) 107-122 demonstrates that even the enthusiasm for British railways, which might well imply a predilection for technology, is steeped with nostalgia. Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation. Britain 1815-1850* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1997), 7, 240 provides further references to works which analyse the display of national heritage embodied in representations of a stylized, reproduced rural past.

Despite the nostalgic version of Englishness that the make-belief world of the island projects, actual events of English history play a minor role both in *England, England*, and in 'England, England'. This cavalier treatment of historical events is in keeping with many constructions of Englishness, for 'real' history as such is rarely taken to be the basis of national identity. What is regarded as relevant are rather echoes of the British past that are supposed to be part of the background of every educated Englishman and Englishwoman. In contrast to writers like Ackroyd and Sinclair, whose novels are built on the premise that there are traces of the past which are reflected in sites associated with historical events, and popular as well as high-brow literature, and that these traces form a part of a cultural memory shared by most Englishmen, Barnes deconstructs the notion that educated citizens' knowledge of history provides any reliable basis for the retrieval of specifically English traits. Despite the history-worship that Martha experienced at school, the knowledgeable Englishman does not know anything much about the nation's past, as Dr Max has to learn when he conducts a survey:

The Subject was asked what happened at the Battle of Hastings.

Subject replied: '1066.'

Question was repeated.

Subject laughed. 'Battle of Hastings. 1066.' Pause. 'King Harold. Got an arrow in his eye.'

Subject behaved as if he had answered the question. (83)

Further questioning reveals that the average university-educated middle-class subject is not even able to identify the participants in the battle, let alone elaborate on possible causes or consequences of the conflict. Even the famous Battle of Hastings, which gave rise to the myth of the Norman Yoke and thus takes pride of place in any patriotic version of English history is no part of the 'cultural memory' that plays such a great role in the construction of national identity. This is not to say, however, that lack of historical knowledge would reduce the level of patriotism. On the contrary, musing about the evanescent nature of memory, the project's historian realizes that "patriotism's most eager bedfellow was ignorance, not knowledge." (85)

Instead of emphasizing that the English past lingers on in the present, *England, England* exposes the assumption that people share a common knowledge about the past as mistaken. Thus the 'echo-chamber' supposedly ringing with voices and traces of the past is shown to be curiously hollow, consisting at best of names, dates or meaningless catch-phrases. Any attempt at forging a national identity therefore has to reckon with elusive memories, lack of knowledge, and highly distorted patriotic views of history; instead of retrieving 'echoes' of shared experiences, the attempt to trace Englishness always involves the invention of something new under the guise of a time-honoured tradition.

The share that literature may have in the construction of Englishness is consequently relegated to minor importance, as well. In *England, England* intertextual references, a typical feature of many of Barnes' other works, are few and far between. In contrast to Sinclair's *Gog* and

Ackroyd's *English Music*, which show how intertextuality may turn a novel into an echo-chamber of England's cultural history,³⁹ Barnes' novel greatly reduces the number and importance of intertextual references. The project's committee does not take literary texts into serious consideration. What is represented on the island is rather a watered-down version of literature, which is made palatable to the tastes of the general public: The grave of Shakespeare, the conversation of Dr Johnson, the presence of well-known literary characters like Connie Chatterley and Alice. Rather than staging the plays of Oscar Wilde, the Project reenacts his trials. *England, England* thus suggests that the collective memory of literature amounts to no more than superficial knowledge of the names of a few famous authors and fictional characters, and even they are stripped of their less attractive attitudes to meet the needs of the audience.

By way of contrast, Barnes' novel abounds with intermedial references to music. Paul repeatedly tells Martha stories about famous composers (68-70, 92, 99, see also 224), and especially Sir Jack is characterized by his musical tastes; ironically enough, he often recalls the works of two composers mostly regarded as typically German, Ludwig van Beethoven and Richard Wagner.⁴⁰ In contrast to Ackroyd's *English Music*, in which intermedial references are confined to British music, Barnes' novel suggests that the educated English person's mind is steeped in memories of Continental music, with Bizet, Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner being much more important than any specifically English tradition. Similarly, whenever there are references to painters Continental artists like El Greco or Rubens rather than Constable or Hogarth are mentioned.

Moreover, some features which have for centuries been claimed by patriotic Englishmen to be part of a quintessentially English tradition are lacking. The famous love of liberty and pride in Anglo-Saxon democratical institutions are exposed to be just another figment of the popular imagination.⁴¹ 'England, England' is ruled autocratically by Sir Jack - with a brief phase of "a relatively accountable oligarchy" (196) in between - and island law is the equivalent of company verdict. Just how the alleged love of liberty has come to be central to English national identity is suggested by the occurrences on the Isle of Wight: After the councillors have been cajoled into demanding independence from Britain by the wily Mark, one of Pitman's employees, they at once

³⁹ Cf. Ansgar Nünning, "Exploring Everyman's Search for his National Past: Andrew Sinclair's *Gog* as an Echo-chamber of England's Cultural History and a Self-conscious Reflection upon Englishness", *anglistik und englischunterricht* 46/47: *Englishness*, ed. Stephan Kohl (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992) 263-288.

⁴⁰ See Hans-Dieter Gelfert, "Picturesque England, or, The Part and the Whole", *anglistik und englischunterricht* 46/47: *Englishness*, ed. Stephan Kohl (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992) 31-48, 31. Sir Jack repeatedly thinks of Beethoven, often humming his symphonies (42, 178), and even during the brief period he has to cede his power to Martha, his "appearance might be operetta, but his tone was Wagnerian" (220).

⁴¹ The importance of the alleged English love of liberty in eighteenth-century culture is explored in Vera Nünning, *'A Revolution in Sentiments, Manners, and Moral Opinions': Catharine Macaulay und die politische Kultur des englischen Radikalismus, 1760-1790* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998).

start to invent a tradition stressing their "long struggle for liberation [...] a struggle marked by courage and sacrifice down the centuries." (177)

Although *England, England* teems with characteristics which are taken to be typically English, the notion of Englishness is deconstructed on many levels. Besides calling into question the tendency to locate Englishness in a past ordinary Englishmen know nothing about, and exposing the unfavourable aspects of English myths, the novel raises the question of "whose account of Englishness and the national culture"⁴² it is that we unthinkingly accept as the authorised version. From Sir Jack's point of view, including the opinions of foreigners in his list of fifty quintessences was not a good idea. What Sir Jack calls "barefaced character assassination" (89) - namely the inclusion of unflattering traits - highlights an important feature of current notions of Englishness, which mostly centre around rather favourable self-images. In his depiction of the Pitman's company's efforts, Barnes thus "satirizes the ideas that the English hold about themselves,"⁴³ by contrasting them with less positive domestic or even foreign notions of Englishness. Like the improved version of Sir Jack's list, who strikes off those negative traits which he regards as "the result of faulty polling technique" (88), nostalgic accounts of Englishness tend to exclude unfavourable characteristics and concentrate on the positive aspects. The Pitman project of course also omits phenomena like "flagellation" or "emotional frigidity" in their version of England, England.⁴⁴

Unwittingly, however, some of the characters on the committee display a few of the less favourable traits which are often supposed to be typically English. Thus Mark, who is accused of being emotionally retarded by Martha, explains his dislike of making friends during his holidays with the outburst "I fucking *am* English." (114; see also 110-114). Whether or not one is inclined to attribute her behaviour to "emotional frigidity" may be arguable, but Martha is also shown to shrink from human contact (see 137). Moreover, the whole project is, of course, a brilliant manifestation of that pragmatism and mercantile spirit which has established Britain's image as a nation of shopkeepers. Ironically enough, these characteristics are not explicitly related to the Project, but attributed to the English past. Thus businessman Jerry Batson illustrates his opinion that "[w]e English are rightly known for our pragmatism" (222) with reference to the way

⁴² Philip Dodd, "Englishness and the National Culture", *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, eds. Robert Colls, Philip Dodd (London: Croom Helm, 1986) 1-28, 1. As Sir Jack realizes, the list is partly the result of coincidences. He singles out the "robin in the snow" and, with superb irony, the Magna Carta, which he thinks is currently popular because it is just being translated into "decent English" (88).

⁴³ Michiko Kakutani in *The New York Times*, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ts/book-reviews/0375405828/completereview>

⁴⁴ This neutral stance, which defies joining the chorus of praise for Englishness, does not go down well with some reviewers. Thus Tom Shippey, "A Better Bogus", *Times Literary Supplement* (28.8.1998) 22 accuses Barnes of "Anglophobic verve" and of "repeated attacks on attitudes he identifies as English". Shippey also takes Barnes to task for having omitted references to historical events and myths from 55 BC to 1066; because Shippey thinks Hengest and Horsa might provide a valuable origin myth.

Parliament solved the crisis of succession after the death of Queen Anne: "Passes over fifty - *more* than fifty - perfectly good royals with best, better, and good claims, and picks an obscure Hanoverian [...]. And *then* they sell him to the nation as our saviour from over the water. Brilliant. Pure marketing." (223) The fact that such key features of Englishness as pragmatism and the mercantile spirit are missing from the list of fifty quintessences, and only mentioned in passing by a minor character provides another implicit comment on the haphazard nature of compilations of typically English traits, and once again emphasizes their constructedness.

Moreover, even the allegedly 'English' features which members of the committee display are partly called into question in the course of the novel. After all, Mark's 'emotional frigidity' is triggered by his dislike of the "authentically English experience" (113) of being chatted up in a pub. It is open to interpretation whether the hypocrisy and pragmatism characteristic of Sir Jack and most of his committee is a specifically English phenomenon or just a part of what is nowadays called 'business culture'.

The team's innumerable problems of coming up with anything authentic and their ingenious ways of constructing versions of Englishness that please their visitors imply that the notion of Englishness is nothing but an invented tradition. In addition, the detailed descriptions of the project's difficulties shed light on the process of construction itself. A marketable version of Englishness is built by first purging a supposedly comprehensive list of alleged characteristics of all the unflattering features, then getting rid of anything Scottish and Irish, selecting myths that have great popular appeal, cleansing those from connotations running counter to modern sensibilities, and last, but not least, by enhancing or even inventing items which happen to coincide with contemporary concerns. It might, of course, be questioned whether such conscious and deliberate processes of fabricating a marketable version of England's past and present really have much in common with the on-going construction of Englishness in society. But as any number of nostalgic accounts of Englishness both in contemporary novels and in cultural studies demonstrate, the deletion of unflattering characteristics and the modification of past events are common traits of such constructions. As *England, England* - in a highly exaggerated fashion - shows, the inventions of cultural traditions serve the purpose of coming to terms with the present. The activities of the Pitman company also highlight another issue that is of central concern in postmodern English literature, the problem of authenticity.

III.

The blurring of boundaries between the authentic and imitations is one of the major thematic leitmotifs of Barnes' novel. As Barnes put it in an interview, there are "opposing extremes running through the book between the public and the private, between the fake and the

authentic, between the complete lie and invention and the inner truth."⁴⁵ In this respect, there a number of obvious parallels of concern between *England, England* and novels like Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987) or Tibor Fischer's *The Collector Collector* (1997), works which also deconstruct the notions of authenticity and originality by obscuring the boundary between copies and originals.⁴⁶

The whole project of rebuilding a replica of Olde England is based on the premise that the authentic has lost its value, that postmodern subjects prefer the well-made simulacrum to the real thing. Sir Jack even flies in a French intellectual in order to get his project on a sound intellectual footing. This satirically portrayed academic elaborates on well-known postmodern doctrines, claiming that

we prefer the replica to the original. [...] it is our intellectual duty to submit to that modernity, and to dismiss as sentimental and inherently fraudulent all yearnings for what is dubiously termed the 'original.' We must demand the replica, since the reality, the truth, the authenticity of the replica is the one we can possess, colonize, reorder (55, 57).

The success of the venture confirms these predictions, in that the island prospers because it offers the convenient replica, which proves to be far more attractive to tourists than viewing the authentic sites in England: "given the option between an inconvenient 'original' or a convenient replica" (185), a high proportion of tourists would opt for the latter. After all, the 'real' thing is not as well-preserved, readily accessible and pleasing as the copy, and the actors impersonating taxi-drivers or peasants are much more friendly and 'in character' than their real counterparts. As Sir Jack shrewdly foresaw, behaviour which is learned paradoxically is "the more authentic" (110). As the project goes into operation, and actors increasingly take over the characteristics and habits of their historical models, the lines between the replica and the real thing begin to blur, and it becomes ever more difficult to distinguish the copy from the real.

This deconstruction of the conventional distinction between originals and copies is officially sanctioned by the Project's historian, who dislikes the venture for any number of reasons, but not because it is 'bogus'. As he explains to Martha, the "very notion of the authentic [is] somehow [...] bogus" (134). Since it is impossible to determine any "authentic moment of beginning, of purity" (135), any so-called 'original', be it Athenian democracy or Palladian architecture, can always be traced back to an earlier object which it imitates in some way. Therefore everything is a copy.

Dr Max' prediction that postmodern subjects wouldn't know what to do when they encountered anything "real" or "natural" is amply borne out by the behaviour of the tourists who

⁴⁵ Denning 1998.

⁴⁶ For a detailed reading of *Chatterton*, see Ansgar Nünning, "'Die Kopie ist das Original der Wirklichkeit'. Struktur, Intertextualität und Metafiktion als Mittel poetologischer Selbstreflexion in Peter Ackroyds *Chatterton*", *Orbis Litterarum* 49 (1994): 27-51.

insist on being presented with a polished and improved copy of the past. When faced with a close resemblance of real manifestations of Englishness like Dr. Johnson's unpolished eighteenth-century manners, they demand their money back.

It thus comes as a surprise that at least in one instance Sir Jack determinedly rejects the notion that the replica is to be preferred to the original. Although the project has a very efficient "Royal Family" in training, he insists that they won't do: "it's *just not the same*." (148) Luring the real king with offers such as lots of money, means of evading tiresome representative duties, and the promise of a favourable press - Sir Jack has bought and relocated *The Times of London*, number 16 of the list of quintessences - they succeed in installing his Majesty and his wife Queen Denise in a half-sized replica of Buckingham Palace. The reason for Sir Jack's apparent preference of the original soon becomes obvious, however, because the king, variably characterised as "a wonderfully parodied Prince Charles,"⁴⁷ in one review, and as "an oversexed moron"⁴⁸ in another, demonstrates the interchangeability of the authentic and the imitation, by managing to be both at the same time.

Barnes' presentation of King Thingy, as he is called by his wife, pushes the blurring of the boundaries between the authentic and the simulacrum to its mindboggling limits. The king, a worthy descendant of King George I, who is characterised as "dull as ditchwater" (223), relies on script writers to provide his punchlines, carefully rehearses his behaviour, and spends his life representing royalty. Having been hired to play himself, the King imitates the behaviour of his ancestors. This 'real' King of England, England, who has been promised that "very good replicas will shoulder most of the burden" (171) of tiresome daily rituals for him, soon starts to copy the habits of his illustrious predecessor King Charles II, as Nell Gwynn, the unfortunate object of King-Thingy's unflagging sexual attentions, complains. It becomes more and more difficult to distinguish the 'genuine' King from an actor playing an English monarch, the more so since King Thingy imitates royal manners by giving in to his own sexual urges. As Queen Denise knows, there is only one cure for this manifestation of 'personality slipping', and this is to question the authenticity of the bodily allurements of Nell. Denise's words "Are they real, do you think?" (169) prove to be the only way of checking the King's extra-marital ardour. There is one feature of royalty, however, that the 'real' king does not intend to emulate: Martha's worry "What if the King decided he really wanted to reign"? (231) proves to be unjustified, thus implicitly raising the question of whether reigning had ever been an activity characteristic of the Windsors.

Though most reviewers identify the relation between the real and the imitation as an important theme of the novel, they tend to refer only to the long satirical middle section, which is often thought not to fit together well with the more serious tone of the unanimously acclaimed

⁴⁷ Richard Eder, "Tomorrowland", *The New York Times Book Review* (9.5.1999) 17.

⁴⁸ Unsigned review in *Kirkus*, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ts/book-reviews/0375405828/completerevuew>

first and last parts depicting Martha's childhood and old age. The preference for the short bracketing sections over the controversial middle part is arguably based on an idyllic (mis-)reading of an "authentic" rural experience depicted in section III, which some reviewers regard as a neatly fitting counterpart to Martha's childhood experiences.⁴⁹ Valentine Cunningham, for instance, opines that Anglia "proves a kind of paradise, some sort of genuine old England"⁵⁰. Similarly, Richard Eder confirms that this "is Olde England [...] as it was. [...] They are themselves."⁵¹ In this reading, two sombre depictions of rural settings frame the satiric, allegedly 'inauthentic' middle section delineating the simulacrum world of the essence-of-England theme park. This interpretation, however, ignores the complexity of Barnes' exploration of the relation between "the fake and the authentic". Far from being an idealised version of authentic rural Englishness that contrasts favourably with the project's world of make-belief, life in 'Anglia' serves to underscore the idea that the boundaries between the real and the imitation have been blurred.

Instead of featuring people who "are themselves" and live simple, honest and authentic lives, the characters in the last part of the novel provide just another curious amalgam of the real and the copy. Thus Jez Harris, "one of the most convincing and devoted villagers" (270), is a fake, an immigrant from America who deliberately changed his name and his lifestyle because he preferred the rural environment to his boring routine as a junior legal expert with an American firm. Jez, whose real name is Jack Oshinsky, enjoys telling village folk lore, and likes to intrigue rare visitors - mostly linguists or anthropologists - with his fanciful tales of local legends. Jez' story-telling is severely criticized by the schoolmaster, however, not because his legends do not correspond to 'reality', but because they are copies. The trouble with Jez' stories is that they cannot be found in the antiquarian compilations of folk lore, that they are Jez' inventions. However, this case of a replica of a villager telling self-made copies of legends serves the purpose even better than the real thing. In spite of knowing some 'true' legends, Jez continues to fabulate, for the very good reason that visitors prefer them to the 'original' (252).

Barnes depiction of an idyllic world of 'Anglia' deconstructs the nostalgic notion of life in Olde England on two levels. Although the life of the villagers in Anglia in some ways conforms to rural modes of living in the past and thus conforms to idealised notions of ruralism, this version of Englishness is neither "a kind of paradise", as Valentine Cunningham believes, nor in

⁴⁹ Cf. the summary of the reviews analyzed by the *Complete Review*, "most think the three parts are not made to fit together well, and many don't like Barnes' efforts at satire (though others find it hilarious)." See also Maggi Gee, "Career, money, sex - why waste time on them?" *booksonline* 8.9.1998, <http://www.booksonline.co.uk/booksol?ac=001893634312555&rtmo=fMwwDyws&atmo>, who also draws attention to the resemblance of the last part with "John Major's famous speech about warm beer, cricket and 'old maids' on bicycles." This comparison is drawn by several reviewers.

⁵⁰ Cunningham 1998.

⁵¹ Eder 1999, 17.

any way 'authentic'. Although many features of the nostalgic life are recaptured - e.g. common land is re-established, domestic animals are smaller, washing "flapped dry in the clean wind" (265), and even the roofs of cottages are decked with reed or thatch -, this adjustment to economic circumstances does not entail more friendliness or interpersonal warmth. On the contrary, Barnes exposes the negative sides of village life as well: "Nobody's business went unobserved; pedlars were greeted warily; children were sent to bed with tales of highwaymen and gypsies [...] though few of their parents had seen a gypsy, and none a highwayman." (265) Prying and xenophobia form part of this nostalgic 'paradise' displaying many of the alleged characteristics of Englishness.

Moreover, the inhabitants of Anglia discover that it is impossible to re-experience or relive the old times. Even though the material circumstances might warrant it, the villagers do not return to 'authentic' pre-industrial attitudes and habits. The vicar realises that a profound change has taken place, for he knows better than to preach old-fashioned religion and morals, which would only drive his flock away (271). In spite of the fact that the outward forms and economic conditions resemble those of the past, the people living in them have internalised modern values. This is emphasized by the fact that the villagers look for models in the past to establish manners and rituals that would be in keeping with their economic circumstances, thus verifying Dr Max' claim that there is no new beginning. Planning to "revive - or perhaps, since records were inexact, to institute - the village Fete" (254), they exchange memories and study old books in order to ascertain how to conduct such a gathering. The result is a hybrid conglomeration of the old and the new, sporting a May Queen, a dressing-up competition and Cornish wrestling - refereed by Coach Mullin "with an open encyclopaedia in hand" (273), while the band plays traditional tunes and Beatles' songs like 'Penny Lane'. But in spite of their initial lack of orientation and their conscious efforts to revive old customs the inhabitants soon convince themselves that the Fete had always been a regular feature of their lives: "The Fete was established; already it seemed to have its history." (275) In short: the invention of another tradition has been accomplished, though the actual past played practically no role in the process.

With regard to the construction of Englishness, the equally nostalgic and futuristic theme-park and the old-fashioned 'Anglia' arguably have much in common. Neither Sir Jack's conscious rebuilding of Olde England nor Anglia's uncomfortable regression to pre-industrial times arrive at any sort of authenticity. In their different ways, both the project and the village inhabitants recreate their idealised versions of Olde England. Their failure to find authentic records and their blundering efforts to recreate the past highlight the impossibility of ever retrieving origins and originals: Adjusting the past to their own specific needs, both ventures result in the invention of new, rather than old traditions.

IV.

By calling into question the existence of anything that might be called 'authentic', *England, England* also undermines the notion of historical truth. The difficulties the committee have in finding out what really happened amply demonstrate the truth of the poignant comment in *Flaubert's Parrot* that "What happened to the truth is not recorded."⁵² In contrast to many other contemporary novels, however, there are no narratorial comments which reflect on the nature of historical truth. The concern with epistemology and history is rather illustrated by the activities of the committee and Martha's difficulty in trying to recall her childhood. Only the project's historian sometimes informs the rather naive members of the committee about the pitfalls of his profession. As Dr Max is ready to admit, historiography does not fabricate copies of historical reality:

What, my dear Jeff, do you think History is? Some lucid, polyocular transcript of reality? Tut, tut, tut. The historical record of the mid-to-late thirteenth century is no clear stream into which we might thrillingly plunge. As for the myth-kitty, it remains formidably male-dominated. History, to put it bluntly, is a hunk. (152)

Since authentic records are lacking and past accounts are always influenced by the preferences of the present, neither the committee nor the inhabitants of Anglia are able to reconstruct the 'true' past. That the same holds true for individuals trying to recall their childhood or even recent events is demonstrated by Martha's experiences, for even the unflinchingly honest protagonist comes to realize that she is unable to reconstruct what she had thought and hoped for when she began her affair with Paul (219). Barnes thus alerts the reader to the idea that our models of national or individual history are as much an intellectual construction as the fictional world projected in the novel.

With regard to the construction of Englishness, there are even more serious problems involved than the by now familiar insights into the elusiveness of the past suggest. As Dr Max explains, "the greatest and grossest" (199) and at the same time the most common misconception of people trying to recover a specifically English tradition lies in the assumption

that the past is really just the present in fancy dress. Strip away those bustles and crinolines [...] and what do you discover? People remarkably like us, whose sweet essential hearts beat just like Mama's. Peer inside their slightly under-illuminated brains and you discover a range of half-formed notions, which, when fully formed, become the underpinnings of our proud modern democratic states. (199)

The point that he is making is that people thought and felt differently in the past, and that their characteristics cannot possibly bear any resemblance to present-day Englishmen and -women. The past is no unbroken, continuous progress, in which typically national traits are slowly developed until they fully emerge in the present. As L.P. Hartley aptly put it in the first

⁵² Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* (London: Picador, 1985) 65.

sentence of his novel *The Go-Between* (1952), "the past is a different country", and any search for one's own national characteristics in that foreign land is bound to go astray.

Any attempt at finding the essence of Englishness in the past is bound to fail for yet another reason, for it proceeds from the mistaken premise that an individual's or a nation's identity is located at some specific point in the remote past. Thus Martha realizes "that most people located their nature in childhood" and sometimes look at old photographs in order to define that true nature; but she immediately asks herself, viewing such an old photo of herself: "was this her nature or only her mother's poor photography?" (232) Rather than being encapsulated in an earlier stage, a nation's identity is constantly changing, with the nation constructing its history as it goes along.

As the novel progresses it becomes increasingly clear that what is important is not history but memory, the construction and interpretation of the past from the point of view of the present.⁵³ Although searching for past events and remembering scenes from one's life will never result in an 'objective' recording, it is still necessary, for it serves many purposes. The essence-of-England theme park exploits only a very reductive fraction of the manifold possible functions, as Jeff points out: "the point of *our* history [...] will be to make our guests [...] *feel better*." (73) The fictional heritage centre delineated in Barnes' novel is meant to serve the needs of present visitors who mainly want to amuse themselves, perhaps finding some continuity and meaning in the nostalgically adapted past, which might help them to make sense of the fragmentary presence.⁵⁴

Barnes' novel also suggests that one of the major functions of a nation's collective memory lies in its importance for forging its national identity. Although it is impossible to retrieve 'authentic' past manifestations of Englishness, their exploration still helps to construct and stabilise a sense of identity. When Martha ruminates about her early childhood, she realises the central importance of memory: "It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself." (6) The construction of a continuous history gives coherence to fragmentary experiences, makes it possible to establish patterns, and to provide explanations for what happened, both with regard to the history of a

⁵³ Although it goes a long ways, memory is not the only component of identity, no matter what the propaganda of *The Times of London* - published from Ryde - claims, which states that "memory is identity" (259). If memory were the only component of identity, England, England, having appropriated the commemoration of English history, would indeed have become England.

⁵⁴ Sir Jack's venture can be regarded as the epitome of the 'heritage-culture' which is controversially discussed by a number of academics in Britain and the U.S.A., who distinguish between a non-critical, mainly affirmative, escapist and conservative treatment of the past (heritage) with a critical exploration of history which is held to be important for making sense of the present. See, for instance, Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987) and David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985). For a short but poignant introduction into this discussion, see Richard Stinshoff, "History or Heritage - Überlegungen zur kulturellen Bedeutung der englischen Kanäle damals und heute", *anglistik und englischunterricht* 46/47: *Englishness*, ed. Stephan Kohl (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992) 83-106.

nation and the life of a person. The invention of a tradition is thus shown to be of essential importance for individuals and countries. Nonetheless, it is worth remembering what Barnes satirically illustrates over and over again, viz. that there is no 'essence' of Englishness, let alone a 'quintessence'. Just like any other construction of past events, the invention of 'Englishness' is primarily a means of coming to terms with the present.

In sum, the committee's activities, the villagers' search for traditions, and Martha's attempt at recapturing her childhood illustrate de Certeau's thesis that "the past is the fiction of the present".⁵⁵ These fictions differ according to the "myth kitty" (152) and the needs of the present, but even under the most favourable circumstances they will never represent a true copy of the past. Although Barnes provides a host of reasons for the fact that constructions of Englishness can never be anything more than a fake, it is not the factual existence of past events or specific character traits that *England, England* calls in question, but man's ability to know or faithfully represent the true course of history. Whether Sir Jack or the members of the committee display any typically English features is open to debate and interpretation; what is abundantly illustrated, however, is the fact that any attempt at constructing Englishness by having recourse to the past is bound to result in just another invented tradition.

V.

With its interest in Englishness, the nature of historical truth, and the blurring of boundaries between the authentic and the imitation, Barnes' novel shares important concerns with many contemporary British novels. The crossing of boundaries between history and myth, as well as between individual stories and collective history has become one of the hallmarks of postmodernist historical novels. Like a host of other novels published after 1960s, e.g. Antonia S. Byatt, John Fowles, Penelope Lively, Graham Swift and Nigel Williams, *England, England* is concerned with the question of how much we can ever know about the past. Barnes' novel is unique, however, in the way it employs these by now familiar ploys of 'historiographic metafiction'. Moreover, the exploration of the limits of historical knowledge is not central to the novel, but ancillary to Barnes' wider concerns: It highlights the impossibility of ever knowing what Englishness consisted of in the past, and it deconstructs the notion that there is either a continuity between past and present Englishness, or something like essential 'Englishness'.

Though the deconstruction of the boundaries between the authentic and the copy is a major theme of quite a number of contemporary British novels, Barnes' arguably goes quite a bit further in his treatment of this theme in giving yet another turn of the screw by illustrating the exchangeability of the real and the replica. Since he stresses that there is no specific point in the past that can be regarded as 'authentic' and thus provide a touchstone for our distinction between

⁵⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, transl. by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia UP, 1988) 10.

the real and the copy, he calls into question the differentiation between these alleged opposites itself. This deconstruction of boundaries, moreover, serves to demonstrate that, even if we had the means of unearthing and representing the past in an objective way, there is no authentic Englishness to be found either in the remote past or, for that matter, anywhere else.

Both the historiographic metafictional concerns and the blurring of boundaries between the simulacrum and the real thus illustrate the most important feature of Barnes' novel, the assumption that Englishness is nothing but a heterogeneous mixture of invented traditions. In contrast to other fictional explorations of Englishness, Barnes' novel foregrounds the process of construction which results in the invention of national characteristics. Similar to the 'kitty' which, according to the Project's historian, produces "primal English myths", the tools forging the selection and enhancing of features that are ultimately presented as 'English' are largely Anglo-Saxon, middle-class, and male. The English tradition that is the result of this process of invention comes dangerously near to being chauvinist, xenophobic and racist: Just as other accounts of Englishness, Sir Jack's island does not include any Scottish, Welsh or Irish features, let alone immigrants, blacks or slaves.

Laying bare the process of invention and highlighting the project's nostalgic notion of 'Englishness', Barnes suggests that current conceptions of Englishness are anything but unproblematic. *England, England* foregrounds the parochial nature of any construction of Englishness, even more so since it shows that the Pitman committee's exclusion of anything Irish and Scottish - let alone anything European - is a salient feature of many constructions of Englishness. The novel also stresses the separatist tendencies inherent in Englishness, which leads to the independence of the Isle of Wight, and ultimately to the selling of northern territories of England. By exposing the negative consequences and nationalist implications of Englishness, the novel brings to the fore the destructive nature of the parochial thinking that informs such singleminded inventions of nationality, while also showing that it counteracts the process of European unification. In contrast to the constructions of Englishness characteristic of, for instance, Ackroyd's *English Music*, Barnes suggests the need to radically rethink popular notions of Englishness.

Exhibiting the biases and problems of current versions of Englishness, and presenting two versions of Englishness one might usefully reject, Barnes suggests that an England trying to catch up with developments elsewhere may indeed be in need of new traditions. After all, in the nineteenth century Englishmen and -women - with a little help from historians like John R. Seeley - managed to invent a new tradition of Britain as an imperial nation, when they realized that the older self-image of freedom-loving Englishmen no longer served the needs of the present

and that it did not correspond to the ambitions of an imperial phase.⁵⁶ On the brink of the third millennium, it may be time to once again change popular conceptions of the past and of typical character traits, as Pitman's 'improved' version of Englishness demonstrates. Furthermore, *England, England* displays some features of Englishness that do not bear any overt chauvinist or separatist connotations: One of the recurring motifs of the novel is St. George, "patron saint of England, Aragon and Portugal, as well as protector of Genoa and Venice" (12, 49, 275).

Barnes' novel thus provides a noteworthy and intriguing contribution to the ongoing debate about Englishness, a topic which is a major concern of contemporary literary criticism and cultural history at large.⁵⁷ In the field of history, Linda Colley's pioneering study *Britons*, which investigated the processes through which the British nation has been forged since the Act of Union 1707, has led to a renewed interest in British and English national identities, a word which is currently used only in the plural.⁵⁸ Antony Easthope's recent *Englishness and National Culture* (1999) not only bears witness to the great amount of contemporary interest in Englishness in the area of cultural studies, it also provides a new departure for investigating the concept.⁵⁹ Like Barnes *England, England*, Easthope displays a critical attitude to a wide range of characteristics held to be typically English, and he also rejects the notion that 'true' Englishness is to be found in the past, devoting half of his book to current manifestations of nationality in discourses like journalism or history-writing.

Barnes goes even further than Easthope, however, for he not only criticizes allegedly representative character traits of the English as a nation, but starts from the premise that perceptions of national identity are always constructs. This notion has become a point of departure for historical and political studies ever since Benedict Anderson published his influential book *Imagined Communities* (1983), in which a nation is defined as an imagined

⁵⁶ See my articles "Vom historischen Ereignis zum imperialen Mythos: *The Siege of Lucknow* als Paradigma für den imperialistischen Diskurs", *anglistik und englischunterricht*, 58: *Intercultural Studies: Fictions of Empire* (1996): 51-71, and "'Daß Jeder seine Pflicht thue'. Die Bedeutung der *Indian Mutiny* für das nationale britische Selbstverständnis", *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 78 (1996): 363-391.

⁵⁷ Cf. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); John Lucas, *England and Englishness. Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990). Hubert Zapf, "National Literary Historiography from a Transnational Perspective: On the Conception of the *Amerikanische Literaturgeschichte*", *REAL. Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* 14: *Literature and the Nation*, ed. Brook Thomas (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1998) 287-315, 294 also reflects on "the common denominator and unifying principle of a national American literary culture and history".

⁵⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven/CT: Yale UP, 1992). See also Hans-Dieter Metzger, ed., *Religion and National Identities in Great Britain, 1500-1900* (forthcoming in April 2000). In two masterly studies, Raphael Samuel explores the way in which changing myths and traditions about the English past inform the present: *Theatres of Memory. Volume I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994), and *Theatres of Memory. Volume II: Island Stories* (London: Verso, 1998).

⁵⁹ See Antony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

community, "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members [...] yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."⁶⁰ Imagining a common history provides one of the major bonds between members of such communities, and the 'cultural memory'⁶¹ of groups thus plays a major part in forging and maintaining national identities. The rituals and images held to be representative of a nation since times immemorial are quite often of surprisingly recent origin, and more often than not they are invented to begin with, thus reflecting the present-day needs and concerns of a community trying to establish continuity with a suitable historical past. In a groundbreaking work Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger coined the phrase *The Invention of Tradition* to describe such processes. From the point of view of the cultural historian trying to explore national identities, "the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes"⁶² can indeed be most revealing, but so can investigations of novels that are engaged with Englishness and the invention of traditions. Presenting a "scandalous analysis of our nation's glorious past" (95), *England, England* forcefully illustrates that "Getting its history wrong is part of becoming a nation."

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⁶⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991 [1983]), 6. Anderson rejects Ernest Gellner's formulation that nationalism "invents nations where they do not exist", because Gellner implied that this invention is a fabrication, resulting in something that falsifies.

⁶¹ On the influential notions of collective or cultural memory, which was developed by Maurice Halbwachs in his seminal books *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), and *La mémoire collective* (1950), cf. Pierre Nora et al.: *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1992). Ulrich Raulff, "Ortstermine: Literatur über kollektives Gedächtnis und Geschichte", *Merkur* 43.2 (1989): 1012-1018. Aleida Assmann, "Das Gedächtnis der Orte", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* Sonderheft 1994: "Stimme, Figur": 17-35. Jan Assmann, *Das kollektive Gedächtnis* (München: Beck, 1997 [1992]). Matt K Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996). See also the following collections of essays: Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher, ed., *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1988); Aleida Assmann and Dietrich Harth, ed., *Mnemosyne: Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1991); cf. also the articles in the special issue "Collective Memory" of *The American Historical Review* 102.5 (1997).

⁶² Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", *The Invention of Tradition*, eds., Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (London: Cambridge UP, 1992 [1983]) 1-14, 6. I should like to thank Sigrid Schneider for patiently tracking down reviews of Barnes' latest novel.