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Englishnesses: Traditional and Alternative Conceptions of English National Identity in Novels by Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles, and Jeanette Winterson

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ENGLISHNESSES: TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF
ENGLISH NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NOVELS BY JULIAN BARNES, ANGELA
CARTER, JOHN FOWLES, AND JEANETTE WINTERSON

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Englishnesses: Traditional and Alternative Conceptions of English National Identity in Novels by Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles, and Jeanette Winterson

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This dissertation addresses the concept of English national identity as a series of ideological constructs in selected novels by Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles, and Jeanette Winterson. To this end, this study includes texts that best reveal the struggle between the various forms of national identity: *England, England* and *Metroland* by Julian Barnes; *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children* by Angela Carter; *Daniel Martin* and *The Magus* by John Fowles; and *Gut Symmetries* and *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson. Each novel explores the space between the lived experience and the inherited notion of Englishness. By using sociological studies, cultural criticism, and historical analyses, readers can better notice how the abstract affects the concrete and vice versa.

This study evaluates the common model of traditional Englishness in relationship with alternative conceptions of national identity through four topics: the Bildungsroman, myth, performance, and the family structure. Each topic allows readers to become aware of ideological processes behind English national identity and, in turn, the ways in which Englishness is constructed to a particular purpose. The traditional Bildungsroman model, for example, depicts the movement towards social appropriateness and, hence, towards appropriate forms of Englishness. Myths often create an unrealistic and empty expectation of England and its people. Individuals perform traditional Englishness in

these novels to particular ends. And the traditional Western family model can be read in concert with traditional Englishness to demonstrate how those traditional forms are legitimated. In each novel, traditional forms of Englishness are depicted as problematic and negative. However, alternative Englishnesses do not provide an answer. Instead, the novels depict a range of responses to Englishness that indicate that the choice between traditional and alternative is misleading since all versions of English national identity are merely constructions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: ENGLISHNESS, IDEOLOGY, AND IDENTITY:

RECONFIGURING ENGLISHNESS

At the beginning of Julian Barnes's *England, England*, the main character, Martha, muses about the nature of memory:

If a memory wasn't a thing but a memory of a memory of a memory, mirrors set in parallel, then what the brain told you now about what it claimed had happened then would be coloured by what had happened in between. 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)

Martha's comments imply that memory allows us to accept the more salutary if unpalatable present by reconfiguring the past. Reflecting what she herself remembered as a child, Martha creates memory in the form of a compensatory narrative to assuage the confusion caused by her father's absence and parents' divorce. This psychological need for creating a personal history by treating the past as a selective filtering system serves as a metaphor for the way in which a nation can mine its history to uphold a specific ideological view. For example, when Martha's classmate calls Sir Francis Drake a pirate, Martha denies the classification, even after she reads an encyclopedia entry for Drake because he "remained for her an English hero, untainted by this knowledge" (Barnes, *England* 7). Even after Martha admits that the terms associated with Drake in the encyclopedia – "privateer" and "plunderer" – could certainly be interpreted negatively, she accepts only her own specific idea of Drake (7).

So when Barnes indicates that historiography consists of making “the present able to live with itself,” he is talking about the contingency of national identity, the way in which its definition is arbitrary and dependent on the ideological need of a particular time. Equally important here, as Martha would testify, is the emotional connection to that identity. Hence the point of *England, England* is that the copy of national identity becomes not only more popular than England itself, but the copies or simulacra become more satisfying than the original. Barnes’ suggestion that just such a thing was – and is – possible, caused me to think about the constructed nature of English national identity, its exposure as an artifice, and the extent to which contemporary novelists are engaged in contemplating the permutations of Englishness that are likely to be curated for the future.

Currently, English national identity is in a considerable state of flux. As literary critics like Raphaël Ingelbien contend, “Englishness provides a puzzle for theorists of national identity” because it is an identity that no longer has clearly delineated figurative borders (159). The variations that have precipitated the shifting view of Englishness, among them immigration and devolution¹, have helped deconstruct what it means to be English by questioning basic assumptions about the English, like the idea that to be English one needs to have ancestors who were Anglo-Saxon, and exposing traditionalist views of English national identity that imagine identity as consistently historically accurate and verifiably inherited. These traditionalist views of national identity are considered natural and authentic only on the abstract level since, in practice, such models

¹ Colin Pilkington offers a good basic definition of devolution in his work on British devolution: “[...]the process by which political power is transferred from the centre to local or regional bodies, which thereby carry out governmental functions while leaving sovereignty in the hands of central government” (9). For an in-depth introduction to the concept of British devolution, consult Pilkington.

of national identity are often rejected. The characters in the novels that I have chosen to write about often use and distort Englishness to fit their needs. As a result, these novelists expose Englishness as a construct that has changed on a concrete level but has remained static in its abstract equivalence. Englishness in this way often represents destruction, decay, and stagnancy, and those characters who embrace it often experience a schism in their identity. In short, there is a fundamental division between a sense of English national identity as an abstract concept that brings people together as a collective identity and the concrete articulation of Englishness through everyday living; consequently, this division allows the characters in these novels to capitalize on the meanings of Englishness on a stereotypical level.

Admittedly, when most people are confronted with stereotypes about themselves, they become defensive. No one wants to be the stereotype. However, many of the characters in the novels I have chosen for this study use the stereotype to their own ends, which brings up a number of questions. Do the English still believe in traditional views of Englishness? If the English are willing to exploit stereotypes to influence others, are they simply playing a role? When do they learn such traditional roles? And, once used, are the English trapped in their stereotypes?

Far from buying into their own traditions, the English novelists used in this study imply that stereotypical, traditional, conventional notions of Englishness no longer accurately represent contemporary conceptions of Englishness. The characters in these novels are often depicted as either using the stereotypes to their own ends or fighting against convention. Yet, traditional Englishness remains. Therefore, these novels isolate a present problem with English national identity, which has been brought into question

because of fundamental losses to Britain. Through selected novels by Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles, and Jeanette Winterson, these novelists argue that (1) English national identity is currently unstable; (2) conventional notions of Englishness that have been destabilized are repressive, limiting, and outdated; (3) the current instability in English national identity affords individuals an opportunity to change how Englishness is conceptualized; and (4) despite the willingness to change, conventional ideas of Englishness will not be erased. These novelists suggest that the answer to this problem is to accept the flexibility of Englishness and the constructed nature of national and personal identities. The changes to Englishness will happen regardless, and so the English must move forward any way they can. This study will attempt to plot that movement.

Studies on Englishness: Historical and Literary Criticism

Despite the overwhelming changes to Britain and England since World War II, studies on English national identity over the past ten years or so have typically focused on pre-World War II works, postcolonial perspectives of English national identity, or supposedly historical English traits like landscape or personality. For example, Peter Kalliney's *Cities of Affluence and Anger* (2007) looks at Englishness in terms of modernism and the class system in the context of early twentieth-century literary conceptions of London which, Kalliney argues, reflect England's move from an imperialist power to a more open conception of a common culture. Kalliney uses works like *Brideshead Revisited*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Howard's End*, and *The Satanic Verses* to accomplish this task; and the bulk of his study focuses on the earlier half of the twentieth century. Likewise, Linda Colley's work, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992),

has had a significant influence on studies of contemporary Englishness like Krishan Kumar's *The Making of National Identity* (2003), despite the fact that her work focuses on the history of the so-called British nation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than more recent conceptions of England. Colley's work focuses on history over literature, but it seems conspicuous that those knowledgeable on the subjects of contemporary Britishness and Englishness often refer to this work, indicating a possible hole in the present work on Englishness. Silvia Mergenthal's work on Englishness focuses on the way England is viewed in the 1990s. In her book, *A Fast-Forward Version of England* (2003), Mergenthal addresses a variety of English novelists from the perspectives of "Us and Them," "Now and Then," and "Here and There," attempting to depict the manner in which Englishness is typically created between these dichotomies (25). Mergenthal's study is one of the few studies that I have encountered which addresses contemporary novelists both inside and outside of postcolonial concerns, although her interest in space places her in another present trend: studies about landscapes and space.

These approaches are intellectually valid, useful, and needed in studies of English national identity; however, while these studies focus on the ideas of personal identity and the dichotomy of the interior and the exterior, they largely ignore contemporary white English writers as if such writers or characters within their work are in too privileged a social and cultural position to articulate or understand such issues of identity even though many of those writers are making similar points about the ineffectuality of current conceptions of Englishness. If writers were talking about contemporary issues, they often focused on postcolonial examples of Englishness that focus on ethnicity, and if they were

discussing the past, they largely ignored the postcolonial aspect to discuss more canonical works. Or in the case of writers like Mergenthal, they are interested in landscapes as a manifestation of Englishness. In short, I found a scholarly gap since most studies focus on either postcolonial subjects or periods before the 1960s, hence my project on English national identity that focuses on the ways in which individuals imagine national identity through contemporary English novels, particularly since these novels capture what I would argue is the current reaction to English national identity.

Much like the work on Englishness as a whole, the literary criticism on these four authors – Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles, and Jeanette Winterson – indicates a gap in the scholarship on Englishness. There is, of course, some interesting work being done on the more obvious examples of English national identity in this study. Several literary critics have addressed *England, England* by Barnes: for example, Vera Nünning addressed the novel in her article titled “The Invention of Cultural Traditions” as did Nick Bentley in his article about “Re-writing Englishness” on *England, England* and Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*. However, on the whole, there is not a considerable amount of work on any of these novelists in terms of English national identity. More often, what I have found critics who address issues of personal identity instead of English national identity in these novels.

In the majority of the scholarship on John Fowles, critics focus on issues like the quest archetype, identity construction, and alienation. Susana Onega, in her article on Fowles’ body of work, argues that “The lesson Urfe learns is basically [...] how to redefine his notions of self and world” (40-1), but she does so without acknowledging any possible repercussions for any of his novels in terms national identity. Thomas C.

Foster identifies how the both identity construction and the quest lead to alienation in Fowles' works: "Alienation is the standard starting point of a Fowlesian novel or story: the hero, who is male, is cut off from his fellow human beings, out of step with his society, and at odds with his own true self" (6).

Much like Fowles, there has been almost no scholarship on Englishness in Barnes outside of his novel *England, England*. Out of the major books about Barnes' writing, most focus on his view of French culture, his focus on postmodernity, and his depiction of women. In his chapter on *Metroland*, Merritt Moseley identifies "France as both a place and a psychological influence for the English" (18). Bruce Sesto comments on both postmodernism and women in *Language, History, and Metanarrative in the Fiction of Julian Barnes*. Matthew Pateman even lists the recurring concerns in Barnes' novels: "male friendship, sexual fidelity, betrayal, love, and the status of knowledge" (2). These issues come to bear on my analysis of English in *Metroland* and *England, England*, however; so they work for the purposes of my study.

Angela Carter is one of the few novelists in this study which has a considerable amount of criticism available about her work. Despite the amount, little to nothing has been said about national identity in particular. The works I have found most useful are Linden Peach's *Angela Carter*, Alison Lee's *Angela Carter*, and Lindsey Tucker's edited collection *Critical Essays on Angela Carter*. These writers acknowledge the influence of gender, legitimacy, and performance in Carter's novels. One chapter of Peach's book is devoted to legitimacy and performance in both *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*, and Alison Lee allots two separate chapters to discussing the novels in terms of performance – including the role of Shakespeare in *Wise Children* (122).

Jeanette Winterson's work defies a sense of national categorization that the other authors in this dissertation seem to either embrace or challenge, and much of the scholarship on Winterson addresses her rejection of labels. A lot of critical energy has been expended in pursuit of understanding sexuality in Winterson's novels, which is decidedly more fluid than most conceptions of sexuality out there. For example, Sonya Andermahr interprets "religion in the first half of the text [of *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*] as a metaphor for Jeanette's as yet unspoken sexual difference" (51). Connected to Winterson's interest in a more fluid concept of sexuality is the constructed nature of binaries, which Andermahr (50) and Makinen (3) make note of. Most of Winterson's novels put both time and space into question, a trend a few writers including Lyn Pykett have acknowledged (54).

The organization of this dissertation was created organically from the themes, issues, and concerns found in the novels I have chosen to discuss, and it is largely through finding the similarities in criticism that I was able to organize those themes while acknowledging the large hole in present scholarship concerning Englishness. I have chosen works from across a forty-plus year span, and these novels are not arranged by decade. There is also some thematic overlap that is important to recognize in the present study. The majority of these novels could be utilized in other chapters; *Wise Children*, for example could easily fit into the performance chapter for its focus on literal performances including Shakespeare. And while I have avoided doing that in this study, I realize that the potential is there; these themes overlap in specific and interesting ways that can impact the nature of the creation of English national identity.

Identity, National Identity, and English National Identity

Before I introduce English national identity specifically, I need to crystallize my definition of identity in general. I adopt a traditional view of identity, as something that makes people unique, allowing them to differentiate themselves from others, while being simultaneously caught up in concerns about belonging and fitting in with traditional or socially acceptable characteristics. As Kath Woodward puts it, “Our identities are shaped by social structures but we also participate in forming our own identities” (1). Identity, then, is not just about looking at oneself, but it is also about looking at others looking at that self. It is also the reason people can have multiple identities; they are playing to different crowds or individuals who have different expectations. Stuart Hall says that identity is “the meeting point... between, on the one hand, the ideological discourses which attempt to interpellate or speak us as social subjects, and on the other, the psychological or psychical processes which produce us as subjects which can be spoken” (“Fantasy” 65). There is, then, constant interplay between our inner definition of self and the expectations others have of us and create for us.

The relationships between the internal and external forces that shape identity cause individuals to imagine not only themselves but also the others around them. As Trinh T. Minh-ha argues, “Identity, thus understood, supposes that a clear dividing line can be made between the I and the not-I, he and she; between depth and surface, or vertical and horizontal identity; between us here and them over there” (415). Minh-ha’s claim borrows from Jung the term “not-I” but also mirrors that concept frequently used in theoretical and philosophical circles: the Other. As Stuart Hall explains it, “Identity is always, in that sense, a structured representation that achieves its positive only through

the narrow eye of the negative” (“The Local” 174), which is the not-I, the Other. This statement expresses a basic principle of identity construction: individuals create the boundaries of their identity by excluding certain characteristics, beliefs, and actions that are espoused by other people. The concept of the boundary is central to identity construction as much as it is to any concept of definition. In essence, identity is the definition of the self, and boundaries are created through the interaction between the internal and external forces that shape those boundaries. Thus, while the Other is a negative concept, the boundaries created by that concept are necessary to shape any sense of identity. So, it follows that any general conception of identity influences the conception of national identity since the self has to embrace a sense of the communal that is embraced in and by all the “not-I”s.

Importantly, though, any conception of national identity does not have to be tangible; instead the “not-I”s are usually imagined. Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities*, considers the cause of national identity as an imaginary one: “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Anderson’s idea that nationhood can never truly be concrete and that nations are, as Anderson imagines them, “cultural artefacts [sic] of a particular kind” remains a central concern of this dissertation (4).

Anderson’s conception of nationhood as imaginary is reminiscent of Raymond Williams’ idea of the masses in *Culture and Society*. In that work, Williams states, “The masses are always the others, whom we don’t know, and can’t know. Yet now, in our kind of society, we see these others regularly, in their myriad variations; stand physically

beside them... To other people, we are also masses. Masses are other people" (*Culture* 299-300). The masses, then, appear to be those an individual might see but do not know personally, those who walk past them on the street but in whom they do not have a personal investment. Previously, as Williams indicates, the masses were faceless; by adding a face to them, one may imagine a greater affinity for them; but as Williams also indicates, no one can never completely be part of the masses because, by definition, they are a communal conglomeration that implies someone other than the self. The creation of the imaginary masses in *Culture and Society* almost anticipates other imaginary communities that Anderson illustrates in his work since one will never meet the majority of the people from his or her own nation.

The world of the masses is also the world of the imaginary, and as Terry Eagleton has argued, this realm of the imaginary is a central conceit of ideology. Eagleton argues that the materialist or concrete view of ideology, which he says "most theories of ideology have arisen from" (33), has been replaced by its understanding as "a sphere of abstract, disconnected ideas," a legacy from Marx and Engels (70). Being able to imagine something as both concrete and abstract is not unique to Eagleton, though. Tom Nairn makes a similar argument in chapter seven of *Break-Up of Britain*, "The English Enigma." While discussing the "mobilizing myth of nationalism," Nairn argues that one cannot consider such a myth abstract in the way that one can with a concept such as "The Working Class" (283). Instead, "It has to be a concrete, emotive notion anchored in popular experience or lore" (283). These seemingly contradictory statements, however, indicate that theorists are concerned with both the concrete and abstract elements of national identity since no consensus exists for the universal characteristics of nationality.

And in order to create a complete definition of any national identity, one must be aware of both the concrete and abstract evocations of nationalism, as Eagleton and Nairn alternately identify.

The creation of national identity is actually a constant negotiation of the concrete and abstract. It is important to use the word “negotiation” in the context, because, like Homi Bhabha in “Commitment to Theory,” a chapter from his work *Location of Culture*, the focus is on “*negotiation* rather than *negation*” of seemingly contrary elements (37). As Bhabha explains it, negotiation is about navigating “contradictory and antagonistic instances that open up hybrid states and objectives of struggle, and destroy these negative polarities between knowledge and its objects, and between theory and practical-political reason” (37-8). What Bhabha says relates directly to the concept of the abstract and concrete: one cannot dismiss either side as completely worthless but must negotiate a space wherein both can exist.

In addition to giving readers the ability to understand the negotiation of the abstract and the concrete in terms of national identity, the concept of the masses offered by Williams also introduces a new take on the Other. While the Other typically represents someone who is abstract and everything that “I” am not, the masses in general symbolize for Williams ideological oppression since they are predicated on the idea of “a minority in some way exploiting a majority” (Williams, *Culture* 314). In this way, one can see to what extent the masses resemble the concept of the Other as well as acknowledge that, in this case, the masses are used by a small minority to propagate a specific view of the world that is, in turn, deemed popular, legitimate, and natural. The conflation of Englishness and whiteness, for example, is couched in something concrete but obscures a

larger and more abstract ideology that uses that classification to further a specific notion of the English as imperialism. As Williams puts it, individuals can never know the masses because they are always one step removed from them; the masses are as imaginary as any conception of the nation (299-300). What the masses and the nation have in common, however, are their concrete manifestations. Thus, individuals can see the masses on a busy street but never know them. They are masses in both the concrete and abstract, but like a bustling city street, their movements, as Williams indicates, change the direction of thought and action, manipulating popular thought and often, in turn, the “I”. The idea of the concrete and the abstract is also explored in Ernest Renan’s article, “What is a Nation?” where Renan argues that the nation is created out of two parts: the past and the present. “One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form” (Renan 19). It is by imagining the past that one creates the abstract, and it is by living together that one creates the concrete. However, Renan acknowledges that “nations are not eternal” because of this negotiation between an abstract past and a concrete present (19). Renan even offers a tongue-in-cheek definition of nations that he attributes to political theorists: “a nation is above all a dynasty, representing an earlier conquest, one which was first of all accepted, and then forgotten by the mass of the people” (12). That definition offers more than just a chuckle, however, because, through it, Renan reminds readers why they should consider the past abstract. While someone has experienced it materially in the moment, the past has become memory instead of action, and as such, it can be forgotten and warped to fit the needs of the people or nation.

In addition to the conception of the past and the present in national identity, both Ernest Renan and Krishan Kumar also identify a central concern of many studies of national identity: race. As Renan puts it very simply, “race is confused with nation” (8). Renan goes on to explain the way in which such a view is maintained: “It is a population’s race which remains firm and fixed. This is what constitutes a right, a legitimacy” (13). Those who take this ethnic view of national identity would assert that race equates with historical verifiability, a lineage that one can trace over the years. In a similar fashion, Krishan Kumar also compares civic, ethnic, and imperial identities in chapter two of his book, *The Making of English National Identity*. For Kumar, the terms “ethnic nationalism” and “cultural nationalism” are synonymous, and his view of cultural nationalism, “a ‘community of fate’, not a ‘community of choice’” (*Making* 24), acknowledges the manner in which nationhood is legitimized. Likewise, Kumar relates a similar sentiment in his essay “‘Englishness’ and English National Identity”: “The hallmarks of this ethnicity were held to be language, religion, history, and blood or ‘race’. These expressed the ‘soul’ of the nation and every nation, it was felt, must have a soul” (48). As a result of conflating race with nation, other races are delegitimized in the context of determining Englishness.

Renan and Kumar’s analyses of race introduce a key term that will become central to this work: legitimacy. As both indicate, the conflation of race and nation creates a standard by which national identity is measured: only those who meet criteria that are considered “natural” can pass the test of nationhood. This metaphor resonates most notably in the chapter on the English family, where I explore the metaphorical relationship between family and nation. The idea of a “legitimate” national identity

predicated on race mirrors the idea of a “legitimate” family predicated on clear parentage. But novels like Angela Carter’s *Wise Children* refute that sense of legitimacy on both a familial and national level, implying that part of the problem is that a minority propagates a script of legitimacy that even they do not follow; and so that script is impotent in creating a “legitimate” sense of identity.

The legitimate/illegitimate dichotomy runs on the premise that national identity is at the very least ideologically fueled. Anderson, for example, calls nationalism “the pathology of modern developmental history,” something everyone is preoccupied by and which people unwittingly characterize as “ideology” (5). Anderson says that it would “make things easier if one treated it as if it belonged with ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’, rather than with ‘liberalism’ or ‘fascism’” (5). While Anderson implies that there are levels of ideological concern, he also seems to swiftly ignore the ideological implications that Althusser identifies in his work, “Ideological State Apparatuses”: that institutions like religion and family are ideological forms as much as liberalism and fascism are. And I would argue that diminishing the ideological impact of things like kinship and religion only perpetuates a system by which these institutions affect people on unconscious but powerful levels. Although Anderson’s work is influential and important to any discussion of national identity, his nonchalant disregard for the ideological power of certain less overtly political institutions is a troubling problem.

Instead of merely accepting Anderson’s view of the breadth and depth of ideology, I adopt Terry Eagleton’s definition of ideology, wherein ideology and legitimization are interwoven terms. Eagleton argues that determining whether something is ideological is “to claim that it is powered by an ulterior motive bound up with the

legitimation of certain interests in a power struggle” (16). Furthermore, Eagleton says that “An important device by which an ideology achieves legitimacy is by *universalizing* and ‘eternalizing’ itself. Values and interests which are in fact specific to a certain place and time are projected as the values and interests of all humanity” (56). Ideology manifests when people accept a certain view of the world as traditional, normal, natural, or universal, thereby promoting a specific view of the world and our place in it. However, in the novels I have chosen to address, the acceptance of ideological structures and values often accompanies physical, mental, or social destruction or loss. Instead, these novels often privilege the view of alternate conceptions and ideologies of Englishness and acknowledge the artifice of national identity while offering alternatives for national identity structures.

Thus, national identity is an imaginary community that relies on the negotiation of the communal and the individual, the I and not-I, the past and the present, and the abstract and concrete. In bringing a nation together on abstract and concrete levels, national identity is a construction that raises some people up and ignores others. That is because while national identity is a construction, it can also be considered ideologically-driven if not an ideological apparatus itself. It relies on legitimation to uphold likewise imaginary hierarchies of privilege, presuming a certain level of “naturalness” behind that conception.

Defining Englishness

As an identity formation, English national identity is elusive. Although it uses boundaries to create a specific sense of self, attempting to separate itself from other national identity constructions, there is also Anderson’s sense that nations have “finite, if

elastic, boundaries” (7). The problem of conceptualizing English national identity is evident, given the number of lists that have been conceived under the guise of explaining Englishness.

In *England, England* Julian Barnes indicates the arbitrariness of this process by introducing the “Fifty Quintessences of England,” a list I will return to a few times over the course of this dissertation. These quintessences are compiled in order to help create the perfect simulacrum/theme park based on England and called England, England. The items are based on specific institutions like “2. Big Ben/Houses of Parliament” and “16. Times Newspaper” as well as postcard inspired concepts such as “6. A Robin in the Snow” and “18. Thatched Cottages” (Barnes, *England* 86-7). In addition to these concrete conceptions of Englishness, however, there are more abstract ideas of Englishness on the list, including characteristics like “21. Phlegm/Stiff Upper Lip” and “42. Whingeing” (87). The list that Barnes creates for the novel resembles the general interest in creating national identity through both the concrete and the abstract and suggests that while there is pervasiveness about certain concepts, collectively the list lacks any meaningful cohesiveness.

Barnes’ awareness of the evanescence of national identity is reminiscent of George Orwell’s “The Lion and the Unicorn,” one of the most well-known works on the English national character in which Orwell can capture only the notorious breadth one encounters when attempting to characterize Englishness:

The clatter of clogs in the Lancashire mill towns, the to-and-fro of the lorries on the Great North Road, the queues outside the Labour Exchanges, the rattle of pin-tables in the Soho pubs, the old maids hiking

to Holy Communion through the mists of the autumn morning – all these are not only fragments, but characteristic fragments, of the English scene.

(qtd. in Mandler 207)

While these paint a picture of the feeling of Englishness, as Orwell asserts, “How can one make a pattern out of this muddle?” (qtd. in Mandler 207). Orwell admits that he merely depicts a fragmentary representation of Englishness. Other writers during the period of Orwell likewise attempted lists, most notably T.S. Eliot’s which included “Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar” (qtd. in Mandler 207). Neither list is all-inclusive, nor can it be. However, these lists have been quoted and requoted over the years, and as Peter Mandler mentions, they are sometimes misquoted. He gives the example of John Major, whose famous St. George’s Day speech in 1993 was meant to “tone down both Thatcher’s nationalism and her individualism...triggering only a volley of sniggers, not the feelings of warm familiarity Major sought to evoke” (Mandler 234). As Mandler argues, Major’s speech failed because it was hard to revive any past evocations of Englishness, like Orwell’s, “showing how difficult it was to shove any pre-packaged vision of national identity down a skeptical public’s throat” (234). There is an ideological resilience behind this recognition of cultural icons with a simultaneous failure to produce a cohesive identity or a decidedly contemporary feel. Individuals relate Englishness back to a specific past, but they cannot quite connect that past to a present concrete sense of identity.

Outside of purely literary sources, there have been numerous lists and surveys that have attempted to crystallize Englishness over the past fifteen years or so. Before

Orwell, for example, political scientist Sir Ernest Barker wrote a book titled *The Character of England* (1947), and in an excerpt from the book, titled, “Some Constants of the English Character,” he includes characteristics like “social homogeneity” (55), “the vogue of the amateur” (58), “gentleman” (59), “voluntary habit” (60), “eccentricity” (61), and “youthfulness” (61). But lists can never be all encompassing as Richard Hoggart of *The Independent* recognized when he attempted to make sense of categories like “English” and “British” as well as the need to make lists to elucidate the qualities of each. After fifty-plus years of the English making such lists, Hoggart surmises that “We should do better at defining our combination of qualities, good and bad, and so try to live better with them; beginning with qualifying our ‘patriotism’ by recognising that it is all too often a narrow, unintelligent insularity, which rightly surprises other Western European nations” (para. 22). Thus, Hoggart politely rejects the usefulness of such lists until the English learn to create a more accurate and less ideal picture of Englishness. As Hoggart implies, no number of lists will completely explain Englishness, a fact even those creating the lists seem to agree upon. One can say, as Orwell does, that Englishness is defined by certain fragmented images like the “clatter of clogs in the Lancashire mill towns,” but is that it? Or should individuals agree to any list that attempts to concretely identify the nature of Englishness, even though such a list will never completely do Englishness justice?

Peter Mandler would argue that a sense of national character has been replaced by a sense of national identity, and this is why characteristics are not enough since he distinguishes identity from character by explaining identity as “the consciousness of belonging to a group, though not sharing with it all one’s innermost qualities” (196).

Angelia Poon explains it best when writing about Victorian conceptions of Englishness, claiming that Englishness is “resistant to language and representation, more easily felt than described” (1-2). This idea is actually quite helpful, since it roots national identity in experience rather than a listing of stereotypical pursuits, interests, or appearances. However, these writers also unwittingly acknowledge an inherent problem with national identity conceptions, namely that one often imagines these conceptions as natural and abstract. It is like the common phrase “I’ll know it when I see it,” the problem being that most people are not so astute as to intuitively understand Englishness across a continuum of experience. They often see only the list or the stereotype.

And that is the only real problem with considering Englishness as a feeling: it leads to the naturalization of certain general views of English identity. As Stuart Hall intimates, the very idea that identity becomes naturalized is common: “[...] one sees what one always sees when one examines or opens up an ethnicity. It represents itself as perfectly natural: born an Englishman, always will be, condensed, homogenous, unitary” (“The Local” 175). Hall identifies here, like Kumar and Renan, not only the naturalization of Englishness but also the fact that to characterize Englishness as an ethnicity presupposes a certain degree of unanimity that can barely be expected of such a large nation. One must defer to some anonymous and imaginary majority like Williams’s “masses” to create such a unity.

The use of a mythology or even pseudo-mythology would help to naturalize a particular version of English national identity, imagining Englishness as having such a long lineage that its establishment cannot be pinned down by a specific time. In other words, naturalized English means an Englishness that is so historically bound that its

beginning lies beyond history. Or, to put it in another way, “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 1). As Bhabha explains in this statement and in subsequent paragraphs, while the nation is a potent concept, when applied to England, the originating stories of Englishness are not as complicated as the practice of Englishness in everyday life, which is constantly in flux: “the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality” (1). Most importantly, Bhabha roots national identity in the difference between theory and practice, stating that there is “a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it” (1). In essence, Bhabha’s point attempts to help individuals make sense of the space between theory and practice, namely that while people may imagine national identity as a fixed point in theory that does not mean that such a fixed point exists in practice.

Traditionally, this is the way Englishness has been seen: as a nation with such an incredible lineage that it can be defined only in the broadest strokes. However, the problem with the traditional notions of English national identity is that while traditional modes of conceiving of Englishness worked in the past, those modes no longer reflect the concrete actions of day-to-day life. Living Englishness in a concrete way can never completely resolve its relationship with the general abstraction of traditional Englishness, and so English national identity should be defined as the constant negotiation of both feeling and action.

Influences on Englishness

There are a number of influences on the current view of English national identity; and while this study cannot address all of them, it will focus on some of the influences that have cropped up in the novels I discuss and that have influenced my view of English national identity. These influences include devolution, the dwindling of British imperialism, and the growth of immigration. These issues are both causative and connected, and they reflect the current instability of English national identity.

A major issue that has affected English national identity is the breakdown of the British Empire. By 1920, the Government of Ireland Act allowed the area eventually termed the Republic of Ireland the opportunity to govern itself (Leese 18). And Leese notes the six years of recession in Britain directly after World War II: there were food and coal shortages, which caused people to go cold and hungry, as well as natural disasters like flooding that crippled parts of the Commonwealth (25). In short, the war left Britain wounded, and by extension, the empire faltered. Niall Ferguson has also cited the encroachment of other empires as a central threat to the British Empire, downplaying the efforts of “nationalist movements within the colonies” (292). Whatever gets the blame for the end of the empire, the empire was for all intents and purposes dissolved by the mid-1960s – or at least the “important parts” were, according to Ferguson (292). The losses in the earlier half of the twentieth century have precipitated changes in laws; inspired an influx of immigration; and facilitated devolution in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. But why does it matter to the English if the British Empire disappears?

As numerous historians, sociologists, and critics have proposed, the English and their collective identity have been caught up in British imperialism since the beginning of

imperial enterprise. This is, perhaps, why Britishness and Englishness are often conflated, even for those who live outside of Britain who often confuse Britain with England (Kumar, *Making* 1). After all, Britishness is meant to encapsulate multiple identities while Englishness has aligned itself with one main identity. Kumar also notices that this is not just an English phenomenon – the accidental conflation of English and British – and identifies other countries in the British enterprise caught up in this aggregation. Kumar calls this the “lordly English habit of subsuming British under English,” and says that by accepting such a conflation, others, like foreigners and other British people, “reinforce them in their bad habits” (1-2). Morley and Robins also claim that “‘Englishness’ has long been the hegemonic component in the supposedly broader term of ‘Britishness’” (4). England has largely benefitted from this arrangement since they have assumed the identity of the larger imperial power above Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

Yet, while Britain’s political bond is disintegrating, England must feel the pain of such a loss, since it is akin to losing a pervasive sense of power across the globe. Tom Nairn critically argues that the indeterminacy of Englishness is intrinsically connected to the creation of empire:

Too internally differentiated for the vulgar measurements of nationalism, the English then spread themselves too far externally. Empire diluted the imponderable essence even farther, to the point where the recapture has become impossible. That is why there is no national dress, an obscure and unresurrected folklore, and a faltering iconography (‘John Bull’, etc.).
(280)

Any cohesive attempts at identity are therefore elusive. As Stuart Hall says, “English never was and never could be that still, unitary point,” saying that it was “always negotiated against difference” (“Local” 176). However, the imaginary conception of Englishness is still a potent one. Brocklehurst and Phillips call this idea of unity a “collective forgetfulness,” which, much like the creation of communal memories, involves “the reconstruction or deconstruction of the past for the sake of the nation” (xxiii). This also involves ignoring that difference for the sake of homogeneity, resulting in a denial of difference despite a concrete reality.

The “collective forgetting” that Brocklehurst and Phillips recognize is one that has allowed the English to not consider the growing influx of immigrants in England as authentically English. The influx of immigrants to England was due precisely to British imperialism, as Anthony Glyn identifies in *The British: A Portrait of the People*. Glyn acknowledges the “large-scale and more controversial immigration of immigrants from outside Europe” which “began after the last war” and which included West Indian, Pakistani, and “other Asian immigrants” (23). Glyn argues that the phenomenon caused “the greatest change in the image of the Britishman since the Norman Conquest” (23), a claim that obviously challenges the static ideology implicit in Brocklehurst and Phillips’ idea of collective forgetfulness. Although I cite Glyn’s book, I find the book problematic because, like many studies, it unconsciously conflates Englishness and Britishness. While he says that Britain was affected by immigration, many of the issues he discusses – like homogeneity (17) and the idea of fair play (29) – are often associated specifically with the English.

My concern over the conflation of Britishness and Englishness, nevertheless, does not lessen the impact of immigration on a homogenized version of Englishness. As Stuart Halls states, “the very moment Britain finally convinced itself it had to decolonize, that it had to get rid of the colonies, the colonized began flooding England” (“Local” 176). Hall also explains that reasoning based on his own personal experience as the child of West-Indian immigrants: “No, they had always said that this was really home, that the streets were paved with gold, and, bloody hell, the people from the margins decided to check out whether it was so or not” (176). How could immigrants not want to see what the center of the empire was like? And so, as Hall and Glyn both explained, they came in droves, not just from Asian countries, but like Hall, from places in the Caribbean as well.²

The end of the British Empire did not merely inspire people from the margins of the empire to flock to England; it also helped precipitate the devolution of Britain. Krishan Kumar discusses this issue in two separate works: the smaller article, “‘Englishness’ and English National Identity,” and the book, *The Making of English National Identity*. In both, Kumar explicates Englishness and the way in which it is related to Britishness. In *Making*, Kumar introduces the idea that Britishness upheld a larger, global sense of imperial power, while that power was also instituted inside Britain as well: “It was by creating and maintaining the ‘inner empire’ of Great Britain that the English secured their position and established their dominance in the British Isles” (250). This theory of Britishness implies that Englishness is part of a complex hierarchy whose

² Of course, connected to this romanticized view of the Empire is also the more concrete draw towards the center, as Izabella Curyłło-Klag identifies, like “adjustments in employment practice and the job markets, which made greater mobility necessary for continued career development” (112).

position at the center of Britishness invariably lessens the power of those parts of Britain that exist outside the boundaries of England. As a result, Englishness is often confused for Britishness.

However, once that “inner empire” was deconstructed by the dissolution of the “outer” Empire, England was no longer protected under the British name. In “‘Englishness’ and English National Identity,” Kumar explains the events that sped devolution along were rooted in the decline of empire:

England, the core nation, stood exposed, no longer protected by a surrounding carapace of Britishness. The other nations of the United Kingdom began to envisage a rosier future as separate members of the European Community. England too was forced to consider this prospect and, in the process, to reassess itself and its future identity. (52)

Without the sheath of Britishness covering it, England was no longer assured of its superiority, so there was no need to continue imagining it as the center of some grand power structure. As Kumar suggests, the other nations were able to accept the change easily, since they were only part of a jumble of Britishness and had an identity outside of Britain prior to devolution. Hence, Scotland and Wales could move out of the shadow of such a power structure. By the mid-1970s, these two nations were able to propose the Scotland and Wales Bill, which meant “examining, and changing, the basis of power itself” (Nairn 51). The bill was unable to pass at that time; but as Nairn suggests, the break-up of Britain was inevitable after the loss of the empire. Beyond the question of power was the question of Englishness. As Christine Berberich observes, “Plans for Welsh and Scottish Devolution have caused the English to turn away from defining

themselves as ‘British’ and try to assert quintessential English traits” (375). And here readers come back full circle to a renewed interest in English national identity. Without the touchstones of racial and social homogeneity and without the power structures inherent in a cohesive sense of Britain that have informed a traditional sense of Englishness, the English are forced to reconfigure their sense of nationhood. While many resort to stubborn and reactionary versions of Englishness, I would argue that many others, including the writers of my study, are rejecting, reevaluating, and attempting to deconstruct/reconstruct a new sense of English national identity.

Chapter Summary

The four major chapters of this dissertation mirror my own understanding of the ways in which English national identity is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed. In the second chapter of this dissertation, by using the concepts of adolescence and maturity to address national identity, I indicate that the creation of binaries, literally and figuratively begins in childhood, but that does not imply that such binaries will continue through adulthood. Krishan Kumar’s view of national identity and Robyn MacCallum’s theory of adolescent identity and ideology help to concretize my understanding of the ways in which adolescence informs national identity. I also explore adolescence as a metaphor for exploring England’s relationship with the Other in terms of other countries. The boundaries of English national identity are defined by what they are not: in the case of Barnes’s *Metroland*, France, and in the case of Winterson’s *GUT Symmetries*, America.

While adolescence is a study in evolution, it is contradicted by the static nature of myths that are learned and perpetuated from a young age. Nevertheless, my argument in

chapter three is that individuals gain meaning from certain myths that are both ideologically driven and imagined as historically valid, even though they are simply a creation just like any other story. I use the works of social theorists on myth like K.K. Ruthven, Harry Slochower, and E.M.W. Tillyard to construct a definition of mythology and the way it informs the creation of English national identity. The meaning that comes from the myths in the novels of Barnes's *England, England* and Fowles's *Daniel Martin*, serves to subvert the idea of a concrete form of Englishness, since any meaning derived from such myths is also created from an imaginary conception of communality, one that is as pervasive and resilient.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation, on performance, addresses the way in which Fowles's *The Magus* and Carter's *Nights at the Circus* use performance to negotiate Englishness. Much as myths inform our idea of Englishness, performance likewise informs national identity. Human beings perform versions of themselves, as sociologists like Erving Goffman and Judith Butler would argue. In turn, that performance exhibits our personal values and beliefs, but it also exhibits the values and beliefs of our collective culture. There is give-and-take between what human beings create and what creates them. People are shaped by culture; but, in turn, they help shape culture. This chapter deals with the manner with which this performance of self relates to the performance of Englishness.

The fifth chapter of this dissertation is concerned with familial identity and its metaphorical application to national identity. Individuals gain their earliest lessons, values, and meanings from their families (for better or worse), something that is central to the characters in Carter's *Wise Children* and Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only*

Fruit. In questioning the idea of the traditional family structure, those characters also metaphorically question forms of Englishness. I use the works of theorists like Françoise Lautman and Charles Rosenberg, who study families and their various permutations to comment on the legitimation of a particular view of familial and national identity. In the novels selected here, the dichotomy of the legitimate/illegitimate family mimics the dichotomy of English/not English in its denial of certain forms of family over others, privileging one and denying the rest. The novelists I discuss not only complicate traditional ideas of what a family should be and the manner in which it should operate, but they also complicate the idea of Englishness by changing the values associated with traditional forms of English national identity.

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECTIVITY, COMMONALITY, AND THE BILDUNGSROMAN: THE INFLUENCE OF TRAVEL AND OTHER EXPERIENCES ON NATIONAL IDENTITY IN *METROLAND* BY JULIAN BARNES (1980) AND *GUT SYMMETRIES* BY JEANETTE WINTERSON (1997)

In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Louis Althusser explains that “children at school... learn the ‘rules’ of good behavior... and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination” (103). The most interesting facet of childhood in terms of the Ideological State Apparatuses is the way children are taught to embrace cultural practices that are considered normal and replicated from one generation to another. In this respect, the acceptance of ideological structures is analogous to the acceptance of national identities given that the creation and reiteration of a specific ideological form of nationalism inevitably perpetuates a specific world view of that nation and its relation to other nations. To that extent, the cultural rules taught to children about self and that self in relation to national identity are part of the same systemic ideological flow.

The assumption underlying these repetitive annunciations of beliefs is that they signify a culturally insular world, one that is almost completely oblivious to the idea that there may be other “worlds” or beliefs out there that are just as viable and that possess a different understanding of communal identity. This appearance of narcissism is predicated on an awareness of, and a reaction to, the presence and influence of other countries. The problem is, of course, that because of this myopic view, individuals are

often able to understand other countries – and in turn their own – only by evoking stereotypical views of those countries.

Consequently, this chapter will address the effects of the metaphor of maturation and the genre of the Bildungsroman on English national identity in terms of the following proposition: as they move from adolescence into adulthood, the main characters of the novels begin to question the ideological structures inculcated when they are children and the stereotypes of their nation that abound as a result of the insecurity of adolescence. Those characters are able to question these structures and stereotypes through the direct experience offered in the traditional Bildungsroman that focuses on learning about the self through first hand experiences like travel. As a consequence, adolescence and the accompanying move to maturity, autonomy, and subjectivity can be seen as a metaphor for the (re)consideration of national identity. The characters in these novels use their knowledge as adolescents to (re)create their own identities and those identities, in turn, influence their understanding of the identities of other countries as well as their own.

Contemporary English novelists like Winterson and Barnes use the perspective of adolescence to show the ways in which characters become self aware as they mature and learn about the world. I interpret that perspective as a metaphor for a fluidity and maturation in cultural knowledge. The main characters in both novels – Alice in *Gut Symmetries* and Chris in *Metroland* – are constantly questioning the world and their place in it. Their identities are never depicted as concrete or rigid. Instead, these characters negotiate their own ontological insecurities in ways that lead them to accept either multiplicity or singularity in their personal and national identities without question. This

decision is often predicated on an almost-mindless acceptance of arbitrary characteristics that define such identities.

Adolescence, Identity Politics, Nationalism, and the Bildungsroman

One way to address the maturation of the young adult is through the Bildungsroman because of its focus on certain issues that ultimately intersect meaningfully with concepts of national identity. In particular, the accumulation of experience, through phenomena like travel and the function of the apprenticeship, allows individuals to mature and become subjective and autonomous before eventually returning to their homes. As the traditional Bildungsroman typically results in the acceptance of certain cultural values, so can the Bildungsroman be considered a genre about ideological acceptance, which can be used to discuss novels like *Metroland* and *Gut Symmetries* that discuss Englishness. However, each novel reflects upon the Bildungsroman differently: *Metroland* uses a conventional model of the Bildungsroman to show the manner in which it causes individuals to accept ideological structures, whereas *Gut Symmetries* rejects the conventional model and shows alternative ways of attaining maturation and autonomy.

Although the forms of analyzing the Bildungsroman vary based on circumstances, there are several characteristics that define its basic form.³ Jerome Hamilton Buckley, for example, explains the basic establishment of plot in the Bildungsroman as follows: “A child of some sensibility grows up on the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination” (17). As a resident

³ Michael Minden, for example, focuses on the traditional Bildungsroman which has its origins with Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, but focuses on incest and inheritance, while Lorna Ellis analyzes the British Bildungsroman and the concept of female development, and Susan Gohlman discusses the Bildungsroman of the 20th century.

of the country, the protagonist of the Bildungsroman finds knowledge in its antithesis, the city, which Buckley calls an “agent of liberation and a source of corruption” (20). One of the main agreements that Susan Gohlman finds among critics of the Bildungsroman is the sense that “the protagonist gains knowledge of the self and the world through direct experience,” and I would argue that one of the main ways characters gain experience, at least in *Metroland* and *Gut Symmetries*, is through travel, a direct path to experience (ix).

While experience can be found in the Bildungsroman in terms of travel, it can also be found in the concept of apprenticeship. As Jerome Buckley observes, traditional apprenticeship involves a young man learning a trade by practicing it, wherein a skilled tradesman helps the young man learn that trade. One of the alternative names of the Bildungsroman is the novel of apprenticeship (Buckley vii). Although, in general, the concept of apprenticeship is about learning a trade, I would argue that the concept of the apprenticeship can be used for both novels even though neither Chris from *Metroland* nor Alice from *Gut Symmetries* enter into what one could call a traditional apprenticeship. However, these novels do conform to another characteristic of the Bildungsroman that relates to direct experience similar to the apprenticeship: “at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting” (Buckley 17). Chris’s main apprenticeship in *Metroland* occurs during his trip to Paris under the ruse of studying “The Importance and Influence of British Styles of Acting in the Paris Theatre 1789 – 1850,” which comes to nothing but leads him to his sexual apprenticeship of sorts with Annick (Barnes, *Metroland* 83). In *Gut Symmetries*, physicist Alice already has a job; but like Chris, she seems to find a sexual apprenticeship through her relationship with Jove, a fellow physicist, and later Jove’s wife Stella. Although this form of apprenticeship is

unconventional, it does allow them to further their experience with the world as well as other countries.

Most definitions of the Bildungsroman focus on the movement of a young man through maturation, as both Minden and Buckley indicate when they incorporate the term “young man” (Minden 1) or the male pronoun “he” (Buckley 17) into their definitions of the Bildungsroman. However, writers like Ellis and Buckley acknowledge the restrictions that the main character of the Bildungsroman faces, noting that “maturity” comes with the price of accepting certain ideological constructs: “In both [the male and female Bildungsroman], maturation comes at the expense of adventure and some personal autonomy” (Ellis 19). This correlation between maturation and losing certain freedoms in order to be part of a collective identity and ideology will come into play throughout this chapter.

Perhaps not surprisingly, autonomy and subjectivity are also central concerns at the heart of novels that address adolescence. In *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction*, Robyn McCallum identifies children’s need for autonomy as they grow into adults and begin to better understand themselves more concretely apart from a collective identity. Interestingly, while one might typically define solipsism as the inability to see past oneself, McCallum identifies two forms that will be particularly useful when discussing Barnes and Winterson: either subjects fail to see the individuality of others, or they cannot accept autonomy for themselves. The former denies the agency of others, while the latter denies the agency of the self (McCallum 7). These two forms, still in play during childhood, are whittled away as children move from adolescence to adulthood; but as McCallum makes clear, that movement signals a dangerous paradigm wherein

individuals are caught between “two ideologies of identity,” one rooted in communality and the other rooted in subjectivity (7). Because Barnes’ novel uses the conventional Bildungsroman model, it is rooted in communality, whereas Winterson’s novel, in rejecting the model, rejects communality in favor of the individual.

This paradigm is mirrored in the customary plot of the Bildungsroman. In Lorna Ellis’s view of the “novel of development” in women’s novels of the nineteenth century, she claims that the Bildungsroman produces a balance “between seeming opposites... between an affirmation of social norms and a pointed critique of society” (10). While Ellis argues that these female protagonists appear to lose a sense of self, they gain power by working within the constraints of their society. Gohlman likewise acknowledges this trope in the Bildungsroman, explaining that one form of the Bildungsroman is concerned with “clearly defined values which the protagonist must come to terms with and ultimately accept as his or her own” (ix-x). Of course, the other form that Gohlman describes ignores such values since “it is the protagonist’s task... to create out of their own experience those standards by which they must live” (x). So, the characters in Bildungsromans must either be subjected to the standards of others or create those standards for themselves through experience, and these choices reflect the task involved in the creation of subjectivity.

McCallum argues that this need for subjectivity contains a simultaneous need for alternative ideological structures: “The ideological frames within which identities are formed are inextricably bound up with ideas of subjectivity [...]” (3). In gaining a level of autonomy or subjectivity, the adolescent re-examines the ideological structures into which he or she was born. Referring to subjectivity, McCallum suggests that such a

tension between ideology and subjectivity indicates that there is a constant conversation between the individual and the social forces that exist in a culture, a mediation that involves negotiation rather than settlement. Metaphorically, the dialogue between ideology and subjectivity can either reinforce or subvert a sense of concrete national identity through the use of Bildungsroman characteristics.

Krishan Kumar's essay "‘Englishness’ and English National Identity" succinctly establishes the interplay between ideological reification and the need for individuation that for McCallum signifies the adolescent experience. There is, on one hand, a decidedly ideological cast to Englishness. As Kumar acknowledges, Englishness has historically reflected the interests, manners, and habits of the upper and upper middle class English: "It was their politics, their church, their sports, their manners and ways of speaking, their schools and universities, their view of history [...]" ("Englishness" 53). And that influence has ideologically influenced several generations of English people to classify Englishness in a particular vein, turning something that is meant to be universal into something exclusionary and elitist. Kumar makes note of the ideology of Englishness, arguing that "Englishness may be an ideology, but as is well known ideologies tend to diffuse themselves widely in society, touching groups which may be very distant from the centres of power" (53). Englishness, as Kumar indicates, affects more than simply those who are English, or even those who fit into the mold of the typical English person, but rather anyone who has ever heard of England. This is pertinent to both novels since their main characters travel to other countries and are privy to an alternate view of Englishness from others.

As a cultural influence, Kumar also indicates that the present sense of Englishness cannot be easily or successfully subsumed by an alternative vision of English nationalism that would attempt to assimilate cultures, races, classes, and other categories that have been excluded from traditional forms of Englishness. Consequently, the inherently traditional definition of Englishness is constantly solidified. As Kumar argues,

People may not consciously seek a national identity or even know that they have one, but there are moments in their lives, both individually and collectively, when they seem to need one and reach for it. Englishness, as it has been handed down and celebrated, is today an embattled concept and practice. It is out of touch with many of the ideas and much of the reality of contemporary British society. But it would be foolish to think that it cannot still generate enthusiasm and mobilize considerable support, at all levels of society. (“Englishness” 53)

Despite fighting a rear-guard action centered on its relevance, Kumar notes that individually and communally, Englishness provides a common ground on which to communicate as a cohesive social body politic. Furthermore, it is not a concept that will be overcome at any point in the foreseeable future, since it has been so assimilated into the national consciousness.

Kumar parallels the words of McCallum by highlighting the way in which Englishness persists as an ideological form despite its seeming disconnection with subjective experience: it may be “outdated”, but people still “need one and reach for it” (Kumar, “Englishness” 53). As McCallum suggests in terms of adolescence, the relationship between subjectivity and ideology is always in flux. By extension, to

completely understand the national identity paradigm, one must accept that while individuals may fight against that paradigm, they can still be part of that paradigm. Kumar's understanding of English national identity is useful to this study precisely because of the intermittent need for national unity that is, as Kumar's quote indicates, largely imaginary. The arbitrary, fictional nature of the concept of Englishness is constantly being negotiated against the daily sense of individual identity structures that do not seem to recognize its relevance to their lived experiences.

The adolescents mentioned in the Bildungsroman novels by Barnes and Winterson enact exactly what Kumar outlines in his essay: a simultaneous struggle between personal autonomy and the need for such larger ideological structures that produce cohesion and a sense of cultural identification. Lorna Ellis's comments connect meaningfully to Kumar's struggle since she states that "the aspects of development [...] imply personal diminishment" and are "remarkably similar in male and female Bildungsroman" because "the protagonists eventually find a conservative niche in society – be it through marriage and noblesse oblige [...] or through marriage and authorship [...]" (19). She also uses the word autonomy in her discussion, emphasizing what characters sacrifice in order to grow up (19).

The choices that Ellis and Kumar suggest are mirrored in the novels I have chosen for this chapter. Whereas Winterson's *Gut Symmetries* enacts the questioning of national identity and ideological structures and largely upsets the traditional Bildungsroman even as the novel points out its tenets in subtle ways, Barnes's *Metroland* reveals that while there may not be answers to a reified version of English national identity, individuals will often continue to blindly accept it and surrender autonomy for maturity. My analysis is

not an attempt to privilege either option but rather to show that the characters in these novels either reject or at least question restrictive notions of Englishness before maturation enables them to make more assertive decisions concerning its place in their lives. When characters adhere to a traditional Bildungsroman that privileges the traditional view of the world and national identity, they become part of the machine of tradition. When characters move past the traditional Bildungsroman paradigm of development, they are able to also move outside of traditional models of Englishness.

“Perhaps I wanted order where there was none”: *Metroland*, Stereotypes and the Traditional Bildungsroman

Julian Barnes’ novel *Metroland* follows the main character Chris as he grows up in a London suburb called “Metroland,” lamenting his status as an average, white, middle-class adolescent. Like his friend Toni, Chris is highly idealistic and attempts to challenge the bourgeoisie by mocking those adults who belong to its class. As he grows closer to adulthood, Chris moves to Paris for a year in order to try to find himself. The novel essentially identifies what Chris believes to be the important moments of his life, as he moves from adolescence to adulthood. Readers eventually find Chris in Metroland – a catch-all word for a suburbia created to serve railway routes to and from London – as an adult whose conservative outlook has replaced more unorthodox beliefs developed during his adolescence. As such, *Metroland* serves as a model of the Bildungsroman because of the novel’s movement towards maturity and subjectivity through direct experience.

At the beginning of the novel, Chris and his best friend Toni revel in their adolescent status, since it allows them to consider defying cultural norms. As they put it, “We hadn’t turned out yet. Being protean was our only consistent shape. Everything was

justifiable. Everything was possible” (Barnes, *Metroland* 66). Barnes implies here that there is freedom in adolescence, since it provides these characters with the opportunity to reassess the ideological rules they learned as children. Chris and Toni use this privilege largely to make fun of adults, but there is also a sense that ontological uncertainty is acceptable in and characteristic of adolescence, even at their age (since they are almost at the end of adolescence at seventeen years old). Keats identified this stage as “the space between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted...” (qtd. in Buckley 1). While Chris and Toni take advantage of this ontological uncertainty, the image of “the space between” will figure into the novel’s treatment of Englishness. At the beginning of the novel, however, this space simply allows these boys to have fun while rejecting what they consider bourgeois values.

Much of Chris’s and Toni’s adolescent taunting of adults rebuked traditional structures that limit thinking or action, and Chris interpreted their acts as full of “coruscating idealism” (Barnes, *Metroland* 15). For example, while performing what they termed “the Constructive Loaf,” another way to look at the French concept *flâneur*, Toni tries to shock a prostitute by asking her what she would pay him to have sex with her. As a result, Chris and Toni get into a fiery debate over whether “Whores are an integral part of bourgeois life” (28). While their pranks smack of immaturity, they also try to couch them as a political view of the world, wherein they see their duty as shocking the middle class and upsetting those in power – hence their interest in the French phrases “*épater la bourgeoisie*” and “*écraser l’infâme*” (15). The former translates to “shock the bourgeoisie” and has been historically used by artists who aimed to upset the bourgeoisie

by shocking their sensibilities, while the latter refers to a saying common to Voltaire that means to “crush the infamous.”⁴

Although Chris and Toni take pleasure in *épats* and *écrasers* (their abbreviations for the well-known French phrases), such acts reflect their need to connect to and interpret the world in meaningful ways. Largely this interpretation involves their subversion of the bourgeoisie that they consider to be in power and reflects their interest in distancing themselves from that part of culture. In part, this rejection comes from their concept of the Constructive Loaf, their own version of education and maturation and something that was more about observation than interaction; for them, everything was simply an experiment to watch: “We wanted scenes, things, people, as if filling up one of Big Chief I-Spy’s little books...” (Barnes, *Metroland* 29). In a way, one could compare such voyeurism as a type of order since the I-Spy books designed for curious children allowed them to observe and categorize things around them like nature, vehicles, and the ruins of Ancient Britain. After all, Chris even calls the Constructive Loaf “a British system of haphazard insight,” implying that such a system relies on a form of random observation (101).

Their interest in objectification is mirrored in the way each section of the novel ends with a chapter titled, “Object Relations.” During one such section Chris says, “I remember things,” after asking readers “How does adolescence come back most vividly to you?” (Barnes, *Metroland* 71). Chris finds meaning in his room at the end of that first

⁴ Tom Wilhelmus unearths D.H. Lawrence’s impulse to shock the middle class in his review of Andre Dubus III’s novel, *The House of Sand and Fog* (339). William G. Hutchison mentions Voltaire’s idiom as well as his iconoclasm in *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Studies* (x).

section of the novel, which takes the form of commenting on the suitcase in the corner that he has “mentally” covered with stickers, saying that “So far that case is label-less: it is all to come. One day I shall fix the real labels on myself. It is all to come” (72). He is “label-less” because he has not yet found a concrete sense of identity. Throughout the novel, Chris’s understanding of his own identity is central to the reader’s understanding of Englishness, particularly the idea that the labels are important since as long as he is label-less as an adolescent, both his sense of his own identity and that of his nation have yet to develop maturation. That first section of *Metroland* ends by showing the comparisons between travel and the self: Chris attempts to create experiences, but he knows by looking at his suitcase that he must wait for actual experiences to occur beyond his own mind. Using this mindset, all of his youthful transgressions with Toni – the *écrasers* and *épats* – are only anticipations of real experiences, which Chris connects directly to travel and experiencing the world independently as an adult. Barnes depicts travels as something that imprints itself on the psyche, and implies that experience, whether physical, emotional or psychological, helps to shape individual identity, which in turn affects other forms of identity such as a sense of Englishness.

Much like the label-making that Chris discusses, Chris and Toni create models and categories to order their world, whereby they have theories like the Constructive Loaf and SST (i.e. Soul, Suffering, Tits), which they believe help them understand others better (Barnes, *Metroland* 64-5). Through such models, Chris and Toni are able to test out theories of the world and the mode in which it operates, bringing order to an otherwise seemingly chaotic world. Tellingly, the chapter titled “SST” begins by speaking to an imaginary non-defined “you”: “Things never changed for you. That was

one of the first rules. You talked about what things would be like when they did change [...] But any real threat of change induced apprehension and discontent. For the duration, things changed only for other people” (62) This quote reiterates the ways in which Chris and Toni look at others as they do the world in general: as a series of changes that happened to other people while the adolescent self is in a holding pattern, waiting for the change to begin. It also elucidates the process that McCallum explains regarding childhood whereby individuals move from being self-absorbed to being able to see others as subjects. As such, one can see that ordering the world through categories is a way to see oneself in relation to others before gaining direct experience of the world, thereby fully participating in the traditional Bildungsroman structure.

In *Metroland*, Chris and Toni order their world via national stereotypes, either of their own country or of others adjacent to England. The importance of subjectivity in the novel links with Englishness through the construction of personal identity and appearance – a connection that sets readers up to think about stereotypical representations of identity. Chris is constantly concerned about looking English, and he talks a great deal about his aversion to looking stereotypically English. At one point in the novel, Chris describes himself as having “a snub-nosed, indeterminately English face,” while he seems to envy Toni’s more multicultural heritage (Barnes, *Metroland* 15). The fact that Barnes uses the word “indeterminately” here is significant. The indeterminacy of Chris’s face, the fact that he could describe it as only vaguely English, reflects the general sense of uncertainty Chris feels about his own identity and therefore about Englishness itself. Chris feels in some ways connected to stereotypical ideas of Englishness, but he longs to be able to

define himself outside of them. This desire manifests itself in self-deprecatory terms compared to the more cosmopolitan looking Toni:

Toni far outclassed me in rootlessness... This gave Toni the flash foreign name of Barbarowski, two languages, three cultures, and a sense (he assured me) of atavistic wretch: in short, real class. He looked an exile, too: swarthy, bulbous-nosed, thick-lipped, disarmingly short, energetic, and hairy; he even had to shave every day. (32)

Chris envies Toni because while he himself fits the stereotypically white mold of Englishness, Toni has an identity outside of England. Chris, meanwhile, explains himself as having a “low-key English face,” implying that he could be easily recognized as English despite his desire not to fit into physical English stereotypes any more so than Toni (33). Consequently, Chris seeks to repudiate any possibility of being a “normal” Englishman, attempting to place himself outside of that role, despite the fact that he fits the mold much more closely than his best friend Toni does and envies Toni for being farther away from the stereotype.

As a result of questioning his Englishness, Chris experiences a concept that relates directly to Keats’ concept of “the space between” or Bhabha’s idea of “the *inbetween* space” which Bhabha associates with hybridity and which “carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (*Location* 56). In the first section of *Metroland*, Chris attempts to simultaneously find a concrete English identity while rejecting that stereotypical role. This process mirrors another concept that Bhabha identifies, the unhomely: “...the border between home and world becomes confused; and uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting”

(“The World” 445). What should be a public identity (Englishness) becomes a problematic part of Chris’s psyche because of his simultaneous interests in rejecting traditional constructions of society and stereotypical representations of identity which are often part of those traditional constructions. This *inbetween* status follows Chris throughout the novel, informing his maturation and his view of Englishness.

Part of Chris’s rejection of his own Englishness is tied into where he lives, the *inbetween* space called Metroland, which, as Chris describes it, has “no geographical or ideological unity: you lived there because it was easy to get out of” (Barnes, *Metroland* 34). Depicted this way, Metroland appears to be a refugee camp of sorts for those who need a place to go before they go somewhere else. Chris considers “the cosy, controlled rootlessness reassuring” (33) because Metroland is depicted as a place that does not always fit into the stereotypical view of the English despite the fact that Chris often defines it as bourgeois. Again, one can see the *inbetween*, which in this case pulls Chris between accepting his place in life and rejecting that place as too middle class.

Metroland represents both status and nationality in the novel. While in Barnes’s novel it signifies a particular suburb for Chris and Toni, the concept of Metroland exists as a kind of suburban ideal. As Andrew Thacker explains in his chapter on the subject, Metroland was a collection of suburbs created to the north of London, originally extending into the counties of Buckinghamshire, Middlesex, and Hertfordshire that sat along the Metropolitan Railway. The suburbs were advertised as an answer to the ills of the city, including health-related issues. For example, Thacker mentions that the railway advertised one formerly-rural area, Golder’s Green, as “London’s healthiest suburb,” offering an opportunity to flee “the dull and smoky city” (*London’s Latest Suburbs*, qtd.

in Thacker 87). Years later, the poet laureate Sir John Betjeman captures both the zenith of Metro-land between the first and second World Wars as well as its initial allure in his documentary on the subject: “Child of the first war, forgotten by the second; we called you Metro-land. We laid our schemes lured by the lush brochure, down byways beckoned to build at last the cottage of our dreams” (*Metro-land*, min. 1:26). This re-creation of an idyllic retreat from imagination was also captured earlier in 1924. An excerpt from the yearly Metro-land booklet describes Metroland as “a country with elastic borders which each visitor can draw for himself” (qtd. in Thacker 104). Much like the way Chris explains his Metroland as having “no geographical or ideological unity,” its real-life analogue likewise was considered something that was changeable and limited only by the imagination, located far outside of the actual demarcations of country and city. For Barnes as well, then, Metroland exists as an *inbetween* as well.

While on the train for his daily commute home from school, Chris learns about some of the history behind the branch line on which the train is traveling, and hears from a passenger that calling the line Metroland was “the beginning of the end,” implying that while at one time the line and the accompanying suburbs meant something, they had devolved into something “to please the estate agents” (Barnes, *Metroland* 38). This exchange demonstrates the constructed nature of Metroland as a way to “sell” the neighborhood just as Betjeman describes in his documentary. The phrase “beginning of the end” also symbolically references the soul destroying nature of commuter life itself, caught up in the never ending repetition of daily travel to work in the city. One of the most elucidating classist moments of Chris’s musings on Metroland happens when he speaks to a man he describes as “dead bourgeois” (35). In that same moment, the

passenger calls Metroland “a bourgeois dormitory,” which unnerves Chris because “It’s like a master admitting he knows his own nickname” (38). However, it also reveals that the bourgeois have a knowing awareness of what this *inbetween* space represents since a dormitory suggests a temporary accommodation. Although Chris is unable to understand this adult knowledge at the moment, since he says “the words remained a puzzle” (38), it will prepare him for his transformation as an adult in which he will give in to the bourgeois lifestyle he rejects in adolescence.

For Chris and Toni, Metroland epitomizes the middle-class bourgeois lifestyle that they abhor, whereas London, in comparison to the suburbs, becomes a cultural and social mecca to them, reflecting the mythical quality afforded to the city in the Bildungsroman. At one point, when meditating on London, Chris concludes that, “[...] London was where you started from; and it was to London that, finally, stuffed with wisdom, you returned” (Barnes, *Metroland* 27). It seems odd that Chris explains London thus since he certainly did not “start” from London on any literal level. However, it does imply that London exists as a starting point for the acquisition of knowledge, culture, and experience, a sentiment that reflects Buckley’s explanation of the role of the city in the Bildungsroman, as an “agent of liberation and a source of corruption” (Buckley 20), where a young man’s “‘real education’ begins” (17). In both the novel and Buckley’s myth, the city provides an inevitable attraction since it leads to direct experience and, hence, maturation.

From a geo-spatial perspective, the Bildungsroman consistently contrasts the depiction of the city with the countryside to show a movement from rural naivety to sophisticated urban maturity. What complicates this dichotomy in *Metroland* is the

presence of the suburb. Typically, a country/city dichotomy exists, wherein the country is a world full of rolling country sides, farms, and thatched cottages, while the city is bustling and rife with both evils and excitement. This dichotomy does not allow room for the suburbs since they are neither completely city nor country. Other dichotomies exist in terms of Englishness, in particular in terms of class, wherein the upper class and the lower class live in alternate worlds, and wherein the middle class can sometimes exist in either. Replacing the upper/lower dichotomy with the city/country dichotomy, suburban life can be seen as having the ability to cross lines much as the middle class can. The suburbs of *Metroland* can be seen as the *inbetween* space, and they allow Chris the chance to experience the city in a risk-free way since he will be able to return back to the safety of the *inbetween* space of Metroland without having to commit to the space of the city.

The *inbetween* is best exemplified in the third section of *Metroland*, where Chris thinks about London again when remembering Toni's "Theory of Suburban Sex": "London, he explained, was the centre of power and industry and money and culture and everything valuable, important and good; it was therefore *ex hypothesi*, the centre of sex" (Barnes, *Metroland* 156). In contrast, the suburbs (including Metroland) become the "strange intermediate area of sexual twilight" according to Toni (156). Metroland stands as the middle ground, where one could fall back into the bourgeois lifestyle that Toni and Chris repudiate in the first sections of the novel. London, in contrast, appears to be the place where one can live the good life, underscoring its importance as a larger-than-life image for Chris and Toni and as part of the traditional model of the Bildungsroman. Barnes creates a more complex paradigm by incorporating the suburbs, which are not

country or city, to show an intermediary stage, or a liminal static point on the path to maturation. It is neither one nor the other, but something *inbetween*. It is also an inherently safe waiting room, a place to retreat to, and a concept symbolically important for an Englishman as I will demonstrate in my later discussion of Fowles' *Daniel Martin*.

While London exists as an important topos for Chris and Toni, there is also a sense throughout *Metroland* that travel to other countries can help them realize better and more mature versions of who they are. During the second part of the novel, Chris and Toni discuss going away to Morocco and Paris, referring to their travel as “de-Anglification” (Barnes, *Metroland* 84), an attempt to divest themselves of their English identities. Initially, when responding to each others' travel destinations, Chris and Toni are decidedly stereotypical. Chris responds to Paris with “*Can-can, frou-frou, vin blanc, French knickers,*” and Toni to Morocco with “*Kif. Hashish. Lawrence of Arabia. Dates*” (84). This is the period before Chris and Toni go off and have actual experiences in these countries, and so their stereotypical listing of characteristics is a product of their lack of experience of those countries from an insider's perspective.

Barnes's interest in these stereotypes occurs because he believes that this is the way national identity comes to be defined. In the preface to his book, *Something to Declare: Essays on France and French Culture*, Barnes identifies a dichotomy between France and England: “...the French are so . . . well, French, and therefore designed by God to seem as provokingly dissimilar from the British as possible” (xvii). Barnes should know as he has visited France on and off since he was 13 (xi). As Barnes himself intimates, the purpose of stereotypes is to create “an antithesis to your normal, English,

urban life” (xv). Individuals define themselves through contrast, and *Metroland* creates personal and national definitions of self by analyzing individuals from other countries.

Chris and Toni seem to accept and perpetuate the stereotypes of France and Morocco, but they also reject them satirically, indicating that while they acknowledge the stereotypes, they also are able to question the assumptions that come from indirect experience. For example, after Chris rattles out his list of Moroccan stereotypes to Toni, he thinks to himself that they “lacked a certain edge” (Barnes, *Metroland* 84). Although they are somewhat offensive stereotypes, the purpose is to mock or show some awareness of the stereotypical ideas that English people tend to have of other countries, a mocking tone that is typical of Chris and Toni during this age range with their *épats* and *écrasers*.

However, this is not to say that the experience of a country will always cancel out the stereotypes of a country imagined before the travel occurs. Often the solipsistic mood of youth supplants opportunities to report more accurate truths about the country visited. While he spent all the time before he went to Paris fetishizing and stereotyping those places he had not yet been, once Chris lived there, he focused on himself: “[...] I didn’t actually see anything” (Barnes, *Metroland* 76). Barnes offers this reflection even before we know why or how Chris decides to go to Paris; readers have to guess why he did not see anything. Instead, Chris begins to explain the trip and refers to the historically important strike of both workers and students that occurred in Paris in 1968 as inconsequential, even though it caused almost catastrophic economic and governmental upheaval. Either Chris is unable to create a stereotype out of Paris once he lives it, or he almost imagines himself outside of Paris since his experiences do not fit into the expectations that others might have.

Chris begins to make sense of his national identity in an unconventional way: through sex. Sexual relationships offer insights into national stereotyping by offering one that contradictory sense of national difference but universal intimacy. Chris is largely single-minded during his time in France since his only concerns are to avoid his Englishness and to move toward the moment of sexual congress. At one point, Chris even considers having sex comparable to having “discharged a social burden; as if, at last, you’ve finally joined the human race; as if, after all, you won’t now die a wholly ignorant man” (Barnes, *Metroland* 96). This belief reflects an obligation, a way to expand knowledge of the world (and hence become more autonomous), and a reflection of the need to be part of a larger whole. To have sex is to be an adult: wise, responsible, and mature.

Chris learns about himself, women, the French, and being English from his sexual experience with Annick. From their very first interaction at a bar one afternoon, Chris shows an overwhelming amount of second-guessing. In an attempt to impress Annick, he analyzes every move each of them could make, and as a result of his attempt at “appearing not to be concentrating” while carrying two coffees, he spills both coffees (Barnes, *Metroland* 88). As a nervous young adult unused to dating, he plans his interaction with Annick so carefully that when they meet next Chris reflects, “In fact, I’d thought about Annick so much that I couldn’t remember what she looked like” (89). Initially, Chris appears to treat her as just another object that he must somehow deconstruct. However, as their relationship develops, Annick allows Chris to explore himself through this direct experience that helps him move away from mere stereotype.

Chris uses Annick in the same way that he uses the trip to France: to explore himself without the touchstones of Englishness obscuring his vision.

Throughout the second part of the novel, where Chris is in Paris, Englishness is often seen through the eyes of Annick while Frenchness is seen through Chris's eyes, and there exists a problematic blurring of the lines between stereotyping and real learning. Many of their conversations revolve around their nationalities, and so their relationship functions as an education in culture. For example, after their first sexual encounter, Chris asks Annick what she was thinking, and eventually she responds, "I felt amused, at sleeping with an Englishman [...]" (Barnes, *Metroland* 100). Their relationship allows Chris to see himself as the unique, the different, the other, and so even in that small response, Chris begins to see himself through the eyes of others, not only as an individual but also as a nationality. He also sees how different Annick is, and quickly asks her "how she had taught herself to act as she did," reflecting his view that somehow her personality was a calculated creation (101). This realization allows Chris to move from "the edgy cynicism and disbelief" and "cowed trust" which he believed "were the only tools for the painful, wrenching extraction of truths from the surrounding quartz of hypocrisy and deceit" to being able to search for truth through personal reflection (101). And it is through this realization that Chris begins to lose his trademark way of questioning the world and his own subjectivity. Not surprisingly, though, while readers could equate the search for truth with the loss of subjectivity, Chris quickly contradicts this possible conclusion by saying that Annick "taught [him] honesty (or at least the principle of it)" (101). In short, part of Chris's problem appears to be that he simply trades one idealistic

notion for another, rather than accepting that both “edgy cynicism and belief” and personal reflection can lead one to the truth.

Annick and Chris’s conversations often come back to nationalities, and as such, they often also resort to stereotyping to talk about each others’ cultures: “After a while, this became the joke between us, a confirmation of national character: the French deal in the abstract, the theoretical, the generality; the English in the detail, the gloss, the rider, the exception, the particularity” (Barnes, *Metroland* 101). As Chris sees it, their entire relationship revolves around these stereotypes, although they “didn’t think it more than a half-truth on any wider scale” (101). However, during their final fight which ends their relationship, they resort to the same stereotypes they claim to deny earlier.

The fight begins because Chris decides that he needs to tell Annick about his friendship with Marion, an English woman I will discuss in more detail in a moment. After Chris uses French to his own detriment by calling Marion his “*mon amie anglais*” three times and then “*cette amie anglais*,” Annick first asks Chris whether his repetition is “*le tact anglais*,”⁵ and she eventually decides that Chris is having an affair with Marion (Barnes, *Metroland* 120-1). When Chris pleads with Annick that he is not “perfidious,” Annick responds, “Albion is always perfidious. We learn that at school” (121). Chris retorts by saying that “our books tell us the French are often jealous without reason” (121). Instead of looking at the specific situation, the two respond with generalizations. In due course, Annick reiterates one of the biggest stereotypes of Englishness, being stiffly upper-lipped, telling Chris, in response to loving her well, “How rational, how measured,

⁵ “*Mon amie anglais*” translates to “my English friend,” “*cette amie anglais*” to “this English friend,” and “*le tact anglais*” to “English tact.”

how English” (122). Despite their protestations to the contrary, both characters use nationality as a weapon, restating stereotypes as it serves them. These have larger consequences because stereotypical forms of identity delay the maturation of these characters since they are constantly reverting to these roles. More importantly, the use of stereotypes throughout *Metroland* underscores their importance in any discussion of nationalism, since despite protestations to the contrary stereotypes continue to exist as part of the identity of a nation, even if they are only as a form of distancing people from each other.

Although Chris’s romantic entanglement with Annick is central to his time in Paris, Chris also is able to see himself and other countries through three fellow English people he meets while visiting the museum one day. Directly prior to his meeting with Marion, Dave, and Mickey, Chris attempts to “immerse myself in the culture... I deliberately avoided English people, papers and books” (Barnes, *Metroland* 105). Part of that immersion meant adopting French mannerisms as well as the language, and while he says he “did it rather well,” he also claims he developed an “inner resistance” to the immersion process because he began “saying things I didn’t know I’d thought in ways I hadn’t previously considered” (105-6). The process of direct experience in this case, then, does not just enhance who Chris is; it changes him. As his language and culture change, so he changes as a person, a process he calls “bisecting” as well as “disloyalty” to his Englishness (106). When direct experience occurs in relation to cross-cultural relationships, it can interfere with attaining the easy maturity that the Bildungsroman imagines.

The day Chris meets his three English compatriots, he is still immersing himself in the culture; initially he pretends not to speak English in an effort to ignore them. Because they do not treat the art studio as he would expect – they are “blatantly unhushed” – Chris refers to them as “philistines” and sees them as merely tourists in his world, “their pockets bulging with duty-free” (Barnes, *Metroland* 107). Yet, the female of the group, Marion, calls him out for being English, while Chris notices the way he might have been friends with Dave back in England, a place he recollects as the other world (109). Once again, Chris’s *inbetween* status leads him down both routes of direct experience wherein he is both one of them and not one of them. As a result, his subjectivity is as insecure as his communal identity.

As the novel continues, readers see the manner in which Chris interacts with and interprets his English counterparts. Dave continually mocks the French, in one instance telling Chris, “I kees you both sheek” (Barnes, *Metroland* 109). Later, Chris describes Dave’s French as “a curious method of conversation, which consisted largely of proper names pronounced in a heavy French (or Franche, as he would say) accent, accompanied by a semi-hysterical gesture” (109). Much like Chris and Toni earlier, the French for Dave are merely an assemblage of loose stereotypes, and Chris’ reaction suggests that the only way to understand a culture is by both accepting and moving past such stereotypes. To put it another way, instead of denying stereotypes, individuals must accept that stereotypes exist while also performing their identities in a way which does not reinforce or privilege such stereotypes.

While Dave tries to “act French” throughout *Metroland*, Mickey is simply being himself; but through the lens of Annick, he could be interpreted as a stereotypical

Englishman. After seeing the way she interprets Chris, Mickey seems to perform similarly. Chris explains him as follows: “Ego, charm, competitiveness, and a certain cunning, which made him pretend to know less than he did until he’d found out roughly how much you knew” (Barnes, *Metroland* 110). This echoes one of the previous exchanges between Chris and Annick, where Annick tells Chris he not only says things he doesn’t know but also leaves out things he does know until he can use them (102). That sense of shrewdness common to both Chris and Mickey could be interpreted as an English trait, the need for retreat or seclusion, a trait that highlights a larger issue I will delve into in the chapter on myth. Likewise, the exchange between Chris and Marion also reveals a level of emotional secrecy in these characters. When Chris finds out about Marion’s infidelity, his only reply is “I suppose that answers my question” (163). He never relates his inner feelings and profane thoughts to Marion, instead having sex with her that night (163).

Sex seems to have little to do with national identity, except in terms of underscoring national characteristics, and has even less to do with travel and other countries. Chris, however, makes an interesting statement in *Metroland* at almost the end of the novel in response to his fear that he may cheat on his wife “Sex, after all, is travel” (Barnes, *Metroland* 161). Although, at first, one could simply take this at face value, it communicates a good deal about not only Englishness but also the manner in which individuals experience other countries and nationalities. Travel becomes an issue of aesthetic pleasure (an obvious observation) and also a way to abate any complacency one has in life. In other words, one must travel (even metaphorically through sex) in order to

enjoy everyday life, since it allows one to escape a present existence – something Chris seems to do when he goes to Paris as a twenty-something.

Although Annick is a large part of Chris's sexual education, Marion emerges in the novel as a person who demonstrates the manner in which interiority shapes Chris's perception of national identity as much as the outsider's perspective. She forces Chris to see himself as an Englishman rather than escaping or ignoring such a classification. From the first meeting Chris has with Marion, she questions and unnerves him, calling him out for pretending not to be English. As *Metroland* continues, Chris explains that Marion "had an unsettling habit of asking me questions which I had imagined I had escaped from, and wouldn't have to put up with again before my return to England" (Barnes 113). While Annick allows Chris to escape his life and national identity to a certain degree, Marion forces him to face his Englishness. The fact that Chris chooses Marion is very telling, since it also mirrors the attitude he adopts towards Metroland at the end of the novel, accepting England (and Metroland) almost blindly, refusing to question it as he did in his youth. Chris's questioning attitude changes as he ages, signaling that perhaps the real interest Chris had in the subversion of ontology was simply a rebellious phase and not a true search for identity (since he so quickly rejects his rejection of ontological security). Or perhaps one of the messages in *Metroland* is precisely that while individuals may be able to escape their identities for a short time, they must eventually deal with those identities and possibly return to inhabit those national identities that they could only temporarily discard.

In *Metroland*, there is a sense of idealism in adolescence, a questioning of the status quo that is not as pervasive during adulthood. The adolescent Chris looks at the

world through cynical eyes, while the adult Chris seems easy-going, albeit a little too accepting of day-to-day life. Stereotyping serves to simplify the world for Chris's consumption, to help the world fit into the structures they have created for it.

Stereotyping also helps Chris maintain a certain satirical edge that is somewhat lost in the last part of the novel. Chris almost seems worn down by society as an adult, which is reflected in the way he sees Metroland itself. It no longer exists as a bourgeois holding center. It is now his home. Chris goes from fighting against the bourgeoisie to being one of them. The change is clear when Chris talks to Toni. Toni says to Chris, "Ah – a new definition of 'adult': the time during which one has sold out" (Barnes, *Metroland* 167). Toni says this in response to Chris's assertion that his time in Paris was "all my adult life ago" (166). There is a clear distinction here between what Chris once was and what he is now. Chris sees this as maturation while Toni sees it as a rejection of their past beliefs and values. In any event, Chris does not seem to realize this distinction, merely rejecting the past as silly or frivolous.

One of the obvious changes in Chris is the way he no longer questions the world. As an example, when an adolescent, Chris and his friend Toni take offense at the color change that comes from the sodium lighting on the train which to them is a metonymic reflection of the influence of "bureaucrats fugging around" with things like "language," "ethics," and the "sense of priorities" (Barnes, *Metroland* 14). Because of the color change that caused everything to appear brown or orange, Chris reflects that they "couldn't even count on being ourselves anymore" (14-5). Yet, as an adult, Chris merely accepts the lighting change, which reflects his change in perspective as a whole, since after thinking about the lighting for a few moments, he says, "... I don't pursue this too

seriously: there's no point in trying to thrust false significances on things" (176). The episode depicts Chris's changes in world view over the course of his life; and so while he takes his Englishness too seriously as an adolescent, he seems to almost ignore that identity as an adult, revealing the manner in which pervasive ideologies can discourage questions and encourage blind acceptance.

"Everywhere I go, reflection"⁶: Autonomy and the Model Bildungsroman in *Gut Symmetries*

Unlike *Metroland*, which I read as a novel that uses the Bildungsroman model to criticize a character that rejects his more radical thoughts of adolescence by adopting middle-class English views in his adult life, the role of Englishness in *Gut Symmetries* is much more subtle. Although the novel is not about Englishness per se, it can – and I would argue does – speak to issues of the Bildungsroman as well as the manner in which one creates and interprets ways of being English. While *Metroland* exposes the limitations of a certain view of Englishness by depicting it directly, Winterson's novel simply avoids depicting Englishness within any paradigm and decisively rejects Englishness as an integral part of a larger ideological structure of identity because it is destructive due to its restrictive effects on the maturation process.

The basic plot of *Gut Symmetries* follows the main character Alice circuitously through her present life as a physicist and backwards to her childhood and to the childhoods of other major characters in the novel. By interweaving Alice's story with the stories of her lovers, fellow physicist Jove and his wife Stella, Winterson enacts her title since the gut in *Gut Symmetries* stands for Grand Unified Theory. GUT – as a theory –

⁶ (Winterson, *Gut* 12)

simply attempts to bring together the weaker and stronger forces of attraction into one larger theory: “Theories that sought to unite the strong, weak, and electromagnetic quanta in a sympathetic symmetry that would include gravity and overturn the bolt-it-together-somehow methods of The Standard Model” (Winterson, *Gut* 99). The terminology of quantum physics and mechanics is used as a means by which Winterson can offer alternative ways of arriving at harmonious relationships that reject traditional societal bonds and, in turn, affiliate people according to arbitrary designations – or what she calls “the bolt-it-together-somehow methods.” A good example of this is the category of blood relations that produce the concept of a family and that can produce, as she shows with the mother/daughter dyad in *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, unsympathetic and dysfunctional relations. Winterson uses this concept to address the interwoven stories of Alice, Stella, and Jove. These characters are connected as lovers, but Winterson always shows the other connections that have: Stella and Jove met each other as children, Alice and Stella’s parents eventually meet even though they live in different countries. Though the connected stories themselves are chronologically and ontologically complicated, they also at least initially follow some of the tenets of the Bildungsroman; and since Winterson’s central concern is subjectivity, the story works as a nice complement to Barnes’ work.

Whereas the novel’s interests in self-discovery reflect a natural inclination of the Bildungsroman concern with “introspectiveness,” “an individualistic conscience,” and “the deepening of one’s own personality” that Esther Labovitz identifies, there is also a sense that this novel does not conform to the traditional Bildungsroman plot due to the lack of a “hero who begins with a sense of self, which with outside guidance and the help

of mentors would be expected to develop to its fullest potential” (qtd. in Ellis 17). This distinction is important simply because, unlike Alice in *Gut Symmetries*, in *Metroland* Chris begins with a strong sense of who he is. The preliminary difference allows the concept of the Bildungsroman and their treatments of English national identity to play out differently.

Because Alice does not possess the confidence of Chris from *Metroland* and feels ontological uncertainty in her youth, she looks to reflections to better define herself by copying her parents. Instead she finds that “they were trying to copy me, looking to the child for the energy and hope they had lost long ago” (Winterson, *Gut* 12). Mirroring reflects the creation of subjectivity wherein one begins to understand the self outside of a collective identity; but since Alice’s parents look to her for direction, she is unable to completely make sense of subjectivity in a conventional way. Instead, their gaze allows Alice to see that subjectivity is, by definition, subjective and therefore alterable.

This kind of mirroring is central to any discussion of Englishness and identity, since various novels, including John Fowles’s *Daniel Martin*, use the motif to show the means through which identity is in part created through the reflection of the self in others. This mirroring is important to both the adolescent phase, as well as in depictions of national identity and the Bildungsroman since, as I have already shown in *Metroland*, national identity is often seen and partially created through the eyes of others. While Winterson depicts the act of mirroring as justifiably negative since mirroring relies on the judgment of others to create a full sense of identity, Winterson also implies that without the tempering of such a reflection with experience, an individual’s identity can become confused or uncertain; and as a result, defining one’s identity can be particularly difficult.

With no reflection to help her create subjectivity, Alice is trapped in identity stasis on both personal and national levels, and the Bildungsroman is suspended.

However, because Alice does struggle existentially with who she is and the method by which she can define herself personally and sexually, she creates a new kind of Bildungsroman. The mirror motif that accompanies Alice's sense of definition shows the manner in which ontology is often tied to ideological reference points that help individuals make sense of their world. As Alice put it, "I could not define myself in relation to the shifting poles of certainty that seemed so reliable. What was the true nature of the world? What was the true nature of myself in it?" (Winterson, *Gut* 12). The implication here is that without these points of reference, Alice cannot truly know who she is and therefore cannot be expected to categorize the identities of others. This is why, while talking about a trip Alice took with her father to "join the QE2 on a Comet Watch," Alice shares a list she made of creatures that is inspired by her discussion of *stella maris*, mythical fish that are said to affect the direction of a vessel or, metaphorically, a life:

Dog. Dog-Fish. Dog star.

Horse. Sea-horse. Pegasus.

Monk. Monk fish. Angel.

Spider. Spider-crab. Cancer.

Worm. Eel. The Old Serpeant. (73)

The creation of this list by Alice, though, seems happenstance and confusing, as she acknowledges: "I was at the age of making lists but the lists I made were correspondences, half true and altogether fanciful, of the earth the sea and the sky.

Perhaps I was trying to hold together my own world that was in so much danger of falling

away. Perhaps I wanted order where there was none” (73). Despite the unknown meaning behind her connections, Alice’s list and accompanying descriptions reveal the tenuous nature of adolescents as they move towards adulthood, becoming less and less ontologically secure as they mature. Thus, Alice attempts to find connection between the earth, sea, and sky simply because she wants to create that sense of order in the world. But as Winterson acknowledges through Alice, often the order that is created is artificial, possibly a side-effect of post-modernity and the difficulties inherent in creating any form of identity.

Although in the first section of the novel, Alice’s parents disrupt Alice’s ability to create herself as a subject through mirroring, parents do serve as a model in *Gut Symmetries*. The three major characters – Alice, Stella, and Jove – all have defining parental narratives that inform who they are as adults. Alice’s father’s narrative in particular serves as a way for Alice to understand herself through his coming-of-age story. Alice’s father’s role in the novel is a sort of cautionary tale, and he represents a character like Chris from *Metroland* taken to extremes. Alice’s father is depicted as a man who has been dead inside for years and is mostly explained through flashbacks and stories by Alice herself. Alice’s view of her father gives a somewhat accurate portrayal of Alice’s view of English national identity, and by association, can help readers better understand Alice’s own Englishness as well.

Alice’s father, much like Alice, travels to New York and acknowledges the transformative nature of the city and the way in which it allows its denizens to transcend singular views of identity. Alice learns about New York from her father, who said “it was the only place where a man could be himself while working his shirt off to become

somebody else” (Winterson, *Gut* 111). Winterson repeatedly introduces imagery that describes New York as a magical city that offers anyone who is able the opportunity to change oneself, a motif embodied throughout the novel by alchemy. In particular, Alice calls it, “a crucible city, an alchemical vessel where dirt and glory do effect transformation” (26). In fact, the success Alice’s father finds comes in large part from his ability to “pan the living clay that you are and find gold in it” (54). In part, this view of New York connects it directly to the larger stereotype of the American Dream, where anyone who tries hard enough can make it. At one point, Alice connects her view of her father directly to the American dream: “There he is, built like King Kong, as ambitious as the Empire State Building, as wide-eyed as Fay Wray, and as much as a dream, an invention, as the movies and America itself. He was a giant projection on the blank screen of other people and that was his success” (53-4). The views of New York and Alice’s father are connected to artifice and movie magic – both are exciting and resonate in the imagination. But they are empty under the surface. His ability to recreate himself in order to achieve success is a manifestation of the American Dream but the price he pays is the subordination of his own identity to the fulfillment of other people’s dreams. In this section of the novel, Alice is explaining to her lover Stella the way her father used to visit the city. The city functions to deconstruct a concrete and singular identity because Alice does not get to know her father. And when Stella sarcastically asks if Alice’s father does become someone else as a result of being in New York, Alice replies “Yes. Yes he did” (111).

Furthermore, because of his blue-collar roots where “his family had worn clean clothes to work [...] but none had ever worn clean clothes home,” Alice’s father lives in

an *inbetween* just like Chris in *Metroland* (Winterson, *Gut* 52). He could have taken up an occupation suited to those roots, but his intelligence provides an opportunity for another identity. As Alice explains, while her “father loved the sea and should have been an active seaman [...] there were more opportunities for a bright boy who had a way about him” (52-3). As a result, Alice’s father rides the tugboats but works in an office, and he never seems to be able to resolve these two identities. He equates success with business offices rather than seafaring, but it is clearly a struggle since “his true self was still fighting his assumed self, and winning” (54). As Alice explains, her father “was a man who could never quite learn the lines he had scripted for himself. Even at his most enthusiastic for a role, some part of him could not forget that it was a role. He did not know how to merge himself into one” (153). His own need to conform to a specific role ultimately harms him. Alice implies that in the process of becoming a “better man,” her father loses part of himself and is caught in the *inbetween* as a result. He is living in his own psychic Metroland. He sacrifices one part of his English identity for another, without really inhabiting either. His success takes him away from his original identity as part of the English working class and as a result, he cannot identify with either his working class roots or his new identity as a professional, educated Englishman.

The novel seems to imply that ignoring those other parts of the self is detrimental, and as a result, causes a type of symbolic death, which in Alice’s father’s case begins when he travels to New York, where he can no longer pretend he is one of the blue-collar workers. The transformative nature of the city, the comparative freedom at the heart of the Bildungsroman city that was so scintillating for Chris, ultimately kills her father. Alice, then, learns that she cannot rely on her father’s narrative to understand herself as a

subject because his identity is splintered. In turn, Alice is forced to turn to other people in her life to make sense of herself, specifically through her sexual relationships with Jove and then Stella.

Because of the convoluted chronology in *Gut Symmetries*, the stories of Alice's father are intertwined with the love triangle Alice experiences with Jove and Stella. As opposed to a traditional love triangle where two women compete for one man or two men compete for one woman, the love triangle in *Gut Symmetries* circuitously follows first Alice's romance with Jove, a fellow physicist and later her romance with his author wife, Stella. These two romances alternately show two ways to look at the world: Jove's view reflects Alice's father's limiting view of the world while Stella's opens up subjectivity beyond mirroring.

In one of the first moments the reader sees between Alice and Jove, she describes their relationship as follows: "I could see him standing behind me. He wrapped himself rug-like round my shoulders. We made an elegant pair: dark/fair, older/younger, assured/uncertain. The mirror offered us a snapshot of our own desirability" (Winterson, *Gut* 17). Winterson identifies two aspects of their union that are relevant to this discussion: the idea of the other person as the mirror, reflecting identities back, and the other, that having a contrast is important to knowing the self since it provides a standard by which individuals can compare themselves. However, Alice's views of mirroring are complicated by the fact that her comparisons boil down to stereotypical dualities like younger/older. Those depictions created by others reflect only the way they see the other person and so, by definition, are not complete. One of these dualities is nationality since Jove is a first-generation Italian-American male while Alice was born and bred in

England. In part, that dichotomy allows Alice to experience Jove's view of national identity: "The bright boy who loves and hates America. Loves it because it has given him everything. Hates it because it has given him everything. The ambivalence of the immigrant everywhere" (98). These views of America and nationalism flow throughout the novel, particularly the ambivalence of national identity; and it is Jove's simultaneous attraction to and disinterest in his own Americanness that serves as a foil for Alice's fluidity.

This ambivalence connects Jove to Alice's father. For, as Jove explains, he longs to return to Italy, but says "If I am the master of my life why do I feel so out of control?" (Winterson, *Gut* 99). This lack of control over life mirror what Alice said about her father and the script he cannot learn; in both cases, there is a division in the self between the way one sees oneself and the way one is. This coupled with the way Jove makes Alice feel somewhat neglected – "It had been the same with my father" – should lead readers to see that these two male characters' views of the world are both problematic and stifling for Alice (106). On the one hand, Alice longs for their approval, but on the other, she can see through the artifice of their world view despite the commercial success that they represent.

In the sections where Alice alone deals with Jove, he seems fairly innocuous, albeit chauvinistic. Readers get a better understanding of the true danger that Jove poses once they are introduced to Stella's view of Jove, and the way Jove's static view of the world hurts his wife. Originally, Jove, Stella, and Alice plan to take a three-week sea "holiday" together to decide what will happen to their respective relationships (Alice and Stella, Stella and Jove, Jove and Alice), but because of her father's sudden fall, Alice

leaves without contacting either (Winterson, *Gut* 140). During their sea voyage, Jove denies Stella's point of view because it conflicts with his own. Jove devalues Stella's view by saying, "She refused to make a clear distinction between the inner and outer. She had no sure grasp of either herself or of herself in relation to the object. At first I mistook this pathology as the ordinary feminine" (195). Jove not only calls Stella insane, but he also brushes off her feelings by blaming them on her being feminine, devaluing both her world view and femininity itself (194). Again, Winterson underscores the male use of binaries to concretize the world, and in turn shows the negative patriarchal act of concretization that places characters in strict roles.

While Jove works to ignore Stella's view, he becomes so ingrained in his own that he attempts to physically violate Stella in different ways: by attempting to rape her, by causing her to hit her head and cause him to think she died, and once dead, by trying to eat her. Eventually Jove goes so far as saying, "I had to do it. She was dead. She was nearly dead or I would not have done it. If I had not done it she would have died anyway. I did it because I had to. What else could I have done?" (Winterson, *Gut* 200). Jove uses this mantra more than once in the chapter titled "Knave of Coins," and it is through this repetition that Jove attempts to erase Stella's view of the situation while simultaneously concretizing his own world view. And his act of erasure mirrors the majority of their marriage where Jove is depicted, like his mythological namesake, as a sexual conqueror and Stella as a patient and naïve virgin. In the end, Jove gets pushed out of the romantic picture, and he appears to go a little insane himself, using his mantra to make himself feel better about the physical violations against his wife.

By showing stereotypical white male standards as rigid and, therefore, unsatisfying through her discussion of both her father and Jove, Winterson rejects the Bildungsroman's interest in ideological acceptance in favor of a more ontologically unstable but personally fulfilling view. Stella offers Alice – and in turn readers – an alternative view of identity that shows the method by which one can move past the conventional Bildungsroman view of maturation as acceptance and/or maneuvering of ideological structures into a more fluid imagining. Stella offers possibilities outside of tradition that do not create subjectivity from mirroring in which you create yourself in relation to others. As a contrast to the relationship of Alice and Jove, Stella and Alice, while their fates are insecure at the end of the novel, are willing to live in multiple times, histories, and selves that allow them to have fluid identities rather than be chained to a single narrative – and hence a single identity – as Jove is.

At the moment when Stella and Alice begin their love affair, Alice recognizes two important concepts that she then challenges: interpellation and mirroring. During their first kiss, Alice thinks to herself “This is not allowed,” because as she explains, “I knew that if anyone saw us, the totality of our lives... would be shrunk up to the assumptions of our kiss” (Winterson, *Gut* 120). To kiss another woman in public would be to defy the way she has been defined as heterosexual woman by society, but while she initially resists that, Alice quickly decides “I realized the absurdity of pinning anything onto a kiss” (120). Whereas this may appear a flippant statement, it shows the way Alice, through her relationship with Stella, is able to defy labeling that would otherwise mark her as she does not see herself.

In much the same way, her view of mirroring in that first encounter shatters the mirror analogy she has explored at the beginning of the novel. As her relationship with Stella quickly progresses physically, Alice explains that “The reflective image of a woman with a woman is seductive. I enjoyed looking at her in a way that was forbidden to me, this self on self, self as desirer and desired...” (Winterson, *Gut* 120-1). Alice moves past the artificial dichotomies of gender to acknowledge that “I did disturb the water and the perfect picture broke” (121). Alice is then able to move beyond the appeal of the heterosexual mirror and love Stella for who she is (121). And this view of Stella, as alternative to the mirror, follows readers throughout the novel.

Stella’s view of the world throughout the novel is one covered by a sense of mystery and magic, owing in part to her Kabbalistic roots. Her parents were able to escape Hitler’s Germany; and while her father was Jewish and became obsessed with the Kabbalah, her mother was not. However, she risked her life to save Stella’s father, a man she did not really love. As a result, Stella was raised in a household that did not conform to a religion or a world view. If anything, Stella is a positive influence on Alice’s world view, simply because Stella sees the world, especially herself, as “clouded, refractory, partial” (Winterson, *Gut* 190).

While to most people Stella’s father may have been out of touch with the outer world because of his close interest in Kabbalah rather than the concerns of everyday life, he did understand his own inner world, which is a decided distinction from Alice’s father, who seems to know how to deal only with the outer world, the world of others’ expectations. Stella remembers her father saying, “Learn to remember your real face,” adding that “He never looked in a mirror” (Winterson, *Gut* 191). While Stella feels

simultaneously stable and unstable, such feelings underscore Winterson's belief in the more varied and more validated version of identity. Winterson implies that characters who accept only one identity are doomed to failure. The contrast between Stella/Stella's father and Jove/Alice's father is precisely that lack of mirroring or lack of Bildungsroman maturation towards ideological acceptance that happens with the latter examples. For Winterson, multiple times/histories/selves equal fluid identity; and so the similarities between certain characters, like Jove and Alice's father, and their psychological destruction should signal to readers that for Winterson, the traditional model of the Bildungsroman that accompanies traditional maturation amounts to stagnation. This is best exemplified in Alice's father, whose portrayal of Englishness becomes stagnant, just as it does for Chris in *Metroland*. Chris is simply Jove/Alice's father before the psychological destruction brought on by their rigid view of themselves and the world at large. As such, the relationships that Alice cultivates with Jove and then Stella allow Alice to experience both rigid and fluid constructions of identity; and in turn, Alice appears to favor Stella's fluidity over Jove's rigidity, which reflects her choice of Stella over Jove as a romantic interest.

The relationship between Stella, Jove, and Alice is predicated on sex, in particular navigating unfamiliar territories for the characters in terms of their sexuality and changes in sexual preference. Much like in *Metroland*, where Chris experiences sex in another country and with someone of another nationality, Alice has her experiences in America with Stella, who was born in America but lived in Germany for a good deal of her adolescence, and Jove, who was born and initially raised in Italy but moved to America as a child. Thus, there are a few scenes where the characters focus on the mirror motif,

looking at and exploring each other as sexual entities and counterparts of themselves. Winterson offers another view of sexuality, though, since she often denies such stereotyping in lieu of instability and mutability. Alice's sexual identity in *Gut Symmetries* is seen as both fluid and fragmentary – the same way she sees her personal identity. She is able to love both Jove and Stella; and while she experiences a sense of conflict over the love triangle, she also seems fairly secure with both relationships. On a number of occasions in the novel, Alice's story or life is described as “fragments of colored glass held up to the light” (Winterson, *Gut* 156), a metaphor for Alice's life that reflects a postmodern view of identity and allows Alice the room to have multiple sides to herself and her view of others.

As Alice states, “Sex and procreation easily fit in with the body's plans for Empire; it wants to extend its territory, needs to reproduce itself. It resists invasion. Love the invader compromises the self's autonomy. Love the rescuer is the hand held out across the uncrossable sea” (Winterson, *Gut* 26). Sex (and love, it would seem) overcome any pure, isolated sense of self, allowing one to both physically reproduce and, as Winterson implies, to also leave a mark on the psyche of the other person, to reproduce metaphorically in the other person's consciousness. It “compromises the self's autonomy,” but it also allows the liberation implicit in *Gut Symmetries* that finds its locus in the Jove-Stella-Alice triangulation. It is also an image that allows readers to best relate sexuality to nationality. If one looks at sexuality as a form of conquest and a way to extend the body's metaphorical empire, then readers can – and probably should – interpret sexuality as a metaphor for national conquest. Certainly, one of the first countries that come to mind when a person thinks the word “empire” is England, and the

use of sex as empire in Alice's case is almost ironic since she ignores most classifications of that nature.

While sex is a form of travel in *Gut Symmetries* just as it is in *Metroland*, there is also a good deal of literal travel in *Gut Symmetries*, usually highlighting voyages across or in bodies of water. At the beginning of the novel, Alice reflects on her travel across the Atlantic on the QE2. She thinks about the overwhelming self-indulgence present on the ship, and then moves from thinking about the food to thinking about sex: "The Exotic, the Other, the orient of interest that floats at sea. Where else could anyone have access to a Thai chambermaid, a bored Countess, a fading rock star and a briny boy, all for the effort of a stroll on deck?" (Winterson, *Gut* 14). Alice sees the ship as a microcosm of sexual (and cultural) opportunities, underscoring, as Chris from *Metroland* would argue, that those opportunities are akin to travel. She also calls the ship "a model of the world in little," and much like the Bildungsroman as a whole, travel should, in theory, lead to personal discovery (9). Beyond that the sexual and global implications, however, the example of the QE2 also underscores the imperialist nature of travel, the easy conquest that characters can experience as a result of travel. The imagery of the QE2 that Winterson introduces causes readers to make the connection between Englishness and conquest. The QE2 is the quintessential English vessel, named after the current queen of England and hence symbolizing imperial domination, even if it is in name only. The excess in evidence on the boat, like Alice's mention of the volume of food on the ship – "2,455 lb of butter, 595 lb of frozen prawns, 865 gallons of ice cream, 26,500 tea bags, 995 lb of frozen fish, 135 jars of baby food, 170 bottles of vodka, 1,959 lb of lobster..."

this is not endless but it is long” – likewise can bring to mind the empire of days gone by, full of excess and opulence (Winterson, *Gut* 13).

In addition to simple imperialist suggestions, the QE2 also serves as a metaphor for Alice’s father’s interest in shipping; and not coincidentally, his work allows him to visit and “conquer” New York. And just as Alice’s father is bifurcated into working-class son and middle-upper-class boss, he is also bifurcated by his English traits and his American dream. In the section directly before Alice explains the way her father was a “giant projection on the screen of other people” (Winterson *Gut* 54), she also explains their understanding about his interest in the ships due to the company’s “apprenticeship mentality” and tells readers about her father’s plan to move up in the company (53). In short, he marries Alice’s mother directly after his first major promotion to head of “Atlantic crossings,” but vows on their wedding night not to consummate their relationship “until he had been made director of the line” (53). Even then, his English sense of propriety struggles against his American-esque ambition: instead of “fulfilling” his wife, he goes to New York to fulfill his business aspirations.

All of these issues that Alice’s father experiences or faces come together to make readers consider the multiple levels on which one can be ideologically colonized. Alice’s father is caught between two lives and ultimately does not feel comfortable in either. He accepts that he cannot be both a worker and a boss, and his identity becomes fragmented, including his national identity, since he appears to act English according to Alice, but he adopts the values of the American Dream. As a result, Englishness is subtly but concretely established as an ideological structure in *Gut Symmetries* – one which Alice attempts to erase through her disregard for the concerns that accompany the question of

national identity. This does not mean that Alice rejects her English characteristics or her resemblance to her father. At one point, when explaining the manner in which both her grandmother and father tended to keep secrets from others, she declares, “I am father’s daughter” (Winterson, *Gut* 109). However, Alice does not allow her Englishness to restrict her identity by offering her only one definite way of seeing herself.

Winterson seems to end the novel in the uncertainty and confusion typical of postmodern existence, as Alice and Stella walk through the streets of New York without resolving their relationship for the better or worse. However, the final line of the novel also leaves the reader with a certain sense of optimism as well: “Whatever it is that pulls the pin, that hurls you past the boundaries of your own life into a brief and total beauty, even for a moment, it is enough” (Winterson, *Gut* 223). Winterson acknowledges the power of transformation, even in seemingly destructive forms, since it allows for “a brief and total beauty” because that beauty reflects the expansion of the self outside of the normal boundaries of ideological, psychological and cultural expectations. Winterson, an existential author at heart, often rejects categorization for the transcendent experience that allows one to move past categorization. *Gut Symmetries* is about transformation on magical and everyday levels, spanning alchemy to travel. Such transformations seem to change who one is, and while Winterson never seems to privilege national identity over other forms of identity like personal, sexual, and other communal identities, all levels of identity can certainly be affected by such amazing changes that pull one out of the ordinary.

For Alice, acceptance of her identity is partially tied to the idea of seeing, since much of the novel is about seeing: what she sees, what she does not see, and how she sees

it (often by seeing through others, as in the mirror). The movement through the past is akin to a walk for Alice: “Walk with me, memory to memory, the shared path, the mutual view” (Winterson, *Gut* 19). One problem in the novel is precisely that while Alice can allow someone into her memories, he or she will not necessarily share the same view, as evidenced by comparing Stella’s and Jove’s views throughout the novel. Metaphorically, this likewise seems to represent Winterson’s view of Englishness: people may try to walk the “mutual path” together, but that does not mean that they will see the same things or interpret them similarly. The phrase “Walk with me” also resonates throughout the novel, including during those last two pages where Alice tries to make sense of the convoluted views of her father and grandmother and the images she sees. And instead of unifying any sense of Englishness, Alice attempts to unify the universe, a much grander ambition: “Space and time cannot be separated. History and futurity are now. What you remember. What you invent. The universe curving in your gut” (223). In what seems like a truly Kabbalistic moment of self-awareness, the microcosm of the human and the macrocosm of the galaxies coincide, identities dissolve and the stasis of personal and national identity in *Metroland* become in *Gut Symmetries* the fluid possibilities of a liberating multivalency.

Conclusion: Accepting or Rejecting Bildungsromans and Englishnesses

Barnes and Winterson use the Bildungsroman paradigm to different ends. In *Metroland*, readers see how the traditional Bildungsroman can be played out to its traditional conclusion: the main character finds their place in conventional society. In *Gut Symmetries*, however, the traditional paradigm is denied, and Alice is largely able to avoid the model through seeing her father’s attempt to be conventional. If the

Bildungsroman offers a model of development, these writers imply that such a model only reflects traditional ways of being.

By using the Bildungsroman as a model for development, Barnes and Winterson also articulate an important message about ideological choices and identity, which has a direct impact on the way readers should understand Englishness. Particularly, both novels depict Englishness as a choice. For Chris in *Metroland*, traditional Englishness becomes equated with the bourgeoisie; and his eventual acceptance into the bourgeoisie as an adult also means an acceptance of a particular form of Englishness. Alternately, Alice in *Gut Symmetries* rejects a model of Englishness that would force her to conform into a role – in this case, one that would also dictate heterosexuality over a flexible sexual identity. Thus, gender and sexuality are caught up in national structures that would dictate young Englishwomen to conduct themselves in a certain manner.

Beyond communicating the constructed nature of Englishness, the Bildungsroman model serves as a compelling metaphor for English national identity. The movement from confused child to challenging adolescent and on to adulthood parallels the movement of country from nascent idea to prominent power. England's maturation has also meant the colonization and control of other countries, and many of those countries have succeeded in making a significant mark on English culture. Moreover, the model of maturation that the Bildungsroman offers forces one to conform to a standard – and Englishness is regularly imagined as traditional and conventional in popular culture. Thus, these novels can be seen as also offering different models through which Englishness can conceive of itself, either through traditional modes or around them.

While neither novel offers a solid answer to Englishness, each allows readers to consider the constructed nature of Englishness and, in turn, consider that there may be alternate forms of Englishness. Instead of accepting the alternative forms, each main character inhabits a world of absolutes where they must either accept Englishness in its entirety or reject it. However, the uncertain endings of each novel should suggest to readers a third option: an alternative sense of Englishness.

CHAPTER 3

REALITY, AUTHENTICITY, AND MYTH: COMMUNAL AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES IN *DANIEL MARTIN* (1977) BY JOHN FOWLES AND *ENGLAND*, *ENGLAND* (1998) BY JULIAN BARNES

Myths are often used to make sense of the world; and throughout the histories of multiple nations, myths have been used to unify national identity. Most countries create larger-than-life figures to aspire to or admire: the French have the legendary king Charlemagne, Americans have George Washington, and the English have Robin Hood. While these characters give people something to aspire to, the myths also give people a unified way of seeing themselves, providing cultural touchstones to make the often nebulous nature of national identity more tangible. Both John Fowles and Julian Barnes are interested in this function of myth: Fowles links the Robin Hood myth to both commercial media endeavors, such as film versions, and English traits in *Daniel Martin*, while Barnes uses a range of mythic characters – from Robin Hood to the royal family – to underscore the powerful influence that myth can exact concerning shared concepts of national identity in *England, England*.

But both Barnes and Fowles also use myths like Robin Hood to question the accepted view of Englishness. These writers show identity in flux, history in question, and truth as subjective. Both deconstruct the idea of a static and easily comprehensible definition of the world in the same way as Raymond Williams. In talking about the concept of mass-communication, Williams says that its success “depends, essentially on a minority in some way exploiting a majority,” implying that the masses are an imaginary concept that relies on a consensus of beliefs that merely pretends to reflect the majority

(*Culture* 299). As Barnes and Fowles show, cohesive ideas of national identity, ones in which a majority can invest, can always be deconstructed by individual definitions that often do not gel with any consensus over what defines Englishness.

This chapter, then, explores the ways in which these writers use myths and fairy tale-like plots to question whether a truly objective view of Englishness can ever be obtained. Barnes and Fowles also argue that the evolving ideas of English myth reveal the contingent nature of that identity. Consider Martha's first memory in *England, England*: playing on the floor with her Counties of England jigsaw puzzle and losing one piece of the puzzle (Barnes, *England* 4-6). This was a game she played with her father, where each time he would magically have the last piece, she would finish the puzzle, and "her jigsaw, her England, and her heart had been made whole again" (6). This image reveals a preoccupation for both writers: that people can create their own sense of national identity outside of rehearsed stories and patterns. Although the result of the game is always the same – her father always finds the missing piece to complete the puzzle – the process is arbitrary since the father randomly chooses which piece will complete the puzzle. Father and daughter work in conjunction, but Martha's interpretation is solely dependent on the authority of her father's choice. As a result, they privilege the multiple and changing interpretations of national identity over its traditional but restrictive versions. The discussion of memory in *England, England* indicates the way in which a communal collaboration – in this case just Martha and her father – can solidify certain ideas of national identity. But it also serves as an example of how the personal – here Martha's own memory – intersects with and contributes to an individual view on that identity. Martha's experience is consistent with Raymond Williams' concept of the

masses, which distances the individual from the public while still insisting that individuals are unable to escape a sense of mass identity. As a result, people are left to negotiate individual and communal notions of national identity. Since the communal is part of the individual identity, the communal sense of identity affects the individual while public identities are equally reliant on individual creation.

Each novel centers on the notion that myth serves different purposes for different characters. In *Daniel Martin*, it is defined as isolation, typified by the retreat within a green England and the figure of Robin Hood. Although Daniel has conflicting feelings about both, they serve to ground him until he figures out how he is. The novel reveals his contradictory nature since, while he initially loves Englishness, he comes to see it as performative, as if it is a coat that one puts on. Since the novel follows Daniel's movement from America to England and his journey as a writer in the context of Englishness, I likewise explore the issues that cause Daniel to embrace Englishness, reject it only to embrace it once more at the novel's end. In *England, England*, Barnes uses Robin Hood as an example of deconstructing and reordering several historical or mythic characters of the English imagination. The Robin Hood episode is also located, as in *Daniel Martin*, within an imaginary locus; but it is inspired less by the nostalgia of a lost childhood than in the artificial location of an England-inspired theme park, which Barnes implies is sometimes more interesting than the material England.

Defining Myth and its Relationship to National Identity

Myth is worth discussing, at least for the purposes of this study, because of its creation by both groups and individuals. It has become consensus among critics that the true value of myth lies not in its factual basis, but rather in its importance to a

community, a culture, a society, or a group. E.M.W. Tillyard calls myths “communal possession,” because their value lies with those who create the myths (12). Likewise, K.K. Ruthven also identifies that myth is not about the individual but the collective psyche (20). He argues that myths are “works of collective and anonymous imagination,” in which the particular details about myths matter less than how they bring groups together (56). And the idea that myths bring people together is echoed in Harry Slochower’s comment on myth in his book on mythopoesis: “the revival of myth in our time is an attempt to satisfy the human need for relatedness to fellow travelers on our common journey” (15). In other words, myths allow human beings to feel connected to each other concretely, and all three writers acknowledge the role myth plays in supporting a collective identity.

However, myths do not simply bring communities together. In order for myths to be propagated and, thus, bring people together, they must be agreed upon by a culture or group. There may be variations of a myth, but those myths have a basic story line with which everyone in that culture can identify and whose worth is realized in their transmission of a culture’s values. Hence, while Tillyard, Ruthven, and Slochower express how people embrace communality, readers should also consider Benedict Anderson’s concept of the imagined community and Raymond Williams’ concept of the masses. Anderson says that “even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members” (6), while Williams mirrors that sentiment: “The masses are always the others, whom we don’t know, and can’t know” (*Culture* 299). So, people want to hang onto, but what they get does not often reflect who they are.

Barnes and Fowles deconstruct the idea that myth relates only to a communal identity. Just because something is accepted by the majority does not give it inherent worth, and Barnes and Fowles depict the constructed character of myth, which cannot possibly encompass everything that is important to a cultural group or nation. After all, there is no single conception that can please all parts of the group or nation. While they do not necessarily reject the mythic as useless, Barnes and Fowles do reject it as any attempt to convey an all-encompassing reflection of the concrete actions and values of daily life, embracing the views of Anderson and Williams over the simplified view that myths simply bring people together. Arguing that they have as little bearing on our day-to-day lives as fairy tales do, Barnes and Fowles question the anonymity at the heart of communal myths.

Furthermore, Barnes and Fowles use myth to show not only that there is no common ground but that, in fact, the myths societies share are contingent and subject to change. There is nothing that can make any cultural expression truly communal, and so instead of believing the idea that somehow groups can truly understand each other completely through myth, these writers depict the idea that communality actually warps those myths because it attempts to include all possible versions of myths that could be created. And in that way, they demonstrate how myths are not truly the “communal possession” Tillyard acknowledges (12). This is why the England theme-park project in *England, England* is so flawed: it was created with the masses in mind; but because of the multivalency of the masses’ opinion, the project moves in strange directions, as happens with the “50 Quintessences of England” that I mentioned in the introduction, where qualities like “42. Whingeing” exist with concrete establishments like “2. Big Ben/

Houses of Parliament” and images like “6. A Robin in the Snow” (Barnes *England* 86-7). While, in one way, this variety of characteristics reinforces the ideologically-secure nature of Englishness – since it exists on so many concrete and abstract levels – it also imagines Englishness as so large that it is hard to recognize it unless someone is one of the initiated (i.e. English). As a result, the countless myths of Englishness should not be the basis of the multiple worlds people inhabit constantly and appear to do as little to help shape a real sense of national identity as the Cinderella myth does to create confident and independent women.

This is not to say that people no longer rely on myth to create identities like national ones. Myth becomes so important to people’s lives and is so repetitive that it cannot help seeping into their psyches, at least nominally. And this is where a large part of the problem of myth lies. It has an ability to shape an understanding of Englishness while still seeming incompatible with the everyday occurrences of the English. So, while myth should have little reflection on national identity because it seems to reflect only the interests of those in a small, privileged minority, myth does affect national identity, albeit that effect can often feel hollow, obscure, or meaningless to the majority.

The other major issue in play in this chapter is the role of history and its relationship to myth. Ruthven argues that just as myth can be historicized, through constant re-telling history can become myth by “turning the actual into the apocryphal” (10). Both Fowles and Barnes invoke myths that have been questioned as historical truths such as the story of Robin Hood. Ruthven actually mentions the myth in his book, comparing this myth’s historical validity to the story of Jesus, and arguing that delving into the true historical basis for Jesus is as “inconsequential as investigations into the

history of Robin Hood” (10). For Ruthven, the point is that the story/myth is real for a specific group of people, rather than whether it has any basis in fact. After all, myths are not about historical accuracy; they merely communicate that consensus exists among certain groups.

Likewise, Fowles and Barnes are not necessarily concerned with the reality or validity of a myth but, rather, who uses certain myths and to what end. In the case of both novelists, myth becomes problematic precisely because myths are related to what people in a cultural group want to hear. These novelists identify certain groups who seem to believe in the myths of Englishness. One group consists of outsiders, those who are not considered English by the other characters in the novel, like the Americans who help create the “50 Quintessences” in *England, England* or even Jenny from *Daniel Martin*, who is British but not English (an important distinction to Daniel in the novel). The other major group who believes in English myths consists of English men and women who may be considered authentically English but can no longer align themselves with outdated forms of that identity that imagine one true version of Englishness and connect that authentic Englishness to an imaginary lineage, in turn limiting the boundaries of Englishness to only those who fit into that paradigm. Martha from *England, England* and Daniel from *Daniel Martin* certainly belong to this group, as readers may realize while reading the novels or this chapter. This chapter largely addresses this latter category, implying that even those who may be considered English reject these paradigms of Englishness because they no longer consider them viable or useful.

This chapter is not intended to disregard mythology. On the contrary, myths can be an important and valuable part of a culture’s meaning and center. Myths help bring

together societies that normally could not be unified. The communality at the center of myth, which connects to ritualistic acts, can be a vehicle for patriotism and unity in a given culture. My argument, however, suggests that Barnes and Fowles work to deny any real sense of value in English national myths. Myths are initially unifying in these novels, but they are destructive to the very thing they mean to protect: national pride and identity. Many of these myths, like Fowles' explanation of the Robin Hood myth or Barnes' discussion of the quintessences of English culture, destroy a sense of true unity by exposing the emptiness that lies underneath all the pomp and circumstance. And if the unity of myth erodes, so does the supremacy of traditional views of national identity.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to show the ways in which a devolved England deals with both its epistemological and ontological status after its loss as an imperial power and after changes along cultural, racial, and social lines. England, the head of political power was left to define itself while Britain devolved and Scotland and Wales become sovereign nations. The past forty years in the history of England indicate that the myths of English culture are becoming harder to hold on to. Those who want to keep these myths are those who believe those myths bind the collective together. The problem comes in defining who the collective is. The collective, as mentioned earlier, often ignores the multiple and the minority, appealing instead to the most general of groups – or to the minority that imagines itself as the majority. Despite the fact that Barnes and Fowles are privileged white male novelists who might benefit from traditional conceptions of national identity because they exemplify those traditional forms, they also show the worthlessness in such a plan. Above all, this chapter will prove that a sense of

community at the heart of English national identity is a farce, exposing that the reliance on mythic concepts to define Englishness is superficial and meaningless.

On Being Insular but not Inclusive: Creating Myths of Englishness in *Daniel Martin*

Over the course of *Daniel Martin*, John Fowles depicts a character who grows up in the idyllic English countryside and leaves his humble roots to go pursue a college degree and a more refined life, which eventually leads to a lucrative job as a Hollywood screen writer. Even though he has attained a level of success and comfort in his life, the eponymous main character of the novel always comes back to the image of that idyllic countryside. And once Daniel is asked to come back home to England to visit his dying friend Anthony, he is forced to come to terms with his idyllic image of England. For the majority of the novel, the English countryside represents his English national identity, particularly since the retreat and simplicity it offers allows Daniel to act out one of the most prolific English myths: Robin Hood. Through the Robin Hood myth, Fowles explains how one can use Englishness to rationalize their life choices. Until Daniel Martin learns to accept that his view is just way of conceptualizing Englishness, he continues to replay the myth in an infinitely pointless loop.

In his 1964 essay “On Being English but Not British,” John Fowles identifies the differences between Britishness and Englishness. Fowles distinguishes the divide between Britishness and Englishness as indicative of the divide between “Green England and the Red-White-and-Blue Britain” (Fowles, “On Being” 80). In subsequent statements, Fowles connects Britain with “obedience” and imperialist power, hence his use of the term “Red-White-and-Blue Britain” (80). In a more complicated fashion, he connects Green England with a rigorous sense of justice. This sense of justice, as Fowles

puts it, needs to be kept “pure; that is, unaffected, unpretentious, unbigoted, unimperial – in a word, un-British” (84). Fowles seems to argue that the important difference between Englishness and Britishness is the difference between a patriotic and somewhat despotic state (Britain) and a personal sense of national identity that is guided by a feeling of justice (England). Fowles considers Englishness as more personal than Britishness because it is older, and his term “Green England” only reinforces that view since it connects England to the natural world on both literal and metaphorical levels.

Green England literally signifies nature, gardens, and verdant estates; however, to connect England with nature also means to render it part of the natural world and at odds with more obviously constructed notions like Britishness. Fowles argues early in his essay that Britishness is “a superficial conversion of my fundamental Englishness, a recent façade clapped on a much older building” (“On Being” 79). This definition reflects Fowles’ disbelief in Britishness, in part, because he sees the word “Britain” itself used to further military aims and foster a sense of patriotism. For Fowles, then, Britain is an empty nationalistic term and is synonymous with an imperialist, militaristic, dominating force; therefore it is a term outwardly forced upon a group of people who would rather be something else, whether it is English, Welsh, Scottish, or Irish.

Britishness to Fowles represents part of some larger entity that is both mythic and menacing. Britishness is always, using an idiom Fowles loves to use in *Daniel Martin*, a white elephant⁷. Englishness, in contrast, becomes somewhat more personal for Fowles because he equates it with insularity and individual experience; and it is, therefore, worth

⁷ In one example, Daniel calls Thorncombe, an estate he bought because of its association to retreat, a “white elephant” because “the place never got used” (340).

the cost of preservation. Although the move from the public to the personal was not easy, at least, argues Fowles, it took the British “from nation of brain-washed patriots to population of in-turned selves” (Fowles, *Daniel* 157). The implications of the move from patriotism to introspection become apparent as *Daniel Martin* continues, since it is this completely encompassing interest in the self and in seclusion that both Daniel Martin loves and which he constantly identifies as entirely English.

In “On Being English but Not British,” Fowles also identifies the Robin Hood myth as central to contemporary conceptions of Englishness. Where Fowles separates the “Red-White-and-Blue Britain” from “Green England,” Robin Hood emerges. As Fowles puts it, “What John Bull is to the Red-White-and-Blue Britain, Robin Hood is to the Green England” (“On Being” 83). Robin Hood, as a mythic figure, is the archetype of the Just Outlaw; and as such he straddles the worlds of freedom and retreat, two major characteristics that Fowles identifies as English (83). The Robin Hood character becomes something that rejects “the power that is” and instead retreats into the trees uphold a sense of justice while maintaining a certain level of freedom (85). In this scenario, Robin Hood represents England, a concomitant sense of retreat, and a reserved nature; and Britain presumably represents the Sheriff of Nottingham and, thus, the ultimate sign of imperialist power. Subsequently, Robin Hood’s rejection of “the power that is” also becomes a rejection of Britain, or at least Britain’s overwhelming sense of power and imperialism. As Fowles argues, “We have to be British and we want to be English” (82). If anything, Britain becomes a deterrent to living the English life, since its looming and forceful presence necessarily eradicates the Green England Fowles desires; but paradoxically, Green England cannot be constructed without Red-White-and-Blue

Britain. Robin Hood would have no one to defy without the Sheriff. Just as individuals cannot escape the conceptions of mass identity, Fowles cannot completely escape the façade of Britishness that he imagines slapped onto Englishness.

While Fowles acknowledges the artifice of Britain, he seems resistant to acknowledge the artifice of English national identity as depicted in the Robin Hood myth, which he avoids by compartmentalizing the “real” myth from the popular version of the myth circulated in contemporary media. As a result, there exists for Daniel a perfect form of the myth that retains the sense of retreat that he associates with Englishness. Fowles acknowledges that the Robin Hood myth has “now degenerated into a subject for children’s-hour television serials and comic strips” (“On Being” 83). Over time, the myth has become watered down by its commodification, whether it is the Disney version of Robin Hood with animals playing the parts, or the Americanized version featuring Kevin Costner. As a result, the personal meaning of the myth gets lost since the public prefers these universally-accepted versions. Even Daniel wants to serialize the Robin Hood myth by writing a script, but he quickly realizes that such an endeavor would ruin the myth as much as other versions have (Fowles, *Daniel* 270-1). The myth loses its power through cultural diffusion, and the commodification of the Robin Hood myth stands at odds with the authenticity of Daniel’s version of the “real” myth. The “real” story is related by Daniel Martin’s claims that the Robin Hood myth is “a myth based on hiding, and therefore we have hidden its true importance ever since it first balladed and folk-rumored its way into being—though even that genesis, from a people, not a single mind, gives the real game away” (271). There is something extremely telling and important to that statement, since Daniel identifies the communal aspects of the Robin Hood myth: the one

the community believes in as fake compared to his preference for the intensely personal one, where the myth of nationalism is something individuals rather than unseen groups of consumers define as true.

So, while Fowles seems to acknowledge the artificial reconstructions of the Robin Hood myth, he somehow imagines a core of legitimacy about Englishness at the heart of the myth. Instead of conforming to the rules of an imperialist and thereby British state, as an outlaw Robin Hood stands outside of those rules as a symbol of English justice and individualism. Robin Hood is decidedly English, not British. In *Daniel Martin*, Fowles connects several terms with the British: “[...] depuritanized, self-obsessed, and self-indulgent . . . all that the word ‘British,’ with its connotations of national duty and the sanctity of the done thing, had once proscribed” (496). Described in this way, Britishness concerns itself with obligation rather than interest, and the description further removes Britishness from the Robin Hood myth. Britishness creates a sense of false connection between entities that no longer benefit or long for that connection. Thus, Britishness fails to incite any sense of loyalty for Fowles because he equates Britishness with an empty shell of obligation.

Fowles’ discussion of the Robin Hood myth in his essay “On Being English but Not British,” is parlayed into a more extensive discussion in *Daniel Martin*, where the individualism behind the Englishness of the myth is exemplified in issues of patriotism, retreat, and freedom. The imagination and retreat hidden behind the Robin Hood myth also connects with a feeling that Daniel struggles with throughout the novel: nostalgia. This is not necessary a positive feeling, though, because as Daniel says, the Robin Hood myth is “too profoundly about being English not to need endless camouflage,

belittlement, relegation, good-humoured contempt... for eternal children, not contemporary adults” (Fowles, *Daniel* 271). Since he embraces the myth completely for much of the novel, Daniel acknowledges his own lack of self-awareness in terms of national identity: he knows he should not like the myth, but he does; and he subverts the issue by saying that he is just a big kid at heart rather than acknowledging his own problematic sense of Englishness. In order to assuage any possible guilt over his fondness for certain aspects of English national identity, Daniel’s nostalgia for English myth forces him to ignore problems with Englishness, like the limiting definition of Englishness or his need to justify his own personality issues as quirks of his English nature.

But for Daniel, a bit of nostalgia is worth the cost to retell a myth like Robin Hood since it is integrated with other characteristics that Fowles associates with Englishness: freedom and retreat, where one represents independence and autonomy, and the other signifies the isolation and separation derived from autonomy. The English have the freedom to retreat, but that retreat can be realized only in the imagination. The contrasting public persona of Englishness is far more restrictive since it involves recognizing the restrictions of life. As Daniel puts it, the English “turn all outward freedom (as contrasted with that of the imagination) into a game with set rules: one where every freedom is allowed except the freedom to break those rules” (Fowles, *Daniel* 79). Outer freedom, then, according to Fowles, implies a choice based on given parameters, rules, and laws. Throughout the novel, Fowles shows the culturally desolate nature of the traditional idea of England as imagined in the Robin Hood myth, in which any retreat from reality so prevalent in English society provides only a hollow, meaningless existence: “what permits in England our extraordinary tolerance of national decay, of

muddling through... Our society, and its actual state is nothing: merely the dead real world, not the living imaginary one” (73). In contrast, the “real” England, at least for Daniel, is a constructed imaginary space in which one can hide from the world. Daniel’s England is a retreat from that deadening reality, not a movement toward it. Thus, his notion of Englishness, allows him to constantly live in the interior world that romanticizes his youth instead of forcing him to accept a less palatable present.

Fowles, then, connects the “notion of retreat” embedded in the myth of Robin Hood with the “desire to create imaginary worlds” (Fowles, *Daniel* 271). This explains Daniel’s passion as a script writer. Fowles explains that Daniel “experienced this retreat (or reserve) much more strongly when I wrote plays” (272). As a result, he sees the Robin Hood myth change “from merely symbolizing folk-aspiration in social terms to enshrining a dominant mental/ characteristic, an essential behavior, an archetypal *movement* (akin to certain major vowel shifts in the language itself) of the English imagination” (271-2). The imaginary, then, is paramount to Daniel’s individual tailoring of Englishness; and one way Daniel creates this interior world is through writing, both in the first person (as Daniel) and third person (as his fictional counterpart, Simon Wolfe). At the beginning of the novel, when Daniel leaves California to return to England to see his college friend Anthony, who almost dies from plunging out of a window, Daniel writes about himself in the third person, “In his characteristic English fashion, Dan carefully filed away this added reason for why he was condemned to be what he was; how clear it was, if he ever did attempt the impossible, that anything would be better than to present it in the first person . . . even the absurdity of a mythical Simon Wolfe” (Fowles, *Daniel* 63). Daniel acknowledges in this moment the greater attraction the first

person holds compared to the third; and as such, the novel explores the contrast between these two perspectives and the manner in which they, in turn, allow Daniel to create different conceptions of Englishness.

Third-person writing creates a psychic retreat treat for Daniel, where he can divorce himself from real feelings rather than engage with them directly through a first-person character. Much of the novel is predicated on the idea of the first person and the third person since these perspectives allow Daniel to move closer to or farther away from the imaginary. Tellingly, Daniel relates the third-person perspective to a sense of retreat and his alter-ego, Mr. Specula Speculans: “a love of mirrors may appear to be only too literally *prima facie* evidence of narcissism, but it can also be symbolic of an attempt to see oneself as others see one – to escape the first person, and become one’s own third” (Fowles, *Daniel* 62). Again, readers get the sense of the third person – imagined through the lens of others – as retreat; Daniel imagines the first-person perspective as the more narcissistic perspective, since it focuses on the ways individuals see themselves and not the ways others perceive them. The problem with Daniel’s line of thinking, though, is that it ignores the solipsistic nature of the third person that accompanies looking in the mirror. In other words, he sees the narcissism inherent in the first-person perspective, but he fails to see how the third person likewise focuses on a particular view of the world, albeit one disguised as objective. It is much like Daniel’s view of the Robin Hood myth itself because, while he knows he should not accept the myth wholeheartedly, he simply imagines his version as the “real” version. Both problems are largely about lack of self-awareness; and in both cases, these problems cause Daniel not to question the larger

ideological structures behind his choices – be they the choice of third person or the acceptance of the Robin Hood myth.

Even though he debates the different forms of perspective he could use, Daniel Martin constantly asserts his status as writer of his own life and his own mythology. Daniel says, “I was writing myself, making myself the chief character in a play, so that I was not only the written personage, the character and its actor, but also the person who sits in the back of the stalls admiring what he has written” (Fowles, *Daniel* 69). As writer of his own personality and identity, Daniel gives himself the chance to enact and read what could be considered his own myth. Just as Ruthven argues, not only can history become myth, but myth can also become history (10); and so Daniel Martin creates his own mythic self, which then becomes “real” through constant retelling. In fact, there are multiple, equally authentic versions of Daniel throughout the novel, indicating that identity is by nature constructed and artificial, a number of myths from which human beings choose, all of which represent a bifurcated self. Susan Strehle Klemtner imagines this bifurcation through the idea of counterpoles, “wherein harmoniously co-existing opposites energize each other” (60). Whether one calls them opposites, counterpoles, bifurcations, or binaries, the unreliability of the narrator and the rejuvenation created by such discrepancies are the guiding forces of the novel, particularly the bifurcation between reality and the ideal. As Daniel puts it: “We paint an ideal, a dream, self on the glass and then wallow in the discrepancy” (Fowles, *Daniel* 72). Daniel, at least in the earlier part of his life, seems to thrive on the dream or the ideal as he attempts to deal with the discrepancy of the different versions of himself through the constant artificiality

of his own life and through his writing. Furthermore, putting on his Englishness as a whim indicates the performative nature of identity, on both a national and personal level.

The person Daniel creates coincides with his foray into film and allows him to use the English part of him as “as a weapon when I was bored, and disowned it when I was amused; demoted it to a Cinderella role” (Fowles, *Daniel* 71). Jenny’s description in the chapter “An Unbiased View” probably explains the phenomenon best. She describes how Daniel’s use of an English persona changes according to his mood, which she explains as “not being able to read him” (33). Part of that persona includes his “Visit-Britain self, chatting with picturesque old gaffers in an oak-beamed country pub and quaffing your tankard of ale,” which Jenny resents because that need to be English/British also makes him appear “homeless, permanently mid-Atlantic” and therefore not completely happy with his present life in America (33). Implicit in Daniel’s description of his use of Englishness is the fact that despite his outward romanticization and protection of Englishness from the world at large, he uses Englishness to his advantage when necessary or interesting.

These different versions appear at the onset of the novel when Daniel moves from his youth in early 1940s England to the present with Jenny in Hollywood then back to Oxford in the late 1940s. The movement from the harvest in the early 1940s to the present, where Daniel Martin is a script writer, shows the ways in which identity is inherently constructed. One moment occurs at the end of the first chapter of the novel, titled, “The Harvest.” At first, readers experience Daniel in the third person, and they can only speculate where the novel will go. It is not until the end of that first chapter that the readers might notice the strange entrance of the first person: “I feel in his pocket and

bring out a clasp-knife; plunge the blade in the red earth to clean it of the filth from the two rabbits he has gutted” (Fowles, *Daniel* 11). Readers know from earlier paragraphs that Daniel is alone, and so his movement from third to first person brings the reader out of this imagined third person to allow them to recognize that, while the story is in the third person, it is a third person story of the self. Both perspectives exist simultaneously with one able to manipulate the other, suggesting that Daniel’s sense of self can be finessed to suit the depiction of the self he wishes to present to the reader. Writing, then, allows Daniel to perpetuate the Robin Hood myth’s interest in retreat and affect Daniel’s personal sense of identity.

While Daniel is able to easily flip between perspectives, the self-construction of identity creates an impenetrable shield between Daniel and those who are most intimate with him. Jenny, Daniel’s erstwhile younger girlfriend, calls Daniel “Very planned and compact, like his handwriting. Like a good leather suitcase in an airport lounge, neatly locked, waiting to be taken somewhere else, with a destination label you can’t quite read” (Fowles, *Daniel* 33). This metaphor represents Daniel in a way that he depicts himself early on in the novel: as someone to be read, deciphered, or a code which even the initiated find difficult to break or find limiting. Jenny goes on to explain this phenomenon in even greater detail: “So the self-contained thing was really just a symptom of his inability to relate to anything but a *place* where he didn’t have to relate, except verbally, and after a few Dettols. I never got far beyond that secret” (34). Ironically, Daniel’s self is impenetrable because he is unable to connect with others outside of a set space that would allow him to experience a sense of retreat.

The concept of retreat serves, then, as an important trope throughout the novel, allowing Daniel to funnel his mysterious nature into the environment and creating a psychic space of retreat. Readers should find retreat exemplified in Daniel's interest in the concept of the sacred combe or *bonne vaux*. Fowles introduces the term most initially when discussing Restif de la Bretonne's *Monsieur Nicholas*. Daniel summarizes a section of Restif's work where, while taking out the family's flock of sheep, Restif wanders into a valley that he dubs "*la bonne vaux*: the valley of abundance, the sacred combe" because of the unspoiled natural beauty it contained (Fowles, *Daniel* 273). Later in the passage, Daniel also aligns Restif's conception of the sacred combe with landscape artist Samuel Palmer and his Shoreham period: "a place outside the normal world, intensely private and enclosed, intensely green and fertile, numinous, haunted and haunting, dominated by a sense of magic that is also a sense of a mysterious yet profound parity in all existence" (273). The combination of the isolation and the capacity for communing with nature afforded by the sacred combe allows Daniel to fully engage with the Robin Hood myth, "a myth based on hiding" (271). So, the physical aspect of retreat is matched in importance by the mental retreat.

The literal sacred combes in *Daniel Martin* offer the eponymous character a level of retreat from others and from reality. In particular, an estate called Thorncombe becomes one of the symbols of Englishness and Daniel's view of it in the novel because it links Daniel to his past. The first section, "The Harvest," becomes a type of *bonne vaux* for Daniel since readers find out later that the chapter is set at Thorncombe, rife with another emblem of England that Fowles connects with Green England and the Robin Hood myth: a connection with nature in a way that is secluded and simple. Thorncombe

is a sprawling estate in the country, where one can hide away from the world literally.

Likewise, Thorncombe and the Robin Hood myth are from Daniel's childhood, and both the place and the myth afford him a sense of nostalgia that shields him from the outer world psychically.

Eventually readers also hear that Daniel eventually acquires the property, and this story establishes his habit of relating to people through sacred retreats like Thorncombe. His daughter Caro is the catalyst for buying the property since she and her father bond over her father's childhood and family history through that property (Fowles, *Daniel* 127-9). But once Daniel buys the land, the reality of ownership inhibits him from actually occupying the property because the romantic notion that spurred him on becomes reality. At the end of the novel, Daniel explains to Jenny that while he and Jane will buy their own house, he will keep Thorncombe to "Just use it as before. Perhaps a bit more often" (625). Thus, the estate is symbolic rather than tangible since he rarely stays there and sometimes considers it an albatross of sorts because he cannot rid himself of it. Yet Daniel maintains a personal need for the estate since Thorncombe offers him the possibility of psychic retreat, and the ideal becomes more real than the actual place. As Daniel creates his view of England from the past, and in particular the time around the end of World War II, Thorncombe accumulates meaning from the experiences Daniel had on the estate during that time.

Throughout the novel, Daniel repeatedly voices the need to go to Thorncombe for recuperative reflection and to gain a sense of "Retreat, to lick wounds, to discover what had gone wrong, not only with Daniel Martin, but his generation, age, century; the unique selfishness of it, the futility, the ubiquitous addiction to wrong ends . . . not only a trip to

nowhere, but an exorbitant fare for it” (Fowles, *Daniel* 574). Not surprisingly, Martin relates the “fare” of retreat to the act of writing, calling it “thoughtless effort” and “mindless energy as a substitute for true intelligence” (574). As he states in the chapter titled “The Sacred Combe:” “*If a life is largely made of retreats from reality, its relation must be of retreats from imagination*” (276).

Part of the nostalgia that Dan associates with Thorncombe connects to his childhood sweetheart, Nancy Reed. While young Daniel “had faith” with the estate much like the estate’s owner, Mr. Reed, did because it was “isolated” (Fowles, *Daniel* 346), the real secret of the estate lay with a secret path Nancy and Daniel took to a place he refers to as “the Garden of Eden” (355). The secluded nature of the landscape reflects the nature of his relationship with Nancy, both of which he feels compelled to keep from her parents: “We mustn’t let anyone see,” Nancy urges (359). As their relationship grows, Nancy leads Daniel to her “real secret place,” somewhere she went with her sisters as a young girl (363). Later during this chapter about Nancy, titled “Phillida” and an appropriately pastoral and idealized renaming of his sweetheart, Thorncombe is suddenly sold; Daniel expresses his concern about the loss of the entire Reed family from the neighborhood. Here, Fowles introduces an important facet to his concept of retreat: “For the first time in my life I realized how profoundly place is also people. I could live a thousand years in this house where I write now, and never own it as they did; beyond all artifice of legal possession” (379). Daniel Martin often relates the significance of a place with the significance of the people who visit it, as readers can see with Thorncombe and the other *bonnes vauxes* that Fowles creates in the novel, in turn allowing those people limited access to his inner retreat.

The only place Daniel looks at in America as fondly as he does Thorncombe is Tsankawi, a mountain range near Santa Fe, which becomes another sacred combe. Daniel calls Santa Fe “one of the most humane of all American cities” and by describing its lack of tall buildings and its laid-back ambience, he explains that “it’s not at all the America of the European myth” (Fowles, *Daniel* 322). Daniel depicts the neighboring landscape as European and American. His description of the Jemez Mountains demonstrates this sentiment: “Their atmosphere is paradoxically very European – to be precise, Etruscan and Minoan . . . that is, they are haunted by loss and mystery, by a sense of some magical relationship, glimpsed both in the art and what little is known of their inhabitants’ way of life, between man and nature” (323). This connection between such disparate landscapes only underscores the imaginative nature of retreat for Daniel; he cares more about the feeling the place evokes rather than the place itself.

Natural environments like Tsankawi serve as emblems of what Fowles identifies as Green England, which exists in a pastoral dream world unsullied by progress. Daniel discusses this preoccupation with nature when he first talks about how his interest in orchids developed during his “solitary boyhood” where he took “refuge in nature as a poem, a myth, a catalysis,” the location for invention, imagination and performance that he pursues throughout his life as a writer (Fowles, *Daniel* 70). Interestingly enough, one of the words Daniel uses to describe nature is “myth.” Daniel’s myth includes the idea that nature is a refuge and that it contains some secret mysteries that can be uncovered if solitude is achieved. Daniel also feels secure in these natural environments and uses this feeling to turn Englishness into a state of mind, something that can stay within a person and can be triggered by a physical locale outside of England. Hence, the Englishness of

places like Tsankawi originates in feeling rather than any physical similarity to the English landscape.

The third major sacred combe that readers encounter in the book is Kitchener's Island, an Egyptian locale Dan visits with Jane in order to scout out locations for a script he is creating about Kitchener.⁸ Dan was initially asked to write the script because "there was a considerable latent nostalgia for imperialism," and he gained interest in after researching Kitchener and finding him "an odd enough character [...] to give him a foothold" because of Kitchener's "weird and Dombey-like mixture of acute shyness and determined megalomania" (Fowles, *Daniel* 279). Daniel sees Kitchener's Island in relief to the industrial landscape of the outlying area and imagines it as a "spatial invasion" that makes the trip end too quickly and keeps Jane and Daniel constantly in reality: "It was like a huge scorpion, pinched, menacing the little oasis of blue and green at their feet" (534). Like Tsankawi, the geography and indigenous vegetation are not as important as the feeling evoked from being in the space: "It was an Alhambra composed of vegetation, water, shadow; and perhaps nicest of all, it remained almost exactly as Dan has remembered it – one of the loveliest and most civilized few acres in his knowledge of this world, a tropical *bonne vau*x" (536).

Just as feeling is important to the space, Jane and Daniel's visit to Kitchener's Island becomes punctuated by an unspoken test he gives to her: "He was careful not to prompt Jane, but she too fell for the place at once" (Fowles, *Daniel* 536). In much the

⁸ Lord Kitchener is most well known for his imperialist work and his time as Secretary of State during WWI. As the article on Kitchener mentions, he "became a symbol of the national will to victory" ("Horatio," par. 1).

same way as Dan associates Thorncombe with Nancy (and Caro) and Tsankawi with Jenny, Kitchener's Island – even though he originally associates it with one-time employee and lover, Andrea – becomes associated with Jane in the present and his “test” of her as someone of an English-like mind. Even more so, Daniel reveals how Jane, too, serves as a type of *bonne vaux* against the present: “Jenny’s very young, Jane. With her I have to live very much in the present. In today. The past becomes like an infidelity, something one has no right to remember or refer to . . . like a past mistress. You’ve given me a quite marvelous relief from that” (541). It is during his visit to Kitchener’s Island that Daniel vocalizes his need to choose between “a known past and an unknown present” (542), not just between Jenny and Jane, but also between his conception of the past as mythic retreat and his conception of the present as undiluted reality. Daniel does not, at this point, see any other choices available; and so, he feels trapped between the two. This is one of the fundamental issues at the heart of this novel, and the recurring image of retreat interrupts binaries like the past and the present even as it helps to create them.

Daniel uses these three disparate natural landscapes to address Englishness: Thorncombe, Tsankawi, and Kitchener’s Island. Although they do not all conform to typical ideas of what is English in terms of landscape – where green, pastoral hillsides serve as backgrounds for large, manicured estates, small thatched cottages, or secluded ponds – all emblemize the core of Englishness: a retreat into a pastoral landscape. For Daniel, they all have a commonality of feeling. More importantly, they serve to test the uninitiated into the tribe of Englishness. Those who pass the test earn a special place in Dan’s heart, while those who fail – like Jenny – earn his secret ire.

The problem that occurs, of course, is that Daniel is unable to completely reconcile that sense of retreat with the people closest to him; and likewise, he fails to acknowledge his artistic retreat in the form of his novel about fictional alter-ego, Simon Wolfe, ultimately rejecting the project out of hand. The novel that Daniel attempts to create becomes, in part, a way for Daniel to deal with bringing his idealized version of England together with the ways things actually are in England. And the figure that is the quintessential representation of that Eden-like England is Robin Hood. Daniel must try to reconcile his own script of Robin Hood with his awareness of other popular conceptions of the myth. Daniel ultimately seems to prefer the myth to the real and concrete world in which he finds himself during the present. Similarly, writing the myth of self contrasts with the messy, unorganized nature of the modern subject. Daniel's attempts to write himself become a chance for him to rewrite his life, free of what has happened in the present. He would prefer to be represented by the mythic reminiscences of what he has constructed of and for himself.

In this sense, the novel itself is an emblem of Englishness to Daniel since, as he argues when discussing the Robin Hood myth, "the 'private' form of the read text must serve us better than the publicity of the seen spectacle" (Fowles, *Daniel* 273). And so, the novel presents readers with a series of binaries that Daniel cannot seem reconcile: the first and third-person perspectives; Dan's love for Jenny and Jane; his love of artifice and need to have a real moment; and, most importantly, the forms of Englishness that Dan uses at times to mask himself and others to be himself. And it is through these binaries that readers better understand how myth operates in the novel as well, separating story from history and putting into question the validity of different ways of being. On looking

at the Robin Hood myth in relation to Daniel's life and perception, readers can see that despite everything to the contrary, it is in myth that Daniel creates those binaries: one world for public consumption and another for private. The myth itself creates that sense of alienation from the world, and so while he lives in America he can shield himself using Englishness. But once in England and confronted with an alternate sense of that identity that involves being rather than distancing, Fowles seems to lessen his dependence on the myth for meaning.

Fowles's novel predicts Julian Barnes's *England, England* (1998), moving from the nostalgic, interior myth of English identity to the realization that all myths are superficial, contingent and patently constructed. In this sense, any myth about Englishness, interior/exterior and private/public is exposed as a hollow façade that can no longer sustain a clear sense of what defines Englishness.

Myth and the Truth in *England, England*

In much the same way that Fowles creates multiple sacred combs in the image of an original English version, in *England, England*, Julian Barnes argues that national myths are a calculated creation even as they seek to sustain pride in a communal sense of Englishness. In the novel, the definition of myth expands from a story or concept based on a communal understanding of historical events to a sense of myth as falsity, as in "it is a myth to consider Englishness a fixed notion." Barnes uses, questions, reimagines, and creates myth using these multiple definitions in order to uncover the fallacy of any cohesive myth about national identity.

Much like in *Daniel Martin*, readers of *England, England* experience the main character Martha's movement from English child to English adult, the main difference

being that while Daniel does not realize the constructed nature of myth and national identity, Martha reconfigures myths from an early age. As she grows older, she then works for the theme park based on England that is alluded to in the title of the novel and is actively expected to reconstruct myth to suit capitalist interests. The final section of the novel moves back to the original England, which has since fallen into ruin. As such, the movement between different creations of England corresponds to the construction of different myths of Englishness; and in turn, Barnes reveals how myths may be simultaneously hollow and useful to the construction of identity.

Barnes illustrates the hollow nature of many English myths in the three sections of the novel. For example, in the second section of the novel, titled “England, England,” Barnes suggests that while many people know that 1066 is important, no one can quite explain why it is important. When the strategically placed “woman researcher in neutral clothes” asks one person what happened in 1066, his reply is, “‘Battle of Hastings. 1066.’ Pause. ‘King Harold. Got an arrow in his eye’” (Barnes, *England* 83). When asked to elaborate on the event, however, the subject was unable to identify Harold as a Norman or a Saxon, engaging instead in a lengthy, garbled explanation where he repeatedly begins to speak only to immediately question his own words as soon as they leave his mouth (83). Myth for these subjects, who help shape the vision of the England-inspired theme park, is well memorized but largely meaningless once excavated by cultural archaeologists; it echoes Tillyard’s definition of myth as “communal possession” while adding to that definition a hollowness behind such possession. While millions of schoolchildren learn by rote, they lose a sense of the value of that information beyond that repetition. There is no real sense of pride or community in any myth that Barnes

invokes, except as a form of recognition that identifies something as important to English history. All these subjects know that 1066 was the Battle of Hastings, but they do not necessarily recognize the significance of national pride or identity beyond that knowledge. They can repeat the information they have learned over the years; but even that is elementary, as one subject demonstrates while explaining King Harold's involvement in the event – “Got an arrow in his eye.” (83). The date is merely another fact to memorize and store in the back of their brains to bring back out as an automatic reflex.

While the Battle of Hastings is not entirely myth – it was interpreted by the individuals embroidering the Bayeux tapestry – the Battle becomes myth through the ritualistic manner in which students learn this kind of information. Or, one could read the role of myth alternately, as Northrop Frye articulates in his work *Fables of Identity*: “the myth is the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual” (15). Frye focuses on the role of archetypes in relationship with myth and ritual, but his work also says a great deal about the power of myth on ritual. Individuals perform certain acts because of the mythic reasoning for doing so. However, I would argue that such a connection is reciprocal; it is not always clear if myth came before the ritual or vice-versa. As such, ritual can create a sense of myth through repetition, which is another way of looking at Ruthven's idea that through repetition history becomes myth. Because the Battle of Hastings is treated as a repetitive act of memori(al)ization, it becomes seamlessly interwoven into a nationalistic narrative without any probing inquiry. Repetition creates the myth.

Barnes treats the Battle of Hastings in the same way he treats the “Fifty Quintessences of Englishness” that are central to the novel and the creation of the theme park England, England, where a robin in the snow and imperialism sit alongside Robin Hood (*England* 86-87). By making a list of the things that are considered most English, Barnes identifies what the world (not just England) thinks of Englishness. The survey elicits responses from citizens of numerous countries. And by taking these quintessences and creating a theme park from them, Jack Pitman creates a world of myth and fantasy, one entirely based on a superficial understanding of national identity and where myth is commodified and rendered hollow. While Ruthven may be right to say that myths lose their meaning over time, causing cultures to create new meanings out of them, in *England, England*, the meanings made are arbitrary, constructed and devoid of any meaning. The world may agree on these classically English characteristics; but because these characteristics do not necessarily hold any real meaning, English national identity itself is equally empty.

Barnes, like Fowles, argues that if there is any truth to national identity, it can be found in the personal, not the national. Martha’s role in the novel is to exemplify the manner in which the personal is revealed through her creations of both memory and meaning. Martha begins the novel by questioning the idea of a concrete memory, arguing that memory “wasn’t a solid, seizable thing, which time, in its plodding, humorous way, might decorate down the years with fanciful detail ... but could never expunge” (Barnes, *England* 3). Because every person must remember his or her own memories, memory is personal and not necessarily rooted in reality. In fact, Martha considers most memories false: “...in all her years she was never able to come across a first memory which was not

in her opinion a lie” (4). Applied to national identity, this quotation implies that all meaning is contingent and individually tailored, thus leaving any common understanding of Englishness as conditional and as changeable as any other version.

Because Martha imagines both memory and meaning as contingent, she is able to generate her own meaning from everyday myths and rituals. She recreates “The Lord’s Prayer” to reflect what is important to her life rather than any communal sense of what it means for a community of believers. Martha creates a somewhat satirical, somewhat earnest revision of it, which “she thought was rather beautiful: the bit about the wigwam and the flowers always made her think of Nine Climbing Beans Round, which God, had He existed, would presumably have approved of” (Barnes, *England* 13). Martha’s version of The Lord’s Prayer relies on the program for an agricultural show she attends with her parents at a young age, which is appealing to her because “something about the lists – their calm organization and their completeness – satisfied her” (9). The repetition from the agricultural show program, including the Nine Climbing Beans Round, resembles the repetition of the Lord’s Prayer in its own “organization and completeness,” and since “Martha was a clever girl, and therefore not a believer,” she creates a prayer that reflects her own interests (13). As a result, Martha creates meaning from the seemingly meaningless, but just as the random sampling of people who argue that a particular view of Englishness becomes meaningless through repetition. So the repetition for Martha is meaningful only because it fulfills a personal need only.

Such contingency of meaning, tailored to individual needs, is at the heart of Sir Jack Pitman’s project to select ideas of England by committee. Brainstorming generates concepts of Englishness rather than relying on those already in place. Permanent notions

of identity accede to arbitrary notions determined around the conference table. In this novel, what is real about England in terms of its materiality is replaced or ignored in favor of what is perceived as real. When Pitman is first beginning to get England, England off the ground, he brings in a French intellectual to sit on a committee meeting. During his speech, the intellectual states, "...nowadays we prefer the replica to the original" (Barnes, *England* 55). The intellectual goes on to explain that this is modern thinking at work, since contemporary individuals prefer the replica to the original simply because "it gives us the greater *frisson*" (56). The thrill resides in the replica rather than original. The French intellectual goes on to say that "We must demand the replica, since the reality, the truth, the authenticity of the replica is the one we can possess, colonize, reorder, find *jousissance* in, and finally, if and when we decide, it is the reality which, since it is our destiny, we may meet, confront, and destroy" (57). Perhaps this is where people find the value of the replica to myth. With the "real" version of myth individuals have no revisionist power, but with replicas, they have the power to change them at will. Echoing the French intellectual, literary critic Matthew Pateman says that *England, England* "celebrates the duplicate, the model, the inauthentic" (78). However, if the novel celebrates the inauthentic, it does so with the aim of showing how truly constructed the world is, and how society has preferred inauthenticity because, as the French intellectual implies, it is easier for people to process, commodify, and rework.

Because the values of English culture in Sir Jack's world can be bought, sold, and shaped at will, they lose meaning and personal value. National myths, Barnes seems to argue, are becoming more and more revised and shaped according to the financial and material benefits to those who remake them. Barnes shows how national myths can be re-

envisioned and revised in his take on Robin Hood, which is decidedly different from Fowles's nostalgic view. On the one hand, readers see the ways people can get caught up in myth. The Merrie Men take on their role to the point where they almost forget that they are playing a part, stealing props from the Island for their own interests (229-31). By reenacting this myth, the actors who play the parts become part of its ritualistic nature. As such, they begin to assimilate the so-called personalities of the characters they are playing, never acknowledging the constructed nature of that personality. At the same time, however, these actors also create new identities for themselves through their reenactment of the myth, refashioning and updating those mythic identities with more contemporary meanings and attitudes.

The committee that Sir Jack creates is assisted by Martha, who questions whether women could have been Merrie Men, an appropriate inquiry since a part of her job is to reposition "myths for modern times" (Barnes, *England* 152). Two members of the team, Mark and Jeff, are resistant to changing what is already known about the myth. Mark's facetious comment, "Is the Pope a Catholic?", and Jeff's obvious irritation that comes out when he tells Martha to "Knock off the feminism..." (151) indicate the resilience of the Robin Hood myth as well as the intensity with which individuals will protect the myth when it is challenged. The myth follows a specific pattern that individuals cannot easily deviate from. Yet, what ensues is one of the more spirited replies from Dr. Max, the Official Historian of Sir Jack's project, as well as one of the most ontologically interesting discussions of myth in the novel. By questioning the sexuality and gender of major characters in the myth, both Martha and Dr. Max blow the myth apart, breaking it into its most basic and utilitarian parts. That the rest of the team seems to reject the

breaking apart of the myth reflects the deference with which they (and average people) hold the Robin Hood myth.

The original argument over women as Merrie Men leads to an argument over whether or not Maid Marian was a woman (Barnes, *England* 154-6). As the dust settles on the argument, Dr. Max presents his evidence and ends his report by adding “My conclusions are these: that personally I could not give a toss; that in assembling this report I have rarely felt so insulted in my professional life; and that my resignation is in the post” (155). Even for Dr. Max, the researcher of the obscure and inane, this discussion turns out to be too ridiculous and incredibly messy. There is something inherently distasteful to the group about questioning whether Maid Marian was attempting to avoid penetrative sex in order to disguise her actual gender (155). The whole episode reads like a Shakespeare pastoral gone horribly wrong, the disguised main character never escaping his or her gendered disguise in a transgressive rather than an equilibrium-restoring way. This messiness and disorder seem to be the side-effects of questioning and revising myths, which returns readers back to this idea that people do not necessarily want the truth. People want the simulacra. Dr. Max responds so negatively to the debate because the mindset that produces statements like “*Everyone knows about Robin Hood...*” and “*You can’t start messing around with Robin Hood...*” is offensive to him though the mindset remains pervasive (156). The inauthenticity of the myth just seems easier to digest.

Part of the power of myth lies in its ability to take over or to supply, as anthropologist and theorist Kluckhohn claims, “fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment” (43). Kluckhohn makes the point that society looks to myths

and rituals to organize a disorganized and confusing world. If readers look at myth in this way, the use of the Robin Hood myth, as seemingly hollow as it may be, gives structure to an otherwise confusing postmodern world. At a time when England's national identity was in such flux due to devolution, it is no wonder that writers like Barnes argue that these myths are hollow but still valuable to a culture that has lost its central meaning. Vera Nünning is right to recognize the less-than-seemly aspects of the group's behavior: stealing, hunting preserved animals, and attempting to attack the Sheriff of Nottingham at every turn are the kinds of behavior that reveal 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" (64). Similarly, Nünning would doubtfully consider other examples of myth in the novel. In the first section of the novel, Martha befriends a Spanish girl named Cristina, who jokingly tells Martha that Francis Drake was a pirate. Martha's reply makes clear her reasoning behind her argument: "No he wasn't, because she knew he was an English hero and a Sir and an Admiral and therefore a Gentleman" (Barnes, *England* 7). The implication here for Francis Drake, as well as Robin Hood and myths in general, is that myths reflect a polished version of history or a story.

Later, when Martha reads about Sir Francis Drake, she realizes that while he is never indicted in encyclopedic history as a pirate, most books talk around such terminology in a way that the word "pirate" could easily be inferred (Barnes, *England* 7). However, Martha rejects fact to rely on myth. Nünning would argue that this rejection is a rejection of the real, that what people really want is an idealized version of Englishness (65). Similarly, the actor who plays Samuel Johnson in the theme park England, England becomes too faithful to the real Samuel Johnson: moody, melancholy, and rude (Barnes,

England 213-5). The implication here, again, is that people do not want the historical Johnson. They prefer the copy to the original, the kind that represents the best representation of that writer.

But it is equally true to say that as the novel continues, Robin Hood and his Merrie Men become so ensconced in their characters that they cannot return to normal life either. Sir Jack has created myth addicts who cannot be released back into normal society, and who do not seem to want to be released to it (Barnes, *England* 203-5). Kluckhohn's discussion of myth explains the way in which the strength of myth in *England, England* resides in its ritualistic nature, which supplies people with certainty at a time when national identity is in flux. People gladly become part of Pitman's experiment because they crave the certainty of the myths he propagates. The main attraction *England, England* (also known as "the Island") holds for people is replication since it reproduces experiences that cannot be experienced in their original form in the present. Instead of hearing about Charles I's execution, for example, the vacationers to the Island can actually experience it (189). In this way, myths have become commodified as Sir Jack envisioned and also been changed to suit a modern purpose. So, myths in *England, England* are appropriated, and while to the reader they seem almost hideous caricatures, they are exciting entertainment to the vacationers.

The commodification of those myths serves, in certain instances, to help rewrite myth. One example is the mythic account of the girl who, on her way to the market, falls from the cliffs with an umbrella and a basket of eggs after being blown over by heavy winds. The girl's story becomes written by Sir Jack and his team into a commodified moment for the tourist, a bungee jump and breakfast, or what Sir Jack calls the "Island

Breakfast Experience” (Barnes, *England* 123-6). Pitman, along with his team, rewrites the myth, primarily to entertain the guests of England, England. However, a side effect of this mythic revision is that the myth itself loses power. The original myth has an ethereal, magical quality, since the woman uses only an umbrella to survive a drop off the cliff. In contrast, the revision of the myth, a skydiver/omelet breakfast deal, is both commercial and emptied of any deeper resonance. Pitman takes the spark and the life from myths like this one and perverts them for the sake of commodity.

Contrast the “Island Breakfast Experience” with the final section of the novel, “Anglia,” which immediately brings to mind the Anglo-Saxon kingdom East Anglia – and as such connects the post-theme park England with its roots as a nation. The end of the novel still questions myth but without the sense of commodification held by the creators of the Island. Jez Harris, once known as Jack Oshinsky in America, attempts to create his own myths instead of retelling the myths of the area; in one story about Halley’s copse, he “would hint, without ever confirming, at tales of witchcraft and superstition” (Barnes, *England* 252). The schoolmaster, Mr. Mullin, rejects Jez’s storytelling, because Jez does not extemporize on the stories of the area that, as Mullin puts it, are “*our* stories. They’d be ...*true* [...] Well, maybe not true, but at least recorded” (254). Mullin sees the myths of the town as more authentic than Jez’s myths precisely because they are written down. Text is valued over orality because it offers a closer approximation to a truth than any contingent narrative structure. However, both are technically false, and so “truth” in Anglia comes from authority rather than reality.

However, when readers see Martha going back to old England, or Anglia, to help recreate the Fête in order to celebrate its origins, the reader has to accept the constructed

and somewhat inauthentic nature of the reconstruction. Martha becomes the picture of authenticity to the townspeople because she actually grew up in the countryside. They come to her as an expert, and she then begins to relate her own myth from the Agricultural and Horticultural Society's book that she read as a youth. Martha is allowed to relate and retell the meanings she created personally as a child; and those meanings are propagated as truth, as valid, as reality. Nevertheless, the townspeople eventually reject the rules that Martha gives them. The alternative is Mullin's somewhat ironic declaration that contradicts his earlier complaints about Jez, "Perhaps on the whole we'd better start from scratch" (Barnes, *England* 255). Yet, in some ways the townspeople can never start from scratch, since any new identity would be derived from their memories of both the past and present. Martha's ideas, although rooted in a version of an English past, are not what the people of Anglia are searching for. Much like Jez tells his own stories instead of sticking to the ones "authentic" to the region, the townspeople prefer their own postmodern pastiche Fête to the one that Martha offers them. They reject Martha's ideas simply because they do not fit into their idea of Anglia. Ultimately, authenticity is not as important as the town's vision of Anglia and its metonymic representation of Englishness. Myth, then, is not about the importance of authenticity since there are multiple identities and stories to the extent that none that can be considered more authentic or valid than others.

There is something inherently contradictory in the way in which the townspeople recreate the Fête. On the one hand, nostalgic surrounds the effort, which Northrop Frye would explain as "something of a voluntary effort ... to recapture a lost rapport with the natural cycle" (Barnes, *England* 15). In this case, the townspeople uphold their modern

beliefs underneath those natural cycles. For example, the townspeople have a May Queen, but no one recognizes the song played to open the Fête, “which some villagers thought a hymn in deference to the vicar, and others an old Beatles song” (272).⁹ As Nünning argues that “the inhabitants of Anglia discover that it is impossible to re-experience or relive old times” (71). Considering how constructed the past has become, there is no way one can relive it: accretions exist but not original repetitions. As Nünning states, the townspeople return to what seems like an idyllic past, while still maintaining their modern self of values and beliefs. This is why the vicar is reluctant to say a prayer to open the Fête – because religion no longer makes sense in this postmodern version of the past. As Barnes puts it, he “knew better than to use his position to propose any coercive theological system” (*England* 271). While the people of Anglia attempt to revert to the past, they pick and choose which elements they will incorporate into their future.

Anglia has been stripped of its title as England and the associated cultural references, while the people deal with the fact that the country cannot revert to a past that others might recognize. After all, the past seems as illusory as the present in *England, England*. Indeed, there is no reliable past present or future in Anglia. As Barnes writes in the last section of the novel, “Old England had lost its history, and therefore – since memory is identity – had lost all sense of self” (*England* 259). The power and meaning of this statement cannot be ignored. If memory is itself a creation, false, then how does anyone have a concrete sense of identity? The answer seems to rest with postmodernism

⁹ The song played, “Land of Hope and Glory,” is actually a song “celebrating English, as opposed to British, patriotism” (“Elgar,” par. 2). The song itself was composed by Sir Edward Elgar, although the accompanying words were written by poet Christopher Bensen.

and the acceptance that memory, history, and identity are artificially constructed.

England, England implies this by creating a landscape rife with parody and pastiche, one where nothing seems entirely reliable. Barnes channels Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra in much of the novel, who argues that in the age of simulation, the real "no longer needs to be rational, because it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance" (2). In fact, Baudrillard claims that the real has been supplanted by the hyperreal because "no imaginary envelops it anymore" (2). Thus, if the division between the real and imaginary no longer exists, then the idea of authenticity is immaterial as well. The authentic is no longer any more or less real than any other conception. It simply is.

As a consequence, the simplest solution is to allow a nation's identity to evolve without too much thought. At the end of the novel, Martha muses:

She was not sure if she had done right, if Anglia had done right, if a nation could reverse its course and habits. Was it mere willed antiquarianism, as *The Times* alleged, or had that trait been part of its nature, its history, anyway? Was it a brave new venture, one of spiritual renewal and moral self-sufficiency, as political leaders maintained? Or was it simply inevitable, a forced response to economic collapse, depopulation, and European revenge? These questions were not debated in the village: a sign perhaps that the country's fretful, psoriatic self-consciousness had finally come to an end. (Barnes, *England* 266)

The questioning of identity, ultimately, becomes less important than allowing the nation to simply be. Both the Island and Anglia are constructed on basic levels. Both identify

with some unseen and unknown past that people think is authentic. However, if Barnes is trying to teach readers something, it is that all sense of authenticity is constructed. England, England becomes more authentic than the original England. People want to visit it over the real England. They find something authentic in its inauthenticity. Meanwhile, Anglia struggles on, an amalgamation of old and new, just like Martha. All three – Anglia, the Island, and Martha – struggle between the interplay of old and new. While England, England as a place shows the ways in which people can commodify and distort history for their own means, Anglia shows the ways in which people construct new identities from old and new ideas. Martha's life in Anglia is more meaningful than Sir Jack's life in his theme park, partially because Pitman has capitalized on the world's ideas of Englishness, creating something marketable but not as meaningful as Martha and the townspeople create in Anglia. His idea is hollow since it does not derive from the personal, even though the personal is just as subjective, given Martha's predilection toward a past dependent on the recovery of the missing puzzle piece.

Barnes uses myth to break apart the collective idea of identity. Instead of arguing merely that England needs to reinvest in its own myths, Barnes depicts these myths as empty and uninspiring. Inspiration for Barnes, then, comes from the interpretation of myth, from the reinscription of meaning into myth through modern means. Some of those means, Barnes implies, include the use of personal interpretation rather than blindly following the long-held myths. In some ways, personal interpretation is all there is since, as both Barnes and Fowles imply (and Nünning argues), myths can never be fully reborn. Much in the same vein, a sense of Englishness cannot be blindly followed without reinscribing it in meaningful and valid ways, ways which reflect the current state of

English culture and society rather than an idealized mythic past that is impossible to recreate.

Conclusion: English Myths and Fluidity, Authenticity, and Commodity

The implications of using myth are varied and complex, as evidenced in this chapter. Typically, myths are seen as concrete, fixed, and ancient. Yet, as both Barnes and Fowles indicate, myths are subject to their surroundings. Myths can also be created in the present, mythologized through their writing, their dissemination, and their repetition. Even more importantly, the use of myths by these two writers indicates the ways in which myths reflect the ideology of a culture. Both writers show the ways in which myths change individuals, as well as the ways individuals change myths.

Myths become more than literature, more than history, and are implicated in the creation of individual and national identities. The flux in myth reflects the flux in identities, including Englishness. So, Daniel's use of multiple types of retreat in *Daniel Martin* demonstrates how the Robin Hood myth's essence can be transplanted to different locales – just as Daniel's Englishness is transplanted in Hollywood. Daniel uses the myth in different locales to bring personal meaning and privacy to it. Likewise, the production of the Fête in *England, England* indicates that myths can be created and should change according to the needs of the people who use them. Thus, while most people imagine myths as immutable, these novels demonstrate that myths will – and must – change.

Not surprisingly, while these two novelists both address myth, they come to conclusions about myth very differently. While Fowles shows that nostalgia can be both beneficial and problematic to a childhood creation of national identity, Barnes shows the ways in which the individual participates in that creation in a postmodern, ontologically

complicated way. Where Fowles questions but still accepts and identifies with Englishness, Barnes shows the emptiness behind its façade. Fowles' narrative, while complex, does not necessarily overtly challenge myths in the way that Barnes does through his explication of theme-park commodification.

Despite these differences, both novels also deal with authenticity of myth and the “writing” of identity, history, and memory. The importance of such a discussion does not lie with the questioning whether something is authentic. If anything, both writers favor a subjective view of identity showing the ways in which the shaping of the national identity can shape personal identity and vice versa. The interplay between the national and the personal becomes a place of contention for both writers since, as both novels explore, identity itself is in a constant state of flux. Even on a personal level, identity is something that remains concrete only for short periods of time, while on a national level, Englishness becomes a hollow shell instead of something valuable and important. Perhaps this is just a reflection of the postmodern condition, one that denies any sense of ontological certainty.

Or, perhaps the commodification of Englishness problematizes any concrete sense of Englishness. Daniel Martin considers the commodification of the Robin Hood myth a major problem that affects the authenticity of the myth. It keeps him from accepting the myth and forces him to find his own way to express Englishness outside of popular forms. And the entire second section of *England, England* lampoons the commodification of myths through the image of the nation as theme park. If the everyday expression of Englishness is boiled down to its most general expression, then Englishness suffers, and by extension so do the people of England.

Whether readers consider John Fowles' solemn journey of individual discovery or Julian Barnes comedic take on the constructed nature of identity, both novels can lead readers toward the same conclusions about Englishness: particularly that myths about national identity are constructions that only hold meaning if imbued with it by the individual. All myths are constructed, but instead of lamenting that fact, individuals need to consider how they can make those constructions personally and nationally meaningful.

CHAPTER 4

MASKS AND MASQUES: PERFORMING ENGLISHNESS(ES), STEREOTYPES, AND AUTHENTIC SELVES IN ANGELA CARTER'S *NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS* (1985) AND JOHN FOWLES' *THE MAGUS* (1965)

As the last chapter indicates, a sense of national identity is often assumed through the use of myths, stories that attempt to concretize the lineage of a people in a slightly more complicated way than the history of those people reveal. In *Daniel Martin*, for example, Fowles shows how Daniel attempts to use the Robin Hood myth to make sense of his English identity. However, I also demonstrated that myths can be reconfigured to suit the needs of the people, re-inscribing their meaning and changing the manner in which that particular myth contributes to a definition of a national identity. This is what readers understand in *England, England*; a number of the characters create myths that people accept as easily as “authentic” myths. In both novels, the Robin Hood myth serves as a perfect example of the ways myths can change according to individual interpretation even though myths are also imagined as communal possession and help to create a sense of communal identity. Myths, though, are rooted in the past because even if they are created today, they still often try to make sense of the past. And while the past can facilitate a link between people and the origins of their national identity, people also want something that allows them to imagine themselves as part of a larger identity in a more overtly fluid way and that is rooted in the present by its very enactment. That is performance.

This chapter will delve into the levels on which performance constructs, deconstructs, and reconstructs identity. In particular, this chapter will deal with the ways

in which Englishness is constantly performed by characters in the novels of Angela Carter and John Fowles, who see national identity as easy to assume as putting on makeup for a stage performance. The two major characters in these novels, Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* and Nicholas D'Urfe in *The Magus*, both use particular kinds of Englishness as masks that distance them from others: Fevvers as a consciously performing Cockney Venus and Nicolas D'Urfe as an unconsciously performing stereotypical young English gentleman of the 1950s. Despite the decidedly different socio-economic performances, each novelist uses the concept of performance not only to mask Englishness, but also to acknowledge that their performance of Englishness is necessarily fluid and changeable.

This chapter reveals the method by which the performance of Englishness ultimately challenges a stable sense of English national identity based on mythic versions of Englishness such as the need for insularity. These mythic qualities can be said to be abstractions of Englishness, in which they possess the appearance of authenticity because they are replicated on a daily basis by those living in England. Their automatic performance of these features of Englishness makes them seem natural. Perhaps not surprisingly, Englishness appears to exist more easily as an abstraction. However, the space between the theory and the practice is where readers can find the constructiveness of national identity; and as the Robin Hood clan in *England, England* demonstrated in the previous chapter, that liminal space offers extemporaneous alternative performances to the abstractions of national identity. So, I would suggest that readers can understand Englishness and national identity through the concrete, lived expression of the abstract, in which the concrete performance of national identity either reinforces or challenges

abstract notions of Englishness. Therefore because the unified sense of identity that abstractions characterize is contingent on area, time, and circumstance, there are multiple versions of Englishness. By choosing a particular version to perform, individuals signal others about ideological leanings; and as such, even if the choice of performance is subconscious, it nevertheless communicates important information to others about one's position on national identity.

The implications of acknowledging the performed aspect of Englishness are important to an understanding of English national identity. If individuals can accept that any expression of identity is a performance, then the privileging of certain forms of identity become pointless. Instead, individuals are finally able to accept the multiplicity of identity, which necessarily challenges the very nature of a cohesive national identity and enables the accommodation of new forms of Englishness.

Defining Performance and Authentic Identities

Performance, like myth (or the terminology of practically any concept, for that matter), invites multiple definitions and interpretations. There are writers who understand performance at the most literal level: as a conscious performance on the stage. Take, for example, critics of Absurdist drama like Herbert Blau, Ruby Cohn, and Martin Esslin. The type of work these critics produce is important to a basic level of performance as a dramatic act, and it is typically used for those who are studying dramatic literary texts or analyzing plays being performed in a certain context.

Then there are those writers who analyze a different type of performance, one that involves unconscious interaction between people instead of actors, with a script that is organically created as individuals interpret one another, and with identities that are

created and reiterated as a performance. Erving Goffman, for example, imagines the interactions between two people as an “information game—a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery” (*Presentation* 8). In this sense, interactions between two human beings are much more than simply a form of communication. Goffmann also presents this “game” as a way to define any given interaction between two individuals, which helps those individuals know how to act (1). There is, then, a sense of knowledge perceived through the notion of the “game,” an awareness of a script or set of rules.

In imagining the world as either a performance or a game, rules establish parameters through which individuals are offered an opportunity to create a personal identity. However, Goffman imagines the “rules” not as permanent but rather mutable, and they are dependent on the circumstances and individuals involved. Hence, he states that people “can serve as a source of information which others can use in arriving at their assessment of the situation” (*Strategic* 88). In other words, human beings use others to understand any given situation and to help them create unwritten rules of any given performance. While people’s performances are based on individual choices, they are also dictated by their interpretation of the situation. Individual choice and interpretation play a large role in both novels wherein the main characters carefully construct their identities for public consumption. The ways others interpret the performance determines the extent to which the characters can confidently make powerful assertions about the validity of national identity. Goffman expresses a similar idea in *Strategic Interaction*, when he says “Individuals, like other objects in this world, affect the surrounding environment in a manner congruent with their own actions and properties. Their mere presence produces

signs and marks. Individuals, in brief, exude expressions” (4-5). In short, people cannot escape the influence of others nor can they ignore the influence that others constantly exercise over them.

In this sense, all human beings are Althusserian examples of interpellation since to be in the world is to be constantly imagined as one identity or another. Judith Butler uses the concept of interpellation in a slightly different way from Goffman, but her treatment of the term can help readers identify the power that comes from interacting and, ultimately, categorizing individuals. Throughout *Excitable Speech*, Butler acknowledges the force behind “being called a name,” and she explains that those being named are “derogated and demeaned” but also “given a possibility for social existence” (2). This naming process derives from Althusser’s belief that naming has a direct correlation to the concrete reality of ideology, and as such is an everyday practice which “can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace, everyday police (or other hailing)” (131). So, when someone calls you a name, they create your identity. In Althusser’s view of interpellation, we are “always-already subjects” (132). As such, Althusser links interpellation to ideology, since both are imagined outside of history and therefore are on some level also imagined as eternal: *I am always myself*.

The power of naming seems simple, but Butler connects the naming process to Althusser’s concept of interpellation that, she argues, paves the way for “a certain social existence of the body,” in which an abstract meaning is transformed into the concrete world of body and action (*Excitable* 5). Both Althusser’s concept of interpellation and Butler’s process of naming imply that human beings are created as certain incarnations of being the moment they are acknowledged by others, thereby denying individuals agency.

Goffman's concept of the information game, however, offers a subversive opening that is not necessarily present in Butler or Althusser. Goffman accepts that interpellation exists in the game, but he also argues that one can undermine the expectations of others through false performances that capitalize on those expectations, even though he also acknowledges that it is easier to ruin someone else's performance than change one's own performance. So, while naming (a form hailing or interpellation) can force or encourage individuals further into the roles dictated by ideological structures and appears more deterministic than Goffmann's theory of performance, the act of naming also contains the possibility to resist these roles. For if one is constituted, in Butler's terms, as a degraded subject, he or she may choose to more freely reject that ideological role foisted upon them because the person gains nothing from that performance.

In addition to the information game, Goffmann offers the concept of the "working consensus," in which the participants of the game/performance agree to a single understanding of the moment (*Presentation* 10). This means that even if an individual is named, that individual must agree to the name and provide that consensus, which in turn implies that one may ultimately resist the name by refusing to perform to the name or ignoring it completely. While this does not mean that one can stop others naming them, it does mean that the name and its accompanying performance can be likewise resisted through another more improvised and self-directed performance. The concept of the working consensus also relies on a moral element given, as Goffmann argues, "that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims he is" (13). In other words, if one chooses a particular identity to present to others, one should honor that identity; put this way, the working

consensus operates similarly to an unspoken, unwritten contract. The working consensus, then, works by using sets of social characteristics that imply a specific social existence. And it is this assumed moral element that is exploited in both *Nights* and *The Magus* when the main characters make use of specific characteristics to force others to name them according to their own criteria, or alternatively, when they create a performance based on the expectations of their interpellated role in order to manipulate others. If name and performance do not consistently connect, then the world decenters. As a result, the English characteristics that these characters put forth can no longer be used to create the world around itself if its very nature is unstable or questionable.

In addition to the concept of the working consensus, the use of stereotypes in ideological perceptions of the individual also becomes central to my discussion of performance. After all, whether they are on the stage or in real life, many performances gain meaning from cultural touchstones, which in many cases also result in stereotypes. Berger and Luckmann would identify these touchstones as the “social stock of knowledge” (42), something that individuals need to engage with directly in their cultural experience in order to understand the world and create the “reality of everyday life” (44). In this way, meanings amass through the interaction of the individual with their own collective culture. Thus, the social stock of knowledge enables individuals to create Goffman’s working consensus. As such, the repetition of a given performance is important since it creates an expectation that one will continue to perform in the same way. Certain performances can become privileged over others simply by their prevalence. Equally important, however, is seeing the contingent nature of performance since each working consensus, on both a personal and public level, constantly changes based on

experience, stereotypes, and preference of each particular embodiment of the public with whom someone comes in contact. The product is a constant negotiation of identity, contingent on the time, the place, the situation, the audience, and the performer, implying that performance involves seeing a certain way as much as it does performing a certain way.

Butler appears to take her idea that “speech enacts domination, becoming a vehicle through which their social structure is reinstated” from the notion of the stocks of knowledge (*Excitable* 18). Stereotypes, according to Butler, become the way individuals and groups become pigeonholed. More importantly, though less obvious, is the fact that by inscribing these stereotypes on others, the inscriber wields a strange power: the power of definition. However, by denying or accepting those identifications, those who are being stereotyped can either accept or reject identity constructions through their performance of that identity. They choose certain performances that privilege certain ideas and subvert others. By rejecting a particular definition, the defined are able to both deconstruct the old definition of who they are and create a newer definition *ad infinitum*, which can then be constituted in the body through performance.

The construction of identity as performance becomes a vehicle through which writers can represent interaction as wholly performative. And if one does accept a view of the world as a performance, then one can also accept the suspension of disbelief that accompanies the stage, allowing outrageous and almost magical events to occur. Thus, the twins Julie and June (or Lily and Rose) in *The Magus* are not improbable to Nicholas simply because the heightened performance on the island allows him to accept such improbabilities even as he questions those improbabilities. The ontological uncertainty of

postmodernism becomes most striking when looking at the performance of identity. The performance itself implies that there is no “authentic” identity since, by acknowledging the performance of identity, individuals also acknowledge that any claims to a real identity may always be compromised by the act of performing. Think back a few paragraphs to my initial discussion of Goffmann’s working consensus: one can perform an identity he or she knows to be false in order to make the most of that identity. The performer and audience may accept this identity, but that does not make it real or true; it just makes it accepted. This means that performance, while it can communicate certain ideological constructs, also allows those watching (and performing) to choose whether what they are doing and/or seeing is authentic or simply an act. If this is the case, the idea that identity is mutable and multiple and dependent for its meaning both on the performer and an interpretative audience appears not only plausible but probable.

Looking and seeing are obviously important to any performance. Consequently, scopophilia becomes central to my discussion of performance. There is a complicated and sometimes negative edge to voyeurism, in particular when one deals with men watching women. Laura Mulvey makes the argument that this negative edge originates in the gendering and sexualizing of the gaze that creates a binary of the woman as “the male other” and as the “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (834). Women, in this formation, exist either as dangerous or as something to look at. I would like to use Mulvey’s idea to explore the gaze in both *The Magus* and *Nights at the Circus*, since both novels include female characters (Julie/Lily in *The Magus* and Fevvers in *Nights*) who use their performances and the gaze of their male counterparts to subvert their roles as women, and in particular as English women. Although Anne McClintock has said that

“Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency” (90), I would argue that characters like Fevvers in *Nights* and Lily in *The Magus* possess an agency that defies stereotypically gendered roles. Instead of following the traditional paths of women, wherein they are either devalued or fetishized (840), these women exploit those roles, and in turn are able to upset the ontology of the male characters, Walser and Nicholas respectively. In other words, the female characters in these novels capitalize on the sexualized stereotypes associated with English women and perform these roles in a way that, in due course, denies their interpellation as those stereotypes.

While the female characters are able to overcome the stereotypical lack of agency afforded to women in the national paradigm, it is nevertheless true that scopophilia is also a nationalistic trait. Stuart Hall refers to “the English eye” as a gaze, one that “sees everything else but is not so good at recognizing that it is itself actually looking at something” (“The Local” 174). The jump from Hall’s “English eye” to scopophilia is a short jump at best, especially when Hall talks about the ability of Englishness to situate the world around itself: “knowing where it [English identity] is, what it is, it places everything else” (174). Thus, in Hall’s conception, Englishness is equally scopophilic and powerful; it sees and therefore imagines the world in a way that others, in turn, adopt and that identifies them at the hub of the world. Hall’s claim that England does not realize its role as seer (one who sees and therefore defines) applies to Nicholas D’Urfe’s lack of self-awareness in *The Magus* and *Nights*. Nicholas from *The Magus*, as a representative of the English eye himself, defines only those around him in the same stark binaries that Hall makes mention of in terms of that eye: “English identity is strongly centered

knowing where it is, what it is, places everything else” (Hall, “The Local” 174). Nicholas defines everyone else through what he is, whether it is Conchis as non-English or Julie as the standard of English womanhood. Likewise, Fevvers creates the world around her, maintaining her as the center of a particular type of Englishness, becoming both passive recipient of the gaze imagined as well as an active participant in the creation of national identity by capitalizing on the conception of the Cockney Venus to make a living. Through looking and being looked at, the characters in these novels articulate most clearly in these novels the ways in which Englishness is performed.

In sum, these premises about performance – naming, interpellation, the ideological effects of performance, stereotyping, and the construction of a gendered identity – have implications for how one sees nationalism as another performed construction. Englishness itself becomes a performance contingent on the conformity to or exploitation of stocks of social knowledge about national identity. As Anne McClintock suggests, “nations are not simply phantasmagoria of the mind” but are “systems of cultural representation whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community,” and as such “they are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed” (89). This notion of the “shared experience” inevitably recalls Goffman’s notion of consensus and suggests that how individuals define Englishness depends on who is defines it and to what extent they can convince others to believe their definition.

“Seeing is Believing”: Questioning National and Personal Identity in *Nights at the Circus* (1984)

In her novel *Nights at the Circus*, Angela Carter liberates traditional notions of what it is to be a freak, an anomaly, a woman, and most relevant to this chapter, English. The main character and *aerialiste*, Fevvers, is both amazing spectacle and horrible freak, since she is explained early on in the novel as biologically being part woman and part bird: “just like Helen of Troy, was hatched” (Carter, *Nights* 7). As Sarah Sceats affirms, Fevvers is “an aspirational figure of female empowerment, a New Woman come to demonstrate the desirability of transgressing the rules and conventions” (148). Fevvers transgresses the expectations of a woman during the turn of the century by capitalizing on the stereotypes of the Cockney woman and disturbs the very notion of a natural individual and, consequently, any normative ideas of national identity since readers never know whether Fevvers’ supposedly assumed identity is just an act or an authentic part of her identity. As the audience eventually asks, “Do you think she’s *real*?” (Carter, *Nights* 9).

Therefore, at its basest levels, *Nights* breaks apart unified notions of identity and community by rejecting a view of the world predicated on simply communal notions and by failing to recognize the role of individual conception in such communal identity constructions. *Nights*, then, shows the ways in which nationality can be staged, broken down, and reformulated to meet the needs of the individual – in this case, the need for Fevvers to be seen and admired as a(n English) performer. In this way, a unified sense of national identity seems possible on the surface but ultimately falls short of unifying England in thoughtful or meaningful ways because the unity is based on something that

always seems to be at least somewhat performed, always referring back to a series of behaviors that reflect an expectation by the audience of Englishness (be it Cockney or something else).

The novel is divided into three sections: one in London, one in Petersburg, and one in Siberia. While the locations change, the more significant changes happen in terms of point of view. The focal point of the first section of the novel belongs to Walser, the newspaper reporter slated to interview Fevvers. It is, however, a point of view that is tempered by the story that Fevvers and Lizzie tell him about Fevvers' early development. The story introduces both the possible fiction that Fevvers "just like Helen of Troy, was hatched" and raises a question about her that resonates throughout the novel, "Is she fact or is she fiction?" (Carter, *Nights* 7). The allusion to Helen of Troy links Fevvers to the mystical and the unknown since, although there are multiple versions of the tale, they all center on a dubious parentage – both on the paternal and maternal sides – as well as a connection to the gods through Zeus: Helen's mother is Leda seduced by Zeus as a swan, which explains Fevvers' winged appearance. The story Fevvers and Lizzie tell Walser is fantastic, from her foundling beginnings to her life at Ma Nelson's brothel, where she lived as Ma's mascot of the brothel, "Victory with Wings" (38), and on to where she lived as part of Madame Schreck's "museum of women monsters" after Ma's death (55).

To some extent, readers have to deal with a doubled point of view, where they witness Walser looking at and interpreting Fevvers and Lizzie, who in turn are looking at and interpreting Walser, and where Walser's point of view is tempered by the third person unknown narrator, an interesting take on Goffmann's "information game." At one point, while Fevvers is explaining the painting of Leda and the Swan as part of her larger

story, readers get a look at Walser's thoughts on her explanation: "Curiouser and curiouser, thought Walser; a one-eyed, metaphysical madame, in Whitechapel, in possession of a Titian? Shall I believe it? Shall I pretend to believe it?" (Carter, *Nights* 28). As Goffman might explain this example, Walser is attempting to interpret their performance so he can better understand their interaction with one another. However, Fevvers and Lizzie, in turn attempt to gauge the effectiveness of their performance, so they can better persuade Walser. They use time, for example, to unnerve Walser and cause him to wonder at the magic of the night through the use of Ma Nelson's clock, a device Fevvers calls "the sign, or signifier of Ma Nelson's private realm" (29). As the night wears on, the narrator makes note of the time discrepancy: "Big Ben had once again struck midnight. The time outside still corresponded to that registered by the stopped gilt clock, inside. Inside and outside matched exactly, but both were badly wrong" (53). Only later do readers discover that Lizzie and Fevvers tricked Walser into thinking that time was stopped as they spoke, by using Ma Nelson's clock (292). However, because the artifice is not revealed until the last pages of the novel, the majority of the novel is grounded upon a constant questioning of reality: does the clock alter time, or is it a trick?

Walser appears to be aware of Fevvers' and Lizzie's act, and so he questions the reason for their performances, assuming that they are fake. Throughout the novel, but particularly in the first section of the novel, Walser examines the authenticity of both Fevver's act and her "performance," breaking down every possible piece of her dressing room and Fevver's and Lizzie's actions. As the narrator explains, "Walser was here, ostensibly, to 'puff' her; and if it is humanly possible, to explode her, either as well as, or instead of. Though do not think the revelation she is a hoax will finish her in the halls; far

from it. If she isn't a suspect, where's controversy? What's the news?" (Carter, *Nights* 11). This questioning bleeds into the audience's reading, since one can never truly be sure who Fevvers and Lizzie really are. But as the previous passage demonstrates, it is almost foolish to believe anything except the idea that Fevvers is fiction. She has to be fiction.

The first section of *Nights*, set in England, finds Fevvers and Lizzie playing stereotypically English roles, as Fevvers' nickname implies, in its phonetic variant of "feathers," her assumed accent and socio-economic status as "the Cockney Venus." In terms of stereotypes, Fevvers plays up her English side through the role of the Cockney Venus. Part of her appeal seems to lie in her status as the "democratically elected divinity of the imminent century of the Common Man" (Carter, *Nights* 12). She is an emblematic figure of duality, part mythological beauty and part working-class fantasy. Everything about her is at once larger than life: she is remote as a classical figure and yet very present as a representation of a certain constituency of London life. Moreover, she is an unusually tall woman, blond and pink, and her voice betrays the spectacle that she is: "this Helen [who] launched a thousand quips, mostly on the lewd side" (8). Again, she is an adaptation: a transcendent beauty who knows how to perform music hall bawd. Fevvers speaks as the common man speaks, and acts as the common man acts, but she also performs as an angel, a goddess, and someone who defies definition as merely a common English woman.

The role that Fevvers performs throughout the novel is indicative of her Cockney-accented nickname. Naming, much like seeing, is important to performance in *Nights at the Circus*, and the name Fevvers uses is of particular interest in light of performance theory. As I have already intimated, naming is crucial to an individual's identity as both

Butler and Althusser interpret them – in ways that can be either detrimental or beneficial. While names can hurt, they can also create. Fevvers, then, takes what seems to be a nickname and uses it to play on the stereotypes others would have of her. She feigns the persona of someone who is uneducated politically uninterested, whose only real interest is money and the new lifestyle that affords her anything she could want, saying things like “Course... he never got nowhere” to explain her lack of sexual history with a random man who bought her things (Carter, *Nights* 19). She often uses her bawdy personality to entice men to buy her presents, like the man “who never got nowhere” did.

Despite Fevvers’ and Lizzie’s use of stereotypical English roles, there are a few times where the artifice is almost uncovered. In one instance, Lizzie is explaining Toussaint, Madame Schreck’s servant in a very intellectual way. When Fevvers reins her in, Walser thinks, “More to the chaperone than met the eye!” (Carter, *Nights* 60). The problem is, however, that even though Walser notices the discrepancy, he never accepts that there actually could be more than meets the eye. Walser, readers, and the audience in the novel tend to take the two women at face value as charlatans, despite the fact that he knows he probably shouldn’t. Or rather, even though Walser wants to know the nature of the discrepancy, he gets caught up in watching Fevvers, rather than unraveling the mystery of her birth and life.

The most interesting aspect of Fevvers’s act is that while everyone watches, they are never sure what she is. The audience, more rapt with every performance, is still not quite sure whether she is a woman or a bird, fact or fiction. Walser in particular, has a hard time understanding her reality, and so he is constantly cynical about her performance. He wonders at the slowness of her triple somersault, the fact that she

merely does acrobatic tricks with wings, rather than flying. Fevvers' act relies on this type of questioning, however, since she never comes out and flies; and in public, she appears as a hunchback or a "cripple" (Carter, *Nights* 19). Even Walser questions her authenticity, wondering whether she may actually be real, wondering again if seeing really is believing (17). Sceats argues that Carter writes this ontological uncertainty to "challenge and subvert some of the existing narratives," and it is through Fevvers' doubled performance that she can achieve such subversion (150). Because Carter writes Fevvers as ontologically unstable, *Nights* serves to question several levels of identity, including national identity. The performance always contradicts what is expected from the performance.

While Fevvers's stage act is one performance, the story she tells to Walser is just as much a performance and a game. Every part of her story seems to focus on her lowly roots in the brothel (hatched from an egg), then her move to the grotesque museum/brothel of monsters ruled by Madame Schreck. At some point in her story, Fevvers even calls the story a "scarcely credible narrative," and this kind of playfulness with reality characterizes Fevvers throughout the novel (Carter, *Nights* 84). She winks at her audience, leaving them to question what is real and what is merely staged. As the novel continues, the space between authenticity and inauthenticity, or rather a sense of the audience's confidence in authenticity, becomes smaller and smaller. Authenticity is always out of reach because of the multiple and individual unfolding of diverse identities.

The second section of the novel not only uncovers the symbolism of the mask, but it also relates the stories of some of the women and the underlying tone of the novel, which seems to center on female solidarity. In the first two sections of the novel, the

phallus becomes not only a literally penetrative force, but also something that harms, desecrates, and often attempts to kill, taking the threat in Mulvey's concept of scopophilia to dangerous levels. Women are punished by men to assuage their concern over their fear of castration – and the lack that woman implies (Mulvey 840). While in the first section, Fevvers is threatened with death masked in a sexual exchange when she is in the care of Madame Schreck – Schreck seemed to sell Fevvers's virginity to a man named Rosencreutz, and Fevvers is menaced by a literal blade (Carter, *Nights* 82-3) – in the second section, she is likewise threatened by sexual interaction as a form of entrapment. In the latter example, a Grand Duke aims to enchant and turn Fevvers into a toy to sit in a tiny, gilded cage (190-2). In both episodes, money is the impetus behind the interaction; and as a result, Fevvers is threatened by the sexual proclivities of the male. The difference between the first and second episodes is that in the first Fevvers is able to use Ma Nelson's sword, her own phallic source of power, while in the second, the Duke who attempts to buy and contain her destroys Fevvers' sword, and so her only option is to “pleasure” and distract him, so she can escape (191-2).

Despite the danger of the gaze that Fevvers experiences, there is also a sense that women are there for the male glance. Fevvers often becomes the subject of the male gaze, which is also sinister, as some of the previous examples of Rosencreutz and the Grand Duke indicate. This echoes Mulvey's interpretation of scopophilia for the cinema, wherein Fevvers, through her performance and her status as the Cockney Venus, becomes not only something to be looked at but also a commodity. While she seems intimately interested in money and commodity, Fevvers in turn is often bartered, in a strange way, by herself. She sells a certain version of herself and then detaches herself from the part of

the transaction that involves being sold. While Fevvers obviously sells sexuality, she also sells that English version of herself, the caricature that people want to see from her. Thus detachment is easy because she constantly separates her Cockney performance from her alternate self.

Fevvers is advertised as the basic female commodity, the Cockney Venus and the English Angel. The interesting part of this is that while Fevvers successfully sells these personas, there is always a question of their authenticity, which Fevvers herself propagates. At the beginning of the first chapter, readers find out that Fevvers's slogan is "Is she fact or is she fiction?" (Carter, *Nights* 7). Fevvers plays the double role as freak and angel, constantly keeping people from being able to understand and identify her concretely. Carter supports this questioning of Fevvers's authenticity by constantly coming back to the idea that "seeing is believing."

Walser's interpretation of Lizzie and Fevvers actually upsets the normal scopophilial relationship Laura Mulvey identified, since the interaction between men and women in this relationship relies on women as the creator of any sense of meaning. Instead, Fevvers creates meaning at the same time she is the spectacle on display; and those looking are placed in the passive role, even when they are imagining Fevvers as a sexual object. After all, the act of seeing Fevvers seems to be something that practically everyone in the novel does at one point or another. She is someone to watch; and as she explains to Walser in their first meeting, her role as spectacle began at an early age.

Fevvers' first job, which she describes as her "apprenticeship in being looked at," began at Nelson's, the brothel where she learned not only how to be looked at but also how to deal with her status as simultaneous freak and wonder (Carter, *Nights* 23). As

Cupid, Fevvers served as a symbol of love, hiding herself in the performance that laid her wings literally bare. The act of seeing, in turn, becomes something that is at once reliable and uncertain. Ontologically, Fevvers is one part of the larger picture that makes up Fevvers/Sophia (Fevvers' Christian name and supposedly her more "authentic" identity); to the outer world, though, there is only Fevvers. The stereotype that Fevvers enacts – that of freak and wonder, something that people constantly question and conjecture about – becomes her primary/public identity and, in turn, her primary reality that she turns outward to her obsessively watching audience. Practically the only person throughout the novel who knows Fevvers as Sophia is Lizzie, and even Lizzie takes pains to play a role in the larger scheme. Lizzie and Fevvers work together throughout the story, but particularly in the first section of the novel, to create a sense of fantasy around Fevvers, which always seems simultaneously reliable and unreliable and creates Fevvers as an entity who cannot possibly be true but whose public identity is never disproven.

While the first section of the novel focuses on Fevvers' story, section two, about Petersburg, focuses on Walser instead of Fevvers. The point of view is still third person; but in this section, the reader observes Walser in the same way Walser observed Fevvers – and the reader has in turn observed her – in the first section of the novel. The focal point moves from Fevvers and her identity to Walser's. Where Walser was once simply a reporter, he becomes sucked into the world of Fevvers; his identity, something once somewhat fixed in the first part of the novel, becomes shakier as this section of the novel continues. He moves both metaphorically and literally away from the fixed points of identity since part of engaging in Fevvers's world means to travel. While Walser is not the focus of seeing in the novel, he has a questionable identity, which is possibly what

attracts Walser to Fevvers and vice versa. Both characters, even through the pomp and circumstance of Fevvers's appearance, are blank slates, allowing others to see them as they will. The difference seems to be that while Fevvers holds inside an inner, personal identity through Sophia, Walser does not appear to have an inner self to rely on. So, while authenticity does not seem to matter, having a personal sense of identity does; and that lack of a personal identity causes problems for Walser as the novel continues.

Walser becomes a clown in the circus in order to follow Fevvers (102) and, in due course, discusses the implications of that career. Obviously, there is a symbolic element to Walser becoming a clown, and Carter explores this fully throughout the second section of the novel. One of the implications is decidedly material since while Walser is relegated to the back alleys of the city because he is a lowly clown, Fevvers surrounds herself in opulence and extravagance. Their points of view imply that socio-economic status, what they can afford, reveals their version of reality. Fevvers may never quite understand the world that Walser lives in, simply because she is a better commodity and, therefore, worth more. They have different social stocks of knowledge, as Berger and Luckmann might argue, because they have different communal experiences. While their intersections into each others' lives create new knowledge, their larger stock of knowledge can only completely make sense in terms of what came before, what Berger and Luckmann identify as "relevances," and the relevances of these two people are decidedly different (45). This is important to a discussion of Fevvers since, although she poses as a hometown Cockney girl, she lives as the wealthy do, thereby contradicting the "simple" identity that she has made for herself.

The freedom of the mask, expressed as clowning for Walser and the role of “Cockney Venus” for Fevvers, is what propels the main characters throughout *Nights at the Circus*. For Fevvers in particular, her role allows her to use the Cockney manners as a type of mask, to use the stereotypes which people expect of her to keep her alternative self from view. The implications of such a performance are both to keep the alternative self from view/harm as well as to belie the singular nature of identity. If identity is something one can perform, try on, and choose from a repertoire, then authenticity becomes something more complex and less important than simply seeing someone as they are. Individuals, as Goffman or Butler might articulate, are also much more than simply what they appear to be; Fevvers plays the information game that Goffman identifies, exploiting Althusser’s and Butler’s concept of interpellation. Fevvers’ performance indicates that she recognizes that others interpellate her and uses that conception of the Cockney Venus in order to make money and gain fame. This is what makes Englishness so complicated in *Nights at the Circus* and in general. Englishness is not simply about authenticity. It is a complicated amalgamation of expectation and experience: Fevvers knows what others expect of her and how she can use it to her advantage, as she does in her performance of the Cockney Venus.

Walser’s character, then, exists as a foil to Fevvers, showing readers what happens when individuals have no awareness of their questionable ontology and allowing readers to also understand that what people know is really only part of a larger epistemology. While Fevvers is extremely cognizant of her performance, Walser’s acceptance of the way others see him tends to reflect the perception that Walser is a blank slate. In one of the first descriptions of Walser, he is characterized as unfinished, as

someone who has no “personal touches to his personality” (Carter, *Nights* 10). This kind of personality allows Walser the possibility to be a chameleon and perform many different versions of himself. However, it also leaves him detached from his own identity, leaving Lizzie to call him “not hatched out, yet” (171). Perhaps this unfinished nature is, as Carter implies, a reflection of his cynicism, the “professional necessity to see all and believe nothing” (10). The implication of this cynicism, the combination of seeing and never believing, exposes performance as both a creative and destructive force. Walser’s role as skeptical audience member and member of the press keeps him from being whole because he can never accept anything at face value.

Because of Walser’s seeming inability to suspend his cynicism, it is worth acknowledging the skepticism the audience feels that Walser could even fall for Fevvers, someone who winks as she tells you that “seeing is believing.” I would argue that this attraction comes precisely from Fevvers’s nature, which is both mysterious and transparent at once. Walser’s love of Fevvers seems to reflect the complexity of her personality. At times, Fevvers seems overtly constructed and performed, while at other times Fevvers allows Walser to see her personal identity as Sophia. Although Sophia is another part of Fevvers, and therefore not necessarily more authentic, she *is* a special version of Fevvers, which most people do not get the privilege to see.

While in the first section, Fevvers constructs and enacts/performs her identity in story form after the fact, Walser seems to create his identity as he goes along. He enjoys the freedom of being the clown, and in some ways he allows others to depict him as they would like. For example, Walser takes Mignon to Fevvers after Mignon is thrown out by the Ape Man, and Fevvers looks at Walser as Mignon’s defiler and ruiner. Walser never

attempts to correct her and seems to accept the way Fevvers sees him (Carter, *Nights* 144-5). To some extent, one could read Walser's indifference negatively, since an easy assumption to make would be that Walser does not care. However, Walser also seems to be more committed to his performance rather than his story. This reflects his initial career as a reporter, because his job is about telling other people's stories. He is so concerned with the stories of others that his own story appears either nonexistent or untold. England is, in this section of the novel, a universalizing force, but in a way that belies any actual meaning. There is the instance, for example, when Mignon replies "God save the Queen" as Walser speaks English to her (Carter, *Nights* 144). Quite tellingly though, Mignon does not understand English; and so the English signifiers do not really signify anything. The problem with the sense of English national identity, particularly in this part of the novel, is that it does not sustain or nourish.

Fevvers' and Walser's inseparable relationship and their attraction to each other are emphasized in the third part of the novel. In this section, the train that the group travels on derails, and Walser is lost while Fevvers and Lizzie are taken hostage by a group of kidnappers. Fevvers refers to the train explosion as follows: "As soon as we turned our backs on our train, it ceased to exist; we were translated into another world, thrust into the hearts of limbo to which we had no map" (Carter, *Nights* 225). The interstitial space that Fevvers experiences allows for a number of surreal events, including Fevvers' trip to a women's penitentiary (210) and Walser's induction as a shaman (238). While these stories are interesting, the real story is the separation of Walser and Fevvers, which propels Fevvers into an ontological uncertainty that she describes as "limbo." Without an audience, Fevvers loses her looks; and as the narrator

explains, “But there was more to it than that. She knew she had truly mislaid some vital something of herself along the road that brought her to this place” (273). That last section of the novel explores the performative aspects of identity differently than the first two, underscoring the interplay of performer and audience through its lack; because Fevvers lacks an audience, her sense of identity is affected or destroyed. She is lack.

Fevvers identifies one of the most important aspects of the performative game she plays with Walser as she explains the effect his absence has had in her life: “The young American it was who kept the whole story of the old Fevvers in his notebooks; she longed for him to tell her she was true. She longed to see herself reflected in all her remembered splendor in his grey eyes” (Carter, *Nights* 273). Walser exists in the novel as a type of psychic mirror for Fevvers. He is, as Lizzie calls him, “unfinished,” and so he can reflect Fevvers’ performed identity back to her. The fact that Carter refers to Walser in the novel as “characteristically American” perhaps says something about her view of America as well as England (10). For if Walser as the blank slate represents America, and Fevvers and her grand performance represents England, then America can be interpreted as unfinished itself since its current incarnation as a country is much younger. It also implies that the English expect to be gazed upon by Americans and know how to tailor that gaze to the maximum effect. In *Nights*, the gaze, which has historically led to Fevvers’ welcomed commodification, leads to her own lack in the last part of the novel. Without Walser there as an audience, Fevvers cannot recognize herself, which exists as a metaphor for the dependency England has on America to define who it is.

The ending of *Nights at the Circus* almost reflects a Shakespearean comedy: Fevvers finds Walser in a state of amnesia and “unmasks” herself by revealing her wings,

Walser remembers his past life, and the two end up in bed together, having presumably recently consummated their relationship (Carter, *Nights* 294). The unmasking, however, is really a revelation of Fevvers as fact, not fiction. She truly is the winged creature she purports herself to be, and so Carter successfully blurs the lines between fact and fiction, likewise blurring the lines between Fevvers as “Cockney Venus” and as a regular woman. Readers must accept that Fevvers can be both fact and fiction and that neither identity is less or more than the other.

Englishness, like individual identity, is performed, and in *Nights at the Circus* in ways which focus on the stereotype or the so-called universal. The performance of identity in *Nights* mirrors what happens in daily life, even at its most fantastic points, because the novel highlights the process by which one decides on an authentic sense of identity and, in turn, that Englishness can be seen as a performance based on the expectations of a communal culture. Fevvers, as the Cockney Venus, depicts Englishness as a performance that plays to an audience who is more comfortable with the stereotype and reiterates a static sense of Englishness. If Fevvers serves as a type of role model, it is through her combined complicity with and existence outside of these stereotypic roles that helps readers make sense of the multiple and fragmented versions of English national identity that continue to exist.

Playing with Identity in *The Magus* (1965)

While *Nights at the Circus* focuses on the turn of the last century, *The Magus* deals with the period directly after World War II and the repercussions of both the war and the subsequent generation. In particular, Fowles depicts how the post-war generation tackles the identity problems the English have as a diminishing power and the manner in

which they deal with that loss. Richard Todd, for example, acknowledges how writers in 1950s Britain were “turning in on themselves of traditional modes of expression, a reflectiveness that often took painful and astringent forms” (117). Perhaps this introspection comes from something Peter Mandler identifies: “By the late 1950s, comment on the strength and virtues of English national character,” something that was lauded between the wars, “was dying out” (196). *The Magus*, initially written by Fowles in the 1950s, uses this period as a backdrop to discuss the loss of a concrete and potent English identity.

Fowles tackles the period after the Second World War in many of his novels, including *Daniel Martin*, one of the subjects of my last chapter. In that novel, Fowles seems to argue that the generation that resulted from the post-war era embodied shallow, vapid adolescents who all became obsessed with the narcissistic spectacle of looking at themselves. As an emblematic character of that era, Daniel’s nickname was “Specula Speculans, ‘who died of shock on accidentally looking into a mirror without its glass and thereby discovering a true figure of his talents in place of the exquisite lineaments of his face’” (Fowles, *Daniel* 52). In true form, Daniel was shallow throughout a significant part of that novel, particularly in his relationships with women. Similarly, in *The Magus*, the main character Nicholas D’Urfe is obsessed with spectacle in both how he looks and how he sees others including the women in his life. It is by looking at himself through the Specula Speculans archetype that Nicholas D’Urfe truly understands himself, including the way he uses Englishness as a way to conceal the totality of his identity.

The first section of the novel takes place in England, where Nicholas meets his girlfriend Alison, an Australian, and begins a relationship with her. Readers could easily

dismiss this first section as exposition, since the purpose seems to be simply to help readers understand the relationship between Nicholas and Alison, thus allowing her to become a greater character in the novel. However, this section also allows the readers to interpret Nicholas's interaction with Alison, in particular as a type of game. Part of the game is winning Alison because he views her as a conquest and a challenge in the first few pages of the novel. Alison is an attractive contrast to the girl who someone at the party wants to set Nicholas up with but who was "as familiar as a species of bird" (Fowles, *Magus* 28). Nicholas also explains this random girl as "the nice English girl," and while readers get little description of her, the result is clear: Nicholas is sick of dealing with the same types of nationally stereotypical girls over and over (28).

But once Nicholas wins Alison, a contrast to the type of girl he seems to be tiring of, Nicholas tries "teaching her, anglicizing her accent, polishing off her roughness, her provincialisms" (Fowles, *Magus* 37). At the beginning of their interactions, Nicholas delineates Alison as the antithesis of Englishness, which he interprets as a welcome variation from the usual English girl. He explains at one point of the novel that Alison had "a very un-English ability to flash out some truth" (30). But while her un-English, open qualities are appealing at first, Nicholas quickly tires of the un-English because, at the heart of things, Nicholas himself is close minded culturally and closed off emotionally. When Alison compares Pete and Nicholas, for example, she says,

You don't know how nice Pete is. Besides being a bastard. I always know what he wants, I always know what he thinks, and what he means when he says anything. And you, I don't know anything. I offend you, and I don't

know why. I please you, and I don't know why. It's because you're English. You couldn't even understand that. (35)

While Nicholas craves a distraction from Englishness, he cannot evade his normal routine completely, so he ends his relationship with Alison since it no longer allows him to evade a sense of Englishness, and he attempts to find a new distraction.

The main action of *The Magus* occurs in Bourani, a fictional Greek island where Nicholas takes a job in order to escape England and Alison. Nicholas describes the reality of Greece as a place that made “conventional notions of what was moral and immoral ridiculous,” but it also sets up a space where Nicholas falls into another game with a man named Conchis (Fowles, *Magus* 59). Nicholas meets Conchis during his exploration of Bourani, and readers instantly learn a lot and nothing about Conchis. All Nicholas knew was that the teacher he replaced had a fight with Conchis, and that Conchis had “worked for the Germans in the war” (75). Nicholas goes searching for more knowledge, and it is during this section of the novel that Nicholas meets Conchis and gets caught up in a new set of games and performativity which persist through the rest of the novel.

Performance in *The Magus* is tied up in the idea of the game as well as spectacle and watching. The entire focus of Conchis's performance is the godgame, which is part game and part theatre, and the issues which Fowles deals with in *The Magus* are directly connected with Erving Goffman and his work on performance and the roles people play in everyday life. Goffman uses the idea of performance as something that we not only do on the stage but that we also do in our daily interactions with others. Goffman argues that in a typical interaction, there are two actors: one who plays a part, and another who is both actor and audience (*Presentation* xi). In this way, performance can be seen as

something that is always present and affects people in concrete ways. If everyone is playing a part, there appears to be little chance for genuine interaction since the whole purpose of that interaction is to adapt our interaction to the expectations of the other person. The levels of performance in *The Magus* are twofold: there are decidedly theatrical aspects such as the German soldiers' ghosts and Lily's performance as Ariadne, as well as the more everyday interactions that are no less a performance even though Nicholas does not realize this. Part of the problem Nicholas has throughout the novel is distinguishing the more overt performances from the everyday, and since everything ends up being performance for Conchis and his group, the idea that there ever can be something that is considered everyday, mundane, and presumably authentic becomes pointless.

This view of performance may be one of the reasons that Goffman works so well for a discussion of *The Magus* because there are ultimately two groups performing in this novel: Nicholas, who is trying to figure out who he is and what he values; and Conchis's troupe of anarchists, who attempt to draw Nicholas into the world of multiplicity and ontological uncertainty. The latter performance overwhelms the general performance in the novel. However, the performance by Nicholas is as important, if not more so, since Nicholas does not completely accept or address his own performance as such. Instead, Nicholas seems to find his performance a necessary evil since he expects others to be as genuine as he is in his interactions with Julie/Lily.

The character of Lily is central to the godgame, partially because while Nicholas distrusts Conchis, Nicholas consistently trusts Lily, even though she gives him no evidence that she is trustworthy. Her first interaction with Nicholas is farcical because

she is falsely presented as Conchis's once-fiancée and now possible ghost. Conchis sets up this moment with a good deal of back story on Lily via Conchis, saying she had "perfect moral judgment" (Fowles, *Magus* 154) and "humanity bound to duty, unable to choose, suffering, at the mercy of social ideals" (155). Once Nicholas meets her, Nicholas perceives Lily in a positive light despite the amount of subterfuge and pretense surrounding Conchis: "But her smile was strange—as if she was sharing a secret with me, that this was an illusion it was for us two, not the old man, to foster" (159). Despite being completely aware of Lily's complicity in the game Conchis is playing, Nicholas continually accepts Lily's performance of "reality" as true; so, while Conchis' performance appears heavy-handed and ridiculous at times, it seems to give Lily's "reality" credence by discrediting Conchis.

Just as in *Nights*, there is a decidedly subversive edge to what Conchis attempts to do to Nicholas through the godgame. Everything that Nicholas believes or values comes into question, beginning almost from his first meeting with Conchis in which he begins to break down Nicholas in various ways, including the dice game. Conchis claims that the "games" allow one to come closer to the perfect republic: anyone who rolls a six is instantly obligated to commit suicide to avoid ever going to war again. Nicholas is such a pliable, innocent, and proud young man that he ultimately plays the game, giving his word that he will take a cyanide pill if he rolls a six (Fowles, *Magus* 127-8). When the six is rolled, Nicholas refuses, and Conchis replies "You have behaved exactly as any intelligent human being should have" (129). While Nicholas was never in any real danger, he remains in this performative state that Conchis places him in because,

although Conchis and his fellow actors perform for Nicholas, ultimately Conchis is attempting to elicit certain performative responses from Nicholas as well.

Goffman describes performance as “an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of a community” (*Presentation* 35). Conchis himself seems to work with and break apart traditional and moral values through the godgame that he plays with Nicholas. There is something both freeing and sinister to the game because it is alternately based on deceit and goodwill. By assigning the name “godgame” to what he does, Conchis invokes the ceremonial, almost ritualistic nature of the game he plays. After all, Conchis has rehearsed the game to the point that everything is entirely artificial. In some ways, Conchis’s godgame serves to question Goffman’s idea of performance by using moral values to question the world and possibly create new forms of mythology instead of reaffirming the moral values of a community. However, at the same time, the performance that Conchis creates through the godgame does reaffirm *his* view of morality, which the followers of Conchis also adopt and make a central part of their belief system. Thus, while the values of the larger community are being questioned through Conchis’s performance, the values of the smaller community that Conchis creates through the godgame are only underscored.

The godgame creates a complex set of performances for Nicholas. And the performance of sexuality in *The Magus* serves, in part, to deal with the many power issues that are found throughout the novel. It is not coincidental that the novel begins by setting up the relationship of Alison and Nicholas, which addresses their power over each other as well as issues of nationality and belonging. Nicholas, especially in the beginning part of the novel, plays that intelligent Oxford man, including all the negative stereotypes

that accompany it, like his vapid, shallow nature, a man of the world who deals with everything and everyone as if they are somewhat below him. Much of the novel is charged with a psychosexual dialogue that revolves around Nicholas' identity as an English middle-class male. Conchis, in his godgame, plays on Nicholas's insularity in a way that focuses on the sexual as much as it does the personal. The majority of the novel deals with Nicholas's relationship with Lily/Julie, who is constantly questioning not only about her honesty but also her purity; and through this constant questioning, Nicholas begins to question himself as a chauvinistic man and as an Englishman.

When dealing with Alison, who does not conform to conventional English stereotypes, Nicholas almost leaves his comfort zone; but he cannot quite escape his own performance. Once Nicholas enters the godgame, however, he begins to break apart his conventional morals and ideals. He also loses his flawless English identity through the constant acknowledgment of artifice since Lily and Conchis cause Nicholas to constantly question their performances. In turn, he begins to see his own actions as a type of performance. Nicholas learns about one version of Conchis early on in the novel, when Conchis identifies himself as a counterfeit Englishman (Fowles, *Magus* 118). In a later exchange between Conchis and Nicholas, Conchis replies to Nicholas's question about the metatheatre/godgame by telling him that its point is to see "Whether we learn to see through the roles we give ourselves in ordinary life" (415). By pointing out the constructed nature of "the roles we give ourselves" using Conchis, Fowles establishes not only the theme of the constructed nature of identity but also the way national identity can likewise be constructed since Conchis's performance as counterfeit Englishman allows Lily's performance of a turn-of-the-century Englishwoman to shine. Likewise, the most

significant origin of such artifice comes not from Conchis but from Lily and her sister Rose.

The fact that Alison enters the godgame over the course of the novel demonstrates the importance of dichotomies in the godgame, but it also reveals that the godgame that Conchis plays involves perverting the most personal and intimate ideas that individuals have. After all, while Nicholas forsakes Alison for Lily, he does maintain a certain level of preoccupation with Alison for a large part of the novel. This preoccupation is not only about Alison but also about Nicholas's attempt to regain control of his life and his identity since, to Nicholas, Alison initially represented all he was not. As he becomes more and more obsessed with Alison, and the godgame comes closer and closer to an end, Nicholas realizes how much he has in common with Alison:

It was the unneeded confirmation of my loss of Englishness; and it occurred to me that I must be feeling as Alison has so often felt: a mixture, before the English, of irritation and bafflement, of having this same language, same past, so many same things, and yet not belonging to them any more. Being worse than rootless . . . speciesless. (Fowles, *Magus* 585)

The role of Alison in the novel causes Nicholas to question his sense of a concrete identity; and at the end of the novel, readers gain no more closure than Nicholas does, implying that perhaps no one can never be certain of anything in life and that endings in real life do not bring the same sense of closure as a novel.

An essential part of the godgame, it seems, is the suspension of disbelief that people normally associate with the stage. In the beginning of the novel, Nicholas constantly tries to let Conchis know that he recognizes the artifice of their encounters.

For example, when Nicholas first stays with Conchis and hears singing and smells an unpleasant odor, he makes a point the next day to ask Conchis if he heard anything (Fowles, *Magus*, 139-40). Although Conchis denies that he orchestrated the incident, Nicholas says “I find it hard to believe that” (140). The obvious moments of artifice of Conchis, which are easy to deny, serve as a backdrop for the more complicated moments of performance.

The godgame becomes complicated with the addition of Lily, who is at once ghost and girl of the past: at times, she plays the amnesiac; while at others, her very presence confounds both Nicholas and the reader. From the beginning, Nicholas interprets Lily as being on his side, that they “were two actors with the same doubts about the director” (Fowles, *Magus* 174). Conchis uses the Lily character to draw Nicholas farther in, to confuse him and to get him to “not to jump to conclusions” (174). The godgame for Nicholas becomes a vehicle for him to start to question any sense of concrete reality, which in turn makes Conchis, as he is eventually referred, a Prospero figure, implying that their situation is like Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. This leaves Nicholas to assume that he is Ferdinand in this scenario, being manipulated into loving Miranda/Lily. Lily and Nicholas compare the two situations, in which Nicholas argues an interesting difference between Nicholas and Ferdinand: “Except I tell you the truth” (209). This comment drips with irony, since Nicholas often massages the truth in an effort to become close to Lily, even as he fumes that “she wouldn’t lay down the other mask” (209). Only two pages later, he denies his relationship with Alison, despite the fact that they were intimate with one another during their vacation.

The use of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a template for *The Magus* is interesting but ultimately holds validity only for Nicholas. In this reimagining of the original, Nicholas envisions Conchis as Prospero and Lily/Julie as Miranda, and he assumes the Ferdinand role. Conchis obviously makes a good Magus figure, controlling the whole of events throughout the novel, and ultimately using Nicholas's Englishness against him. Nicholas likes to think of himself as someone who is protected by his Englishness, but Conchis uses this idea to bring Nicholas into the performance since Nicholas looks to certain cultural touchstones of Englishness to arrange his world. Conchis uses these cultural touchstones like Lily's English refined young woman routine as part of the godgame to question those cultural touchstones, explaining that Lily's soul was "*sans pareil*" and that she was "always so self-controlled, patient, helping," a direct contrast to how Conchis perceived himself, with "dark blood" (Fowles, *Magus* 118). In their first interaction, Conchis also instructs Nicholas to "Anglicize" his name to pronounce it (Fowles, *Magus* 83), and two pages later he tells Nicholas, "Prospero will show you his domaine [sic]," inviting an extended comparison to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and in turn inviting Nicholas to make the assumption that he is the Ferdinand character in this Shakespeare reenactment where he imagines himself as the suitor of Miranda/Lily as the novel continues. Throughout the novel, there are subtle yet repeated reminders of Nicholas's Englishness, and *The Tempest* is simply one example where Conchis exploits touchstones of Englishness in order to bring Nicholas into the godgame.

In this same section where Lily and Nicholas overtly discuss their roles in *The Tempest*, Nicholas refers to his interactions with Conchis as a masque, one in which he is expected to play along and "not poke my nose behind the scenes" (Fowles, *Magus* 169).

Nicholas is basically manipulated into his suspension of disbelief. Conchis plays the godgame in such a way that he convinces Nicholas that to become a part of the experience, he must accept everything. However, Nicholas seems to question only certain parts of the game, choosing to take others primarily at face value, in particular many of his seemingly “authentic” interactions with Lily. Initially Nicholas questions Lily’s performance; Conchis changes her story, saying that she is a mentally unstable girl named Julie Holmes rather than a ghost named Lily Montgomery, Nicholas acknowledges that “nothing she had said about herself had been backed by any hard evidence” (288). However, Lily quickly turns suspicion onto Nicholas by explaining that Conchis has warned her not to kiss Nicholas because he has frequented Greek brothels, which in turn causes Nicholas to focus on his virtue rather than Lily’s (292). And when the story changes again, and Lily/Julie’s sister Rose/June is introduced, Nicholas has a conversation with Lily where she tells him “we’ve decided to be ourselves” and goes on to provide a range of documents that are meant to prove her and her sister’s innocence (331). Although anyone with common sense would think to question those moments, Nicholas’s overall lack of questioning allows him to truly enter the godgame, even though he does so more because of his feelings for Lily rather than his interest in the game.

The godgame becomes particularly interesting in terms of Conchis using Nicholas’s English sensibilities against him. In his first official meeting with Lily, Nicholas attempts to use their shared Englishness to question her, to which she retorts, “That gives us the freedom to be rude to each other?” (Fowles, *Magus* 176), playing on her sense of English propriety that reflects the period Conchis says she is supposed to be

from, the early 1900s. As Conchis describes Lily, “She had something that is gone from the world, from the female world. A sweetness without sentimentality, a limpidity without naivety. She was so easy to hurt, to tease” (118). And it is this set of characteristics that Conchis sets up as a foil to his Greek blood: “Lily used to disgust me with myself. I used to think of my Greek blood as dark blood” (118). The conflation of Englishness and propriety is explained on the next page through Conchis’s great uncle: “He had become a naturalized Englishman, but he never carried the anglophilia to a point of being puritan, or even respectable” (119). Conchis likewise explains that he “wanted to be purely English” in order to meet with the standards he sets up in his mind that make Lily a better person than he is because she is purely English (119).

Meanwhile, a sense of Englishness, for Nicholas, is not only about a sense of belonging, but also about a sense of the authentically English; and it seems that Conchis is able to capitalize on this idea through his stories. There are a few instances in the first section of the novel where Nicholas seems to think of Conchis as not authentically English, describing his accent “though excellent, was somehow not contemporary... and then his whole appearance was foreign” (Fowles, *Magus* 84), whereas, it seems that the people on the island seem to think of Conchis solely as a foreigner rather than as partially English (166). For Nicholas, Englishness is defined by birth. Thus, while Conchis’s story revolves around his life in England, there is a sense that Nicholas sees him as just a visitor to the island. Perhaps this is also why Nicholas retains a sense of distance between himself and Alison, while he instantly becomes infatuated with Lily: because while Alison has the more overall genuine personality, Lily portrays a more authentic sense of Englishness.

The comparison in appearances becomes incredibly apparent over the course of the novel through Nicholas's constant comparisons between Lily and Alison. Nicholas's relationship with Alison is a positive force in the beginning of the novel, which Nicholas devalues after he meets Lily. Nicholas privileges his relationship with Lily for the majority of the novel, denying the authenticity of his relationship with Alison, despite the fact that that relationship could be construed as more truly authentic. Thus for Nicholas, what seems most important is the appearance, not authenticity. Alison may be a more "real" person, but she is somewhat uncouth, and so he chooses to pursue a relationship with Lily. This could also explain why he maintains his part in the endless godgame, one where reality drops out of the bottom infinitely and is constantly searching for the most authentic sense of reality only to repeatedly come up short. Nicholas's reliance on this sense of appearance, despite its ultimate inauthenticity, not only haunts Nicholas throughout *The Magus*, but it also hurts him. Nicholas becomes so obsessed with appearing authentic that he forgets the value of other forms.

In turn, the Lily/Julie character constantly brings into question Nicholas's authenticity, which seems valid given readers' glimpses into his psyche. Readers/viewers see not only the reactions Nicholas has to Julie's attempts to gain his trust, but they also see all the false notes that Nicholas plays in his conversations with Conchis, Lily/Julie, and Rose/June. After the string of performances and stories, including the stories that Lily/Julie is a ghost (Fowles, *Magus* 169-174), then insane (230-235), and finally part of an elaborate plot with her twin sister that Conchis has titled "Three Hearts" (339-345) – and despite the fact that Conchis has time and time again concocted elaborate back stories with evidence to prove their validity – Nicholas still ultimately believes Lily and Rose

when they give him “proof” that they are who they say they are (333-5). He does try to question the validity of their stories:

She mentioned the name of a famous girls’ grammar school in North London.

“That’s not very plausible.”

“Why not?”

“Not enough *cachet*.”

“I didn’t want *cachet*. I wanted to be in London.” She picked at her skirt. “You mustn’t think I was born to this sort of life.” (335)

Despite his reticence at believing their story, once he sees what he considers Lily’s “real self, a simplicity and seriousness in her expression,” Nicholas seems to forget that reticence and falls back in the story (335). Fowles artfully creates a character that is at once so smug and so unaware of his own duplicity and who continues to be outraged even after being constantly depicted as a liar himself.

Those who have read *The Magus* before know what happens next: a further series of stories that causes Nicholas to become more and more embroiled until the godgame reaches its peak at “the trial,” in which Nicholas is forced to hear his life explained in a clinical way and then watch himself on film (Fowles, *Magus* 504-541). As one of the “doctors” states, “The subject’s family, caste, and national background have not helped in the resolution of his problems,” which they describe as socially backward and depressed, wherein he uses women to quench his own Oedipal issues (518). After this display, Nicholas is given the opportunity to physically punish Lily for tricking him into falling in love with her through her various performances and then humiliating him during the trial.

He does not and at first blames his “stupid English decency” for stopping him from hitting Lily (526). Nicholas is then forced to watch a film/ live performance in which Lily makes love to another man, her “bodyguard” Joe, and Conchis comes in directly after and tells Nicholas that he is now “elect” and that he should “Learn to smile” (540). As Nicholas is left to contemplate this idea alone, he muses: “If anything, it meant ‘Learn to be cruel, learn to be dry, learn to survive.’ That we have no choice of play or role. It is always *Othello*. To be is, immutably, to be Iago” (541).

However, that is not what Nicholas learned. During the trial, when Nicholas finds that they taped him and Alison on their trip, Nicholas never thinks about the fact that they have found out his lie. Instead he thinks, “It was too horrible, too blasphemous, that that, of all moments, could have been public. Stripped, flayed by the knowledge; and their always knowing” (Fowles, *Magus* 536). The problem is not even the fact that he wanted to necessarily remember Alison in a certain way or protect her privacy; he merely hates the fact that they knew about the moment. That concealment of knowledge is about concealing himself from others. As a character, Nicholas seems to see his close protection of his personal life as necessary, rather than what it really is: something that keeps him from maintaining real connections with others.

Likewise, in the third and final section of the novel, Nicholas begins to see his predecessors and his successor of the godgame as stereotypes of their nations, polarizing their images. And he calls his most recent predecessor, Mitford, in particular “a caricature, an extension, of certain qualities within myself” (Fowles, *Magus* 627). Nicholas goes on to call Mitford a barbarian, someone who was so self assured, so self obsessed that he could only see that which furthered his own ideas. Meanwhile, this

insularity in some ways is also apparent in Mitford's own predecessor, Leverrier, who Nicholas says "had chosen exile" (583), isolating that peculiarly English trait that flows throughout Fowles's novels, the need for a personal space. Yet, while isolation is characteristically English to Fowles, it is also destructive and problematic, indicating an inherent problem in the construction and performance of national identity.

However, Nicholas' interactions with Conchis and the godgame demonstrate that authenticity is not important; the tempering of a private identity with a public identity that no one identity is privileged over another. Because Nicholas chooses his relationship with Lily based on its supposed authenticity and its more appealing appearance, he polarizes his relationship with Alison at the other end, eventually resulting in the tense conclusion of the novel where Nicholas attempts to repair his relationship with Alison. Because Nicholas is so obsessed with the godgame and, in turn, chases authenticity vainly, he loses a strong hold on his sense of reality. According to Conchis, Nicholas can truly begin to live once he finally begins to question everything. During that final exchange between Nicholas and Alison, Nicholas is initially still obsessed with the idea that Conchis and company are still watching via a theater of sorts and imagines that Alison is "still playing to their script" (Fowles, *Magus* 666). However, Nicholas also quickly realizes that he and Alison are alone:

There were no watching eyes. The windows were as blank as they looked. The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre. They had perhaps told her it was a theatre, and she had believed them, and I had believed her. Perhaps it all has been to bring me to this, to give me my last lesson and final ordeal . . . the task, as in *L'Astrée*, of turning lions and unicorns and magi

and other mystical monsters into stone statues. I looked away from Alison and at those distant windows, the façade, the pompous white pedimental figures that crowned it. It was logical, the perfect climax to/ the godgame. They had absconded, we were alone. I was so sure, and yet . . . after so much, how could they be so cold, so inhuman—so incurious? So load the dice and yet leave the game? (666-7)

Once he realizes no one is there, though, Nicholas is unsure how to handle the situation, since he has been conditioned to react during his time participating in the godgame. Like Fevvers in *Nights*, Nicholas is at a loss when it comes to interpreting himself or the way he should act in the world without the audience dictating his movements and appearance and interpreting his actions.

It is through performance that Nicholas finds a real sense of identity or, rather, when Nicholas realizes that his façade is just that. In the third part of the novel, after Lily de Seitas (Lily and Rose's mother) tells Nicholas that the godgame is over, Nicholas comes to see himself in a new way. Performance and the godgame were necessary to the development of Nicholas as a truly self-aware person, as opposed to the pompous, self-interested person that he once was. When de Seitas asks Nicholas during one of their meetings, "Did you have any sense of that before this summer?", she implies that without this experience, Nicholas would have continued to be the same person he was, learning no lesson, and more importantly, being completely unaware that perhaps there was a lesson to be learned in the first place (Fowles, *Magus* 638). This part of the novel brings forth the importance of performance, giving credence to the maxim that people learn by doing. By acting in a certain way, one that is stereotypically and negatively English, and

in turn being shown the performative nature of that identity, Nicholas becomes a more aware person, both towards himself and towards others. Fowles' ending of the novel suggests that one shouldn't allow themselves to be so caught up in the cachet of a title or category, but rather that they should allow themselves to be a person first and a category second. Nicholas is eventually able to stop letting the category define his individuality; and so while his life is messier and less conclusive, and the conclusion may not be completely satisfying for readers, Nicholas experiences life rather than going through the motions of performing Englishness.

Conclusion: The Range of Performed Englishnesses

While people expect certain things from the English, performing and enacting those ideas allows the English to negotiate what truly constitutes Englishness. In *The Magus*, the performance of identity is part of Goffman's information game, wherein individuals read one another to gauge the best performance to use. Nicholas's use of national identity in his overall performance tells readers a great deal about how one can become aware of their own artifice since Nicholas becomes self-aware only through the concerted efforts of Conchis's godgame. Conversely, Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* almost loses herself in her highly conscious performance of Cockney Venus. In both, though, these characters' versions of Englishness threaten to destroy their personal sense of identity simply because they let it subsume all other forms of identity. Once they begin to accept the performance, however, the main characters in both novels become optimistic, Nicholas because he is able to find closure with Alison and Fevvers because she gets her man and finally lets go of her role as bawdy virgin.

The role of gender in these novels should not go unnoticed. In both, there are predetermined performances for men and women that are, in turn, predicated on class levels. Therefore Fevvers' Cockney Venus has much different implications than Lily's Victorian English gentlewoman routine. Each performance relies on the role of sexuality. Both female characters use a version of Englishness that focuses on sexualized versions of themselves to illicit responses from the men in their lives. In turn, those sexualized versions tell readers much about the forms of Englishness. And it's important to recognize that Nicholas' view of sexuality in *The Magus* never changes; instead, his level of frankness about sex adapts to his English gentleman persona.

The use of sexuality in the performance of Englishness should, subsequently, tell readers something about the role of Englishness. In particular, English national identity contains a range of smaller identities from which actors can choose from. Those Englishnesses are meant to illicit a specific response from the audience; and while I have intimated that characters can lose themselves in the performance, they can also be liberated through performance. In truth, Fevvers and Nicholas appear to lose themselves because they begin to believe in their own performances a bit too much. Nicholas often fails to see his own performance even though he often notices the performances of others. Fevvers, too, is so caught up in her Cockney Venus role that she withers once she loses her audience in Siberia. These characters are able to recover once they accept that they can live without the audience, which both have to come to terms with at the end of their respective novels.

Finally, readers should consider the way in which the use of genre affects the metaphor of performance. As I have demonstrated over the course of this chapter,

Nicholas and Fevvers create a performance to garner responses from others. However, they are likewise affected by the performance of identity, and they are unable to consistently steer their performances in the direction they may want. Thus, these are novels about performance instead of performances about performance. Novelists are able to guide readers in a way that performers cannot. Furthermore, the very nature of reading in the twentieth century is predicated on being alone, hiding. And so, novels are also the perfect genre to explore issues of Englishness, even as performance.

Theorists may successfully articulate what constitutes national identity, but novels like *The Magus* and *Nights at the Circus* imply that the construction of national identity is always part performance. What individuals must remember, then, is to be able to live outside of the performance – because there may not always be an audience to sustain it.

CHAPTER 5

QUESTIONING LEGITIMACIES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF PERSONAL, FAMILIAL, AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN *WISE CHILDREN* (1993) AND *ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT* (1985)

Although the nuclear family exists as the standard of the traditional family in England and in the West as a whole, newer permutations that represent non-traditional or non-Western familial bonds also exist. In these formations, family can mean more than simply those people with whom one is biologically connected because identification might have more to do with choice, affinity, or necessity than genetic affiliation. In short, families are made from those people whom one believes are most important just as much as they are made from literal reproduction. Consequently, the dualism of the English family structure parallels constructions of national identity. First, there is the traditional, homogenized notion of Englishness. This is a historical construct of belonging based on a mythical and ideologically-driven definition in which arbitrary characteristics that are considered English such as “‘insularity’, ‘aloofness’, ‘self-sufficiency’ or ‘reserve’” also play a role (Mandler 145). Traditional Englishness is also largely driven by racial considerations wherein white is regarded as a prerequisite of nationality because to be white assumedly means that one has a genetic link to the land and the people. Second, there is the hybridized notion of Englishness, equivalent to non-traditional definitions of the family, in which being English is ascribed to those who have lived in England for an extended period of time and who have adopted some of the characteristics of that culture, such as its mannerisms and colloquialisms but who are not necessarily Western in birth. In both cases, the novels I have chosen to discuss – Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges are*

Not the Only Fruit and Angela Carter's *Wise Children* – privilege alternative familial and national constructions over traditional forms.

The duality of national identity expressed through multi-faceted permutations of family –traditional and non-traditional, Western and non-Western – has both literal and metaphorical applications in the two main novels discussed in this chapter. On a literal level, the characters in these novels, particularly those in *Wise Children*, relate to their families in a way that either perpetuates traditional forms of English identity or questions those forms of Englishness that privilege a restrictive definition of Englishness over a more inclusive definition. Both Winterson and Carter address the traditional constructions of family in order to subvert them, and the success of alternative familial structures occurs only when characters are able to surmount the issues of legitimacy, persistent traits common to traditional familial structures. Once they realize that the traditional and restrictive definition of Englishness is not the only possible definition, these characters are able to accept themselves as authentically English as well, although they deviate from the traditional definition.

On a metaphorical level, I would contend that if individuals are able to counteract certain hegemonic systems within their own families, then they can just as easily subvert established conceptions of national identity. Just as there is an assumption that an individual's identification with a family unit depends on whether he or she is born in or out of a marital and/or biological relation, so some individuals are considered more authentically English because they embody certain cultural criteria that establish their nationalistic credentials – they are “born” into Englishness. English national identity is as much of an ideological construct as the family unit around which this chapter is oriented.

The characters in these novels address national identity construction through the construction of the biological family in order to demonstrate that neither are as “natural” as they are often depicted, and as such they are open to create their own sense of family outside of traditional, Western paradigms.

Defining the English Family: Legitimacy, Ideology, and National Identity

The concept of a family is not only regarded as an entrenched concept, but it is persistently perpetuated by the ideological values it contains. As Françoise Lautman claims, the family “serves as both a haven and a symbol. It is a rallying point for ideologies...” (252). Lautman depicts the family as a double-edged sword of sorts, where it inhibits individuation but provides comfort and identity through the reiteration of subtle ideological forms. In a similar manner, Charles Rosenberg acknowledges the ideological possibilities of the family because it is “a system of values and behavioral options” (10). This implies that the choices individuals make in terms of family can encourage the ideological expectations of a given culture. This reiteration of core traditional values is to be expected, according to Ann Copeland and Kathleen White because “Families have a shared history. The history stretches back for generations and involves ethnic or religious values” (4). Based on these points, readers can observe that the family holds ideological power because it has a type of history, it symbolizes certain values, and it allows individuals to practice and uphold those values.

While this view of family may seem bleak, the connection between ideological values and family is not always inherently rigid. Louis Althusser also considers the familial structure as an overtly ideological manifestation. But in identifying family as one of the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 110), he explains that such apparatuses

“may be not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle” (113). In this sense, Althusser indicates that family can serve as both a kind of barometer for change but also the place wherein such changes happen. In other words, because family is a type of ideological state apparatus, it allows individuals to both see change and create change. Just as the family helps underscore certain ideological structures, so too can the familial structure that is rooted in everyday life enact change by its very practice, adapting to new situations.

Althusser’s views of the adaptive nature of the family unit mirror issues relevant to the English in the 1960s and after, which experienced changes in the legal, moral, and social attitudes towards the family. Peter Mandler indicates in his book on the English national character that the sense of insularity that followed the war led to “the great social plague of the 1950s—loneliness,” (204) and that the English also lost a concrete sense of identity in this time (205). Similar to Mandler, Mary Abbot identifies a “sense of loss” throughout this post-war period, where individuals and families were dealing with changes in living (117). During this period, a number of laws changed, including divorce laws, which obviously altered the way people saw the family unit, while also indicating a subtle change in cultural and moral values that allowed the law to pass in the first place (121). In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a sense of a backlash against the traditional nuclear family when “couples and individual men and women set out to establish communal households free from the hazards of traditional family life[...].” (Abbott 128). Tracing the evolution of the family from the 1960s through the 1990s, Abbott shows a clear willingness to reveal how the status quo in general was questioned. She also argues

that, as social mores became more open and able to be questioned, the traditional nuclear family becomes less the norm and more a vestige and symbol of the past.

Those “hazards” of traditionalism that Abbot refers to parallel the central concern with the family unit in this chapter: the construction of (il)legitimacy and its effects. When individuals choose their families instead of being biologically defined, the creation of that family is no longer an automatic part of this familial matrix of established characteristics; and legitimacy has to be earned rather than blindly awarded because, above all, legitimacy requires substantiation from others. Historically, a verification process existed that labeled one either legitimate or illegitimate. A significant step of this process was the registration of the child at a local church or later, a civil registration, making legitimacy a legal term as well as a religious one (Laslett 109). In this way, the concept of legitimacy on a larger ideological level mirrors the process of biological legitimacy by forcing individuals to have their very birth substantiated. And while substantiation is important, a certain amount of social respectability accompanies legitimate parentage. As such, legitimacy is connected with certain values, and those values are connected with an ideology.

Legitimacy is inherently a social construction and furthers the values, beliefs, and expectations of a group. As Terry Eagleton suggests, ideology “attends to the *promotion* and *legitimation* of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests” (*Ideology* 29). Its function is to provide or deny individuals familial and societal acknowledgment. While Eagleton does not equate biological legitimacy with ideological legitimacy, biological legitimacy is still based partially on an ideological foundation, which can turn it into ideological legitimation. The fact that legitimation was a legal

process only reinforces this view since for Althusser ideological processes are propagated by ideological state apparatuses like the legal system.

The concepts of both biological and ideological legitimacy are explored in the novels of Angela Carter and Jeannette Winterson, which depict certain familial problems that distort or damage the centrality of the traditional family unit and, in turn, help privilege different ideas of what constitutes a family. These novels are decidedly different in their configurations of family: the Chances from *Wise Children* are illegitimate but still obliquely linked as a family while Jeanette from *Oranges* is part of a nontraditional family masking itself as a traditional one. Carter creates a family that is successfully able to exist successfully outside of legitimacy with love and inclusivity. In contrast, Winterson depicts an insular and extended religious family that is considered outside of traditional modes of family but which creates an inner insularity that mimics the constricting natures of the traditional dichotomy. However, both authors focus on the arbitrary nature of family in which the privileging of only a certain view of family life as legitimate and morally sound is regarded as a constructive act.

In fact, family in the novels appears to be only a solid cultural construct because it is constantly reinforced through a repetition of traditional and stereotypical behaviors that are conveyed through stories like fairy tales, myths, and family legends. While the less savory parts of the family dynamic are constantly scrutinized by its members, those who have a stake in maintaining its reputation attempt to hide these problems from the outside world. Carter's novel, for example, examines the illegitimacy of the Chance sisters, and their alternative version of events is constantly being devalued by a father who is interested in maintaining appearances. Winterson's novel deals with the clash between

the individual sexual preferences of the narrator, Jeanette, and the extreme religious beliefs of the family unit. In this struggle, the family unit tries to devalue and delegitimize Jeanette's view of the world.

It is only when these characters are able to reemerge on the other side of these tensions that they are also able to fully actualize their own identities as individuals and constitute themselves as members of the kind of family that is no longer determined by traditional definitions. For example, Carter identifies the Chance sisters as Melchior's "never-by-him officially recognized daughters" and introduces the idea that in order to be legally recognized as part of a family by those patriarchal figures that matter in their culture is to establish that they are genuine in a public or legal way (Carter, *Wise* 5). Likewise, in *Oranges* Jeanette is chosen by her adoptive mother, even though she will never be seen as conventionally legitimate since her relation to her mother is not biological.

Traditional Western familial structures rely on biology, which reflects a Judeo-Christian belief in God-given heterosexuality and can be seen in sociological research based around the family unit. As sociologist Glen H. Elder, Jr. explains in his discussion of Reuben Hill's nine-stage formation of family, "the core of this version of the family cycle is the reproductive process, both sexual and social..." an idea that has no place for "unmarried and variant family forms" (7). The standard of the traditional Western family relies on the reproductive process and, more importantly, relies on a traditional way of performing that process. Homosexuality holds no place in that model and so is deemed deviant, while illegitimate relationships diverge enough from the social model that they must be punished. Carter's and Winterson's novels alternately show exactly how

biological fictions can negatively affect aspects of personal identity that are dependent on their relationship to and within the family through their depictions of homosexuality and illegitimate parentage.

What seems most apparent is an articulation of a revised idea of the family unit, one that allows characters to reject a traditional family view in lieu of an alternative family structure – a structure that is based less on blood relations, legal decree or patriarchy than on personal affinities. Newer forms of familial constructions revolve around extended families (as in *Wise Children*'s interest in uncles, in-laws, and half-siblings), adopted families (in both *Wise Children* and *Oranges*), and families that start from either friendship or a need for connection with others (in *Oranges* through Jeannette's religious family and in *Wise Children* as seen through "our Cyn," Brenda, and Tiffany). In addition, the preoccupation in these novels with orphanage and adoption indicate other examples of alternative family units while rejecting biology as the only determinant of a family. This challenges a view of family that relies on marriage, morals rooted in part in Christianity, and which insists that the traditional family must reflect an ideologically legitimate view of living. This newer paradigm of family is in keeping with Marianne Novy's argument that in contemporary society "traditional genetic kinship is not enough to meet the needs of an increasing number of children and the desires of an increasing number of adults," and she identifies all the variations of the family unit – including step, half, adoptive, and blended families (31). Such permutations of family are seen in both these novels, and they indicate a growing need to address differing constructions of familial identity.

So, while the nuclear family has been a dominant form “since before the industrialization of Europe,” as Lautman claims (251), this is not the only form in which the family exists. Some groups have a more extended family, some exist without children or extended family members, and others still have no biological bond – having been created instead out of a basic need for personal connection. Such families can be extended step families, adoptive families, or conglomerations of discrete people. Often the only commonality embraced in the term “family” is its ability to bring people together so that they can share not only memories and a history but also beliefs, rules, and expectations. Such variations of family result in a questioning of the validity and legitimacy of the traditional familial structure while conversely allowing a genuine place of belonging for those individuals who may have been considered illegitimate, whether because they were literally born without a clear mother or father, or because they were otherwise defined outside of traditional definitions of family.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the changing face of family dynamics in this chapter is the novels’ focus on incest. In *Wise Children*, incest is more concrete and tangible, as the questionable family ancestry of the Hazards leads to incestuous relationships between Dora and her uncle and father figure, Peregrine. While the focus on incest is less literal in *Oranges*, the incest metaphor can be found in the values exhibited within a secluded familial unit who resist the outside world. In this respect, the old adage “keeping it in the family” is relevant to ideology and identity. There is though a difference between questioning something from the inside versus the outside. When familial identities are challenged, supporters of the status quo will tend to do anything they can to defend or uphold that ideology and identity. Even if individuals from inside

the ideological structure want to question that structure, they may feel reluctant to do so because of their affiliation with that group. As a result, despite the obvious cultural changes, and despite the assaults on the family unit that exist both inside and outside of that unit, family ties remain as strong as ever. This does not mean alternative forms of family cannot survive. It simply suggests that despite the fact that many people do not exist in a traditional family structure, alternative families will merely follow the ideological antecedent of the nuclear family unless they actively insist on definitions of family that are not concerned with issues of legitimacy.

Similarly, readers can interpret the resilience of the English family as a metaphor for the resilience of traditionalist notions of Englishness, since despite the changes made to culture, English national identity remains. Both immigration and the loss of the British Empire have served to destabilize and challenge traditional forms of English national identity. While neither serving nor attempting to destroy Englishness, these changes serve to question what it means to be legitimately English. As Alison Lee states about *Wise Children*, “Not that legitimate – that is officially sanctioned – history does not impinge on the story, but Dora refuses to treat it without irony” (114).

The analogy of Englishness to familial structures is an apt one. In addition to the writers I have already cited, my work exemplifies the ideas of Krishan Kumar and Benedict Anderson, both well-known theorists on nationalism. Kumar explicitly compares English national identity to the family unit: “One does not join it; one is born into it. One belongs to it as one belongs to one’s natural, biological family. Its ties are the ties of blood, if not actually then metaphorically” (*Making* 24). Kumar implies that Englishness is inevitably inherent in every one of its citizens, a lineage in which

Englishness is historically, and sometimes legally, verified and one in which the definition of the English is reasserted. Likewise, Anderson argues that Englishness is often discussed “either in the vocabulary of kinship... or that of home,” going on to explain that such ways of thinking link nationhood to something “to which one is naturally tied” (143). As Anderson continues, he identifies that “precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of disinterestedness” (143). Such disinterestedness and naturalness permeates not only the family unit but also conceptions of the nation, and it is precisely that response to these identity structures that serves to reinforce them.

Thus, the hold that the traditionally-defined form of nationhood exerts over its citizens echoes that of the family unit wherein blood is valued over personal connection and the sway of ideology is most unquestioned. On some level, Anderson and Kumar succeed in establishing a paradigm of communal or public identity that imagines such connections as unswervingly natural rather than created. The problem with this conception of nationhood, however, is that a biological metaphor suggests only one way of conceiving identity, which restricts other ways of imagining who can be considered English. Think of individuals who have been born in England but who do not look the part of the middle-class, white English man or woman. Because they do not fit into the “natural” model, to what extent would they feel less English and more “unnatural”?

Neither Kumar nor Anderson seem to consider the arbitrary nature of national identity that is on display in Winterson’s *Oranges* and Carter’s *Wise Children*. In both novels, national and familial identities can be enacted and reaffirmed in everyday life only by those who believe in cultural institutions like the traditional family unit, a notion

that mirrors Raymond Williams' concept that tradition (in this case Englishness) can be seen as not only tradition but "*selective tradition*: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification" (*Marxism* 115). This selection then lends validity and authenticity to those traditional views by imagining them as the central tradition. Carter, in particular, delineates those who are identified as quintessentially English (i.e. the Hazard family) and those who exist outside of that frame (i.e. the Chances). To read incest in national terms, for example, exposes a preoccupation with cultural insularity, which can be partially traced to the days of empire and its need to propagate certain cultural ideals. The legitimate/illegitimate dichotomy in these novels becomes a way to deal with the postcolonial moment, to invent or maintain a tradition of Englishness. In this sense, the focus on incest in the contemporary English novel questions the legitimacy of a traditionalist and insular notion of English national identity, given that in *Wise Children*, incest almost seems to be revealed as a consequence of a lack of a confirmed legitimacy. Read analogously, the subversion of traditional family values implies the concomitant deconstruction of what passes for normal definitions of Englishness in which the role of legitimacy and a biological family structure is valued over alternative forms of familial construction and parenthood. Ultimately, there is no legitimate, authentic sense of Englishness, but rather, as my analysis of the contemporary English family in these novels suggests, what people call a legitimate or authentic form of Englishness is simply the version of Englishness that people recognize most easily through their continual absorption of reiterative images in English culture and the media.

This version serves as a pervasive form of authenticity even though it is no longer truly dominant.

Just as families hand down traditions and beliefs, nations can likewise hand down traditions and beliefs to their “children,” in this case, the metaphorical descendants of England. And it is the children of empire who must deal with the repercussions of their parents’ actions. Those “children” are forced to live with a conception of nationhood that relies on a now-hollow imperial distinction to define itself. They are designated as either legitimate members of England, or they are considered outside of that culture based on outmoded designations. Think about the role of the children or grandchildren of immigrants, of those descendants of former colonized nations, who may have lived in England all their lives and yet are still considered as not conforming to traditional notions of Englishness. Thus, the issues analyzed in this chapter – namely legitimacy and illegitimacy – can be interpreted as more than just familial issues but as long lasting residual legacies of a system that does not equally honor all of its members who have a right to belong.

The Binaries Behind the Ideology: Legitimacy and English National Identity

Throughout the novels of Carter and Winterson, there is a preoccupation with the legitimate family, a preoccupation that is predicated on the binary of the legitimate/authentic and the illegitimate/inauthentic. In both novels, legitimacy is defined artificially but imagined as natural, and as such excludes anyone who does not fit this fixed definition. This distinction relates to a larger issue of cultural institutions and ideological structures. Philosopher Jenny Teichman states,

The institutions which give rise to the legitimate/illegitimate distinction, and which thus create the logic of those ideas, are both specialized and manifold. In other words, the logic of these ideas is created by several different human institutions which act together, as it were. (10)

As Teichman suggests, legitimacy is simply another ideological form that privileges certain beliefs, views, and lives, subtly reaffirming socioeconomic and class formations.

While I have already argued against a legitimate/illegitimate dichotomy by suggesting that it is an arbitrary ideological construct, this does not mean that such a dichotomy conveniently disappears. This binary helps the characters in these novels understand that while they may not be legitimate on a biological level, they have nonetheless found their own “legitimate” family situation, one defined by choice. Yet, instead of acknowledging these complex relationships, the majority of the characters in these novels are consistently being defined by their biology. In other words, the traditional and biological definition of family is privileged over others, which shows its resilience and reluctance to be supplanted by alternative concepts, even if those other conceptions are more commonplace than the traditional definition.

The novel *Wise Children* (1991) by Angela Carter is concerned with the family dynamic and English national identity, and it uses Englishness to underscore these familial structures and vice versa. The basic story focuses on two families, the Hazards and the Chances. The former family stands superficially as a positive symbol of England, embodied in the respect they gain for their Shakespearean performances. The latter family, the Chances, while being genetically linked to the Hazards as the unrecognized

daughters of Melchior, is tossed aside as illegitimate and makes their living as overtly lewd dancers wherever they can find work.

The novel works off of this dichotomy between the Hazards and the Chances as the narrator Dora introduces the reader to her side of the London river, the left side, which she calls “the *bastard* side of Old Father Thames” (Carter, *Wise* 1). The rest of the novel uses this idea of the haves and the have-nots, the right sides and the left sides, throughout, showing that while the Chances are considered illegitimate and unrecognized, the Hazards use the traditional family structure to their advantage in order to make money and gain prestige. The separation between the Hazards and the Chances is set up in the riddle that begins the novel: “Why is London like Budapest? A. Because it is two cities divided by a river” (Carter, *Wise* 1). While most of us see London as a single city, Dora sees it as two: one where the legitimate live and another where the illegitimate live. Dora identifies this dichotomy simply: “[...]our father was a pillar of the legit. theatre and we girls are illegitimate in every way – not only born out of wedlock, but we went to the halls, didn’t we!” (11). Legitimacy, then, partially derives from how others construct the identities of others based on certain cultural preconceptions, and since the Chances have always been perceived as illegitimate and less sophisticated, they come to believe that outside perception.

Legitimacy is assigned to those who are able to uphold standards that are considered time-honored conventional standards by the larger public. Therefore, while Melchior stands as a representation of traditional England on the right side of the Thames, the Chances are the left, less legitimate side which “the tourist rarely sees” (Carter, *Wise* 1). This invisibility of legitimacy leads Dora to accept the label “bastard”

and acknowledge the pervasive nature of a terminology circulating in and bolstered through public discourse that separates legitimate people from illegitimate ones. And of course, people who perform the way they are expected to perform help maintain the expectation. Melchior himself has a somewhat illegitimate past: he may or may not be Ranulph Hazard's son due to his mother's possible sexual indiscretions. That illegitimacy does not seem to impinge on his legitimate present precisely because as his "father" seems to simply accept him publicly, Melchior continually performs the role of dutiful father in public settings, as he does when he visits Tristram's show or during his 100th birthday party. So, the pose of legitimacy is enhanced solely by the efforts of its practitioners to publically affirm its status.

The Hazards attempt to maintain legitimacy through their many public events, although, as their appearance on their son Tristram's bizarre television show "Lashings of Lolly" indicates, the perfect performance of familial and national identity is not always guaranteed. Shortly after Melchior and his wife Lady Margarine make their way to the stage and Tristram calls his father "Mr British Theatre, himself," Tiffany "ruins" that performance by living outside of the traditional familial script the Hazards maintain (Carter, *Wise* 41) . Instead of playing her role as the perfect girlfriend and hostess of the show in her "purple sequin boob tube," she breaks apart the view of the Hazards as a perfect, legitimate family by entering the stage disheveled and singing, thereby interrupting the staged family moment between the Hazards (42). In the succeeding pages, the reader discovers that her interruption of that moment is because of her grief over finding herself pregnant by Tristram, who has no intention of marrying her, thus

ruining the staged legitimacy of the Hazards, both metaphorically by interrupting their moment on the show and literally since her child is Tristram's.

The example of Tiffany's interruption exemplifies the way in which legitimacy must be constantly reinforced and performed in order to maintain the traditional family structure. This is also evidenced in *Wise Children* in one of the first interactions between the Chance sisters and Melchior. When Melchior sees Perry with the girls, he says, "Peregrine ... how nice of you to come visit me... And you've brought your lovely daughters, too!" (Carter, *Wise* 72). This is said despite the fact that the Chance girls have always believed Melchior to be their father, while Peregrine has consistently taken on a fatherly role in place of his brother. Dora reads Melchior's conversation as an acknowledged denial of his parentage, and as an implication that in order to be considered a family, there must be repeated performances of certain niceties as well as duties that affirm the façade. In this instance, there must be a consensus about the performative act: all actors must consult the same script and be equally convincing in their roles.

Eventually, Dora and Nora are able to move past their roles as illegitimate daughters, but they are constantly reminded of their illegitimacy. Hence, Melchior Hazard does not acknowledge his own children, except as his fictional nieces and his brother's supposed children. Take, for example, the speech he makes before they began shooting for the Shakespeare movie in Hollywood. He acknowledges the Shakespearean earth he entrusts to Dora and Nora, "earth gathered up and borne hither as tenderly as if it were a baby by two lovely young Englishwomen, nymphs, roses, almost as precious to me as my own daughters... my nieces" (Carter, *Wise* 134). Readers share the joke that

the dirt is not the “real” dirt, the Shakespearean dirt being dumped out by the Chance girls once they realized that a cat used it as a litter box. Not only is the dirt unreal, but Melchior compares the dirt to his “nieces,” daughters he barely acknowledges as his brother’s supposed children, let alone his own. Melchior uses his daughters when convenient and ignores them otherwise. In the novel, children are commodified by Melchior, who uses them as props in his movies, bit characters in his plays, and as a means to show his family man image. This lack of parental feeling is likewise demonstrated in a scene earlier in the novel in which Melchior suspects he has lost his paper crown in a fire. Dora attempts to find her sister after the conflagration, while Melchior seems to be worried only about the loss of his crown (104-5). His public performance of family is thus decidedly different from this private performance in front of family.

Melchior’s use of his own children as commodities to forward himself repeats the manner in which his own father, Ranulph, used both him and Peregrine as commodities in order to make the Hazards a family name and therefore a national treasure. The “Hazarding” of America can also be seen as a certain type of colonizing, attempting to introduce America to Englishness in the form of Shakespeare as a colonizing entity, which Ranulph calls the “Word” (Carter, *Wise* 17). The colonizing of America through Shakespeare can be compared to the biological imperative to spread one’s name and genetic material, and as such, the link between the British Empire and America is important to *Wise Children*. Not only are the Hazards colonizing, but they also do it under the ruse of some greater good and their own type of civilizing mission, in this case spreading the word of Shakespeare. Naming is a central part of this

colonization/parenting attempt, where roads and towns are renamed to honor the Hazard family. The naming issue is crucial to a discussion of the family/nation metaphor, because to propagate one's name is both a metaphorical form of procreation and a culturally progenerative move to propagate Englishness.

Shakespeare serves an interesting purpose in *Wise Children*, particularly since he can be interpreted not only as a characteristic of Englishness but as a specific type of Englishness because, as Peter Ackroyd states, "Shakespeare effortlessly and inevitably refined many English archetypes" (233). But while the archetypal nature of Shakespeare allows it to be reproduced, retold, and re-imagined endlessly, it simultaneously operates as a mode of exclusion. For while Shakespeare is often connected to the masses, Krishan Kumar argues that "the nation he [Shakespeare] represented was one that found little room for the majority of the people of England" (*Making* 119). What Kumar calls "the fundamental split between the 'high' culture of the society and the popular or mass culture" (119) becomes reproduced in *Wise Children*, since while Shakespeare is known as a performance for the people, there is some snobbery built into Shakespeare. This inborn elitism allows the Hazards in *Wise Children* to become akin to royalty. More importantly, playing parts in Shakespeare's plays is recognized by Melchior and Ranulph as an essential means by which they can cover up secrets and scandals in their pasts as well as maintain the fiction of a perfect and ennobled family.

In this respect, Shakespeare serves as a convenient way of obfuscating questionable behavior because in the Hazards' past, performing Shakespeare accompanies some less than palatable aspects, such as Ranulph's excessive drinking and Estella's questionable sexual history. Since Melchior performs Shakespeare in the theater

rather than in the dance halls like the Chance girls, he preserves his reputation, as the less palatable aspects of their family are not common knowledge and, therefore, do not define their family on a public level. This fiction is sustained despite evidence to the contrary. For, while the Hazards earn renown, their figurative kingdom seems to be falling in around them. The costumes become faded and worn, the props go missing; and in a moment that follows the reader throughout the rest of the novel, Ranulph gambles away his crown, which his wife Estella promptly replaces with a cardboard version painted gold (Carter, *Wise* 20). Linden Peach links the decline of their ability to maintain the performance with the loss of empire: "...Britain's waning power is linked with the decline in the prestige and influence of the English theatre... is cast, albeit temporarily, into a condition of loss" (14). I would likewise argue that Shakespeare symbolizes England in the center of the imperial mission, which ultimately loses its shine as Shakespeare does. The Hazards, in turn, "act out" the performance of a declining England through their actions. Whereas Peregrine literally escapes his family after his parents' death able to live without the influence of his family or Shakespeare, Melchior maintains the family business by continuing to perform Shakespeare. The cardboard crown exists as an important symbol over the course of the novel, one which Melchior cannot let go. Thus, Melchior follows this emblem of his father and their wayward life even at his hundredth birthday party.

The cardboard crown is a treasured family heirloom, and its lack of monetary value belies its actual value for Melchior. The crown, passed down through generations, also exists as a way to allow the Hazards to figure themselves as their own type of royalty and for Melchior to take after his father without his fatherly influence. Melchior's own

psychology and fatherly attitude is reflected in the crown, a symbol of his father's own irresponsibility, rakishness, and self-imposed royalty. Because of the influence of the crown, Melchior seems unable to parent any of his children properly, hence replaying the cycle of neglect for both his legitimate and illegitimate offspring.

Wise Children analyzes the inherently problematic binaries which label the Chances as illegitimate. Carter seems to indicate that these binaries only serve to conceal the multiplicity of truths which are available. Likewise, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) uses these same types of binaries to deal with familial relationships. Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* addresses similar issues in terms of family, legitimacy, and the performance of both. The narrative of *Oranges* focuses on the main character, Jeanette, who was adopted as a baby. Much like the Chances in *Wise Children*, Jeanette's traditional familial bonds are unknown and unverifiable; and as such, her adoptive family becomes central to her life. But unlike the Chances of *Wise Children*, Jeanette becomes so entrenched in her adoptive family's values and beliefs that she can barely function without them. In fact, *Oranges* suggests that a family based on a non-traditional model is just as binding as a traditional family, even with the added complicated cultural issue of illegitimacy.

What the reader finds within the pages of Winterson's novel are the many ways in which family is not only constructed but also constricting. The separation between Jeanette and the other characters in *Oranges* seems to come from the stark binaries that Jeanette's mother creates for her at birth. Winterson begins the novel by talking about her mother's construction of the world: "She had never heard of mixed feelings. There were friends and there were enemies" (*Oranges* 3). Winterson then goes on to spell out those

friends and enemies, who are broken down into those who Jeanette's mother considers evil and those whom she considers morally acceptable or helpful in the fight against such evil:

Enemies were: The Devil

Next Door

Sex (in its many forms)

Slugs

Friends were: God

Our dog

Auntie Madge

The Novels of Charlotte Brontë

Slug pellets

and me at first. I had been brought in to join her in a tag match against the rest of the world. (3)

As the narrator Jeanette acknowledges, she was once listed in the "friends" category. During the first part of the novel, there is really no explanation as to how Jeanette loses her mother's favor, but those first pages set the tone for the novel and underscore the strict nature of the family structure to which Jeanette belongs.

The binaries that exist in *Oranges* serve to order Jeanette's world for the majority of her young life; and Jeanette's mother attempts to order the world for Jeanette at every turn, all of which ideologize the world as she wants it to look and behave. Early in the novel, Jeanette gives examples of the ways in which her mother reorganized the world through the stories she created and the stories she changed. Jeanette's mother's stories

were akin to ethical stories from the Bible that helped people understand God, like her story about the whalebone corset she had bought from Maxi Ball, a catalog company. A piece of the whalebone had become dislodged from the corset and began stabbing Jeanette's mother during church, which her mother endured for an hour. As a result, her mother destroyed the corset, "except for one piece that she gave to me. I still have it, and whenever I'm tempted to cut corners I think about the whalebone, and I know better" (Winterson, *Oranges* 6). Jeanette's mother implies that God will punish those who go against the standards He values, and many of her stories are either about the punishment of the wicked or the triumph of those who believe. Jeanette eventually also discovers that her mother rewrote *Jane Eyre* so that Jane marries St John over Mr. Rochester because she had found the original version unsavory (74). In much the same way as the stories she creates, her rewrites punish those she considers wicked and reward those who follow her conception of God and his will.

Jeanette refers to her mother as the "White Queen," in part, because she certainly fits the despotic nature of the character from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* but also because Jeanette's mother attempts to control the world around her to the point that it no longer makes sense. In the "Judges" section of *Oranges* where Jeanette is being turned out of her mother's house for being a lesbian, Jeanette denies the pastor's request for her to repent. As Jeanette relates, it no longer mattered what she said to her mother after that, because "my mother had painted the white roses red and now she claimed they grew that way" (Winterson, *Oranges* 136). Jeanette's mother creates a world of extremes and harsh dichotomies, and anything that does not fit into one or the other will be forced to fit regardless. Beyond that, however, Jeanette acknowledges the perfidy behind these

stories. As Keryn Carter recognizes, “for Jeanette the adoptive mother’s story is a lie, just as her claim to the ‘truth’ of parenthood is a lie” (21). Jeanette’s acknowledgment of the falsity behind her mother’s stories helps readers understand not only that Jeanette experiences negative dichotomies but she also has the ability to perceive them in order to deconstruct their truths.

Jeanette accepts this status until it comes at odds with her sexual identity, something she cannot change herself to adapt to her mother’s will. As Jeanette puts it, “Walls protect and walls limit” (112). The will of Jeanette’s mother did not crush an essential part of Jeanette’s identity because Jeanette could accept the stringent nature of her mother’s will. After all, the church environment into which Jeanette’s mother throws her actually serves as a positive outlet for Jeanette, since she no longer has to reject who she is or accept an identity that is foisted upon her by her mother. However, as Winterson seems to imply through the novel, try as she might, Jeanette’s mother cannot change this one aspect of her daughter; and so Jeanette’s mother moves from stringency to shunning, a more severe way to punish Jeanette for transgressing against the identity her mother created for her. Even though her mother eventually seems to accept Jeanette, the stringency that her mother symbolizes not only makes itself present in the title – referring to the fact that her mother, for the majority of the novel seems to think oranges are, indeed, the only fruit – but it overwhelms the relationship they could have.

The struggle that ensues as a result of Jeanette’s sexuality serves as the major conflict throughout the novel, but it is through that struggle that readers can better look at familial bonds. On one level, the novel deals with typical family dynamics wherein the parent does not agree with or condone some aspect of their child’s life. In this case, that

issue is sexuality, but it is also about the life Jeanette chooses to leave, since her mother practically destined her to be a missionary. Again, rigid binaries affect the characters in the novel, particularly here where sexuality is at odds with evangelical Christian morality. Just as Jeanette's mother segments her friends and enemies, so she attempts to separate sexuality, especially homosexuality, from religion and morality. By doing this, Jeanette's mother supports a type of status quo that not only oversimplifies religion and sexuality but also serves to reinforce and reassert stereotypes to anyone she talks to. Jeanette eventually gets caught up in the vicious cycle of a stubborn parent/daughter dichotomy, just as her mother got caught up and shunned by her father. Jeanette's mother ends communication with Jeanette just as Jeanette's "grandfather" ends communication with Jeanette's mother.

Unlike *Wise Children*, *Oranges* does not overtly address national identity through subjects like Shakespeare. However, readers should be able to identify through the family's class and religion a bit about their place in English society. Because of the stringency of their faith, they would be considered on the fringes of society despite their surface tendency towards normalcy. As such, readers have to more closely look at the ways in which Jeanette's mothers acts and the manner in which she interprets others: enemies or friends. The dichotomy of legitimate/illegitimate, then, creates stringency in both the novels; and while these novels are somewhat different in purpose and tone, the illegitimate characters in both are forced to negotiate their places in the world and come to terms with the status that has been forced on their superficiality. Although this dichotomy forces these characters to reevaluate themselves, legitimacy as a cultural category serves to isolate those who reject it, resulting in a limiting version of identity.

Incest and Other Negative Effects of Familial and National Legitimacy

Legitimacy can only be maintained if everyone plays their part in the script and maintains the fictiveness of the traditional familial unit. The presence of implied incest in *Wise Children* and the idea of insularity in *Oranges* suggest that certain characters endeavor to sustain the veneer of orthodoxy. While only *Wise Children* deals with incest directly, Winterson does address the insularity within families, particularly in terms of heterodox notions of sexuality and the degrees of acceptance of the lifestyle choices of others. Jeanette's sexual preference is regarded as a threat to the traditional mores of her church family, underscoring the insular and metaphorically incestuous relationship among Jeanette's church family.

In *Wise Children*, incest originates in a reconfiguration of Shakespearean drama, specifically with the re-imagining of Shakespeare's *King Lear* involving Ranulph Hazard and his very own Cordelia, his wife Estella – who are Melchior and Peregrine's parents. This relationship is explored early in the novel and provides a different way to look at the traditional family structure. As Dora puts it, "So he and Estella fell in love. How could they resist? An old man and a prodigal daughter, the stuff that dreams are made of" (Carter, *Wise* 15). While this relationship does not result in literal incest, merely a May-December romance, it is figured in such a way as to allow the participants to perform father- daughter roles which develops as romantic love behind the scenes. The resulting relationship is one that cannot sustain itself, since the impetus of their love comes out of the passion for their performance of Shakespeare. But just as the performance on stage becomes the catalyst for love off of it, so the performance of family that results exists in

part as a way to “play” at being a family and also indicates a way to make sense of incest in the novel.

This relationship dynamic is sustained by the second Cordelia- Lear relationship, between Melchior and his daughter Saskia’s friend, who becomes the Lady Margarine and Melchior’s third wife, although Saskia was also initially in the running to play Cordelia to Melchior’s Lear (Carter, *Wise* 172). As a result, the role of Cordelia becomes a motif and a symbol throughout the novel of some sort of atypical and troubling father-daughter relationship. There is almost an implied threat of incest in the novel because of Saskia’s near opportunity to become Cordelia to her father’s Lear that is avoided just barely by a substitute daughter.

As the novel continues, the pseudo-incestuous acts escalate into actual incest, and the lines between performed incest and actual incest become more pronounced, as with Saskia’s relationship with her younger half-brother, Tristram. Dora calls it “the single, most unmentionable secret in this entire family’s bulging closetful of skeletons,” and while she never overtly says that Saskia and Tristram are sleeping together, the subtext is quite clear (Carter, *Wise* 48). To some extent, the movement from interconnectedness to incest makes this so unnerving, enough to make Nora exclaim, “Like a dog... returning to its own vomit” (48). After all, Saskia is not only Tristram’s half-sister but also his mother’s erstwhile best friend. Despite this, the secret remains, largely, a secret. In this way “keeping it in the family” takes on a new meaning – to keep the family’s secrets in the family rather than parading their incestuous relations all over town – revealing why everyone in the family never seems to explicitly acknowledge that the Chances belong to them.

The novel culminates in another instance of what the reader can assume is actual incest, if the parentage of the Chance sisters can be believed. Dora and Peregrine enter into sexual congress with one another in the final pages of the novel, an act that Dora sees as “the curtain call of my career as a lover,” bringing together all her past romantic and sexual experiences into that single moment (Carter, *Wise* 221). The moment, although uncomfortable to the reader, seems commonplace and normal to Dora. The most peculiar moment in this incestual exchange between Dora and Peregrine is the reply she gives Peregrine when he asks how long it’s been: “Too long, me old cock!” (219). After saying this, Dora begins to question whether she has had sex with Peregrine before. Post-coital, Dora also asks Peregrine if he could be her father, to which he replies, “I’m not your father, Dora. I spent seventy-five odd years regretting it, my precious, but mighty glad I am of it this minute” (222). Although he is not her father, he is her uncle, and so this denial of a blood tie is still somewhat disingenuous. Furthermore, although Peregrine is not her actual father, Dora still thinks of him as one which further complicates their relationship.

The role of incestuous father is confirmed in the final pages. While Peregrine may not be the girls’ biological father, he did act as the strongest father figure in their lives. Other blood relations similarly swerve off into the realm of the unseemly. Dora and Nora, for example, often talk about their supposed biological father, Melchior, in sexual ways: “But those very eyes, those knicker-shifting, unfasten-your-brassiere-from-the-back-of-the-gallery eyes[...].” (Carter, *Wise* 72). Given this visual desire for incestuous relations, there’s something in the tone that transforms the father/hero worship into a sexualized relationship. Although the Chance girls say these things in a breezy tone, exchanges like

this reveal the extent to which traditional familial relationships are sustained by “keeping it in the family.”

While incest is not really a concern in *Oranges*, the premise of incest, which involves a level of insularity that rejects anything outside of a range of measured responses, is represented by the traditional, conservative responses by both Jeanette’s mother and the church to what they consider an illicit lifestyle – Jeanette’s sexuality. Perhaps this lack of direct interest in incest signals Winterson’s rejection of patriarchal standards inherent in the incest metaphor, at least in terms of the way Jeanette’s church family interprets them. The invested interest the church has in pronouncing against Jeanette’s sexuality also leads them to seclusion from the outside world, which hinders the church family’s understanding of alternative ways of living that are contradictory to their own. Likewise, while their evangelical Christianity seems commonplace to them, as evidenced in the example of Jeanette’s cross stitch, the larger world does not accept their ways of living and being. In this way, readers can see the inherent problem at the heart of the incest metaphor: by attempting to live an insular existence, Jeanette’s church family does not know how to interact with others outside of that existence.

Yet, there is no actual incest in *Oranges*. Because national identity structures are analogous to familial identity structures, where blood is essential, then the perversion of incest metaphorically implies something about the state of English national identity. In these novels readers could, and should, go one step further and read family as nation; the interweaving of the two concepts, particularly in *Wise Children*, implies as much. This means that if people accept familial identity structures as not only analogous to, but metaphors for, national identity, then the incestuous moments in these novels are

metaphors for the perversion of insularity that Fowles calls characteristic of the English. Thus, the overly insular familial relationships in *Oranges* can be interpreted akin to incestual relationships. The focus on incest in *Wise Children* is almost more about the secret than it is the sex, and *Oranges* mirrors the illicit nature of familial relationships in that way.

As I have argued in *Wise Children*, intimations of incest admit to a secret that must be kept in the family. Such an admission is especially important to a family like Jeanette's, one where they maintain insularity to keep out depravity, only to find they no longer have any connection to a larger sense of community outside of their church. Once Jeanette is forced to go to school, her world opens up, but in a way that reinforces the insularity of her church family. When she first started school, Jeanette expressed that "at first I'd done my very best to fit in and be good" (Winterson, *Oranges* 37). However, in the same way as the cross stitch example I explain later in this chapter, her recitation of her essay, "What I Did in my Summer Holidays," where she explains how her mother heals the sick and the breeding habits of "Next Door," only serves to alienate her from her classmates and cause her to feel the need to find ways to "fit in" (37-8). In this way, one could interpret Jeanette's subsequent need to make herself "as ordinary as possible" an enactment of a type of incest symbology since she feels the need to hide her religious beliefs from others (39). To discuss forms of incest in *Oranges*, then, is really to discuss the negative effects of insularity that takes family togetherness one step past its breaking point: a close family becomes so narrow-minded that they cannot exist outside of their small community.

Both Carter and Winterson's novels deal with the isolating worlds that the English characteristic of insularity and its familial manifestation, incest, create. Incest serves a positive purpose only when it shatters the stifling role of the traditional family; and in both novels, it is only once the original family is tested that certain characters can find happiness in their present families. The rejection of the traditional family that accompanies an analysis of incest in these novels also signifies a somewhat stereotypically English love of conformity while also creating a new space for these families to inhabit. These two competing forces also reflect the present face of English national identity where traditional forms of identity sit alongside alternative notions. As a consequence, its very core identity has been challenged in two specific areas: in terms of race and in definitions of English versus British. In both scenarios, Englishness is imagined as traditional and natural, much like definitions of family, while alternative conceptions of national identity that go against such traditions serve to destabilize the nature of the centrality of Englishness.

While such alternatives do not destroy Englishness in its traditional forms, they can move conventional versions of Englishness out of their central position while simultaneously shifting alternative forms from the periphery. Traditional forms of Englishness are largely predicated on their "naturalness" as Kumar and Anderson identify; and in this case, to be naturally and historically English largely means to be white. As I previously mentioned, while there are certain characteristics that are linked to English national identity, those characteristics are largely configured as part of the paradigm of "naturalness," and thus link back to whiteness since Englishness is seen as a historical conception of certain groups of people. Mandler, for example, introduces the

idea of “autostereotypes” into his work on the English national character, explaining that these stereotypes, “generated by a process of exclusion” were largely in contrast to “various imperial peoples, particularly non-whites” during the nineteenth century (53). Thus, English national identity is created through boundaries that allow the English to see themselves through what they are not.

The problem with this racial conception of Englishness is that it ignores the influx of people of various racial backgrounds who have immigrated into England and Britain as a whole since the late 1940s and early 1950s. As Peter Leese recognizes, for example, West Indian immigration soared in the 1950s “in anticipation of the British Commonwealth Immigration Act (1961), which introduced new restrictions” (49). There appears to have been a backlash over immigration during the 1960s; and as Leese makes note, while some legislation that was helpful to minorities was passed like the Race Relations Act of 1965, “the anti-immigration mood persisted in the two Commonwealth Immigration Acts (1962 and 1968) as well as in events outside Parliament” (89). The “events” Leese refers to are “the experience of racial difference,” and the example that Leese offers after that statement outlines how a teacher, in an attempt to teach his/her class racial tolerance and understanding, unwittingly embarrassed and set apart an Indian student in the class (89). This example demonstrates how misunderstandings about race led to misunderstandings about nationality which seem to create a circular logic of race as nationality and ultimately the rejection of those outside of that logic. Although the resistance to immigration spanned Britain, such resistance has specific and larger implications for England, a country whose identity had been affected by its loss of importance to the British Empire and by the processes of internal devolution.

Many people equated Britishness primarily with Englishness. Such lessons were even taught in schools, as Peter Yeadle notes in his article on teaching about empire from the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth (275). Yeadle, in turn, makes the link between hundred-year-old teachings of English as British and the present problems the English have defining themselves as a nation: “In the context of contemporary debate, it is easier to understand why the English have found it the hardest when the English/British synonymy becomes not only redundant but also challenged by the non-English British” (286). Likewise, as Kumar argues, equating Englishness with Britishness was truly problematic once the empire began to lose its potency:

England, the core nation, stood exposed, no longer protected by a surrounding carapace of Britishness. The other nations of the United Kingdom began to envisage a rosier future as separate members of the new European Community. England too was forced to consider the prospect and, in the process, to reassess itself and its future identity. (“Englishness” 52)

What both Yeadle and Kumar acknowledge is the conflation of Englishness with Britishness, which truly became more problematic once the concept of Britishness itself was deconstructed as countries within the contiguous boundaries of Britain sought independence. Full devolution of Scotland and Wales did not happen until the late 1990s, but the issue had been talked about since before the 1970s. The Bill for Scotland and Wales, passed in 1978, was not supported by enough of the Scottish electorate to become law, but it did indicate a wish for change in the primacy of England in the United Kingdom (Leese 72). These legislative changes corresponded with a general feeling

about Britishness and Englishness – primarily a mixture of anxiety that Englishness was dying as well as a hopefulness concerning multiculturalism – despite the simultaneous problems with immigration.

The ultimate goal of devolution can partially be attributed to the fact that while Britishness and Englishness are often confused by some, others are incredibly sensitive to the distinctions. Kumar reminds us that most “non-English members of the United Kingdom” are incredibly aware of the differences between Englishness and Britishness and seldom confuse the terms because “they are usually gratingly aware of what is peculiarly English, and are ultra-sensitive to the lordly English habit of subsuming British under English” (Kumar, “Englishness” 41). Readers can interpret Kumar’s identification in two ways: non-English as part of the United Kingdom like Ireland, Wales, and Scotland; or non-English as living in England but, for whatever reason, not being able to or wanting to describe oneself as English.

Ironically, those who might have been expected to feel the conflicting definitions of identity the most were the most assured. In 2002, *The Guardian* posted an article in its “Home Pages” that indicated that while the majority of white people would identify themselves as English, Welsh, Irish, or Scottish over British, “a clear majority of people from the ethnic minorities confidently assert their Britishness and do not feel they belong to any other national grouping” (Carvel 7). Two years after *The Guardian* posted Carvel’s article on Englishness, *The Independent* reported a study done by the Office of National Statistics, recognizing that “both first generation immigrants and those who were British-born had a strong sense of identity with their adopted country” (Frith 2). Ironically, this article begins with an acknowledgement of “racial attacks” that prompted

many immigrants to “becom[e] increasingly determined to assert their right to be in this country” but continues with a response from Chris Myant from the Commission for Racial Equality: “The interesting thing is that a black Caribbean British teenager probably has far more sense of who he is and his identity, than a white person does now [...]” (qtd. in Frith 2).

As *The Independent* article indicates, there is something contradictory in the way immigrants are forced to fight for a sense of national identity, while some people also imagine white children as “less English” and I would argue, perhaps, “unmarked” as a category, just as categories like “white” and “male” have traditionally existed as “unmarked.” While other groups have multiple national allegiances, white children have the simultaneous “burdens” of being unmarked, traditional, and historically linked by blood to England – “burdens” which privilege them and hold them as a standard by which others should act. This goes back to the “disinterestedness” that Benedict Anderson identifies at the heart of national identity constructions (143). The very thing that makes whites traditionally English is now marking them as “unmarked.” What was once valued is now becoming just another form out of many forms – and while that unmarked nature would once be an asset, it is now something problematic because people are identifying it as such rather than accepting it as “natural.”

And the white reaction to changes in national identity is a major issue. Returning to Chris Myant’s response to *The Independent*, he says that “[t]he problem for white English people is that there isn’t a clear English identity that isn’t reactionary or racist” (qtd. in Frith 2). Whites will continue to be “reactionary,” “racist,” or both if they cling to the traditional ways of being English without evolving to incorporate the racial

complexity of the nation as a whole. Enoch Powell is a perfect example of a synthesis of these positions. His 1968 Birmingham speech is not only infamous but expresses a belief that “Britain’s immigrant population does indeed present a mortal threat to the British (or rather to the *English* – for he pointed out that ‘in practice only England is concerned’) and must be got to return home whence they came” (Nairn 245).¹⁰ Further, this racist attitude has not dissipated. Last year for example, the British National Party (BNP) was challenged by the Equality and Human Rights Commission because their constitution stated that membership into their group be “restricted to people derived from ‘Indigenous Caucasian’ stock” (Verkaik 8). The rhetoric of groups like the BNP focuses on some authentic sense of past rooted in whiteness and masked in tradition. Some individuals may mask such bigotry, as both Powell and the BNP seem to do, by subtly linking racial purity to patriotism and the history of the nation.

This leads to a negative view of immigration and race by those who espouse these perverted national beliefs. It is also true that reactionary ideas of Englishness are also resilient among certain members of the population, in particular “right-wing movements,” as Paul Gillespie acknowledges in 2006 (13). Gillespie makes note of subtle symbols, like the St George flag, which he says has “become associated with right-wing and far-right movements, and with ethnic rather than civic identity” (13). These connections to an indefinite past like the St George flag attempt to, again, link historical versions of English national identity to whiteness. In the same manner, the “Fifty Quintessences of Englishness” that Julian Barnes creates in his novel, *England, England* mirror these

¹⁰ Nairn devotes a chapter of his book, *The Break-Up of Britain* to Powell, whose political history focused on a racially limiting version of English nationalism.

subtle, but undeniably racially charged or exclusionary characteristics of Englishness. Things like “10. Imperialism” and “13. God Save the King/Queen” smack of imperial and ethnic implications and, more importantly, are interspersed with more innocuous and racially neutral characteristics like “6. A Robin in the Snow” and “5. Pubs” (Barnes, *England* 86). This echoes the spirit of Gillespie’s article as he begins with a narrative about an English sailor’s criticism of the use of “God Save the Queen” for an England soccer match in the World Cup, citing that the song “does not mention England – and only Britain once” and that “Several verses refer implicitly or explicitly to Scotland, where the Stuart uprising had just been put down” (Gillespie 13). The song has specific imperial implications that invoke England as the center of the imperial venture. Thus, the use of this song as a symbol of England and part of the “Quintessences” suggests more than patriotism and pride in England, namely intransigence to other forms of national identity and the maintenance of England as a historically imperialistic power.

The novels under discussion in this chapter reflect these reactionary attitudes in terms of the ways in which traditionalism is challenged only to be reaffirmed through deviant behaviors like incest. In both Carter and Winterson, incest, the equivalent of a reactionary national identity, in turn relates directly to Raymond Williams’s idea of residual cultures, wherein incestual leanings in families, for example, are analogous to “some version” of the dominant culture that are rooted in both past and present (*Marxism* 122). Most supporters of incest in Winterson’s and Carter’s novels have a complex relationship with and an affinity for traditional and insular views of Englishness. In other words, even if one wants to rid themselves of the past, some structures linger despite any ambivalence about them. One can, then, interpret incest as a practice that may be

considered sordid and unsavory but which cannot be completely eradicated by its practitioners, thereby creating a persistent pattern of shame and acceptance. Incest in these novels stands as a metaphor for ways of seeing hegemonic forms of English national identity. The way one experiences the traditional version of Englishness in these novels – however “natural” that version is considered to be – is largely negative since even when incest is not overt and even when Englishness is not overtly addressed itself, the implications of incest creates a world that is too insular and removed from interaction with multiple identities. Incest is a way of interpreting the family as so all-inclusive that reveals the constructed nature of such “natural” versions of the family unit when individuals challenge its orthodoxies. In this way, incest can be interpreted as a hegemonic power of Englishness that is also delimiting. What these writers suggest, then, is that while Englishness is not destructive on its own, denying other forms and turning inward is not the answer to the current concerns over the future of Englishness.

Legitimacy, then, as both a familial and national identity designation serves to restrict Englishness to the past and ignores other recent and future versions that offer more expansive notions of belonging. However, there is a constructive alternative that emerges out of the destabilization of these legitimacies, both familial and national, one that offers a way out of the claustrophobic dichotomy that traditionally defines who can identify themselves as English.

Destabilizing Legitimacy: Literal and Metaphorical Parent-Child Relationships

While illegitimacy is traditionally considered negative, both *Wise Children* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* explicate the possible positive effects of illegitimacy through the existence of alternative families, including both orphaned children who do

not know their parental legacy as well as adoptive and extended non-biological families. In both cases, while these children are not necessarily considered outright bastards, they have no biological connections, and biological parentage is often unclear or unverifiable. This status allows these characters the opportunity to create their own identities, rather than be subject to the identity others placed upon them. In both *Wise Children* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the absence of any “natural” parents leads to a family that is created out of choice. The creation of these alternative families rejects the idea that families are simply organically constructed. And when faced with the perils of the traditional family in these novels (like deadbeat parents and incest), the alternative family can hold a great attraction despite the possible negative connotations that may be associated with it. However, these two novels indicate that although alternative families can offer positive effects, they can also simply reiterate the same negative effects of traditional families if they are created with the same basic rules.

Alternative formations of family pervade *Wise Children*. Not only are the Chance sisters considered illegitimate because of their questionable parentage, but Grandma Chance creates her identity through a series of fictions: “She’d invented herself, she was a one-off and she kept her mystery intact until the end” (Carter, *Wise* 28). This invention of self includes the invention of family as well as the seemingly false nature of the Chance family, which includes Our Cyn, her granddaughter Brenda, and her daughter Tiffany, who is able to defy the expectations of legitimacy. Thus, illegitimacy allows the illegitimate to create their own families. Since they have no legitimacy to lose, the illegitimate can easily create a world apart from the status quo, thereby challenging society’s definitions of that legitimacy. While readers never get a concrete sense whether

outsiders interpret the Chances as Dora does, there is a clear sense that Dora and Nora interpret themselves as outside the status quo; and so all their actions seem to subvert the dominant attitudes as they see them. This does not mean that the alternative subsumes the status quo, but rather that the primacy of the status quo comes into question and, hence, loses its privileged status. In fact, Carter seems to recognize the extent to which one type of family is on equal footing with the other. Carter sets up a literal dichotomy wherein there is the affluent and nicely kept side, the side that everyone wants to see, and then there is the less savory and somewhat invisible side of London (*Wise* 1). Dora calls this a “crude distinction” that one could make “once upon a time,” indicating that the lines between north and south London have begun to disappear (1). Dora quickly connects the literal separation of the city to her own illegitimacy.

Wise Children represents the ways in which the legitimate/illegitimate dichotomy is a fiction and a performance. This fiction is depicted through how the Hazards set themselves apart from others as pillars of the community, as representatives of Shakespeare, and as a type of royalty, since Melchior is also known as “Sir Melchior” (Carter, *Wise* 4). Neither family’s performance (the Hazards or the Chances) can be privileged since both exist, and legitimacy does not indicate an ultimate superiority – it merely marks itself as superior. The public, however, as told through Dora’s eyes, seems to prefer certain images of family over others, showing the manner in which the Hazards perform familial roles as well as Shakespeare to their advantage. For example, after seeing Lady Margarine in the newspaper, Dora explains: “After all, the Hazards belonged to everyone. They were a national treasure” (38). The Hazards have performed for the public so much that they are no longer merely a family; they are also a reassuringly

constant performance, something everyone wants to see. The responsibility for the separation between the two families lies with the Hazards who, because of their performance of family, must reject the Chances in order to maintain the appearance of the “perfect” family, the one the public wants to see.

While there seems to be a clear dichotomy between the Hazards and Chances throughout the novel, their names indicate something else. After all, “chance” is merely another word for “hazard.” Both words indicate a sense of arbitrariness in the privileging of one family over the other, implying that the Chances could have been the Hazards and vice-versa. As Alison Lee explains, “Both [names] imply an unknown or undetermined cause, and each can denote a risk or accident” (*Angela* 118). Carter’s play on words indicates that while the exterior world sees the families as different in terms of class and status, there is actually not much difference between the two. Thus, just because the Hazards are considered legitimate by some imaginary public entity does not mean that the status is permanent.

Similarly, the unstable nature of Jeanette’s legitimacy in *Oranges* comes into play when she chooses to accept her own sexuality rather than perform the role of perfect Christian daughter that her mother assigns to her. As a lesbian, Jeanette’s sexuality is at odds with her mother’s evangelical zeal. The binary that exists in *Oranges* is similar to that in *Wise Children*, particularly the rejection and/or silencing of those who do not fit traditional roles. In *Oranges*, the binary is created solely by Jeanette’s mother, wherein her idea of family involves her religious community. Jeanette says her mother “didn’t believe in Determinism and Neglect, she believed that you made people and yourself what you wanted” (Winterson, *Oranges* 128). Jeanette’s mother does just that by creating

a familial structure for Jeanette from the beginning that focuses on their evangelical community, which further problematizes the world for Jeanette since she is expected to fulfill her Christian duties as a missionary and as a woman, echoing Glenn Elder Jr.'s assessment that the model of the traditional Western family unit rests on "the reproductive process, both sexual and social..." (7). In addition to these reproductive concerns, however, there exists a certain amount of insularity associated with their view of the family. For years, Jeanette only really knows and associates with fellow church members. As a result, Jeanette can only understand the world in terms of the evangelical world view held by this family.

After Jeanette's mother goes so far as having an exorcism for Jeanette, Jeanette rejects the family script that her mother creates for her, just as Tiffany does in *Wise Children* during her entrance on Tristram's television show. In both cases, the results are both destructive and empowering. As Jeanette puts it, "After the exorcism I had tried to replace my world with another just like it, but I couldn't. I loved God and I loved the church, but I began to see that as more and more complicated" (Winterson, *Oranges* 128). Not long after the exorcism, Jeanette is forced to leave her mother's home and her past life (148). The effects for Jeanette include the loss of her church family and her pivotal role in the church, while the empowerment comes from living through that struggle and refusing to simply live her life as it had been constructed by her mother. Winterson best explains the familial relationship in the novel: "It exposes the sanctity of family life as something of a sham; it illustrates by example that what the church calls love is actually a psychosis and it dares to suggest that what makes life difficult for homosexuals is not their perversity but other people's" (qtd. in Andermahr 24). As one

reads the novel, the effects of moving past the constricting sense of familial identity only serve to free Jeanette.

In both novels, characters like Jeanette and Tiffany are able to move past the constricting views of family that portray them as deviant or illicit, but only by accepting that they will be portrayed by others as such. On some level, it appears that attempting to fit into the legitimate mode is no longer worth it for Tiffany or Jeanette. Tiffany has clearly hit her breaking point when we first see her in the novel, and the book uses Tiffany's incident on "Lashings of Lolly" as bookends of the novel. The rest of the novel anticipates Tiffany's death (a body – possibly hers – has been dredged out of the Thames), although while she has been defeated by Tristram's denial of parentage, she eventually overturns by coming back strong and resilient and chastises Tristram rather than lovingly returning to his arms.

In *Oranges*, although she largely seems happy with her life until she confronts her sexuality, Jeannette is forced to reject her church's opinion on sexuality, as her "intervention" in the "Joshua" section of the novel depicts. As a devout and well-read Christian, Jeanette uses her faith to dispel the pastor's accusation that "These children of God... have fallen under Satan's spell" (Winterson, *Oranges* 104). Jeanette does not deny God, but she does deny a structure that would deny her sexuality. When the pastor claims she does not love God, Jeanette replies, "Yes, I love them both [god and her lover Melanie]" (105). It is important to note that Jeanette does not make a choice between God and honoring her sexual identity. Instead, she rejects a system that would suddenly reject her for what she considers a "gift from the Lord" (104). Jeanette is able to discard the

view of the church precisely because it denies her an identity as a good and God-fearing person.

Despite the effects on their sense of personal identity, these characters are able to accept themselves as they are, instead of rejecting parts of themselves that a larger group deems abnormal. What can be found in both these novels is at least a partial rejection by certain characters of traditional and restrictive forms that only recognize a privileged minority of the population. The examples of Tiffany and Jeanette in particular embody the contradictory nature of such modes. In fact, both characters, while they can be construed as abnormal, are actually no less normal than, say, their other relatives. The difference is that they choose not to perform the traditional role convincingly or, rather, that at some point they refuse the role entirely in lieu of an alternative performance.

The construction of family in *Wise Children* allows Dora and Nora the space to become uncensored versions of themselves without the burden of legitimacy to uphold. The girls are accepted by Grandma Chance in a way they are never accepted by Melchior, and so they are able to escape the expectations of a family that never accepts or acknowledges them publicly. After all, why would they completely accept a structure that can find no place for them? The alternative family that is created by Grandma Chance and reiterated by Nora and Dora offers them both love and acceptance without the restrictions of traditional family structures. As Dora puts it, “She was no blood relation at all, to make confusion worse confounded. Grandma raised us, not out of duty, or due to history, but because of pure love, it was a genuine family romance, she fell in love with us the moment she clapped eyes on us” (Carter, *Wise* 12). The kind of freedom afforded these characters allows them to question traditional notions of familial identity since they

never seem to regret their status in an alternative family. After all, Grandma Chance “a convert to naturism” and a seeming vegetarian – a lover of salads, or “rabbit food” as Dora calls it – allows the girls to run through the house naked, thereby rejecting typical modes of how child rearing in lieu of a relatively alternative and freeing environment (27). While the definition of the alternative family is infinitely expandable, there is a specific permutation of the English alternative family that is important to a sense of the English family and English national identity: orphanage and adoption. Both *Wise Children* and *Oranges* indicate the authors’ concern with orphans or neglected children.

In order to discuss orphanage thoughtfully, one has to distinguish orphanage and adoption from other issues that cause children to be labeled differently than traditionally defined legitimate children. Both Laslett and Novy explain the difference between legitimacy, adoption, and orphanage that acknowledges the supremacy of legitimate, traditional family structures created out of blood. As Laslett recognizes, orphanage differs from legitimacy because of the “parental deprivation” at the heart of orphanage since someone can be illegitimate and still have parents (160), while Novy similarly underscores the difference between orphanage and adoption (7). Novy identifies the idea that, “Most of the adoptees in canonical literature, fairy tales, and folklore, find their identity in meeting their birth parents” (1), whereas orphans are never given the moment to enact that tableau even though such a view is ultimately a fiction. In part, their very identity is caught up in the loss of their parents. In adoption scenarios, children can dream of the moment of recognition wherein they recognize themselves in another; with orphanage, that moment is eternally deferred, forcing these children to forge their own

identities. However, since birth parents are central to legitimacy in cases of orphanage and adoption, these characters can never remedy the permanent denial of legitimacy.

The first orphans in the chronology of *Wise Children* are Melchior and Peregrine, and their beginnings are akin to folklore. Melchior and Peregrine were part of a famous performing family who traveled across continents. Once this supposedly perfect family falls apart in an Othello-inspired murder-suicide, hence blurring the lines between reality and fiction, the two sons are left to fend for themselves for a period, only to be flung into the arms of a religious aunt (Carter, *Wise* 21-2). This section of the novel is important because it sets up patterns for both Melchior and Peregrine: Melchior becomes the brother who worships a cardboard crown and becomes obsessed with appearances (the cardboard crown being a clear symbol of appearance without substance that represents the Hazard family), while Peregrine has different dreams, ones which lead him to be a constantly absent figure in the novel. This permeates their later lives as well, where Melchior plays the perfect father to his “legitimate” children, while Peregrine performs the role of loveable-but-absent father figure to children who aren’t even his own.

Later, readers find the similarities between Melchior, his brother, and his progenies: all are orphans and have their paternity called into question. In similar style, both father and daughters lost their parents early in life, and in turn held on to somewhat imaginary versions of those parents. For the Chance girls, the only information they receive about their mother is from Grandma Chance, someone they know as a creator of fictions because she created their family. Once Grandma Chance dies, the girls feel the loss doubly since, as Dora acknowledges, “She was the only witness to the day our mother died when we were born, and she took with her the last living memory of that

ghost without a face” (Carter, *Wise* 164). Family devolves into myth since in the case of the Chances, it is passed down through story rather than being experienced. While Grandma Chance was alive, their mother had a witness. After Grandma’s death, there are only stories; and, as a consequence, their mother’s validity and their own identities come into question.

At the heart of any traditional Western family lies the parent-child relationship. Traditionally, such relationships involve a constant battle for power and supremacy between child and adult. The problems that occur in *Oranges* and *Wise Children* as a result of parental support, or lack thereof, directly erode the familial structure. Such a metaphor also works for national identity, a paradigm which is modeled on a type of parental relationship, wherein the nation itself is characterized as the Mother country and the child represents those former colonial powers gaining their independence and those devolved countries within the contiguous British Isles themselves. The implications of such a metaphor reflect how such losses have affected the country at the center of such power.

The parenting problem in *Wise Children* illustrates how family can be performed negatively. Family is something that one performs not only in terms of quality, as Melchior does by acknowledging only legitimate forms of parentage. However, family can also be created and performed from nothing, as exemplified by Peregrine and Grandma Chance where the lack of history of a family can be either freeing or destructive without the reliance on biology. In the latter case, the choice of family made by these characters debunks the idea that families must always be related. In traditional formations of the familial structure, family members must be biologically connected; but in this

novel, family is created through choice. Peregrine may be related to the girls, but since he is not genetically their father, there is constant uncertainty about the state of parentage in the novel.

In the final exchange between Peregrine and Dora in *Wise Children*, Dora tells Peregrine that “‘Father’ is a hypothesis, but ‘mother’ is a fact” (Carter 223). This contradicts Peregrine questioning the issue of Dora and Nora’s mother, since Grandma Chance’s biography was a fiction. Dora’s reference to paternity as a “hypothesis” suggests that fatherhood is seen as something that, in practice, can be chosen, while motherhood is a responsibility that cannot be ignored. Furthermore, Nora and Dora also take on the motherhood role at various points throughout the novel, including at the very end, where they adopt their nephew Gareth’s twins that Peregrine brings back from the Amazon, causing Dora to say that the “Hazard dynasty wasn’t at its last gasp at all” (227). It’s important to note two things about these twins: one, that they are illegitimate (which, while rarely acknowledged by the family, is a tradition of the Hazards/Chances), and two, that Dora calls them “brown as a quail” (226), implying that the children may not be white, hence moving the Hazard side of the family towards multiculturalism. Dora and Nora are incredibly pleased with this development and are intent on raising Gareth’s twins.

Despite these apparent polarizations of mothering and fathering, both forms of parentage seem to be a choice. Grandma Chance, for example, chooses to be a mother to the Nora and Dora. But as Peregrine suggests after he and Dora have completed their sexual tryst, Grandma Chance may be their biological mother. After Peregrine assures Dora he is not her father, he asks, “But . . . has it ever occurred to you that your mother

may not be your mother?" (Carter, *Wise* 222). During this exchange, Peregrine points provides some evidence concerning their mother's identity, including the fact that they never saw her grave and that Grandma Chance, who rarely discussed the Chance girl's mother, "liked to keep her secrets" (223). Readers we never discover the truth, but that moment of doubt is enough to create doubt about the parentage of the Chance girls on multiple levels.

In these cases, parentage is not only questionable but also constructed. As a consequence, the role of the mother or father in this novel becomes destabilized, underscoring the ontological uncertainty of affiliation that characterizes these novels. As Novy might argue, the act of being a non-biological mother creates an alternative family, which also subverts the idea that to be a family one must have a biological bond. The roles of parents in these novels suggest that other ideological structures offer suitably legitimate or authentic models for contemporary familial relationships.

While there are plenty of fathers in *Wise Children*, however questionable, noticeably absent from *Oranges* is a father figure. Although Jeanette's mother has a husband, he rarely appears in the novel, and Jeanette refers to him as "her [mother's] husband" rather than her own father (Winterson, *Oranges* 5). The lack of a father figure in some ways underlies the alternate world that Jeanette's mother tries to create for Jeanette. Part of the problem is logistical since Jeanette's father keeps different hours than her mother (15). However, readers also sense that Jeanette's father is not really a part of the family and instead acts more like a lodger in their home. He has no control or say in Jeanette's upbringing, and he distances himself from the family to a certain degree. Jeanette's mother explains her husband in one episode: "He's not one to push himself"

(8). This kind of timidity has no chance against the power of Jeanette's mother's convictions, and he gets swept up in its wake. In the novel as a whole, "Fathers are shadowy figures who barely feature at all," and women largely control the world Jeanette inhabits (Andermahr 52). While one could infer many things from this fact, the one implication this has for my study is that fathers do not matter. And although they are stereotypically imagined as the top of the familial hierarchy, fathers have been supplanted in the church family by women who, instead of deconstructing the familial hierarchy, bolster it in a new way that still forces members of the family to obey the law of the family. The lack of a father figure reveals the alternative family that Jeanette's mother attempts to create, possibly even without her own knowledge. While from the outside, the family dynamic in their household is almost stereotypical, the reality is much different. The father figure does not hold the weight that he would in most stereotypical nuclear families, Jeanette is not the result of her parents' consummation of their marriage, and the family dynamic is often pulled toward the religious alternative family in times of strife, which implies that the outward appearance of this stereotypical family necessarily cannot sustain itself and must be reinforced through alternative means. The idea of the typical English family, then, becomes devalued throughout the novel; and in turn, what becomes valued is the personal idea of family that changes to fit the needs of each particular family.

Both Carter and Winterson create family units without a strong father figure, denying the stereotypically patriarchy-dominated view of family. Partly, this may stem from a growing acceptance of single-mother households as viable family constructions. This may also reflect the view of fatherhood after World War II, as Stefania Bernini

suggests: “[T]he emphasis on emotions that dominates post-war discourses unsettled traditional images of fathers as authority figures, without providing them with an alternative role, comparable to that of mothers” (109). Such a change in the role of fatherhood has implications for not only the family structure but also Englishness. The lack of fathers can be read as a general lack of patriarchy at the heart of group identities, including a national identity. As Laslett states in this book on familial and historical sociology, “Patriarchal authority is widely believed to be the subjective-symbolic counterpart of political authority” (4). This statement not only acknowledges a cultural norm that men are expected to be leaders; it also exposes the connection between the identity constructions of smaller groups and those of larger groups like nations. In this way, there is both a metaphorical and literal link between the traditionally patriarchal views of family in England with its larger political designs. A denial of such a male-centered view in novels like *Wise Children* and *Oranges* points toward not only a denial of traditional views of the family but also traditional views of the nation as patriarchally centered. Such a denial also indicates that although patriarchal authority is traditional in Western society, it is not necessary for daily life, as the main characters in both novels live without fathers quite ably, if not perfectly.

As a whole, parents are seen from multiple angles in these novels, and there are as many absent mothers as there are fathers. Biological parents are largely absent from the lives of both main characters. What seems most important throughout these novels is that someone is present to parent children when the original parents can no longer handle their parental duties. One alternative, seen in *Oranges*, models a version of the traditional parental relationship and relies on rigidity to maintain its dominance. The second

alternative, found in *Wise Children*, establishes the parents as loving but not traditional. The rigid expectations of a traditional family are eradicated; as a result, the “children” at least have the possibility to escape such rigid power structures in the future if they are willing to be identified as untraditional or illegitimate.

It is perhaps not surprising that alternative families can also be, paradoxically, a place where alternative expectations are held as highly as the ones which are created in traditional families. In *Oranges*, Jeanette’s own commitment to the church is a reflection of the extended family Jeanette’s mother embraces, which also serves to bring order and rules to Jeanette’s world. Jeanette learns not only the rules of life from this family, but she also learns a somewhat unorthodox sense of family from her mother as well. Therefore, as Jeanette eventually regains some sense of a familial relationship with her mother, she can comment, “Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of joining one, and no means of dismissing my own; she had tied a thread around my button, to tug as she pleased” (Winterson, *Oranges* 176). Winterson implies that family is something that cannot be broken once created, even if it manifests itself in alternative forms. While familial structures are problematic the alternative is an unpleasant nothingness.

This family, on the surface, appears to merely be concerned with the idea that Jeanette was chosen to help her mother; but as the novel continues, the reader also understands how this idea of family stems from Jeanette’s mother’s upbringing as well. At one point, while looking at a photo album including her past loves, Jeanette’s mother talks about the falling out she had with her own father concerning who she married. Her well-to-do father decided she had “married down,” and so he cut Jeanette’s mother off

financially and emotionally (Winterson, *Oranges* 36). From this experience of disappointing class expectations, Jeanette's mother learns that deviating from expectation has extreme consequences.

But while remembering this conversation, Jeannette's mother indicates the solace she found in an alternative family structure: "'The church is my family,' she always said whenever I asked about the people in the photograph album. And the church was my family too" (Winterson, *Oranges* 37). Consequently, Jeanette learns from her mother two things: one, that family can be created from those around you; and two, that while families can be broken, they can be reassembled using other components – but only if those individuals are willing to accept that others may consider them illegitimate as a result. For, while throughout the majority of the novel she seems both stubborn and unyielding in her dichotomizing of life into the good and the bad, Jeanette's mother eventually seems to accept Jeanette on one level or another, and they reunite in the last chapter of the novel.

The church family that Jeanette embraces in the earlier part of her life isolates her from the expectations and assumptions of the rest of the world. In one instance, after Jeanette enters the school system for the first time, she is expected to cross stitch, so she creates a sampler which says "THE SUMMER IS ENDED AND WE ARE NOT YET SAVED" in black letters as a present to one of her fellow church members (Winterson *Oranges* 39). As Jeanette puts it, "I did upset the children. Not intentionally, but effectively" (39). This situation arises because of Jeanette's other life, her church life, which is strongly connected to her central adoptive family with her mother. While she does not intend to upset or alienate the other children, she does so because her norms are

not their norms. Because the other children did not learn to read by reading Deuteronomy as Jeanette did, and because they do not have the same religious experiences as Jeanette, the other children interpret Jeanette as odd (15). Despite this, Jeanette never seems to envy the normality that is represented by her schoolmates. Instead, she seems to merely want acceptance from her family; and in some ways, Jeanette almost seems surprised that people do not see things in the same way she does, indicating that the insularity of her adoptive family causes her to accept her alternative family as normal. So, while Jeanette's church family has isolated her, she also does not share larger cultural expectations, so she does not feel the need to fulfill them. Instead, Jeanette spends a large amount of her youth focused on the expectations of her alternative family.

The separation between Jeanette and other children at school relates back to the idea of the dichotomies of legitimacy and illegitimacy. Since Jeanette does not conform to the stereotypical interests and actions of other young children, in particular little girl, she becomes an illegitimate outsider in their eyes. Yet, at the same time, the alienation from her peers causes Jeanette to lean more on her family for support. The creation of an alternative family is something that complicates any traditional idea of family since those families are created by the members artificially and so have the ability to create their own rules, subverting the very traditional nature of family. However, just like anything that has an antecedent, alternative families, even if they do not follow a traditional path, can (and often do) follow the template of the traditional family and its accompanying values, power hierarchies, and expectations. This leads to an obvious question: is the alternative family as structurally sound as the biological family? The answer seems to be that once someone creates a family, they cannot easily destroy it. They may be able to damage it,

but the total destruction of a sense of family, the severing of that thread, seems to be almost impossible. This may reflect the importance of biology to traditional views of family and the idea that someone's blood binds individuals to each other, but it equally applies to alternative families.

Eventually, Jeanette learns to rely less on that family out of necessity after she transgresses against them in an effort to honor her own sexual identity. Through this ordeal Jeanette learns that her family has unwritten rules, and it is only by living outside of all those rules that Jeanette begins to accept who she is. While Jeanette's family is far from perfect, they help bring order and hope to her world, giving her life a sense of meaning, even though she acknowledges the constructed nature of that family. In the end, she sticks by her adoptive mother rather than rejecting her family completely, despite Jeanette's choice to live outside of the expectations of the larger family defined by the church family. On some level, Jeanette's rejection of the church family's view of sexuality causes her relationship with her mother and their family to change on some fundamental level. However, it also leads her mother to accept or at least ignore Jeanette's sexuality, so she can maintain a place in the family.

Alternative familial relationships are not only often constructed in this novel but also appear as confining as traditional family relationships. In particular, the relationship between Jeanette and her mother is a power struggle wherein Jeanette's mother adopts a child so she can control and shape that child to her will. The story of Jeanette's adoption, for example, shows Jeanette how special she is, but it also shapes Jeanette's destiny, one which Jeanette accepts for the majority of her childhood. This is a decided difference from Dora and Nora's upbringing in *Wise Children*, since Grandma Chance allows the

girls the freedom and independence that Jeanette seems to lack. In Jeanette's mother's eyes, since she chose Jeanette, she should be allowed to control her destiny. Yet while these novels are decidedly different in their approach to orphans and the care/adoption of children, each show the effects that the lack of biological parentage and illegitimacy can have on these children. It is equally true that being constantly defined as illegitimate causes these characters to consciously question the legitimacy of everyone and everything around them, and that self-consciousness can allow them to play different roles and create stories of identity. So, while the construction of family can be confining, it can also be empowering and freeing if that family is created outside of dominant constructions of the family unit and its hierarchy. These alternative parents mirror the alternatives to a traditionalist national identity. England as nation can easily be symbolized as England as parent – often not a very good parent. And if Melchior symbolizes England as both parent and nation, then the implications are bleak to say the least.

To continue the nation-as-parent metaphor, England has often been depicted as Mother England. The implications of such a metaphorical leap are clear in these novels: Mother England is an absent or preoccupied parent, and as such her children are left to carve out their own ways of being. This corresponds perhaps to the loss of empire in Britain and, hence, England. As Niall Ferguson outlines in his book, *Empire*, the “break-up of the British Empire happened with astonishing speed” (348). Ferguson even goes so far as to say that the British Empire had “effectively been for sale in 1945” (355). So Melchior's crown, for example, can be seen to directly symbolize a falling British empire centralized on England, one which exists on only a surface level. Without the imperial

base on which Britishness and Englishness is largely founded, the meaning of Britishness (and Englishness to a degree) is lost, along with the meaning behind a monarchy that no longer rules anything. Thus, the symbol of the paper crown denotes the emptiness behind the imperial structure which once centered England's concept of itself. Yet there is hope. For while Melchior's relationship to the paper crown indicates both the fragile and resilient nature of Englishness since this form of identity exists without much clear substance or delineation, it also resists destruction by its continuing existence and its adoption by others. And while the uncertainty of Englishness can allow individuals to carve out a new sense of national identity, the fact is that like most children and many of the characters in these novels crave the stability of a traditional model simply because it is seen as natural, historically based, and legitimate. The alternative to such tradition may appear too uncertain, too unstable to willingly embody.

Conclusion: From Alternative Families to Alternative Forms of Englishness

On a metaphorical level, there are important implications regarding alternative familial constructions like orphanage and adoption. Above all, the abandonment of certain groups as not legitimately English, like the way Dora and Nora Chance live on the outskirts of accepted society because they were orphaned as babies, has allowed new permutations of Englishness to survive against all odds simply because they have the freedom to exist as they choose outside of the confinement of a particular form of Englishness. For example, the Chances defy cultural norms that expect them to perform Shakespeare and instead dance in the halls and run about nude. Adoption also becomes important to the metaphor about national identity, since to be accepted by a group implies legitimization as English.

In both *Oranges* and *Wise Children*, the dominant view of Englishness is questioned by other English people who do not conform to traditional notions of Englishness. They do not fit into the stereotypical mode that only acknowledges a particular depiction of English men and women based on class, racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic definitions. This questioning of the dominant mode seems to indicate that traditional definitions of Englishness no longer exist, or at the very least are accepted only as a minority representation of contemporary English national identity.

This dwindling conception of Englishness, metaphorically applied to the alternative English families of Winterson and Carter's novels, can be accounted for by patterns of immigration in England from the early 1960s on. As Mary Abbott recognizes, a decided increase in immigration to England caused the face of Englishness to change. The immigration legislation in the 1960s sent clear messages about the place of immigrants in England, and many of the problems that triggered such legislation remained throughout the next twenty plus years. Things continued to deteriorate during the 1980s and 1990s, and Britain as a whole became a powder keg for race relations. These problems happened incrementally as new legislation was passed and more people wished to immigrate to England. While immigrant children were often still ignored by the majority of English culture, as evidenced in the study of Nottingham children done by developmental psychologists John and Elizabeth Newson that excluded both immigrant and illegitimate children, the Newsons' study and its corresponding definition suggests that "how the notion of what constitutes 'an ordinary family' changed in Britain in the last decades of the twentieth century" (Abbott 130). Even through to the new millennium, race in England was a problematic and topic: "Immigrants and ethnic minorities were

equally subject to a confusing mix of support with hostility; public attempts to praise and promote minorities could barely be reconciled with the often wary antagonism displayed towards asylum seekers” (Leese 187). What Abbott and Leese attempt to outline is the very issue that both Carter and Winterson’s books address: how legal and social changes to England create changes in the English familial structure, both of which changed the identity of Englishness itself. And while neither Carter nor Winterson directly address immigration in these novels, readers should nevertheless be able to appreciate how the issue of biological legitimacy in these novels can lead one to consider the biological legitimacy of Englishness.

What remains from this interplay between whites and immigrants, a parallel to traditional and alternative family formations respectively, is encapsulated by Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo in their article on nationalism: “What exists today is the implicit myth of a white British past in opposition to the idea of a multicultural present, a present that is framed as both new and, once again, ‘a problem’” (340). In other words, people may be able to sustain antiquated forms of Englishness even today, but traditional conceptions of Englishness are clearly faltering, if the constant scrutiny of Englishness in the past decade is any indication. As Amelia Hill put it in 2004, “The question of what it means to be English has been asked with increasing frequency and intensity in recent years, with a flurry of books and television programmes debating whether the English have lost their national identity and whether there is any longer such a thing as ‘Englishness’” (16).

Any sense of Englishness is at odds with two basic ideas: the need to distinguish itself from Britishness and the wish to maintain exclusivity without being racist against the many people who should be considered English but who are constantly discriminated

against historically, like the immigrant population. In other words, there is a need to abandon a prior sense of history. Without the imperial power they once enjoyed, the English have to take responsibility for their past while simultaneously creating a newer identity outside of this imperialist agenda, which acknowledges the residual grief that accompanies losing such a large part of their collective history.

Readers should, at this point, be able to see the metaphorical implications of familial identity on national identity. The idea of family as defined by Carter and Winterson – one in which children are denied, incest is prevalent, orphans are abundant, and alternate families can be created – underscores the changing and changeable nature of the English family structure, as well as the changing and changeable nature of Englishness itself. The interrogation of national and familial identity structures in these novels also uncovers the way individuals negotiate a sense of Englishness, particularly at a moment that affords little certainty. No longer can individuals rely on Englishness as meaning an immovable and indestructible empire. No longer does Englishness rely on stereotypes of white, middle-class, emotionally-reserved men and women who look and act under strict guidelines of behavior, or on the other stereotype of Cockney, lower-class working men and women who are merely bawdy and humorous. The evolution of Englishness over the past forty years has enabled the resistance of English stereotypes that pigeonhole individuals into particular roles, but it also reflects the increasing demands of a diverse population who challenge the very stereotypes on which Englishness is based.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE AMBIVALENT FUTURE OF ENGLISHNESS(ES)

While styles, values, and interests change from decade to decade, the problems with Englishness today appear to be unchanged. The English are still trying to make sense of a concept that has been consistently challenged since the Second World War. While England is no longer the center of British imperialism, writers like Fowles would argue that England is older than Britain, and so any preoccupation with title is a moot point. However, Krishan Kumar has made the claim that unlike the other British countries who “began to envision a rosier future as separate members of the new European Community,” England has been forced to question “its future identity” since a major part of its identity is tied to Britishness (“Englishness” 52). These contradictory statements encapsulate the English problem that has driven this dissertation: ambivalence over what constitutes Englishness.

The end of Angela Carter’s *Wise Children* can help readers of this dissertation better understand the ambivalence that many individuals still hold concerning Englishness. Nora and Dora, though old and wizened, are able to act as mothers to a new generation of Hazards, which Dora argues means that the “Hazard dynasty wasn’t at its last gasp at all” (Carter, *Wise* 227). But since the Hazards represent the status quo of Englishness, the ending is simultaneously hesitant and reassuring. On the one hand, they may parent the next generation, and they may feel personally vindicated about their own parentage since Melchior appears to acknowledge them as his illegitimate daughters at his very public birthday party (Carter, *Wise* 200). On the other hand, it is unclear whether the Chance sisters will live long enough to impart wisdom to these children, and the

Chances seem to be complicit in a cycle wherein children are allowed to suffer because of their parents' mistakes.

The sisters' complicity in this familial and ideological cycle tells readers something about traditional forms of Englishness. Even though alternative forms of Englishness are able to make some headway, traditional forms symbolized by the Hazard family are able to maintain a certain hold on the Chance girls. The Chances were, after all, technically accepted into the Hazard family by their father's public acknowledgement of them. And herein lies the problem with attempting alternative versions: they may eventually be subsumed by the traditional. Consider Dick Hebdige's explanation of "the process of recuperation" in which groups – in his case subcultures – lose their subversive nature through commodification and ideology (94). In the commodity form, the stylistic elements become incorporated into mass culture; and in the ideological form, groups that represent Ideological State Apparatuses own the subculture by labeling it in a new way (94). Often, alternative groups like subcultures are considered forbidden, and the goal of "recuperation" is to eliminate the forbidden cachet. In this way, dominant forms can subsume alternative forms over time, just as the Chances are subsumed by the Hazards through their father's acceptance and their acquisition of their nephew's children.

However, recuperation does not necessarily mean that the alternative has been accepted as dominant; instead, it merely becomes palatable to the dominant culture. So, the alternative notions of identity in these novels are often subsumed, denied, or rewritten to appease the dominant, which is imagined as the anonymous populous imagined through William's concept of the masses: "always the others, whom we don't know, and can't know" (*Culture* 299). In this way, readers should be able to recognize the similarity

between alternative notions of identity and Raymond Williams' concept of "emergent" culture, a term that identifies notions of culture that are "substantially alternative or oppositional to [the dominant]" (123). Taking Hebdige's "process of recuperation" a step further, Williams also acknowledges the process by which the emergent becomes the dominant and the dominant becomes the residual, a process that is "a constantly repeated, an always renewable, move beyond a phase of practical incorporation" (124). Clearly, the problem with the alternative attempting to become the dominant is that "incorporation looks like recognition, acknowledgement, and thus a form of *acceptance*" (125).

But if the alternative is subsumed, the conventional also appears to change as a result of its clash with the alternative. For example, the end of Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* offers readers a useful way to see the change in traditional family patterns. Jeanette's mother holds an extremely rigid worldview, which causes her to force Jeanette to leave home (Winterson, *Oranges* 136). Eventually, and without explanation, the two reconcile. And it is clear Jeanette's mother has changed since she allows Jeanette back. She may not share Jeanette's worldview, but her mother certainly seems to accept it – even if that acceptance means ignoring the issue. In the same way, the traditional changes as a result of its struggle with the alternative, and while that does not mean more support for the alternative, the traditional no longer holds its place of ideological superiority so securely.

What I want to suggest is a constant process of "*negotiation* rather than *negation*" (Bhabha, *Location* 37) in these novels both between and within characters whose thoughts and actions reflect traditional and alternative views of Englishness. The inability for either traditional or alternative concepts to assert themselves as dominant ideas

creates the ambivalence in national identity. The ending of *Wise Children*, which is at once both optimistic and skeptical, mirrors the way in which writers have consistently responded to conventional forms of English national identity. In *Daniel Martin*, the Robin Hood myth is depicted fondly, and Daniel incorporates it into his personal identity as well. However, that myth also obfuscates reality for Daniel and causes him to shield himself from others. Fevvers from *Nights at the Circus* likewise does not perceive her performance of the Cockney Venus negatively. But her performance begins to subsume a possible “authentic” identity – resulting in the novel’s refrain, “Is she fact or is she fiction?” (Carter, *Nights* 7). In short, these examples demonstrate that the response to conventional forms of Englishness is not binary, that either individuals must accept tradition or deny it. The indecision these characters exhibit towards traditional Englishness indicates there is a range of acceptance regarding traditional and alternative forms of English national identity.

To see this range most clearly, one simply needs to briefly compare the novels from each chapter. In chapter two, readers experience the acceptance of bourgeois Englishness in *Metroland* that I have read as negative and then are able to weigh that against Winterson’s hyper-fluidity in *Gut Symmetries*. The character of Chris ultimately accepts the traditional while the other, Alice, rejects the entire paradigm. In chapter three, Fowles demonstrates a love of Englishness as imagined in the Robin Hood myth, while Barnes seems to take issue with any form of myth worship since the whole paradigm of national identity is constructed. The entire premise of chapter four rests on the performance of Englishness, but Fevvers’ performance in *Nights at the Circus* is decidedly more conscious than Nick’s in *The Magus*, which also reflects the difference

with which they accept traditional forms of Englishness. Fevvers uses her performance to illicit a response from the crowd, while Nicholas does not realize the constructed nature of his identity until near the end of the novel, even though he uses it in a similar way. Finally, the depictions of traditional and alternative families in the fifth chapter allow readers to see more overt rejections of traditional Englishness in *Wise Children* and to make the leap towards Englishness in Winterson's much more complex interpretation where the definitions of the English family are clearly distinct from more conventional modes of depicting familial relations. Some books address Englishness more explicitly like *England, England*, while others, like *Gut Symmetries*, allude only occasionally to Englishness because they are less interesting than the concept of finding identity outside fixed definitions. There are novels that initially privilege the traditional like *Daniel Martin*, and others that initially privilege the alternative like *Wise Children*. However, none of the novels offers some magical answer to the problem of how to interpret English identity. Instead, they offer ambiguity.

Writer Nick Bentley takes my argument about the ambivalence of contemporary definitions of Englishness a step farther in his article on English national identity in Barnes' *England, England* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. Bentley argues that "If there ever was a grand or Master narrative of Englishness, the novel is keen to undermine the philosophical basis on which such a model might rest," and in such a manner unearths the hypocritical nature of the novel (494-5). The characters in the last section of *England, England* perpetrate the same type of empty rituals and myths that the theme park does; readers are simply more conscious of the act since it happens before our eyes rather than hundreds of years before.

In truth, many of the novels I have discussed in previous chapters have likewise taken issue with the “grand narrative” of Englishness, which I have alternately identified in this work as traditional, conventional, legitimate, natural, and authentic. All these words communicate how one pervasive model seeks to take hold over the others: it is accepted as normal. And each novel deals with such grand narratives differently. In Barnes’ *Metroland*, middle-class Englishness is seen as normal and hence unattractive to the main character, Chris; however, by the end of the novel, it subsumes Chris’s more rebellious identity.

While I agree with Bentley’s assessment of Englishness in terms of the master narrative, he does not consider the ambivalence with which people embrace the repressive view of Englishness even as they reject it. That simultaneous embrace and rejection is the problem at the heart of *England, England* and is embedded within the quote with which I began this dissertation: “the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself” (Barnes, *England* 6). In Martha’s case, when she says that the past allows the “present to live with itself,” she presumably means that individuals are able to look back at the past with fondness and are, in turn, able to identify that fondness with a historical and traditional sense of national identity. In the simplest terms, if one accepts or enjoys the piece of history, he or she also accepts or enjoys a particular version of Englishness.

However, the problem is simply that Englishness can no longer use its past to make the present livable as Martha states it should. The real/concrete expression of Englishness created through everyday existence is able to overwhelm the symbolic/abstract expression of Englishness, hence, the ambivalence that is found in

Wise Children and many of the novels in this dissertation. Bentley's assessment of *England, England* corresponds to my interest in the abstract and the concrete. He separates phenomena like the "Quintessences of Englishness" in *England, England* from those like "imperialism, colonial violence and exploitation" that "[threaten] to 'suspend'" symbolic forms of Englishness (486-487). This concept is important to my overall discussion of the abstract and concrete because it shows that, rather than representing a different form of identity than the traditional, concrete expressions of Englishness simply bring to light the less savory aspects of the abstract expression of that identity. This is comparable to the immigration laws that Leese mentions in *Britain Since 1945: Aspects of Identity* (49), and which I note in the previous chapter on family and legitimacy. Traditional Englishness wants to imagine itself as "natural," and since immigrants threaten that sense of naturalness, the concrete expression of that symbolic feeling is materialized through reactionary laws that limit immigration. In this way, readers should be able to see the break between traditional and alternative modes of identity as well as the break between the abstract and concrete modes of identity.

Thus, the two basic problems that characters face in these novels are also the general problems of Englishness because people imagine the world in the binaries of the traditional and the alternative. Either people become overly consumed by a primarily abstract and traditional sense of Englishness to the point where they allow it to destroy alternative facets of their identity, or they reject all abstract notions of Englishness to the point that they no longer have a meaningful national identity. The dominant view of Englishness is also the most abstract, but that does not mean that alternative forms are the concrete form in the binary of traditional/alternative. Rather, the concrete is the

expression of those abstract concepts. What people do tells others what they believe. In this way, readers should accept that any view of national identity is predicated on both the abstract and the concrete, and so the answer here is not simply to adopt another form of Englishness. That would simply mean replacing one abstract concept with another or one concrete practice with another. Instead, my readings of the novels suggest that these characters need to acknowledge the constructed nature of both the dominant and the alternative views of Englishness rather than blindly accepting either as the natural form.

I would argue that Barnes's *England, England* comes the closest to recognizing the inadequacy of the traditional/alternative concepts of Englishness. While the majority of the novels in this dissertation feed into the traditional/alternative dichotomy that fuels stereotypical notions of identity, *England, England* treats Englishness differently than the majority of the novels in this dissertation. While novels like *Daniel Martin* and *Metroland* react uncertainly toward Englishness by depicting the struggle between traditional and alternative modes of identity, *England, England* denies the worth of such a struggle since all forms of identity are found to be constructed and therefore technically inauthentic. When the schoolteacher decides to revive the village Fête at the end of *England, England*, for example, he immediately consults Martha. However, instead of doing as Martha suggests, Mr. Mullins decides, "Perhaps on the whole we'd better start from scratch" (Barnes, *England* 255). The townspeople succeed in creating their own version of the Fête, which merges traditions like "the vicar's right and duty to open the Fête" with their own ideas, like the fact that the vicar did not actually "propose any coercive theological system" in the process of opening the Fête (271). The townspeople accept the physical act, but they deny the symbolic undertone. As such, a scene that could

be interpreted as authentic on the surface is found to be constructed. However, since the townspeople are merely attempting to make sense of their new identity, the act, although technically inauthentic, does not feel inauthentic.

In much the same way as the characters of *England, England*, the people of England are forced to make sense of a national identity in flux. However, while there may be apprehension at losing the traditional definitions of identity, it becomes easier if one accepts the constructedness of identity – that is, that a country's history, its well-known public figures, and its customs have been chosen and shaped over time. And just as the conclusion of *England, England* suggests, the English must be willing to piece together their own sense of patriotism over time and in their own way, recognizing that it will acquire as much legitimacy as any other prior attempts at defining England.

Despite the stereotypes of Englishness in popular culture today, readers should not assume that the English take their national identity for granted. Given the examples in this dissertation alone, the English, as represented by both critics and select novelists, appear incredibly conscious of the ambivalence of English national identity. And as the continued questioning of Englishness in these novels demonstrates, the only fear should be in accepting one form of Englishness as the only form since only then will Englishness be truly in danger.

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