

Jameson Hogan

Doctor Renk

English 668

26 April 2010

Internal Intertextuality in Julian Barnes' *England, England*

In "The Invention of Cultural Traditions: The Construction and Deconstruction of Englishness in Julian Barnes' *England, England*," Vera Nünning makes an interesting claim. She suggests that unlike many of Barnes' other works, *England, England* is marked by a lack of intertextuality, and that those intertextual references that do appear are presented as unimportant, secondary to the novel's overall narrative, and paling in comparison to Barnes' frequent references to music. *England, England* is widely regarded as a postmodern novel, and as such it should be not only keenly aware of its own constructedness, but reveling in its connections to other texts. Why, then, do intertextual elements appear so marginalized?

In an article related to Nünning's only in its consideration of *England, England*, Nick Bentley argues that each the novel itself is a hybrid of sections written in styles distinct from each other. Specifically, he identifies *England* (Part One) as being a Realist text, *England, England* (Part Two) as being Postmodern in style, and *Anglia* (Part Three) as being in the mode of a Pastoral Elegy. If this is the case, I believe that it opens up an intriguing possibility. If we can demonstrate that the three sections of the novel *England, England* are distinct in their mode of storytelling, then I believe that we can consider them as distinct texts within the larger artifact of the novel, in much the same way that the books of the Bible are viewed. It then follows that we can look for intertextuality

within the novel as a whole, just as biblical scholars do. I hope to demonstrate this by first analyzing each part of the novel in terms of its identified style, then by identifying specific intertexts that exist among them. On a practical note, since Part Two of the novel shares its title with the novel itself, I will mark with an asterisk any usage of **England*, *England* that refers to this particular section.

England introduces us to Martha Cochrane. Leaving aside for the moment the narrator's ruminations on the falseness of memory, we are presented with a series of brief vignettes highlighting Martha's child- and early adulthood. She assembles a puzzle of Britain's counties, visits an Agricultural Show with her family, and exacts schoolyard revenge on a classmate. Her father abandons the family, her mother moves her to a new town, and a more experienced gardener takes all the prizes after she enters the Agricultural Fair herself. Jealous and afraid of abandonment, she fakes illness to keep her mother from going on dates, finishes school and finds a job only to have her father try to re-enter her life. The meeting fails to spark a reconciliation, due in part to her father's apparent lack of memory of her childhood, and we leave Martha already well on her way to being the cynical woman we will find later.

Broadly speaking, the more closely an author adheres to real-world situations the more realistic a work is considered to be. The setting should be close to the intended audience, both geographically and temporally, so as to be relatable to their everyday lives. The characters should be regular people, neither heroic nor demonic, whose troubles are similar to those of the reader. The intrigues of exotic nobility would have no place in Realist fiction written in Britain. Literary realism is "the portrayal of life with fidelity" (Realism, 729), as opposed to the "idealism, melodrama, and . . . lack of concern

for contemporary economic and social issues” (Fludernik, 53). However, Realism is a problematic concept, often relying on absence and qualification more than a solid definition; in order to identify a text as Realist, we must first find specific elements to use in analysis. Catherine Belsey, who Bentley relies on for his definition of realism, provides a way to narrow in on what she terms “Classic Realism” by identifying three critical elements: “illusionism”, a “hierarchy of discourses”, and a “narrative that seeks closure” (70).

By illusionism, Belsey means essentially what I have discussed above: the attempt of the author to craft “a semblance of reality and verisimilitude” that fools the reader into believing the world of the text to be a real one (“Illusion”) Throughout *England*, Barnes fulfils this qualification, seeking to replicate real life with a high degree of accuracy. The Agricultural Fair especially highlights this, with Barnes providing brief but evocative descriptions of the sights and smells of country life:

The white marquees with striped porticos, as solidly built as vicarages. A rising hill behind, from which careless, scruffy animals looked down on their pampered, haltered cousins in the show ring below. The smell from the back entrance to the beer tent as the day’s heat rose. Queuing for the portable toilets, and the smell not much different. (8-9)

Martha’s parents are presented as real, flawed beings. Her father leaves the family to marry another woman and start a new family. Her mother cries and drinks heavily for a time, then begins to date again later. She seems to raise Martha well, but instills in her a cynical view of men. Martha’s life is neither a charmed fable nor a grim tale; like most people in the real world, it treads a middle ground between literary extremes.

The hierarchy of discourse means that the author uses focalization and textual clues to make explicit a distinction between the narrator and the characters, and to identify a specific character whose perspective the reader shares in (bid.). In *England*, Martha is our focal character. Alone among the characters, we are given details of her thoughts and feelings, her inner world. Events unfold from her perspective, so that the reader is limited in knowledge to what Martha experiences.

The second element is a narrative that seeks closure, the resolution of a disordered state introduced into the story; Belsey points to the classic murder novel, at the end of which a killer is revealed and the entire crime explained to the reader (70). Although there is no such scandal in *England*, we are confronted with a mystery. When her Martha's father vanishes, we are left wondering what happened to him. We know what Martha thinks and feels, and we know what Martha sees of her mother's behavior afterwards, but we do not have any more information than that. When Martha and her father meet at the end of the section, his revelations about his life since then are as much a surprise to us as they are to Martha. The mystery is solved, and that section of the narrative closes.

**England, England*, the second and longest portion of the novel, brings us into a near future where Sir Jack Pitman, millionaire mogul and entrepreneur, has decided that he wishes to have on last and greatest project to be remembered by. To this end, and after much discussion and consultation of experts and philosophers, he hits upon the idea of creating a miniature version of England that the wealthy of the world can visit, taking in all the greatest sights of Britain without leaving the Isle of Wight (which Pitco

manipulates into declaring independence from England proper). Sir Jack's company, Pitco, undertakes a survey of high-income potential vacationers to establish the most quintessentially English elements and from there develops a list of sights, attractions, spectacles and experiences from across British history and literature. Robin Hood and the Merrie Men live within short distance from a twice weekly reenactment of the Special Forces raid on the Iranian Embassy in 1980. Visitors can have dinner with Dr. Johnson, see a mock Battle of Britain, and view the King and Queen waving (convinced by Sir Jack to relocate to the island) from a scaled-down Buckingham palace. The Project is a great success, and Sir Jack is able to leave behind a legacy that exceeds his every expectation.

Bentley identifies this section of the book as Postmodern, a term in many ways as problematic as Realism. In general, Postmodern literature is non-traditional and experimental in nature ("Post-Modernism"); where Realism seeks to create the illusion of a real world, Postmodernism is self-aware and referential, incorporating elements of parody and pastiche (Bentley 493). Like Realism, Post-Modernism is a term that encompasses a wide variety of elements and styles, and so I will focus here on three closely-related elements that Bentley identifies which seem especially prevalent in **England, England*: parody, pastiche, and "knowing side references to contemporary theory" (493).

Parody can be thought of as use of imitation for the purpose of critique (Dyer 40). In **England, England* Barnes employs Parody in a number of ways. Pitman's company stands in for any number of multinational conglomerates, and Sir Jack himself comes across as a parody of "Thatcherite entrepreneur[s]" (Bentley 489), and with his

deliberately mysterious background could conjure up current personalities such as Rupert Murdoch. Jack has a personal assistant whose sole function is to record and mine his words for nuggets of brilliance for posterity, and continually adopts the tropes of accolades he didn't earn, such as sets of suspenders specific to schools and posts. He is further exaggerated to the point of grotesquerie by his sexual proclivities, which involve infantilism and scatological elements.

Dr. Max, the Project's historian, provides another constant source of parody, in this case of the dry and disconnected (and it seems homosexual) academic. He wears a bow tie and tweed, and speaks in an affected style. He is revealed to have studied genital piercing academically, and, during a discussion of British heroes, seems overly-personal in his interpretation of Nelson and Hardy (Barnes 71). He is an absolute font of information and trivia, and is consistently disappointed by the fact that visitors to the island seem uninterested in what he has to offer. The exaggerated characteristics of Dr. Max, while not as bombastic as those of Sir Jack, mark him as a parody of academics, who might have difficulty embracing the postmodern world's disinterest in any kind of truth or fact.

Pastiche is a form of artistic imitation, distinct from plagiarism in that the reader is meant to know that it is imitative (Dyer 1), and distinct from Parody in that it is not generally intended to satirize or mock the original material (Dyer, 39-40). In **England, England*, we see an early example of this in chapter one when Dr. Max interviews a 49-year-old man to determine his overall knowledge of elements of British history. The section is written in the style of a transcript, signaled by a concise writing style, line-by-line transcription, and objective description:

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

Subject replied: '1066.'

Question was repeated.

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

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

The Pastiche ends abruptly a few pages later when Dr. Max "[leaks] his reluctant initials onto the report" (85), and Barnes returns to his previous, more literary writing style.

Perhaps the most obvious example of Pastich occurs in chapter three, a significant portion of which is written in the style of a newspaper review article. It begins with the title "*A Tourist Mecca Set in a Silver Sea*," followed by a blurb setting the scene for the supposed reader. The piece is written in the "voice" of a fictional staff writer, who provides us with a visitor's-eye view of the Island that the we would are denied by the top-down perspective of most of the sections' focal characters.

Pitman House, Jack's corporate tower, provides **England, England's* first nod to contemporary theory; the ultramodern building was proudly designed by a prestigious firm of architects who, when forced to include Sir Jack's archaic inner sanctum, hoped ardently that they would not be lauded for their "ironic post-post-modernism" (Barnes 30). Bentley suggests that the speech given by an intellectual from France is especially relevant here, as attempts to form a philosophical underpinning for the project by drawing on theorists from Pascal to Jean Baudrillard. In fact, the entire project is a nod to the theories of Jean Baudrillard, which state that in postmodernism, the

replica (or simulacrum) of an object comes to overshadow the original, just as England, England comes to replace England proper.

Anglia returns us to mainland England, a nation which, unable to compete with Pitco's version of Britain, has reverted to a largely pre-industrial state. Territories have been lost, depopulation has occurred, and a loss of international respect and support drove the country to become extremely isolationist, eventually changing its name to Anglia. Although there was some early strife, eventually things evened out for those who remained behind. Pollution cleared up, weather improved, forests expanded and wildlife returned. Martha, having traveled for some years after her exile from the project, has settled in a small village in the countryside which is preparing to hold a village festival, apparently the first in living memory. The festival is a huge success, and the book closes with Martha sitting on a hilltop bench, looking down at the dancing below.

Bentley suggests that *Anglia* “[returns] us to a more recognizably English form [of writing] – the pastoral elegy” (494); however, I believe that Bentley goes too far in this regard. An elegy, after all, is a poetic lament for the dead, generally a shepherd or someone represented by a shepherd (“Elegy,” 254). Although Bentley identifies thematic elements that this section has in common with pastoral elegies, the fact remains that it is a work of prose, and not of poetry. Instead, I believe that we should consider *Anglia* as a piece of pastoral literature, a mode of writing which is, as the name implies, very similar to the Pastoral Elegy; it likewise focuses on the lives of shepherds, tending to idealize them (“Pastoral,” 644). Not unlike realism, pastoral literature seeks to move outside of the city and halls of power, retreating into the countryside. It is nostalgic for the past, for a “hypothetical state of love and peace which has somehow been lost” (647).

Anglia certainly has a pastoral setting; planes flying overhead see a landscape of new forests, windmills, and horse-drawn barges. Crops are grown locally in fields and gardens, livestock has shrink somewhat, and weather patterns have taken on renewed importance to the kinds and quality of foods available. Use of technology in general is minimal; written correspondence has replaced modern forms of communication, a scythe is used to cut grass instead of a mower, and people travel mainly by steam engine and horse. Residents of Martha's village can take a bus to a nearby market twice a week if they so wish, and book-mobile visits on occasion, but these seem to be largely the extent of motorized travel. Instead of mechanics and entrepreneurs, we have farriers and publicans.

The people who live in *Anglia* are far from power in the modern sense of the world; when the Pitco park opened, it quickly eclipsed England proper as a destination, leaving the economy in shambles as businesses bailed out, the wealthy emigrated, and currency was devalued by investors. Scotland and Wales expanded, reducing England's territory. A new government attempted to recover both territorial and economic might, but failed miserably when foreign powers came to the aid of their targets. Soon, Britain became obstinately isolationist, withdrawing noisily from the EU, barring trade, and tightly controlling immigration. The country was divided up along the lines of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, instead of her modern counties, and finally the name of the nation was changed to *Anglia*. Although Barnes does not go into detail on the form of government in *Anglia* when we join the story, there is a general sense of absence. Crime is minimal, outsiders are viewed with suspicion, and doors are left unlocked. The only mention of a true authority figure is of a local policeman with a bicycle and truncheon, and his

appearance is confined to a parade during the village fair. Throughout *Anglia*, no real mention is made of any sort of authority or government; in this pastoral world, temporal power is of no importance.

Barnes is quick to note that the village in which Martha lives is neither a dystopia nor a utopia, but his detailed descriptions can't help but evoke a sense of nostalgia for the past; after all, these are people who have, more or less, chose this way of life. Initially, they may simply have been denied immigration to another country as Barnes tells us was common, but throughout the section there is no evidence of anyone bemoaning their fate. Quite the contrary, we meet commodity traders turned cheese-makers, tollbooth operators turned barkeepers, and even a Milwaukee-born legal expert who elected to remain in Anglia when the electronics company he worked for left the country. This last has embraced the new world order with something like religious fervor, changing his name, his clothes, and his personality to match his idea of the country yokel he delights in being. The people of this town leave their doors unlocked at night

Intertextuality is another difficult term to define; Graham Allen acknowledges this early on in his book on the subject, claiming that any attempt to identify a single essential definition would be doomed from the start (2). In general, Intertextuality refers to the idea that literary texts are interrelated and dependent on each other for interpretation ("Intertextuality"). An author doesn't create a literary work out of whole cloth, but rather adopts and adapts existing plots, methods, characters, and sometimes phrasing from existing works and literary traditions (Allen 11). There is some argument as to how much authorial intent matters, but Nünning seems to suggest that it does, as she accuses Barnes of downplaying intertextual elements in *England, England*, claiming that they are a

“typical feature” of much of his previous work (15). I believe that Barnes has indeed retained this feature, but has concentrated on forging his most direct intertexts among the sections of *England, England*, rather than linking to external texts.

Some intertexts of *England, England* only connect between two sections. For example, in *England*, Martha recalls a childhood memory of working a puzzle of the counties of England. This is an important memory for her, because of its connection to her father; he would often hide a piece from her, only to “find” it once the rest of the puzzle was completed. His departure from her life coincides with the vanishing of a puzzle piece, and young Martha assumes that he had gone to look for it (it is never clarified whether he took the piece with him, or if it was simply a coincidence). In *Anglia*, this memory is recalled during the summary of what happened during England’s reversion to a pastoral state; part of this change is marked by an abandoning of the county system, and the adoption of the older divisions of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy as provinces, a system which Martha notes is much easier (Barnes 254). Taken alone within *Anglia*, this reference seems like a simple, practical observation by the cynical Martha; it is only by referring back to the use of British counties in *England* that the reference takes on full meaning.

Lists, however, play an important role in all three sections of *England, England*. During Martha’s trip with her parents to the Agricultural Show in *England*, she finds herself satisfied by the “calm organization and . . . completeness” (Barnes 9) of the list of prize categories. The booklet containing the list becomes a treasured keepsake that resurfaces in *Anglia*, where it is dismissed by the planners of the village fête (255). Perhaps the most prominent list appears in **England, England*, in the form of the “Fifty

Quintessences of Englishness” (86), a compilation of characteristics that upscale vacationers identified as being essentially British. The list is used by the Project in the development of everything from attractions to menus, and the manipulation and distortion of these forms a large part of the novel. Lists crop up again in *Anglia* in the form of the local gazette, which compiles a number of lists for the reader. Martha diligently reads listings of feed costs, competition results and market pricing of crops, taking comfort in their regularity and simplicity. The obtuse nature of these lists, using archaic units of measurement and pricing, recalls the Agricultural Show listing which, as a child, she enjoyed without necessarily comprehending (9). In this instance especially, a reader would have difficulty appreciating the overall importance of lists within the narrative without having the previous texts to draw upon.

Religion also becomes an itertext of the novel, specifically in the form of a variant of the Lord’s Prayer which Martha recites as a child in *England*. During morning assembly at school, Martha switches the words of the prayer with her own version, a habit which lands her in hot water when a conspiracy of classmates causes her transgression to be revealed. Her subversion of the words of the prayer stems from Martha’s lack of belief in the higher power she is supposed to be exalting. Years later, in **England, England*, the alternate words of the prayer come back to Martha after an encounter with a Project employee who has come to identify completely with his role as Dr. Johnson. She takes to visiting an abandoned and overgrown church on the Island to get some solitude and consider her life since dethroning Sir Jack. Her ruminations lead her to conclude that the variant prayer is no less true than the original, echoing not only her lack of childhood faith but the philosophical underpinnings of the project itself; the

prayer and church become more important than what they originally represented. This theme reaches closure in *Anglia*, which opens with Martha observing Jez Harris clearing the local churchyard of overgrowth. The words of the variant prayer return in reference to her neighbor's apparent apathy towards religion, and are identified as "just another pretty verse" (Barnes 267) no more meaningful than the original. Without the earlier references, the phrase used would likely still be identifiable as a variant on the Lord's Prayer, but the reader would lack full understanding of their importance to the scene.

Another important theme recalled in all sections of *England, England* is an incomplete understanding of history. As a child, Martha absorbs history by way of a chant her teacher leads. The teacher, Miss Mason, calls out a year, and the children are expected to recite back an important historical event that took place in it; for example, "1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings" (Barnes 11). The pattern of recitation varies, sometimes beginning with an event asking for a date, and sometimes using an unexpected rhyme ("Guido Fawkes caught alive") to prompt the students to remember the year ("1605"). The children display a rote ability to match events with years, but we are given no sense that they truly understand these events.

This situation is recalled in **England, England* when Dr. Max's team interview a 49-year-old man who, as noted above, responds to prompts in a similar fashion. He demonstrates knowledge of the year in which the Battle of Hastings took place, but appears to have no real knowledge of what occurred apart from someone being shot in the eye. The subject is similarly vague on other historical events he is asked about, displaying barely a surface understanding of historical events in the forming of his own nation.

This theme of shallow historical awareness seems strongest in *Anglia*, in which not only is history poorly comprehended, but willfully invented. Jez Harris delights in making up stories, myths and rumors to make the village seem more authentic, taking special pleasure in misleading any researchers who might visit. The village decides to hold a fête, but as their records are not wholly accurate there is uncertainty as to whether they are reviving an old tradition or inventing a new one. In fact, the entire world seems to share a myopic view of the past; in the wake of the Project's popularity, people outside of Britain have more or less forgotten that England used to be a place distinct from England, England. In each of these cases, the ignorance of history would be interpretable by a reader, but would again lack the punch that is carried by their repetition in each section of the novel.

It would seem that Nick Bentley is correct in asserting that each section of *England, England* is written in a distinct style that sets it apart from the others. These sections, when considered as individual texts within the larger artifact of the novel, display a number of intertextual elements that rely for their interpretation on similar elements in the preceding sections. This leads me to believe that Vera Nünning is being overly dismissive in her claim that the book contains very little evidence of intertextuality; when considered as above, intertextuality is as prevalent as we would expect. However, this raises a further question: Barnes has clearly done his research in terms of postmodern theory, and would undoubtedly have come across relevant discussion of intertextuality, which is so prevalent in modern literature as to be almost redundant (Allen 183). Why then would Barnes avoid the kind of outward-looking intertextuality that Nünning is looking for?

Works Cited

- Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print. The New Critical Idiom, gen. ed. John Drakakis.
- Barnes, Julian. *England, England*. New York: Vintage International, 2000. Print.
- Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice*. London: Routledge, 1980. New Accents, gen. ed. Terence Hawkes. *Northern Illinois University Library*. Web. 25 Apr. 2010.
- Bentley, Nick. "Re-writing Englishness: imagining the nation in Julian Barnes's *England, England* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*." *Textual Practice* 21.3 (2007): 483-504. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 14 Mar. 2010.
- Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print. The Basics.
- Cuddon, J.A., ed. *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 1999. Print.
- Dyer, Richard. *Pastiche*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- "Elegy." Cuddon 253-55.
- Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- "Illusion." Cuddon 412.
- "Intertextuality." Cuddon 424.
- Nunning, Vera. "The Invention of Cultural Traditions: The Construction and Deconstruction of Englishness and Authenticity in Julian Barnes' *England, England*." *Anglia* 119 (2001):58-76. *julianbarnes.com*: 1-28. Web. 12 Mar. 2010.
- "Pastoral." Cuddon 644-49.
- "Post-Modernism." Cuddon 689-90.
- "Realism." Cuddon 728-33