

From the Actual to the Possible: Cosmopolitan Articulation of Englishness in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*[❖]

Cheng-Hao Yang

ABSTRACT

Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* (2005) critiques the nationalistic particularism of English identity and offers the possibility of reconfiguring Englishness. An institutionalized reading of the novel would draw the reader's attention to the issues of racism and miscarriages of legal justice, and most reviews conform to these readerly expectations. I would argue that this novel works on the deconstruction of the total and totalized English identity, and this deconstruction is coupled with a cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness to facilitate ethical relation and solidarity between the two "unofficial Englishmen": Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. The deconstruction of the English identity does not discredit the value of national identity, but it turns away from a totalized national identity. In *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Paul Gilroy asks, "... what critical perspectives might nurture the ability and the desire to live with difference on an increasingly divided but also convergent planet?" (3). A cosmopolitan articulation of national identity could be a response to Gilroy's question, as it will shift the focus of the discussion on Englishness from the actual—the entrenched, static and prejudiced national identity, to the possible—the ethical engagement, and the productive relatedness of existent differences in the singularity of each subject. In *Arthur & George*, differences do not constitute the obstacle between the two main characters, but rather the very reason for Arthur to reach out toward George.

KEY WORDS: Englishness, Julian Barnes, *Arthur & George*, ethical relation, cosmopolitanism

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Cheng-Hao Yang, PhD student, English Department, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan
E-mail: chyang2008@gmail.com

從現況到可能： 朱利安·拔恩斯《亞瑟與喬治》中 世界主義想像的英國身份

楊承豪*

摘 要

朱利安·拔恩斯於 2005 年出版的《亞瑟與喬治》批判國族主義式的英國身份，提供我們重新檢視與想像英國性的可能。一般制式化的閱讀大多著重於此文本中種族歧視和法律無法伸張正義的議題，而大都數的評論也的確迎合這般「讀者文本式」閱讀的期待。本文論點為《亞瑟與喬治》解構獨霸式的英國國族身份，並透過世界主義重新想像英國性，將身份解構轉變成倫理的關係，而整本小說所要探討的，即是亞瑟與喬治二位均非「正統英國人」之間的倫理關係。解構英國性並非輕估國家身份的重要性，而是要抗拒一種獨霸式的國族主義身份。在《後殖民的憂鬱症》一書中，保羅·吉爾羅伊問道：「在現今越來越分歧但也愈加同質的世界，什麼樣的批判性觀點能夠培養和異己共存的能力和慾望？」一個世界主義式的國家身份想像不僅能夠回應吉爾羅伊的問題，也能將對英國性的討論，從現況中根深蒂固、停滯和帶有歧視的國家身份主體，轉向到被重新賦予可能的倫理關係，思索每個主體獨一性中差異性的連結。在《亞瑟與喬治》中，差異並未造成二個差異性極大主角之間的障礙，相反地，差異奠定了亞瑟和喬治之間倫理關係的基礎。

關鍵詞：英國性；朱利安·拔恩斯；《亞瑟與喬治》；倫理關係；世界主義

* 楊承豪，國立臺灣師範大學英語研究所博士班學生。
E-mail: chyang2008@gmail.com

You and I, George, you and I, we are . . .
 unofficial Englishmen.
 —*Arthur & George*

In an age when globalization has almost reached its apex, the concept of national identity has been problematized and subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Nation, conceived of by Benedict Anderson as an imaginary community founded on a sense of simultaneity created by modern printing and communication technologies, has ceased to be the sole reference point of identity in the intense flows and exchanges of people, information, and commodities. The nation's command of people's allegiance is partially dissolved, and people's affiliation has become multiple. Yet, to say that nation has withered into inertia, or even oblivion, is a simplistic account of the present geopolitical context. The "auto-immune" reaction to the terrorist attacks on American cities on September 11, 2001, the subsequent attacks on some European cities, and the resultant "wars on terrorism" have prompted the resurgence of nationalism, the reassertion of dominant national identity, and a series of xenophobic confrontations. The Euro-American states manipulate the discourse of nationalism to discriminate against and exclude non-citizens on the basis of identitarian differences, among which race and religion stand out as conspicuous markers. Policies on immigration are tightened, national frontiers erected, and appeals are made to the distrust of the racial other. Racial discrimination and exclusion and religious intolerance in the United States and Europe are carried out in the name of managing the risks posed by terrorist attacks.

Under this geopolitical context, the nation has become a totality, and nationalism turned into a restrictive binary ideology that separates us and them, citizens and non-citizens. Englishness, as a national identity, is a discursive construct embedded in power relations. We have witnessed the evolution of the discourse of Englishness from a post-war and post-imperial nostalgic rural imagination, through the subsequent Thatcherite racial exclusion of the "swamping" others, to the post-Thatcherite multicultural constitution of the English identity during the second half of the twentieth century. Due to the political and cultural negotiations carried out by the immigrants, post-war England has been gradually characterized by heterogeneity and hybridity, and since 1980s there emerged the call for a

liberal multiculturalism proclaiming openness and inclusiveness. At the dawn of the new millennium, however, accompanying the collapse of the Twin Towers, the liberal and multicultural Englishness is thrown into crisis, as the suspicion of and xenophobic violence against other racial and ethnic groups have spurred the resurgence of an essentialized and exclusive nationalist identity.

Read in a way that is relevant to the post-September 11 context, Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* (2005), with its setting in the Edwardian period, critiques the nationalistic particularism of English identity and offers the possibility of reconfiguring Englishness. An institutionalized reading of the novel would draw the reader's attention to the issues of racism and miscarriages of justice, and most reviews conform to these readerly expectations. I would argue that this novel works on the deconstruction of the narrow and exclusive discourse of essentialized Englishness, and this deconstruction is coupled with a cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness to facilitate ethical relation and solidarity between the two "unofficial Englishmen": Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. National identity is still important, but we should turn away from a totalized national identity that throws up insurmountable hurdles in the relation with the other. In *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Paul Gilroy asks, ". . . what critical perspectives might nurture the ability and the desire to live with difference on an increasingly divided but also convergent planet?" (3). A cosmopolitan articulation of national identity could be a response to Gilroy's question, and it will shift the focus of the discussion on Englishness from the actual—the entrenched national identity, the static and prejudiced perspective, the ontological conception of identities, to the possible—the ethical engagement, or the productive relatedness of existent differences in the singularity of each subject, of the postcolonial other who have settled in England and who are continuing to arrive. In *Arthur & George*, differences do not constitute the obstacle between the two characters, but rather the very reason for Arthur to reach out toward George.

Englishness in Crisis: Paradox, Alterity, and Hybridity

What has emerged from the postmodern intervention into the discussion of identity is that it is very much a product of invention and construction, an

entity of performative nature,¹ thus subject to intervention and reinvention. The “official” version of national identity is constantly met with resistance and demands for negotiation from those whose claim to this identity is denied. In the instance of English national identity, the negotiations have involved disrupting the entrenched representation of Englishness and challenging the validity of the laws of the *ius soli*, blood, and race that have regulated the discourse of identity, so that one can rethink the contours of Englishness from a new and flexible perspective. As John McLeod points out, rethinking Englishness requires “replac[ing] ‘uniform Englishness’ with something more heteroglot and untidy, [and] embracing Englishness in terms of historical flux rather than in terms of the stasis and petrification of English heritage” (9). This suggests that Englishness, far from being a stable entity, is inscribed in an identitarian vortex of ambiguity, if not confusion, between Englishness, Britishness, and (postcolonial) otherness in the post-imperial era. To conceive of Englishness as founded on historical continuity, racial and cultural purity, and enclosed ontological boundaries is reductive and problematic, as the “cultural sedimentation” (Connolly 194) of Englishness is impregnated with ambiguities, alterity, and paradoxes through the long history of imperial expansion and encounters. Thus, to think about Englishness in post-imperial England is to recognize the heterogeneous and the “heteroglot” constitution of this national identity, that is, the traces of the (postcolonial) other within the construct of Englishness. Simon Gikandi, in *Maps of Englishness*, raises a critical question: “[H]ow do you read black subjects and their experiences as important generative agents in the formation of a modern English culture when the most forceful ideas and ideals on English identity insist on the intrinsic and racial purity of Englishness?” (51). To recognize and respond to the irreducible alterity of the black subjects, one needs to explore the

¹ To say that identity is inscribed in performativity does not mean that it is like a garb one can choose to put on or take off at will, or a performative act one chooses to present at one’s choice. It means that identity is not a fixed category, that it is shaped and scripted in a social process of power struggles, ideological manipulations, and cultural influences. As Judith Butler, in *Bodies that Matter*, points out, “Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. . . . [P]erformativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the forces of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance” (95).

dynamics of paradox and alterity embedded in the spectrum of Englishness so as to unsettle the totalized discourse of Englishness rooted in the established interpretations of racial purity, cultural authenticity, and nostalgic attachment to the English countryside.

In the 1950s and 60s, the English state produced a discourse of Englishness rooted in the English countryside² in a climate of postwar austerity and post-imperial “melancholy” (to borrow the term from Paul Gilroy). With the loss of the British Empire that used to rule over a significant portion of the world, the English identity that had been invested in the imperial expansionist outlook of Britishness³ had evaporated, and this loss, both of imperial control of former colonies and imperial/national pride, had prompted a nostalgic retreat back to the English countryside in search of a compensatory substitution of identity. The return of the rural basis for Englishness is derived from the fact that “Englishness has, for centuries, been linked to romantic pastoralism” (Berberich, “England” 170), and this link to the “shrine” of the English countryside, the heart of the English experience, provided the English people with the possibility, or rather the illusion, of “[imagining] the permanent and the underlying” (Aughey 84) in their quest of self.

This loss of imperial control and imperial/national grandeur, coupled with an anxiety permeating the country caused by the presence of postcolonial others at the heart of the former Empire, contributed to the rise of “a new nationalism” that was “previously unheard of” in England (Schnapper 206). This nationalistic discourse of Englishness promulgated an identity of insular

² In *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity*, Ian Baucom has investigated thoroughly the intricate complexity in the connection between Englishness and English space, by examining the writings of John Ruskin, E. M. Forster, C. L. R. James, and V. S. Naipaul. The English space—the architecture and the spirit associated with it—laid claim to the essence of English identity both at home and in the overseas empire, where the English architecture and the cricket fields were seen as possessing the power to create order in the colonial space and to “civilize” the colonized.

³ According to Krihan Kumar, Englishness and Britishness were for a long time undistinguishable (see *The Making of English National Identity* 1-17). Britishness was usually conceived of “as a global identity, and the power, influence, and authority associated with a world role” (Webster 3). In the imperial period, the English people took great pride in seeing their national identity (Englishness) as synonymous with a universal identity (Britishness). But with the end of Empire, the independence of former colonies, and devolution in Scotland and Wales, the idea and ideal of Britishness were bankrupt, and the English people fell back on their English identity. Curiously, Gordon Brown wished to revive the ideal of Britishness for the contemporary Britain, yet his speech reads more like a revived rhetoric of liberalism. See transcript of the speech, entitled “The Future of Britishness,” delivered to the Fabian Society New Year Conference on January 14th, 2006.

ontological boundaries, and this logic served to enact the restrictive policies on immigration, including the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and the 1971 Immigrant Act (King 21, 73). The manipulation of the insular discourse of Englishness further resulted in a series of acts of civil unrest and xenophobic violence in the 1950s, ultimately culminating in the 1958 Notting Hill race riots, largely caused by the incapacity of the English state to recognize and offer citizenship to the former colonial subjects who had been displaced from their native lands and come to the metropolises of the former Empire.⁴

The geographical loss paralleled the loss of the imperial history, which was an important source of identity construction for the English people during the imperial period. In the course of imperial expansion, the local history of England had been elevated to the grand narrative of imperial history and assumed a teleological paradigm for the native histories of the colonized people, as D. A. Washbrook remarks, “The narrative structures through which [imperial] history was told privileged hierarchies of significance and teleological forms of reasoning” (602). The imperial history is founded on the concepts of order, rationality, and teleology that belong to the epistemology of European historiography, and on liberalism and humanist values vital to English social and political thought. At the center of this imperial historiography is a view of England as undertaking the mission of civilization: the paradigm of imperial history would be installed, and English spatial order and administration implanted in the unruly colonial space to integrate the colonial subjects into the continuum of English/British history. Yet, the meta-narrative of the imperial historiography disguised the fact that it was founded on a teleologically hierarchical structure in which the colonies were presented as lagging far behind, if not excluded altogether. The façade of the architecture of imperial history was destroyed in the crumbling of the Empire, and the subsequent tides of national independence of former colonies. In a practical sense, the English people had lost the control of the imperial history, and thus their history, as Steven Connor points out, “[a]fter the Second World War, Britain seemed progressively to lose possession of its own history” (3).

In the much quoted passage from Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*,

⁴ We witnessed the resurgence of nationalistic rhetoric in England after the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks in the United States and London, respectively, and this time hostilities were directed toward the Islamic immigrants, as the Islamic others were seen as suspect enemies harboring the intention to destroy the liberal and democratic values embodied in the English way of life.

Whiskey Sisodia says, “The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so *they dodo don't know what it means*” (343; italics mine). When the English people started to realize what their history meant, they saw their history dethroned, and the Britishness that had been written into the heart of the imperial history had dwindled to parochial Englishness with the collapse of Empire. As they thought they had lost the command of imperial history, they simply severed imperial ties,⁵ as if the division between Englishness and Britishness were clear-cut, as if the imperial history and the national history of England could be decoupled easily. What was at work was a mechanism of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, or inclusive exclusion, to use Giorgio Agamben’s term, through a cunning manipulation of the discrepancy between the more limited and privileged identity of Englishness and the more expansive geographical and cultural framework of Britishness. The “schizophrenic Englishness” (Head 124) is diagnosed by Ian Baucom as a “trick” to strategically assert imperial identity and to withdraw from the imperial identity of Britishness into the niche of Englishness:

Its conservators could save Englishness by insisting that the empire had little or nothing to do with England, by defining imperial space as something subordinate to but quite different from English space, and by identifying the empire’s subjects as persons subordinate to but quite different from England’s subjects—by identifying these as *British* spaces and *British* subjects: a solution that manages the neat trick of allowing England to simultaneously avow and disavow its empire. (6; italics original)

But to what extent is it possible to distinguish British history from English history? To what degree is it justifiable to discriminate a colonial subject

⁵ Paul Gilroy remarks that “[O]nce the history of the empire became a source of discomfort, shame, and perplexity, its complexities and ambiguities were readily set aside. Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten” (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 90). He diagnoses an “inability” to “face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and mood that followed the end of the empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige” (ibid). What is needed to deal with this inability that arises because of guilt in the first place is “to transform paralyzing guilt into a more productive shame that would be conducive to the building of a multicultural nationality that is no longer phobic about the prospect of exposure to either strangers or otherness” (99).

endowed with British subjecthood from a colonial subject seeking English citizenship? On the other side of “schizophrenic Englishness” is Englishness as a site of incommensurability, as Robert Young argues, “[f]or the past few centuries Englishness has often been constructed as a heterogeneous, conflictual composite of contrary elements, an identity which is not identical with itself” (*Colonial Desire* 3). This English identity “which is not identical with itself” resonates with Caryl Phillips’ observation that “England has become half-English” in the article “The Kingdom of the Blind.” The excess of Englishness overflows the construct of the English identity. Far from being “fixed and singular,” Englishness is “protean and multiple,” even “oxymoronic” (Reviron-Piégay 5). The English identity cannot be perceived as a totalized or totalizable system; it is simultaneously about Englishness and its postcolonial otherness, about attachment to England and to the territories formerly under British sovereignty, or, in Baucom’s words, about “a global beyond that was also an imperial within” (5). English identity is always haunted, disrupted, and disarticulated by the traces of postcolonial otherness lurking within the English subjectivity. It is simply impossible to conceive of Englishness in isolation, as Englishness, Britishness, and postcolonial otherness have been intertwined closely. Englishness conceived of in isolation is a broken image, an eclipsed picture, and only by bringing into view the heterogeneous otherness—the Scottish, the Welsh, the Northern Irish, and the black, the Caribbean, the Indian, etc.—can we see Englishness in a fuller view. In this sense, Englishness is inscribed in the blurring of English, British, and the colonial history, in the ambiguity of English, British and other native subjectivities, and in the hybridity of English and other cultures related to the former Empire.⁶

If Englishness is best seen in its ambiguity and alterity, heterogeneity and heteroglossia, it can be readily valued as “a translatable identity,” “a global identity into which others could always translate themselves” (Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* 3). Translation cannot be understood as the equivalent exchange of logos, or seamless appropriation of one language into another; on the contrary, it involves a certain degree of untranslatability, as foreignness always haunts the translated text. A translatable English identity is

⁶ In Hanif Kureishi’s novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the narrator says, “My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, *almost*” (3; italics mine). This “almost” denotes Bhabha’s idea of “almost but not quite,” and resonates with the concepts of “blurring,” “ambiguity,” and “hybridity” discussed here.

not one that homogenizes the alterity of the other, but one that fleshes out the flexibility and capacity of the English identity. As a translatable identity, a mutual process takes place: Englishness was translated into Britishness, which accommodated the colonial subjects, while the colonial subjects also translated their alterity into Englishness. In this process, alterity was introduced into the system of the English identity. The intervention from all sides into the “spaces of alterity” (Gikandi 7), into the interstices between metropolitan and colonial “temporal conjunctures and disjunctures” (49) can be powerful acts to crack open the insular space of English history and the ontological boundaries of Englishness, to reinvent English identity.

In the post-war and post-imperial period, Englishness was a site full of tension and contestation not only because of the inner paradox but also the exterior challenges posed by the people of color settling in the land of England. Through the prism of paradox and alterity, a more complicated vision of Englishness may be refracted with the intervention of ethnic writers. Englishness is not a “still” of the English countryside; it is a dynamic montage of multiplicity, heterogeneity, and hybridity. The “parallax view” that reveals an “insurmountable parallax gap” inaugurates an epistemological shift” (Žižek 4), demanding us to approach Englishness from another perspective, a perspective that cannot be synthesized into the focused view of the official version of Englishness that shows only the image of the countryside. The parallax view unfolds the traces of the otherness of the postcolonial subject that have always already been constitutive in the making of the English identity, and it also reveals the hybridized nature of Englishness and English culture. Hybridity should not be seen simply as a blending of different identities and cultures, nor as the “assimilation” of ethnic groups into the dominant culture. Instead, hybrids of identity and cultures “mark the history of survival within relationships of unequal power and domination” (Lowe 138). Hybridized Englishness is characterized by the process of ethnic writers and artists rewriting Englishness, and it can be seen most conspicuously in the rise of ethnic writers who can claim a dominant position in the scene of contemporary English literature. The novels of Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Zadie Smith, Caryl Phillips, and Hanif Kureishi represent the daunting challenges that have disrupted the imperial historiography, the ontological subjectivity of Englishness, and the hegemonic relationship that have structured the dominant and the minority social positions, and their

different narratives have contributed to the re-imagining of what Englishness could be. They write their own history and story in the land of England and rewrite the traditions and canons of English literature. Bruce King points out that there is a major change in “subject matter and sensitivities” in English literature in the second half of the twentieth century: “If the nation seemed to be withdrawing into a little England of post-imperial dreariness and irritation, having a diminished relationship to Europe and the United States, or fragmenting into micro-nationalisms, the new immigrants made English literature international in other ways than it had been during the Empire” (1). The immigrants’ presence in, contestation of, and contribution to English culture have remapped the contemporary landscape of Englishness: “After the mid-1980s, it was impossible to keep to the image of England as a nation of white people and their culture with some exotic immigrants. That England was over” (King 127). The defamiliarization of English identity and culture wrought by the ethnic writers embodies the “spaces of alterity,” giving rise to the “internationalization” of Englishness with the end of a parochial England.

The post-war hybridized English culture is seen as a process and phenomenon of “internationalization” by Bruce King.⁷ King prefers “internationalization” to either “postcolonial,”⁸ “postnational,”⁹ or

⁷ King, Bruce. *The Internationalization of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

⁸ The postcolonial approach falls short of addressing the identitarian vortex in post-war England because it presumes a dualistic mechanism of resistance and “has lost touch with the great migration of the world’s people”: “Rather than the peasants revolting against globalism, people came to England in search of publication, education, better jobs, more secure lives, or adventure. They are part of the globalization of the economy, communications, transportation, education, and culture, not rebels against it” (King 5). The postcolonial approach that has reified into a simplistic dichotomous framework is inadequate to theorize the transnational flows and multiple allegiances that characterize post-imperial England and the present age of globalization.

⁹ Dominic Head points out that postnationalism emerges out of the dialectic between the countryside discourse of Englishness and the attempt to reconfigure the English national identity (118). The postnational vision for Englishness is questionable because nation is always a problematic concept in the English social and political discourse. In its history of conquering the neighboring islands and colonizing overseas territories, England has sublimated itself onto larger intra-national and inter-national forms in its modern history—the Great Britain, the British Empire, the Commonwealth, and the United Kingdom, so the connection between the English nation and English identity has created much ambiguity and confusion. If nation is problematic as a concept and a category with which to conceive of English identity, how do we conceptualize English identity in a “postnational” framework? On the other hand, in the contemporary theorization of nation states in the age of globalization, nation is still considered a vital category with which to deal with the border-crossing of people and the flows of capitals, information, and commodities. According to Étienne Balibar, it is not that borders have disappeared altogether, but that borders are “vacillating”: “[B]orders are becoming the object of protest and contestation as well of an unremitting reinforcement, notably of their security

multicultural approach¹⁰ to describe English literature and culture. This internationalization ties in with a cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness, which is the subject for the next section, and it suffices to say here that this internationalization does not seek the revival of the universal liberal humanistic values invested in Britishness; nor does it give up the concept of nation. The ethical nature of the cosmopolitan articulation of the English national identity lies in disrupting the totalized and totalitarian system of national identity by responding to the alterity of the postcolonial other. The project of reinventing Englishness would be unsatisfactory if it were only about exposing the paradoxes and alterity within this discourse, which would turn otherness and alterity into semantic rhetoric. The discussion of the cosmopolitan self requires the act of approaching the other by opening itself to difference and alterity without homogenizing the other within the economy of the same. A cosmopolitan self works, firstly, toward a recognition and celebration of differences, and, then, the formation of an ethical relation with the other beyond the nationalistic discourse.

A Cosmopolitan Articulation of Englishness

English society has emerged as increasingly diversified and hybridized, and the concept of Englishness has undergone an excess of revision and re-imagination through the incoming immigrants' contestation of English culture and identity over the decades. In light of the inadequacies of the postcolonial, postnational, and multicultural approaches to theorize the contemporary English identity, a cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness emerges as a strong discourse to envisage "alternative forms of belonging and

function" (92). To claim the invalidity of the nation state and the advent of a postnational phenomenon is another simplistic way of envisaging too promising a future for the conceptualization of Englishness, particularly in the post-9/11 and post-7/7 context, in which national borders are tightened.

¹⁰ Multiculturalism, cultural diversity and difference are catchwords of neoliberal democratic politics, and the emphasis on identitarian differences within the multicultural identity politics not infrequently leads to indifference among the various social groups, and, worse still, to the hegemony of divided identity to which their group members are subjected. The greater emphasis on identity difference and loyalty has dissolved the prospect of solidarity among the social groups. And in most multicultural societies, the dominant groups maintain political and social power under which they allow the minority groups to exist as long as they abide by the prescribed laws and social norms. In other words, differences and singularities degenerate into being the instrument that the dominant groups use to govern the diverse social groups. The politics of multiculturalism is plagued by the limitations of reified differences that throw up hurdles in the relation with the other and by the subjection of minority groups to the dominant social disciplinary power.

definition of identity” (Connor 3). Calhoun draws our attention to the immense cosmopolitan potentiality in contemporary Britain: “Britain was a center of the 1990s boom in talk of cosmopolitanism . . . [because] it evoked multicultural Britain versus monocultural English, Scottish, or Welsh national identity” (431), and “because English was increasingly the world language, because it had joined the EU without losing its special relationship with the US, because it was a major financial center, and because its former Empire gave it unusually strong connections around the world” (432). The legacies of the Empire and the intensified transnational flows brought about by globalization have moved English society beyond the provincial project of national unity and identitarian uniformity, and facilitated the social conditions for a cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness. Englishness is no longer inscribed in binary nationalistic politics, and the praxis of identity is reoriented, as Homi Bhabha has seen it: “The new cosmopolitanism has fundamentally changed our sense of the relationship between national tradition and territory, and the attribution of cultural values and social norms” (“The Manifesto” 38). The English national identity in the post-imperial cosmopolitan context is stripped of its ethnic prestige and nationalist insularity, and opens to new forms of social relation with the (postcolonial) other.

The cosmopolitan articulation of a national identity is built on the seemingly uneasy oxymoronic relation between the national and the cosmopolitan, the latter of which is usually taken to refer to some aloof, abstract, and elite intellectual universalism. It should be pointed out, however, that while cosmopolitanism is against nationalism, particularly the xenophobic nationalism that demonizes and excludes strangers and refugees, it is not antithetical to the idea of the nation.¹¹ Cosmopolitanism and nation overlap to a great extent, which suggests the immense potentiality in the cosmopolitan articulation of national identity.¹² Calling herself a cosmopolitan (15), Julia Kristeva conceives of “nations without nationalism,” as inspired by her reading of Montesquieu (1689-1755): a nation is “a space of freedom and dissolved in its own identity, eventually appearing as a texture

¹¹ For a picture of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in the history of ideas, see Pheng Cheah’s *Inhuman Condition*, pp. 20-29.

¹² The word articulation is used in both senses of the word: unity/connection and expression. Thus, a cosmopolitan articulation of the national identity designates the connection of the cosmopolitan self and the national identity, and the expression of the national identity through the cosmopolitan self.

of many singularities—confessional, linguistic, behavioral, sexual and so forth” (32). A nation should quit its addiction to “the cult of origins,” (2) and a nation without nationalism is a “transitional” and open-ended nation where commonalities are sought in the serial differences in identities. Thus neutralizing the seemingly antagonistic bonds between the national and the cosmopolitan, Kristeva sees the national space as the intersection of divergent and irreducible singularities, as the “transnational or international position situated at the crossing of boundaries” (16).

This crossing point between the national and the cosmopolitan corresponds to Thomas Paine’s (1737-1809) idea of a universal humanistic founding of nations, as he writes, “The true idea of a great nation is that which extends and promotes the principles of a universal society; whose mind arises above the atmosphere of local thought, and considers mankind of whatever nation or profession they may be as the work of the Creator” (qtd. in Delanty 42). Thus, a nation is founded on the ideals of universal brotherhood, not on discrimination and alienation. The Italian political thinker Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72) also advocates a “cosmopolitanism of nations” (Recchia and Urbinati 2), which suggests the idea that the nation is not an end in itself, but an important means to achieve cosmopolitan humanism. As he says, “the end is humanity; the pivot, or point of support, is the country” (58). Commenting on the aporia of exclusionary nationalistic politics in twentieth-century Ireland, Declan Kiberd observes, “A national entity is, as W. B. Yeats found, a glove placed over the hand with which we reach out to hold the world” (66). For Kristeva, Paine, Mazzini, and Kiberd, the nation is not envisioned as an enclosed entity with insurmountable boundaries that fend off a larger solidarity among human beings, but an interface where the encounter of trans-national differences takes place. What characterizes the relationship between the local and the global, the national and the cosmopolitan, is the impetus of the nation to reach out for connections with the larger world.

For both Homi Bhabha and Kwame Anthony Appiah, the cosmopolitan is situated in the local. Bhabha’s “vernacular cosmopolitan negotiation” is carried out on the “border—narrower than the human horizon [. . . , the] space that somehow stops short (not falls short) of the transcendent human universal, and for that very reason provides an ethical entitlement to, and enactment of, the sense of community” (“Unsatisfied” 42). Vernacular cosmopolitanism dwells on the “border” as the site of connection, and it attempts to create a

cosmopolitan self that is unrestrained by entrenched cultural and racial roots without renouncing cultural belonging. For Appiah, “rooted cosmopolitanism” spells out the local-cosmopolitan nexus in which cosmopolitanism is simultaneously “within” and “beyond” the local attachments: “A cosmopolitanism with prospects must reconcile a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality” (*The Ethics of Identity* 223). One’s identity is not formed out of nowhere, and it is equally impossible for one to adopt no identity at all. But the identity politics practiced by nationalist, feminist, or the Black movements tends to impose a rigid and homogenous form of identity and identification. The essence of identity, instead of essentialized identity, is embodied both in one’s inseparable attachments to a specific history, nation, and community, and in the relational experience with people of different cultural backgrounds. In Bahbha’s “vernacular cosmopolitanism” and Appiah’s “rooted cosmopolitanism” which designate flexible and plural belongings to and connection with places, identities, and communities, the ethics of identity lies in the freedom for one to create and re-create a self in relation to collective identities.

A cosmopolitan articulation of national identity is to be seen not only in the recognition of diversity, but more importantly it is embodied in the “related[ness]” of differences (Delanty 73), in “a more active engagement with the irreducible value of diversity within sameness” that goes beyond the liberal concept of “tolerance” (Gilroy 67). A cosmopolitan self is empowered with the capacity to reinvent the category of a national identity, and with the ability to form an ethical relationship with the other. A cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness would be seen in this light in its rejection of *the actual*—the essentialism of whiteness, the postcolonial dualistic mechanism of resistance, the neoliberal postnational simplistic solution, and the multicultural indifference toward essentialized differences. The cosmopolitan articulation of the English identity does not simply transcend the local structures of immediate concerns, interests, practices, aspirations, and identifications of people; instead, it “enter[s] into these modalities, stretching them a little here and ennobling them a little there” (Connolly 196). What is ethically exigent is “to inspire more participants in each religious and metaphysical tradition to come to terms respectively with its comparative contestability and to explore creative lines of connection to other orientations” (195-96). Thus, the cosmopolitan English identity is situated in “a reality of

(re)attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance” (Robbins 3), and in the negotiation between the imperial/global and the national/local. Englishness should be reconceived in the *possible*—the potentiality of the “relatedness” of existing and more potential differences in the singularity of each subject, of the (postcolonial) other who have settled in England and who are continuing to arrive. Agency, active participation, and productive engagement are the constitutive elements of this new configuration of the English national identity.

The issue of Englishness has been a major point of contestation and investigation for postwar and post-imperial writers in England across the racial and ethnic spectrum. While the ethnic writers have committed themselves to the task of negotiating the discourse of English identity, the white writers, such as Graham Swift, Peter Ackroyd, Ian McEwan,¹³ and Julian Barnes, are also engaged in the task of opening and reconfiguring the once provincialized Englishness.¹⁴ Julian Barnes “seriously” investigates the discourse of Englishness in his satirical novel *England, England* (1998), in which he exposes “the constructed nature of national feeling” (Head 121). The British entrepreneur Sir Jack Pitman launches an ambitious project of building a miniature theme-park Britain on the Isle of Wight with “quintessential” things that can best represent English character and values—replicas of Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament, Stonehenge and Hadrian’s Wall, Harrods,

¹³ In an interview with Milan Kundera, McEwan reflects on the “smallness” and “bigness” of Englishness:

Kundera: . . . You see, if you’re English, you never question the immortality of your nation because you are English. Your Englishness will never be put in doubt. You may question England’s politics, but not its existence.

McEwan: Well, once we were very big. Now we are rather small.

Kundera: Not that small, though.

McEwan: We ask ourselves who we are, and what our position in the world is. We have an image of ourselves that was formed in another time. (“An Interview with Milan Kundera” (1984))

In *Saturday* (2005), McEwan portrays an intruder into the home of a white middle-class neurosurgeon, an intruder who would be called a “terrorist” in the post-9/11 climate. Through this intrusion and “encounter,” McEwan raises the issues of the representation of the “terrorist” and hospitality toward the stranger, the other. Can the intruder be called a terrorist? How has the war in Iraq influenced the way the English people see themselves and the other?

¹⁴ In the article “Kingdom of the Blind,” Caryl Phillips makes the comment that “White British writers have continued to write about Britain without seeing any black faces, and the responsibility to represent a multiracial Britain has continued to fall on the shoulders of non-white writers” (*The Guardian*, 17 July 2004). This observation may not be completely accurate, as this paper intends to show that the white writers are also involved in representing “black” people and remapping Englishness.

Manchester United Football Club, the Tower of London, and the white cliffs of Dover, etc (86-88). This fictional representation seems too ready an adaptation of Jean Baudrillard's theories of simulation and hyperreality and Benedict Anderson's idea of the selection and construction of cultural and identitarian authenticity for the nationalist project.

Unlike *England, England*, *Arthur & George* is not tarnished by obvious allusions to postmodern theories. In this novel that juxtaposes the lives of two "unusual" Englishmen though a mix of the subgenres of the historical novel, detective story, courtroom drama, and biographical chronicle, Barnes deals with the issue of Englishness in a more sophisticated way. In alternating chapters, a tale of opposites is told in Barnes' creation of the two diametrically different characters of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji in terms of their racial origins, personality, and social participation—George is of Parsee background, a reserved and pragmatic solicitor with a modest reputation as the author of *Railway Law for the "Man in the Train,"* while Arthur is imaginative, outgoing and athletic, and is the world-famous creator of Sherlock Holmes. As the crimes of animal mutilations are reported in Staffordshire, the police *believe* George is the criminal without finding convincing evidence. What they do instead is to fabricate evidence that influences the court in its decision to sentence George to serve a prison sentence of seven years. During George's prison term, the mutilation of animals continues, and public outcry precipitates the early release of George in the third year. To "have [his] name back," George writes to Arthur for help. Seizing the chance of realizing his detective skills as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur accepts the task, though his efforts do not come to complete success.

As a critical intervention into the reinvention of English identity, *Arthur & George* demands an ethical reading grounded in a cosmopolitan articulation of English identity, an ethical reading calling for our attention to Barnes' sophisticated exploration of the alterity and ambiguity constitutive in the making of Englishness and the cosmopolitan potentiality of the English identity embodied in the relatedness between Arthur and George. Despite its Edwardian setting and "the form and texture of the Edwardian novel" (Holmes 23),¹⁵ *Arthur & George* resists to be read either as a historical novel

¹⁵ Frederick Holmes shows that this Edwardian setting is "synonymous in the collective literary imagination with innocence and social stability" (22), and that *Arthur & George* is characterized by

about a racial conflict plaguing Edwardian England, or a text that dramatizes and drums up a racial issue from the Edwardian period to teach us a political lesson about racism in contemporary multicultural English society.¹⁶ Barnes' decision to reach back to the Edwardian period and revive Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji is *ethically* informed—through the “story of racial prejudice,” Barnes intends to deconstruct Englishness, investigate the ethical relation of self and other, and explore the cosmopolitan aspiration of English identity. A cosmopolitan approach toward the novel does not deny that *Arthur & George* is about racism, but a parallax view would shift the focus of the novel to the relation between Arthur and George, and to how this relation reconfigures the contour of Englishness, as Arthur's intervention in the juridical case of George and his bonding with the latter have advanced the deadlock of the discussion on racial politics and enclosed identity to the stage of cosmopolitan potentiality. This cosmopolitan aspiration recognizes the irreducible differences in English identity in the first place and sees these differences in a productive relatedness in the formation of commonalities that is not dictated by the discourses of nationalism and identity politics. In this novel, we see very diverse cultural and ethnic elements infused in both Arthur and George that reshape the parameters of Englishness, and Arthur's cosmopolitan humanist touches of personality in his interactions with George inaugurate a paradigm shift of the discourse of Englishness from one of insularity to one of cosmopolitan openness.

Most reviews of the novel seem to have responded to Barnes' remarks that *Arthur & George* is a contemporary story of racial prejudice, and their discussions are restricted to the theme of racism as the latent cause for the unfair charges against George. But an *institutionalized* racist reading risks being politically correct by prescribing *the* way that this novel should be interpreted. In his review of this novel, Robert Winder writes about the theme of “a classic post-Victorian miscarriage of justice with a racist/imperialist undertow.” Vanessa Guignery makes the observation that “*Arthur & George* introduces a new topic which had not been dealt with by the author before:

“the form and texture of Edwardian novel”—“generally slower pace, greater density, and more formal prose rhythms” (23).

¹⁶ In an interview with Xesús Fraga, Barnes says that “I don't want to write a novel that only happens in the past; I'll write a novel with that story and then a contemporary story of racial prejudice” (135). See Fraga 134-47.

racial prejudice” (131). The reviews that subscribe to racial politics disclose the fact that the English society is largely plagued by institutionalized racism, that “Britain is now two entirely different worlds, and the one you inhabit is determined by the color of your skin” (Rushdie 134), but they are mired in the liberal multiculturalist politics of unbridgeable reified differences, without moving beyond the dichotic framework of the “two” worlds of Britain. In addition, using the discourse of race and racism leads to an *institutionalized* and *structural* reading—racism is the structural problem dividing a multicultural society, and it could and should be identified as the leading cause of violence and injustice whenever one reads a literary text with a depiction of conflict between racially different people. An institutionalized and structural reading relegates this literary text to the category of texts that deal with racism without exploring its singularity and potentiality as a *literary* text. To approach the issue of Englishness from a racial point of view serves to epistemologically reinforce the racial citadel of Englishness because pinpointing racism as the root of the violence against the racial other only accentuates the fundamental racial difference. An alternative re-imagining of English identity is hardly available since the outcome is usually *either* exclusion *or* appropriation of the racial other. In either case, the concept of hegemonic English identity remains enclosed and totalized: the racial other is to be respected, but when racial conflict arises, segregation or exclusion has to be executed. Thus, a racial approach leads to nowhere other than being trapped within the insular boundaries of Englishness. An alternative vision, a parallax view, a cosmopolitan imagination, is urgently needed to advance the discussion toward an ethical relatedness with the other.

In Barnes’ portrayal of both George and Arthur as “unofficial” Englishmen, we witness disarticulation of Englishness caused by the irruption of alterity and differences within the category of this national identity. Barnes’ depiction of George creates much ambiguity in his identity as an Englishman, and this ambiguity not only frustrates the normal representation of the English image, but also disrupts the ontology of the English subjectivity. In the first place, George holds an unwavering faith in his identity as an Englishman. In the critical moment of his encounter with the issue of identity in his childhood, George finds that the attachment to his birthplace provides him a pivotal point for the reference of identity, as shown in the Vicar’s “catechism of Englishness” (Cavalié 354) with his son:

“George, where do you live?”
 “The Vicarage, Great Wyrley.”
 “And where is that?”
 “Staffordshire, Father.”
 “And where is that?”
 “The centre of England.”
 “And what is England, George?”
 “England is the beating heart of the Empire, Father”
 [. . .] (20-21)

This passage reminds us of Stephen Dedalus’s meditation on his identity in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and here George does not seem to doubt that England is his home, as this concentric geometry gives him a geographically and structurally firm sense of attachment to the land of England; nor is he troubled by the colonial anxiety straining the relationship between Britain and India. This faith remains unchallenged even when his father intends to tell George about the honorable Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji, of Parsee background, who was elected to Parliament for the Finsbury Central district of London on July 6th, 1892, as George protests to his father, “But I am not a Parsee, Father,” thinking to himself that “[h]e is English, he is a student of the laws of England, and one day, God willing, he will marry according to the rites and ceremonies of the church of England” (51). His faith in England and in his identity as an Englishman is further strengthened by his commitment to his study and practice of the English law, which he considers as “his second home,” and which brings order, coherence, and stability to his life. The English values of logic, rationality and linearity that he finds in the study and practice of law are also embodied in the railway service which he admires: the railway service provides “a smooth ride to a terminus on *evenly spaced* rails and according to *an agreed timetable*, with passengers divided among *first-, second- and third-class carriages*” (63; italics mine). One feels George’s unusually strong faith in his English identity, and this representation unsettles the very privileged image of Englishness. But this frontal challenge to English identity runs the risk of reinforcing the ontological boundaries of Englishness. To say that George identifies himself completely as an Englishman would mean that he is appropriated into the system of the same: The ontological structure of the English identity holds, and his alterity is dissolved. Barnes is subtle enough to see through this trap and portrays a

George who claims his identity as an Englishman, and yet whose irreducible alterity forms an irruptive force in the ontological system of Englishness. One salient example from this novel shows that George insists on his last name being pronounced in the Parsee way relentlessly on several occasions (105, 124, 148): His last name Edalji should be pronounced as *Aydlji*, not *Ee-dal-ji*. Even though the Anglicization of the pronunciation of his Parsee family name would make him more English, George refuses to accept it, and he does not think having a Parsee name pronounced in the Parsee way would make him less English.

The ambiguity in Barnes' portrayal of George is further registered at the moment when Arthur says to George that “[y]ou and I, George, you and I, we are . . . unofficial Englishmen” (268). George is at a loss to interpret what Arthur means by both of them being “unofficial Englishmen.” He never questions his English identity, though he refuses to Anglicize his family name. Why does Arthur say he is not an official Englishman? On the other hand, Arthur himself is an “official” Englishman, indeed the very representative of an Englishman, but why does he consider himself an “unofficial” Englishman? George's sense of perplexity continues when he comes to think about the discrepancy between Arthur and himself in their Englishness. How do they stand on an equal footing as Englishmen? Through Barnes' attempt at exposing the non-English elements in the construct of the English identity by exploring “the spaces of alterity,” we witness the porosity of identity in the figure of George.

Having explored the immanent ambiguity of English identity through George, Barnes goes to the other extreme, using one of the most revered English gentlemen, Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, to un-found the myth of Englishness. In his lifelong career, Arthur has come to be the very core of Englishness itself, embodying the “quintessential” values and virtues of the constitution of Englishness—liberalism, athleticism, courage, patriotism, sympathy, magnanimity, and humanism. Yet, while assuming the privilege of representing the English identity, Arthur also disables the very definition of Englishness, as his English identity flows upon the subterranean currents of numerous non-English identitarian elements. His family background and religious upbringing are very un-English: “Irish by ancestry, Scottish by birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits, Arthur became English” (28).

Here, one is reminded of Gikandi's discussion of William the Conqueror,¹⁷ and Barnes' highlighting of the heterogeneous elements of Arthur's Englishness—Irish, Scottish, and Catholic—deconstructs the very core of national identity the English people take great pride in. This deconstruction does not invalidate the concept of an English national identity; instead, it leads to open-endedness in the articulation of national identity based on serial differences.

The quintessential values of Englishness are embodied in the image of the gentleman, and these values, as depicted in the English literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that abounds with gentleman figures, seem to be tailored for Arthur. The immanent connection between the Englishness and the gentleman is drawn by Berberich: "The term 'gentleman' is not only generally used in conjunction with the adjective *English*, but *gentleman* has come to be appropriated as a symbol for quintessential Englishness" (*The Image* 12; italics original). The quintessential values inscribed in the figure of gentleman include the epithets of "civil, civilized, courteous, cultivated, gallant, genteel, gentlemanlike, honourable, mannerly, noble, obliging, polished, polite, refined, reputable, suave, urbane, well-bred, well-mannered" (8), and Arthur can claim to represent all of these English gentleman values. But Barnes does not portray Arthur as an absolute and faultless English gentleman, and this slightly less than perfect portrait does not compromise Arthur standing as an English gentleman in this novel. We see Arthur's weakness in his extra-marital affair with Jean. If gentlemanliness signifies fidelity in marriage and infallibility in morality, Barnes' characterization of Arthur challenges the fixed and rigid definition of a gentleman as being a person of supreme morality. In Arthur's mental struggle, we see him still upholding the idea of English gentleman, as he is afraid he might make sacrilege of it: "As a doctor, he might find such a moment of weakness explicable; as an English gentleman, he finds it shameful and perturbing. He does not know whom he has betrayed the most: Jean, Touie or himself. All three to some degree, certainly" (206). Arthur's affair with Jean neither

¹⁷ Gikandi quotes the example of William the Conqueror (1028-1087) to illustrate the myth of an authentic and homogenous Englishness (25). William the Conqueror is seen as the founding father of England, but this "English" monarch spoke no English and was of French royal connection. He was even sneered at as William the Bastard, as he was the illegitimate son of Robert I, Duke of Normandy. Nevertheless, this founding figure of England—deficient in his English ability, coming from French royal blood, and illegitimate by birth—is no less than the full embodiment of Englishness, as most students of England have been taught.

discredits the concept of gentleman nor disqualifies him as an English gentleman—he is still respected despite this defect in his conduct, but Barnes’ depiction of Arthur’s involvement in the extra-marital affair demonstrates his intention, as is his deconstruction of the ontological totality of Englishness, to loosen the “national image” of the gentleman figure the English people value so dearly to show it is not a timelessly absolute and abstract ideal.¹⁸

The work of enlarging the capacity of Englishness to which George and the (postcolonial) other can lay claim is driven by Arthur’s cosmopolitan humanism. Arthur has traveled extensively and been exposed to people of different cultural and national origins; he also envisions a global cosmopolitan identity in the project of Empire building.¹⁹ Although cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century is often seen as “inextricably linked to the uneven development of capitalist globalization” (Agathocleous 3), as theorists such as Simon Gikandi, Tim Brennan, and Pheng Cheah observe, Arthur represents another aspect of the cosmopolitan imagination—humanist “transnational identification and an interest in abroad and cultural difference” (Nava 82). The universal humanism Arthur upholds comes close to what Gilroy espouses as “planetary humanism” (4), as it is distinguished from liberal humanism, which relies on the Enlightenment epistemology—the reason and autonomous self, a progressive framework of social development, and ultimately a universal prototype of man—the white European/English. The major problem with liberal humanism is that it has been “too occupied with morality *within* the nation-state” (Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots” 93; italics original). Its limited scope gives it the characteristics of being “small-scale, individualist, suspicious of big theories and sweeping solutions” (Davies 41). Thus, liberal humanism concerns a humanity within the jurisdiction of the white nation, forgetting that the rights they are entitled to matter only when the rights of the

¹⁸ In this novel, we do not see a sustained depiction of George as a gentleman; perhaps, the closest description can be found in the following passage: “He has a respectable moustache, a briefcase, a modest fob chain, and his bowler has been augmented by a straw hat for summer use. He also has an umbrella” (92). But this description has little to do with the qualities that make a gentleman. In Elsa Cavalié’s article, “‘Unofficial Englishman’: Representations of the English Gentleman in Julian Barnes’s *Arthur and George*,” she also focuses on the representations of the gentleman in Arthur. Thus, to include George in the discussion of the representation of the gentleman may not yield fruitful analysis.

¹⁹ Despite the criticism of imperial exploitation and violence, the British Empire makes possible the connection and encounters between different cultures within the imperial territory, giving rise to cosmopolitan humanism.

(postcolonial) other matter too (Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots” 93). However, its limited scope does not prevent it from assuming a hegemonic stance that dictates “global homogeneity” (93). As a result, liberal humanism fails to resolve the tension surrounding the encounters between the white English people and the postcolonial other, as they are “suspended in a limbo of a baffled disconnection” (Davis 43). On the one hand, it is a humanism for white people at the expense of colored people; on the other, when the postcolonial other fails to meet the prototype of the liberal humanist model, they are forced to lift themselves up to fit this model; even, the model is forced upon them. Thus, a good-natured philosophy is turned into a “kind of philanthropic tyranny” (Medalie 43), freedom into enslavement, equality into hierarchy.

In contrast, Arthur’s cosmopolitan humanism envisions a human solidarity that recognizes differences. While liberal humanism has unwittingly justified the exploitation and exclusion of the disadvantaged other on the basis of differences, cosmopolitan humanism reaches out toward the other precisely because of the series of differences existing among human beings. Differences do not make gaps and hurdles; differences serve as the interface for active engagement with the other. Without assuming a complacent and triumphalist gesture, cosmopolitan humanism is a *weak* humanism that attempts to remedy the presumptuous assumptions of liberal humanism, and seeks “a humanity [that is] capable of interrupting the liberal, Cold War, and exclusionary humanisms that characterize most human-rights talk” (Gilroy xvi). It is founded on a contingent and incommensurable communal bonding stripped of the total and totalitarian discourse of nationalism. It is committed to forming productive engagement with the other.

Arthur’s cosmopolitan humanism manifests itself in his “psychic, social and visceral readiness to engage with the new, with difference” (Nava 82), a *moral* readiness that responds to the singularities of the other without homogenizing them into the onto-epistemological system of identity and representation. The relatedness formed with the other is not so much “spatial” or nationalistic as it is “moral,” and “it is captured in the singularity of humanity everywhere, to which the subject relates morally” (George 70). This ethical relation with the other that disrespects boundaries dictated by a narrow version of nationalism ties in with Jacques Derrida’s idea of hospitality. Hospitality is ethics itself (*On Cosmopolitanism* 17), and it is very much

about the “manner” as it is about “ethos,” as Derrida argues that “[i]nsofar as it [hospitality] has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one’s home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners” (16-17). We have to approach hospitality from two levels: with the “manner,” we need to think how to conceive of hospitality, or rather unconditional hospitality, that answers to the call of the other; with “ethos,” we need to consider the existing systems of conditional hospitality—the practices of sovereignty, national identity, and social relation. For Derrida, unconditional and conditional hospitality is involved in the dynamic of antinomy. Unconditional hospitality intervenes in the determination of conditional hospitality by “announc[ing] itself as such only in the *opening of context*” (*Limited Inc* 152), that is, the opening of national identity and national boundaries. If we consider the problem of hospitality toward the other simply from the perspective of “ethos,” it would turn into a simplistic solution of tightening the control of borders, and the result would be to decide who to include and exclude. As in the novel, George and his family are bombarded with unfriendly statements, such as “You are not the right sort,” and “You do not belong here.”²⁰ There is a close connection between identity (“the right sort”) and ethos/countryside (“belong here”) in these sentences, and George feels a deep disappointment at the rural discourse of Englishness: “Any vague notions that the countryside was romantic were swiftly extinguished” (95). A hospitality based on “ethos” would create more social violence and division and a more exclusivist discourse.

In his engagement with the other, usually marginalized or disadvantaged, Arthur sees them as they are, recognizing their singularity and difference and forming an ethical relation with them. He helps them, not out of liberalist sympathy, charity, or religious doctrines, but out of his understanding of humanity, his ability to comprehend “the universality of our elemental vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other” (Gilroy 4). In this cosmopolitan outlook, Arthur grasps the universal humanistic bonding with Oscar Wilde and George. His relations with them are not founded on “the conditional laws of a right to hospitality” (Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism* 22), but on cosmopolitan humanism with an ethical responsibility toward the other.

²⁰ The two statements are similar to the two questions that were most often posed to the postcolonial other during the Thatcherite era: “Are you one of us?” and “Do you belong here?”

A conditional hospitality would manipulate the “facticity of difference” (Pitcher 2) of the other against them, while a cosmopolitan humanism would see the difference as the impetus, under the operation of which we reach out toward the other for connection. In this novel, most people see the other with “the all-encompassing ‘English eye’” (Hall 20), that is, they see both George and Oscar Wilde in their negative racial/ethnic difference that verges on stereotype and prejudice. For Anson, the chief constable, Wilde is queer *because* he is of Irish descent, and George is guilty *because of* his skin color. In Wilde, Anson sees only his vulgar Irish blood and his notorious homosexuality aestheticized by Wilde himself as the love that dare not speak its name. In George’s case, Anson unashamedly argues that “when the blood is mixed, that is where the trouble starts. An irreconcilable division is set up. Why does human society everywhere abhor the half-caste? Because his soul is torn between the impulse to civilization and the pull of barbarism” (339), and he further identifies George’s racial impurity as the cause for his allegedly effeminate personality, exophthalmus, unmarried status, the stifling of his sexual desires leading to perverse and criminal acts, and his intense social isolation (339-44). Thus, George’s Parsee background is misused to explain his “pre-programmed” biological and psychological abnormalities. For Arthur, it is a pure fantasy on the part of Anson that mixed blood and racial difference serve as the pretext for committing the crimes, a malign intention to use racial difference to create racial conflict.

If people see the postcolonial other with the prejudiced English eye, Arthur “unsees” its negative image. He adopts a parallax view to see differently. In his talk with Anson on Wilde, Arthur would not discredit Wilde’s Englishness and gentlemanliness simply because of differences in sexual orientation and ethnic background. Liberalist humanism would treat the difference as undesirable while the cosmopolitan spirit would seek commonalities out of the difference. Arthur is aware of the differences existing between Wilde and himself, but also recognizes the gentlemanly quality that they share, as he says, “I dined with him once . . . I found him a gentleman of perfect manners” (331). Through Arthur’s cosmopolitan humanism, Wilde’s image is not defiled. Arthur sees in Wilde the sense of humor, literary genius, and gentlemanliness.

Arthur’s engagement with George is equally productive, informed as it is with cosmopolitan humanism. In their first meeting, Arthur sees George

both in his “Oriental origin” and as a “professional Englishman” (330). Arthur is aware of the racial difference in George—“[P]reliminary inspection reveals that the man he is to meet is small and slight, of Oriental origin” (259), but this awareness does not automatically translate into racism, as it has in Anson; nor does it prevent Arthur from considering George as an English subject entitled to the same legal and social rights that he himself is entitled to. Arthur’s second observation reveals a different George: “A broad face, fullish lips, a pronounced dimple in the middle of the chin; clean-shaven. . . . His black hair is shot with grey, but this rather gives him the aspect of a thinking, cultured person” (260). This time, George’s difference is not measured against the standard of whiteness of skin color in a binary paradigm. If Anson refrains from or feels uncomfortable in the presence of the racial other, Arthur does not compromise his faith in cosmopolitan humanism and invites George to his wedding, an act that defies the limited scope of tolerance that people adopt in the business of dealing with people of different racial origins. Furthermore, undaunted by social criticism, he devotes himself to the task of cleaning George’s defiled name, although he knows well that he would be striking a serious blow against the English laws and the national identity that he embodies.

Arthur takes great pride in the Englishness he exemplifies, but he also explores the potentiality of this identity rather than being confined by its insularity. He is aware of differences between him and George, but the recognition of differences does not result in Arthur’s indifference or hostility toward George. The differences are the very reason that Arthur wants to reach out to George. Gilroy avers that “if we care about others who are not part of our political order—others who may have commitments and beliefs that are unlike our own—we must have a way to talk to them” (222; *italics original*). It is not possible to talk to them if we resort to a conditional hospitality based on exclusionary and provincial nationalism; limited conversation would ensue if we adopt a liberal humanistic stance. Arthur’s act of reaching out constitutes the ethics of the cosmopolitan relatedness of differences. It is an unconditional hospitality at work that attends to the irreducible alterity in the system of identity. Differences are not to be homogenized in a European philosophical system of the self and regime of representation in which the other is to be subjected to a dialectical subsumption of one’s subjectivity. The cosmopolitan relatedness of difference is a connection informed by the social participation

of people of active agency, as we have seen in the persons of Arthur and George.

Conclusion

The legacies of Empire and contemporary globalization have rendered Englishness a site where reconfiguration of national identity takes place. As there is a resurgence of racist violence targeting the racial other, particularly people from the Middle East, in the post- 9/11 and 7/7 period, this crisis creates a state of exigency in which we should examine and re-imagine what Englishness can mean in the present state. Reading *Arthur & George* in a way that is relevant to this context brings to our awareness the limitations of a national identity with enclosed boundaries and the urgency of the need for a cosmopolitan articulation of Englishness, an articulation that stresses the relatedness of differences rather than indifference and separation based on differences.

By reviving Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the very representative figure of Englishman, and George Edalji of Parsee background, Barnes draws our attention to the heterogeneous elements constitutive of English identity. Barnes creates a dramatic contrast between Arthur and George, and he then capitalizes on the ambiguity and hybridity in the making of Englishness that unsettle the entrenched interpretations of the discourse of English identity. But a more dynamic reading would not only celebrate their differences but also draw our attention to the ethical relatedness between them. Englishness is ultimately not inscribed in the homogeneous monoculturalism of English society, the dichotomy of self and other, or the indifference to differences, but a productive engagement of differences through cosmopolitan articulation of English identity, as exemplified in the ethical bonding between Arthur and George.

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