



Cornelia Macsiniuc*

Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences,
Ştefan cel Mare University of Suceava,
Universității Street 13, 720229 Suceava, Romania
e-mail: corneliamacsiniuc@yahoo.com

POST-TOURISM AND THE MOTIF OF REGRESSION IN JULIAN BARNES'S
ENGLAND, ENGLAND

Abstract

The present paper starts from the assumptions and concepts of Zygmunt Bauman, George Ritzer and Jean Baudrillard concerning the regressive nature of the act of consumption and its "conceded freedoms" (Baudrillard), which infantilize the consumer and ensure high social integration and control. Barnes's comic-satirical representation of the nation as theme-park may be interpreted in the light of the concept of post-tourism as a means of consumption (Ritzer), which encourages the preference for the replica and the simulacrum over the real and the authentic, as well as an inclination to playfulness, and which distinguishes itself from the traditional Grand Tour by its privileging of the pleasure principle over the reality principle. The touristification of historical memory accomplished in the extravagant project of "England, England," meant to compensate for and redress the country from its state of decline, is shown to rely on the harnessing of the pleasure principle in the service of rational instrumentality, with its principles of calculability, efficiency and control, which commodify even the experience of regression.

Keywords: Julian Barnes, *England, England*, post-tourism, regression, rationalization

Most approaches to Julian Barnes's novel *England, England* insist on its satirical lampooning of ideas of Englishness and nationalistic mythologizing which processes of commodification of national identity situate in an awkward relationship with the "truth" of history. The theme-park motif offers Barnes the suitable frame for the comic rehearsal of such typically postmodern issues as the success of the replica and of the simulacrum over the "real" thing, the irrelevance of authenticity in the process of (touristic) consumption, or the multiple ways in which identity may be narrativized and/or staged. I have argued elsewhere (Macsiniuc, 2013) that the postmodern concern with identity – both national and personal – in Barnes's novel is better grasped in the light of what Zygmunt Bauman calls the *tourist syndrome*, a complex of attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that define the "liquid" condition of modernity (cf. Franklin, 2003). Tourism is, for Bauman, not just one aspect of the processes of economic globalization – an expanding industry responsible, to a large extent, for the commodification of culture (cf. Macleod, 2006: 178) –, but a paradigmatic dimension in which postmodern identities construct and deconstruct themselves.

In Barnes's novel, there are two versions of this paradigmatic context, apparently set against one another, in which the issue of national identity, more precisely of quintessential Englishness, is

*Dr Cornelia Macsiniuc is Associate Professor of English Literature. Her research interests also include cultural and critical theory, postmodernism, utopian studies.

satirically explored. On the one hand, there is the completely touristified “England, England,” concentrated as a theme-park on the Isle of Wight, a project whose success depends on the underestimation of historical truth and knowledge and on the creation of consumers who are trained to “travel light” (Barnes, 1998: 203), in complete indifference to the burden of history, and to find “*jouissance*” in the “authenticity of the replica” (55). This touristic-patriotic project is “profoundly modern” in its privileging of the replica, as the “French intellectual” invited as a consultant insistently reassures Sir Jack Pitman, its initiator (53–56), and its modernity lies in the victory of the “Technicolor” world of spectacular representation over the “monochrome,” “plain and primitive world” of the original “Olde Englande” (55). The touristification of Englishness is a sign of modernity from yet another point of view: the “old-style nation state” (128), incapable of providing stability and economic prosperity, has been turned into “a pure market-state” (183), whose modern commercial practices have eliminated all the contradictions and drawbacks of declining, “dowdy and old-fashioned” England, previously perceived as “not really up with the cutting edge of the modern world” (182) and have restored it to a position of global prominence.

On the other hand, the last part of Barnes’s novel, “Anglia,” plays with the same theme of national decline and possible regeneration, but from a different angle, which also incorporates the element of touristification. The Old England which re-emerged on the main island through historical regression in the aftermath of the success of Sir Jack’s Island Project represents a return to a pre-industrial, pastoral version of the nation, in which a rural Golden Age has been revived – or rather invented. Barnes clearly speculates satirically on the “rural myth” traditionally associated with the core of Englishness, on the popular Romantic perception of national identity as connected with the countryside and its unadulterated values, the seat of the nation’s authentic self (cf. Smith, 1999: 264). In a comic tour de force, Barnes traces Anglia’s attempt to save the nation from the engulfing processes of globalization by taking a reverse course to self-sufficiency: the abandonment of the ideology of economic growth, power, influence, and moral superiority; the willed isolationism; the reversion to the old administrative division of the heptarchy; the assumption of the old name “Anglia” (Barnes, 253). On its own terms, this *calculated regression* could be seen as another cutting edge solution: “modernising patriots felt that it was the last realistic option for a nation fatigued by its own history” (*ibidem*). The “willed antiquarianism” (254) meant not only a return to picturesque thatched roofs, bicycling policemen, or the reintroduction of the stocks, but also an invention of traditions and memories, which, much as in the case of the Island theme park, constituted a similar suspension of belief in the truth of history and of concern for authenticity. The figure of Jezz Harris, the village farrier, mowing the church lawn with a scythe, is emblematic for the mock-idyllic utopia in the last part of the novel: he is, in fact, Jack Oshinsky, a junior legal expert with an American electronics firm who had found in England shelter from some global crisis (“the emergency”) and decided to “stay and backdate both his name and technology” (243). Anglia’s final “separateness from the rest of the globe and from the Third Millennium” (253) also involved the banning of “all tourism except for groups numbering two or less” (253), but its quaint antiquarianism attracted the curiosity of anyone charmed by the aura of “authentic” ethno-history. To the “disguised sipper and browser of retarded humanity” (243), Jezz would gladly offer spurious local knowledge, in a fake local accent, trading his made-up stories for a treat at the local pub and delightedly playing the yokel “whenever some anthropologist, travel writer or linguistic theoretician would turn up inadequately disguised as a tourist” (*ibidem*).

Barnes is thus splitting the nation’s image into two complementary comic fictional projections – the (post)modernized, theme-parked nation, with its “repositioned” myths, and the regressive-utopian Anglia, with its newly established “Fête” and its reinvented innocence –, placing both of them in the same frame of touristification as an emblematic tendency for the fate of national identity in the age of globalization. This double comic fantasy exploiting the sense of national decline and the anxiety of break-up brings to the fore the question of memory and its relation with identity. The uncertainty or fakeness (i.e. constructedness) of memories that go into identity building – both personal and national – is an issue that looms large in all the plot-strands of Barnes’ novel, with the character of Martha Cochrane, the “Appointed Cynic” in Sir Jack’s Island project, linking the two levels of experience in her attempt to understand the nature of her childhood memories. Her frustrating sense of the impossibility to go back to a “first memory,” which might well be an “artfully, innocently arranged lie” (Barnes, 4), is balanced by the dream-like memories of her childhood games, when her father would help her find the missing pieces from her Counties of England puzzle, rescuing

her from “desolation, failure, and disappointment at the imperfection of the world” (5): “her jigsaw, her England, and her heart had been made whole again” (6). Martha’s nostalgic quest for the sense of wholeness and completeness that her childhood games afforded has a comic analogue in the Project team’s efforts to assemble on the Isle of Wight the most representative icons of the national past and “quintessesences” of Englishness. The result is a touristic puzzle which forces the most heterogeneous elements into a falsely coherent and deceptively sharp image. The success of the whole undertaking conveys the idea that Englishness is no more than a fiction, a fantasy meant to compensate for the impossibility of grasping its “reality”; it is, in Nick Bentley’s Lacanian frame of reference,

an imaginary body onto which individuals can project their desires of wholeness, completeness and belonging; a space that momentarily removes the lack with which individuals are burdened by their move into the symbolic world of adulthood. (2007: 486)

The touristification of national memory in Sir Jack’s theme-park affords the relapse to the Imaginary stage characteristic of infancy, when the (false) perception of coherence and wholeness offers an intense sense of gratification. The “Island Experience” as a touristic project is calculated to gratify an imaginary, heavily sanitized version of Englishness, the consumption of which requires the tourist’s regression to an infantile stage of ignorance and dependence. The tourists are promised complete relaxation and spared any inconvenience that might impair full enjoyment and excitement. They are no longer exposed to the confusing bustle of places like “dirty Old London Town,” but “treated as the centre of attention” and offered a “more convenient, cleaner, friendlier, and more efficient” experience of what they “imagined England to be” (184).

In Barnes’s novel, the motif of regression links the theme of memory to the larger paradigm of the tourist syndrome. Just as uncertain memories cannot be accessed except as fantasies, so the touristic project on the Isle of Wight cannot re-present “real” history except in the gratifying form of a simulacrum, which, in the process of its consumption, eliminates the question of authenticity.

Tourism, in its postmodern form, is, according to George Ritzer, one of the new and most efficient “means of consumption,” alongside shopping malls, casinos, catalogue or television shopping, or cruise ships (1998: 117). Invoking Baudrillard and Bauman in his analysis of the contemporary consumer society, Ritzer examines the way in which “post-tourism,”¹ in its “Disneyified” form, operates on the basis of the general Weberian principles of rationalization: high predictability, efficiency, calculability and control (*ibidem*: 138 ff.). The fictional theme-park in Barnes’s novel displays the same careful calculation and elimination of all inconveniences: frustrating problems of classic tourism, such as “poor infrastructure, inefficient tourist thruput, inconsiderate opening hours – everything the traveller doesn’t need” (Barnes, 179), have been solved by cramming replicas of all significant touristic attractions on the Isle of Wight – a parody of postmodern time-space compression, in the service of consumer comfort. All the needs of the tourist must be anticipated and met (“Here even the postcards come pre-stamped” – *ibidem*); even the unpredictable English weather can be tailored by the Techno-Development department to suit touristic preferences. In spite of the extravagance and apparent riskiness of some of the Project’s items, the complete marketization of the Island ensured the full absorption and neutralization of anything that might impede the success of the investment: “Everything on the Island worked, because complications were not allowed to arise. The structures were simple, and the underlying principle of action was that you did things by doing them” (201-202). When the newly established utopian market state is threatened by criminal activities like contraband and – ironically – counterfeiting, the solution proposed by Martha Cochrane was to set up an “authentic (...) example of Heritage Action” (201), which offered “Premier Visitors,” for a supplementary fee, the simulated experience of an effective raid against smugglers, organized in one of the coast villages. The idea of re-training the real offenders for the better paid job of actor criminals was a skilful strategy of incorporating deviance and resistance and making them serve the profit-making imperative of the Project, the whole show of the smugglers’

¹ Ritzer draws on Maxine Feifer, Chris Rojek, and Alan Bryman in his use of this concept. Among the defining features of post-tourism advanced by these theoreticians are the increasing reliance on digital technology, the eclecticism of interests, the acceptance of the fact of its commodification, the element of playfulness (“playing at and with touring”), the preference for the simulacra and the hyperreal (Ritzer, 1998: 141).

seizure functioning also as a “[P]ublic chastisement” (217), signalling thus the integrative and neutralizing capacity of the system.

It is, of course, part of the comic intention of the novel to test this underlying hypothesis of perfect calculability by “falsifying” it: the hilarious incidents involving behavior which departed from the official script constitute an irruption of unpredictability which confuses the visitors and threatens the smooth working of the project. This is the case with the disturbances in the Band of “Mr Hood” and his “Merrie Men,” who start acting more in accordance with the “primal myth” and against its “repositioned” version, which had been tailored to fit contemporary visitors’ sensibilities. In the episode of the “Johnson regression” (217), the hired actor’s similar identification with the original character determined an outpouring of visitor complaints (208) – about his dress and smell, table manners, and distracting asthmatic gasping, and about the proverbial sullenness and irritability, the short temper and arrogance known to have defined the historical Dr. Samuel Johnson.

As anticipated by the Project team, considerations of historical or cultural accuracy in the devising of the theme-park were secondary in importance to the tourist’s sense of comfort and satisfaction. All contractual breaches had to be penalized and all transgressive or non-conforming tendencies had to be contained in order to provide a “calmly efficient” (182) environment to the visitors:

Sir Jack had also dealt swiftly with the subversive tendency of certain employees to over-identify with the characters they were engaged to represent. The new Robin Hood and his new Merrie Men had brought respectability back to outlawry. The King had been given a firm reminder about family values. Dr Johnson had been transferred to Dieppe Hospital, where both therapy and advanced psychotropic drugs had failed to alleviate his personality disorder. Deep sedation was prescribed to control his self-mutilating tendencies. (248)

Barnes satirical representation of the theme-park as a tightly controlled consumer environment recalls George Ritzer’s observation that there is practically no escape from this form of highly rationalized, “McDisneyified” form of tourism; even those aware of the standardized scripts imposed on them and seeking to evade them are ultimately caught in the system, as “those who profit from such activities rapidly McDonaldize any escape route from rationalization” (1998: 139). The highly integrative nature of the consumer society on the whole – for which tourism may be a metaphor, if we follow Bauman’s suggestion – consists not only in eliminating and annihilating any unmanageable irregularity or deviance in the system’s working, but in controlling the whole possible range of the consumers’ wants and needs. Several decades ago, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno were emphasizing the “ruthless unity” of what they termed the “culture industry” of advanced capitalist societies, which works by identifying, classifying, and organizing consumers:

Something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated. The hierarchy of serial qualities purveyed to the public serves only to quantify it more completely. Everyone is supposed to behave spontaneously according to a ‘level’ determined by indices and to select the category of mass product manufactured for their type. (Horkheimer, Adorno, 2002: 97)

This is also true for the contemporary leisure industry, and Barnes turns this aspect of consumerism into high comedy in his novel. For instance, the Project team’s careful consideration of the issue of “client choice” regards money spending in the first place. The options concerning the tourists in “England, England” are either the elimination of “any awareness of financial disbursement,” which the all-inclusive package tour affords, or encouraging spending (and “being seen to spend”) as a form of entertainment in itself, for which the special diamond-shaped Island Charge Card was devised (Barnes, 182). There is yet another category of prospective tourists, the “fiscally adventurous,” willing to deal with “the head-scratching complexity of real old English currency,” for whom the whole array of “farthings, ha’pennies, pennies, groats, tanners, shillings, florins, half-crowns, crowns, sovereigns, and guineas” are made accessible; compared with plastic money, it is “much more satisfying to feel the weight of a glinting copper coin against your thumb” (182–183). Spending ceases thus to be a rational, instrumental act, being either temporarily wiped out of the tourists’ consciousness or turned into a source of excitement, just as historical reality is turned into a source of touristic amusement.

The meticulous identification of possible client categories and needs and of gratification means for each of them reveals the double condition of the contemporary tourist as a consumer: motivated by the pursuit of freedom and autonomy, but being the object of scrutiny, calculation and control². To obscure the dimension of constraint which characterizes all consumer practices, the tourism industry, functioning, as has been shown, on principles of rationalization, must in fact create in the consumers a range of needs that passivizes them and transforms them into – to use a Foucauldian term – “docile bodies.” When Martha is asked for an opinion, during the interview for the post of Special Consultant, she assures Sir Jack that his “mighty Project” will work, because “no-one lost money encouraging others to be lazy. Or rather, no-one lost money encouraging others to spend well on being lazy” (Barnes, 47). Laziness is not meant here only as a state of aversion to the productive activities of work time; it may be understood as a state opposed to the more general condition of modern man, who seeks relief from the insecurities of a “liquid” world of permanent unpredictability and agitation, and this relief is most at hand in the pleasurable, effortless activities that “Quality Leisure” provides ready-made. What contemporary tourists expect from their holiday is, above all, the “escape from the hazards, confusions and uncertainties endemic to their daily life” (Bauman, 2001: 26). The safe environment of the pre-packaged holiday offers, first of all, “shelters of security and predictability”:

Adventures should be carefully planned to include a happy end, excitements sanitized and pollution-free, the ‘far-away from everywhere’ must be located no more than a car-drive distance from shops and restaurants, wilderness ought to have exits well mapped and signed.
(*Ibidem*)

This temporary withdrawal from the anxieties of everyday life into the carefully scripted and tightly controlled world of the theme park, with its well defined schedules and itineraries and its prescribed tourist behavior, has the same “hedonistic and regressive” nature as all consumer practices (cf. Baudrillard, 1998: 191). Consumer society works by encouraging irresponsibility and infantilism, as both Baudrillard and Bauman show. The semblance of free choice may gratify the individual’s sense of autonomy, but the freedoms of the consumer society are not won through rebellion or critical resistance; they are, in Baudrillard’s words, “conceded freedoms”: replying to Ernest Dichter’s argument that the task of advertising and of every project of sales promotion should be “to permit the consumer freely to enjoy life and confirm his right to surround himself with products that enrich his existence and make him happy” (qtd in Baudrillard, 2001: 12), he points out that

‘[t]o permit the consumer ...’ we must allow men to be children without being ashamed of it. ‘Free to be oneself’ in fact means: free to project one’s desires onto produced goods. ‘Free to enjoy life’ means: free to regress and be irrational, and thus adapt to a certain social organization of production. This sales ‘philosophy’ is in no way encumbered by paradox. It advertises a rational goal (to enlighten people about their wants) and scientific methods, in order to promote irrational behavior in man (to accept being only a complex of immediate drives and to be satisfied with their satisfaction). (*Ibidem*, 13)

Barnes’s *England, England* fictionalizes this idea of the cultivation of irrationality in the contemporary consumer: the setting up of the “England, England” theme-park as a business project, the profit expectation of which was based on the commodification of national memory and identity, presupposed efficient, co-ordinated and calculated rational action, carefully oriented towards procuring pleasure, not knowledge, for consumers. The Concept Developer’s reply to the objections of Dr. Max, the project’s “Official Historian,” concerning the freedoms that were to be taken with historical truth, evinces a definite program of infantilization: “Well, the point of *our* history – and I stress the *our* – will be to make our guests, those buying what is for the moment referred to as Quality

² Jean Baudrillard noticed this contradiction in his analysis of leisure time in its relation with work time (“The Drama of Leisure or the Impossibility of Wasting One’s Time,” in Baudrillard, 1998: 154); the structural equivalence between the two is visible in the “increasingly marked tendency towards the physical concentration of tourists and holiday-makers,” for instance.

Leisure, *feel better.*” (...) We want them to *feel* less ignorant. Whether they *are* or not is quite another matter, even outside our jurisdiction” (Barnes, 70). Jack Pitman’s misleading rhetoric, centered on the idea of magic and day-dreaming, is in fact endorsing this pragmatic approach – the discourse of irrationality is skillfully brought to the service of instrumental action:

‘What we want,’ said Sir Jack, (...) ‘is *magic*. We want *here*, we want *now*, we want the *Island*, but we also want *magic*. We want our Visitors to feel that they have passed through a mirror, that they have left their own worlds and entered a new one, different yet strangely familiar, where things are not done as in other parts of the inhabited planet, but as if in a rare dream.’

The contemporary theme-park experience is similar to any other consumer experience as far as this suspension of realistic and rational thought is concerned. Zygmunt Bauman insists on this cultivation of regressive attitudes that the “temples of consumption” (a term he borrows from Ritzer) engage in, showing, in similar terms, the magical, almost mystical, quality of this experience: a trip to any such temple of consumption is “like being transported to another world, rather than witnessing the wondrous transubstantiation of the familiar one, (...) not the ordinary world temporarily transmogrified, but a ‘completely other’ world” (2000: 98).

The encouragement of the customers’ hedonistic and infantile behavior relies, according to Bauman, on the natural regressive fantasies of security and shelter that we project in times of personal confusion and difficulty: “the search for a primal shelter is ‘the other’ of responsibility,’ just like deviance and rebellion were ‘the other’ of conformity” (*ibidem*: 213). In the gated, self-contained world of the mall, or the theme park, or the utopian island – all inspired from “images of the pre-natal womb and the walled-up home” (*ibidem*), outside reality, with its constraints, interdictions, and limitations, has little bearing. What is available in these spaces is the temporary reversion to a realm dominated by the *pleasure principle*, in which all responsibility falls to a prime gratifier of infant needs. Zygmunt Bauman’s Freudian interpretation of this phenomenon of regression peculiar to the consumer society is similar to Baudrillard’s argument: the pleasure principle is enlisted in the service of the reality principle, “harnessing the volatile, fastidious and squeamish desires to the chariot of social order” – quietly consolidating, therefore, social integration and conformity:

Consumer society has achieved a previously unimaginable feat: it reconciled the reality and pleasure principles by putting, so to speak, the thief in charge of the treasure box. Instead of fighting vexing and recalcitrant but presumably invincible irrational human wishes, it made them into faithful and reliable (hired) guards of rational order. (Bauman, 2001: 16)

The tourists’ anticipated state of historical ignorance, whose paradigm is infancy, which Sir Jack’s Project team relies on for the success of their theme park, invites comparison with the traditional Grand Tour. The latter involved an attitude of openness and curiosity towards alterity, the desire of knowledge and a conscious assumption of the risks attending the encounter with the Other. One of the functions of this educational institution was, according to Michèle Cohen, to dispel the “anxieties of effeminacy” (2001: 131–132), weaning the young Englishmen from the soft comforts of the home, where the tenderness of a mother’s care might pose a threat to developing masculinity. On this interpretation, the Grand Tour may be seen as a “rite of passage” marking the transition from the pleasure principle, associated with the maternal world of immediate gratification, to the reality principle, associated with the manly world of the Father, dominated by self-restraint and postponement of gratification. In Barnes’s novel, the modern theme-park strives to shelter the tourists from the anxieties of unpredictability and from the pangs of guilt caused by ignorance (by replacing knowledge with fantasy), and to return them to the pleasures of irresponsibility. Direct contact with the genuine Other is excluded; what visitors are provided instead is only spectacle and performance – even the real royal family, convinced to relocate on Sir Jack’s Island, are playing their roles as themselves.

The Royal Family, the top of the list of the “Fifty Quintessences of Englishness” – and “the country’s top cash crop” (Barnes, 144) – is the best comic illustration of the effect of de-responsibilization which accompanies the “touristification” of Englishness: the most effective

arguments used by the negotiating team in persuading them to move to the Island relied on the twin advantages of a financial arrangement and the freedom from their social and political duties:

There would be a fully modernized Buckingham Palace, plus, for retro weekends, Osborne House; there would be no criticism or interference, just organized adulation *ad libitum*; the Family would pay no taxes, and the Privy Purse would be replaced by a profit-sharing scheme; there could be no journalistic intrusion into their lives, since the Island had only a single newspaper – *The Times of London* – and its editor was a true patriot; boring duties would be kept to a minimum; foreign trips would be purely recreational, and dreary heads of state would have their visa applications refused (...). (*Ibidem*)

Trading their (eroded) symbolic authority in the crumbling kingdom for the leisure and pleasure of an indefinite holiday, the Windsors moved from the realm of the reality principle into a zone of consolatory unaccountability governed by the pleasure principle. The ambiguity of their status – at once beneficiaries and contractual servants of Sir Jack's extravagant touristic project – is analogous to that of consumers in general, whose irresponsible and irrational buying into escapist promises creates uncritical complicity and endorses a system which uses them. It is also in this sense that Zygmunt Bauman's insight about the alliance between the pleasure and the reality principles is true: in contemporary consumer society, "pleasure could be miraculously transmogrified into the mainstay of reality and (...) the search for pleasure could become the major (and sufficient) instrument of pattern-maintenance" (2001: 16).

The most explicit reference, in the novel, to the experience of regression and its peculiar nature in a consumerist context is, paradoxically, connected with Sir Jack Pitman himself. The high priest of the temple of consumption that he calls "England, England" is described as an elusive, multi-faceted being, generating contradictory judgments about himself. The identity of his character is as uncertain and fragmentary as the idea of Englishness that he is trying to market in his theme park; he is, at the same time, a bold businessman, the "archetypal transnational entrepreneur working in the modern global market" (Barnes, 57), but also a declared patriot, intent on rescuing England from its decline; a hardheaded realist, but also a dreamer, a visionary and an enthusiast; he is known "to profess an unfulfilled desire to learn the tango" (58) and is found out to indulge periodically in a regressive childhood fantasy as "baby Victor," nurtured and pampered like an infant in the house of "Auntie May." The rational, calculating, sceptical, and domineering businessman has turned pleasure into a monthly routine, purchasing it like any other commodity. The grotesquely magnified hyperreal simulation of the infancy scene, in the twelve meters by seven nursery, in which "a wooden playpen one and a half metres high and three metres square; and a pram two and a half metres long," a "vast pile of nappies," a "metre-high bottle of baby oil," and "the matching powder can" (153–154) build a Gulliverian telescopic perspective, suggests the effective extent of the rationalization and commodification of the whole experience. "Baby Victor" is treated expertly to an all-inclusive standardized package, which combines basic infant care with sexual services, and his satisfaction is measured by the "value for money" criterion: "Auntie May certainly knew how to do things. She'd taken some finding but it was worth every euro" (154).

This extended scene conveys the implication that, like touristic experience in general, the hedonistic quest for a state of total comfort and security – the reversion to the pleasure principle – cannot entirely escape the dictates of economic, instrumental rationality. The "alliance" between the pleasure principle and the reality principle that Bauman was speaking about turns out to be highly asymmetric. Seen in the terms of Baudrillard and his insights into the consumer society, Sir Jack's quest for pleasure, involving the body as the seat of desire and irrationality, presupposes an "investment of an efficient competitive, economic type":

The body is (...) reappropriated (...) in terms of a *normative* principle of enjoyment and hedonistic profitability, in terms of an enforced instrumentality that is indexed to the code and the norms of a society of production and managed consumption. In other words, one manages one's body; one handles it as one might handle an inheritance; one manipulates it as one of the many *signifiers of social status*. (1998: 131)

The experience of infant regression and the quest for instant gratification, as represented in this particular episode in Barnes's novel, involves, in fact, a double consciousness, which is also that of the "post-tourist": the latter derives pleasure from the simulacrum, while being aware of its fakeness and of the artifice, as well as of the circuit of economic exchange in which it is inevitably experienced. Post-tourists "almost delight in the inauthenticity of the normal tourist experience" (Urry, 2002: 12) and see the world as a stage, finding enjoyment in "the multitude of games to be played" (*ibidem*: 91). This double awareness, illustrated in Jack Pitman's staged regression, is also that of the child engaged in playing, absorbed in the fictional world of his game, but capable of making the distinction between the latter and reality. Freud was pointing out, in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," that this activity, which the child takes very seriously and on which he spends a considerable amount of emotion, is a significant source of pleasure, which he never fully gives up (1989: 437–438). The postmodern tourist's regression to the order of the pleasure principle is manifest in this inclination, noted by John Urry (2002: 91), to play the game of "being a child," accepting or assuming an infantile posture of dependence and helplessness as part of a larger script, setting the rules to what John Urry describes as "playing at being a tourist" (*ibidem*).

The regressive experience raises, by itself, the question of origin and authenticity. In the case of Sir Jack, the authenticity and truth of childhood memories is immaterial, just as the truth of England's history was irrelevant for the commercial success of his enterprise. The fabricated, simulated infancy that he plays at in Auntie May's house with the seriousness and precise calculation of the businessman is an analogue of the simulated, touristified history of England; there is something essentially infantile, of the nature of a childhood game, in the miniature replication of a whole country on the reduced plot of the Isle of White.

While we learn nothing about the childhood and origin of Sir Jack, except a series of reported rumours about his supposed "continental origin" (Barnes, 33), the character of Martha Cochrane is closely connected with the prominence of the motif of childhood. Martha displays, throughout the novel, an obsessive preoccupation with the nature and truth of her early life memories – from the feeling of safety in the presence of her mother to the emotionally traumatic memory of familial disunity – a personal history which has a correlate in the decline of Britain from unity and prosperity to imminent break-up. Martha constantly looks back, trying to determine to what extent memories can be trusted – she cannot establish if childhood memories are authentic or "processed"; at best, in the beginning of the novel, she knows she can engage in the same voluntary self-deception as a child playing at his game: "Because even if you recognized all this, grasped the impurity and corruption of the memory system, you still, part of you, believed in that innocent, authentic thing – yes, thing – you called a memory" (Barnes, 7). The intensity of her hesitation increases as she returns to "Anglia," and her uncompromising lucidity endows her with a sort of "negative capability," which allows her to embrace uncertainty and nostalgia without becoming depressive. In the last scene of the novel, in which the whole village celebrates the invented "Fête" with sincere joy, Martha is suddenly struck by the faces of the children and their expression of "such willing yet complex trust in reality" – by examining them, she has a revelation about herself, which gives the sense of a historical dimension of her identity:

As she saw it, they had not yet reached the age of incredulity, only of wonder; so that even when they disbeliefed, they also believed. The tubby, peering dwarf in the distorting mirror was them and wasn't them: both were true. They saw all too easily that Queen Victoria was no more than Ray Stout with a red face and a scarf round his head, yet they believed in both Queen Victoria and Ray Stout at the same time. (...) She, Martha, could no longer do that. All she could see was Ray Stout making a happy fool of himself. (264)

We must infer that her loss of this double capacity, of simultaneous belief and disbelief, associated with a child's capacity for playfulness, began in the aftermath of her termination by Sir Jack, when she confessed to Dr Max that she aspired towards "a recognition that life, despite everything, has a capacity for seriousness" (236). After years of cynical playing in Sir Jack's faithless game, she realizes that "[l]ife is more serious, and therefore better, and therefore bearable, if there is some larger context" (237). This larger context is supposed to provide transcendence, and the Appointed Cynic realizes that, above all, "seriousness" means the capacity for faith: "[a]n individual's loss of faith and

a nation's loss of faith, aren't they much the same? Look what happened to England. Old England. It stopped believing in things" (237).

Back in Anglia, not as a citizen, and not as a tourist, but as a "Permitted Immigrant" (250), Martha begins to lose her cynical disposition and learns that "[i]t was better to commune with the reality you knew; duller, perhaps, but also more fitting" (259) – life in Old England was definitely more healthy, stable and secure than on the "Island," even if more backward and less exciting. The country had begun to fade from the world's memory, owing to its willed insularity and the disappearance of tourist industries, and its former identity was now inadvertently associated with the theme-park Island, "England, England." Anglia was also a country in which the invention of memory occurred out of the natural necessity of a renewed, stable community, and not out of pragmatic calculations of profit-making. It is relatively difficult to decide if Anglia was, in fact, a utopia or a dystopia – we learn that Martha's village was "neither idyllic, nor dystopic" (256) – but it certainly was "a culture of voluntary austerity" (*ibidem*) – therefore one in which there is no longer a complicity between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. Barnes subdues the satirical tone in this part of his novel, introducing instead a combination of good natured humour and nostalgia – a kind of nostalgia, Nick Bentley comments, which has "the power to evoke longing for a lost Englishness whilst at the same time registering a suspicion towards the grand narrative on which that very nostalgia rests" (2007: 495).

It is clear, however, that this grand narrative is no longer capable of providing a frame: in the novel's final scene, Martha, sitting alone on top of Gibbet Hill, where she found solitude and quiet in the middle of the Fête, starts wondering:

Had there really been a gibbet up here? Had corpses swung while rooks pecked out their eyeballs? Or was that in turn the fanciful, touristy notion of some Gothic vicar a couple of centuries back? Briefly, she imagined Gibbet Hill as an Island feature. Clockwork rooks? A bunjee jump from the gallows to know what it felt like, followed by a drink with the Hooded Hangman? Something like that. (Barnes, 265)

For Martha, the older history of the place is as important as personal history, and the absence of certainty triggers, as it always will, the imagination. This is, ultimately, another form of regression, compensating for the frustrating lack of knowledge. History as it possibly was in England and history as it might be represented in the theme-park Island – both versions in this exercise of the imagination are placed within the frame of tourism. The novel's ending on this note, with Martha's imaginary touristification of historical memory, suggests the enduring power of this pattern of perception in contemporary culture.

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