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'Where do you belong?': De-scribing Imperial identity from alien to migrant

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Introduction: writing the post-colonial nation

> 'England,' said Christophine who was watching me, 'you think there is such a place?' … 'You do not believe there is a country called England?' She blinked and answered quickly, 'I don't *know*, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it.' (Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1996, 92)

Understanding the novel as a formative influence on the imagining of national collectivity, Timothy Brennan argues that 'it is especially in Third World fiction after the Second World War that the fictional uses of "nation" and "nationalism" are most pronounced.' He goes on to say that, following the war, English social identity underwent a transformation based on its earlier imperial encounters. Colonialism in reverse created 'a new sense of what it means to be "English"' (1990: 46–7). However, Brennan does not consider what changes have been wrought on that society, what reinventions of tradition have manufactured new Englands of the mind, alongside the pronouncements of newly forged nationalist identities in 'Third World' fiction. By contrast, Patrick Wright does this in some detail in *On Living in an Old Country*, where he makes an important if familiar point that is necessary to balance the vogue for Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as 'imagined community' (1991). Wright, considering post-war England, concludes that

> [people] live in different worlds even though they share the same locality: *there is no single community or quarter*. What is pleasantly 'old' for one person is decayed and broken for another. Just as a person with money has a different experience of shopping in the area than someone with almost none, a white homeowner is likely to have a different experience of the police … than a black person – homeowner or not. (1985: 237, original emphasis).

Perhaps more than any other, the nation that has been colonised in reverse exists at the intersection of these two viewpoints about the differentiated, conceptualised community – a new sense of not Englishness but Englishnesses: multiple imagined communities within and not across nations.

Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha argues that, contrary to the rhetoric of national selfhood that proclaims the homogeneity of a 'people', the nation 'is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference' (1994: 148, original emphasis). There is thus a tension between statements that refer to a past, pre-formed nation and to a (differently constituted) present nation. In post-colonial space, where a large plurality of communities are imagined within the nation, the cultural threat of difference shifts from the nation's exteriorities to its interiorities because the unified people invoked by the narrative differ from the diverse people addressed by it: 'the wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture … but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation' (Bhabha 1994: 164). Taking his cue from Anderson, Bhabha has also claimed to identify in cultural representations and narratives the nation's discursive position between polarised terms such as private/public, progression/regression, belonging/alienation, custom/power, order/licence, justice/injustice. For Bhabha, it is at the intersection of each of these pairs of conflictual articulations, not in their resolution, that the nation inheres. Arguing that the nation is also revealed in its margins, he proposes that a nation is less defined by its distinctions from an 'other' that is outside it than by narratives at the inward and outward facing boundaries between cultures and texts.

To take a further example, Edward Said has maintained in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) that the imposition of national identity is implicit in the domestic novel in its boundaries, exclusions, and silences – the Imperial interstices of English society that Said's contrapuntal reading can reveal by turning the narrative inside out, temporarily centralising its margins. Such emphases on borders, heterogeneity, and reading against the grain require analyses of national identity which move away from binaries of domestic and foreign, native and immigrant, belonging and alienation, and instead consider the people, cultures and discourses that cross or collapse these categories.

In his analysis of a black Atlantic culture, Paul Gilroy proposes diaspora as an alternative way of understanding modernity and cultural

identities (the term 'diaspora' was taken up by historians of Africa and slavery in the 1950s, although Gilroy says that its genealogy as a concept in black cultural history is obscure). He maintains that diasporic identities work at 'other levels than those marked by national boundaries' (1993: 218). Similarly, Stuart Hall argues that the contemporary significance of diaspora in the Caribbean can be apprehended through Lacan's theory of enunciation and its implications for identity. If the speaking and spoken subject do not coincide then 'identity' is therefore not an essence but a positioning in discourse, and that positioning, or representation, will itself be conditioned by the position spoken from. Hall adds to this Derrida's theory of meaning, which is always deferred as it forever disseminates along endless chains of signifiers: meaning is constantly *moving*. While not quite suggesting that everyone is now a migrant, Hall does believe that the post-structuralist theory of linguistic identity offers a new paradigm for viewing human identity as always moving, never arrived at, and therefore in some ways related to diaspora rather than a discourse of homelands and rootedness. Hall compares this with a traditional view of identity in the West, which sees it as self-evident and self-defining. A single, homogenous selfhood is replaced by a recognition of a disseminated heterogeneity and diversity: 'Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (1993: 400). Given this re-evaluation of identity, Hall argues that diasporic culture is instrumental in post-colonial formations wherever there is recognition of displacement, hybridity, colonial history, and creolised language. Consequently, Gilroy can conclude that

> Black Britain defines itself crucially as part of a diaspora. Its unique cultures draw inspiration from those developed by black populations elsewhere. In particular, the culture and politics of black America and the Caribbean have become raw materials for creative processes which redefine what it means to be black, adapting it to distinctively British experiences and meanings. (1987: 154)

Gilroy sees this model of identity opposed and preferable to those of national, 'racial' and ethnic absolutism (1987: 154–7). But in what language is such a change in self-definition conducted and what is at stake in a shift from a discourse that sees polarised identities (dis)located in either rootedness or rootlessness, belonging or alienation, to one that sees them characterised by relocations through oscillation, travel, diaspora and migration? This is a question I will discuss in the rest of this essay with

reference to prose writings concerned with India(ns) and England since Independence in 1947.

No direction home

> The whole point that made it impossible to give way, even to argue, was that we *couldn't* go Home. We couldn't become English, because we were half-Indian. We couldn't become Indian, because we were half-English. We could only stay where we were and be what we were. (Patrick Taylor, a Eurasian character in *Bhowani Junction*, by John Masters, 1983, 27–8, original emphasis)

The British frequently felt alienated in India, psychically distanced from those they were surrounded by, physically distanced from those they were emotionally close to. Their 'home' and 'people' were elsewhere, they did not 'belong' on the sub-continent, in the hostile climate and unfamiliar terrain under *The Alien Sky*, in the title of one of Paul Scott's early novels. They frequently clung all the more forcefully therefore to ideas of a national identity, whose characteristics were, unsurprisingly, defined and intensified by perceived differences from an Indian identity. Yet, Indian otherness in relation to a fully formed English national identity was, up until recent reconsiderations in Indo-Anglian fiction, described in terms of rootlessness, fragmentation and alienation. Which is to say that under the Raj the English were partly comforted in their psychical and physical alienation by metaphysical assertions on the historical and national homelessness of Indians. A common opinion has also been that, post-Independence, the British sense of Imperial and economic failure was projected on to migrating peoples, as aliens, immigrants, foreigners. What is clear in both instances, despite the contrary positions of the English in India and in England, is a straightforward contrast between those with homes, roots, nations, and those who are rootless, homeless, and alien – an opposition which has found a place near the centre of discussions of English and Indian difference.

Rabindranath Tagore once noted that there is no word in any Indian language equivalent to 'nation' but that this concept arrived in India with the British. In contrast, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in his study of patriotism and literature, argues that English patriotism 'intensifies upon that which, untranslatable to the foreigner, is comprised for us in a single easy word – Home'; a term which means not only 'family house' but 'place of belonging' and 'nation' (1918: 306). With the imposition of English rule and culture, in addition to the arrival of the concept of the

'nation', enshrined in the colonies as 'Home', Indian nationalist identity arose in response to British colonialism and therefore, to a considerable extent, to British nationalism, which always bolstered its hold in India by claiming to unify a fragmented country. It is the protracted reiteration of India as a self-alienated, divided country that has most frequently marked perceptions of an Indo-British national difference and also characterised British action in India (policies of division are well documented, from the British fetishisation of Hindu–Muslim differences in the eighteenth century to the splitting of Bengal at the beginning of the twentieth century). This process did not end with Independence and, according to Ashis Bannerjee, 'Partition seems to have driven very deep into the Indian political psyche the threat of further dismemberment' (1989: 284). Bannerjee also argues that successfully laying the blame for Partition at the feet of the English 'Divide and Rule' policy was a major triumph for the Nationalists, who pitted the idea of India's 'unity in diversity' against it. This was a particular feat of unification considering that Tagore had concluded, along with the British, that the greatest barriers to nationalism in India on top of a religious divide were the divisions and inequalities of caste within Hindu society (Tagore 1976: 66–7).

According to O. P. Bhatnagar, British colonialism created in India 'a psycho-pathological complex of racial, cultural, and moral crisis' (1985: 27). Bhatnagar ascribes this simply to the importation and imposition of Western ideas, institutions, and values. He argues that the colonial encounter provoked a response

> of caricature, sarcasm and satire, exposing both who refused to change as in *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* by Mulk Raj Anand, and who changed to be an underdog as in G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*. Caricatures of anglicized men and women have become a favourite with several post-independence Indian English novelists … showing the cultural inadequacy of the change. (1985: 35)

Yet, many of those Westernised Indians were also the most powerful individuals on the sub-continent. Nehru wrote in *The Discovery of India* that:

> India was in my blood and there was much in her that instinctively thrilled me. And yet, I approached her almost as an alien critic, full of dislike for the present as well as for many of the relics of the past I saw. To some extent I came to her via the West and looked at her as a friendly Westerner might have done. (1946: 38)

The aggregate of these examples suggests that to an appreciable extent the perception of the representative Indian as at best self-divided and at

worst a homeless and rootless outsider was established in a wide range of discourses, as here at the centre of Indian government at Independence, by the displacement of British colonial alienation.

Neither here nor there: alienation

In terms of the Indo-British relationship, the half-century since Independence has been a period of sundering, as India and Pakistan have been prised away from Britain, but also one of suturing, as Indo-Anglian or Indian English identities have been uneasily embraced or at least acknowledged. India has always figured in Englishness as one kind of defining difference to some degree, long before discourses of English national identity surfaced themselves. From this perspective, when national images of Englishness did gain wide currency in the nineteenth century, the importance of India to English identity lay in its status as imperial possession, as an immense proof of an increasingly problematic national accomplishment in the world.

Just as many commentators argue that the English founded and found themselves as an imperial nation in India, for Paul Scott it is in India that the English 'came to the end of themselves' (1976a [1973]: 3). Throughout *The Raj Quartet*, and particularly in the second volume *The Day of the Scorpion*, there is a repeated image of the British protected by their carapace – by their imperial history, their traditions and certainties represented by their white skins. Scott portrays this as a circle of Englishness, both containing and protecting the Anglo-Indians, and he has several of the characters either transgress or die within its circumference (usually figured as a circle of light or fire). By contrast, in Scott's final novel, *Staying On*, Lucy Smalley, last representative of Scott's colonials in the 1970s, feels her 'own white skin' is 'increasingly incapable of containing me, let alone of acting as defensive armour' (1978: 111). For Scott, this is the difference that developed between the 1940s and 1970s: a loss of the sense of imperial history containing English identity like a skin or protecting it like a shell. This gradual collapse of a similarly slowly established Englishness located in an imperial identity, which for Scott stems from the inter-war years and especially the rise of Gandhi's 'Quit India' campaign, is evident in many ways post-war. For example, in 1951 nearly sixty per cent of the UK population was unable to name a single British colony (Lawrence 1982: 69–70). On the other hand, a second point which is not incompatible with the first is that R. K. Narayan recorded on his visit to the UK in the 1950s that '[most] people

in England, especially those living outside London, were unaware that India was no longer a colony' (1990: 32) – and this at a time when Enoch Powell was planning India's re-conquest in order to resurrect England's greatness (Nairn 1981: 265).

In the 1960s India acquired a significant role in Euroamerican discourse only as the West's immaterial opposite. From the legacy of Huxley, Hesse and Isherwood, the British, from the Beatles to Iris Murdoch (for example, *Bruno's Dream*, 1969), sought enlightenment in India just as many of their ancestors claimed to export it there. But to most British people, the sun had set on not just the Empire but the Commonwealth too. At the end of the decade, the editorial of a special sixtieth anniversary edition of *The Round Table* lamented that

> [the] fading of the vision of Empire-Commonwealth as an instrument of British world power has brought with it the progressive attenuation of interest in the Commonwealth within Britain herself. *Aut Caesar, aut nihil*. To many people in Britain the Commonwealth now seems a useless, indeed an inconvenient pretence. It is no longer a source of wealth and power … As for the British, the urban society of the rich, white northern hemisphere appears more elegant, more amusing, above all, for the time being, more profitable than those far-away lands of which we remember less and less. The creeping indifference of Britain herself to the world community, which she founded, is perhaps the greatest danger that the Commonwealth has to face. (Howard and Jackson 1970: 379)

This is similar to the sentiment conveyed by Scott's *The Raj Quartet*, which laments the indifference of the English 'at home' to their own Empire even in the 1940s. In the final volume, *A Division of the Spoils*, a major new character, an historian called Guy Perron, is introduced. His Aunt Charlotte comes to represent for Perron the indifference of the British to their Empire. Her refusal to accept any part of the responsibility for 'the one-quarter million deaths in the Punjab and elsewhere … confirmed my impression of her historical significance (and mine), of the overwhelming importance of the part that had been played in British-Indian affairs by the indifference and the ignorance of the English at home' (1976b: 222). At the end of the Second World War, Perron's Aunt Charlotte thinks Britain should quit India, but only because all Britain's resources are needed to fund post-war rebuilding and the Welfare State. In a letter to his publisher in 1973, Scott emphasised that this was central to the entire *Quartet*:

> The overall argument of the sequence is that the greatest contribution to the tragi-comedy of Anglo-India was the total indifference to and ignorance of Indian affairs of the people at home, who finally decided to hand India back in as many pieces as was necessary so long as it was got rid of. (1990)

In 1960, ten writers, including Doris Lessing and J. P. Donleavy, contributed to a book entitled *Alienation*, which offered a series of personal views of England from people born elsewhere. One entry was by Victor Anant, an Indian who saw himself as one of 'Macaulay's bastards'. His essay is called 'The three faces of an Indian', and begins:

> It is characteristic of people born, historically speaking, on a borderline and reared in a no-man's land of values to live lazily; and lazy living, in plainer words, means living by opportunism, treachery, cowardice, hypocrisy, and wit. There is no effort implied in such a way of life, no awareness of a need to make a deliberate choice. It is a fact of nature – just as, in politics, the notorious unreliability of border areas may primarily be a result of their geographical situation.
>
> I know this from direct reflection on my own situation. I am one of these people. (1960: 79)

Anant believes this because he has decided after seven years of living in London that people like himself are 'homeless orphans': 'We are looked upon as children of conflict, born in transit, that we will eternally remain torn within ourselves but that we can be taught to recognize our duality … playing the role of cultural schizophrenic' (89). Anant sees Britain and India as two nations, like other nation-pairs, who are incompatible until the production of what he calls 'the third face', a face not in-between but different from either of the other two.

Anant goes on to say that 'people like me are heirs to two sets of customs, are shaped, in our daily lives, by dual codes of behaviour' (80). At one stage he makes a remark similar to Timothy Brennan's earlier point about the emphasis on 'the nation' in post-war 'Third World fiction'.[1] But Anant makes his point in relation to pre-Independence fiction, about which he writes that it

> stands only as a record of a phase in Indian history. Because that period is significant the writing is also significant; but because of the very nature of their preoccupations those writers all seem to be posing one problem of a nation, not the many problems of an individual. Not one Indian – or a type of Indian – but a whole community was the hero. (81)

This sounds like a criticism of socialist realism but its chief concern seems to be with the lack of alternative narratives in Indian fiction in

English. The story was always (although Anant makes an exception of Narayan) concerned with national liberation.

Post-Independence writers, up to 1960, had for Anant a 'curiously self-analytical tremor'. There were themes in their work of individual aspiration, self-mockery, nostalgia for Indo-Britain, and self-propaganda, 'but the most important significant trend in this new range of articu-lateness is the *distance* now created between the individual Indian and India. Alienation has arrived in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta' (1960: 84, original emphasis).

Anant's awareness of being an heir to two sets of customs is a feeling that also impinges on other 'Indian' writers growing up in Britain. Meera Syal describes how her semi-autobiographical character Anita came to this realisation that she had no home that she had ever visited:

> Papa's singing always unleashed these emotions which were unfamiliar and instinctive at the same time, in a language I could not recognise but felt I could speak in my sleep, in my dreams, evocative of a country I had never visited but which sounded like the only home I had ever known. The songs made me realise that there was a corner of me that would be forever not England. (1996: 11)

In a further example of her alienation from a national identity, Syal's Anita talks of her separation from cultural roots:

> I always came bottom in history; I did not want to be taught what a mess my relatives had made of India since the British left them (their fault of course, nothing to do with me), and longed to ask them why, after so many years of hating the 'goras', had they packed up their cases and followed them back here. (1996: 211–12)[2]

Perhaps the best-known writer on cultural alienation of this kind in the 1960s is the Trinidadian of Indian descent V. S. Naipaul. Naipaul's dis-placed individuals epitomise the highpoint of Indian homelessness in the face of English modes of identity. Homi Bhabha even talks of his forays into theory beginning at the moment he realised that the meta-phor of the home in the West, both in terms of belonging and of the 'house of fiction', would not accommodate his reading of diaspora and homelessness in Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961): 'here you had a novel where the realism, if you like, was unable to contain the anguish of displacement and movement as poor Mr. Biswas was looking for his house.' Naipaul also exemplifies Bhabha's comment on key aspects of post-colonial identity, which had been overlooked up to the eighties by theory in its discussion of interpellation. He explains that '[the] colonial

subject was actually very aware of his or her inauthenticity … a form of inauthenticity which was clearly seen to be culturally, politically, and socially constructed and which then turns into a kind of inward experience, through which most of political and social life is negotiated' (Bhabha 1991: 57). Of equal importance to his fiction, Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* (1964) set an agenda that was addressed by much subsequent writing on India in a way that no book had achieved since *A Passage to India*. In it he decides that: 'With one part of myself I felt the coming together of England and India as a violation; with the other I saw it as ridiculous, resulting in a comic mixture of costumes and the widespread use of an imperfectly understood language' (1968: 189–90). Stepping over the borderline between England and India in the 1960s created for Naipaul both tragedy and comedy. The people it created for Naipaul were *The Mimic Men* (1967) who did not 'belong', like his protagonist Ralph Singh: 'where you are born is a funny thing … You get to know the trees and the plants. You will never know any other trees and plants like that … You go away. You ask, "What is that tree?" Somebody will tell you … But it isn't the same' (171).

For Naipaul, India had disappeared from English identity by the 1960s: 'after less than twenty years India has faded out of the British consciousness: the Raj was an expression of the English involvement with themselves rather than with the country they ruled' (1968: 200–1). But Indians had reintroduced themselves to Britain since the 1950s, preparing the ground for a burst of Indo-Anglian cultural activity from the 1980s onwards, and prompting what Salman Rushdie calls a 'raj revival' by the British in the wake of 'Mrs Torture's' election – a nostalgia for the Empire that has been most notable in the literary establishment's reception of certain novels and then films which portrayed a tragicomic mixture of 'costume' dramas against the backdrop of an 'imperfectly understood' culture. The repeated phase of alienation was playing itself out as farce, and Anglo-Indians themselves began to explore new identities based less on displacement, homelessness, and exile than on migration and relocation.

Travelling home: migration

But most of the time, people will ask me – will ask anyone like me – are you Indian? Pakistani? English? … We are increasingly becoming a world of migrants, made up of bits and fragments from here, there. We are here and we have never really left anywhere we have been. (Salman Rushdie, quoted in Marzorati 1989: 100)

Writing in 1990, Viney Kirpal divides the Indian novel in English into the three generations I am also outlining in this essay: those who emerged pre-independence in the 1930s, those who up-rooted themselves in Independence/independence in the 1960s and those who engaged with a post-colonial world in the 1980s (xiii–xxiii). Though somewhat overly focused on decades, Kirpal is able to sketch a coherent overview. The emergent writers of the 1930s, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R. K. Narayan, blazed a trail in terms of Indian identity, Indian uses of the English language, and the relation of the two to colonialism and nationalism. As we have seen, much of the writing of the 1960s concerned itself with East–West divisions, with dislocations, separations and alienations. The turning point for the 1980s was *Midnight's Children*, but Kirpal argues that the defining features of novels of that decade are, again, parallels between the individual and the nation's history; protagonists who are tense and sceptical; language that is taut, energetic and concise as well as humorous; and characters that are cosmopolitan and not regionalised.

Also since the 1960s, not least because far more Indian writing in English has been written since then, the idea of Indian identity has figured more prominently in narratives of Englishness as the troubled margins of the nation have increasingly been located not just at its geo-cultural edges but internally, as I discussed in the introduction. In Indian English writing, Englishness has become a subject for explicit discussion, review and satire in terms of imperialism (as in Gita Mehta's *Raj* or Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*) or in terms of the aftermath of imperialism (as in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novels). There is a greater prominence for Indian English fiction in debates over the novel than ever before, especially through such well-publicised work as Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Accompanying this is the redefinition of anglicised or westernised Indian identity post-Independence (in several of Desai's novels, Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August* or Rukun Advani's *Beethoven Among the Cows*). In British writing there is the growing English analysis of key colonial events from the 'mutiny' in 1857 (J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur*) through to Partition in 1947 (Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*). Many novels of national crisis chart the shift more forcibly in terms of a post-imperial malaise, as do a number of post-war plays which feature characters left over from the raj, such as Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and David Edgar's *Destiny*. But, nearly all recent 'British' novels about India are retrospective: Farrell, Scott, Masters, Kaye and others write historical fiction. By contrast, far more novels by Indian than English

novelists have been written about Partition (Coswajee 1982; Dhawan 1982; Kirpal 1990). More importantly for my discussion there is the ever-growing number of texts that articulate or examine new Indian English or migrant ethnicities in the UK (for example, by Rushdie, Amit Chaudhuri, Sunetra Gupta, Hanif Kureishi, Ravinder Randhawa and Shyama Perera).

These texts have articulated new positions on questions of national and international identity, opposing the New Right's attempt in Britain to delimit the possibilities for versions of Englishness by opposing ideas of one 'true' identity and another which departs from it, and instead predicating identity on valorised qualities of newness and migrancy, of not origin but originality, redefining 'this and that' away from 'self' and 'other' and towards the welcome recognition of movements between 'here' and 'there'.

Discussion of alienation is founded upon a discourse of belonging. The alien is displaced from a 'home' which is either elsewhere or, in the title of Kamala Markandaya's 1972 novel, 'nowhere'. Her protagonist, Srinivas, is *The Nowhere Man* because he does not 'belong' in Britain, where he has little family, few friends, and a house but not a 'home'. Which is to say that the discourse of alienation itself rests on ideas of locations and roots, not relocations and movements. To be alien is not to belong, and similarly to be a migrant is not to have a 'home'. Yet migration, on the one hand, implies a movement between two or more 'homes', and on the other hand suggests that identity inheres not in rootedness, in an arguably parochial idea of continuity-in-stasis, but in travelling. In other words, the image of the alien is created by the questions asked in framing identity: 'where do you belong?', 'where do you come from?', 'where is your home?' These are questions about (places in) the past, not the future; they are questions about where individuals and their families originate, not where they are headed. This is not to deny the cultural investment individuals have in the first kind of question but to insist that the second kind is also, if not more, important. In contrast to Markandaya's 'Nowhere' man, Hanif Kureishi's Karim Amir in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is 'from the south London suburbs … and going somewhere' (1990: 3), a balance of past and future, 'home' and 'somewhere' else, which locates identity in one place but then relocates it in the movement to another.

I am therefore arguing for a revised concept of identity emerging in Indo-Anglian fiction along lines suggested by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. 'We are all migrants', as Hall almost says, or a 'world of migrants'

as Rushdie has it. A new ethnicity needs to work through ideas of identity based on home, belonging and origins to ones based on travel, change, and not the past but the present and the future. Hall calls these identities 'diasporic', focusing on the large-scale movements of peoples, which I am calling 'migrant', focusing on the translocated individual protagonists of Indo-Anglian writings. Not 'immigrant', which suggests the individual should not be here, or 'emigrant', which suggests that the individual felt he or she should not be 'there', but 'migrant' – someone who is not standing still but someone who has travelled and who is 'going somewhere'. Saladin, Rushdie's demonised migrant in *The Satanic Verses*, is told: 'Your soul, my dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form' (1988: 277). The migrant, whether bird or human, does not simply belong in one place and not another but moves between both places, or, more correctly, along a line from one place to another. Particular locations represent the endpoint of identities, which are characterised not by stasis but movement.

Migration oversteps the *Borderline* (1981), Kureishi's early play about South Asians in Britain. *The Buddha of Suburbia* also concerns transgression in its two parts, about the suburb and the city, as Karim sets off on his picaresque travels from one to the other. Yet this not a comment solely on Indo-Anglian identity – it applies to all the characters in the novel. Almost everyone travels, either between countries (Haroon, Shinko, Changez, Charlie) or to the city (Jamila, Eva and Haroon with Karim and Charlie in tow). In these migrations, there is not a sense of rootlessness but of having moved on, of having not transcended but travelled away from and of wanting to continue 'somewhere else'; such that the identities which interest the reader are those that morph and evolve not those that remain constant or 'rooted'. Kureishi's primary characters are not nowhere figures who have lost one home and found only alienation in another, but migrants who develop, accumulate and grow away from the racism, stereotypes, and traditions that hem in their lives in the first half of the novel. Their addition to the places to which they relocate does not mean dilution but increase, just as the bilingualist who is so often denigrated out of hand for having a comparative understanding of the host language can instead or also be venerated for an understanding of linguistic difference and semantic plurality.[3] It is usually when identity or expression is owned and guarded, dressed up as correct or incorrect, that alienation results. This is the language of home, belonging, origin, purity and their opposites of alienation and contamination, which refuse alternative emphases on newness, travel, and miscegenation. It has in this

regard been salutary to observe the rise in Indian travel writing on England since the 1980s, after Nirad Chaudhuri's pioneering account in *A Passage to England* (1959) of his alienation ('I had not been there even a week when I realised how impossible it was for either the East or the West to resemble each other in any significant trait' [25]). The new accounts range from Prafulla Mohanti's experience of the contrasts between Indian village life and British urban racism in *Through Brown Eyes* (1985) to Firdaus Kanga's tempered Anglophilia, from Bombay to Finchley, in *Heaven on Wheels* (1991).

The need for a realignment of identity from an axis of belonging/ alienation to a continuum of translocated migrancy is evident in the discourse of essentialised national identities. Like all metaphysical identities, Englishness is *essentially* only a vacant term; to acknowledge its history and negotiate its political uses, its vacancy needs to be continually restated and its space contested. This can best happen through a constant revision of the traditional view of national identity in relation to the current population, since Englishness is manufactured and maintained in the vacillation between the two. In short, both new mythology and cultural displacement confound any 'authentic' sense of a 'national' identity and point to its redundancy (Bhabha 1990a). The nation, as a perpetually vacant yet ideologically saturated (id)entity, is reinhabited at its every contact with whatever cultures are (over)lapping its borders, revising the established and redirecting the ongoing narrative of Englishness (Gilroy 1993: 217–19). Against this, Krishan Kumar sees the contemporary 'Englishness' of the New Right stepping from the ruins of 'Britishness' in the 1970s and 1980s brought about by the three-cornered assertions of Celtic nationalism (1995: 89). The new voices of Englishness were Margaret Thatcher, Norman Tebbit, and Enoch Powell, who asserted their nationalism not just against those in other countries but against the 'foreigners' within, and in doing so replicated in a post-colonial Britain the racist effects of nationalism under colonialism.[4] This is itself a notable transition turning xenophobia inwards to a focal point within the nation's borders.

While national identities are frequently both overcoded and circumscribed in terms of 'racial' and physical markers, it is only since the phenomenon that Louise Bennett's poem calls 'Colonisation in reverse' (Markham 1989: 62–3) that the possibility of Black Englishnesses has been widely discussed, not least by and in relation to second-generation Asians in Britain, in terms of New ethnicities and multiple identities. Kureishi, who in this at least resembles his hero Karim, is a case in point:

born in England of an English mother and a father who came to the UK from Bombay in 1947. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the theme of hybridity is constant: the first page tells us 'I am an Englishman born and bred, almost … Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored' (1990: 3). Questions of place and hybridity pervade the book, which in several ways concerns Karim Amir's oscillation between these poles of 'here and there'. The novel deals with identity primarily in terms of relocation, as does Kureishi's earlier autobiographical essay 'The rainbow sign', which is structured in a tripartite movement from 'One: England', through 'Two: Pakistan', back to 'Three: England' (Kureishi 1989).[5] This has two significances I want to mention here. On the one hand, the essay signals the move away from unitary subject positions, and on the other it locates identity in terms of an oscillation, a movement back and forth between widely divergent cultures as well as places. As Homi K. Bhabha says, there is a

> need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity. (1994: 1–2)

Kureishi's novel operates in this in-between space but it charts a specific trajectory across it. Karim's path takes him from the 'not white/not quite' beginning of that 'almost' to a recognition of a new ethnicity, a variant of black Englishness, towards the end of the book – an identity not 'rooted' in a country but in a newness born in travel, anchored by the new shoots nourished by relocation. In parallel, the sexual and racial prejudices of English society are shown to accommodate the resurgence of the political New Right, which surfaces at the book's close as Karim and others celebrate their personal successes in a restaurant on the night of the 1979 general election. In keeping with Hall's idea of a new ethnicity perpetuated through diaspora, the primary model Kureishi uses to indicate cultural shift is that of migrancy – from India to England, from the suburbs to the city, from England to the United States and back. But at the same time, the counter-forces of reactionary nationalism are shown to be resisting any revision to the monologic narrative of Englishness, just as the New Right also emerges to counter the new forces that the novel has described, from radical music, squats, sexual freedom, drugs and miscegenation, to socialism and, of course, migrancy.

To take a final example, Rushdie is himself a first-generation migrant who considers himself to have only 'imaginary homelands' (1992: 17), to have been borne across and 'translated' like the hero of his novel *Shame* (1983). Paul Gilroy writes that, since the 'Rushdie Affair' of 1989:

> Whatever view of Rushdie one holds, his fate offers another small, but significant, omen of the extent to which the almost metaphysical values of England and Englishness are currently being contested through their connection to 'race' and ethnicity. His experiences are also a reminder of the difficulties involved in attempts to construct a more pluralistic, post-colonial sense of British culture and national identity. (1993: 10–11)[6]

The difficulties arise because of a need in those who consider themselves rooted and belonging to protect an authentic, unalienated identity which perceives itself (and its home and wealth) to be in danger from newness, from the migrant who is unfamiliar. But the moment of importance for Indian diasporic identities in England did not occur with 'The Rushdie Affair' over *The Satanic Verses* in 1989 but with *Midnight's Children* and the urban riots in 1981. Syed Manzu Islam writes: 'If "15 August 1947" is the name of the event in the historical time of the Indian postcolonial nation state, then it is equivalent to the time of "London, 1981" – the historical time of the migrant as subject of the British national state' (1999: 129). If Partition was the final colonial act of alienation enforced by the English in India, then its legacy, so evident in 1960s writing, began to be extirpated by the migrant's assertion of new British ethnicities on the streets and in the publishing houses of London from 1981 onwards. The journey is itself not only temporal, but one of millions of postcolonial migrants world-wide, and of the concept of national identity itself, from Anant's England of 'Alienation' to Rushdie's 'world of migrants'.

Notes

1 Brennan is of course indebted to Fredric Jameson's point in his controversial essay on 'third world literature' (1986) to which Aijaz Ahmad (1987) took such exception.

2 'Gora' was a word applied to the British tommies and means 'whitey'. The *Hobson-Jobson* dictionary says it applies to any European who is not a sahib (Yule and Burnell 1996: 388).

3 For a discussion of this see Tzvetan Todorov's essay 'Dialogism and schizophrenia' in his book *An Other Tongue* (1994), 203–14.

4 Tom Nairn amongst others has argued that racism derives from nationalism. Nairn is salutary because he argues it in terms of Englishness in his influential book *The Break-up of Britain* (1981).

5 Interestingly, the essay's reprinting in the volume entitled *Patriotism* edited by Raphael Samuel (1989), under the title 'London and Karachi', organises its headings around these cities and not their countries, thus honing the specificity of the earlier publication.

6 See also Talal Asad's article on 'the Rushdie Affair' (1990) in which, *contra* Gilroy's and Bhabha's position, he suggests that distinct cultural traditions need to be acknowledged, for both logical and political reasons.