

## HYPERREAL REPLICAS IN JULIAN BARNES' "ENGLAND, ENGLAND"

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### Abstract

This article aims to examine Julian Barnes' *England, England* through Jean Baudrillard's influential concepts of hyperreality and simulation, illuminating profound resonances with the postmodern condition of contemporary Western societies. The novel portrays a world increasingly governed by models, signs and simulacra, challenging traditional notions of authenticity and reality. The theme park's replication of English culture, history and identity exemplifies how simulations and hyperreal constructions have saturated domains like tourism, nationhood, historical narratives and media representations. The novel encapsulates Baudrillardian themes such as the blurring of reality/illusion, the eclipse of the original by replicas, and the commodification of culture into marketable experiences. This mirrors contemporary experiences where the virtual and artificial hold sway over the authentic, fuelled by forces like consumer capitalism and the media. The actors' embodiment of historical roles reflects how mediated depictions shape public memory more than facts. Ultimately, the novel's vision of a hyperreal England supplanting traditional conceptions of nationhood resonates with contemporary anxieties about meaning and truth in a world dominated by simulations. By vividly fictionalizing Baudrillard's philosophical perspectives, the novel offers insightful views on modern complications distinguishing reality amid our self-constructed simulations.

**Keywords:** Julian Barnes, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Hyperreality, Baudrillard, Postmodernism

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In his novel *England, England*, British author Julian Barnes crafts a hyperreal world where simulation holds sway over reality. This fictional realm serves as fertile ground for examining theories around authenticity — a concept that lost its meaning when entering the world of simulation — and national identity in an increasingly technology-driven era. Specifically, Barnes' work resonates with philosophical questions posed by French theorist Jean Baudrillard in his influential book *Simulacra and Simulation* regarding representations overtaking reality. The article will examine how the simulated theme park Barnes constructs within the novel aligns with Baudrillard's orders of simulacra, where replicas and models obscure and replace authentic reality. Specifically, elements such as the childhood puzzle map, the cloning of English identity for replication, the actors immersed in simulated historical roles, and the eventual triumph of the fictional theme park England, England over the 'real' England will be explored using key Baudrillardian concepts. The discussion will provide a close reading of the novel, analyzing how shifts from symbolic representations into pure simulation provides a vivid fictional embodiment of a hyperreal world. This examination ultimately centres on Baudrillard's philosophical interrogation of authenticity, and the way that replicas overtake their referents in order to highlight the deeper levels of contemporary society, national identity, and the interplay between reality and artifice as portrayed in Barnes *England, England*.

In his seminal book *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard focuses on the dominance of hyperreality in the contemporary world, where representations (re)shape reality. He extensively elaborates on the dissolution of boundaries between authenticity and simulation. Hyperreality, as Baudrillard indicates, belongs to a state in which reality, artificial reproductions, and simulation becomes entangled in each other, henceforth the distinction between the two is arduous: “[i]t is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real” (1981, p. 2). Here, Baudrillard argues that postmodern culture is characterized by substitutions of simulations for the real itself. Representations constitute their own autonomous realm rather than imitating or duplicating reality. The signifier, then, represents nothing external, and it is “its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 6). This primacy of representations over reality aligns with the perspective that in the realm of simulacra, where the “sign is preferred to the thing signified, the copy to the original,

representation to reality, appearance to essence truth is considered profane, and only illusion is sacred," supplementing Baudrillard's notion that simulations construct their own autonomous reality disconnected from their referents (Debord, 1967, p. 6).

To exemplify hyperreality, Baudrillard offers the example of Disneyland, which he positions as the epitome model. He argues that Disneyland encompasses itself as an imaginary space, a theme park domain filled with symbols, illusions, spectacles and three-dimensional simulations, whose true purpose is to conceal the fact that the society is an artificial construct:

Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real.... It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle. (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 12)

In this sense, Disneyland, as a simulated space, does not provide the object itself; rather, it "produce[s] illusion, but—in confessing it—stimulate[s] the desire for it" (Eco, 1973, p. 44). In other words, the hyperreality of Disneyland creates a world where "faked nature corresponds much more to our daydream demands" than authentic reality (Eco, 1973, p. 44).

Baudrillard also offers the example of the Watergate scandal as an event demonstrating the encroachment of reality into hyperreality. He draws a parallel between the simulated fantasy of Disneyland and the political revelations of Watergate as constructed spectacles operating on the boundaries of fact and artifice. The extensive media coverage of Watergate served to dramatize the original events through proliferated narratives and imagery that overshadowed the factual occurrences. Watergate derived greater meaning from its mythologized position in public discourse rather than its basis in evidence. As Baudrillard states, it "conceal[ed] that there is no difference between the facts and their denunciation," (1981, p. 14) thus the representations assumed precedence over the reality they depicted. This blurring of boundaries between factual events and fictionalized media reconstructions exemplifies history ceding ground to reconstituted hyperreality.

In a similar manner, Baudrillard suggests that in the era of postmodernity, history has undergone a profound transformation, shifting from a record of factual events to a

constructed narrative that is increasingly detached from its original occurrences: “[h]istory itself invades the cinema according to the same scenario” (1981, p. 43). For Baudrillard, historical films and accounts now serve ideological functions of cultural mythology rather than evidencing actual past events when he indicates that “[i]t is by virtue of this fact that it [history] takes the place of myths on the screen” (1981, p. 43). Here, he indicates the absorption of the past into fictionalized hyperreal renditions moulded to present purposes rather than tangibly rooted realities. This postmodern confinement to hyperreal history resonates with Fredric Jameson’s perspective that we are now “condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra...which itself remains forever out of reach” (1991, p. 25). In a way, it is the inaccessibility of the past that allows its manipulation.

Baudrillard further illustrates his idea of hyperreality in the realm of cloning and holographic technology. He states that cloning is the endpoint of replication since “everyone can dream, and must have dreamed his whole life, of a perfect duplication or multiplication of his being” (1981, p. 95). Cloning facilitates the endless duplication of human cells to produce identical replicas. This represents the potential realization of the ultimate simulacrum—an artificial copy indistinguishable from its model that disrupts traditional notions of identity as he indicates that through cloning “[i]t is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore” (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 2). Likewise, Baudrillard envisions holograms as a technological manifestation of attaining pure simulation. Holographic projections generate three-dimensional simulation seemingly transcending material into a hyperreal space. As he indicates, “[i]n the hologram, it is the imaginary aura of the double that is mercilessly tracked...just as it is in the history of clones...similitude is a dream and must remain one...in order for a modicum of illusion and a stage of the imaginary to exist” (Baudrillard, 1981, pp. 105-106). The hologram’s ability to reconstruct reality without origin exemplifies the postmodern proliferation of models and artefacts claiming autonomy from stable referents. Both human cloning and holograms demonstrate Baudrillard’s vision of simulations progressing towards pure self-referential replication detached from reality.

Baudrillard extends his theoretical critique to mass consumer society, embodied by suburban hypermarkets. Hypermarkets serve as prime examples of simulacra, spaces where the symbols and signs of consumerism have become detached from their original

meanings. Baudrillard describes the hypermarket as a space devoid of traditional visual relief or perspective in which "[n]o relief, no perspective, no vanishing point where the gaze might risk losing itself" (1981, p. 75). Unlike traditional art or landscapes where the gaze can wander and potentially get lost, the hypermarket presents a total screen filled with a continuous, unbroken display of billboards and products "total screen where, in their uninterrupted display, the billboards and the products themselves act as equivalent and successive signs" (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 75). Within these hypermarkets, products cease to be merely functional items and instead become symbols of identity and status. Shoppers are thus immersed in a hyperreal world, where the act of consumption no longer satisfies genuine needs but rather serves as a simulation of desire and identity construction.

In the following sections, a close analysis of the novel will be given which puts forward the argument that contemporary societies have lost their access to the original and are obsessed with the replica. The abundant, all-around virtual reality world in the novel, this paper argues, has become the reality of the contemporary human beings. Therefore, the scope of the novel goes beyond what Barnes depicts as a fictional world for the reader to imagine. Indeed, the all-encompassing fictional world of replicas shapes the mind of the contemporary individual without giving him as chance to experience a tangible world of external reality.

### **Childhood Map as Symbolic Order**

Simulation manifests itself at different junctures within the novel. The inception of the orders of simulacra and hyperreality becomes discernible in the novel's opening chapter. Barnes explores the intricate relationship between memory, simulation, and the construction of a nation through the character of Martha Cochrane. Examining the dysfunctionality of memory, Martha's inability to recall a true first memory underscores the elusive nature of human recollection, as she asserts "there's always a memory just behind your first memory, and you can't quite get at it" (Barnes, 1996, p. 10). Martha's attempt to create her first memory involves the fabrication of a scene with a jigsaw puzzle in the kitchen. This childhood memory, symbolized by the puzzle, evolves into a metaphor for nation-building, which, in the context of late capitalism, has increasingly become a constructed entity. The completion of the puzzle parallels Martha's yearning for a sense of wholeness and completeness in her understanding of England. As Barnes notes, "Staffordshire had been

found, and her jigsaw, her England, and her heart had been made whole again” (1996, p. 12). The jigsaw puzzle, representing England, becomes a central theme in Martha’s life. As her father completes the puzzle by providing the last piece, it symbolizes the artificial and crafted essence of a nation coming together. The puzzle also serves as a metaphor for the fragmented nature of memory. Martha’s interaction with the puzzle introduces her to the concept of simulacra as her first memory transforms into a hyperreal space, leaving her unable to differentiate between what is real and what is fictitious.

Martha’s early experience with the jigsaw map foreshadows her later construction of hyperreal simulations that replace reality altogether. In both instances, the map attains autonomy, marking Martha’s entry into a Baudrillardian experience of simulated places. The puzzle map, as a second order simulacrum, exemplifies the shift from reflection to the creation of an autonomous system of signs, challenging traditional notions of representation in a postmodern world. As Baudrillard articulates, “[i]t is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real” (1981, p. 2). Therefore, with the death of the real there is no way to access it, and the replica offers itself as the original.

### **Sir Jack Pitman’s Philosophy of Simulation**

The second chapter of *England, England* stands as its focal point, encapsulating a convergence with the majority of Baudrillard’s concepts. In this pivotal chapter, Sir Jack Pitman embarks on an ambitious project to construct a replicated version of England. This endeavour is an amalgamation interplay of personal ambition, business acumen, and a yearning for control. However, Pitman’s worldview also reveals “anthropocentrism that privileges human voices over other beings” and an indifference toward environmental impact (Ates, 2023, p. 129). His approach reflects a capitalist perspective of “treating [nature] as a commodity and resource for industrial development” (Ates, 2023, p. 129). Pitman envisions the theme park as a utopian escape, an idealized rendition of the nation that blurs the boundaries between reality and simulation. In a discussion with his colleagues, Sir Jack poses profound questions that penetrate the very essence of reality: “[w]hat is real? This is sometimes how I put the question to myself. Are you real, for instance – you and you?” (Barnes, 1996, p. 34). Sir Jack’s inquiry serves as a profound philosophical reflection on the authenticity of existence. By addressing his employees

with such question, he not only questions the external reality of individuals but also probes into the core of their identities. Then, Sir Jack deliberately answers his question “[m]y answer would be No. Regrettably. And you will forgive me for my candour, but I could have you replaced with substitutes, with ... simulacra” (Barnes, 1996, p. 34). Sir Jack’s discontent with the authenticity of the world resonates deeply with Baudrillard’s philosophy in a hyperreal environment, where the distinctions between reality and simulation become increasingly elusive. His readiness to replace real individuals with simulacra underscores society’s evolving preference for simulated experiences over the genuine. Sir Jack extends his contemplation to the very fabric of society, questioning the reality of money and God: “[i]s money real? It is, in a sense, more real than you... [i]s God real?” (Barnes, 1996, p. 34). His theories on God align with the concept of symbols evolving into simulacra, detached from their original meanings: “that deep down God never existed, that only the simulacrum ever existed, even that God himself was never anything but his own simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1991, p. 4). This uncertainty about the nature of reality reflects the broader postmodern condition that Baudrillard theorizes, where “the whole system is swamped by indeterminacy, and every reality is absorbed by the hyperreality of the code and simulation. The principle of simulation governs us now, rather than the outdated reality principle” (Baudrillard, 1976, p. 23). This encapsulates the destabilization of reality Sir Jack intuitively senses, as simulations and hyperreal codes supersede concrete realities.

Continuing his philosophical exploration, Sir Jack questions the authenticity of his name and the reality of great ideas, embodying the pervasive nature of hyperreality in the postmodern age: “[i]s my name ... real?” and “[a]re great ideas real?” (Barnes, 1996, p. 35). In this, Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality is vividly illustrated, where signs, symbols, and concepts detach from their original referents. Sir Jack’s uncertainty about the reality of great ideas reflects the ambiguity inherent in a hyperreal world. Baudrillard’s ideas underscore the challenge of distinguishing between the real and the simulated, sparking an ongoing quest for authenticity and meaning in a society saturated with simulations.

The dreams Jack Pitman has for England closely align with the ideas of Tony Blair, the former prime minister of England. He also aimed to recreate the history and concepts such as nationhood, Britishness, and British culture in line with what he called the “spirit

of national renewal” (qtd. in Navarro Romero, 2011, p. 247). Thus, he led his politics to inspire a modern nation characterized by a dynamic, multicultural, innovative and young country able to lead and set the example of a twenty-first century nation. His ideas were to create a cohesive society “which was entrenched in strictly British terms, causing British values and institutions, which promoted a unified national identity, to be celebrated” (qtd. in Navarro Romero, 2011, p. 248). In this parallel pursuit of constructing national identity, both Pitman and Blair engage in the creation of simulacra. Pitman’s theme park becomes a second-order simulacrum, a hyperreal space where symbols and tropes are artificially engineered to meet marketable expectations. Blair’s national renewal similarly involves a symbolic reconstruction of British values to inspire a cohesive society.

Sir Jack Pitman invites a French intellectual, bearing a striking resemblance to Jean Baudrillard, to discuss simulation and replication with his team. This French intellectual emphasizes the contemporary preference for replicas over originals, stating “[w]e prefer the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself” (Barnes, 1996, p. 52). The intellectual offers examples like the Bayeux Tapestry Museum, where visitors spend more time in front of a replica than the original, highlighting society’s shift toward simulated experiences. Furthermore, the intellectual explores human psychology and our relationship with authenticity. Referencing Viollet-Le-Duc’s preservation work on old edifices, he suggests a psychological aversion to the profound reality of the original. This aligns with Baudrillard’s idea that simulations offer a refuge from the overwhelming power of authentic reality, emphasizing the psychological and existential aspects of our fascination with replicas.

The intellectual contends that modern life blurs the line between reality and representation, indicating that “[a]ll that was once directly lived has become mere representation” (Barnes, 1996, p. 53). This transformation, influenced by media and technology, reflects Baudrillard’s ideas on the prevalence of symbols replacing authentic experiences. His assertion that the modern world is not a substitute for the “plain and primitive world,” (Barnes, 1996, p.54) but rather an “enhancement and enrichment” (Barnes, 1996, p.54) encapsulates Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality, where contemporary existence is marked by the amplification and intensification of signs and symbols over the original reality: “[s]imulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential



being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 1). In other words, the simulated world has devoured every form of reality and represents itself as the only authentic form of representation.

The intellectual dismisses the original as "sentimental and inherently fraudulent" (Barnes, 1996, p.54) and demands replica in a world saturated with simulations, because it is a more controllable reality. His statements that we may "meet, confront, and destroy" (Barnes, 1996, p.54) the replica as our destiny indicates his obsession with a world dominated by hyperreality and the perpetual interplay between reality and simulation. At the end, the French intellectual congratulates Sir Jack Pitman for his ideas and his ambitions to replicate England into a theme park.

### **Replicating England into a Theme Park**

In deciding the location for the theme park, the team faces a challenge, laying out a map resembling Martha's childhood jigsaw puzzle. Sir Jack insists on designing an exact replication of England, aiming to "offer the thing itself" (Barnes, 1996, p.59). Sir Jack gets close to Baudrillard when he indicates that once built, the theme park becomes its own entity, a "pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard,1981, p. 6). England, England mirrors Disneyland as meticulously designed theme parks founded on simulation. Baudrillard's description of Disneyland as a "perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra" applies equally to England, England (Baudrillard,1981, p. 6). Both attract crowds by presenting illusions of the real nation, creating microcosms concealing the shift into hyperreality. In both, visitors are immersed in a simulated world.

The microcosmic operation of both theme parks parallels Baudrillard's observations about Disneyland. They claim to represent the essence of their nations while concealing the wider nation's moving into hyperreality. England, England meticulously reconstructs English elements, potentially diluting their vitality. While the theme park aims to flawlessly recreate aspects of English culture, ironically this precision enables the simulations to spiral out of control. The meticulous simulation allows employees to "over-identify with a character or to unconsciously reflect some unknown characteristics of the original" (Arargüç, 2005, p. 148). Despite the park's efforts to reconstruct English identity and history, the sheer replication itself sows the seeds of destabilization. Sir Jack's aspiration to craft an exact replica initiates a hyperreal process, disconnecting from the

original and establishing a self-contained world. Like Disneyland, the focus is on a compressed representation rather than capturing the complexities of real life. The theme park meticulously reconstructs English heritage, history, and culture within its bounds through exhibits, attractions, and costumed interpreters. Details are engineered to match expectations and assumptions of national character even, as Parrinder suggests “the supposedly authentic past might be a fantasy, while the replica might seem truthful” (qtd. in Vanessa Guignery, 2006, p.111).

As standalone microcosms, these theme parks allow the wider nation to slip into hyperreality unnoticed. Their illusion that the park represents the real nation provides cover for the entire country losing touch with reality. Both Disneyland in America and England, England in the Isle of Wight reveal blurred lines between real and simulation. These independent simulacra obscure the fact that the nation’s identity has become an artificial construct mediated by signs and symbols, blurring the distinction between inside and outside their gates.

Sir Jack Pitman vehemently rejects the notion that his project is a mere theme park; he envisions it as something far beyond. Sir Jack aims to surpass and replace the very notion of reality. He articulates his genuine objectives, stating, “[w]e are offering *the thing itself*. Der Ding an sich” (Barnes, 1996, p.57). Sir Jack believes that a simulation, over time, naturally transforms into the very thing it imitates, challenging the conventional understanding of authentic reality. He emphasizes this idea by indicating, “[i]t becomes *the thing itself*” (Barnes, 1996, p. 59), suggesting that the simulation of nature becomes the new reality. The project’s goal is to meticulously reconstruct the entirety of England, intending to offer visitors an immersive and pleasurable experience. The limited historical knowledge of the public becomes evident in an interview conducted by Dr. Max with a representative of the target demographic. The responses regarding historical events left Dr. Max disheartened, highlighting the need for an accessible and engaging approach to history.

Sir Jack seeks to capitalize on people’s limited knowledge of their history. He tasks Jeffrey, his Concept Developer, and Dr. Max, his Official Historian, to conduct surveys and research, intending to manipulate historical information to make it appealing to a global audience. The emphasis is on digestibility rather than accuracy: “the point of our history

will be to make our guests... *feel better*" (Barnes, 1996, p. 67). So, a list of top fifty characteristic of Englishness is prepared which includes various items, among others, like "Big Ban, House of Parliament, BBC, Tower of London, Oxford/Cambridge, and Wembley Stadium" (Barnes, 1996, p. 78). The authenticity of national identity and history is brought into question, casting doubt on the legitimacy of lists and research related to these concepts. The generated list condenses the essence of England and Englishness into fragmented elements, highlighting the conceptual and constructed nature of a nation's identity. The fragmented nature of this list aligns with the Baudrillardian perspective of constructing a replica without an original foundation, resembling the notion of cloning. The team's effort to create an amplified and glorified version of England for the theme park reflects the complex interplay between reality and simulation in contemporary culture, where the replica often challenges and overshadows the original.

### **Cloning National Identity**

Baudrillard takes cloning as a metaphor for the proliferation of simulacra in society, asserting that cloning represents the culmination of body history, reducing individuals to abstract and genetic formulas for serial propagation: "[c]loning is thus the last stage of the history and modelling of the body, the one at which, reduced to its abstract and genetic formula, the individual is destined to serial propagation" (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 99). In parallel, England, England mirrors this concept by endeavouring to clone English identity into 50 distinct elements, echoing cloning's reduction of living beings to replicable genetic code. The list that the team project offers meets the denial of Sir Jack since he wanted to adapt his perception of Englishness. The list, a dissection of Englishness into replicable symbolic attributes, closely parallels cloning's process of reducing a being to re-constructible genetic code. This process of serial reproduction involves a consequential loss of uniqueness and singularity, effectively abolishing the original cultural context of items like Big Ben and Cricket, reminiscent of Baudrillard's statement that "[c]loning radically abolishes the mother, but also the father" (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 96). In this sense, cloning replaces the natural forms of reproduction and erases any meaningful connection between the producer and the produced.

The list prompts contemplation regarding the dissection and replication of a nation. We have entered an era of simulation where history, in its traditional sense, has

lost its meaning. Authentic historical narratives are now supplanted by simulations of history, causing a profound metamorphosis in our understanding of the past and national identity. While there may have been a time when the concept of nation held an authentic meaning, the era of late capitalism has transformed it into a simulation of itself. Can a nation, now existing primarily as a series of simulacra, truly be broken down into defining items? Is it conceivable for these components, already divorced from their original context, to reassemble into a coherent entity within a different framework? These questions inherently cast doubt upon the notion of a genuine and authentic national identity. Following the simulation of the Royal Family on the island, the fabricated identity gains independence, attracting global tourists. Satisfied visitors may perceive no necessity for experiencing the original country, thereby contributing to the emergence of a fabricated national identity. This phenomenon aligns with Sir Jack's attempt to deconstruct and subsequently rebuild Englishness. Sir Jack's efforts to reconstruct a cohesive national image resonate with Tony Blair's pursuit of creating a cohesive society: "[w]e in our country have our certain idea of le patrimoine, and you in your country have a certain idea of Eritage" (Barnes, 1996, p. 52). However, this reconstruction of national image in a new style ends up in vain and it will be merely a façade since as some indicate "Britain's first and foremost touristic profit comes from that traditional, idyllically rural and stereotyped representation of the country" (Navarro Romero, 2011, p. 249). In this regard, we can safely assure that a nation can be constructed in an idealized manner, as Christine Berberich illustrates that "nations, whether imagined or not, are, of course, not nature-made. They are contained within man-made boundaries; they are run according to rules set by man" (2008, p. 168). Such a perspective highlights the fact that the concept of nation has strong cultural connections but no natural ties.

### **Consumer Hyperreality**

Following the discussion of the cultural heritage behind the England, England theme park, it is important to delve into the processes of commercialization and marketing, as well as the concept of hyperreal tourism in relation to Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard, "[p]eople go there to find and to select objects - responses to all the questions they may ask themselves" (1981, p. 75). In the novel, Sir Jack promotes the theme park as "everything you imagined England to be, but more convenient, cleaner, friendlier, and more efficient" (Barnes, 1996, p. 160). This statement echoes hyperreality,

emphasizing convenience and idealized qualities as reflected in the park's strategy of offering replicas for consumer satisfaction. Baudrillard's perspective on billboards and products acting as successive signs mirrors the theme park's transformation of England into a hypermarket of cultural commodities: "total screen where, in their uninterrupted display, the billboards and the products themselves act as equivalent and successive signs" (1981, p. 75).

In the postmodern era, projects like England, England thrive as consumers favour simulacra over reality. The theme park commodifies England's heritage, turning actors into commodities. Visitors willingly engage with hyperreality, emphasizing Baudrillard's argument that convenience and perceived authenticity drive the shift towards simulations, reshaping perceptions of reality and authenticity. This transformation of culture into commodities reflects the depth of hyperreality, where representations become detached from original meaning. As Fredric Jameson indicates, this primacy of simulation occurs in a "society where exchange value has been generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced" (1991, p. 18). Jameson's point about the effacement of use value in favour of exchange value within hyperreality aligns with the theme park's commodification of culture solely for commercial profit and tourist consumption. The park transforms quintessential elements of English heritage and history into consumable spectacles and simplified snapshots detached from their broader cultural context. Visitors pay for temporary access to this fabricated microcosm where complex and nuanced cultural artifacts become commercial products. For Baudrillard, "whole new sociality" emerges as a consequence of this preference (1981, p. 75). England, England reflects a societal shift that values simulations over authentic experiences. Baudrillard emphasizes that within this hypermarket, there is "no relief, no perspective, no vanishing point where the gaze might risk losing itself" (1981, p. 75). The incorporation of actors simulating historical figures aligns with Baudrillard's notion that simulations generate a hyperreal version overshadowing the original, crafting idealized representations of history.

### **Actors Embodying Hyperreal Roles**

The England, England theme park manifests as an intricately crafted hyperreal rendition of English culture, drawing visitors into an environment where quintessential

elements are meticulously replicated. Baudrillard's concept of simulation articulates in the observation "[p]eople no longer look at each other, but there are institutes for that. They no longer touch each other, but there is contact therapy" (1981, p. 13). This resonates with the theme park's transformation of interpersonal engagement into staged simulations. The actors, assigned costumes associated with historical figures, play their roles according to scripts, blurring the lines between reality and simulation. This hyperreal tourism underscores a contemporary fascination with idealized representations, where authenticity surrenders to the allure of meticulously crafted illusions.

Throughout the narrative, the actors undergo a notable transformation, shedding their individual identities and embracing the characters they portray. This loss of personal identity is exemplified in instances such as the actor playing Samuel Johnson, who not only assumed the persona but even changed his name, as evidenced in the statement: "Martha called up Dr Johnson's contract of employment... They had engaged Samuel Johnson to play Samuel Johnson. Perhaps this explained things" (Barnes, 1996, p. 182). Despite attempts by project managers to monitor and restrain the actors, they manage to transcend themselves into a realm of hyperreality, embodying their roles to a point where the boundaries between self and character diminish. This immersion reflects Baudrillard's broader perspective by stating that "what has occurred is a materialization of aesthetics everywhere under an operational form. It is indeed because of this that art has been obliged to minimize itself, to mime its own disappearance" (1993, p. 16). The actors exemplify this materialization, as their artistic performances as historical figures lead to the disappearance of their actual identities. Visitor complaints emerge as a paradoxical confirmation of the success of hyperreality within the theme park. Rather than desiring authenticity, visitors express a preference for idealized replicas, seeking a more jovial and stylized rendition of historical characters, even if it contradicts the true nature of those figures. The visitor complaints highlight a societal inclination to favour the hyperreal over the authentic since they "prefer the replica to the original" and "the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself" (Barnes, 1996, p. 52).

A notable example involves the reconsideration of the Robin Hood myth within the theme park since the team managers believe that the well-known myth needs refurbishing for modern audiences, emphasizing the need to adapt folktales to contemporary sensibilities. The ensuing transformation of Robin Hood and his Merry Men within the

hyperreal setting, turning them into mischievous figures causing disorder. Notably, the actors themselves succumb to the hyperreal environment, genuinely believing they are the historical figures they portray. Martha's interaction with the king, where she reminds him of his kingship being limited to the island, and his emphatic reply, "I'm the fucking King anyway, he shouted. Anywhere, everywhere, always" (Barnes, 1996, p. 165, emphasis added), exemplifies the employees' delusion. Their immersion in the hyperreality leads to a form of psychosis, where they accept their made-up stories as more real than reality, refusing to acknowledge their symbolic status (Arikan & İpekçi, 2020).

### **The Triumph of Hyperreal England**

In the concluding segment of the novel, "Anglia" emerges as the triumphant domain of simulacra, overshadowing the original reality. Martha, expelled from the project, reluctantly returns to the 'real England', now transformed into 'old England'. The overwhelming majority of the population is ensconced in the theme park, erasing the memory of the genuine England. Old England metamorphoses into the village of Anglia, a place that, as described, is "neither idyllic nor dystopic" (Barnes, 1996, p. 222). This transformation encapsulates the tension between a yearning for a lost reality in the past and the endeavour to resurrect it in the present, portraying Anglia's nuanced nature as it oscillates between the search for reality and childish nostalgia. The conscious and artificial attempts at constructing historical narratives, shaping a national identity, and reviving the old England reveal their fake, simulated nature beneath the seemingly idyllic surface of Anglia. In this sense, the members of the community in Anglia are not very much different from the actors in England, England who paid to play some roles. As Peter Childs points out, "Anglia returns to its supposed past, losing its contacts with the outer world and losing its technological prosperity, but reclaiming a seriousness about its misremembered traditions" (2011, p. 122). This suggests that the attempts to recreate the nostalgic Anglia is itself a simulated version of it. Barnes through Anglia presents a form of "fabulation" where a semblance of coherence "between things that are largely true and things that are wholly imagined" (qtd. in Arikan and İpekçi, 2020, p. 184). Ultimately, the novel navigates the dilemma of reconciling the true nature of reality with an enduring yearning for meaning in a post-reality world dominated by simulations.

## Conclusion

Through its intricate fictional portrayal of a nation eclipsed by its own hyperreal simulation, Barnes' *England, England* offers a remarkably prescient exploration of postmodern conditions as theorized by Baudrillard. In the novel's world where the replica transcends and replaces original reality, Barnes vividly conveys Baudrillard's critique of Western societies becoming disconnected from authenticity and consumed by self-perpetuating simulation cycles. The novel dismantles assumptions about such concepts as national identity — transitioning from lived realities to mediated experiences in our digital age — cultural heritage, historical truth, and the ability to discern the genuine from the artificial. The theme park's exaggerated and artificial portrayal of Englishness grows beyond just a commercial attraction into a self-sustaining alternate reality that overshadows and replaces the real nation itself. This mirrors how simulated realities, and artificial constructs have filled and subsumed nearly every aspect of modern-day human experience. Tourism, media, politics and consumerism have become perpetually reconstructing narratives, identities and desirable representations as authenticity erodes. Barnes' work compels us to confront the disorienting and unsettling nature of our current era. We are surrounded by all-encompassing virtual realities, glorified national narratives that are more myth than truth, corporate commodification of cultural heritage, and mediated portrayals that distort and obscure factual historical accounts. These simulated experiences and fictionalized depictions have become inescapable facets of the human condition. The actors transcending their costumed roles to embody historical personas reflects the postmodern instability of subjectivities and identities adrift in a sea of contingent simulations. Through this intricate fictional world that uncannily echoes key aspects of Baudrillard's theory, *England, England* illuminates the complex interplay between reality, representations and the hyperreal in contemporary societies.

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