Is it 'cos I is English?

The contradictions of an early twenty-first century national identity

Richard Weight

Being English is a bit like breathing. I only think about it when someone tries to stop me doing it.' So said a caller to a BBC Five Live discussion I was involved in recently. His comment captures two aspects of English national identity: the traditional belief that Englishness is such a natural state of being there's no need to crow about it in the way that inmodest foreigners do about their nationality. And the contemporary view that English national consciousness has grown in the last decade because the English are being actively prevented from expressing who they are.

Who exactly has their hand on the windpipe of fifty million people? Some argue that a Scottish political elite is running Britain, helping to ensure that the Treasury's generous fiscal subsidy to the Scots is maintained and - symbolically - replacing Edward Elgar with Adam Smith on the £20 Bank of England note. All this echoes the Scotophobia of the late eighteenth century in which people questioned the Union on the grounds that Scots had taken over the British state through chambers of commerce, having failed to do so on the battlefield. How justified is contemporary English anxiety?

The Scottish National Party fostered and exploited anti-Englishness from when it was founded in 1934, but it has now begun publicly to celebrate Englishness and the bonds that our countries share. In a St George's Day article for The Times, former SNP leader John Swinney wrote: 'Moving on from Britain has never meant breaking the social ties that we share. From Sean Connery to Coronation Street, from Robert Louis Stevenson to Shakespeare, common cultural experiences are shared by all residents of this island.' This policy has been a pragmatic attempt to reassure moderate Scots that independence would not mean the Balkanisation of Britain, while also encouraging the growth of English nationalism in order to put pressure on the Unionist establishment at Westminster.

The reality is that anti-Englishness is still rife north of the border and continues to underpin Scottish identity. One study by the University of Glasgow found that among immigrants in Scotland who have experienced ethnic jokes 'very often', 74 per cent of English respondents believed that the Scots were 'generally Anglophobic', while only 37 per cent of Pakistanis believed that such jokes showed the Scots to be 'generally racist'. The SNP's articulation of civic, as opposed to ethnic, nationalism has been so successful that Asian Scots (the country's largest ethnic minority) now vote for the SNP more than any other political party, despite continuing to suffer prejudice on the same scale as that experienced by minorities in England. That's because Scottish nationalists have convinced them that what they share with white Scots is a history of being colonised by the English. This audacious re-writing of Scottish history, in which England's former imperial partner presents itself as a fellow victim of rapacious Anglo-Saxons, may be disingenuous, but it has done what the English have so far failed to do - create what political scientists are now calling 'multicultural nationalism'.

RIVERS OF CRUD

Englishness has also come to rest on victim-hood, a feeling that all nationalist movements depend upon to mobilise support. But England's sense of oppression is not yet accompanied by self-confidence or political vision, which north of the border put the SNP in power for the first time in 2007. English anxiety about Caledonian influence in southern affairs is compounded by jealousy of the fact that the Scots and Welsh have a clear sense of who they are and are free to articulate that identity, not least through the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly they voted for in the devolution referendums of 1997. On the 2001 census, the options for white people in England and Wales were 'British', 'Irish' and 'Other', while in Scotland a Scottish option was included. This seemed to confirm that the white English had become a non-people.

The English identity crisis is closely bound up with the politics of race. Those who feel that their English nationality is being denied usually point to 'political correctness gone mad', by which they mean that ethnic minorities are indulged at the expense of the majority. The result, they feel, is that tolerance - that great English virtue - is abused, thus calling into question the efficacy of multiculturalism, rather than the willingness of the English to live up to their principles. Apocryphal stories abound of taxi drivers being banned from flying the George flag during football tournaments. The educational underachievement and
anti-social behaviour of working-class children have even been blamed on the confusion about what Englishness is. One youth worker in Birmingham told *The Times*: 'Black kids are proud to be black, Asian kids are proud to be Indian or Pakistani. There’s not a lot of cultural identity for white Anglo-Saxon males.' The belief in ‘tolerance abuse’ has intensified with the rise of Islamic extremism, and the fact that most of the men convicted for terrorist offences in the UK have been English-born, or raised here, whereas in the US most have been foreign nationals.

Attitudes to race and religion exemplify the way that ignorance about the origins and nature of modern England, far more than political correctness, is hampering the development of a modern English identity. England, which defined itself for 400 years as a Protestant nation is now one of the world’s most secular societies, with 69 per cent of the population never attending a religious service, up from 26 per cent in 1964. Charles Darwin graces the Bank of England’s £10 note and nobody minds (imagine what would happen in the US if he appeared on the dollar bill). The white majority place religion seventh out of ten in their list of priorities, compared to second for Asians and third for the predominantly Christian Afro-Caribbean population.

Whites are consequently less likely to practice whatever faith they have, and the Church of England has acknowledged that in some inner cities black immigrants and their descendents are keeping open many churches that would otherwise have to close. Yet Christianity is tacitly defended as part of a white national heritage that’s being destroyed by immigration. This was apparent in some of the reaction to the Archbishop of Canterbury’s clumsy suggestion that aspects of sharia law might be introduced to Britain. It was also apparent when British Airways legally stopped an employee from displaying a crucifix on her uniform. The *Daily Express* opined that ‘Britain is a Christian country ... and the British people are very angry at continuing assaults on their heritage and culture’ by ‘politically correct busybodies’.

The English sense of victimhood mines a deep seam of Powellism in the nation’s psyche, according to which the working classes have been betrayed, forced against their will and without consultation to live in an alien and dangerous multi-racial environment, which its middle-class architects can physically avoid because of their greater wealth. Ostensibly liberal commentators have recently been burning this fossil fuel again, with one of the most noxious clouds being pumped into the atmosphere by Michael Collins. In his ‘biography of the white working class’, *The Liks of Us*, he imagines a golden age of working-class monoculture unsullied by immigration. ‘White flight’ to the suburbs he sees as an almost biblical exodus forced upon the Cockney ‘salt of the earth’ by the criminal reality of life lived with black people since the 1950s. His folk devils are ‘middle-class liberal journalists’, whose accusations of racism from the comfort of their ‘lofts and lattes’ are really motivated by snobbery. Ubiquitous use of the term ‘chav’, and in America ‘white trash’, does show that class hatred is still rife. But to blame the black English, even indirectly, for the ‘decline’ of white working-class culture is absurd, because that culture, like every other in these Isles, was never pure. And the way it changed in the second half of the twentieth century had much to do with consumerism and the influence of America, which is ironic, because that’s something Collins’s Cockney heroes share with the black working classes they supposedly fear so much.

Throughout Europe since the eighteenth century ‘rootless’ cosmopolitan intelligentsias have been blamed for frustrating nationalism. George Orwell’s criticisms of the English left were certainly necessary in the 1930s and resonated again in the 1980s. ‘England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality’, he famously wrote in *The Lion and the Unicorn*. That’s less true now though, and if there remains a gut feeling of English nationalism as ‘awful, horrible, leave it to the yobs’, it’s as likely to come from the right. For example, Simon Heffer’s study of Englishness, which bravely advocated the end of Union, concluded that the ‘civilised and educated classes’ were best fitted to lead the breakaway rather than ‘the spiky-haired louts with red and white faces’ who follow the national football team.

G.K. Chesterton’s 1907 poem *The Secret People* is often quoted as the cry of a majority denied a voice in their own country: ‘Smile at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget/ For we are the people of England who have not spoken yet’. The cultural critic Patrick Wright nails the poem’s appeal: ‘It is a semi-innate theory of encroachment that allows even the most well-placed man in the world to imagine himself a member of an endangered aboriginal minority: a freedom fighter striking out against “alien” values and the infernal workings of a usurping state’. The secret people are not actually very secret. They can be heard daily on radio phone-ins, in bars and restaurants, on public transport and, yes, in taxis, bemoaning the fact that they are forbidden from being English. The question is: are they being listened to?

**BRITS WHA HAE!**

*English nationalists are heard loud and clear by politicians and policy makers; they’re just not being given the answers they want. Conservative leaders since Margaret Thatcher have whipped up British*
nationalism by encouraging discontent with immigration, Europe and devolution. But their instinctive unionism has stopped them properly addressing ‘the English question’, while the essentially Victorian, imperial vision of Britain on which their unionism is based precludes any imaginative reform of Britishness.22 In contrast, Labour leaders since Neil Kinnock have engaged with historical debates about national identity. As well as delivering devolution to Scotland and Wales, the Blair and Brown governments have confronted traditional left-wing distaste for patriotism and made a concerted attempt to nurture post-imperial Britishness. When mourning the idea of a ‘British Day’ comparable to America’s 4th of July, Gordon Brown declared: ‘We in our party should feel pride in our Britishism and patriotic purpose founded on liberty for all, responsibility by all, and fairness to all’.23 Attempts to articulate a radical Englishness have been less frequent because the Labour Party has its own electoral interests in maintaining the Union and discouraging any initiatives that might further the cause of separation. Former Home Secretary David Blunkett is one of the few who has argued that a radical Englishness could be made to serve the reform of Britishness. Speaking to the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2005 he said:

We can build a new sense of English identity, finding its place among the plural identities of the United Kingdom and supporting a wider Britishness. Englishness can be experienced, asserted and celebrated in the fabric of existence as a community: in our habits, casts of mind, the culture that we daily create and re-create. We can find it in the traditions of fairness and civic duty and in our spirit of imagination and invention. In this way we can overcome bigotry, insularity and hostility.24

Fine words, but as yet nothing practical has been done to build an English national identity that’s fit for purpose. There is no English national anthem so we still have to put up with singing God Save the Queen (of the 32 countries that took part in football’s 2006 World Cup, England was the only one not to have its own anthem). There is still no St. George’s Day Public Holiday, despite the fact that it is also Shakespeare’s birthday (and as St George came, like Morris Dancing, from the Middle East, the holiday would also symbolise England’s historic diversity).25 There has also been no resolution of the constitutional imbalance left by devolution, since New Labour’s flirtation with regional assemblies failed to excite voters. The workings of government may not vex the English people as much as symbols of nationhood do, and in any case a Bill of Rights for all Britons would do more to foster citizenship than the creation of an English parliament or a reduction in the voting rights of Scottish MPs.26 But the constitution surely does matter, and the most pragmatic reformers should remember that allowing people, in Evelyn Waugh’s phrase, to ‘put out more flags’, will not necessarily stop the demand for a more political expression of their nationality. After a vigorous campaign, in 1960 the Welsh were finally given the right to fly their national flag in public, having previously had to ask permission from the Crown to do so (it’s still absent from the Union Jack, one reason why that flag lacks legitimacy). A people thought to be unconcerned with political devolution and placated by the fluttering of a red dragon went on to support the creation of a Welsh Assembly.

More people in England currently favour the creation of an English parliament than they do membership of the Euro.27 As well as underlining disquiet with New Labour’s constitutional settlement, that’s a reflection of the Euroscepticism of the English, compared to their more canny open-minded Scottish and Welsh neighbours, for whom membership of the EU is somewhere between a welcome check on English power and an alternative to the UK. English xenophobia won’t be tempered without concrete acceptance of England’s uniqueness. But, instead, the New Labour project seeks to foster a more civic Britishness. So, for example, Lord Goldsmith (appointed to head the Government’s ‘citizenship review’) suggested that God Save the Queen ‘is outdated and needs a rewrite’ with words that are ‘more inclusive’.28 The reconfiguring of Britishness, including a re-write of the national anthem, remains a necessary project that all progressive Britons should support. But to be successful it must be accompanied by recognition of the distinctiveness of the four nations that comprise the UK, including the English elephant that stands, blowing its trumpet, in the smart open-plan living room that’s been designed for its cuter co-habitants. The need to act is becoming more urgent, for when the Conservaties eventually return to power there will be fewer opportunities to address English discontent progressively.

Both liberal and conservative unionists talk a great deal about the need to instil ‘British values’, while debating which histories have shaped and demonstrated those values. Whether they prefer the Chartists or Churchill, each side agrees that among the things we cherish are ‘liberty’, ‘duty’, ‘tolerance’ and ‘fair play’.29 The search for British values has spilled over into debates about what constitutes Englishness. That’s a good thing if we are to avoid returning to an exclusively ethnic definition of Englishness based on bloodlines rather than culture lines. So what should be in our patriotic primer for the
Imagined Nation

twenty-first century? Given how many people still think multicultural England began in the 1950s, it’s vital that more realise, for example, that fish and chips are as much a product of immigration (invented with the help of continental Jewish refugees in the nineteenth century) as that cliché of diversity Chicken Tikka Masala. The language we speak should also be historically amplified. Next time you’re gazzumped in the housing market or you eat some nosh, remember that those terms are originally Yiddish, many more of which are found in the Oxford English Dictionary (founded by a Scot), alongside those words of Asian, African and Caribbean origin that so vex today’s guardians of the morals of English youth.

It’s also important that we include modern pop culture in our story of England, however embarrassing some find its association with sex and drugs, and however compromised it is by corporate commerce. While the Beatles are second only to Shakespeare on most people’s list of what makes them proud to be English, there’s still a Puritanism on the left, as well as the right, that regards pop culture as an improper source of pride. That Puritanism condemned ‘Cool Britannia’ to the dustbin of spin when in fact Blair was saying something important about the need to broaden the parameters of patriotism. When the Sex Pistols reformed for their thirtieth anniversary concerts at Brixton Academy in 2007, this was not only four men exploiting nostalgia to sort out their pensions but also fans sharing in a collective enjoyment of critical patriotism every bit as authentic as support for England’s underachieving football team. With St George Cross flags as well as Union Jacks adorning drum kits and speakers, the band took to the stage with Vera Lynn’s There’ll Always Be An England playing on the PA, cheered on by fans ranging in age from 10 to 60, who sang together with equal gusto when the Pistols performed their own God Save the Queen.

There is still no future in England’s dreaming and the proper excavation of our English history has to do more than deliver up ‘values’ like so many golden torcs at an Anglo-Saxon burial site. Otherwise it risks becoming too moralistic and that deadens any expression of love for one’s country. We must avoid essentialist views of national character and remind ourselves that whatever values we hold dear are not peculiar to us. Being ever ready to distinguish history from myth and legend, we must also acknowledge that values are not the same as virtues. We’ve certainly had some finest hours (for example the abolition of slavery, the bicentenary of which was celebrated in 2007 much more enthusiastically than the tri-centenary of the UK in the same year). But, as Gordon Brown reminds us, ‘the past is also strewn with examples of how we failed to live up to our ideals’ (like the profiting from slavery in the first place). Together with our Scottish neighbours, we need to confront those failures more than we have previously. So, taking all this into account, what could England’s future look like? In his impressive study of English identity, Krishan Kumar concludes: ‘English nationalism, that enigmatic and elusive thing, so long conspicuous by its absence, might now show what a truly civic nationalism can look like.’

MONGREL GLORY
Perhaps the time has come to stop running scared of ethnic nationalism in our pursuit of civic ideals that all can salute, for one may actually serve the other. England is not only one of the most diverse countries in the world; it is also one of the most hybrid. Our ethnic culture is not as simple as population statistics suggest (90 per cent white), for culture cannot be easily carved up in the way that boxes on a census form can be ticked. Nor is it a lifestyle option. Culture is inherently eclectic, something we shape, experience and consume under countless influences, only a few of which we are aware of at any given time. That’s even truer today than it was 300 years ago when Daniel Defoe famously wrote ‘A True Born Englishman’s a contradiction! In speech, an irony! In fact, a fiction!’

A poll taken after the 2004 Olympic games found that double gold medal winner Kelly Holmes was as much a source of pride as the Queen, a vote confirmed by the rapturous reception she was given by the predominantly white citizens of her home town of Hildenborough in Kent, on her victory-parade return from the Games. That scene illustrated more than just tolerance and ‘fairness’, which in the poll mentioned earlier came third as the ‘British’ quality most people valued (after ‘defiance of Nazi Germany’ and ‘people’s right to say what they think’). A mixed race woman, Holmes is a testament, like Zadie Smith, Lewis Hamilton and many others, to English hybridity.

Mixed relationships are more prevalent and accepted in England than in most western countries (since polling began on the subject in 1958, the number of people disapproving of intermarriage has fallen from 71 per cent of the population to 15 per cent today). The number of mixed couples has more than doubled in the last twenty years, as a consequence of which mixed race people are now the third largest ethnic group in the UK and the fastest growing one. How many of us if we really knew our history would discover that we too are ‘mixed’ in some way? Modest estimates put the figure at 10 per cent of the population, but the true figure would probably be much higher were
everyone to have a DNA test. It's not a straightforward barometer of progress, not least because some minorities are more likely to intermarry than others. But it does indicate that multiculturalism, far from being the artificial imposition of modern social engineers bent on destroying ancient customs, is in fact the attribute of a country voluntarily becoming more heterogeneous.

Some minorities still prefer to shelter under the umbrella of Britishness, because it relates to the passport that usually legitimates their passage and presence. But as Mark Perryman has consistently pointed out, support for the England football team testifies (almost as much as the team itself) to the increasingly multi-racial identification with England, since fans of all colours have reclaimed the George flag from the Union Jack since the 1996 European Championships. With respect to Monty Panesar, no wonder Norman Tebbit holds to the cricket test rather than the football test. Gary Young of the Guardian is well qualified to discern the racial difference between England and Scotland. He was born in England to West Indian parents and grew up during the 1980s in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, before attending university in Edinburgh:

It is now no longer possible, or desirable, to forestall the inevitable – it is time to find an accommodation between blackness and Englishness. Paradoxically, such a task might be easier here than in any other parts of the United Kingdom. The Scots and the Welsh still think of themselves as primarily white nations where black people happen to live ... The English no longer have that self-image; the apparently seamless link between Englishness and whiteness has long since been broken. Even though nobody would question that England is, and most likely always will be, predominantly white, it ... is almost impossible to imagine it without black and Asian people. From pop to politics the black experience is now intimately interwoven into the fabric of English daily life in a way that is not so obviously the case in Scotland or Wales.

Is the black experience really so interwoven in our daily life? After all, as Younge acknowledges, it's 'primarily concentrated in urban areas', with regions like the south west of England having similar minority population levels to Scotland and Wales.

Writing as someone who has strong rural as well as urban family roots, I don't want to see an Englishness in which the flat, austere beauty of Norfolk fields are erased from the national imagination. But I am under no illusion that those fields mystically represent the 'real' England, elsewhere lost to industrialisation and immigration. For

starters, much of Norfolk's intensively farmed land was reclaimed from the sea by Dutch engineers in the seventeenth century, land which is now worked by other foreigners from Eastern Europe because most locals don't want to. Throughout England, the number of migrant workers in rural areas has more than trebled since 2003, while young English men and women continue to leave for better opportunities in the city. Thanks to a media that's almost as globalised as our economy, it's difficult for people who remain in the countryside to ignore the urban England that 80 per cent of the nation inhabits, even if they never go to the Indian restaurant or Chinese takeaway that can be found in most village high streets. Country and city, though still very different, have more in common with each other than either care to admit. So why pretend that diversity is some metropolitan conspiracy foisted upon a long-suffering yeomanry, or, conversely, that every Caucasian in a thatched cottage is a member of the BNP?

This is not a happy land. Immigration is higher up the list of voters' concerns than it has been since the 1970s, and attacks on ethnic minorities have risen sharply in recent years. And let's face it: 'hybridity' is not going to enter our political lexicon in the way that Churchill's 'Finest Hour' did. Nor is it going to be the rallying cry for a new Englishness. It smacks too much of the liberal elite, that amorphous yet powerful body of men and women who are periodically blamed for England's identity crisis. 'Hybridity' belongs to an intellectual argot of ambiguity; it's the language of uncertainty, which for those in search of certainty is at best unsettling and at worst frightening. But whatever reassuring words or phrases the English settle on to describe how hybrid they are, it is this central feature of our nation which we must embrace as the foundation of our national identity in the coming century.

For, it is the depth of our hybridity that makes the English so different. Different from the Scots and Welsh, because ethnic and national minorities make up a smaller proportion of those countries (only 1 per cent compared to 15 in England); different from the rest of Europe, because in most continental countries there is a smaller number and range of ethnic/national minorities (they form an average of 8 per cent of the population of EU members); there is also greater hostility towards minorities on the Continent, manifest in ruthless assimilationist government policy, and a failure to monitor discrimination effectively. The Paris riots of 2006 were a result of that; so too was the Spanish racial abuse of black English footballers in 2004 and of racing driver Lewis Hamilton in 2008.

We are also different from the United States because, although
America is more diverse than England and proud of it, America is not as integrated. True, minorities are more likely to salute the Stars and Stripes because in the American Dream they have an aspirational, mobilising ideal that's less freighted with class than anything Britain offers. And despite current anxiety about the Latinisation of the US as a result of the Mexican influx, immigration remains central to the creation story of modern America whereas it continues to be seen as a marginal aberration here. Our Ellis Island is the Channel Tunnel, our Statue of Liberty an electrified fence and a barking Alsatian.

However, as Americans themselves admit, less racial mixing occurs in their private and public spaces than in England. Because a smaller proportion of the US population live in inner cities, and because of the more ghettoized geography of urban, suburban and rural America (a hangover from enforced segregation), Americans are less likely to go to school with, reside near, socialise with, date or marry people of different ethnic backgrounds. That difference is reflected in American advertising and TV programmes, where the races are seen to work together but little else. It's an Alamo of the mind as well as the body, since few Americans, whatever their ethnicity, question the self-segregation that pervades their society. Of the world's largest nations only Brazil outdoes us in the scope of its genetic make-up, but away from the football field it too is economically more stratified along racial lines than England (at least we can beat the Brazilians off the pitch if not yet on it).

Hybridity, then, is what makes England special, something with which we can define ourselves and something of which we can be proud without being complacent. It's not a form of cultural relativism because the ingredients of our hybridity and the culture it produces are unique to us. It links our rural and urban lives. It links us to Europe, to America and indeed to most of the world. It links us to the past, as a pre-colonial then colonial nation, and to our future as a post-colonial one. If these sweeping panoramas are not your cup of tea, remember that in myriad ways hybridity is present in our daily lives – often, like our DNA, without us even knowing it (not least that cup of milky sweet tea, product of our links with China, India and the Caribbean). It's not an aberration, still less a betrayal. It's who we've always been. There is, as Billy Bragg has observed, a hyphen in Anglo-Saxon. It's a term that fails to capture the variety of early English culture, which contained French and Islamic influences. But in any case, if being a 'people of the hyphen' was good enough for Germanic tribes over a millennia ago, it's surely good enough for us now, unless of course you believe that skin colour remains the defining criterion of Englishness. If you do, you're the real minority, for polls taken since the turn of this century show that around 80 per cent of the population think you do not have to be white in order to be English.

On the first of July 1963 the Beatles released *She Loves You*, composed under the influence of American rhythm 'n blues and English music hall song. A month earlier in the *Spectator* Colin MacInnes, author of *England, Half English* and the first herald of British youth culture, begged his readers to embrace what he called their 'mongrel glory'. MacInnes knew what he was talking about. On his mother's side he was a relative of Rudyard Kipling and of the Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, both celebrants of Englishness in the imperial age. With Scottish origins on his father's side, he was brought up in Australia. As an adult, he was an habitué of Soho, an area of London that's been home to immigrants since Mozart and Casanova lived there. Of recent arrivals from the West Indies and West Africa who formed part of his social circle, MacInnes wrote:

> Whatever their origins of place and race, they are now Britons in every sense that we are. The alternative is a continuing, nagging misery and pretence: the fatal weakness of not seeing what our country is. History is unkind to pretension that is not sustained by power ... The choice is to be terrified and be; or to cling to safe hatreds, and destroy ourselves as no bomb ever will.

The English can solve the identity crisis that currently afflicts them without living Maclnnes's extraordinary life.

Therapy will not come through creating an English parliament or a St George's Day Bank Holiday, nor even by winning the World Cup again; and the English patient certainly won't be cured by 'clinging to safe hatreds' – blaming others for their malaise, whether it's the Scots and Welsh or foreign immigrants and their descendants. Therapy will come through that cliché of the American self-help book: 'learn to love yourself'. The English must embrace what they've become since the Second World War and what they've always to some extent been: one of the world's most richly diverse nations; neurotically insular yet adventurous and culturally porous when it suits them. When the English find the courage to celebrate their mongrel glory; when they realise that the only people stopping them from being English is themselves; then, and only then, will they start to breathe easily once more.

NOTES
1. The number of people living in England who describe their national identity as British fell from 63% in 1992 to 48% in 2007, while those who
describe themselves as English rose from 31% to 40%. See National Centre for Social Research, Perspectives on a Changing Society: British Social Attitudes 23rd Report, 24.1.07.

2. For concern about the replacement of Elgar by Smith see Daily Express, 2 April 2006. For a typical expression of general Scotophobia see Geoffrey Wheatcroft, ‘Hammered by the Scots’, Guardian, 23.6.03, in which he characterized the Blair era as ‘an influx across the border [of] Scotch carpetbaggers’ while back home ‘Edinburgh is giddily spendthrift with English money’.

3. The Times, 23.4.02.


5. Ibid., pp164-5. At the 2003 Scottish Parliament elections, 47% of Pakistani Scots voted for the SNP, compared to 28% for Labour. As Hussein and Miller argue, even allowing for Muslim opposition to the Iraq war, ‘it is almost inconceivable that any English National Party, however moderate, could win twice as much support from Blacks and Asians as from the average voter in England’.


7. The fact that the white Welsh were also not offered such an option seems not to have mattered to English critics.

8. Simon Heffer, for example, writes ‘It is a self-evident truth that if multiculturalism is actively encouraged it must be at the expense of the indigenous culture in all its forms. At a time when a nation is re-establishing itself, that could be destabilizing and harmful’, Nor Shall My Sword: The Reinvention of England (1999), pp42-43. What is self-evident is that this is a wilful re-writing of English history as audacious as that of the Scots with whom Heffer has lost patience. For at what moment did the ‘indigenous culture’ cease to be shaped by other cultures and become pure in the first place?

9. See for example, ‘Cabbies refuse order to remove England flags from taxis’, The Times, 30.5.02. The order in this case came from Portsmouth City Council because taxi drivers had broken by-laws. At every football tournament since the 1998 World Cup, stories such as this have appeared in the media, with council officials usually portrayed as politically correct apparatchiks determined to frustrate English patriotism.

10. Penny Wark, ‘Lost White Boys’, The Times, 15.11.07. Such anecdotal evidence does not explain why the most underachieving social group, boys of Caribbean descent, reputedly have a stronger cultural identity than their white counterparts.

11. The Times, 16.6.07.
27. An ICM poll commissioned by the Campaign for an English Parliament in April 2007 found 67% in favour. This compares to only 23% in favour of the Euro, according to the last ICM poll on the subject in 2004.


30. Fish and chips were voted one of 20 ‘Icons of England’ in a poll of 350,000 people conducted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2006.

31. For the debate on this, see ‘In search of British values’, Prospect, October 2007.

32. Bikhu Parekh, ‘New Englands’, Times Literary Supplement, 2.2.07, makes this point well: ‘Shared values’, he writes, ‘are not enough to hold a society together. The Scottish National Party shares British values, but seeks Scottish independence’. Equally, Parekh continues, ‘One’s son may not share one’s values, indeed one may be hostile to his way of life, but one does not therefore disown him or love him less. Patriotism has a similar thrust, and we fail to understand its psychological basis if we take too moralistic a view of it.’


36. Cited in Jeremy Paxman, The English: A Portrait of a People, Penguin 1999, p58. Paxman concludes, ‘Defoe was right. The English are a mongrel race, and it has taken the development of communities living in England that are visibly different to demonstrate the point’, op. cit., p59.

37. Anthony King, ‘What does it mean to be British?’ Daily Telegraph, 27.7.05.

38. Ibid. When asked ‘What defines Britain? 54% said a ‘sense of fairness’, 59% said defiance of Nazi Germany and 61% ‘the right to say what you think’.


40. Official estimates in 2001 put the mixed-race population at 677,000, 14.6% of the minority population and 1.2% of the total population, compared to 350,000 (11% of minorities and 0.6% of the total) in 1997. See National Statistics 2001.
10 per cent (deemed by estate agents to be the tipping point at which ‘white flight’ is set in motion). See Lola Adesioye, ‘Separate Reality’, Guardian, 21.1.08.

53. Blacks and whites in America are more likely to watch different entertainment shows than Britons; advertisers follow suit, targeting different ethnicities in separate commercials. See Freedland, op. cit, pp136-7.

54. The numbers of white Americans who approve of interracial marriage rose from 4% in 1958, when polls were first taken, to 61% in 1997, while the number of blacks approving rose from 58% (when first polled in 1972) to 77% in 1997. But the number of people who disapprove is still more than double that of the UK. See Renee C. Romano, Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America, Harvard 2003, pp2-3. Overall, the number of mixed marriages as a proportion of all unions is similar in each country, around 2 per cent according to the last census. The key difference is that in America marriage between black and white is rare – making only 0.6% of the total in 2000, while in Britain it is the most common form of mixed marriage. Also, official figures do not account for the number of non-marital mixed relationships, thought to be much higher in the UK than in the US.


56. See for example Guardian, 27.6.02.