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An Analysis of the British National Party's *Identity* Magazine

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EPI-REVEL
Revues électroniques de l'Université Côte d'Azur

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First published in 2000, *Identity* was the response of the British National Party to the view that Britain had become a diverse society for ever, and that the "new" Britishness could no longer have an ethnic basis, nor, in fact, be exclusively grounded in recognisable British values. Drawing on books recently published on the genetic history of the British Isles, *Identity* contributors try to show that far from being all descended from immigrants, the British can biologically trace their ancestry to the first pioneers who reached the Isles after the last glaciation, and that the original populations were merely supplemented by minor gene flows from closely-related peoples in early historical times, from the Celts to the Normans. Thus the British have remained anthropologically homogeneous till the middle of the twentieth century. In its magazine the BNP promotes a racial(ist) view of identity rooted in a firm belief in the objective existence of blood ties. This biological identity has however developed a cultural structure around itself, which provides the concrete manifestations of what Britishness is and supplies the reservoir of facts and symbols indispensable for its reproduction and durability. From that perspective traditional national culture also becomes an instrument of the ethnic reawakening of the British people drugged by consumerism and liberal propaganda. Britishness in *Identity* is thus pre-modern and anti-liberal, the product of the fear of cultural deracination, territorial dispossession and racial extinction. It underpins a model of ethnicity which predates immigration and postdates the multicultural society.

Britishness is a modern idea, at most an early modern one if one thinks of James I and the Union Jack. It is also usually regarded as an institutional construct, a political identity which firmed up during the long eighteenth century around Protestantism and a good dose of xenophobia and then thrived on world commerce, the expansion and consolidation of the Empire, and more generally Britain's ruling the waves for the benefit of her peripheral subjects as much as for that of the English. To be sure Britishness was an imagined identity and there was not a little confusion between Englishness and Britishness, but from the Victorian Age onwards, and quite possibly long before, it is not difficult to spot a real sense of Britishness among the peoples, and even more certainly the elites of what, till the mid-Victorian Age at least, was commonly called "the Empire" in the initial sense of the term, one nation compounded of different peoples and cultures all equal under one crown. Things began

to turn a little sour when the going ceased to be good after the second world war. Britain was no longer a superpower and some people began to look on the kingdom no longer as a nation of many peoples, but as a political and economic union of diverse nations. In such a context, regional nationalisms could resurface, unless they were simply born. From the 1970s it became possible to reflect on the "break-up of Britain" with plausibility, if not quite convincingly. That Britain and Britishness might one day vanish like the Cheshire cat in the course of a lengthy process of dilution began to wonderfully exercise the minds and pens of politicians, journalists and an ever-growing cohort of intellectuals and academics who over the years turned this preoccupation into an industry.

Soon the question of Britishness became inextricably entangled with the issue of multiculturalism and the promotion, much more than the mere study, of a multiracial society in Great Britain. It had by then become obvious that the initial dream of assimilation, of "Black Britons" or "Brown Anglo-Saxons", would never come true. To the liberals and progressives of every hue who had become hegemonic in the media and in Academe, assimilation had somehow become a dirty word and integration became the preferred term possibly because it was definitionally so equivocal that it could be employed to advocate strategies which many might consider as disintegrative in a reassuring voice. With the rising tide and growing diversity of immigration, integration predictably came to mean nothing more than the hope that if the right policies were implemented the several communities living on British soil at the end of the twentieth century would be able to live and work side by side in harmony and peace while retaining by right their native cultures and mores.

In such a heterogeneous "new society" that its intellectual and political elites were bent on transmogrifying into "the first country in the world that can be a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multinational state"[1] what was to become of Britishness, all the more so as, like it or not, history had inextricably bound it up with whiteness? In the 2000 report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, the Parekh Report, the traditional side of Britishness got short shrift. Just as it had once been said that there was not enough black in the Union Jack, it was now predicated that there was too much white in Britishness, a "racially coded" notion. The report, it seemed, favoured the creation of what one of the members of the Commission (Tariq Modood) had recently called, using an interesting plural, "new forms of Britishness"[2], after demolishing the idea that there had been and should continue to exist a distinct British national identity. Therefore the diverse cultures now standing shoulder to shoulder in Great Britain should not only be tolerated but recognized. Gradually there would occur the construction of hybrid forms of identity through cultural overlapping and cross-fertilization, but the new Britain must be "a community of communities" as well as a "community of citizens" whose social and political cohesion certainly depended on certain "shared values", but these could be the century-old values of the white community only if the various minorities settled in the country regarded them as legitimate; otherwise some sort of consensus had to be reached through intercultural negotiation. The Parekh Report also contained judgments and recommendations that were better-founded and sensible, but the notion that Britishness carried racialist overtones and had to be redefined did not go down

[1] Gordon Brown *dixit* in Steve Richards, "The NS Interview: Gordon Brown", *New Statesman & Society*, 19 April 1999, p.19

[2] Tariq Modood, "New Forms of Britishness: Post-Immigration Ethnicity and Hybridity in Britain", in R. Lentin (ed.), *The Expanding Nation: Towards a Multi-Ethnic Ireland*, Conference Proceedings, Dublin: Trinity College, 1999.

well, and the book ran the gauntlet of politicians and journalists[3]. Even *The Economist*'s Bagehot could not believe his eyes[4].

It was not obvious that to turn Britain into "a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with its rich diversity"[5] would also result in the kind of national homogeneity, albeit new, that Gordon Brown, in particular, had been talking about for some time[6], and appeared to regard as an indispensable cement of society. The 2001 riots in Northern England[7], although race may not have been their only cause, seemed to show that Brown had a point, and the Cantle report[8] that followed was perhaps the first official recognition, *via* David Blunkett's introduction, that multiculturalist policies and tolerance for strange customs had gone too far[9]. Four years later, the 7/7 bombings in London proved with an Eliotian bang that Blunkett and Cantle were quite probably right, and in 2006, as the "war on terror" hotted up, one could even conclude from certain keynote speeches given by Tony Blair[10] and Ruth Kelly[11], then Communities Secretary, that multiculturalism was to be seriously watered down, if not considered as dead, because it had arguably resulted in a more fractured society. The message was the same as Blunkett's in 2001. All immigrant communities needed to conform to basic "British norms" and "a sense of civic identity and shared values" – "common bonds" in Kelly's words – must be reintroduced in national life. Since then Gordon Brown has continued in the same vein, focusing in several speeches on Britishness and the importance of integration[12]. The citizenship test introduced in November 2005[13] is no longer enough; local councils have been encouraged to promote "citizens days"; there has been talk of holding a yearly "Patriotism Day", or a "Britishness Day", of opening a Museum of British History[14], and even the British Empire has been requisitioned to "reunite this divided nation"[15]. After the

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[3] For an overview see for instance the last chapter of Gordon Betts, *The Twilight of Britain. Cultural Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Politics of Toleration*, New Brunswick (N.J.): Transaction Publishers, 2002, pp.349-366.

[4] Bagehot, "Don't mention the B-word", *The Economist*, 14 October 2000, p.50.

[5] *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (chair: Bhikhu Parekh), London: Profile Books Ltd, 2000, p.viii.

[6] See Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp.253-254.

[7] And 9/11. See "Connubial Wrongs", *The Economist*, 10 November 2001, p.37.

[8] Community Cohesion Review Team, chaired by Ted Cantle, *Community Cohesion*, London: Home Office, 2001.

[9] See, for example, "Blunkett's under fire for backing 'British norms'", *The Independent*, 10 December 2001, p.2. This is a report of an interview that Blunkett had given in *The Independent on Sunday* of 9 December and in which he had declared "we have norms of acceptability and those who come into our home –for that is what it is – should accept those norms". Also, "Blunkett calls for national debate on race and religion", *The Independent*, 12 December 2001, p.4 and the same day, referring to the Cantle report, "Immigrants must show loyalty to nation, says report", *The Independent*, 12 December 2001, p.4. Interesting comments in Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging", *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol.40, n°3, 2006, p.211.

[10] See "Radical Muslims must integrate, says Blair", *The Guardian*, 9 December 2006, p.4. Blair's speech on "the duty to integrate" was delivered the day before.

[11] Neil Tweedie, "Multi-culturalism may have fractured society, admits Kelly", *Daily Telegraph*, 24 August 2006, p.8; "Kelly vows that new debate on immigration will engage critically with multiculturalism", *The Guardian*, 25 August, 2006, p.7.

[12] For instance at a seminar on the nature of Britishness on 27 February 2007. See Michael White, "Facing up to awkward truth on immigration", *The Guardian*, 28 February, 2007, p.13.

[13] "Britain for beginners", *The Economist*, 6 September 2003, p.35.

[14] On 10 December 2007 *The Daily Telegraph* launched a "Call Yourself British Campaign", and its leading article (p.23) proclaimed: "We must never forget to call ourselves British". See also, Lord Baker, "It's time for a museum of British history to celebrate our achievements", *Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 2007, pp.18-19; "Brown throws weight behind push for Britishness museum" and "[Brown] Why I support a museum of British history", *Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 2007, pp.16-17.

[15] John O'Sullivan, "The history of empire can reunite this divided nation", *Daily Telegraph*, 1 September 2007, p.B8.

July 2007 government green paper on "The Governance of Britain" had stressed the need for a clear definition of what it meant to be British and proposed "to develop a British statement of values", and Gordon Brown had focused on Britishness and the importance of integration in his Labour conference speech[16], one could be forgiven for believing that the country was on the verge of a major rethink of Britishness, perhaps a restoration along more traditional lines[17] as the high priests of multiculturalism themselves now seemed to agree that the experiment had led to Britain "sleepwalking to segregation"[18]. But this was an ideological and political impossibility for although multiculturalism might have become suspect to some, diversity had not, thus singularly restricting the manner Britishness could be reoriented.

In so far as the established political class was determined to leave the race factor out of the equation and to start from the premise that Britain had become a diverse society forever, and was likely to receive more, and more varied, immigrants in the future, it was clear that Britishness could no longer be viewed as having an ethnic basis. National identity had to be regarded as eminently fluid (the bizarre but well-publicised notion that national identities are always in becoming, never in being proving here extremely serviceable), and what should be promoted in the kingdom was not so much a national identity as a British citizenship centred on a number of political and ethical values which allowed the new British to dispense with the traditional emotional attachments which "older" Britons (in days when they were not yet called Britlanders) were supposed to feel for their native country, its history, its heroes, its achievements, its way of life, its landscapes. Consequently the "common values" around which the populations of Britain could be expected to rally were no more than what Philip Collins, an ex-Blair adviser, defined in the October 2007 issue of *Prospect* as "the basic tenets of liberal democracy"[19], what Brown, on various occasions, referred to as tolerance, liberty, fairness, fair play, civic duty, and even Orwellian decency. Others completed his list with obvious additions ranging from accepting the modern woman to good neighbourliness *via* "saying sorry when someone else bumps into you"[20]. To be sure, in his speech of 27 February 2007, Gordon Brown had conceded that a sense of ethnic belonging might contribute to the unity of a nation, but then had quickly moved on to the crucial role played by institutions, values, social procedures to mould what he significantly preferred to call "citizenship" rather than national identity. Clearly there was little room for former generations in his "new Britishness". After the green paper, even Bhikhu Parekh could breathe a sigh of relief. After all, to be British would not demand "a deep love of the country", merely being loyal to Britain ("however much one may disagree with its dominant values") and "accepting certain fundamental obligations to its [Britain's] government and other members"[21]. In the *Daily Telegraph*, Vicki Woods could poke much conservative fun at Brown's bloodless, fleshless, boneless Britishness:

> 'Britishness' to Gordon Brown is both vague and ill-defined enough to make use
> of in political soundbites: we are a 'hard-working people', 'decent' and 'tolerant',
> who are bright-eyed about 'liberty' and 'fair play'/.../ Britishness is not something

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[16] See Philip Johnson, "Immigrants to get cultural 'briefing packs'", *Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 2007, p.12. The briefing packs were to give "tips on acceptable behaviour".

[17] The Goldsmith report of March 2008, "Citizenship: Our Common Bond", that suggested that all school-leavers swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen possibly tried to go in that direction. It mainly provoked an outcry, even though it followed in the wake of the Royal United Services Institute report which claimed that a want of national identity had made Britain vulnerable from within as much as from without.

[18] The words of Trevor Phillips, the chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, in Richard Woods & David Leppard, "Has Britain Become Soft on Terror ?", *The Sunday Times*, 17 February 2008, p.13

[19] "In Search of British Values 1", *Prospect*, 139, October 2007, http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=9829, accessed 23 October 2007.

[20] Robert Cooper, *ibid*.

[21] "In Search of British Values 2", *Prospect*, 139, 0ctober 2007, http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=9833, accessed 23 0ctober 2007.

you have to be born with, like being a Lancastrian. You can acquire it on a piece of paper signed off by the Home Office, after you've plodded through a 'citizenship test' /…/ Brown's idea of Britishness means a civic community of 60 million people (and rising) where anyone of any sex, any parentage, any background, any national group, any class, any creed or colour can rise to high office. Or riches. Or success[22].

Others would say in a more scholarly manner that this new Britishness is post-modern and post-national[23]. What the political and intellectual elites are trying to achieve is a constitutional patriotism *à la* Habermas, a civic nation in which the state and culture are decoupled and there can be allegiance to democratic institutions by people of many cultures and ethnicities[24]. Of course, if such people also understand that they must queue for buses, so much the better, but the crucial point remains that the new Britishness is fundamentally culture-free, and so can in no way be an obstacle to immigration and a foe to diversity. It is underpinned by a republican, a Renan-like conception of citizenship in its affirmation that people can live together on the basis of simple choice; in this voluntaristic nation identity becomes strictly political and certainly supra-ethnic, instead of cultural, historical and genealogical. Britishness is defined by the present form of the nation, and by what some would like it to become. It has no respect for what came before. Everything that traditionally defined the nation and its members is to go by the board. To be British is no longer to belong to a community of blood and a community of history; rationality of choice has replaced the claims of kinship, and the ineluctable goal remains what Demos, a New Labour think-tank, had already called in a 1997 pamphlet, "the United Colours of Britain"[25].

Thus from the late 1990s the going became rougher than ever for those for whom neither the decontextualized, disembodied new Britishness nor the chic hybridization it promised had the slightest appeal. Besides, this new Britishness had retained the concept of diversity at its heart (even though it would probably welcome, individual assimilation to the historic culture of the land), and so had not laid the multicultural question and its underlying threats to their traditional identity to rest. After all, what answer was likely to be proffered by the power-brokers to the rather extraordinary but exceedingly revealing way in which Stuart Hall had worded it when "rethinking the multicultural question" in a video conversation with Nira Yuval-Davis in 2004[26]: "What are the terms for groups of people from different cultural, religious, linguistic, historical backgrounds, who have applied to occupy the same social space, whether that is a city or a nation or a region, to live with one another?" In all likelihood, it was to be feared, something very similar to the words of novelist Hanif Kureishi, insisting that the "whites" must understand that to be British no longer meant what it used to signify: "It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was"[27]. In this "social space" which they had always believed to be theirs, they would be the ones who would have to squeeze up, or worse. "They don't want us changed, they want us dead", somebody recently shrieked on a right-wing internet discussion forum. Britain was hopelessly sliding into a post-racial society, an entity evoked on his weblog by Lawrence

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[22] Vicki Woods, « Britishness is not something you're born with », *Daily Telegraph*, 15 March 2008, p.B15.

[23] So post-national, in fact, that it may not exist at all. As many commentators pointed out, Brown's 'common values', for the most part, have nothing specifically British about them; as a guide to human conduct they are almost universally applicable, 'the commonplace principles of most modern democratic societies' [historian Tom Devine], 'a universal catalogue of equal rights and procedures, bland stuff that is valid from Cork to Canberra' [Josef Joffe of *Die Zeit*] (both quotations found in *Prospect* of October 2007 at http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=9829 and 9833 (accessed 23 October 2007).

[24] See Anthony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture*, London: Routledge, 1999, pp.210-216.

[25] Mark Leonard, *Britain ™. Renewing our Identity*, London: Demos, 1997, pp.56-57. Which goes to show, as Orwell might have pointed out, that intellectuals of the Left, or at least of New Labour, can be exceedingly insensitive in their choice of metaphors.

[26] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging", p.213.

[27] Cited in Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, p.260.

Auster with reference to Barack Obama's vision of America, but easily applicable to many multicultural countries: not a society in which no one would think about race any more, but one from which "whiteness has been removed as the country's explicit or implicit historic and majority identity", a country in which "whites, as whites, go silent for ever"[28].

It was in this context, when the traditional identity narratives that related to the past, to a common ancestry, history, culture, and that had animated Anglo-British civilisation (to use Stuart Hall's terminology) for centuries seemed about to be terminated and replaced by others functioning "as a projection of a future trajectory"[29] that the British National Party began to publish *Identity*, a monthly magazine initially much less glossy than it is now, but which from the start contained articles of a perfectly respectable intellectual calibre if one compares like with like[30]. Many of them, despite the magazine's title, are of more general interest, dealing with party affairs or immediate political or economic issues, but the majority are concerned with the politics of belonging. They attempt to demonstrate that Britishness is not simply an abstract legal category that anyone can acquire by mugging up for the Citizens Test, but a genuine deep-rooted national identity based on the traditions, cultures, history and racial background of Great Britain's four nations, and which it is the mission of the party to preserve, illustrate and promote[31]. In an article written in 1993 Stuart Hall perceptively noted that right-wing definitions of Britishness were attempts "to capture the future by a determined long detour through the past"[32]. But neither he, nor probably at first the *Identity* authors themselves, could imagine how long and distant that detour would need to be.

For while the Establishment was trying to concoct a new Britishness that hopefully would hold the country together without seriously denting the existing multiculturalism (were it only to "appease" the ethnic minorities in Great Britain – the term being, rather surprisingly, *The Economist*'s[33]), several books were published on the peopling of the European continent and the British Isles from the Late Upper Palaeolithic and on the genetic roots of the present-day inhabitants of both Ireland and Britain. To some extent these books built on previous research on the genetics of populations, but their contents were new and controversial enough to turn them into quasi-best-sellers. Despite occasional patches of obscurity, they usually were written in a lucid, entertaining style, making it easy for the general cultured public to grasp that the whole early history (and prehistory) of Britain was being startingly revisited and indeed, on the strength of DNA evidence, totally rewritten -- to the point of almost leaving the Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans out of the picture. Yet one looks in vain for references to Bryan Sykes's *The Seven Daughters of Eve* (2001), *Adam's Curse* (2003) or *The Blood of the Isles* (2006), Stephen Oppenheimer's *The Origins of the British* (2006) or David Miles's *The Tribes of Britain* (2005) in the recent writings or long bibliographies of sociologists or cultural thinkers on Britishness and identity, possibly because most of them are constructionists and cannot bring themselves to admit that there might be biological bases to

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[28] Lawrence Auster, "What is Post-Racial America?", *View from the Right*, http://www.amnation.com/vfr/archives/010000.html, accessed 10 July 2008.

[29] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging", p.203.

[30] In one of his articles Nick Griffin explains that *The Voice of Freedom*, the other BNP's main publication, is "first and foremost a propaganda vehicle" for presenting "a snappy, easily grasped summary of our ideas"; on the other hand, for people who "want to have a better grasp of the principles of modern ethnic nationalism and the long-term aims of the BNP, then the things to study are *Identity*, our website and the educational series of Vanguard CDs" ("Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", *Identity*, 30, March 2003, p.6).

[31] The first editorial of the new magazine stated that "the preserving of the identity of the traditional inhabitants and cultures of Britain is, then, our primary purpose" ("Why 'Identity'", *Identity*, n°1, January-February 2000, p.2). John Bean repeats this almost word for word in his own leader of March 2006: "The Voice of Freedom", *Identity*, 64, p.3.

[32] Cited in Ben Wellings, "Rump Britain: Englishness and Britishness, 1992-2001", *National Identities*, vol.9, n°4, 2007, pp.407.

[33] Bagehot, "On Plain Speaking", *The Economist*, 27 0ctober 2007, p.50.

human behaviour. Besides, to imply that man's biological constitution might also be a prime mover of human history, almost on a par with rationality and culture, would be to dabble in "perilous ideas"[34]. Race, therefore, cannot be an analytical concept. Primordialist sociologists will certainly acknowledge that there is much significance in the importance human beings attribute to "relations of descent", "primordial attachments", or "biological connections"[35]. These are "fundamental" beliefs from which one must start probing identity, but it is not the same thing as saying that the essence of the latter is to be found in biology, even though in practice it does not make much difference to individual choices and behaviour whether race is a construct or a biological reality so long as one believes in it[36].

Having no such qualms, the BNP soon realized the intellectual and political capital which could be made out of the findings that the books were popularizing. Here was a means of shoring up an ethnic conception of Britishness that everyone who counted in the land was doing their utmost to discredit. For what story did the books tell? Basically that the British Isles were emptied of their inhabitants by the onset of the last Ice Age; these found shelter in southern refuges, especially in south-west France and northern Spain, but also in the Balkans and along the Black Sea coast. Between 13 and 15,000 years ago[37], when the climate became a little warmer, their descendants started to travel north again, mostly along the Atlantic façade to reach, on foot, Ireland and the Western side of Britain. At roughly the same time, the south-eastern "refugees" set on a long trek which brought them to north-west Europe and eventually, in the Mesolithic, to Norfolk and eastern England across what was then a steppe and not yet the North Sea. The final, probably less significant arrivals from the Mediterranean, northern Germany and Scandinavia took place during the Neolithic period before the introduction of farming in the British Isles. By 5 or 4,000 BC, it seems that the genetic landscape of the British Isles had been fixed to this day. In Stephen Oppenheimer's view: "When we add up all the genetic lines coming into the British Isles, we find that what is left over after the Neolithic is insufficient to call a real mass immigration, male or female, Celtic, Anglo-Saxon or Viking"[38]. From his analysis of mitochondrial DNA, Bryan Sykes concludes that by about 6,000 years BC:

> The genetic bedrock on the maternal side was in place /.../ The pattern was set for the rest of the history of the Isles and very little has disturbed it since /.../ We are an ancient people, and though the Isles have been the target of invasion and opposed settlement from abroad ever since Julius Caesar first stepped on to the shingle shores of Kent, these have barely scratched the topsoil of our deep-seated ancestry[39].

Working on the male Y-chromosome, Oppenheimer comes to the same conclusion:

> The most important message of my genetic story is that three-quarters of British ancestors arrived long before the first farmers. This applies in varying proportions to 88% of Irish, 81% of Welsh, 79% of Cornish, 70% of the people of Scotland /.../ and 68% (over two-thirds) of the English. These figures dwarf any perception of Celtic or Anglo-Saxon ethnicity based on concepts of more recent, massive invasions[40].

[34] See Eric R. Wolf, "Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People", *Current Anthropology*, 35, 1, 1994, pp.1-12.

[35] The words are Steven Grosby's in his "The Verdict of History: the Inexpungeable Tie of Primordiality – a Response to Eller and Coughlan", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17, 1, 1994, 164-171. See also, Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism: the Demystification of Ethnic Attachments", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, 2, 1993, pp.183-202.

[36] Cf. Philip Rodkin, "The Psychological Reality of Social Construction", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, 4, 1993, pp.633-656.

[37] Bryan Sykes says 12,000, David Miles thinks it is 13,000, and Stephen Oppenheimer plumps for 15,000. It seems that in such matters one can take or leave a millennium without becoming horribly wrong.

[38] Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, London: Robinson, 2007, p.248 [1st edition 2006].

[39] Bryan Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, London: Bantam Press, 2006, pp.281 and 287.

[40] Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, p.470.

In his book Oppenheimer considers that there is a perceptible genetic difference between the Atlantic fringe of Britain and the East side of the island which he mainly attributes to the different geographical origins of the gene flows which colonized Britain over thousands of years, even though he obviously thinks that those genes coming from the south-west corner of Europe, "Iberia", are clearly dominant. Sykes, for his part, puts almost exclusive emphasis on the Iberian genes which he sees as widely prevalent even in England. They form what he calls the "Celtic substructure" of the Isles, using the term Celtic to define the early settlers[41] whose descendants adopted, for reasons still unclear, a Celtic language and culture. A position which enables him to conclude somewhat lyrically, referring to all the peoples of the British Isles: "The strands of ancestry weave us all together as the children of a common past"[42].

Needless to say both Sykes and Oppenheimer make the necessary genuflections to escape all suspicion of ethno-nationalism or, worse, racialism[43]; besides it is just possible to put a universalist construction on what they write[44], seeing us all, ultimately, as the children of the primeval African Eve, rather than stopping at the seven ancestral mothers from whom most of us, as Europeans, apparently descend[45]. That is not, however, what the layman is likely to do. From Oppenheimer's work he will mainly remember that although there are extremely old, "deep genetic divisions between England and the British Atlantic coasts and islands"[46] whose study is the book's main topic, "all but a few per cent of male and female gene lines appear to have arrived in the British Isles before the historical period"[47], so that all ulterior migrations into Britain, including the most recent ones, have had little impact on the genetic make-up of the country[48]. Sykes, for his part, is at times so rhapsodic about DNA that one feels almost transported from the realm of science into that of mysticism. He invests DNA with a vital symbolic function[49]. It reconnects us with our family and clannish past[50], with the bodies of our most remote ancestors[51]. It makes us and them eternal and part of a larger whole which is not mankind for all Sykes had taken great care to point out in a previous piece of writing[52],

[41] And not, as is traditional, the Celts who spread from their central European homelands to many parts of Europe. These he finds genetically unrelated to the British/Irish Celts. Openheimer, for his part, is sceptical about the existence, ever, of a Celtic homeland in the La Tène and Hallstadt regions.

[42] Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, p.287.

[43] Oppenheimer feels obliged to remind us of his family background (pp.486-7) and to consider that Britain has been multicultural since the Anglo-Saxons (p.485), and Sykes concludes *The Seven Daughters of Eve* with the remark that certainly "more than 95 per cent of native Europeans fit easily within one or another of the seven clans", but "that still leaves a large number of people whose deep maternal lineages tell of a different story", so that there is no "biological basis for racial classifications" (London: Bantam Press, 2001, pp.294-295).

[44] See, for instance, some of the comments on Oppenheimer's book in the June 2007 issue of *Prospect* (Stephen Oppenheimer, "Myths of British ancestry revisited", http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=9639, accessed 14 September 2008).

[45] This is the subject of *The Seven Daughters of Eve*.

[46] *The Origins of the British*, p.xviii.

[47] *Ibid.*, p.429. Oppenheimer provides a much simplified version of his book in an article written for the October 2006 issue of *Prospect*, "Myths of British ancestry" (http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=7817, accessed 14 September 2008).

[48] *Ibid.*, p.485-6.

[49] Thus in *The Seven Daughters of Eve*: " Its power is as a token or a symbol of the shared ancestry it reveals rather than the body of chemistry it directly controls", p. 290.

[50] "The [DNA] thread becomes an umbilical cord" (*The Seven Daughters of Eve*, p. 289).

[51] For instance about the Y-chromosome males inherit from their fathers: "Follow this thread into the past /…/ Sooner or later you will spend a generation or two in the testis of a warlord", *Blood of the Isles*, p. 279.

[52] In a less well-known book he edited in 2000, and for which he wrote a chapter mainly on mitochondrial DNA, *The Human Inheritance: Genes, Language, and Evolution* (Oxford: OUP), Sykes insisted (p. 103) that eventually "we are all mongrels", and "given time for diffusion" we all have genes from all parts of the world so that if we want to know where we come from, the answer will be "from everywhere". The paragraph ended however with the reservation: "only the proportions differ", which is exactly the proposition at the heart of his next books.

but one of those tribes that provide the title for David Miles's book[53], a *volk* in all but name[54]. The title of Sykes's latest book, *Blood of the Isles*, could certainly pass for one of those dangerous tropes that so worried Eric Wolf as we saw above, all the more so as it has to be taken entirely metaphorically as Sykes, as a "new geneticist", does not think much of blood group analysis to categorize human populations[55], and there is an intellectual chasm between a book dealing with "the human inheritance" in 2000 and another intending to explore "the genetic roots of our tribal history" (the subtitle of *Blood of the Isles*) a few years later. Sykes admits to being something of a romantic[56]; probably one has to take with a pinch of salt his insistence that knowing whether one descends from Celts, Vikings or Saxons matters immensely, and that thanks to DNA time and change and death are obliterated: "Within each and everyone of our cells is something that has witnessed every life we have ever lived"[57]. Likewise, he certainly got carried away when he made the DNA codes the very basis of ethnicity, "those unseen architects of our bodies, even of our souls", but so doing he unwittingly supplied the radical Right with the foundation myth[58] they needed to combat the multiracial, multicultural society.

Despite its rampant anti-semitism, the far right in Britain was not seriously preoccupied with defining a precise British identity till the latter half of the twentieth century. As Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea put it, Britain had never been heterogeneous enough for the need to arise before then[59]. Racial nationalism, a minority strand in British fascism before the war, was merely an extension of the much more widespread Anglo-Saxonism which had reached maturity in the Victorian age and defined the English as a people of mostly pure Teutonic, Aryan stock[60]. This Nordic racialism with its emphasis on one element of identity, whiteness[61], was frequently resorted to after the war to denounce the new extra-European immigration, but it was both too imprecise, and too tainted by recent history to rally support and win votes. The terms "British Race" or "British Nation" were therefore superimposed onto it[62]; they had the added advantage, unlike "Anglo-Saxons", of not consigning the Celtic

[53] One should hasten to add that on the subject *The Tribes of Britain* (London: Phoenix, 2006) is impeccably PC. In *Identity* there is but one passing reference to the book which soon forgets the ancient genetic make-up of the British and belies the communitarian overtones of its title to conclude that more immigrants are needed to "refresh" the country and create "a constantly changing new Britain" (see John Bean, "How Small Genetic Differences Give Racial Diversity", *Identity*, 59, October 2005, p.14)

[54] Significantly members of the same "clan" are "brothers and sisters"; simply by looking at each other they "sense [their] deep umbilical connection", and the mitochondrial DNA that they have inherited from their "ancient maternal ancestors /…/ is the deep magic which connects everyone in the same clan" (*The Seven Daughters of Eve*, pp.289-291, *passim*). We may still be in the field of biology, but perhaps no longer quite in the one of rationality. No wonder then that some of Sykes's colleagues were somewhat reserved about the *Seven Daughters* (see, for instance Colin Renfrew's review in *The Times* of 19 October 2001: "Mothers of all mankind: Telling the story of human ancestry as a novel", http://www.timesonline.co.uk /tol/incomingFeeds/ article766186.ece? token=null&print=y, accessed 4/10/2008.

[55] See *The Human Inheritance*, pp.95-97.

[56] *Ibid*., p. 102.

[57] Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, p.279.

[58] Although, as will soon become clear, *Identity* would not call it a myth. Not that it greatly matters; as Walker Connor notes: "Identity does not draw its sustenance from facts but from perceptions; not from chronological/factual history but from sentient/felt history" ("The dawning of nations", in Atsuko Ichijo and Gordanna Uzelac (eds.), *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*, London: Routledge, 2005, p.46.

[59] In their introduction to the book they edited, *Racism and Political Action in Britain*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, p.5.

[60] On Anglo-Saxonism, see Hugh Mac Dougall, *Racial Myth in English History. Trojans, Teutons and Anglo-Saxons*, Montreal: Harvest House, 1982, pp.119-130. See also Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain. A History, 1918-1985*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp.15-18

[61] Admittedly it was also strongly emphasized that this was the whiteness of superior peoples.

[62] Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, pp. 292-293.

element to benign neglect or malign classification: "By 'we', we mean of course the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples whose unique blend of Northern European stocks gave Britain her greatness and her genius"[63], but there was no objection to adding "the other Northern Europeans from which most of us spring"[64]. Thus a British identity emerged, both biological and historical: people of the same blood and close cultures had mingled to produce a unique ethnic blend. As John Tyndall wrote in the *Spearhead* issue of March 2000: "We British are the indigenous peoples of the British Isles. We are made up of various original tribal groups but all of these were European and the vast majority came from Northern Europe. We are therefore essentially a North European people. By no possible token are we a 'mixture of races'"[65]. A very traditional version of early British ethnic history till recent times[66], yet one which from the 1960s was increasingly challenged in schools[67] and the media, not to mention sociology departments, till it became gradually vaguely non-PC. At any rate it could hardly hope to stem the onslaught of another interpretation which was more and more widely disseminated through quasi-official channels: if the peopling of Britain resulted from successive waves of migrants (and from that perspective it did not make the slightest difference whether the Celts had arrived a few centuries before the others or not) who eventually had ethnically and culturally mingled, then the British were all immigrants, had been a "mongrel race" for more than two thousand years, and there was no reason, except racial prejudice, to consider recent migrations as anything else but a continuation of a well-established process[68].

Needless to say, among *Identity* contributors this passed for "brainwashing", a word used many times, a mendacious strategy to intellectually and spiritually enervate the "indigenous British peoples", another recurrent phrase[69]. As *Identity*'s editor, John Bean, puts it: "The defendants of the multicultural society are still attempting to brainwash our young people into believing that Britain was already a nation of immigrants before the mass Afro-Asian influx of the last fifty years"[70]. A few years before, one of his predecessors, Paul Golding, had already commented: "All the so-called 'immigrant groups' the multi-culturalists list, such as the Saxons, Angles, Celts and Normans were tribes of the same white race. The 'logic' to

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[63] From the British National Party's 1997 general election manifesto, quoted in Nigel Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 88.

[64] John Tyndall, "On the Meaning of Britishness", *Spearhead*, March 2000 (http://www. spearhead.com/0003-jt.html, accessed 18 April 2008). See also chapters 24, 25 and 28 of *March of the Titans. A History of the White Race*, by Arthur Kemp, now a prominent member of the BNP. The book was first published in 1996, has been updated but surprisingly remains faithful to the old theory of the historic Celts overrunning Britain. It can be consulted at http://www.white-history/com (accessed 18 April 2008).

[65] *Ibid*. Tyndall, by then, had just been ousted from the leadership of the BNP, but remained in firm control of *Spearhead*. At any rate, on race and nation there had been no change of line (Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism*, p.112).

[66] As G.M. Trevelyan puts it in his *Shortened History of England*: "The racial basis was fixed by the time of Canute" (*A Shortened History of England*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963, p. 37 [1st edition, 1942]).

[67] Witness, no doubt one instance among scores of others, a little booklet clearly intended for children in which they are informed that "all our ancestors came to Britain from somewhere else. Some only came a few years ago, but others came hundreds of years ago. Even the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish did not originally come from the British Isles. At one time all their ancestors were immigrants" (Philip Page and Heather Newman, *They Came to Britain. The History of a Multicultural Nation*, Edward Arnold: Londres, 1985, p.6). Purposely no distinction is made between being a settler in an empty post-glacial wasteland and an immigrant. The last chapter is predictably called "The Enrichment of Britain"; it shows George Frederick Handel in a wig and Bob Marley in dreadlocks.

[68] In her *Origins of the English* (London: Duckworth, 2006, p. 110), Catherine Hills is well aware of the ideological charge the subject carries, and of the slanted conclusions this sometimes results in.

[69] See in particular Steve Johnson, "Are We Really a 'Mongrel Nation'?", *Identity*, 37, October 2003, pp.18-19, and "Should Britain Become a 'Mongrel Nation'?", *Identity*, 39, December 2003, pp.8-10, both responses to "Mongrel Nation", a television programme broadcast on Discovery Channel in June 2003.

[70] John Bean, "A Europe of Nations", *Identity*, 67, June 2006, p.3.

what they are saying is this: whites come to a white country, mix with white people and produce white people, and that makes us a mongrel race!"[71]. The weakness of the argument was not that it was strictly biological – after all that of the "mongrelisers"[72] was of the same nature – but that it was purely defensive and forced those who used it to subsume Britishness into the more general concept of whiteness or Europeanness, a pity for a nationalist party that had the adjective British in its name. Soon, however, the latest findings in the genetic prehistory of Britain made for a much more aggressive approach to the subject, and for an interpretation of British identity capable of turning the theory that the Isles were panmictic societies from the start into a "nonsensical narrative"[73].

Sykes's and Oppenheimer's books were reviewed at length in four issues of *Identity* in 2007, on the last occasion by no less than Nick Griffin himself with the resounding title, "We've Always Been Here!"[74]. This was an assertion that, more briefly, *Identity* had already formulated at various intervals since 2000. By then DNA analysis had become central to historical genetics and together with a number of archaeological finds had conclusively demonstrated that the majority of the inhabitants of Britain and northern Europe could trace their ancestry "back to Ice Age hunters" and that "the peoples of north-west Europe seem to be descended from common ancestors who lived between 40,000 and 17,000 years ago"[75], so that there was little genetic distance between "Celts" and Anglo-Saxons. This certainly became public knowledge in 2001 when the first popular book on the subject came out. Sykes's *The Seven Daughters of Eve,* which retraced the maternal pre-history of the Europeans, made it clear that in varying degrees the seven genetic "clans" from which nearly all inhabitants of modern Europe descended had penetrated the British Isles following a northward migration. From the very early days of *Identity*, therefore, the intellectual context was propitious to blazon the perenniality of the British and trumpet their genetic homogeneity. As early as the second issue of the magazine, Griffin proclaimed:

> The latest DNA studies at Oxford University show that today's native English, Scots, Welsh, Ulsterfolk and Irish are literally 99 per cent descended – at least on the maternal line – in slightly different proportions from a tiny number of Stone Age settlers who arrived in this corner of North-West Europe in several waves between 40,000 and 10,000 years ago. Stonehenge, Avebury, Newgrange, Callanish and the other ancient sacred sites of these islands were all built by the same people – our common ancestors[76].

A few months later he was even blunter: "The latest evidence of DNA studies of prehistoric skeletons found in Britain proves that we British have been the owner-occupiers of this land of ours for an incredible 40,000 years"[77]. The idea was reiterated in varying guises by a number of contributors in the years that followed, although they were usually more modest in their claims for the longevity of the "original British people"[78] preferring to restrict

[71] Paul Golding, "The Truth about our National Identity", *Identity*, 9, May 2001, p.3.

[72] As John Bean calls them in his "Nationalist Notebook", *Identity*, 65, April 2006, p.21.

[73] Steve Johnson, "Are We Really a 'Mongrel Nation' ?", p.18.

[74] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 1: Cheddar Man and the Hunter Gatherers", *Identity*, 77, April 2007, pp.8-10; Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", *Identity*, 78, May 2007, pp.12-15; Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 3", *Identity*, 79, June 2007, pp.15-17; Nick Griffin, "We've Always Been Here", *Identity*, 80, July 2007, pp.4-7.

[75] David Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, pp.67-68, 175; Catherine Hills, *Origins of the English*, pp.112-113. See also chapters 5 ("Using genes to map population structure and origins") by Bryan Sykes, and 6 ("Ancient DNA") by Svante Pääbo, in Bryan Sykes (ed.), *The Human Inheritance. Genes, Language, and Evolution*. All useful works on the subject can be found in Oppenheimer's bibliography.

[76] Nick Griffin, "All the King's Horses", *Identity*, 2, March-April 2000, p.6.

[77] Nick Griffin, "The Real Alternative", *Identity*, 4, October-November, p.5.

[78] John Bean, "Old Parties, Piggies in the Middle", *Identity*, 63, February 2006, p.3.

it to the post-glacial age[79]. The conclusion *Identity* readers were expected to reach was the view Steve Johnson expressed in restrained terms in October 2003: "We are just not mongrels – our pedigree in these islands is extremely old"[80].

Apart from the not negligible fact that they put paid to the remnants of the old far-right Anglo-Saxonism-cum-Celticism[81] which at times still intruded upon the new primordialist discourse of the BNP, *Blood of the Isles* and *The Origins of the British* did not alter in any way the views one could read in *Identity*. However, piggybacking on the success of two widely received books allowed a more trenchant exposition of the subject. Science could be declared on the side of the Party, and therefore national identity was not to be decried any longer as constructed, as a genealogical myth, a presumption of descent. The backing of genetics did away with the traditional accusation of subjectivity or, worse, prejudice[82]. The basis of identity was now beyond doubt, it seemed, common biological ancestry. Did not Sykes and Oppenheimer show that by 4,000 B.C. at the latest, and quite possibly much earlier, the British gene-pool which is still largely predominant today was in place, so that the much later Celtic, Saxon, Viking and Norman invasions had little impact on the genetics of the first inhabitants of the Isles? David Miles himself, writing a little earlier, considered that about 80 per cent of the genes of white Britons had been passed down "from hunter-gatherers who came in immediately after the Ice Age"[83]. Could it be denied then that the people of Britain and Ireland have been a homogeneous racial group for at least 6,000 years[84]? What

[79] Britain was of course emptied of its inhabitants by the coming of the last Ice Age and recolonized a few thousand years later. In his choice of dates Griffin was no doubt influenced by the age of our seven European mothers according to Sykes. For repeats of Griffin's basic idea see in particular Stephen McDonald, "Forging the Union: the Making of our Nation", *Identity*, 16, December 2001, p.19: "Our country is not a nation of immigrants. Our genes were born out of the people who dwelt at the edge of the European ice cap tens of thousands of years ago"; Paul Golding, "The Truth about our National Identity", p.3; Deryk Smith, "Scotland's True Identity", *Identity*, 27, December 2002, p.9; John Bean, "A Europe of Nations", p.3; Steve Johnson,"Implications of Racial Differences", *Identity*, 33, June 2003, p.11; Stephen McDonald, "The Origins of British Family Names", *Identity*, 36, September 2003, p.22; Steve Johnson, "Should Britain Become a 'Mongrel Nation'?", *Identity*, 39, December 2003, p.10; Nick Griffin, "Global Capitalism: The Big Picture", *Identity*, 51, January 2005, p.5.

[80] Steve Johnson, "Are We Really a 'Mongrel Nation'?", p.19.

[81] Expressed, for instance, by John Bean in his "Nationalist Notebook", *Identity*, 49, November 2004, pp.20-21. However the final, more ecumenical version usually contends that the peopling of Britain, since at least the Neolithic and till the Normans, had been the work of "different tribes of a common stock" originating in the North-West quarter of Europe (John Bean, "A Europe of Nations", p.3), of "a common North European race" (editorial standfirst to Nick Griffin's article, "The Celts. Part 1: Their Origins", *Identity*, 32, May 2003, p.14). But in 2005 what David Miles wrote on the subject did not suggest anything much different. See *The Tribes of Britain*, p.175.

[82] Nick Griffin, "We've Always Been Here !", p.4: "To have cutting-edge scientific research vindicating our position is invaluable"; Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", p.14: "Professor Sykes' pronouncements and the background in the Oxford Genetic Atlas Project are a sound base from which we may now put paid to the subversive work of the liberal cosmopolitans in Western society".

[83] Interestingly, this formulation disappears from the 2006 paperback edition, to be replaced by the more uncommitted "on present genetic evidence it seems that /…/ the majority of the population, especially in Britain and Northern Europe, can trace its ancestry back to Ice Age hunters" (*The Tribes of Britain*, p.68). The figure of 80%, however, which appears, for instance, in a review of the 2005 hardback edition for *National Geographic News* (James Owen, "British Have Changed Little Since Ice Age, Gene Study Says", http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/1590652.html, accessed 15 October 2008) did not go unnoticed by right-wing militants and the *National Geographic* review itself was reproduced on the radical-right Vanguard News Network ("British genetic makeup much the same as 12,000 years ago", http://www.vnnforum.com/showthread.php? t=21660, accessed 15 October, 2008). The percentage was also quoted, in a few lines taking their inspiration and some of their vocabulary from the *National Geographic* website by John Bean in his "How Small Genetic Differences Give Racial Diversity", p.14.

[84] Let us repeat that both Sykes and Oppenheimer would certainly deny it, whether because they sincerely believe it is the scientific truth, or out of a sense of self-preservation is another matter. After all one of the

had taken place in the preceding millennia, according to Alastair Harper, was a process of race creation, an ethno-genesis. As the small pioneer bands that had reached the British Isles mingled, the biology of selective mating and reproduction moulded the British race or, to use Pierre van den Berghe's sociobiological terminology, the British ethny: "assortative mating over the millennia /…/ served to unify [us] as a distinct ethnic nationality"[85]. The result of this evolution process says Harper, leaning heavily on Sykes's *Seven Daughters of Eve* and *Adam's Curse* was that "the indigenous inhabitants of those islands are of a markedly common stock which on the maternal side runs back for anything up to 8,000 years, and though the paternal genetic signatures may not extend thus far back at least they represent the same level of homogeneity as the distaff side, and set together they mark off the inhabitants of those islands as a people of ancient, allied and settled blood"[86]. Britishness, therefore, is first of all a natural coalescence of blood-bound people. It is not a social construct, it is not primarily a community of values, it is "an extended family", "a common bloodline"[87]. Harper's phrase, "ethnic nationality", is clumsy but conflating, as it does, ethnicity and nation[88], it clearly reveals that for the radical Right Britishness is not only pre-modern, it is organic, immemorial and practically pre-historical. It certainly has nothing to do with social compacts, political settlements, economic interests or, it goes without saying, the possession of a UK passport[89], but a lot with nature which always ensures that like will to like: "Groupings are decided by likenesses which can be instantly identified and have had the backing of Mother Nature for millennia"[90]. One could debate whether it is founded on "purity

world's leading population geneticists, Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, has devoted a large portion of his career to measuring the genetic distances separating the different world populations (as in his 1994 magnum opus, *The History and Geography of Human Genes*) all the while denying the reality of human races.

[85] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", p.15. Van den Berghe writes: "Basically ethnies form through three or more generations of endogamy /…/, combine through widening interaction /…/ These processes can take less than a century or last for millennia /…/ Several generations of endogamy ensures that the ties of kinship and marriage overlap, and that is how ethnies are formed" (Pierre van den Berghe, "Ethnies and Nations. Genealogy Indeed", in Ichijo and Uzelac, *When is the Nation*?, pp.114-115).

[86] *Ibid*, p.14.

[87] Dave Baxter, "Marxist Left and Global Capitalist Right Push Integration", *Identity*, 63, February 2006, p.26. For his part, Nick Griffin adds: "Genuine nationalism is based on a view of the nation as an extended family, linked by overwhelming ties of common ancestry and shared history" ("The BNP and UKIP Won't Be Getting Married", *Identity*, 78, May 2007, p.6).

[88] The Right likes to remind his readers and interlocutors of the Latin etymology of the word nation, *i.e. natio*, race as well as birth, which in turn has links with *nativus* and *nasci*, "native", "to be born" and so with the family metaphor. Both nationality and nationhood are used interchangeably in *Identity,* but the Right's preference is now for nationhood. As David Webb puts it in the *Salisbury Review*: "As nationality is now a legal category divorced from any real existing nation, conservatives need to think in terms of 'nationhood' instead. A letter from the Home Office confers nationality /…/ but cannot confer nationhood which is a shared identity among people. Nationhood predates Parliament, and therefore cannot be conferred on anyone, whether by Parliament or the government or anyone else" ("Whose Nation Is It?", *Salisbury Review*, vol.23, n°1, 2004, p.12). For Dave Baxter, "race is the bedrock of nationhood", in "Marxist Left and Global Capitalist Right Push Integration", p.26. On the topic of ethny and nation, Anthony D. Smith points out (in Ichijo and Uzelac, *When is the Nation?,* p.122) that "the key distinction in ethno-symbolism between ethnic community and nation /…/ is largely ignored by primordialists". The sentence refers to two schools among students of nationalism, but it can easily be applied to nationalist writers themselves.

[89] The latest avatar of the BNP is convinced that enforced repatriation and an all-white Britain have become unachievable goals. It has certainly not reconciled itself to the idea that consequently long-established non-Europeans must retain their British national status: "Those non-Europeans who stay [after the BNP comes to power] will have British passports and will be protected by our laws, but they will be regarded as permanent guests, and not as native English, Scots, Welsh or Irish, because such status springs from blood and not from printers' ink" (Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.7).

[90] Mark Collett, "Racial Atrocities in New Orleans", *Identity*, 59, October 2005, p.16. Or, as a reader had already written: "Nature decrees that 'birds of a feather flock together'; the Liberal elite wants to destroy this natural urge" ("Speakers' Corner", *Identity*, 31, April 2003, p.21). On several occasions the multicultural society

of blood" as the British race is conceived as the end product of thousands of years of crossbreeding, even though this was between closely-related genetic groups, but Alastair Harper is not far from making *limpiezza di sangre* essential when he deplores the ongoing destruction of "the millennial integrity of the people of these islands" by "the wilful importation of masses of totally alien groups"[91], and persistently remarks: "the British people are an ancient blend of similar blood"[92].

The centrality of blood-ties to a definition of British identity means that the latter must be viewed as fixed, immutable, perennial and, of course, untainted. This last requisite is disposed of by Steve Johnson in his "Are We Really a 'Mongrel Nation'", already referred to. According to Harper, "interbreeding did not happen" before the mid-twentieth century. Blacks were few in number and rarely in a position to mate with British people, except possibly with the dregs of the population in a few seaports where they and their mixed-race offspring then lived in ghettoes, shunned by the rest of society when they were not forcefully deported: "Until living memory most English people /…/ never saw, let alone interbred with, a Black or Asian person, so they are generally 100% white"[93]. If this was a plausible argument, the settlement of Saxons, Vikings and Normans and even Celts, on the other hand, presented an apparently greater difficulty concerning the immutability of blood so indispensable to circumscribe a perennial British identity supposed to have taken shape thousands of years before their coming. In the July 2007 issue of *Identity*, Nick Griffin tried to solve the problem by following Oppenheimer and belittling the genetic impact of the Celtic and Nordic invasions, that is to say by depicting them as warrior elite migrations whose cultural influence was often decisive, but that had little effect on the genetic profile of the Isles[94]:

> Two-thirds of the indigenous people of the British Isles are the direct descendants of the first pioneers who followed the retreating ice sheets at the end of the last glaciation, and the vast majority of the remainder of our ancestors arrived during Neolithic times. The invasions of Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans which form the backbone of the 'nation of immigrants' story between them contributed little more than a ripple on our genetic pond. Far from being immigrants and 'mongrels' we, the native folk of these islands, are the First People. We are the aborigines[95].

One can easily understand the ideological and polemical leverage that can be derived from this "demolition of the Anglo-Saxon foundation myth"[96]. It allows Griffin to turn the fashionable, liberal language of his opponents to his advantage. Why should the British be treated differently from the Native Americans or the first inhabitants of Australia? Like them they are the rightful owners, from time immemorial, of their ancestral homeland; unlike them, they have not yet lost it, and for the sake of justice, logic and coherence they should be

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is condemned as "utopian", as an "unnatural construction" (David Hamilton, "Hitler in Reverse", *Identity*, 64, March 2006, pp.14-17) that will break on "the hard rock of human nature" like Communism (John Maddox, "The New Colonialism and the Destruction of Britain: Part 2", *Identity*, 42, March 2004, p.8). To this the BNP opposes its "determination to build a society based on the realities and limitations of nature" (Nick Griffin, "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", *Identity*, 66, May 2006, p.6). See Jérôme Jamin, "Nature, culture et extrême droite", *Politique*, n°48, février 2007 (http://politique.eu.org/archives/2007/ 02/356.html, accessed 7 July 2008).

[91] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", p.14.

[92] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 3", p.16.

[93] Steve Johnson, "Are We Really a 'Mongrel Nation' ?", p.19.

[94] A theory for which the *Identity* contributors are not indebted to Sykes or Oppenheimer. It had been gaining strength since at least the early 1990s and much had been written about it. Griffin had already used it in one of his articles on the Celts: "The Celts. Part 2: Spreading the Iron Age Culture and Coming to Britain", *Identity*, 33, June 2003, p.12; and in December 2002 Deryk Smith had written that the Celts had been too few in number "to change the racial composition of society", but "powerful enough to be culturally dominant" ("Scotland's True Identity", p.9).

[95] Nick Griffin, "We've Always Been Here !" , p.4

[96] *Ibid.*, p.5.

recognized the right to retain it, to do what they want with it, to welcome some, and exclude most if they wish: "We do not demand for our own people any more than the basic human rights which we would extend to every nation, people and tribe on this planet: the right to preserve their own territory, traditions and ethnic identity /…/ We believe, in a nutshell, in the human right to discriminate"[97]. What is demanded, in other words, is apparently no more than the absolute right to exercise the old principle of national sovereignty, strategically coupled with the Australian concept of Aboriginal Rights[98]. Whether such a position is fully sustainable in today's world is another question which the BNP knows it must now answer obliquely[99].

Viewing Britain as "a country with a history of ethnic homogeneity going back thousands of years"[100] seems to leave the Celtic, Saxon and Danish input in limbo, almost a shameful blot on an otherwise timeless pattern of genetic immaculacy. However Griffin's radical dismissal of the Anglo-Saxons in "We've Always Been Here!" should not perhaps be taken too literally. Using the same figures as Griffin (although Sykes's instead of Oppenheimer's) as a basis, Alastair Harper accepts that the Anglo-Saxon genetic influence is not preponderant in the biological make-up of the British, but far from playing it down speaks of "a substantial overlay of these related peoples", so that "the root stock of the Isles is roughly two thirds Celtic/Pictish with the balance Teutonic/Scandinavian"[101]. In other words there has been no adulteration of the pristine British blood by those Nordic invaders. They blended into the original gene pool ("root stock") because they were near relations, another argument borrowed from Sykes and even more so Oppenheimer who describes the gene flows from the Iberian Ice Age refuge as eventually wending their way into northern Europe, sometimes via Britain, before returning to the British Isles in the form of migrations across the North Sea[102]. On this basis, and assuming that "no significant immigration" occurred "for over a millennium" after William the Conqueror[103], Harper feels entitled to conclude that "Britishness is chromosomal not residential"[104] – not, as the Americans would put it, propositional – and that "we are justified in holding that, until the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948 the British people together with the people of the Irish Republic could be recognised as a homogeneous people"[105]. Thus the point at which Britishness began to be threatened with dilution is clearly established. It corresponds exactly with the years when the country ceased to be thoroughly white, even though the passengers of the *Empire British* and

[97] Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.5.

[98] "Nations are historical communities that have the right to shape their own destinies as they see fit and to resist developments that undermine their identities. No cosmopolitan elite has the right to refashion these identities as it chooses" (John Maddox, "The Left sees sense on migration", *Identity*, 33, June 2003, p.14). For other typical statements see for example Nick Griffin, "The Great Debate – The End of the Road", *Identity*, 46, August 2004, p.6, and Arthur Kemp, "Britain Has the Right to be British", *Identity*, 71, October 2006, p.13. On this topic see also Ross Poole, "National Identity, Multiculturalism and Aboriginal Rights: An Australian Perspective", in Jocelyne Couture *et al.* (eds), *Rethinking Nationalism*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1996, pp.407-438.

[99] Which explains the abandonment of an all-white Britain policy. As Griffin explains, tongue hardly in cheek, "facing up to reality" means that thoroughness in this matter has become impossible: "The United States of America is under the control of multi-racist fanatics who would bomb this country back into the Stone Age if we gave them the excuse by evicting the last non-whites at gunpoint" ("Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.7).

[100] Colin Liddell, "Micro America *vs*. Macro America", *Identity*, 89, April 2008, p.12.

[101] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", p.15. In this quotation Celtic and Pictish are, of course, referring, as in Sykes, to the biologically pre-Celtic populations, the early settlers.

[102] Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, pp.305-309. According to Oppenheimer these migrations occurred during the Neolithic period, the small Dark Ages invasions merely supplementing them.

[103] Tim Heydon, "A Question of Trust", *Identity*, 84, November 2007, p.27;

[104] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 3", p.17.

[105] Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", p.15.

those who followed them from the West Indies often felt they were returning to the Mother Country. But for the *Identity* authors there can be no divorce between genetics and historical or ethnic identity. Identity means community of blood, and it is impossible to imagine the historical persistence of a British identity should the blood-line happen to become thinner. Britishness has remained unchanged till the mid-twentieth century essentially because after the Normans the gene pool of the Isles continued historically isolated for an extra millennium[106]. The BNP would no longer go all the way with Disraeli and assert that "all is race", but in the matter of identity there is no doubt that it still thinks it is the case, since in its writings the British are a human group socially circumscribed by biological descent and physical appearance[107]. The mission statement posted on its website on 8 January 2008 neatly sums up what precedes:

> The British National Party exists to secure a future for the indigenous peoples of these islands in the North Atlantic which have been our homeland for millennia. We use the term indigenous to describe the people whose ancestors were the earliest settlers here after the last great Ice Age and which have been complemented by the historic migrations from mainland Europe[108].

Thus the latest findings in the genetics of population, or at least a specific interpretation of them, have allowed the BNP people, just as Darwin's theory of evolution did the German nationalists in the late nineteenth century[109], to give a modern scientific representation to what so far could hardly pass, to the eye of an outside observer, for anything but the imagined construct of an ever-existing community. They have been able to legitimate through biological references their chosen version of identity as well as the politics that necessarily derive from it. Biological and pre-cultural, Britishness becomes a quasi-eternal entity almost strictly based on one ascriptive quality, the possession of the right genes and the attendant phenotype. What historicity there is in this British identity is restricted to the contribution made by the Celtic and Nordic migrations, for it was after all only after the newcomers had combined with the early settlers that the ethno-genesis of the British was completed. This was not enough, however, to make Britishness either historical or cultural in its essence and there is no doubt that the future the British National Party wants to secure for the British national identity is first of all envisaged in terms of flesh and blood: "While we don't hate other peoples, we would rather mix with our own /.../ We want to walk down our streets and see familiar faces which a hundred generations would all have recognised as 'British'"[110]. Two years before an *Identity* contributor had written more bluntly, and in decidedly more fascistic tones, that the final raison d'être of the Party was "insuring Racial Survival"[111]. But these

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[106] Alastair Harper speaks of "the genetic isolation of the peoples of the Isles" (in "The Blood of the Isles. Part 2: The Viking Gene", p.15). See also Phill Edwards, "Promoting a Multi-Ethnic Britain", *Identity*, 75, February 2007, p.25: "Prior to 1950, Britain was /.../ a 'separate race' of white people".

[107] This was perhaps best expressed by a very outspoken reader of the magazine ("Speakers' Corner", *Identity*, 66, May 2006, p.24): "Leftists have attempted to eradicate the term race altogether and replace it with the vague and misleading term of ethnicity, claiming that anyone living in or born in England can be termed English. This totally ignores the last thousand years and more of English history, that gives only one group the right to be termed English /.../ One should not confuse racial discrimination with the legitimate right of a Briton to employ the term British in its correct sense, as a racial description".

[108] The British National Party, "Mission Statement", http://bnp.org.uk/about-us/mission-statement/printpage/, accessed 5 September 2008. The "historic migrations are said to refer to the "Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, Norse and closely related kindred peoples".

[109] See Christian Geulen, "Identity as Progress – The Longevity of Nationalism", in Heidrun Friese (ed.), *Identities. Time, Difference and Boundaries*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2002, pp. 222-238.

[110] Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.4.

[111] Stephen King, "Race – The Only Foundation for Nationalism", *Identity*, 4, October/ November 2000, p.10. King concludes: "In the very long future, ten thousand years or more perhaps from today /.../ quite possibly no one will remember us or even Britain. But if the people of that far-off day can look about them and see other

were the days when John Tyndall was not yet a spent force and the BNP not yet totally purged of his supporters. It is very doubtful whether such forthright provocative language would now be deemed acceptable in *Identity*, but the nativist thread that appears and reappears in the magazine conveys a very similar message, especially when it is expressed by the pictures of newly-married couples in a romantic setting, of smiling pregnant women, or of Madonna-like figures with child[112], or when it warns against unnecessary abortion[113].

Such a vision of destiny, centred on the continuity of the assumed original phenotype and the accompanying dread of racial oblivion, made more acute by the British National Party having given up the hope of turning Britain totally white again, accounts for miscegenation being probably the worst nightmare one finds in the pages of *Identity*. Although the new immigrants to Britain are readily described as spongers, opposition to their coming has little to do with economic considerations, the struggle over scarce resources so beloved of sociologists, but very much with the preservation of British biological identity[114]. Massive immigration inevitably means race-mixing. In such a context to attach ontological value to ethnic homogeneity can easily become the first step towards a representation of miscegenation as unnatural, a crime against the right of peoples to conserve their identity and, in the final analysis, as a "genocide" (a recurrent term) orchestrated by the ruling hyperclass of world capitalists, liberal intellectuals and media moguls. The BNP firmly believes that there is a conspiracy, a "genocidal Genetically Modified Britain project"[115] to bring about "the decline and eventual disappearance of the British as a distinctive ethnic group"[116].

The distaste for race-mixing is also one of the reasons why Britishness is not accessible to people of colour. Their way of life may appear to be typically British, but manners do not make the British man. In consequence Norman Tebbit's much vaunted "cricket test" is perfectly beside the point; race is the "determinative characteristic". As Dave Baxter puts it: "Even ignoring the debate as to what extent values are learned or innate, the fact is that an African Negro born here will still be a Negro. Even if his speech and manners were perfect English he would remain /…/ someone of a different race"[117], and therefore, one may surmise, "a flaw in the pattern"[118] of a timeless white Britain. It is for exactly the same reason that the British National Party disapproves of, and wants no truck with civic nationalisms that will some day preside both over the final break-up of Britain and the dilution of British blood by admitting and welcoming on an equal footing "all featherless bipeds" (another recurrent metaphor) who "arrive on these shores and claim allegiance to a flag" when in fact "the term British means much more than that; it has a cultural and ethnic foundation extending back

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white people, some with hair the hue of sunlight on ripe cornfields and some with eyes the blue of midsummer's heaven, then we will have our fitting memorial. If not, we will have failed for ever" (p.11).

[112] For a sample of photos with texts to match, see Esther Harstein, "Whites Must Breed or Face Extinction", *Identity*, 58, September 2005, p.11; Len Starr, "Marriage, the way forward", *Identity*, 63, February 2006, pp.18-19; John Bean, "Whites Could Face Extinction", *Identity*, 75, February 2007, p.3.

[113] Diane Stoker, "Nationalists and Abortion", *Identity*, 52, February 2005, pp.12-14: "Abortion /…/ prevents our future from existing. What is the point in fighting on the nationalist scene if we have no future generation to whom to pass on our livelihoods and traditions?" Also, Sadie Graham, "Abortion and Rape", *Identity*, 53, March 2005, p.15.

[114] Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.4.

[115] Nick Griffin, "Closing a Dangerous Gap", *Identity*, 50, December 2004, p.4

[116] Dave Baxter, "Fallacies of Integration", *Identity*, 60, November 2005, p. 24. Though the issue belongs more properly to another article, it should be stressed that the critique of interbreeding is inextricably bound up in *Identity* with that of international capitalism. Indeed, as so often on the right, racial concerns seem to lead to certain forms of anti-capitalism. See also David Hamilton, "Hitler in Reverse", pp.16-17; "History Speaks: 'March of the Titans' Reviewed", *Identity*, 71, October 2006, pp.10-13; Tim Heydon, "Christianity and Nationalism", *Identity*, 82, September 2007, pp.10-13.

[117] Dave Baxter, "Fallacies of Integration", pp.24-26.

[118] The phrase is of course O'Brien's in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974, p.260).

over several thousand years to the end of the last Ice Age long before cartographers produced maps showing the borders of Pictish, Scottish, Cambrian and Saxon kingdoms"[119]. Or, as Nick Griffin had written a few months before, pointing out that the BNP and the French Front National did not see eye to eye on this issue, an individual's identity cannot be "determined by mere accident of birth, or by choice"[120].

What precedes certainly confirms that the British National Party has a racial(ist) view of identity rooted in a firm belief in the objective existence of blood ties, and that this forms the backbone of its political programme. However, even that Britishness is not without a cultural dimension. At a certain point in the definition, race begins to merge into ethnicity[121]. This is manifest in the case of white immigrants to Britain. In *Identity*, the door to Britishness remains half-open to other whites, as the demographic pre-history of Europe ensures there are ties of kindred uniting many of them[122]. Yet their whiteness is not enough to turn them all into Britons. They must also be culturally compatible, which excludes large numbers of them with a radically different background. Although the BNP proclaims its solidarity with all other white nationalist movements[123], it denies being merely a white nationalist party whose ideological and political choices are exclusively determined by skin colour: "White racial nationalists /…/ would thus be happy with any number of immigrants pouring into Britain just as long as they are racially white. The BNP, by contrast, recognises that culture, language and common historical experience are all factors which combine with racial origin to decide who is – and who is not – part of our nation"[124]. Thus it was easy to absorb thousands of educated French Huguenots because they were Protestants[125] and if all the whites of former Rhodesia wished to return to Britain, this would pose no problem as "they share our values and would integrate immediately"[126]. Most immigrants from Eastern Europe would probably pass muster as well individually, but their mass migration to Britain is just as unacceptable as any other because it is again the best economic interest of the British people. On the other hand parasitic Romas and criminal Muslim Albanians should be debarred from entering the country[127].

It is thus evident that though Britishness as seen by the BNP had no cultural foundations to speak of, it later developed a cultural superstructure around itself. This superstructure cannot

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[119] David Hannam, "The Myth of Scottish Independence ?", *Identity*, 85, December 2007, pp.24-25.

[120] Nick Griffin, "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", p.5. See also Nick Griffin, "On 'Nationalist' Unity", *Identity*, 55, June 2005, pp.4-5. The relationship between the BNP and the French FN seems to be cordial (Le Pen first met Griffin in London in 2003, and flew to England in 2004 to support the BNP's European election campaign), but *Identity* had pointed out the crucial difference between the two parties as early as its first number: "Le Pen's party is committed to a 'civic' idea of nationalism which involves a willingness to embrace huge numbers of non-whites as 'good Frenchmen' provided only that they agree to salute the tricolour and sing a national anthem about driving out impure blood" ("Why 'Identity'", *Identity*, 1, January/February 2000, p.2).

[121] It is probably risky to attempt a distinction between race and ethnicity as the two terms are often used interchangeably, race in particular being often defined away as ethnicity. Although by no means loath to use the word race, *Identity* authors often do so. Here we obviously mean a definitional shift from biological to cultural criteria.

[122] "We are related very largely to the great majority of the peoples of Western Europe" (Alastair Harper, "The Blood of the Isles. Part 1: Cheddar Man & the Hunter Gatherers", p.8)

[123] For instance this answer to a reader: "The BNP is fighting the British corner in the white world's struggle for the continuous existence of its people and its cultures ("Speakers' Corner", *Identity*, 33, June 2003, p.21). The party is very careful, however, to keep its distance from all neo-nazi groups (see for example Nick Griffin, "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", p.8, and "On 'Nationalist' Unity", p.5). In *Identity*, the "new BNP" broke definitively with its fascistic past in a 2003 article damning John Tyndall and all his works (Nick Griffin, "Chairman's Article", *Identity*, 34, July 2003, pp.4-7).

[124] Nick Griffin, "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", p.6.

[125] Duncan Mayhew, "The New East End", *Identity*, 77, April 2007, p.12.

[126] Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.4.

[127] John Bean, "Fiddling the Immigration Figures", *Identity*, 42, March 2004, p.3, and Nick Griffin, "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", p.5.

stand alone, however. It must always rest on a racial basis. One cannot get at Britishness through culture only because culture is not to be equated with the current mode of life[128]. British culture is very ancient; it has nothing to do with the political union of England and Scotland, or with pushing the same trolley in the same supermarket for that matter[129]. It is the outcome of the interaction of a specific gene pool with the environment of the Isles, the realization in history of the Britons' genetic endowments[130]. As such it is unique, and like all cultures can only endure if the blood of its creators does not change. The new BNP no longer posits that some races are superior to others, and claims to be differentialist[131]. But since such a stance also postulates that each people is of a different nature which has played a major role in giving a distinctive shape to its civilization, it logically follows that the insertion of alien genes in its genetic pool will change the face of this civilization, sometimes out of recognition. Racial miscegenation leads to cultural hybridization which results in the loss of historical identity, "ethnic and cultural obliteration"[132]. The argument recurs several times throughout *Identity*. Thus from John Bean, its editor: "Our objection to mass immigration is based on the fact that a nation's way of life, way of thinking, acting and everything else that stems from its specific culture evolved from its people. History shows that whenever you replace a people with a hybrid stock, then that culture dies"[133].

In his sociobiological approach to the question of identity and nationhood Pierre van den Berghe considers that ethnies "dissolve through exogamy". When they do, the cultural superstructures that they have raised on their biological foundations collapse. Van den Berghe puts is as delicately as he can, but the meaning is perfectly clear: "Unless that superstructure remains linked to its underlying social structure of interacting individuals, the ethny ceases to exist, or becomes something else"[134], which exactly reflects the fears of the British National Party. A cultural mosaic is not a sign of civilizational enrichment, but a symptom that degeneration has set in, for when the culture is no longer endogamous, neither is the people. Herder's *Volksgeist* soon dies out and so does the possibility of a national culture faithful to tradition. Applying this to European culture, John Bean writes: "Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, Goethe, Beethoven, Voltaire /…/ came from the gene pool of the European people and no matter how intelligent the sons and daughters of new Asian or Arab migrants to

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[128] "A Zulu, even an English-speaking Zulu who wears a suit and works in an office in Croydon, will always remain and should remain a Zulu" (Nick Griffin, "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", p.8).

[129] Of course, when an immigrant reaches that degree of acculturation he ceases to pose any serious cultural threat. That is probably the reason why *Identity* has little to say about black immigrants or their offspring, except when they happen to be knife-wielding teenagers. Most black immigrants have adapted to a culture-free, value-free existence in the midst or on the fringes of the consumer society: "Most Blacks seem to have abandoned whatever pride they might have had in their ancestry and identify with western consumerist values. Not so Asian Muslims" (Dave Baxter, "Fallacies of Integration", p.24). That is why, on the other hand, the pages of *Identity* are full of the dangers of harbouring in one's midst a large population of culturally aggressive Islamists.

[130] Griffin speaks of "the closely related European tribes who have made and been made by these islands" ("Nationalist Groups of the British Isles Must Stand Together or We Will Hang Separately", *Identity*, 44, May 2004, p.4).

[131] On race and differentialism, see for instance Pierre-André Taguieff, *La force du préjugé*, Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1987, pp.330-333. On the BNP and differentialism see Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.4; John Maddox, "The New Colonialism and the Destruction of Britain: Part 3", *Identity*,43, April 2004, p.15; John Bean, "Whites Could Face Extinction", p.3: "We do not contend that biologically any one race is superior to another. The fact is we are all different!"

[132] Nick Griffin, "Nationalist Groups of the British Isles Must Stand Together", p.4.

[133] John Bean, "Whites Could Face Extinction", p.3. For typical pronouncements of a similar kind, see for example, Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.4 and "Modern Nationalism – The New Force in Politics", p.6, Arthur Kemp, "How the Afrikaners Were Hoaxed: The Lie of Apartheid", *Identity*, 49, November 2004, p.8, Dave Baxter, "Fallacies of Integration", p.26.

[134] Pierre van den Berghe, "Ethnies and Nations", in Ichijo and Uzelac, *When is the Nation?*, p.115.

Europe may be, they will never be able to replicate our great European forbears"[135]. The choice of the last verb is unfortunate. It seems to urge the constant repetition of the same when other texts in *Identity* clearly consider change as inherent in the cultural process. Arthur Kemp, for instance, thinks that a racially homogeneous society is the sine qua non for an "active" civilization and culture, and Dave Baxter writes:

> Of course, healthy cultures do not remain static and stagnate; they change, adapt and evolve. The crucial point is that all previous changes in our cultural norms – language, dress, modes of behaviour and so on – have mostly been part of an evolutionary process within our own people. Historically, customs and manners have changed, but the people have remained unaltered /…/ To celebrate our past and our identity does not mean passive acceptance of the status quo[136].

British cultural identity, therefore, is dynamic and dialectic because it is perpetually confronted with time and history. It is not the antithesis of change, but it evolves only within certain boundaries fixed by the genotype as much as by the environment[137]. Anything else, in fact, would be a rent in the continuum uniting past, present and future and a sign of corruption. Besides Kemp's quotation above implies that a sound people has the inner will and vision to ride the tiger of change[138] and does not need outside help.

There is a number of articles about the forms and manifestations of British culture in *Identity*, from a celebration of British achievements in politics and industry and of British great men and women to patriotic music, the etymology of British family names, Gilbert and Sullivan or morris dancing. These need not detain us; many are often reminiscent of what can be read in *This England* with less rurality and less nostalgia. The aim is to illustrate "the genius of Britain" and, more importantly, to demonstrate that there is no need of cultural diversity to enrich the British people. At the end of a review of British inventors, Arthur Kemp concludes: "It is truly no exaggeration to say that the genius which has come out of the native, indigenous population of Britain, has quite literally shaped the very earth itself. And people still ask: why do we wish to preserve it? Rather, the question should be: why would anyone want to change it?"[139]

Thus culture, from the sociobiological perspective adopted by the BNP authors, serves not so much to tell who the British are, as to define what they are. It provides a reservoir of facts and symbols that are conducive to the reproduction and durability of Britishness. This is where its role is crucial in contemporary Britain. Pierre van den Berghe explains that for a myth of common descent to be effective the members of an ethnic group must be "sufficiently alike in physical appearance and culture, and have lived together, and intermarried for a sufficient period /…/ for the myth to have developed a substantial measure of biological truth"[140]. *Identity* could not but agree with this view, but would probably point out that in modern liberal societies, blood relationships cannot guarantee adherence to a common lineage, nor an instinctive preference for one's own people. Britishness is represented as in the grip of a huge demolition project decided by the two wings of hegemonic liberalism: the capitalistic one which aspires to turn people into brain-dead consumers, and the egalitarian-liberationist which hates white society and wants to brainwash the British into multiculturalism. In both cases erasing borders, races, cultures appears as the natural path to a

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[135] John Bean, "A Europe of Nations", *Identity*, 67, June 2006, p.3.

[136] Arthur Kemp, "How the Afrikaners Were Hoaxed", p.8; Dave Baxter, "Fallacies of Integration", pp.24 & 26.

[137] It does not seem, therefore, that it is merely a matter of expecting "Britishness to remain fixed and pure" and of denying "the constructed and reconstructed nature of national identities" (Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, London: Routledge, 2004, p.172).

[138] On this topic, see Alain de Benoist, *Nous et les autres. Problématique de l'identité*, Paris: Krisis, 2006, pp.79-81.

[139] Arthur Kemp, "The Genius of Britain", *Identity*, 87, February 2008, p.9.

[140] Pierre van den Berghe, "Does race matter ?", *Nations and Nationalism*, vol.1, n°3, 1995, p.360.

truly global society. In Britain the liberal elites are at work in many fields. Race-mixing is promoted, and as regards culture, the history of the white British is either not taught or voluntarily distorted. The magazine is full of such complaints. In May 2004, for instance, Lee Barnes spoke of the "deculturalisation" of the British, "as pernicious as genocide", and yet "the policy of successive British governments"[141]. In July of the same year, Tim Heydon accused the Liberal-Left of "destroying our Britishness" by "denigrat[ing] its past and import[ing] other cultures"[142]. David Hamilton summed it all up two years later. The aim, he said, was to "destroy us":

> This blueprint of abstractions that is designed to lead to a multi-racial Utopia, a perfect world on earth where we have all become coffee-coloured, is a rationalist construct /.../ It attempts to create a new type of person as the main thrust of multi-racialism. The Runnymede Trust agenda is to do this and it really is being done in practice. The aim is to change our identity as if we were mere abstractions /.../ By modifying our education system, re-inventing our history, imposing a culture of apology, ethnic monitoring and destruction of traditional legal principles which protected personal freedoms /.../ it is a transformation to the artificial, rational construction of a multi-racial society[143].

Only the "reinvigoration"[144] of the people by the transmission and inculcation of their traditional culture will save Britishness from annihilation. Many articles in *Identity* are calls for a cultural counter-attack whose main axes would be the proper teaching of national history to reawaken national pride, but also the celebration of British folk culture, the study of Nordic mythology, a re-evaluation of Britain's imperial past, a redefinition of the Christian identity of Britain, flying ethnic flags, teaching toddlers "the traditional version of Baa Baa Black Sheep", producing "politically incorrect children's stories", selling music that can also spread the ideas of the party, warning in schools against "the essentially unnatural and destructive nature of miscegenation", and if necessary resorting to home-schooling. Such actions are repeatedly described as indispensable to restore a sense of identity and purpose as well as a feeling of oneness with past traditions, and so to ensure the survival of the ethnic nation[145]. Mentioning moves to resurrect the White Dragon flag as the banner of "the ethnic English community", *Identity* stresses that "in a world with few certainties this flag tells us who we are and from where we have come. It imparts a sense of permanence and continuity. It is a symbol of our identity, our common history /.../ It is also a stark reminder that in a multi-cultural England unless we embrace these things, then we will surely die"[146]. There is thus a will to salvage what Stuart Hall calls an "overarching master identity" by disseminating a traditionalist "narrative of the nation", by telling and retelling it "in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture"[147]. This has always been the self-assigned mission of organic nationalists; whether they can be as successful today as in Romantic times is

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[141] Lee Barnes, "Deculturalisation and the Awakening of Albion", *Identity*, 44, May 2004, p.13

[142] Tim Heydon, "Then and Now: Part 2", *Identity*, 45, July 2004, p.13.

[143] David Hamilton, "Hitler in Reverse", p.16.

[144] John Maddox, "The New Colonialism and the Destruction of Britain: Part 3", p.15.

[145] See Nick Griffin, "Knowing Who We Are and Where We Have to Go", p.7; "Speakers' Corner", *Identity*, 32, May 2003, p.20; Steve Sherwood, "Anti-Social Behaviour. Reasons and Remedies", *Identity*, 39, December 2003, p.12; Nick Griffin, "Chairman's Article", *Identity*, 45, July 2004, pp.6-7; Nick Griffin, "The Death of the Multi-Cultural Fantasy", *Identity*, 58, September 2005, p.10; Troy Southgate, "Home-Schooling: Creating True Alternatives", *Identity*, 58, September 2005, pp.26-27; Dave Baxter, "Fallacies of Integration", p.25; Nick Griffin, "British Nationalism – Political Party or Broad-Based Popular Movement?", *Identity*, 71, October 2006, p.4 & 7; Mark Stevens, "The Morris Men", *Identity*, 74, January 2007, p. 13; Nick Griffin, "Building Nationalist Strongholds", *Identity*, 81, August 2007, p.7; Phil Reddal, "The Eagle and the Dragon", *Identity*, 81, August 2007, p.18; Lance Stewart, "A Decadent Britain", *Identity*, 84, November 2007, p.12; Tim Heydon, "The Defence of Christian Civilisation", *Identity*, 87, February 2008, pp.10-11.

[146] "The White Dragon. The Flag of England", *Identity*, 68, July 2006, p.27.

[147] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity", in Stuart Hall *et al.*, *Modernity and its Futures*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, pp.277-295, *passim*.

doubtful. As Nick Griffin puts it after suggesting the opening of new cultural fronts: "The struggle in which we are engaged is a long-term one"[148].

Britishness as conceptualized by the Far Right can thus be defined as pre-modern and anti-liberal, in reaction to the present-day globalist ambition of the dilution of all national identities. The logic of modernity is to tear man away from his roots, to free him by destroying his natural and communal ties, to eradicate all historically and anthropologically specific human groups, and to undo organic ties seen as so many obstacles to maximizing economic efficiency and profits. Pre-modern thought sees man as embedded in a natural, traditional order, and situated in a transcendent framework of spiritual values, a vision the *Identity* contributors would certainly claim to share. Liberalism, the political face of modernity, turns men into monads, denying them all historical or ethno-cultural depth. They become abstract, interchangeable citizens who may have gained a few political rights but have lost all substance and become "the featherless bipeds" so detested by *Identity*. Alain de Benoist writes that "*le libéralisme est une pensée de l'arrachement, du déracinement*"[149]. By contrast *Identity* tries to re-conceptualize Britishness by reinserting British men and women into the biological, historical and cultural matrix which, it believes, had given meaning and purpose to their lives till recent times. Liberalism, as a politics of deracination and anthropological disengagement, cannot understand, and become the foe of human groups who place distinctiveness and survival above all else. It is therefore the polar opposite of the BNP who battles against ethnic oblivion.

An intrinsic component of the Far Right mindset, this fear of extinction has become obsidional since the explosion of a mass immigration whose consequences are judged to be ethnocidal for British national identity interpreted in terms of common ancestry, a common historical experience and cultural heritage, a bounded national space replete with memories, symbols, rituals, iconic sites and typical landscapes. As Ernest Becker and Zygmunt Bauman have pointed out, all human groups and individuals devise "elaborate subterfuges" to deny the "scandal" that is death, to transcend it and to "achieve ersatz immortality"[150]. Among these "policies of survival" which "play down the importance of bodily death", Bauman[151], like Becker before him, includes nationalism. Considering that at the heart of the BNP's version of Britishness there is the dread of a fatal rupture with a unique ethnic past, of a fracture in historical continuity, the ethno-nationalism of *Identity*, which at times would be better defined as ethno-racialism, can best be explained not by some sort of instinctive racism, but by the horrifying prospect of the death of the self and of the same[152] in a context of world populations on the move. It is for this sole reason that, for the British National Party, the politics of belonging begins by factoring out the second half of the twentieth century, fifty years of population change and several decades of liberal intellectual hegemony. At present reconceptualizing Britishness on the far right means to conceive a model of ethnicity that predates immigration and postdates multiculturalism.

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[148] Nick Griffin, « Chairman's Article », July 2004, p.7.

[149] Alain de Benoist, *Nous et les autres*, p.43. See pp.24-28 and 43-47 on this subject.

[150] The phrase is Sam Keen's who wrote the preface to the second edition of Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997, p.xiii).

[151] Zygmunt Bauman, "Survival as a Social Construct", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol.9, 1992, pp.1-36. The quotations are to be found pp.1 &15.

[152] This is perceptively expressed by Pierre-André Taguieff in *La force du préjugé*: « Le noyau dur de l'idéologie néo-raciste est là /…/ Ce qui est au centre du fantasme, ce n'est plus l'infériorité de l'autre, c'est l'identité absolument différente de soi. Le cœur de la hantise est moins la perte du rang que la disparition du propre /…/ Une horreur induite par la menace d'une interruption dans la transmission continue de la ressemblance propre à la lignée » (pp.336 & 353).

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