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Performing Post-Britishness: A Quest for Independence in the Contemporary Literature of England

by

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Acknowledgements

Declaration

This thesis, entitled 'Performing Post-Britishness: A Quest for Independence in the Contemporary Literature of England', is entirely my own work. No parts of the thesis have been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other institution.

Siyu Cao

Abstract

Since the eighteenth century, the distinctness of the nations of the UK has largely been overshadowed by top-down gestures aiming to unify British identity in everyday-life discourse. Due to the impact of devolution, the debates surrounding the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, and the 2016 EU referendum, the political conflicts between state and nation have been further exposed. Compared with the other three nations, England, in the eyes of many commentators, should be the last to whine about invisibility within an Anglo-British framework. But the fact that an over-stretched England has also led to the absence of the nation can no longer be ignored. An increasing interest in the discovery of England since the 1990s suggests a political and cultural need for renegotiating the boundary between Englishness and Britishness. Nevertheless, many attempts to pinpoint an English identity in the contemporary literature have relapsed into a reconstruction of British conceptions of the nation. In response to the (re-)canonisation of British imaginations, this thesis aims to show that a turn to 'post-Britishness' as a reading method suggests not only a desire for the return of England in a range of literature, but also a warning of the risk of expanding the ideas of England into some renewed British ideals.

Reading novels by authors including Ian McEwan, Graham Swift, Gillian Slovo, Alecky Blythe, J.G. Ballard, and Tom McCarthy, this research analyses methods pointing towards breaks from idealised imaginations of England. Contextualised in a literary space that canonises a return to imaginary past, post-British critique of this kind can reveal absurdities of using British narratives to conceptualise an English community. By studying the biopoliticalness of British ideals, this thesis argues that a moment of Englishness starting from locating an independent England unavoidably sparks a reconsideration of the organicist strategies of Britishness, and their registration in contemporary literatures. A post-British reading of these literary texts shows that the continuity of an originary (narrative) structure is the major source of the political violence of Britishness. Instead of optimistically assuming a messianic, once-for-all break from such a structure, this thesis argues that awareness of its organicist logic is crucial for understanding the systematic absorption and disciplining of English characters inside British narratives.

Introduction

The conflation of Englishness and Britishness has always been one of the enduring perplexities of English identity, which not only keeps popping up in everyday-life locutions, but also causes, even in some contemporary monographs on Englishness, an alarming misunderstanding of how to separate the idea of the nation from that of the state. In the (post-)devolution context, the quest for an independent Englishness is both political and cultural. In the sphere of party politics, mass media, popular culture, and literary narratives, myriads of signifying marks have been invoked to offer a simultaneously inclusive and exclusive definition of what it means to be English. What is behind such a collective pursuit of a distinct Englishness is the same canonical logic of identity politics that has sustained idealised imaginations of the British state. The lingering use of this logic, often in unwritten forms, has developed into an institutionalised political mechanism, and more importantly, a set of moral values and social norms that all individuals *should* tacitly follow.

In his 1983 publication, Benedict Anderson provided a solid definition of 'imagined community'. As early as in *Community and Society* (1887), Ferdinand Tonnies's analysis of how modern states operate on daily basis already suggested the necessity to view the community as a self-conscious, politicised being (Tonnies 2011: 44-48). And unlike Ernest Gellner's theoretical model that stresses the 'falsity' of a national community, Anderson prefers the term 'creation', affirming that the existence of imagined communities, as well as the unifying force that enhances people's identification with the communities, is real (Anderson 2016: 6-7). While Anderson's pioneering study mainly focused on the development of nation-states (and nationalism) in specific regions, the political and cultural signification of an 'imagined community' was later substantially expanded into a critical framework to characterise the interplay between different (sub-)communities (distinguished by class, gender, ethnicity, and so on) inside a modern state (cf. Bauman 1997: 8-14). Because of its increasing relevance in (post-)devolution context, the concept of imagined community can be very conducive to interpreting the trend of remapping the boundary between Britishness and Englishness. In this thesis, the quest for an independent Englishness since devolution is viewed as a motivation to break from (the established rules and

principles of) the British community. The research not only focuses on studying the constitution of the British community, but also attempts to argue that Britishness (as well as the idealisation of Englishness) stands for a canonical mechanism (or a philosophy) that keeps mythologising the collective imagination of the state. Only by pinpointing this philosophy of Britishness can the imagined community's systematic, political violence upon its subjects be fully disclosed, which, as this thesis will argue in Chapter One, is a vital step to reveal the driving force of creating an independent English narrative.

The 'return of England' (to use Michael Gardiner's phrase), as a political response to devolution, invokes a different philosophy and methodology to break from the imagined British community (cf. Gardiner 2012: 3-4). To be more specific, the production of independent Englishness should rely on historicised experience that is closely attached to English localities. In contrast, the continuity or even the expansion of the British community rests on the ahistoricalness of such experience, and on the consistent transformation of English experience into a universalist myth. In this sense, Englishness should be constituted by 'placed ideas', whereas the myth of Britishness is sustained by 'placeless ideals' (cf. Gardiner 2013: 3). In his discussion of the difference between Englishness and Britishness, Ian Baucom stresses that historical ideas of specific places should be distinguished from stretched, displaced ideals:

> 'British' space was thus read as homogeneous, interchangeable, everywhere alike, while 'English' space remained unique, local, differentiated: a formula which permitted the empire to be that which was simultaneously *within* the boundaries of Britishness and *outside* the territory of Englishness, that which, relative to the sovereign nation, was at once identical and different. (Baucom 1999: 10)

Baucom's analysis of the production of ideals offers a precise description of how Britishing strategies absorbed England the place during the imperial expansion, and turned the state's grand narrative of England into an ahistorical canonicity – a (moral) binding force that promoted a systematic assimilation and disciplining of all subjects even beyond the English landscape. A clarification of the connection between locality

and idealised imaginations of nationhood, as some scholars have suggested, is crucial for studying the possible 'return of England' in post-devolution context (cf. Gardiner 2012: 1-11). In *The Idea of Englishness* (2015), Krishan Kumar stresses the lasting cultural impact due to the rise of scholarly interest in locating an independent England since the 1990s. Compared to other waves of English consciousness in history, the current moment of Englishness has perhaps seen the most diverse perspectives arrayed to negotiate a distinct conception of being English. Many of these attempts to form ideas of English identity turned out to be gestures towards reproducing idealised images of England – hence the lingering conflation of nation and state.

While these academic pursuits do not necessarily lead to a complete (intellectual) independence of Englishness, an often understated phenomenon in contemporary narratives of England is their tendency to revive British ideals. As Michael Gardiner suggests in *The Constitution of English Literature*, the perpetual absorption of other literatures, and then the production of new canons, is a process of reinforcing the narrative authority of British ideals (cf. Gardiner 2013: 2-4). Baucom and Gardiner have both suggested that the reason for the absence of a distinct English discourse can only be fully understood by considering the Anglocentric framework that keeps exporting idealised British imaginations. When talking about his experience of editing the modern history of 'England', A.J.P. Taylor confessed that he was repeatedly forced to speak of 'the British', and at the same time, nor could 'English affairs for long be kept separate from a host of members of the British empire' (Taylor 1965: 557). Apparently, the way the image of England has become uncertain decides that it would be extremely difficult to break from the narrative of the British state by simply asserting what it means to be English. Because, unlike other nations, the shrinking of Englishness cannot be simply ascribed to a top-down deprivation of national narratives – hence a logical improbability to regain an independent England by the conventional methods of speaking out the unspoken experience of the nation. From this perspective, the rise of English consciousness in devolution debates should not be limited to regaining an English national identity, for it is methodologically necessary to reflect upon the British mechanism that has made the expanded England 'invisible' in the first place.

In terms of the revitalisation of Britishness in this surge of English nationalism, this thesis will argue that the aims of pinpointing an independent England should be steered towards a reconsideration of the *organicist* philosophy behind the construction of Britishness myths. In *The Constitution of English Literature*, Michael Gardiner describes the strategy of establishing a 'rigorously anti-formal British meridian' with a purpose of creating a 'sovereignty form that is perpetually anterior, based on an ideal of precedent, the organic, and the legal positivism of the always-already' (2013: 14). From this perspective, organicism constitutes the essential logic of Britishness, for it not only establishes the strategies of sustaining an imagined British community, but also predetermines how its subjects should behave inside the idealised space. Since the eighteenth century, the discourses of a unifying 'British identity' has gradually formed an originary (narrative) structure that makes it a moral obligation for British subjects to repeat what has been canonised in the past. This structure is organicist, because it demands that individuals' historicised experience should be subordinated to the ahistorical (moral) narrative of the British state. In other words, the imagined community cannot be seen as a mere aggregation of citizens but an organic creature that has formed its own consciousness. The continuity of the community does not rest on people's capacity (or right) to revise some fundamental principles of the community to meet the demands of individuals. On the contrary, the imagined community, because of its expanded moral authority via grand narratives, keeps turning the people into politicised bodies – the subjects inside an organic space are in effect the objects whose identity is constantly rewritten to legitimise the cultural pilgrimage to an idealised past. In this sense, to realise this organicist aspect of British myths is the key to discovering the reason of the constant revitalisation of idealised Britishness (more analysis of organic Britishness in Chapter Four).

By reviewing some narratives of England from a post-British perspective, this research attempts to reveal the continuity of an organicist framework that can be traced back to the seventeenth-century political philosophy, such as the thinking of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Edmund Burke. An ideal of the originary created by some of this thinking becomes a source of moral canonicity that calls for an eternal return to British ideals every time the rupture of state and nation emerges. Contextualised in the post-devolution period, the confluence of such a structure and the identity politics

of Britishness has given rise to even more mature biopolitical strategies of self-healing on the part of the state (cf. Agamben 1998: 94-108).

In fact, a coherent sense of British identity has risen as a fairly modern invention. This is often neglected by scholars and commentators when they discuss the making of a unitary British 'nationhood', the question of a top-down imagination of an idealised Britain written into British thinking since the seventeenth century. In such discussions, historical ideas of 'being British' have often been presented in surprisingly ahistorical ways. If we want to see a consistent strategy behind the identity politics of Britishness, the significance of this habitual disregard of history should not be underestimated. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Edmund Burke's comparison of British evolution and French revolution exposes the ahistoricalness of organic Britishness since the Hobbesian model.[1] One noticeable similarity in Burke's, as well as in Hobbes's, argument lies in a relentless emphasis on respecting and repeating *the* history and *the* tradition. The inheritance of a canonical tradition, according to Burke, is closely related to a moral assessment of British subjects.

But neither Hobbes nor Burke can offer many substantial clues to content of this canonised tradition, or placing the making of this tradition inside a real history – more of a deliberate gesture of dehistoricising than a failure to pinpoint fictiveness. The moral obligation of return to an imaginary origin, along with the uncertainty of the existence of *the* tradition, suggests that the continuity of an imagined British community is indeed an organicist repetition. The ultimate goal of this repetition, as Baucom has suggested, is not to keep its content unchanged, but to pursue a perpetual authority to discipline all British subjects inside the imagined community (Baucom 1999: 8-12). In other words, the production of ahistorical Britishness can be seen as a historical process in which subjects are turned into 'political bodies' (cf. Hobbes 2000: 91-103). The term 'political bodies' here refers to individuals' permanent status after being born into a community. This status suggests that it is not out of one's free will that a subject can form a political imagination of a community. Instead, it is (the canonised narrative of) the community that treats individuals as targets of assimilation.

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[1] It has to be noted that although Edmund Burke constantly referred to evolution as an 'English' model, his conception of England was in effect a stretched Anglo-British imagination.

In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes claims that the contractarian relationship between civil state and its subjects is based on the principle that citizens are not the (only) masters of their own bodies. Their bodies also belong to Leviathan, the monstrous state where the subjects are simultaneously protected and disciplined. According to this model of political community, the existence of subjects within a political space should not be simply viewed as biological. Their bodies are also perpetually politicised to comply with the moral narrative of the state. To a large extent, this Hobbesian assumption of 'political body' unveils the secret for the repetition of mythologised Britishness, for the continuity of this myth relies on its ability to adjust its content (historical) to guarantee its narrative authority/canonicity (ahistorical). This mixing of the historical and the ahistorical makes the definition of Britishness clear and confusing at the same time. On one hand, what it means to be British can be easily pinpointed, since the 'continuity' implied by the assumption of an ahistorical Britain predetermines a principle of linearity, stability, and certainty. On the other hand, this presumed continuity points us towards a need for historical contextualisation. The paradox of Britishing strategy, then lies in its persistent pursuit of the ahistorical, and its methods of historically re-negotiating the content of being British.

In this sense, the strategy of exporting British ideals is indeed a masterpiece of distraction. It has lured some scholars and commentators into a methodology of renewing the content of Britishness, at the same time ignoring the state's use of structural violence on internal nations. Many academic attempts to locate a shared British identity have continued to assume that modern Britain is (or should be understood as) a nation-state (cf. Colley 2014; Skey 2011: 1-8, 12-20). In the development of the state's grand narrative, this assumption has played an indispensable role in the making of an organic British imaginary (cf. Kumar 2015: 3-22). Nonetheless, this gesture of narrating Britain as a nation-state, as some scholars have argued, is at odds with its status as a state-nation (cf. Gardiner 2012: 138-141). A major difficulty in pinpointing Britishness thus lies in the enforcement of an overwhelming framework of a British nation and its being structured superior to the reality of Britain as a union of nations. The existence of this double structure, to some extent, points to the organicist strategy of the state-nation as naturalising the process of rewriting others into new canons – and a nation expanded into being placeless is also a nation that has to become invisible relative to British ideals. The political gap

between conceptions of nation and state has never disappeared since an institutionalised modern British identity was pressed in the eighteenth century. But the imaginary force of a unitary Britishness, even when faced with serious threats of break-up, seems to have been able to renew the myth of an undying Britain. The strategy in the 1707 Act of Union was also applicable in the union with Ireland, and the continuous addition of overseas colonies to the empire's sovereignty. In the meantime, the successful expansion of British territory also seems to have justified this organicist strategy of revitalising British canonicity. In its absorption and repurposing of specific experiences, the expansion of Britishness, politicising land and subjects, needs to transform a physical place into a space of ideology. Hence an absurd phenomenon surrounding Britishness: for any individual subject within the British territory, the idealised imagination of Britain that should be internalised as an object of identification also always refers to an imagined location that can only be found elsewhere. To compare Rudyard Kipling's imperialist discourse with V.S. Naipaul's postcolonial account of the British state, this kind of rupture between reality (the experience of living in a real place) and fictiveness (the set of moral values canonised by the imagination of space) turns out to be a constant source of identity crisis. To what extent to identify with an idealised space not only reflects one's sense of self, but also the attitude towards the legitimacy of a universalist British imagination. Therefore, the idea of 'space' in the British sense is indeed 'placeless', and even 'anti-place'.

Correspondingly, an imperial contraction after the Second World War ushered in a need for reconsidering the continuity of a paradoxical intertwining of place and placelessness. Since the 1950s, a series of critical moments, perhaps most iconically the Suez Crisis and waves of colonial independence, have troubled the British ability to uphold the imagination of an empire. Some scholars have assumed that a more 'placed' strategy is required to narrate post-war Britain (cf. Morgan 2001: 634-49). Nevertheless, as suggested in Hugh Kenner's *A Sinking Island* (1987), then Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island* (2003), although the rewriting of Britishness has had to turn inward, the ideological aim of this gesture has remained no different from the colonial years. Some of the architecture of the welfare state, especially the National Health Service, has played a part in enhancing the unity of the country. For many British people, the national healthcare system has been even more influential than the triumph of World War Two in getting individuals to identify with British nationhood. But the ups and

downs of the modern welfare state are not enough to provide a panoramic view of the post-war politics of Britishness. What has emerged as a counterweight to the territorial contraction of Britain is a Britishness of an unprecedented principle of diversity. A number of waves of immigration since the mid-twentieth century and the sweeping trend of globalisation have contributed to the rise and canonising of a multicultural Britishness. The scope and complexity of the contemporary British ideal would have been beyond the imagination of those living in the pre-war Britain, let alone the ambitious unionists of the eighteenth century. But what has to be acknowledged is that although the (re-)writing of Britishness varies in its contexts and methods, the repetition of an ahistorical myth is always the goal. The central logic of creating such an all-weather unifying force is explicit: contemporary Britishness remains as organic as it was since the seventeenth-century Hobbesian model of civil state. All these political efforts to adjust the content of being British exist to ensure that people can always be disciplined by the updating of old ideals.

Just as this thesis acknowledges that the rise of English consciousness and the rejuvenation of British ideals coexist in devolutionary context, it should be stressed that behind the lingering use of Britishing strategy emerges the opportunity to conduct post-British tactics. Despite a state-national effort to proclaim an open and plural Britishness, the process of re-creating the British nation has been full of bumps and jolts. A series of moments travelling through Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968 and the breakout of massive urban riots since the 1980s work to demythologise the 'multi-ism' of the new British identity. In these critical moments, the increasingly frequent clashes between state and nation, between idealised imaginations and real places become difficult to overlook. As the consequence of the 1997 devolution referendum and the 2016 EU referendum, there has emerged a necessity to reconsider the seemingly unquestionable legitimacy of idealising Britishness. The expansion of England into placeless imaginations has played an important role in the making of British ideals (cf. Gardiner 2013: 8-14). In today's discussion of Britishness crises, what are most frequently mentioned are mounting Scottish nationalism and potential disturbances in Northern Ireland. But as well as the well-worn attempts to examine the interplay between Scottishness (and even Welshness) and Britishness, a study of post-Britishness in this 'moment of Englishness' is crucial in clarifying conflicts between nation and state, and more importantly a potential break from the organic

framework. Drawing from studies of Englishness rapidly moving up the political agenda since the 1990s, this research will decode the (re-)making of an imagined British community in English texts, and then the inevitable demythologising of an organic Britain.

To stress the importance of the post-British turn does not necessarily assume a transitional phase before the independence of England. In this research, the main focus of critique is on an independence from replicating the classic British mechanism that creates the ahistorical. The turn to post-Britishness and the independence of a placed Englishness are not two separate procedures, but one coherent act in criticising organic Britishness. To claim that Britain is already undergoing a post-British transition may be seen by some as an offensive exaggeration of current political and cultural conflicts. After all, the making of British ideals is never immune to challenge, and it seems to have been able to rejuvenate after each crisis. But a real (intellectual) independence from British ideals cannot take place unless the practice of criticism witnesses a fundamental shift in terms of its target of critique. Rather than a negotiation of new British canons, what really needs revealing is the way the originary structure has been sustaining the expansion of Britishness myths, and its production of violence upon British subjects. In this sense, the post-British turn is indeed a rejection of the ahistorical and the universalist.

Demythologising British ideals, therefore, rests on the understanding that all flexible adaptations of Britishness are at base techniques for absorbing otherness for the purpose of achieving a self-rebirth (cf. Gardiner 2012: 2-4). Structurally superior to the changing constitution of British ideas are the principles that allow for negotiations of what contents should be canonised. This means that while the ideas of Britishness always have to compete with each other to be prioritised into ideals, the system of selection *per se* is treated as an untouchable ideal from the very beginning. Particularly in literary imagination of Britishness, while all 'historical' gestures of canonisation attempt to include other literatures, the simultaneous assimilation of otherness works to sustain the ahistorical authority of canonicity. This indicates that the continuity of Britishness is based on a mechanism I will call, after Agamben, *inclusive exclusion* (more discussion in Chapter One and Chapter Three). Post-Britishness is thus not really a political replacement of, or successor of, Britishness. Instead, it is more of a

critical interpretative method inherently pre-coded by and inseparable from the rise and fall of the Britishness myth. This means that a post-British reading of the Britishness myth cannot be easily absorbed like other methods of reconstructing imaginary ideals. The driving force of post-Britishness always exists as long as the systematic practice of inclusive exclusion continues.

By analysing the interplay between Britishness and post-Britishness in the contemporary literature of England, this thesis asks why the idealised imagination of the British state-nation cannot avoid cyclical crises in literary reproduction. An even more important question is why this post-British turn may cause more political rethinking about the myth of an organic state-nation. To undertake this research from a literary perspective is also important, I argue here, because of the historical ties between the canonical English Literature and the export of a universalist British imagination. Since the British state's expansion in the eighteenth century, a non-stop process of canonisation has witnessed a number of texts being picked out and prioritised. The naturalness and pre-givenness of these works ensure that the initially temporal experience closely attached to England the place can overcome boundaries of time and space, expanding into a metaphysical role (cf. Gardiner 2013: 1-18). The role of literary canons increased after imperial contraction. Although the Anglo-British canons established before World War Two, as Q.D. Leavis suggested with utmost lamentation, gradually lost their political attractiveness and legitimacy, the reconstruction of Britishness has continued to be constituted by rounds and rounds of re-canonisation. Some *other* narratives – the voices of those formerly excluded by the traditional standard of canonisation – are now moving from the peripheral to the central. But as this thesis will suggest, gestures of updating only take place in the constitution of canons, and not enough questions have been raised about the mechanism that creates canonicity, the political impact of canonisation, the 'natural' expectation of the existence of (new) canons and the idolatry of certain authors. In this thesis, the rift between England the canonised imagination and England the real place is detectable in selected literary texts, thus offering a vantage point of post-British critique. This research will show that the turn to post-Britishness as a reading method shows not only a desire to regain a 'placed' England across numerous texts, but also a warning against the lingering use of imperialist lens in representing England.

The texts for analysis include literary narratives by Ian McEwan, Graham Swift, J.G. Ballard, Tom McCarthy, Alecky Blythe, and Gillian Slovo. The research examines the narrative methods used to temporarily break from the idealised imagination of England. The criteria of choosing these writers' fictions for research mainly focus on whether the conflicts of state and nation are well represented in the texts. What can be sensed in all these writings is the rebirth of an idealised Britain in this moment of Englishness, as well as a group of English characters inevitably caught in a storm of identity crisis. Since the early stage of selection, the fictions of McEwan, Swift, and McCarthy have stood out, because they offer a most accurate depiction of the trajectory to break from British narratives. What really draws the attention is that these quests for independence share a similar structure. The texts often start with a character's seemingly abrupt awareness of being 'imprisoned' (physically and mentally) inside an idealised imagination of the British state. However, their act of revolt does not lead to a permanent redemption, and all these stories end up with these rebels being recaptured and disciplined by the imagined community. Also, the selection of *Saturday* and *Ten Days* for analysis is based on the fact that these fictional writings use real, critical moments (such as the 2011 London riots) as the backdrop of their plot. The literary representations of such critical moments are good samples for post-British analysis. The repeated transition of the British community between order and disorder is densely and precisely illustrated in the texts, which can significantly benefit the exposure of the originary structure of British narratives.

Based on a close reading of the primary texts, the thesis aims to undertake a descriptive research of the strategies used to re-canonise British ideals in the contemporary literature of England. In Part One, this thesis mainly draws from the theories of Ian Baucom and Michael Gardiner (the production of identity crisis in a cultural space) to analyse the inevitable turn to post-Britishness. To some extent, the critical assumptions of Baucom and Gardiner share a similar logic, for they both foreground the rupture between fictiveness and reality during the construction of an imagined community. By clarifying the source of this rupture, these two scholars have managed to separate the literature of England from the canonical English Literature. From the post-British perspective, such a categorical division is crucial for this thesis to review the function (as well as the originary structure) of some literary narratives to consistently produce ahistorical, placeless British ideals. Then, in the second part of

the thesis, Michel de Certeau's game theory of cultural identification in daily life is frequently adopted to explain the counteractive interplay between the imagined British community and its politicised subjects. In addition, the analysis in Chapter Three and Chapter Four is largely carried out under the sign of biopolitics to expose the state's strategy to systematically produce a moralising narrative of an idealised community. In this case, Michel Foucault's and Giorgio Agamben's ideas of biopolitics constitute the theoretical framework to argue that the continuity of Britishness rests on a mode of 'enforced assimilation' of governmentality that constantly disciplines or expels its disorderly subjects.

The first part of this thesis offers two chapters which engage with the significance of post-Britishness in a new emergence of Englishness. These chapters draw from Michael Gardiner's arguments to suggest that the anticipated return of England ought to be negotiated in a context where 'England the place' and 'England the placeless ideal' are put into conflict. The first chapter addresses the turn to post-Britishness as a critical response to the frequent application of imperialist methods in defining Englishness. According to Krishan Kumar's observation, an increasing interest in the discovery of England as a nation suggests that the post-devolutionary British state has witnessed a re-awakening of English nationhood (2015: 4-22). However, due to the problematic confusion of state and nation, the imperial ideology that contributed to the expansion of England into a 'placeless' ideal still exists in the contemporary pursuit of an independent Englishness (Gardiner 2012: 1-18). For this reason, this introductory chapter suggests that a premise for the turn to post-Britishness is to acknowledge the co-existence of a quest for the return of England and a noticeable revival of Britishing narratives of the nation.

Chapter One argues that the significance of post-Britishness lies in its critique of the political and cultural framework of an imposed British ideal, and, more importantly, of the imperialist logic that leads to the making of a placeless 'English' community. The recurring clash of two Englands within the narrative hierarchy is examined in Chapter Two, and the way such a clash exposes the rupture between place and imagination. Two-faced English characters act simultaneously as rebel and pilgrim, marking the danger of reinvigorating a stretched imagination of England. Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) and Graham Swift's *Wish You Were Here* (2012) can then

be read symptomatically to explain the significance of post-Britishness as a paradigm of critique. Drawing from the historical connection between Britishness and English Literature, this chapter argues that the selected representations of England offer a textual space in which the desire for an independent Englishness and the impact of imperial Britishness engage in frequent conflict. In this sense, the portraits of England in these two novels can be interpreted from two interrelated perspectives. Firstly, they can be read in terms of the constant battle between the central and the peripheral within the British narrative structure to represent an idealised imagination of England. Secondly, they can be read in terms of the rupture between 'imagination' and 'place' suggested by the juxtaposition of idealised Englands, and by the absurdity of the absence of England the place. Due to the anxiety invoked by the placelessness of imperial ideals, some rebelling characters foreground a distinctness in articulating an independent Englishness, and in the meantime a risk of those characters being re-absorbed into the confusion of state and nation.

The second part of the thesis, drawing from Michel de Certeau's everyday-life theory, focuses on different forms of repetition as performative tactics to break away from a placeless 'England'. Chapter Three re-examines the representations of urban violence. In response to the *strategy* of the state of creating a grand narrative of madness, the selected texts suggest certain literary *tactics* to pinpoint the connection between the systematic production of the 'insane' and the logic of Britishness, as centred on a classical Lockean emphasis on property. In this chapter, de Certeau's distinction of 'strategies' and 'tactics', and Michel Foucault's theory on 'madness', are applied to interpreting Gillian Slovo's *Ten Days* (2016) and *The Riots: From Spoken Evidence* (2011), Alecky Blythe's *Little Revolution* (2014), and J.G. Ballard's *Kingdom Come* (2006). These texts, in the form of fiction and verbatim theatre, respond to urban violence – notably the social disturbances caused by the 2011 London Riots – as critical moments of post-Britishness. With no intention of romanticising societal disorder, this chapter lays emphasis on the literary representation of the cause, the expansion, and the impact of urban riots. The strategy of Britishness demands that the grand state-national narrative should define such incidents as inexplicable 'madness' – an incessant construction of the binary framework of rationality and insanity, order and disorder. As a result, the state's conclusive narrative is almost always used to constitute a desirable contrast to the imagined security and harmony promised by what

I will describe as the British conception of spatial order. However, these selected narratives reject the notion of conclusiveness as well as the moral rhetoric of the state-nation. Instead, they suggest tactics revealing the biopolitical order of organic Britishness, based in the systematic production of madness, and drawing from the Hobbesian assumption of a total politicisation of the body of subjects, and the Lockean ideal of natural law.

Chapter Four describes how, while the *repetition* of prescribed social norms in everyday life constitutes one of the 'strategies' of ideological institutions in imposing a seemingly 'pre-existing' order, it can also be seen a Deleuzean 'tactic' for individuals to expose the inevitability to question the idea of an organic Britain. Even in today's context, a Burkean imagery of organicism is still widely used, and has a huge impact on the operation of the British state and the subjects' everyday-life practices. By analysing Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* (2005) and *Satin Island* (2015), this chapter concentrates on the function of a repetition which, from the organicist perspective, forms a disciplining force to rewrite individuals' knowledge of self and their relation to the external world. By canonising social principles (traditions, cultural taboos, and literary canons), the subjects of organic Britain are 'encoded' to undertake an eternal return to an original point that only exists outside history. Due to the ritualisation of the repetition, all the performers are supposed to contribute to the 'impossibility' of the death of Britishness. Drawing from Deleuzian theory, this chapter also argues that the unavoidable production of difference via repetitions does not rest on the characters' situational choices, and on the contrary that the contemporary crises encountered by the organic Britishness are not occasional but inevitable.

To sum up, this study aims to think about the mechanism of an organic British community, the crisis caused by its philosophy, and literary registrations of this crisis. Shifting the target of critique to the strategy of expanding British ideals, it suggests, would be a condition of taking about a return of (ideologically) independent nations – not just England. These, the thesis argues, are the stakes of an analysis of the turn to post-Britishness in the contemporary literature of England.

Chapter One

Englishness or Post-Britishness: The Break from the Britishness Myth

The results of the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum and the 2016 Brexit referendum suggest that devolution in the 1990s was by no means the end of renegotiating the boundary between state and nation. Starting from studying the rise of English consciousness, this chapter explains why this moment of Englishness should not simply be seen as a collective attempt to regain an independent English identity. As it turns out, the pursuit of English national identity has been accompanied with, if not directly giving rise to, a re-mythologisation of Britishness. By reviewing some of the most representative Englishness scholarship in this era, this chapter argues that the systematic canonisation of British narratives makes the turn to post-British critique inevitable in the context of (post-)devolution. Starting from acknowledging nationalism as a driving force of this moment of Englishness, such a critique advocates that the initial quest for the return of an independent England is bound to shift to studying the mechanism that keeps producing and renewing idealised British imaginations.

1.1 A New Moment of Englishness?

Since the Acts of Union in the 1700s, systematic, top-down constructions of a unifying British community have demanded a relative 'suppression' of the union's constituent nations.[2] But contemporary national conflicts and divides, as exposed especially in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and the 2016 EU referendum, have revealed that the seemingly unitary state-nation is, in its essence, a union of nations, or a union-state. Partly in response to the emerging ruptures in the rest of the UK (especially the

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[2] British colonies have changed significantly in history, especially during the nineteenth-century imperial expansion and the post-colonial contraction since the two world wars. Instead of producing a comprehensive record of all the nations once absorbed to be part of Britishness, this thesis, when addressing the political gap between state and nation, will mainly consider those still remaining under British sovereignty (i.e. England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Island). Compared with the other three nations, England, though significantly suppressed in its own case, is in some sense also 'stretched' beyond the local. This accounts for the existing conflation of nation and state, and marks the distinctness of the contemporary quest for an independent Englishness. See Michael Gardiner (2013) *The Constitution of English Literature* (London: Bloomsbury): 1-10.

momentum that pushes for Celtic autonomy), an increasing interest in locating an independent England suggests that post-devolutionary Britain has undergone 'a moment of Englishness' (cf. Kumar 2010: 17-28; 2015: 2-22). One originary motivation for pinpointing a distinct Englishness can be traced back to what is sometimes called the English Question – a question that has remained unanswered since its first appearance in modern British politics. This question was repeatedly revisited before and after the 1999 devolution election, and with a mounting academic enthusiasm since the 1990s, the initial interest in locating English national identity has gradually grown into a reconsideration of the roots of its conflation with British ideals. The recent development of Englishness scholarship can be seen as a mixture of political contingency and structural inevitability. In a narrow sense, one form of the English Question is the West Lothian Question associated with Tam Dalyell, a Labour MP who repeatedly raised the issue of English representation under devolution. The English Question is magnified in post-devolutionary Britain, and has gradually gone beyond an initial quest for 'English votes for English laws'. Now that devolution has witnessed a significant rebalance of political power between the British state and the 'outer' three nations, the English question, technically, should at least address the concern that England would not be the only one left out in the process of decentralisation. However, the English Question has never been purely technical about parliamentary reforms; it has been imprinted with a very conservative attitude towards a rapidly changing British community since the 1960s. As a result, the original English Question has gradually expanded into an English identity politics in the post-devolutionary context (cf. Biressi and Nunn 2013: 142-149).

The expansion of the English Question has had a significant impact on the British state's sense of self, and its interaction with other nation-states – especially its relationship with those in the European continent. According to Benedict Anderson, the source of a national identity largely stems from a collective feeling of insecurity about potential external threats (cf. Anderson 2016: 12-15). In the context of devolution, an increasing awareness of insecurity has stimulated a need to reaffirm an idealised conception of being English, which has often been misinterpreted by commentators as a mere expression of the 'trendy' isolationism across the globe, and as a contemporary rendition of a deep-rooted Euroscepticism (cf. Colley 2014: 96-104). Following the same logic of identity politics, Theresa May, at the 2016 Tory

party conference, uttered that 'if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere' (May 2016). While this comment seems to be responding to a rising anti-globalist emotion, it is also impossible to ignore that there exists behind the desire of remapping British borders an even greater fear of losing England. Apart from the external push given by the British state's changed geopolitical role, England has also been accumulating political momentum by responding to a rise of national consciousness in counterpart regions within the UK. But an interest in characterising Englishness goes further than a power negotiation between nations. A more important yet often ignored aspect of this interest is that the desire for an independent England, in addition to allowing for a long-absent national voice, helps locate a missing piece of the Britishness puzzle. In pursuit of an independent Englishness, what has emerged is a panorama of Britishness's structural production of canonicity and constant absorption of others, stimulating a comprehensive reflection upon the interplay between nation and state. In this respect, the contemporary revisiting of the English Question already has questions of parliamentary reform. The quest for a distinct Englishness is closely connected with a series of political and cultural challenges to ideals of what it means to be British. An (intellectually) independent Englishness would be impossible if it were not positioned as an indispensable part of the breakup of Britishness myths.

With regards to the structural conflict between state and nation, by far the most well-worn example in the British context is Scottish nationalism. But the rise of Scottish national thinking, to some extent, has been noticeably linked with the awakening of English consciousness. In 2000 in *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland*, Tom Nairn argued that 'the Scottish sovereignty cancelled out by the Act of Union in 1707 will inexorably rise up like a long-suppressed underground stream' (2000: 192-194). According to Nairn's critique of Isabel Hilton's fearmongering of ethnic tension, Nairn observes that a post-devolution Scotland would deeply strengthen the quest of locating English identity, which would eventually enforce a rewriting of England's relationship with other nations, and with the state (cf. 2000: 192-205).[3] To some extent, the aftermath of the 1997 devolution referendum proved

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[3] In response to the nineteen-year-old Mark Ayton being kicked to death in the Edinburgh suburb of Balerno, Isabel Hilton said in her *Guardian* article: 'it is only a matter of time before

that this renegotiated political framework was far enough to anchor a stable British imagination. And the Scottish Independence referendum of 2014 (and potentially a second referendum due to Brexit) reinforces the way Scotland tends to perform as a pioneer breaking up the cultures of a unifying British 'nation'.

The comparison with a 'rebelling' Scotland is not to assert that the Englishness issue has not been widely discussed. In fact, there were abundant Englishness studies long before the surge of English consciousness in the 1990s. As early as the late 1960s there was a rising awareness of the gap between England the place and England the imagined being (cf. Taylor 1965: 15-24; cf. Williams 2017: 4-8; cf. Thompson 2013). But pre-1990s discussions on Englishness rarely built a logical thread between a distinctly defined Englishness and its threat to the intactness of British union. For example, in his volume in *The Oxford History of England* (1965), A.J.P. Taylor claimed that the purpose of writing is to characterise Englishness. But at the same time, he lamented a past age 'when "England" was still an all-embracing word, meaning indiscriminately England and Wales; Great Britain; the United Kingdom; and even the British Empire' (Taylor 1965: v). With such a pre-devolutionary logic, extracting a distinct Englishness from British ideals is impossible. As a result, although scholarship on Englishness was already abundant before devolution, it generally avoided clarifying statehood and nationhood, so that the awakening of English consciousness wouldn't compromise the legitimacy or the unifying force of Britishness. Research aims before and after devolution suggested different paradigms, and created an ideological watershed for an independent Englishness. Especially after the 1950s and '60s, an eagerness to locate an English national identity invoked by some nationalist parties and activists did bring some responses from some of the English people, especially, as Baucom suggests, an underclass that was most seriously affected by the post-war waves of migration (Baucom 1999: 190-201; Biressi and Nunn 2013: 44-50). The recurring image of an 'angry underclass' renegotiating 'English place' within a 'space of Britishness' suggests that what this thesis will later show to be a Lockean vision of a property-based state remains strong in the post-1945 state-national framework (cf. Biressi and Nunn 2013: 44-48). With the difficulty of regaining

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white-robed figures with burning torches are hunting out English settlers from their beds and hanging them from lamp-posts.'

Englishness in terms of constitutional reform, popular cultures and sports came into the frame for the pursuit of re-identification (cf. Featherstone 2009: 2-9, 49-55). In the eyes of some commentators, this might explain why the image of football fans waving St. George's Cross in the 1996 European Championship and the 1998 World Cup should be associated with as a solid, collective utterance of English national identity (cf. Perryman 2008: 9-10). G.K. Chesterton, in *The Secret People*, observes a long suppressed national consciousness and predicts that an English revolution is bound to happen. For many critics, the political significance of putting out more English flags since the 1990s is no less than a 'revolution' of national identification. According to J.G.A. Pocock, this phenomenon can be seen as the rise of a 'soccer fan Republic of St. George': these people obviously 'had fallen in love with England' and 'couldn't stop telling themselves about it' (Pocock 2000: 41-52). In *The Politics of Englishness*, Arthur Aughey observes that '1996 helped to dispel the myth of the English being reserved and reluctant to engage in collective collaboration' (2007: 1-3). In his response to Richard Weight's argument in 'Raise St. George's Standard High' (1999), Aughey agrees that the political significance of this particular occasion is the 'extraction of the English cross from the Union flag', and that popular flag waving meant that the English were 'gaining a deeper awareness of their own nationhood' again (2007: 2).

While many writers have been obsessed with political signifiers (in this case the flag), what has also emerged from this national excitement is an understatement of the inherited framework of Britishness. The gesture of waving flags is far from enough to export a sustainable imagination of being English, for it does not negate but repeat the logic of ritualising a collective performance of ideals. A huge gap still exists between this kind of ritualistic expression and a solid definition of the political and cultural force behind the rise of English consciousness. In his illustration of the development of English national identity, Krishan Kumar points out that people in England (especially in those relatively more multicultural regions) seem confused about the solid content of English identity, and their concern about the risk of extremist nationalism actually encourages a re-identification with being British (2010: 18-38). At the end of the twentieth century when English nationalism witnessed a strong reaction to devolution, an article titled 'How English Are You?' articulated two weaknesses that the quest for Englishness could not bypass: the blurring of English

and British, and the doubt that English nationalism would become confused with far-right racism (BBC 1999). Such a degradation of Englishness has not entirely disappeared in post-millennial Britain, and the situation, as many commentators have argued, has become even worse. Because Englishness is seen as radical, a number of contemporary writers, such as J.G. Ballard and Hanif Kureishi, have suggested a connection between the rise of English nationalism and the notable increase of urban violence. In *Kingdom Come* (2006), for instance, a suburban town visited by the protagonist is harassed by English football hooligans, street violence, racist attacks, and party politics. These factors together have wrought great havoc on local residents, especially the ethnic minorities and those who refuse to carry a marker of Englishness. This kind of literary narrative illustrates the frustrating trajectory of an Englishness closely tied to a cultish passion for new national ideals. The repeated examples of Englishness turning far-right in post-devolution context makes it clear that replacing British signifiers with English ones cannot lead to the nation's independence – the overall narrative structure of the state-nation is left unchanged.

Awakenings of English national consciousness in modern history often follow a similar trajectory. What happens after the initial, populist carnival is an accelerated marginalisation and shrinkage of the overt English signs within the space of Britishness politics. The collective excitement cools down and lurks until the next fuse appears to reignite the temporarily suppressed anxiety. From this perspective, what has made this moment of Englishness continue for so long and become so unprecedentedly effective is that it is caused by an irrevocable restructuring of institutionalised Britishness. The implementation of devolution enforces England to face its awkward position within the British state: while the other three nations have already achieved a certain degree of autonomy via decentralisation, the English Question remains unanswered, and can even result in a deeper conflation with Britishness. The frustration caused by the long absence of further constitutional reform naturally causes a crucial change of focus in this moment of Englishness. The explosive development of scholarship during this period shows a collective interest in finding rational explanations for the invisibility of England the place (other than a stretched, imaginary England) inside a state-national system. Many of these Englishness studies differ from the conventional perspectives and methodologies of pre-devolutionary thinking. In *The Idea of Englishness*, Kumar offers a precise

summary of this academic enthusiasm since the 1990s, and states explicitly the political context of this phenomenon:

> if the systematic study of Englishness was a relatively undeveloped field until as late as the 1990s, scholars have been busily, even frantically, making up for the lack ever since. The obvious driving force of this new interest has been the threats to the unity and integrity of the United Kingdom. The Labour government's devolution measures of 1998 raised, perhaps for the first time since the secession of Ireland in 1921, a serious question mark over the future of the United Kingdom… The Scots, the Welsh, the Irish, seemed to know who they were; but the English – who were they? (Kumar 2015:1)

As Kumar has noted, this wave of English consciousness in the 1990s witnessed a notable, academic switch (if not a complete take-over), and has since then set a different tone in tackling the lingering English question (cf. Kumar 2015: 3-14, 18-22). More importantly, some of these studies on Englishness have noticed from the very beginning that the return of England cannot dodge the conflation of state and nation – a blind spot often found in pre-devolutionary research. For this reason, one important task for many research projects is to have a serious reconsideration of the political and cultural roots of England's return as an independent nation.

To discover a distinct Englishness, many scholars start from locating the origin of Englishness – a well-tried method that suggests a renewed worship of 'continuity', and the motivation of this worship can be easily linked to the shared assumption that post-British Englishness is in continuity with pre-British Englishness. The driving force of such an interest in English history is to ensure a return of British England instead of a creation of Englishness.[4] The most representative works of this kind are *Englishness Politics and Culture 1880-1920* edited by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd,

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[4] Although the initial motivation for pinpointing a historical continuity is to achieve the return of an independent England, the organicist obsession of returning to an assumed originary past turns out be Britishing – thus making it inevitable that resorting to this strategy can only deteriorate the existing conflation of state and nation. See Michael Gardiner (2012) *The Return of England in English Literature* (London: Palgrave): 6-22.

first published in 1986, with a second edition in 2014, and Colls's *Identity of England* (2002). Especially in the latter, the author seems unsatisfied with merely enlisting changing images of England from its origin to the post-imperial reform in the field of politics, culture, jurisdiction, and class. Noting the problem of producing English imaginations as resilient as British ideals, Colls touches upon a key question that many pre-devolutionary studies had failed to answer: what is the real motivation for regaining an English national identity?

> Being English is not a natural, or a fixed, or an absolute quality.
> Nor is it an inconsequential myth or an irrational act liable to fade
> in post-modern times… The idea that the state stands for a
> homogeneous nation is no longer credible… It is difficult to think
> of a national identity that can be pluralist and normative at the
> same time. Pluralism works best for pluralists. It works less well
> for those who regard being English as a uniquely important way
> of valuing themselves. Nor should pluralism become a super-
> identity taking homage from, and denying comparison between,
> all other identities beneath. (Colls 2002: 378-379)

According to Colls's argument, it is the seemingly 'pluralist' Britishness that produces the motivation for locating an independent Englishness. By clarifying idealised Britishness as a 'homogeneous' and 'normative' superstructure, Colls observes that the new political reality created by devolution makes it impossible to keep England the nation unvoiced. In a similar pattern, Peter Mandler, in *History and National Life* (2002), tracks the formation of national experience in history writing, thus revealing a paradoxical link between frozen moments of Englishness and the maturing of a British super-identity. Some other research also addressed the relationship between renegotiating the state-national structure and the assumed return of England, such as Richard Weigh's *Patriots: National Identity in Britain 1940-2000* (2003) and Helen Brocklehust and Robert Philip's *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (2004). And in *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (2006), Mandler extracts a national image from English political philosophy, and at the same time reveals the state's absolute power to absorb national ideas. All these works are of great value since they have contributed to revealing the

Britishing method used to create and sustain the state-national structure. But a new question emerges, a question that tells this post-Britishness study from existing research on Englishness: is it even possible, or to what extent can the regained English 'nation' differ from the state-nation if it is accomplished via a re-employment of this questionable method of Britishness?

Some studies have stressed the lingering impact of institutionalised Britishness. In his important study *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (1999), Ian Baucom points to a political strategy of exporting an assimilative 'national' identity via transforming historical experiences of real places into timeless ideals of imagined territory. In *The English Question* (2006), Robert Hazell, with some other scholars in the field of political history and governmentality, analyses the institutional development of Englishness since the 1707 union. According to their conclusion, the key to the English Question is not just further parliamentary reform but a more comprehensive and thorough decentralisation in daily life. *Imagined Nation: England after Britain* (2008), edited by Mark Perryman, attempts to define an independent English nation from the perspective of sports, constitutional reform, gender, geopolitics, and cultural roots. As well as analysing the status quo of the state-nation, this collection of identity studies also proposes a timetable for the breakup of Britain and predicts the impact of the potential independence of Scotland on the politics of Englishness. A more updated and in-depth collection of essays is *The Making of English Popular Culture* (2016), edited by John Storey. In these essays, scholars review the construction of English identity since the Victorian age – using the form of portrait photography and the popular magazines designed for specific classes and genders to locate an idealised imagination of England. In *National Belonging and Everyday Life* (2011), Michael Skey, drawing from Michel de Certeau's idea of everyday-life politics and Michael Billig's thinking of banal nationalism, attempts to restore the image of Englishness by piecing together fragmented everyday-life experience. Simon Featherstone agrees that the rise of English consciousness is deeply rooted in the development of popular culture. In *Englishness: Twentieth-century Popular Culture and the Forming of English Identity* (2008), Featherstone provides a detailed study on travel writings, popular songs, cricket and football, and national festivals to characterise what it means to be English. Regarding the literary representation of the interplay between state and nation, Patrick Parrinder's *Nation*

and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day (2006) observes an emerging rupture between provincialism and universalism. By tracing canonical writings from Daniel Defoe to late twentieth-century novels of immigration, Parrinder suggests that English fictions in the twenty-first century should focus on the making of place-oriented characters instead of exporting a unitary English identity. Michael Gardiner's emphasis on English Literature's function as a 'cultural agent' for an unwritten British constitution is important. In *The Return of England in English Literature* (2012), Gardiner articulates an essential difference between 'English Literature' and the 'literature of England', suggesting that the exposure of this difference invokes a serious question about the literary discipline in current university education, and will lead to a belated return of England in contemporary narratives. Aside from their diverse perspectives, most of these studies mark an increasing interest in discovering the cultural roots of an invisible Englishness in Anglo-British narratives. Especially in Baucom and Gardiner, the study of the relationship between space and cultural imaginations suggests a critical focus on a British mechanism that keeps producing ahistorical canons – an important theoretical inspiration for this thesis to define the aim of post-British critique.

Drawing from Gardiner's theory of 'other literatures being constantly absorbed into the British imagination', this thesis chooses to focus on the mechanism of canonisation instead of a traditional interest in what should be canonised. What is worth noticing is that some scholars and writers have also contributed to the critique of (British) canonicity without directly setting an independent Englishness as their direct research target. For some writers, a possible motivation is that a regained English nation could be conducive to deconstructing the British super-identity – hence a momentum of a more thorough decentralisation for all nations. In *Faces of Nationalism* (1997), Nairn points out the growth of different nationalisms within the British state, providing an important theoretical groundwork for England's independence from British ideals. In *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy* (2011), Nairn sees the mystery of royalty as a crucial method of narrating an imagined Britain based on a mythologised conception of continuity. By mapping out and comparing the trajectories of Scottish and English nationality, Nairn affirms that the belated rise of an English awakening will accelerate the fall of the union state. Another example of breaking up state-national myths is Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992). Proposing

that canonical English Literature also be devolved, Crawford stresses the importance of re-drawing the blurred boundary between national narratives and Anglocentric British Literature. While his research adopts a noticeable Scottish lens, it still sheds light on a direction for separating the 'literature of England' from 'English Literature'.

The above-mentioned research is representative of the studies on nation and state since the 1990s. Compared with pre-devolutionary attempts at discovering English national identity, these studies, in their depth and comprehensiveness, seem to have justified Kumar's claim of a new moment of Englishness at the turn of the century. In his keynote speech for a 2015 Englishness conference, Kumar admitted that there might be more such moments in history (Kumar 2015).[5] Nonetheless, this moment of Englishness distinguishes itself from the rest, for devolution gives England a strong stimulation to renegotiate, with an unprecedented seriousness, its relationship with the British state. In this sense, the recent surge of national consciousness has already broken away from a presumed continuity, and shortened its distance from an England that could be independent from British ideals.

1.2 The Lingering Spectre of Britishness

The post-devolutionary quest for an independent Englishness has occasionally been described by scholars as a change of English status from 'the dog that did not bark' to 'the dog that finally barked' (Kumar 2015: 12). However, attempts at pinpointing an English identity often turn out to be ambiguous and contradictory. The implementation of devolution and the interest in Englishness do not mean that an intellectual and ideological independence from British ideals can happen easily. A renegotiation of power within the existing political framework should not be oversimplified as the end of constructing a British 'national' identity. In fact, what this critical moment has witnessed is two parallel forces: a rise of Englishness and a lingering Britishness, a competition between devolution and centralisation. The coexistence of these two forces constitutes a political reality that is often (deliberately) understated in the post-

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[5] In November 27, 2015, Krishan Kumar made a keynote speech for the Englishness Conference at St. John's College, admitting that the concept of 'moment of Englishness' could be legitimately extended to a wider reference (i.e. the making of Englishness in the age of King Alfred, the Venerable Bede, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth and the English Civil War) in exploring the origin and development of English nation. Also see Krishan Kumar (2015) *The Idea of Englishness* (Dorchester: Ashgate): 2-25.

devolutionary quest for the return of an England that can completely break from Britishing idealisation. As a result, what can be seen at this stage of devolution is the focus on constructing a national identity being shifted to reconsidering the political function of British narratives.

Since the four nations inside the British state have played different roles in exporting (and being absorbed by) ahistorical ideals, the renegotiations of power between nations and the state must adopt different methods and political tools. However, although the recent rise of Englishness study can be seen as a timely response to the trend of decentralisation, the content claimed by Englishness studies has turned out to be *displaced*. Since the similarities shared by nations in their interplay with the state are overstressed, the use of universalist tactics can easily turn the construction of a distinct Englishness into a replica of other nations' trajectory of self-identification. With regards to the experience of devolution in the other three nations, the most efficient option is to make the unvoiced heard, strengthening the narrative power of the nations to strike a balance with the British rhetoric. For instance, in *Nations Against the State* (2001), Michael Keating reviews Scotland's cultural roots, structure of civil society, and attitudes towards crucial international affairs. By stressing that 'these elements are not new, but can all be found somewhere within the Scottish historical experience', Keating suggests that his approach, as well as his aim, is to make the unseen seen, and weld these rediscovered elements into a nation's unifying narrative (262). A similar logic can be found in many other studies, including Murdo Macdonald's *Scottish Art* (2000), Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (2000), and *Radical Scotland: Arguments for Self-Determination* edited by Gerry Hassan and Rosie Ilett (2011). Despite their different perspectives, these works all have a logic of, to use Hassan's phrase, being simultaneously 'active' and 'defensive'. While these scholars advocate a more active participation in narrating the national, the main purpose is to ensure that national subjectivity can be safely guarded in its confrontation with the super-identity of statehood.

In retrospect, the frequently used metaphor of 'English barking' is exemplary of the overemphasis on the sameness of national identity crises, which often leads to the conclusion that it is natural for the return of England to follow a same path as the other three nations. However, such a prototype is not applicable to the English Question.

This is largely due to England's unique role in the making of an idealised Britishness. Although Englishness, like other nations, was severely suppressed, it was in the meantime also expanded to the extreme:

> from the inception of the British state at the end of the seventeenth century…the apparently plurinational – and yet itself somehow national – state has relied on a displaced ideal of an England that can be continuously extended outwards – but this is not because of what used to be called 'Anglocentrism' as if England-the-place really did form a centre, but rather because of the cultural burden of holding together incommensurate constitutional authorities relying on its apparently most durable model, that is on a constitution 'settled' but open to perpetual informal modification. (Gardiner 2013: 2)

In *The Constitution of English Literature*, Michael Gardiner observes that the way England has been absorbed by the canonical British narrative differs from that of other nations. As briefly mentioned in the previous section, what makes England visible and invisible at the same time is England the place being stretched into a placeless, ahistorical imagination of England. In other words, in addition to its enforced absence as a nation and as a place (a condition shared by other nations within the state), England is distinct in its 'dis-placed' expansion into an idealised imagination, a mythologised metaphor of state-nation (cf. Gardiner 2013: 2-8). As Kumar has also noted, England's conflation with Britain, in the eyes of other nations, is usually attributed to Anglocentrism, thus questioning the legitimacy of stressing the significance of pursuing an independent Englishness in the first place. But England's disappearance after its expansion into a metaphysical ideal is more widely demonstrable. In *The Expansion of England* (1883), J.R. Seeley points out that 'the modern character of England may be briefly described on the whole by saying that England has been expanding into Greater Britain' (Seeley 1971: 64-5). It is not too difficult to notice that the conception of England in Seeley's statement was no longer England the place. Likewise, other scholars considered the gesture of clarifying the difference of being English and British as a waste of time. What is reflected in such an attitude is a deep-rooted mixture of 'England the place' and 'England the

imagination', suggesting that the idea of Greater Britain is indeed a pointed attempt to create an Anglosphere of Anglo-Britain (cf. Taylor 1975: 622).

This sort of confusion has also been inherited since the 1990s rise of Englishness. In one of his interviews on BBC Radio Four in 2000, Jack Straw, the then Home Secretary, expressed his deep concern about the 'dark and dangerous forces' lurking within the rising awareness of the English nation. According to his comment, the English nation had used a 'propensity to violence' to 'subjugate the other nations in the United Kingdom' and had then exported such a violence to Europe and the British Empire (BBC 2000). On the surface, Straw's statement was a critique of the violence caused by English nationalism. But the stretched link between the English and the British 'propensity' actually supports the logic that a placed English experience can be expanded into the equivalence of a British ideal. Because of this logic, England cannot justify regaining its lost voice as other subjugated nations. England, because of its population, political and financial dominance, and cultural hegemony, is never believed (by other nations, and also by many English people) to have been absent. For this reason, unlike the rest of the British state that could rely on its national narratives to counteract the imposed British rhetoric, England has no choice but renegotiate its conceptual boundary with the state before moving on to pursue an English voice. Otherwise, the belated 'English bark' could still turn out to be British.

Apart from the displaced replication of other nations' method of self-identification, this moment of Englishness also witnessed a notable tendency to relapse into Britishing methods. Hence a contradiction between the aim and the outcome. In 'A Short History of the Future Break-Up', Gerry Hassan points out that Britain is both a space and a location, indicating an awareness that the British sovereignty is a political ideal that transcends the limit of territory (2008: 148). One thing to take from Hassan's argument is that the aim of devolution is to reverse this transition, so that narrative power can be returned to real places (148-160). However, as Hassan notes, quite a few scholars have shown uncertainty regarding the trajectory of a disunited Britishness:

> the potential break-up of the UK would raise numerous questions.
> If Scotland leaves the union what does the rest become? Does it
> become the United Kingdom minus Scotland – a Rest of the UK,

or does it become something else, new and unnamed? The Greater England/Lesser UK would in the eyes of some be the successor state to the UK. (Hassan 164-165)

When it comes to the outlook of a further decentralised Britain, the term 'break-up' usually refers to potential territorial changes, and to the political power that might be gained by each 'independent' nation. Nevertheless, the method that enables a continuous production of British ideals is often re-adopted to construct idealised imaginations of nations. In this way, as Hassan has warned, no nation can be truly independent from being British, and the outcome of the assumed break-up would thus be no more than a mini-Britain – a successor of the state-national metaphor.

The arbitrary copy of other nations' methods, and the likelihood of revitalising British methods, means that the crisis of the surging English consciousness is more than just a 'postponed' return of England. A more serious risk is that the initial target of separating Englishness and Britishness could be, or has already been, overshadowed by a nostalgic pilgrimage to a lingering, and even more expanded state-national ideal. Such a relapse into Britishness can be seen in much significant Englishness research. In *Out of Place*, Baucom's analysis on English place (as a real locality) and British space (as a political fabrication) proves that he is well aware of the necessity to solve the long existing conflation. But in view of his reading of the 1981 riots in Brixton, this author, at times, is inclined to repeat the replacement of England the place with England the imagination – hence a restored timeless Britishness (1999: 190-198). Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island* (2004) claims to characterise the national culture of England by analysing modernity and collective identification in literary narratives. But as it turns out, Esty's Anglo-British approach makes his imagined English identity impossible to locate in a 'placed' England. A similar case is Harry Mount's *How England Made the English* (2013), in which the author lays great emphasis on the function of English landscape on shaping a distinct Englishness. However, Mount fails to realise that the travelled landscapes have been simultaneously attached to the political signification of nation and state. Without a proper definition of these two conceptions, using the British lens to pinpoint an English national character tends to give rise to a recanonisation of these selected places into placeless metaphors. Kumar's *The Making of English National Identity* (2003) is devoted to solving the

confusion of state and nation, and proposes that a different method is needed to characterise a distinct Englishness. However, in a monograph aiming at the return of England, Kumar stresses the risk of furthering the conflation but seems unable to offer adequate information on how to achieve, if possible, an Englishness that would not be absorbed by the mechanism of idealisation. The problem Kumar encounters is common to numerous contemporary studies. These studies share a research aim of constructing Englishness, and have more or less come to realise that a new paradigm (other than traditional identity politics) is needed. But the question of what constitutes this paradigm still remains unanswered.

In addition to the problem of methodology, something that has delayed the assumed return of England is the non-stop export of British ideals during the process of decentralisation. For scholars such as Kumar, the interplay between state and nation is generally understood as a competition of two binary opposites. The continued construction of British 'national' identity makes it even more difficult to predict the trajectory of Englishness. The making of a British 'nation' has long been narrated by the state as a 'form of fate', a myth of ahistorical continuity (Colley 2014: 9-15). The two World Wars constituted a major threat to the imperial Britain, but this era also witnessed a climax of enforcing a unifying British identity. One iconic moment hosting such an organicist strategy of turning a fatal crisis into a saga of rebirth is the Blitz. Via repetitions of grand narratives, this moment has been canonised as a meta-history that crystallises a timeless, idealised spirit of the British 'nation'. The production of British ideals shows a similar resilience in today's context. Many phenomena encouraging English nationalism after devolution (such as putting out more St. George's Crosses) can find their counterparts in the still on-going construction of an idealised Britishness. In 'The Last Great British Summer for England', Gardiner observes that the 'Jubilympics' in 2012 was a 'strenuous attempt to recover the ground of cultural Britishness' (14 June 2012):

> the desperate construction of cultural Britishness observable to
> this summer's Jubilee and Olympics is just another attempt to
> conflate British identity with an idealised vision of England…
> The three main historical moments [showed in the Jubilee flotilla]
> – dominance over the Spanish Armada, Trafalgar, and Dunkirk

> – invoke fear of invasion, naval domination, and unification
> through retreat and survival… To shore up this British state was
> also to paradoxically evoke a contemporary vision of the
> multicultural while relying on the idealised Englishness of the
> village fete, the parade of ensigns, the Victoria sponges and the
> tradition-of-tradition.

According to Gardiner, 'the motivation for this enforced celebration of an idealised Englishness upon the "public" is to disguise the gaping constitutional issues that threaten the UK's political authority' (14 June 2012). This performative British summer can be seen as a carnival of political signifiers, both nationalists and unionists discovering their own preferred political symbols. Particularly for English people, the appearance of St. George's Cross and Union Jack in the same space showed the coexistent advocacy of nation and state, and how flexible England could be. In fact, this production of British ideals and English ideas in the same place was already quite evident in academic fields. One well-known example is Norman Davies' *The Isles* (1999), in which the author presents a panorama of Britishness and unveils England's special role in the union as an imagined being. A more popular case is Simon Schama's BBC television series, *A History of Britain* (2000-2002), later turned into a best-selling three-volume publication. Although the history of all nations is covered by Schama's documentary, through a dominating Anglo-British lens he revisits the trajectory of England being expanded into, and eventually replaced by, British ideals. Andrew Marr's *A History of Modern Britain* (2008) can be seen as a complement to Schama's study in terms of their shared research aims and narrative perspective. Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992) and Rebecca Fraser's *The Story of Britain: From the Romans to the Present* (2006) imply, at times, a strong sense of fatalism in their production of a meta-history of Britain. From the outset of her retelling, Fraser assumes the legitimacy of imagining a unifying Britishness myth. This sort of history writing often claims the discovery of new materials or the adoption of new perspectives, offering the public an updated narrative product of Britishness. In a sense, the repeated obsession with such an 'archaeology' of facts indicates that the undying myth relies on its 'history' always staying outside of history.

The shaping of political landscape since the post-colonial era has also invoked fruitful research on ethnicity. Postcolonial studies have contributed enormously to developing a multicultural Britishness, which has been considered by many unionists a crucial method to counteract the awakening of nationalism in post-devolutionary Britain. Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (2002) makes a strong argument on the importance of rebuilding a British identity that can absorb different races and cultures. In *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004), Gilroy, addressing racial and cultural confrontations in the twenty-first century, points out that the ongoing process of idealising has failed to come to terms with the loss of its empire. In response to this failure, Gilroy proposes an improved ability to absorb alien cultures so that the renewed British ideals would have a 'welcome ability to live with otherness' (cf. 2004: 13-22). A more recent example is Afua Hirsch's *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging* (2018), which claims that most established assumptions of being British are 'in the midst of an identity crisis' (2-6). Like Gilroy, Hirsch holds the idea that the endpoint of including an expanded narrative of ethnicity is to produce a more updated, universalist identity for the twenty-first-century Britain. The problem implied by these writers' strategy of speaking up for the unvoiced lies in a tacit justification of a timeless authority in their models of British ideals. Without a criticism of the binary-structured narrative system, British subjects are still stuck in a perpetual competition for narrative authority, and a romanticised inclusion of otherness into a unifying British super-identity risks redisciplining and assimilation.

Absorbing other literatures is not the only focus of a post-devolutionary idealisation of Britain. In order to 'evolve' established perceptions of Britishness in a multicultural context, *Relocating Britishness* (2004), an interdisciplinary collection edited by Stephen Caunce, suggests possible routes of imagining a more open yet unifying British culture. *Islands and Britishness*, edited by Jodie Matthews and Daniel Travers (2012), examines the connection between the making of British ideals and the territorial (and cultural) sense of islandness. By tracing the history of a number of small islands being stretched from place to space, this collection of essays makes it clear that the awareness of island status, in British understanding, has systematically turned into a political metaphor for identification. In *Watling Street: Travels Throughout Britain and Its Ever-present Past* (2018), John Higgs makes a great effort to collect cultural myths scattered around British territory. In his representation of

historicised English facts being changed into ahistorical ideals of statehood, Higgs affirms the cultural value of repeating a mythologised Britishness. And, once again, behind such a Britishness value emerges the fact that his vision of England only refers to England the idealised being. Ian Bradley's *Believing in Britain* (2008) aims at defining the spiritual identity of the British 'nation'. In his response to the assumption that modern Britain might be one of the most secular nations in the world, Bradley reconsiders the religious history of the four nations in the UK, suggesting that the different sources of belief have gradually constituted a tradition of tolerance. This tradition, according to Bradley, is an important basis for the making of an inclusive British identity. Aside from the effort to pinpoint a religious consensus of being British, the biopolitical idea of the 'right of life' has always played a role not just in post-1945 Britishness politics, but also in the seventeenth-century British philosophy advocating the production of political bodies inside an imagined community (cf. Hobbes 2000: 99-112; Agamben 1998: 9-12). This increasing emphasis on the state's function of 'letting live (properly)' can largely explain that the idea of welfare state represented by the NHS is seen by a large proportion of people as a core motivation for a collective identification with Britishness. Rodney Lowe's *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945* (2005) and Derek Fraser's *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (2009) share a focus on the post-war development of a welfare state. By reviewing welfare-state philosophy's transition from socialist universalism to post-Thatcherite New Right principles, and then to the New Labour's the Third Way, Fraser and Lowe illustrate the top-down idealisation of the state's direct involvement in supporting people's lives. These studies should be contextualised in the grand narrative of contemporary Britishness – a narrative assuming that the evolution of the state leads to the imagination of a new British ideal. As this thesis will discuss later in Part Two, such an organicist logic suggests that the current Britishness framework is not so different from the seventeenth-century Hobbesian model of a state.

All these examples of rebuilding a shared imagination of Britain testify to the fact that the attempt to regain a distinct Englishness, in the post-devolutionary context, is indeed accompanied with a process of double identification. The development of nationalist quests for ideological independence from British ideals proves to be uneven. Under many circumstances, conceptions of state and nation are still congruent, and the construction of an idealised Britain imagined to continue into the foreseeable

future. This may be frustrating for some of those who eagerly anticipate an immediate, clear division between state and nation. But the predicament of locating Englishness and the revitalisation of Britishness has also provided an opportunity to re-examine the mythologised narrative of statehood. An inspiration could thus be drawn from this moment of Englishness: sorting out the conflation of state and nation calls for a belated review of the systematic production of idealised British imaginations. In other words, post-devolutionary England faces two inter-related tasks – to practise a critique of the nature and strategy of the state-nation, and to break away from the Britishness myth. The endpoint of this moment of Englishness might have been set as the return of an independent England. But as it has turned out, this surge of English consciousness has invoked an inevitable (but not mutually exclusive) turn to post-Britishness.

1.3 The Turn to Post-Britishness

Justifying an assumption of a post-British turn demands an understanding of the relationship between Britishness and post-Britishness, and especially a clarification of Britain's ontology and epistemology. 'Post-British' does not refer to the construction of a new identification, but an interpretative method to criticise the Britishing strategy of idealisation. Clarifying post-Britishness is in effect a process of unveiling the logic of Britishness, which in turn can explain why the British state – despite its capacity for constant self-rejuvenation – would more and more frequently fall into repeated narrative crises. The post-British critique is produced by, and continues to develop inside, the narrative crisis of Britishness. This means that the possibility of and motivation for post-British critique would 'automatically' emerge as long as the automatic production of Anglo-British canons continues.

As a critique of Britishness, the prefix 'post-' should not be understood simply as a modifier of temporality. And the term 'post-British' does not suggest the rise of a new imagined space 'after' the current exportation of Britishness. On the contrary, the British construction and the post-British critique temporally and spatially coexist. The logic of critique, as well as the practice of such critique, is based on acknowledging the lingering effect of idealised Britishness as an undeniable political reality. This relationship of coexistence dictates that the practice of post-Britishness cannot be separated from Britishness gestures. At the same time, this post-British turn as a

critical stance, whether viewed ontologically or epistemologically, does not aim to create a liminal space amid the competition between state and nation. In this sense, being post-British does not aim at creating a 'third identity' in addition to being British or English. Another reason for not seeing the prefix as a temporal modifier lies in a need to distance critique of Britishness from reliance on changes of British sovereignty. The initial motivation of this moment of Englishness was in the constitutional crisis of British devolution. However, the turn to post-Britishness does not, at least not entirely, concentrate on the outcome of the competition between nation and state – the series of territorial and constitutional questions considered in Hassan's essay. On the one hand, any change of British territory would inevitably trigger a reflection upon the established strategy of institutionalising unwritten British ideals. On the other hand, there is a need to distinguish post-British critique from a critique that could only happen *after* Britain, thus locating post-Britishness right within the existing British space. From this perspective, the performance of post-Britishness could become more explicit along with a further devolution or even a second Scottish independence referendum. But it has to be noted that these potential changes are not necessarily the only driving force to the post-British turn. With or without any changes of sovereignty, the turn to post-Britishness would still take place.

There is also a need to distinguish post-Britishness from the nationalist tradition of breaking British ideals. In the above-listed studies of Englishness, some scholars (such as Aughey and Kumar) have attempted to pinpoint a distinct English identity, whereas some others have considered a break from being British totally unnecessary. All these gestures of constructing and demythologising are, to a large extent, based on individuals' situational interpretations. In contrast, the turn to post-Britishness, in terms of its source and nature, is a result of what I call an 'inevitability' that transcends the limit of one's political stance (more discussion on inevitability in Chapter Four). The continuous maintenance of British canonicity is bound to result in ruptures between ahistorical inventions and temporal experiences, which would automatically raise questions about the organic nature of Britishness myths. In this respect, to undertake a post-British critique is not to be affected by the pace of Britishness construction or the rise and fall of British narrative power. The logic of Britishness construction is to produce a myth that guarantees a disciplining force via a process of absorption, rewriting, and canonisation. As long as this logic remains, the political

force generated by the logic of Britishness will continue to provide the momentum for critique. For this reason, the post-British turn is not invoked by individuals who whimsically attempt to jump out of the British space to criticise British ideals. Rather, the structural self-contradiction embedded within the construction of Britishness is the exact source of post-Britishness. This cause-and-effect relationship ensures that the act of disqualifying the narrative power of Britishness will always exist inside every Britishing practice.

The fact that Britishness and post-Britishness can only happen at the same time, and in the same space, suggests that a dialectical approach should be introduced. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), Michel de Certeau characterises the state's top-down shaping of ideology as 'strategy', and individuals' anti-establishment gestures in daily life as 'tactic':

> sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of 'making do'… They [tactics] refer to the modalities of action, to the formalities of practices. They traverse the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action into one part assigned for work and another for leisure… Although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances… what distinguishes them [strategies and tactics] concerns the types of operations and the role of spaces: strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces. (2002: 29-30)

De Certeau, like other classic Situationist theorists, argues that 'strategy', via modern industrialisation and commercialisation, has been turned into an everyday-life product that is constantly consumed by individuals. More importantly, de Certeau is fully aware that there is no possibility of an essential reconstruction by staying outside this system where all the production and consumption of ideals take place. This is largely due to the fact that this kind of external critique is 'not any more localisable than the technocratic (and spiritual) strategies that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models' (2002: 29). The trajectory of a critique becoming a revitalisation of

the criticised is applicable to many quests for Englishness, and is exactly what the post-British critique wants to avoid. According to de Certeau's analysis, the practice of tactics exists within the institutionalised strategy, which also exposes an inherent feature strategy would desperately deny. No matter how 'perfectly' a strategy has evolved and been practiced, it simply cannot rule out the possibility of being transformed into a counteractive tactic. However, the Situationist understanding of the interplay between strategy and tactic has not fully completed the shift from contingency to inevitability. After all, de Certeau's argument still indicates that it is up to the 'consumers' in everyday life to decide whether, and when, to trigger such a shift. This assumption is largely due to de Certeau's misconception that the political violence enforced by the strategy only happens 'after' individuals choose to see it. But the fact is, even the individuals performing a counteractive tactic are not produced by a malpractice of strategy. On the contrary, it is the loyal implementation of strategy that makes the production of tactics, as well as the subjects to practice the tactics, inevitable. De Certeau's definition of strategy and tactic is applicable to distinguishing the dialectical connection between Britishness and post-Britishness, because the tactic to achieve intellectual independence from Britishness actually stems from the everyday-life practice of Britishing strategy. In order to understand the idea of post-Britishness, a series of questions needs to be answered first: what is the essence and the purpose of the construction of Britishness? And what is the political logic (not the specific content) behind such a construction?

Constructing Britishness can be understood as building an 'imagined community' – a political invention that pretends to be located in the past. Seventeenth-century English political philosophy defined 'ancestry' and 'continuity' as the foundational principles that dominate the interaction between subjects and sovereign power. However, one crucial factor was neglected by the Hobbesian conception of the state of nature, the Lockean idea of originary contractarianism, and later the Burkean advocacy of an eternal return to the wisdom of tradition. In this sense, the capacity of a mythologised British community to constantly rejuvenate does not rest on its specific content. Rather, the lingering spectre of Britishness after devolution is made possible by two seemingly contradictory features – flexibility and stability.

Flexibility mainly refers to the diversified constitutions and perspectives adopted to construct an imagined community. The decision as to what should be included to constitute an updated imagination of Britishness is often prioritised by many scholars and commentators as the most important task. On the one hand, the content of a shared imagination keeps expanding, including food, religion, philosophy, political system, sovereign territory, gender, ethnicity, and so on. On the other hand, the things constituting the Britishness community, under different circumstances, are constantly reinterpreted from a more 'correct and appropriate' perspective. In this sense, what many writers have provided is no more than a 'personal selection' (or a pop propaganda) to renegotiate a shared imagination. But the logic of their method suggests that they still concentrate on what is more qualified to be idealised to present Britishness. The endless expansion of British imagination is thus predetermined by the internalised competition among all the contents. From the eighteenth-century union to the imperial contraction in the post-1945 era, the content of the imagined British community has changed significantly. Being flexible and constantly including new objects largely account for the survival of the Britishness method. In *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993), Thomas Richards explains why the formation of a British ideal has to keep the process of absorption going:

> the place of the British Museum in late-Victorian culture provides an exemplary instance of the confluence of the aesthetic and political spheres of representation. In a very general way the capillaries of an institution like the British Museum traversed the British Empire, and as a political institution the museum tended to intervene forcefully in the Empire (where cultural treasures often needed to be taken by force) … like many other Victorian societies, the museum sponsored knowledge-gathering expeditions in the colonial world. (1993: 15-16)

Richards' analysis reveals that the making of the imagined British community is not only about collecting things, but the information produced via political interpretations of these things. The centralisation of all this information is in effect a canonisation of other experiences to constitute the idealised Britishness. The process of canonisation also witnesses placed ideas' separation from their original historicity and spatiality.

Therefore, sustaining Britishness does not rest on the number of things that are included into the shared imagination, but on turning the ideas of things into timeless ideals. This need to produce ideals can help reconsider the logic and the fundamental framework of imperial Britishness. The flexibility of Britishness only refers to a superficial inclusiveness. The constant practice of canonising invokes an enforced transformation of ideas into ideals. And it is the canonicity of these ideals that makes it possible for the community to assimilate its subjects. Such a power of exclusion, though often disguised in the form of inclusion, can be regarded as the essence of Britishness, and decides the balance of power between the community and its subjects. Individual subjects within the Britishness community, in order not to be expelled from the community, have to endure a constant rewriting of themselves imposed by an ideal British canonicity. In this sense, the imagined British community's branded inclusiveness is just an illusion, and it is via the mechanism of *inclusive exclusion* that the community manages to remain flexible and stable at the same time. In other words, the only thing permanent and stable is the political violence of canonicity, which turns out to be the ultimate purpose of an imagined community.

The strategy of 'inclusive exclusion' is still widely applied in the post-devolutionary context (cf. Agamben 1999: 9-13, 79-91). In spite of the notable fluidity and openness of its content, the making of a shared British imagination still undertakes an exclusive rewriting of otherness. In 'Farewell to the Morris Men', Anne Coddington provides an insightful analysis on Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane's 2002 Folk Archive at Tate Britain in terms of its contribution to a renewed imagination of Britishness. As this archive is a collection of 'what has been left behind and strangely at odds with how we see ourselves', Coddington argues that the range of festivals, banners, murals and more that have been collected together indicates 'a much more open and accessible example of what a modern museum of national art might feel like' (2008: 171). For many critics, such as Jonathan Jones, what is worth 'encouraging' in this reconstruction of Britishness is its 'leaving some loose undefined space for further acts of reimagining instead of securing a fixed, coherent definition of national identity' (Coddington 2008: 173). Nevertheless, Deller and Kane's statement on the archive's function may point out a different way to interpret this gesture of rebuilding:

our artists are mostly quite clear on how their work will be read, and we have simply transposed the works from one form of public display to the more traditional presentation of an art gallery. They are not examples of 'outsider' art where the author has no interest in appealing to a wider audience. The difference between the Folk Archive and other exhibitions may simply come down to the fact that they have been authored by individuals who would not primarily consider themselves to be artists. (qtd. in Coddington 2008: 175)

Deller's and Kane's concern about classification not only refers to the boundary between popular culture and canonised art, but also considers the function of canonisation in an imagined community. These two authors, as well as Coddington, tend to stress the fact that these collections are originally positioned outside the space of British ideals. According to their statement, this is an important premise that allows this project to contribute to reconstructing a shared identity. But one fact seems to have been forgotten by Deller and Kane. Once this archive is collected and 'presented in a traditional way' inside Tate Britain, it is already canonised and absorbed into 'British art'. After the alien ideas are turned into new ideals, the 'loose undefined space' initially created for subjects to accomplish a personal re-identification disappears. From this perspective, it is extremely hard for people to break away from idealised Britishness, for the new established canon resumes the systematic assimilation within the community.

Similar trajectories to Deller and Kane's 'accidental' revitalisation of Britishness can be found in Sarah Pickard's study on anti-social behaviours in Britain and Adrian Randall's re-interpretation of riotous assemblies. In these examples, it is not too hard to tell that the essence of being British is to construct an imagined community, and its principal paradigm lies in a nonstop repetition of canonising. The making of British ideals does not reject alien elements, but relies on the absorption of such elements for its perpetual rejuvenation. The inherent mechanism of inclusive exclusion not only aims at maintaining the imagined community. More importantly, it also secures the community's power to enforce an identity upon its subjects – including an enforced assumption that the timeless need of identification is 'natural'. As Michael Gardiner

and Clare Westall observe in *The Public on the Public* (2014), the construction of an imagined community ends up transforming persons into an imagined British public:

> the public is created for, and determined by, the British imperial state's need for financial stability, or even-ness (which is not equality), across times, territories and populations, making financial trust, as public opinion, the primary tool of its expansion… Understood in this way, rather than as an imagined base unit of democratic process, Britain's public can be seen as a set of discursive strategies – or a distinct cultural register – tied to financial expansionism backed by constant war, and set towards the perpetuity of state and capital, which are linked at source. (Westall and Gardiner 2014: 3)

Once the fictiveness of the imagined community is exposed, it becomes clear that all subjects are constantly captured and politicised inside British ideals. From the post-British perspective, the political tension of Britishness stems from the fact that all people are forced into an endless competition for becoming the new canon. Wherever a subject is positioned (inside or outside the imagined community), there is always a risk of being expelled in next round of (re-)canonisation. Since the post-British tactic already exists inside the Britishness strategy, individuals' involvement in the construction of canons must also be a most thorough presentation of the structural violence of Britishness.

According to Gardiner's comment on the image of Dunkirk during the 2012 Jubilee flotilla, the myth of Britishness always 'celebrates retreat as a form of great victory' (14 June 2012). By and large, this also proves to be an accurate depiction of this moment of Englishness. The rise of English nationalism constituted a huge threat to the imagined Britishness community, but this momentum of decentralisation was swiftly repurposed into restoring an idealised statehood. As England's break from British ideals has not been fully accomplished, the dilemma faced by the politics of Englishness inevitably leads to a post-British turn of critique. Especially in contemporary literary representations (to be further discussed in Chapter Two), the gap between English Literature and literature of England suggests that post-British

interpretations are needed to expose the originary narrative structure and characters'
perpetual competition for moral authority via canonisation.

Chapter Two

Post-Britishness in Contemporary Literary Representations

As pointed out in the previous chapter, this moment of Englishness since the late twentieth century has been more or less undermined by a noticeable recanonisation of British imaginations. Especially in literary writings, the use of stretched images of England to pursue an independent national identity has more or less led to a deeper confusion of state and nation. For this reason, the rupture between English Literature and the literature of England can no longer be neglected. In the contemporary context, the mechanism of canonising selected literatures into idealised Anglo-British imaginations still contributes to the perpetual absorption and assimilation of British subjects. Therefore, the tension between Englishness and Britishness in literary narratives offers a vantage point to observe the inevitable turn to post-Britishness. By analysing the two images of English characters (rebel and pilgrim) in their pursuit of a new sense of self, this chapter argues that, without a critique of the originary structure of British narratives, it would be extremely difficult for individuals to be liberated from the political violence of British myths.

2.1 The Significance of Post-Britishness in the Literature of England

Because of the political connection between English Literature as a university discipline and the constitution of an 'English' ideal that can be traced back to the origin of imperial expansion, there is always the possibility of reviving the imperialist logic of Britishness in literary representations of England.[6] As Michael Gardiner points out in *Literature of an Independent England*, the British state form is itself 'unusual – determinedly set against formal definition, it has relied on a constitutional culture, that is, a structural but unwritten, and so historically unregistered, set of values' (Gardiner 2013: 203). In other words, 'constitutional' but 'anti-formal' Britishness makes it possible for the state to search incessantly for opportunity for ideological expansion and annexation, assimilating as many 'political bodies' as possible (cf. Gardiner 2013:

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[6] 'English Literature' is different from 'the literature of England' in that the former refers to a literary imagination that goes beyond the geographical border of England, thus expanding into a British narrative. For this reason, the 'English' ideal created and exported by English Literature is actually a 'British' one. See Michael Gardiner (2012) *The Return of England in English Literature* (London: Palgrave): 1-27.

3-5; Agamben 1998: 57-61). Yet, as one of the premises for British absorption is to avoid 'formal definition', the task of creating a 'universal' and 'ahistorical' imagination of the state calls for an agent to serve as, to quote Gardiner's phrase, a 'surrogate constitution' of Britishness, or what is also a British conception of Englishness (cf. Gardiner 2013: 204-205). Although England is chosen as the agent, English Literature does not actually come from England. It is in the 'stretching' of England into Britain that a universal imagination of state is enabled. And in the meantime, 'England the place' is successfully replaced, as Ian Baucom describes, by 'England the imagined being' (cf. Baucom 1999: 14-24).

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said suggests that literary history and empire are intractably entwined (cf. Said 1994). A similar connection can also be seen in the making of an imagined Britishness. In *The Constitution of English Literature*, Gardiner reveals how literary canons have continuously exported British ideals. Contextualised in the period from the imperial expansion to the post-1945 contraction, English Literature has repeated a trajectory of 'establishing canons – absorbing others – rewriting canons' to create an idealised England for British subjects (cf. Gardiner 2013: 2-4). This strategy is explicitly practiced in F.R. Leavis' *Great Tradition* (1948), as an appeal to establishing an 'English' canon dominates his criticism. As a precise conclusion to the long sweep of culturalist meritocracy, the Leavisite approach is ruled by two fundamental principles for presenting an idealised 'English' community. Firstly, only a limited number of authors and a selection of their writings should be prioritised to constitute a literary canon. Secondly, assessments of canonicity depend on the texts' capacity to preach an authoritative moral fable, a set of Anglo-British values that could 'unite' and 'discipline' its subjects in overseas colonies as well as in the British Isles (cf. Leavis 2008: 6-8). Such an approach to enforcing a shared imagination begs the question of reliance on a placeless narrative of England. In *A Shrinking Island*, Jed Esty suggests that the most significant political and cultural changes Britain has experienced during its imperial contraction have been not the loss of control of colonies but the accompanied re-negotiation within its shrunken territory (cf. Esty 2003: 6-14). With mass immigration from former colonies and the British Commonwealth in the mid-twentieth century, it became more difficult to maintain a meta-narrative of empire. No comment could depict this impact more accurately than the lamentation in Q.D. Leavis's *The Englishness of the English Novel*, as she asserts

that 'a literature comparable with the English tradition' is now impossible in that 'the England that bore the classical English novel has gone forever', as a catastrophic consequence of a re-constituted country of 'unassimilated multi-racial minorities' and the disappearance of 'the traditional life of countryside' (Leavis 1980: 303-320). The accelerated outbursts of *other* narratives trespassing the border of nation and state compelled the literary discipline to re-adjust itself to the state-national ecology of politics after the Second World War.

Yet the imperialist fit of English Literature in an image of the state has been subtly inherited in the making of 'British fiction'. In *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction Since 1970*, Peter Childs argues that 'the resistance to homogenising or defining is a most important characteristic of contemporary British writing – as opposed to "national literature" – which bears the hallmark of diversity alongside the qualities of energy and imagination that ensure its continued importance' (Childs 2010: 22). But the problem is that this seemingly open and inclusive system fits neatly into the process of canonisation employed by English Literature; and the structural relationship between the unifying conception of British fiction and the internal narratives of otherness vividly portrays the framework of a 'harmonious', 'multicultural' British state. Given that the prefix 'multi-' has been largely mythologised to become a new ideal, it is crucial to bear in mind that behind the taken-for-grated celebration of a multicultural British fiction is the lingering use of the imperialist approach of absorbing other literatures and understating the conflicts of otherness. This sense of otherness does not necessarily refer only to the racial, gendered, or ethnic other, but, to apply J. Hillis Miller's concept, to 'something different, an element of the "complete other" that inhabits even the most familiar and apparently "same", for example the alter ego within one's own home or culture' (Miller 2001: 1-2). However, for the sake of proclaiming 'multi-ism' as the new 'universal' and (quite paradoxically) 'unitary', British fiction, just like English Literature, purposefully neglects that each discourse crystallises the political appeal of a specific group of individuals. That is, within the shared imagination of a literary community, each of the absorbed narratives represents an exclusive sense of self, and these naturally compete with each other for the narrative authority to characterise their own perception of the state. Hence the internal structure of some post-war narratives does not fundamentally differ from that of canonical English Literature, as the

metaphysical sense of harmony relies on the ignorance of the fact that these narratives are not equally juxtaposed. The existence of the central and the peripheral inside the narrative structure suggests that what Childs sees as the 'pluralistic imagination' of literary Britishness, in effect, is hierarchical and undergoes an ever-present process of (re-)canonisation.

One noticeable phenomenon of contemporary canonisation is that the power of evaluating literariness is no longer only accessible to a small group of literary elites. In his response to the process of canonising, Malcolm Bradbury observes, in *The Modern British Novel: 1878-2001*, that the (British) novel has in fact been proclaimed 'dead for every single decade of the (twentieth) century', and that such a pessimistic overview of literature since the fifties goes with 'the whole anxious notion of Britain's declining place in the world' (Bradbury 2004: vii). But the novel is certainly not in decline in publishing terms as, in the new century, 'approximately one hundred new English novels are released each week, while around 7000 novels eligible for the Booker prize are published in Britain and the Commonwealth annually' (cf. Childs 2005: 3-5). Endowed with the power of capital and more advanced strategies of marketing, publishing houses, as well as the appearance of Granta selections of 'Best Young British Novelists' and various lists of literary prizes (as in the Man Booker, The James Tait Black Memorial, and The Whitbread), play a vital role in shaping the modern landscape of literature. Although this business is bent on enlarging and updating the pool of writers to an extent that is unimaginable by Leavis's standard of canonisation, the number of those who are prioritised in the lists of prizes, with regards to the skyrocketing total number of the published, is still relatively 'limited'. In other words, this conscious (re-)construction of literary ecology, though often criticised by academics (cf. Stevenson 2004: 88-110), has, to some extent, mapped out the narrative boundary between the central and the peripheral, and more importantly, the route that leads to the central. After all, in the age of information explosion, readers have no choice but to convey some of the power of selection, which allows the lists and prizes to rebuild the connection between 'canon' and 'ideal'. As a result, more writers are forced to compete for canonicity, and some are offered an easier access to readership – a better chance to triumph over other narrative voices and to gain advantage in constructing, to some extent, a unifying British imagination in the novel.

Apart from the reinvigoration of an authoritative image of England in the guise of 'pluralistic' British fiction, the relapse into an imperialist logic of Britishness exists in creative writing, as well as in contemporary scholarship, on Englishness. Writing on Englishness has obviously moved up the political and cultural agenda. But the role played by a stretched imagination of England in the construction of the British state has made it impossible for the nation to emerge by undergoing a similar trajectory to that of articulating Scottishness. For several – Peter Ackroyd's novel, *English Music* (1992), for example – the decline of nationhood has been attributed to the detachment from the canon of state-national culture. The title of Ackroyd's novel *per se* seems to promise a provincialised view of England and its cultural inheritance, but the content, on the contrary, stresses relentlessly the influence of a selection of British artistic heritage on the nation's character, spirit and self-identification. By practicing T.S. Eliot's idea about the significance of canon in forming 'an ideal order' upon the readership, this play of English music, which is supposed to present a separate national entity, transforms into an encore of British classics (cf. Eliot 1921).

Similarly, this Anglo-British imagination of England is still detectable in the study of literary Englishness, especially in an explicit propensity to set 'national identity' as a central theme of research. In *Nation and Novel* (2008), Patrick Parrinder argues that the traditional pursuit of national characters should be replaced by a desire to pinpoint a distinct national identity. Although Parrinder's research marks a shared interest in locating England in literature, his attempt has neglected that the way the idea of identity (or the act of identification) itself refers to a top-down procedure of imposing an 'English' ideal upon the subjects. As this kind of study of England frequently collapses into 'identity' construction, it is inevitable that the results sometimes prove to be a shrunken version of Britishness. From this perspective, the post-British interpretation of the literature of England marks two significant turns in the process of separating from Britishness. The first signal is a turn from 'English Literature' to 'the literature of England'. In *The Return of England in English Literature*, Gardiner reveals the distinction between these two concepts, defining English Literature as 'an absorptive, universalising principle dependent on displaced and ideal images of England for the ends of empire and has been disastrously antagonistic to national experience' (Gardiner 2012: 1). And further in *The Constitution of English Literature*, he suggests that, as the viability of English Literature as constitutional culture may be

'facing an insuperable challenge', the anti-formalism of Britishness in literary representation will be forced to change (cf. Gardiner 2013: 1-6). Notably, conflicts among the pluralistic narratives within the seemingly unifying and hierarchical representation of England indicate that to export and maintain a displaced England via the discipline of English Literature has become even more difficult in contemporary context. In this sense, the foregrounding of 'locale' signifies a critique of the transcendental conception of the English ideal, and more crucially, a quest for the emergence of a placed and provincial(-ised) literature that can regain England.

With regards to the interplay between English Literature and the British conception of Englishness, the emergence of the literature of England inevitably leads to the turn to post-Britishness. But when it comes to a break from imperial Britishness, the return of England the place alone cannot guarantee an independent Englishness. In *Out of Place*, Baucom provides a strong argument that the narrative of England's confusion is indeed a 'history of simultaneously disciplinary and antidisciplinary locales':

> a number of locales have served as apt metaphors for writers struggling to define what it means to be English, and such metaphoric understandings have been literalised so that these material places have been understood to literally shape the identities of the subjects inhabiting or passing through them.
> (Baucom 1999: 4)

In other words, the making of British ideals requires a combination of the material existence of locales and the experience of subjects attached to these places to export the 'metaphorical understandings' of nationhood. But the question is how to distinguish English experience from the British experience that has at some points in history been attached to English locations. If the confusion of Englishness and Britishness cannot be resolved beforehand, the renewed appeal to the 'identity-endowing properties of place' could fall back into the pitfall of retrieving the British imagination of England (cf. Baucom 1999: 3-4).

Gardiner's argument makes it clear that critiques of British imperialism, of British union, and of English Literature, are all inseparable (Gardiner 2012: 7). What is

explicit in the notion of the turn to post-Britishness is that a premise for a separate Englishness lies in a criticism not only of the production of the experience of imperialist Britishness (the constitution of the English canon), but also on the ideology that establishes a placeless ideal via the absorption of *others*. If the latter task is disregarded, post-imperialist critique focuses on speaking for historically absent narratives, unaware that this act itself inherits the approach of placelessness to create the new ideal – a strategy employed by English Literature as well as British fiction. For instance, in a discussion of Hugh Kenner's *A Sinking Island*, Robert Crawford is correct to affirm that Kenner's book begs the question as '(he) ignored Scottish and Welsh writing by simplifying cultural geography and assuming that England's boundaries extend to Aberystwyth and John O'Groats' (Crawford 2000: 2). But apart from criticising the tradition of Anglocentrism and retracing the Scottish contribution to the invention of English Literature, we might also suggest that what has also been left out is the English landscape substituted by the expanded 'cultural geography'.[7] Without revealing and questioning the hierarchical structure of the narration of the literary ideal, the attempt to 're-locate' the Scottish writing alone would turn into an endorsement of the ideological framework of Britishness, as if the act of 'devolving English Literature' only called for a transition from the peripheral to the central.

To illustrate this turn to post-Britishness in contemporary literature of England, in the rest of this chapter I turn to Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) and Graham Swift's *Wish You Were Here* (2012). The literary representation of the clash of two Englands – England the imagination and England the place – not only indicates the inevitable breakup of the British conception of English ideal, but also reveals the danger of reinvigorating Britishness in this moment of Englishness. And in the face of the tug-of-war between a reawakening Englishness and the existing impact of British ideology, two-faced English characters show an uncertain attitude towards idealised imaginations in their crossing the 'border' of these two Englands. The unstable status of these characters indicates that the independence of a placed Englishness demands a new paradigm of critique to distance itself from the British method of expanding a cultural empire.

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[7] In terms of the imperialist implications of expanded cultural geography, see Tom Nairn ([1977]1981) *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: New Left): 7-24.

2.2 Imagination or Place: The Clash of Two Englands

According to Robert Stange's observation, the material existence of locales can be transformed into myth through literary representations, and thus 'make manageable to our consciousness experience we must live with, but which may appal or derange our immediate understanding of the "place"' (Stange qtd. in Freeman 2007: 201-202). To some extent, it is via the exposure of such a transformation from 'locale' to placeless 'myth' that the post-British reading strategy can offer access to the conflation of Englishness and Britishness in selected fictions. Contextualised in the competition between the quest to re-locate Englishness and the lingering impact of British ideology, the portrait of 'England' presents a strong sense of ambiguity. On one hand, the instinct to compete for a higher position within the literary hierarchy expands England the place into an imaginary space. On the other hand, the emerging rupture between England the imagination and England the place justifies the adoption of a different reading method that can be seen as a critical response to the post-British turn – a re-examination of the structure of British narratives.

This kind of interpretational ambiguity is detectable in Ian McEwan's *Saturday*. Although the novel's content does not move outside the confines of England (Henry Perowne's one-day experience in the city of London), it is worth noting that the novel is rarely viewed as belonging to the literature of England (cf. Wells 2010: 111-124). Largely due to scenes such as those describing 'a burning plane falling from the sky', 'the February 15 parade of anti-war protest', and 'white middle-class intellectuals attacked by violent (and possibly ethnic-minority) intruders', critics have tended to classify this work with the label of 'post-9/11 British fiction' (Childs 2006: 145-147). In a sense, the fact that the protagonist survives a gathering pessimism and the fear that his city and his family are under threat does show an attempt to restore an idealised community. With regards to the shared anxiety evoked by the conflicts between different social classes and cultures, the gesture of forgiveness and the willingness to integrate towards the end of the story also signify a unifying force that is always hailed as the core value of multicultural Britishness. Nevertheless, from a post-British perspective, what should not be ignored in the notion of the harmonious British narrative of England is the counteracting force of the existing and emerging quest for the return of a 'placed' England (cf. Gardiner 2013: 3-8). As Lynn Wells points out in

New British Fiction, if a political irony on cosmopolitan Britishness is in play here, 'its subtlety has obviously been lost on readers and critics alike, who hail this book as a masterpiece of "British" fiction' (Wells 2010: 123). To reveal the confusion of imagination and place, we can read the novel from two interrelated perspectives. The first, and the more conspicuous, perspective is constituted by a representation of the conflict between 'England the central' and 'England the peripheral'. The analysis aims at revealing the existing use of imperialist Britishness on a daily basis and the ideological tension caused by the repeated clashes of these two Englands. The second dimension involves a performative representation of the rupture between 'England the imagination' and 'England the place'. Based on the exposure of the connection between the 'placeless' narrative and the imaginary space, the practice of post-British criticism here is to point out that the possibility of reinvigorating Britishness lies in an obsession with (re-)balancing the central and the peripheral, while missing the urgency for a re-placed narrative of England.

Cosmopolitan London, as the setting of the novel, offers a miniature exemplar of the British conception of Englishness. The clash of two Englands (the central and the peripheral) is personified into the battle between Henry Perowne the upper-middle-class neurosurgeon and Baxter the violent street thug. In *Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, Sebastian Groes notices that these two images of London recur in McEwan's novels and collections of short stories (cf. Groes 2009: 99-103). The reference to the London characterised by Baxter can be traced back to *First Love, Last Rite*s and *Between the Sheets* (1975). This repeated portrait of urban violence and perverseness could be a reference to Raymond Williams' conception of 'darkest London' (cf. Williams 1973: 221-227). In comparison, Perowne's perception of the city – the London of light (to quote Groes' phrase) – echoes the modernist re-construction of an idealised urban experience, the origin of which can be pinpointed in McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987) (cf. Groes 2009: 99-100). However, it is worth noticing that this is the first time that these two visions of London have been juxtaposed in one McEwan text to confront each other. And the unbalanced narrative status of the two Englands clearly maps out the division between the central and the peripheral.

In this context, Perowne's observation of the city is an imaginary ideal centring on his self-consciousness and class interests. At the beginning of the story, the protagonist cannot wait to provide a panoramic description of his London:

> the city is a success, a brilliant invention, a biological masterpiece – millions teeming around the accumulated and layered achievements of the centuries, as though around a coral reef, sleeping, working, entertaining themselves, harmonious for the most part, nearly everyone wanting it to work. (McEwan 2005: 5)

Obviously, Perowne's mythologised vision of the city bears much resemblance to Peter Childs' definition of the 'inclusive' system of Britishness (cf. Childs 2006: 145-147). With regards to the positive assertion of 'success', 'masterpiece', and 'achievements', Perowne's image of London seems to celebrate the co-existence of 'millions' of voices within a system of narratives that does not attempt to homogenise. Nevertheless, some expressions, such as 'for the most part', and 'nearly everyone', acknowledge, in a rather understated way, that behind the 'harmony' exist the conflicts invoked by a relentless rivalry in canonising personal imaginations of the city. Considering that Perowne's perspective dominates almost all of the narrative, the overwhelming proportion of his imagination and the equally noticeable absence of Baxter's idea of the city articulate the difference between the two Englands. One is the fully or (over-)voiced, whereas the other collapses into the voiceless. In fact, the psychological monologues and the geographical journey across city streets mark the territory of Perowne's imagined city. In terms of this self-centered ideal, his house in Fitzrovia is the locale where he can achieve a sense of security, physically and ideologically. It is under this shelter that the protagonist manages to observe the landscape of the city, and in the meantime, construct an imagined community that can extend to be shared by every subject. But the problem is that in view of his one-day-in-the-life networking, it would not be farfetched to assume that the word 'everyone' in his city ideal only refers to a rather limited number of people, the more so as these sample subjects turn out to largely share a background. Possibly, the well-educated family members, the young medics, and the consultant anesthetist with whom Perowne plays squash on Saturdays constitute his core community – the only

individuals he can perceive. Thus, unlike the universalist vision of London described above, the city territory Perowne has actually covered proves much smaller. In other words, his 'England' (the imagination) has been expanded to reach the unknown locale of the others, including the street where he confronts Baxter.

Proud to be 'a habitual observer of his own moods', Perowne looks at but always fails to perceive the English locality in that he is self-imprisoned in the expanded imagination (McEwan 2005: 5). Given that the protagonist regularly drives his way through London streets, what he really does is move from one isolated shelter (the house) to the other (his Mercedes), preoccupied with the mission to safeguard his vision of London. For this reason, Baxter's dark London never exists in the doctor's stretched imagination. This explains why Baxter is portrayed as the other in their first confrontation, although Perowne is actually the one that breaks into the space owned by Baxter. That the unreliable narrative imposes the identity of otherness upon Baxter signifies that Perowne's idealised conception of the city refuses to be pushed to the peripheral. For the purpose of justifying his privileged position in articulating an idealised image of the city, the protagonist rushes back to his house to restore the wholeness of his imagination. As the impression of the existence of a different London is wiped out from his memory, readers can only gain an access to the peripheral via the description of the visage of Baxter:

> he's a fidgety, small-faced young man with thick eyebrows and dark brown hair razored close to the skull. The mouth is set bulbously, with the smoothly shaved shadow of a strong beard adding to the effect of a muzzle. The general simian air is compounded by sloping shoulder. (McEwan 2005: 87-88)

Such a racist and classist response to 'dark London' signals the 'stretchedness' (and, quite paradoxically, the 'narrowness') of Perowne's perception of the city, as well as his ignorance of 'the existence of other orders of reality beyond the quotidian' (cf. Freeman 2007: 201-203). As mentioned above, this 'stretched-ness' is the key factor in the process of creating Anglo-British ideals. From this perspective, the repulsive portrait of the modern 'barbarian' has among its tasks that of 'domesticating the subject's apprehension of the terrifying or the unknown' (cf. Freeman 2007: 202).

Despite all the clues, that Baxter is not directly defined as ethnic minority allows interpretation to transcend the post-9/11 context, and treat the street thug as 'a complete other' from a British perspective (cf. Miller 2001: 1-4). With a closer look at Perowne and Baxter, their difference and conflict turns out to be all-around. For instance, they use different methods to maintain and absorb others into their imagination of community – knowledge (Perowne's professional skill of medicine) and body (Baxter's employment of physical violence). Moreover, the different 'identity-endowing' locales (the house and the street) invoke the ensuing battle over the control of property – an enduring factor that marks the capitalist division of the central and the peripheral. In this sense, the opposition between the two characters is simultaneously specific and abstract. Baxter's successful intrusion and temporary control of Perowne's house should not be specified as an unexpected clash of two fictional individuals or of different classes, races, religions, and so on. Instead, the seemingly accidental confrontation suggests an inevitable conflict between two ideals (presenting mutual otherness to each other) to striving for narrative power.

Baxter is by no means the only other in Perowne's imagined community, nor the last one to break into his ideal to deprive the doctor of his narrative power. To some extent, the overwhelming rebellion by Baxter might have overshadowed the existence and the potential threats of the innumerable others, such as the 'Filipino nurse' he never bothers to know in the hospital, and the 'Cockney cleaner' he passes by in the theatre (McEwan 105). Although residing in the city space as an undeniable fact, these individuals seem to have been dispelled into the 'limbo' of Perowne's imaginary harmony. Never allowed to speak for themselves, the unknowns are arbitrarily assumed by the protagonist as obedient subjects of his one and only idealised space. However, just as Perowne seems relieved by his final triumph over Baxter, he discovers with a mixed feeling that the 'feckless Italian Giulio' has impregnated Daisy – a 'feat' that Baxter, his archenemy in the novel, never accomplishes (McEwan 241). This signifies that the potential threats are true and permanent, as those individuals of otherness always attempt to move from the peripheral to the central to voice their own imagination of the city, thus, sooner or later, colliding with Perowne's idealised vision:

> at the end of this day, this particular evening, he's timid, vulnerable. All he feels now is fear. He's weak and ignorant,

scared of the way consequences of an action leap away from your
control and breed new events, new consequences, until you're
led to a place you never dreamed of and would never choose – a
knife at the throat. (McEwan 2005: 207)

Undoubtedly, the internal monologue towards the end of the novel suggests that Perowne's standing in front of the house window to observe the city does not signal the ending of conflicts or the harmony regained. But what dominates his introspection is an ignorance of the cause of the impending threats. By attributing the danger of the day to the unexpected 'consequence' from one unthoughtful 'action', the neurosurgeon fails to realise that the potential consequence might not again show up as dramatically as in the shape of a threatening knife. The anxiety troubling Perowne on this particular evening rests on the fact that Baxter's intrusion is more than just a temporary loss of his power over space and narrative. As long as the binary opposition of the central and the peripheral exists, the approaching of a new round of clash between different ideals is inevitable. In other words, the currently-voiced and the central are always under a threat to be suppressed into the voiceless and the peripheral in the hierarchy of narrative.

Apart from the representation of the clash between the central and the peripheral, *Saturday* also displays the originary structure of the English canon that crystallises the rupture between the imagined England and the placed England. [8] Indeed, the knowledge of the mutual dependence of English Literature and the British conception of England may shed a light on the cultural signification of revisiting the literary prototype of Britishness in this novel. Specifically, the parodic rewriting of some canonical narrative that has dehistoricised and expanded a certain 'placed' literature into a transcendental ideal marks a shift of the target of criticism. In this novel, McEwan offers a contemporary rendition of *The Tempest* as Perowne's confrontation with Baxter bears much resemblance to the battle between Prospero and Caliban – an antagonism in English Literature that exposes an imperialist idea of property in negotiating the narrative and spatial hierarchy within an imagined community. While

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[8] On the connection between 'canon' and 'universalism', see Michael Gardiner (2013) *The Constitution of English Literature* (London: Bloomsbury): 1-8.

both Baxter and Caliban are characterised as sub-human and a symbol of otherness, Perowne and Prospero wield their power of knowledge to gain superiority in spatial and ideological spheres. The 'power of knowledge' refers to the magic of the Duke of Milan, and to the neurosurgeon's professional skills of medication. Given that Perowne is indicated to have 'the impression of himself as a witch doctor delivering a curse' when he instantly diagnoses the symptom of Baxter (McEwan 94), it is quite suggestive that these two characters using their knowledge to subdue the barbarians are essentially the same. In part, this play's English canonicity rests on its legitimation of the narrative power of the central (Prospero) to rewrite and absorb the peripheral (Caliban). As the date of script writing (1610-1611) is immediately after the first establishment of a colonial foothold in Virginia (1606-1607), *The Tempest* is often viewed by postcolonialist scholars as a retelling of the empire's history of conquering the others and taking their territory (cf. Vaughan and Vaughan 1993: 2-15). Hence Caliban as a barbaric native attracts sympathy for being victimised by the Duke of Milan as a prototype of European colonialist. From a post-British perspective, Todd Andrew Borlik, on a closer examination of the Englishness of the play, affirms that the source of inspiration could also come from within England, for 'the chimera known as Caliban is in part inspired by legends of Lincolnshire fen spirits' (Borlik 2013: 21). Regardless of the different opinions about the source of this narrative, a common theme of interpretation is the division of the central and the peripheral, the voiced and the voiceless. However, what is significant about the novel's reference to Shakespeare's narrative is that its mimic of the canonical reveals the cause of the relentless clash of two Englands. In terms of Ian Baucom's argument about the connection between narrative and the making of ideals, the act of literary representation is constituted by a transition of the experience of the locale into the idealised imagination (cf. Baucom 1999: 24-28). As the relationship between English Literature and Britishness is based on expanding England into an idealised imagination, McEwan's parodical representation of such an expansion distances itself from endorsing the mechanism of exporting a universal and ahistorical imagination of England (cf. Gardiner 2013: 1-18).

Therefore, from a post-British perspective, McEwan's re-playing of a Britishing canon invokes a reconsideration of the role of narrative in transforming the material existence of locale into the metaphysical being of imagination. In fact, the function of narrative

to exert idealised imaginations was already suggested in *The Tempest*. Prospero, though in exile for twelve years, leads a life that is not fundamentally different from that in Milan, because the hierarchical structure of his kingdom has been largely replicated to rewrite the landscape of the island. The process of re-negotiating the order of this island calls for a set of values (originally rooted in specific locale) to be transformed into a transcendental, placeless ideal. In the play, Prospero is dependent on the power of magic to conquer Caliban and the island's territory, and achieves the expansion of Milan the place into a political ideal that trespasses the border of its geographical territory. This accounts for Caliban's attempt to steal Prospero's supernatural 'art', as the knowledge of manipulating this power seems to the barbarian the only method to re-adjust his status as the peripheral. What the rebel fails to realise is that the canonical narrative is as powerful as the magic. Since the play is mainly produced from Prospero's perspective, the fact that Caliban is not the only *other* on the island is easily overlooked. While Prospero wields magic to change the status of the barbaric native, what he applies to rewriting his daughter's sense of self is narrative. In the process of narrating, the originally placed experience of Milan turns into a placeless imagination, and then is imposed and internalised as Miranda's own imagined ideal. To apply the imperialist cycle of 'canonising-absorbing-recanonising' to the analysis here, what Caliban seeks is a magic able to centralise one's own narrative and suppress the others into being the voiceless. In other words, the function of magic lies in the act of canonising Prospero's ideal in absorbing Caliban as well as Miranda. But what should not be left out is the gap between imagination and place. Compared with the duke's 'placeless' narrative of Milan, Caliban's narrative of the island (before the conquest) is a 'placed' one that presents 'metaphoric understandings' attached to the locality (Baucom 1999: 4-6). According to Ian Baucom's analysis of the making of a cultural empire, whatever specific 'ways-of-being' Englishness has been understood to entail, Englishness has been generally understood to 'reside within some type of imaginary, abstract, or actual locale, and to mark itself upon that locale's familiars' (Baucom 1999: 4). From this perspective, the proto-Britishness in this Shakespearean fantasy also refers to the imperialist logic of establishing 'dis-placed' canons to 'persuade' (or force, to be more accurate) the others to forsake their placed experience. Despite an abhorrence of the content of the ideal imposed by the outsider, the native's obsession with absorbing Prospero into his own vision proves that the mechanism of creating universal ideal via placeless narrative has been inherited.

This Britishing mechanism, as we can also see in McEwan's fiction, continues to play an important role in the contemporary context. In *Saturday*, the performative representation of Baxter's attempt to canonise his own vision reaches its climax when he dethrones Perowne and controls the whole house. This is a moment when the central and the peripheral change places. However, Perowne's daughter's recitation of Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*, which turns the situation around, suggests the role of the literary imagination in assimilating otherness:

> it's hard to tell, for his face is never still, but Baxter appears suddenly elated. His right hand has moved away from Rosalind's shoulder and the knife is already back in his pocket… Baxter has broken his silence and is saying excitedly, 'You wrote that'… and then, hurriedly, 'it's beautiful. You know that, don't you. It's beautiful. And you wrote it… it makes me think about where I grew up'. (McEwan 222-223)

Explicit in the abrupt and absurd change of Baxter's attitude towards the Perownes is the function of English Literature in preaching a shared imagination of the placeless ideal. Baxter's reaction to the poem marks his retreat into being the other in the house: 'he entranced like a child, nips forward and seizes the book (the collection of poems), crying "I'm having this, you said I could take anything I want. So I am taking this. OK?"' (McEwan 233). With no evidence to suggest the connection between Baxter and Dover Beach the place, it seems hard to explain why the violent trespasser starts acting with a 'childlike eagerness and trust', and even identifies himself with Arnold's representation of the locale. But according to Baucom's argument, 'the localist discourse offer to resolve a series of crises in English identity by inviting the nation to recollect, enter, and defend England's redemptive locales' (cf. Baucom 1999: 38-40).

There are another two details worth pointing out here. Firstly, Baxter's proclamation that 'it [the poem] makes me think about where I grew up' indicates the confusion of the real place where he 'spent his childhood' and the literary image and sound of the beach. The fact is, his experience and emotion do not move from the place of childhood to the 'placed' Dover Beach, but to the textual space of the poem that only

constitutes a 'placeless' ideal of the beach. As Baxter's shift between the central and peripheral accelerates, the subtle transference of experience from the locality to the expanded imagined being is fully exposed. Secondly, the sentence 'you wrote it' is repeated six times in Baxter's conversation with Daisy. That Baxter should care so much about authorship suggests that he is actively engaged in seeking a canonised narrative voice to integrate himself into the Perownes' imaginary England. For this reason, he instantly believes Daisy's expedient lie and is fully convinced of the existence of a shared community constituted by literary imagination. Regardless of the objection by his accomplice, not only is Baxter's initial plan to attack the daughter aborted, but he also re-adjusts his attitude towards the whole family. Obviously, this transition crystallises the way the intruder is on the point of breaking away from the old community shared by his accomplice (an image of the city based on their provincialised experience accumulated in and around 'dark London'), and starting to re-identify himself with the Perownes (a sense of belonging based on canonical literary imagination). The gap between the irrationality of the transition of Baxter's attitude and the historical role of literary canonicity in sustaining idealised imaginations shows a conspicuous contradiction. It is due to this contradiction that the transformation of the rebel into an active and obedient participant in re-identification gives off a strong sense of absurdity, suggesting that the act of revisiting the canon successfully exposes the fictiveness of the placeless representation of England.

The performative representation of *The Tempest* in McEwan's fiction points out that the mistake shared by Caliban and Baxter is their obsession with seeking a higher position within the narrative hierarchy to assimilate and rewrite the others (Prospero and Perowne, respectively, in their eyes). As far as Caliban is concerned, the attempt to seize the power of magic is stimulated by the goal of canonising his own narrative. But as long as the task of renegotiating his relationship with Prospero is on the agenda, the narrative he plans to restore will inevitably turn into an imagined ideal. In other words, though initially subdued by the power of magic, Caliban unwittingly inherits the dichotomy of self and other, central and peripheral. Unaware that Prospero's control of the island is dependent on the expansion of a placeless ideal, the barbaric native is assimilated by the narrative framework as his plan of revenge involves the transformation of the placed narrative into a placeless one. This suggests that the fusion of imagination and place is internalised, as Caliban only wishes to re-negotiate

his position within the idealised space. Likewise, Baxter's swift shift from the rebellious intruder to the obedient absorbed is due to his ignorance of the fictiveness of the expanded literary imagination. Baxter's conception of dark London, before the confrontation with Perowne, is connected and largely limited to the streets where his gang often hang around. But the moment he breaks into the house and controls narrative power, the hooligan, just like the neurosurgeon, attempts to expand his representation of the street into a universal imagination of the city and impose this new idealised image upon his subjects. In this sense, the nature of the clash of these two Englands changes during the two unavoidable confrontations in the novel. While their first meeting witnesses the trespassing of Perowne's placeless imagination into Baxter's placed imagination, the second one shows that Baxter tries to turn his perception of the city into a dis-placed narrative that can subdue and absorb the Perownes. Now that his narrative of urban violence is closely attached to specific locales (on the streets), Baxter is in desperate need of a method to export a placeless ideal that can assimilate his target subjects. This accounts for his vulnerability during the recitation of the literary canon in that the possession of this narrative skill signifies to him the capacity of creating a community of shared imagination. In terms of the prerequisites for the continuity of a community, J. Hillis Miller has made an analysis of the role of the other inside a narrative space:

> On the one hand, the other may be another version of the same, in one way or another assimilable, comprehensible, able to be appropriated and understood. On the other hand, the other may be truly and radically other. In the latter case, the other cannot be turned into some version of the same. It cannot be made transparent to the understanding, thereby dominated and controlled. It remains, whatever effort we make to deal with it, irreducibly other. (Miller 2001: 2)

The contemporary rendition of *The Tempest* in McEwan's novel makes it clear that both Caliban and Baxter undergo a transition from, Hillis's terms, 'the complete other' to 'the assimilable other'. Such a transition starts from their inheritance of the

imperialist approach to rewriting others via imposing a placeless ideal.[9] In other words, what makes it possible for them to become the assimilable is the fusion of imagination and place. Thus, that Baxter is severely injured and arrested towards the end of the novel represents something more than just a failure to claim his power over space and narrative. With a parodic reference to the tragedy of Caliban, the modern barbarian reveals the lingering use of the imperialist approach to export an imagination that is separated from the locale. Towards the end of the novel, Perowne's uncertainty about his vision of the urban space suggests that the collision of English places and British imaginations will continue to expand.

2.3 Pilgrim or Rebel: The Ambiguity of Two-faced English Characters

As well as disclosing the rupture between place and imagination, a post-British reading also calls for a discovery of the ambiguity of two-faced English characters. Drawing from Walter Benjamin's articulation in *Reflections* that 'ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill', W.J.T. Mitchell suggests that 'the co-existence of different or even contrary interpretation in any isolated image enables the medium to be described as multi-stable' (cf. Benjamin 2002: 87; cf. Mitchell 1995: 45). Whether 'ambiguous' or 'multi-stable', some English characters can also be seen as the product of contradiction, and are already encoded in the co-existence of different interpretations. In this sense, the systematic production of literary ambiguity is worth investigating to reveal what has been blocking the return of a placed England. In terms of the tug-of-war between Englishness and Britishness, it is not hard to notice the co-existence of Henry Perowne (who represents the voice of 'harmonious' Britishness) and Baxter (who attempts to speak for the marginalised within the idealised community). However, the image of the peripheral in the narrative hierarchy turns out to be multi-stable. On the one hand, many marginalised characters in contemporary narratives of England, like Baxter, are *rebels* who dare confront the imposed ideal and question the repressiveness of the hierarchical structure of British narratives. On the other hand, these characters are also *pilgrims* who are inclined to inherit the imperialist logic and are easily absorbed into the ideological framework

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[9] This universalism is specifically British, and accounts for the success of the British empire. See Michael Gardiner (2013) *The Constitution of English Literature* (London: Bloomsbury): 8-15.

they intend to break away from in the first place (as in Baxter's obsession with the pursuit of the narrative skill to create the placeless ideal).

Graham Swift's novel *Wish You Were Here* can be read in these terms of a shift of the two-faced English characters between rebel and pilgrim. A post-British reading of this fiction would aim to point out the lingering conflation of the placedness and the placelessness, as well as the danger of reviving an expanded conception of England in the attempt to regain England the place. While Baxter is the only rebellious character that emerges to threaten the imaginary community of the Perownes in *Saturday*, almost all the characters in Swift's fiction challenge the imperialist ideal of Britishness that is personified in the image of the father (Michael Luxton). The list of rebels consists of Michael's two sons (Jack, the last of the Luxtons, and his little brother Tom, killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq), Ellie (Jack's wife) and Vera (the mother). But unlike Baxter, as the other who trespasses into Perowne's house (the symbol of fictive harmony) to locate his narrative in the centre, the rebellious characters in Swift novel choose to escape. In other words, instead of attempting to re-negotiate the relationship between the central and the peripheral within the ideal, these characters are determined to break from the mythologised saga of the Luxtons and choose to remain as others.

Compared with Baxter's invasion into Perowne's house, the rebellious characters in the Swift novel employ a less aggressive tactic to try to gain independence. This is largely due to their connection (by marriage and blood relationship) with the Luxton community, which boasts of a history of over four centuries.[10] Used to being subjects contributing to the idealised imagination of being Luxtons, these characters are absorbed into a binary framework in the process of 'canonising-absorbing-recanonising'. In view of binary configurations, such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual and speech/writing, Jacques Derrida observes that binaries are always 'hierarchical in value, with one term being the preferred and privileged; yet the ascription of greater weight to this term only serves as a mask, covering up the threatening, if not predominant, power of the other term' (Derrida 1987: 133-35). This

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[10] It is worth noticing that the rise and fall of the Luxtons coincides with the imperial expansion and the post-1945 contraction of Britain. On 'the first English Empire', see Krishan Kumar (2010) *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 60-88.

understanding of the binaristic framework understates and even naturalises the political violence of the central and the voiced against the peripheral and the voiceless. In *Wish You Were Here*, the appearance of such anti-heroes reveals that the others exist beyond the imagined ideal, and that the conflicts suppressed within the community are bound to emerge. Even before taking action to break up the ideals of their family as well as the British state, Swift's characters already present a multi-stable image: they are simultaneously the constructor and the oppressed of this Britishness myth. For instance, although Vera is transformed by Michael Luxton into a submissive subject (a consumer) of his narrative, she also actively takes responsibility for implanting the family saga (a romanticised discourse of war and conquest) in her sons. And according to the narrator's recollection, the process of assimilation never stops:

> it was Tom who one day put on Vera's still flour-dusted, gravy-spotted apron. It had been hanging on its hook on the corner of the dresser where no one seemed to want to touch it. But it was Tom who took it down and put it on. Like some silent declaration. (Swift 2012:43)

Jack, at twenty-one, is a 'big, outdoor man with mud on his boots'. That he and Michael simply watch and praise Tom's skill of 'cracking eggs one-handed just like Mum used to do' indicates that the elder son has already adopted the perspective of a typical Luxton male (Swift 2012:44). As far as Michael is concerned, his 'declaration' of Tom's gesture in the kitchen not only marks that the little son takes up Vera's role after her death, but also suggests a derogatory assessment of Tom's masculinity. In this sense, the way the father forces Tom, instead of Jack, to witness the killing of their pet dog can been seen as a repetition of his conquest of Vera and a reinforcement of his authority in deciding how a canonical Luxton man should behave. As the glorious family history has been frequently mentioned with mixed feelings in the story, it is explicit that this idealised community is built on the non-stop cycle of assimilating the voiceless and upgrading them to the voiced (cf. Miller 2001: 3-6). For this reason, Swift's rebels have no choice but challenge the ideal by escaping to become others, because their (initial) goal is neither becoming the privileged nor rewriting the others.

In the Swift novel, all rebellious characters have shared targets to flee from – the father and Jebb the farmhouse. In Jack's description, Michael Luxton, a 'stumbling and unsentimental dairy farmer' who enjoys displaying the Luxton medal at a local pub, embodies an imperialist desire to conquer (Swift 2012:15). That is, he is a product of the combination of family saga and the state's imperial past – both of them linger via perpetual expansion and absorption. Likewise, the Luxton farmhouse is simultaneously the material existence of an English locale and the narrative space that maintains an imperialist conception of the British ideal. In *Wish You Were Here*, the act of crossing over specific temporal and spatial 'thresholds' marks critical moments of re-identification. The different areas of the farmhouse (the gate, the kitchen, the parents' bedroom) have distinct implications of identification and rewrite family members into specific roles. Vera's transition from an outsider to a Luxton offers a vantage point from which to observe that the movement across each threshold in Jebb is endowed with a sense of ritualistic performance. After his mother's death, it occurs to Jack that his parents' marriage would have been impossible if his father had not 'plucked her [the mother] from the post-office in Polstowe and carried her on his back over "the threshold of the farmhouse"' (Swift 2012: 23). Vera's maiden name – Newcombe [new-com(b)e(r)] – implies her original status as the other, and her ensued assimilation is closely related to the entering into the narrative space of Jebb. According to Jack's memory, the reason why mother turns into 'more of a Luxton than the Luxtons themselves' is that Michael has thrown her on straight into 'the Big Bed – where two years later Jack would be born and where Vera would die twenty-one years later' (Swift 2012: 23-24). Swift's description of Jebb is very similar to the Fitzrovia apartment in *Saturday* – a space where all characters are forced to compete with each other for the central position of narrative. In the eyes of the rebels, this Jebb farmhouse constitutes the Baucom's idea of a space that witnesses the mechanism of sustaining the narrative of an idealised space and its ruthless absorption during the expansion.

For this reason, attempts to break down the imposed ideal always start by running away from the farmhouse. As the first other absorbed by Michael, Vera is the forerunner and inspires the rest of the characters to follow suit:

when Jack was thirteen and Tom was not yet six Vera had taken them both for the first of two holidays at Brigwell Bay, Dorset, not far from Lyme Regis … They'd gone on their mother's instigation and insistence. She must have said to Michael, with perhaps more than her usual firmness with him, that she was going to give those two boys a holiday, a seaside holiday that when they'd grown up they'd always have to remember. (Swift 2012: 64-65)

As Vera's bond with the Luxtons originates from a forced marriage, she retains some of the characteristics of a rebel in her integration into the ideal. This means that, before the two boys come of age, she is the only person within the family to counteract the impact of the father, protecting the boys from inheriting an ideal based on the structural violence of assimilation. Hence Vera's 'instigation', 'insistence' and 'unusual firmness' imply the significance of this 'epic' journey (Swift 2012: 65). What is worth noticing is the absence of (the image of) father in Jack's recollection of the two holidays, the only occasions when the voices of the mother and the sons occupy the whole narrative space. These trips give the rebels an illusion that they are 'crossing the border into another country' in that this is more than just an opportunity to be geographically separated from Jebb the locale during the process of absorption. Also, as they always stay in a caravan near the beach named 'Marilyn' (a feminine characteristic as opposed to that implied by 'Jebb'), the journey can be seen as the mother's declaration of (temporary) independence from the father's ideal. What is different between Baxter and Vera is that the street thug in *Saturday* chooses to break into his rival's idealised space to renegotiate his position inside the narrative hierarchy – a direct confrontation that aims at causing a (momentary) disorder. Vera's rebellious tactic, in comparison, is to momentarily escape from the established central point and create a counteractive narrative. Only in this new idealised space does Vera feel that she has been granted an unrivalled narrative authority, and this is very first time in the novel she talks to her sons in her own words instead of speaking as a 'surrogate agent' of (what Baucom calls) a 'collective remembrance of ideals' (cf. Baucom 1999: 4-5; cf. Gardiner 2013: 2-4).

With a noticeable reference to the narrative structure of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Swift's description of Vera's first attempt to escape is largely disguised among the intertwined timelines in the novel. Given that Jack, Ellie and Tom have left the farmhouse early in the text, the significance of the journeys to Brigwell Bay should not be understated. Although the ambiguity of the two-faced mother makes her rebellion weak and temporary, she still offers a paradigm of breaking from the idealised community. As the starting point of other characters' repeated performance of fleeing, Vera's attempt discloses two factors that are later inherited by her boys in their own attempts. The first factor is the absence of the authority dominating the narrative of the Jebb ideal. When analysing those two journeys, Jack, quite trenchantly, attributes his unparalleled happiness to the unusual disappearance of Michael's influence: 'father must have relented for two years running because of the fulltime summer labour on the farm' (Swift 2012: 65). The protagonist is thus fully convinced that the absence of (the narrative voice) of the father is a premise for running away from the ideal. Although Jack's unreliable narrative deliberately understates his role in Michael Luxton's 'suicide', the emerging gap between the fictional and the factual in his memory proves that his attempt to separate from the Luxton community starts with an Oedipus-like killing of his father. In this respect, it is obvious that Jack shares with Baxter a tactic of dethroning the person who has possessed the narrative authority. Such an obsession with replacing the central narrator makes the characters in both novels fail to realise that the established trajectory of moving from the peripheral to the central is the source of structural violence. The second factor concerns the geographical separation from the Jebb farmhouse. Jebb is both a material existence of locale and an expanded space of ideology. As Henri Lefèbvre observes in *The Production of Space*, 'space', unlike the concept of 'place', is a complex social construction which affects people's practices and perceptions (Lefèbvre 1992: 4). That is, the shift from 'place' to 'space' is a foundation for the social production of meanings and the rewriting of the subjects' interrelationship and their sense of self. As a consequence of not realising that Jebb also constitutes a space of myths, the attempts made by Vera and the rest of the characters (Jack and Ellie move to the Isle of Wight; Tom runs away from home on his eighteenth birthday) rely on a break from Jebb the place. When the placeless ideal continues to trespass the geographical border after their escape, there is no doubt that the confusion of place and imagination predetermines the failure of their rebellions.

Unaware of the placelessness of their imagination of the farmhouse, these characters keep revisiting this idealised space in their memory, and subconsciously turn their current life into a replication of the imaginary past. In fact, the carnivalesque features of their escapes signal an inevitable transition from rebel to pilgrim. Firstly, all the rebellions turn out to be temporary – an occasional time-out in the long process of ideal-construction when a framework of binary oppositions (the seemingly stable yet unequal relationship between the voiced and the voiceless) is turned upside-down. Both of Vera's seaside journeys end up returning to the farmhouse. Tom is the first Luxton who successfully leaves Jebb the place for good and cuts off his contact with the family after joining the army. After his death in Iraq, however, his envisioned hearing of the 'unmistakable, steady "tchch…tchch…tchch" of browsing cattle tearing grass' (a recurring idealised image of the pastoral farmhouse) articulates a nostalgic return to Jebb Hill (Swift 2012: 209). Likewise, after living on the Isle of Wight for more than two decades, Jack still cannot break his connection with the old farmhouse. Towards the end of the story, Jack's return to Jebb with the coffin of his little brother marks the climax, as well as the failure, of their carnivalesque performance. Secondly, these rebellious acts are not a critique of the logic upon which the placeless ideal is established. Unable to distinguish imagination from place, those who are desperate to achieve a separation from Jebb the locale always resort to the approach of expanding a placed narrative into a new universal ideal. In most occasions, the newly constructed community of imagination not only replicates some of the characteristics of Jebb, but also inherits its 'set of unwritten values' (cf. Gardiner 2013: 1-4). As a result, the escape from the farmhouse turns into a gesture of restoring what is supposed to be criticised in the first place.

In terms of the above-mentioned features, it is notable that Swift's two-faced characters eventually act as pilgrims. Evolved from 'peregrinus' in Latin ('per-' is 'to pass'; 'ager' means field, land and country), the term 'pilgrimage' indicates a close relation to an exploration of the land (cf. Dyas 2005:6). With regards to Jack's description, the recurring pilgrimage to Jebb is a mixture of three traditional types. Firstly, these characters are 'interior pilgrims', as their exploration of the connection between land and self usually takes place in the form of meditation and penance. Secondly, despite the confusion of place and imagination, these characters' journey in

the novel is a 'place pilgrimage' in that a 'mythologised' location (the farmhouse) is involved. And thirdly, Swift's characters are 'moral pilgrims' who are still judged by whether they have followed the moral discipline of Jebb the ideal after the fleeing. According to Alexandra Peat's observation, the significance of pilgrimage has transcended the domain of religion and expanded to illustrate broader social and cultural shifts with emphatic historicity, thus defining a modern pilgrim as 'a restless seeker for identity' (cf. Peat 2011: 9-15). Given that Jack, Tom and Ellie have been trying to 're-identify' themselves, what they fail to grasp is that identity-construction itself is a practice of idealising and ahistoricising, which is exactly the approach of Michael Luxton to establishing the Jebb ideal. In this sense, the ambiguity of these characters is caused by mistaking the locality for their target of criticism, which, in turn, lures the rebels into using the old method (of idealising and canonising) to try to break down the enforced imagination.

The transformation of 'a narrative of resistance' into 'a narrative of pilgrimage' is detectable in Vera's model of escape. During those Brigwell Bay holidays, the only change in Vera's attempt to get away from the impact of the father is in moving from one locale (the farmhouse) to another (the caravan). It is clearly stated in Jack's recollection that the experience attached to the small caravan over the past twenty years has gradually grown to replace the real experience of the Bay as well as that of Dorset. Eventually, the space of the caravan is prioritised as an ideal opposite to the one represented by Jebb. In other words, although Vera flees from Jebb the place, she never manages to achieve (or ever thinks of) the return of locality in her narrative. On the contrary, the illusion of the temporary joy ahistoricised by the new placeless ideal misleads later rebellions into a form of pilgrimage – an incessant cycle of old ideals being replaced by newly established ones:

> he [Jack] looks at the caravans and even now feels their tug, like the tug of the wind on their own thin, juddering frames. Thirty-two trembling units. To the left, the locked site office, the launderette, the empty shop-grille down, window boarded. The gated entrance-way off the Sands end road, the sign above it swinging. (Swift 2012:7)

Not only does this prototype stimulate a desire to separate from Jebb, it also creates a new placeless myth, which, mixed with some of the content of the old Luxton saga, has a huge impact on the two boys' development of their own sense of self. What is most absurd about life on the Isle of Wight is how the way Jack 'the caravan keeper' managing the caravans in the Lookout Park so resembles the way Jack 'the farmer' used to deal with the cattle in the Jebb farm. It is not until the journey back to the farmhouse that Jack comes to notice that the anxiety of rootlessness in the past twenty years actually results from the placelessness of his narrative. On the one hand, the recurring image of Jebb in his memory is no more than an imagined being, as the farmhouse is now for the Robinsons to 'stay on some occasion like their children's half-term holiday' – an irony of Jack's constant pursuit of that specific holiday experience (Swift 279). On the other hand, although he has moved to reside at a new locale, Jack's life turns out to be a parodic mixture of the two ideals imposed by his parents. This explains why Jack attempts to achieve a certain kind of catharsis via his journey back to Jebb, only to find that he has imprisoned himself in a new placeless imagination.

This experience of escaping from one ideal into another also happens to Tom. In fact, even locked within the suffocating space of the farmhouse, Vera still manages to preserve a critical moment and space (the afternoon tea time in the kitchen) to counteract the Jebb ideal. This moment is supposed to be used to pass on the family saga – the legendary Luxton brothers (George and Fred) who were rewarded DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal) in the First World War. However, this kind of retelling proves to be ambiguous, for the storyteller, acting simultaneously as rebel and pilgrim, creates a story within the story. There is no doubt that she fulfils her duty by narrating the legend of Luxton brothers that contributes to reinforcing a sense of loyalty to the established ideal – the imagination of the Luxtons and the empire. But in the meantime, just as Jack is uncertain of the credibility of mother's narrative, Vera does secretly rewrite that story. The 'canonised' discourse about the relationship between empire and its subjects is replaced by a largely romanticised imagination of brotherhood. Although the inner narrative of brotherhood offers a different perspective in order to demythologise the grand narrative of empire, the mother's story still encourages the pursuit of a transcendental placeless ideal – in this case a canonical brotherhood that might not really exist in the first place. As far as Vera is concerned, this motivation of

rewriting the story is about setting the children free from the psychological burden of their family saga. But as it turns out, her invention only melts into the original story, and constitutes a renewed myth that makes her boys suffer in the rest of their lives.

The structural cause of the Luxton family's tragedy explains why the post-Britishness in *Wish You Were Here* can be read in the representation of the repeated shift between rebel and pilgrim. This resulting two-facedness suggests that the anxiety of the novel's characters is largely caused by the expansion of a placed narrative into a placeless myth. Unconscious of the lingering confusion of imagination and place, the rebels cannot work out that the real target of criticism should not be what constitutes the ideal, but the imperialist logic that sustains the mechanism. The Luxtons' quest for a new 'ideal' is attributed by Jack to 'a crisis of identity', but the narrator is unaware that the root of this crisis is the imaginary needs of such an 'identity'. In this novel, Swift's plot and characters are, as Daniel Lea suggests, 'founded upon juxtaposition and paradox' (cf. Lea 2005: 73). In fact, this sense of ambiguity reminds readers of the danger of reviving imperial ideals by ignoring the significance of placedness in literary representations. However, despite English characters' frequent relapse into the production of idealised imaginations, some counteractive tactics, which will be discussed in Part Two, have already emerged in the contemporary literature of England.

Chapter Three

When the State Meets the Street: A Strategy of Britishness or A Tactic of Post-Britishness?

The rapid shift between order and disorder of a society, in the eyes of many scholars, offers a great opportunity to observe the public's re-identification with their imagined community – one of those critical moments unveiling the structural cause of identity crisis. By reviewing the strategies of the disturbed community to restore its law and order, this chapter suggests that the literary representation of urban riots can be seen as articulating the two fundamental principles of the perpetual rebirth of Britishness: a) the tradition of organicism that can be traced to the seventeenth-century British philosophy; b) the combination of this organicist tradition with modern biopolitics that is based on the political technique of inclusive exclusion. In this chapter, the interpretation of the works of Gillian Slovo and J.G. Ballard aims to argue that these two principles predetermine the continuity of an organic Britain and the structural (narrative) violence imposed upon its subjects. The fact that all individuals are under the threat of being turned into bare lives suggests why the strategy of Britishness inevitably produces the counteractive tactic of post-Britishness inside an organic community.

3.1 The Strategy of State: Who Is Afraid of the Mad Man?

> Though nothing, nothing will keep us together
> We can beat them, forever and ever
> Oh, we can be heroes just for one day
> I, I will be King
> And you, you will be Queen
> Though nothing will drive them away
> We can be heroes just for one day
> We can be us just for one day[11]
>
> —— David Bowie

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[11] The chorus of David Bowie's 'Heroes', which was played during the opening ceremony of 2012 London Olympics.

In his observation on Geoffrey Chaucer's literature of Albion, G. K. Chesterton is deeply attracted by the imagination of 'an elemental and emblematic giant' making a home in the British Isles 'with our native hills for his bones and our native forests for his beard… a single figure outlined against the sea and a great face staring at the sky' (1991: 314). The image of the country personified in Chaucer's writings should by no means be confused with the modern conception of British state in the post-1707 era; however, the political influence of this metaphor is profound. The combination of sovereignty and landscape as key elements of a political state has been inherited in the development of British political philosophy, of which the seventeenth-century image of Leviathan was a typical example. The logic behind such a mythological narrative, according to Ian Baucom, still lingered in the twentieth century and contributed to the confluence of British politics, particularly since the 1960s, with biopolitical governmentality (cf. Baucom 1999: 4-8, 17-22). This imagery explains why writing on English landscape by Chesterton and Edward Thomas, as well as V.S. Naipaul in the post-1945 context, continued to expand ideas of England into an idealised vision of British state. Some contemporary writers (like Graham Swift) still share with F.R. Leavis and Philip Larkin an obsession with viewing pastoral landscapes as 'the heart of the Kingdom' (cf. Parrinder 2006: 396-340). For Hanif Kureishi and J.G. Ballard, however, it is the asphalt roads and cold skyscrapers in modern cities rather than the soothing hills and rivers in rural areas that constitute the political body of the British state since the second half of the twentieth century. This urban vision of the body and space of Britishness exists in Kureishi's depiction of suburban South London, as well as the condition of barbarism and self-destruction in Ballard's narrative of British cities simmering with social tensions (Kureishi 1990; Ballard 1975). The repeated breakdown and rebuilding of the imagined British community in urban space is thus of huge significance for understanding the coexistence of and the constant competition between Britishness and post-Britishness. Reading literary fictions of urban riots from this perspective makes it possible to undertake a more accurate critique of the methods constantly exporting an organic Britain.

In late 2018, an article on identification with British ideals by Kevin Rawlinson called for the British people to take a moment to review 'the long and winding road' the 'British nation' had taken since the 2016 referendum (14 Nov 2018). The analysis in

this article is informative enough as it provides a detailed record of those critical moments in negotiating a new imagination of Britishness with the EU and within the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Rawlinson's question of 'how did we get here' urges readers to distance themselves for a moment from the hustles and bustles of Brexit issues to consider an increasing disillusionment with the myth of Britishness. In their 2015 review of contemporary British fiction, Nick Bentley and Leigh Wilson also observe a sort of 'disillusionment', a sentiment not only felt by a few fictional characters, but prevalent in literary representations of Britain since the twenty-first century (2015: 4). In the second decade of the century, Bentley warns in a pessimistic tone, what is in store for (the narrative of) Britain and Britishness is a more violent shift of culture prompted by political and economic turbulence from home and abroad (2015: 12-14). Some of these external incidents, such as the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, have made existing internal tensions even more grave (i.e. a noticeable rise of urban crimes and underclass revolts). Many fictions, such as Laura Oldfield Ford's *Savage Messiah* (2011), and Guy Gunaratne's *In Our Mad and Furious City* (2018), provide panoramic images of the noticeable division and confrontation emerging in narratives of an organic Britain. The pervasive disillusionment in these works reveals a shared anxiety within an organic state to re-identify with the ahistorical imagination of Britishness.

When observing the construction of Britishness, scholars like Krishan Kumar, as noted in previous chapters, have tended to lay emphasis on critical moments of Britain's political and cultural history. Those moments witness a politicisation of some *historical* incidents which eventually bulge into a set of collective, ahistorical ideals of an organic Britain. Sometimes these moments have appeared in the form of crisis and turbulence – the Blitz, for example, is a canonical reminder of the destruction of London and the casualty of citizens. Disorder, however, is by no means the solitary point of trauma. For instance, Adam Curtis' *The Living Dead: Three Films About the Power of the Past* (1995) stands out as an accurate showcase of Britishness strategy. In this collection of documentaries, Curtis examines in great detail how an idealised reworking of memory has been used to manipulate British people's national identification. With the state's full-speed production of grand narratives of patriotism, moments of crisis can mark an opportunity for the shrinking empire to rebuild Britishness and maintain its capacity of absorption, particularly in the post-1945 era.

The romanticising of (the continuity of) an imagined British community does not have to be triggered by national crises. Under many circumstances, some ritualistic events are used by the state to display renewed myths of being British, not only to the external world but also to the its own people as a form of collective re-identification (cf. Kumar 2015: 3-5, 44-49). The 2012 London Olympics, for example, can be seen as a typical top-down performance of Britishness. Headlines such as 'London 2012: Time to Find Out Who We Are' were common in newspapers (Freedland 2012). In spite of a moderate concern about whether Britons might pass or fail 'the mammoth test' of collective identification, such discourses were still tacitly acknowledging the connection between this state event and the frequent displays of a unifying Britishness amid the growing political uncertainty of the twenty-first century. Leftist intellectuals have long been questioning the method of using sporting events to advocate British identity politics – long before the city was granted the right to host the Games, and even in the critical responses to certain commentators celebrating the return of the St. George's Cross in the 1996 European Championships and the 1998 World Cup. In 'The Sporting Spirit' (1945), George Orwell articulated his distaste of large-scale sport due to its undisguised link to increased tension and violence between state and nation. But unsurprisingly, this kind of concern was largely overshadowed by the state's relentless advocacy of unification as the Olympics approached. Sunder Katwala, for example, rejected the popular comparison with Beijing, insisting that the content of Danny Boyle's Olympic opening, together with the display of a unique image of Britain in the ensuing games, was of special and irreplaceable value in that it was 'irresistibly British' (Katwala 2012). Similarly, floods of optimistic claims, such as 'the Olympics is meant to reveal the British character' and 'the birth of Britain 2.0', seemed to suggest that the grand narrative of the state has settled the identity crisis in the eyes of critics (Freeman 2012).

As Sarah Lyall comments, what the Olympics (as a ritual of Britishness) attempts to show is 'a nation secured in its own post-empire identity, whatever that actually is' (Lyall 2012). The hint of sniffiness casts doubts upon the portrait of 'winning' and 'unabashed patriotism' as defining characters of Britain 2.0. When Team GB marched in the Olympic stadium to Bowie's *Heroes*, modern sports, instead of bloody wars, again constituted an ideal space to show the passion for being British (cf. Orwell 1945). The recurrence of such an Orwellian link between sport and statehood suggests that

the so-called version 2.0 is just old wine in a new bottle. As we have seen from the Britishing strategies in Chapter Two, the lyrics ('be heroes just for one day') conveys a sense of self-mockery and temporal compromise which is in sharp contrast with the state's feints to an idealised and ahistorical imagination (cf. Baucom 1999: 42-48; cf. Gardiner 2013: 17-22). The last time those two elements (winning and unabashed patriotism) were so intensely (and so closely) celebrated in narratives of Britishness was the Blitz spirit advocated during the Second World War. 2012 was not the first time London hosted the Olympics. Just like the one held after the war in 1948, the 2012 Olympics signalled not only a high-spirited re-identification with the idealised Britishness, but also 'a timely therapy' for a turbulent London that was suffering before the arrival of Olympics. The undertones of these two Olympics, however, turn out to be very different. The one taking place in 1948 witnessed a Britain, shortly after surviving the Second World War, rising from the ashes and ready to rebuild a shattered British community with moderate optimism. During the 2012 Olympics, flying Union Jacks, in the eyes of some commentators, made the country look like a perfect unity. But this new addition to the collection of British memories might not be enough to heal wounds over four warm summer days in the previous year – lootings, ruthless battles between rioters and police, and more significantly, the disillusionment of some canonical social and moral values of the imagined British community. The outbreak of urban upheavals in 2011 seemed unexpected to the public, but the structural violence produced by society, as Zigmunt Bauman points out in *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, would always be ready to renegotiate (by force) the power of narrative and the right of space:

> from time to time the outcasts of the consumer society assume
> the role of its Luddites – going on the rampage… committing
> acts which are immediately represented as riots and thus supply
> a further proof, if a further proof was needed, that the question of
> the underclass is – first and foremost, perhaps even solely – the
> problem of law and order. (Bauman 1997: 221)

On 6 August 2011, protests started in Tottenham following the death of Mark Duggan, a local resident shot dead by police two days before. After a few violent clashes with police, along with the destruction of police vehicles, double-decker buses, and many

homes and businesses, the initial 'peaceful' quest for justice for the deceased turned into urban riots by thousands of people in several London boroughs, and then in various cities across England. According to official investigations after the riots, five people died due to the urban violence. In addition, an estimated 13000 to 15000 people 'rioted/ looted' across cities during those four days in summer, and the disorder cost £50 million to police and another £43.5 million to taxpayers to clean up. This is still not the whole picture, though. In another report, it was calculated that 'there was also £300 million worth of damage to property and the figure to thought to be lost in tourism revenue reached £250 million' (*Guardian* and LSE 2011; Riots Communities and Victims Panel 2012). Even after inflation adjustment, these numbers still make the 2011 riots the most serious in the modern history of the United Kingdom. As many academics and commentators have pointed out, the history of London is inarguably a history of violence. In *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels, and Revolts*, Clive Bloom offers a long list of urban revolts, including Roman legions' ruthless suppression of revolts and the ensuing destruction of London in AD 60, city rebellions during the Parliamentary reform and the Suffragettes movement, and the 1980s riots in Brixton (Bloom 2010: 5-25, 68-76, 98-102). In *Out of place*, Ian Baucom takes a whole chapter to analyse the impact of the 1981 Brixton riots on locating and identifying with Britishness (1999: 190-218). In view of the unparalleled extent and frequency of riots and the way violence is able to rewrite the political landscape of London, recurring urban riots, instead of the occasional Olympics, might be more qualified to be what Krishan Kumar calls *the* 'critical moment' to observe the practice of Britishness strategy (cf. Kumar 2015: 8-14).

Among all these riots in London, a reason to train a post-British reading on the outbursts twelve months before the Olympics is that the short gap between the events generates a huge tension between two different (if not completely opposite) narratives of Britishness. These two narratives, as we have analysed in Chapter Two, are bound to collide, for the hierarchical framework prioritises an eternal movement from peripheral to central. Compared with all the riots listed by Bloom, the 2011 riots, due to their specific feature and context, constitute a political metaphor that might shed some light on the logical connection between urban upheaval and the contemporary production of British ideals. It is noticeable that in the political discourses of the English riots, England the place is largely replaced by England the imagined space –

once again an expansion of nation into state. Despite the fact that almost all the media only referred to English riots, and that Wales and Scotland did not witness any disturbances that could be linked directly as part of the riots, many of the political statements (especially those made by the administration of Conservative Party) were still taken up with the idea of the British state (or the so advocated British 'nation') as a whole as a 'broken society' (Bloom 2012: 87).

Some specific features of the 2011 riots are worth noting. Firstly, there was a gap between the rioting's lack of distinct political appeal and the arbitrary assertion of a complete absence of politicalness in these incidents. The riots, largely depoliticised by most British reporting, did not seem to have a clear theme, or even a slogan – if any particular theme ever emerged, it was, in contrast to Baucom's analysis of previous revolts, pushed out of focus when the violence escalated (cf. Baucom 1999: 190-196). In Occupy London and the 2010 student riots, there was at least one specific theme of 'social justice' and 'real democracy' to help define the nature of movement and serve as a criterion to evaluate whether the original pursuit had been accomplished. In contrast, the nature of urban disturbance in 2011 remains unclear, because all possible answers come from speculative assumptions instead of deriving directly from any unequivocal claims from those rioters. With the wide and repeated spread of such depoliticised assumptions, some have gradually managed to form a canonical (British) narrative of these urban revolts. Secondly, their obvious leaderlessness distinguishes the riots from some other disturbances that bear more traditional markers of revolt. As some investigation reports have suggested, misinformation about the causes of massive riots leads to a misunderstanding of leaderlessness (*Guardian* and LSE 2011; Riots Communities and Victims Panel 2012). The death of Mark Duggan during a police investigation is believed by many to have been closely connected with the following upheaval (Bloom 2012: 76-78). The riots broke out shortly after a group of furious people (including the Duggan family and those from their neighbourhood) started protesting in front of a local police station, and this specific group of protestors might be the only one that could be characterised as 'leaders,' since they initiated part of the movement that later escalated into full-scale riots. With a closer examination of the motivation, the actions, and the development of this incident, however, there is a distinct division between the protest and the ensuing riots. As many accounts have pointed out, protestors with these specific appeals had already left before the riots

actually began (Bloom 2012: 77-78). In other words, lootings and arsons continued to escalate in a leaderless pattern. Thirdly, the London riots resulted in an unprecedented destruction, the extent of which is closely related to modern media as a political catalyst, and especially the widespread use of social media. As early as in the investigation of the 1981 Brixton riots, Lord Scarman pointed to the relation between the development of riots and the spread of information:

> During the weekend of 10–12 April (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), the British people watched with horror and incredulity an instant audio-visual presentation on their television sets of scenes of violence and disorder in their capital city, the like of which had not previously been seen in this century in Britain. (Scarman 1981: 1)

In his interpretation of Scarman's statement, Baucom suggests that the situation contemplated by this report is 'a future in which disorder will become a disease endemic in our society' (Baucom 1999: 192). Such an identification of riot as 'a species of contagion invokes a time-honoured understanding of the crowd as a social form that reproduces itself through an act of contaminated touching' (Baucom 1999: 192). The tiny television screens in the 1980s, according to Baucom, as well as the constantly expanding space of social media in the twenty-first-century context, provide an image that 'locates' the imagination of a Britishness that can turn explicitly violent. This was also what happened in the 2011 riots, with the difference that the screens used to locate Britishness today have become even smaller and more accessible. In *Out of Ashes: Britain after the Riots* (2012), David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, notes the role of Blackberry Messenger (BBM) in the spread of urban violence: 'the Blackberry used to be the phone for City suits, but in August 2011 it provided the infrastructure for a riot' (27-29).

Unlike Occupy London, largely launched as the English branch of a global movement, the characteristics of the 2011 London riots are deeply rooted in the political soil of Britishness. As mentioned in Part One, the rupture between placedness and placelessness marks the non-stop politicisation of English landscape into British imaginations. The centralisation of such Britishness myths, in return, squeezes out

other narratives as well as the possibility of questioning the structural causes of violence (cf. Baucom 1999: 198-199; cf. Gardiner 2013: 4-8). In many discussions of the urban upheavals, the police failing to respond properly to Duggan's death is generally characterised as an obvious mistake in the everyday-life operation of British society. But the implied sense of accident cannot explain why the initial fury against the police would turn into a condition of havoc with little to do with the Duggan case. As Lammy contemplated after the riots, many lootings and arsons were 'copycat incidents not restricted to one race, let alone one area' (2012: 15). It is reasonable to suspect that 'many of those who took part in Hackney, Enfield, Woolwich and Croydon had never even heard of Mark Duggan' (Lammy 2012: 15). This opinion is shared by Clive Bloom, who confirms that 'Duggan was hardly minor for his family and friends, but he was little known outside his community and those involved in his killing could not predict the national carnage that was to follow' (Bloom 2012: 76). Thus the marked disproportionateness of, and the weak connection between, the (direct) cause and the effect raise a reasonable doubt about the top-down gesture of downplaying the 'politicalness of the urban violence' (Baucom 1999: 191-194).

In the post-riot context, there were some contemporary literatures attempting to respond in voices different other than those behind the grand narrative of the British state. Thanks to these literary narratives, the clashes of place and space are exposed as a major source of urban riots. In verbatim theatre, for instance, Gillian Slovo and Alecky Blythe have written, respectively, *The Riots: From Spoken Evidence* (2011) and *Little Revolution* (2014). By collecting narratives from all walks of life at different stages of the riots, these theatrical works recreate an open space where a dialogue between various opinions is made possible. In verbatim theatre, an implied motivation is to invite audiences to challenge their already existing positions. This form of open debate (with no obvious conclusion) exposes the fact that realities of riots cannot possibly be covered by the state's grand narrative of trauma. Notably, there are some slight differences in narrative perspective and structure in these two theatrical works. In *The Riots*, the aim of the debate forum is to summon representatives of different classes and professions involved in or affected by the riots: masked rioters, local MPs, news reporters, the police, local residents, and observers of this disorder from other cities. Each representative is granted an equal narrative right to describe his or her perception and debate with those holding different perspectives. Unlike Slovo's

obvious effort to minimise the playwright's personal impact on the debate forum, Blythe directly shows up in the narrative space as an on-the-scene reporter. Only those interviewees she encounters on the streets are eligible to voice their ideas in *Little Revolution*. Additionally though, the Q&A pattern of the conversations between the playwright and the other characters suggests that Blythe does not appear to be a mere observer. Instead, she puts forward questions to other characters, impacting on interviewees' reactions to the riots throughout the play. For example, when asked about the reason for deploying police horses to Mare Street in the riots, one passer-by at first seems to have no clue at all. But inspired by Blythe's suggestive question, this character almost immediately affirms that 'the police riding on horse seems more threatening than merely standing on the street', which could be an efficient strategy to establish an authority in the urban space (2014: 23).

Based on the materials collected for her theatrical contemplation of the London riots, Gillian Slovo published a novel titled *Ten Days* in 2016. The content of this novel can be divided into three stages: pre-rioting, rioting, and post-rioting, with the last one addressing analytical and retrospective responses to the lingering horror. The fiction portrays a fictitious underclass location, Lovelace, where the accidental death of a local resident during a police investigation leads to riots within the community and then to the whole of London. Again various characters provide multiple perspectives. Before each chapter Slovo presents the monotonous beating of police helicopters' blades and the cold language of the government's surveillance reports, which are in sharp contrasts with the heated, uncomfortable disorder of looting and arson for the common citizens on the ground (Slovo 2016: 3, 87-88). The gap between police reports (titled 'private and confidential only for private inquiry') and the grand statement released to the public attests to the existence of two different narratives on the same incident. The emergence of these two discourses indicates that when the imagined British community undergoes a cyclical disorder, a hidden set of healing strategies automatically kicks in with renewed moral myths to absorb/discipline the unsettled public (cf. Gardiner 2012: 8-12; 2013: 3).

In its criticism of spatial conflicts, J.G. Ballard's *Kingdom Come* (2006) also helps expose the relationship between the addictiveness of violence and the repeated practice of Britishing strategies. In the story, Richard Pearson, an unemployed

advertising executive and an inborn rebel since childhood, leaves central London and drives along the M25. Not long before his father is seen being killed by a gunman in a shopping mall in Brooklands, and during his investigation of his father's death, Pearson finds that a seemingly peaceful town in this area has long been pervaded by a postmodern form of fascism (consumerism, nationalism, and violence). Similar to the two-faced characters in Chapter Two, a clique of social elites in Ballard's novel shows a mixed feeling towards the status of their community. As the narrator describes at the beginning of novel, the seed of violence seems to have already been sown deep down in the British landscape before his arrival in the town:

> the suburbs dream of violence. Asleep in their drowsy villas, sheltered by benevolent shopping malls, they wait patiently for the nightmares that will wake them into a more passionate world…consumerism rules, but people are bored. They're out on the edge, waiting for something big and strange to come along… they want to be frightened. They want to know fear. And maybe they want to go a little mad. (Ballard 2006: 3)

According to Ballard, well-behaved citizens in everyday life can instantly turn into malicious rioters, harmonious communities into a burning hell. In this sense, the 2011 riots should not be regarded as popping up out of nowhere, as Ballard's narrator had actually warned in a prophetic tone: 'this thing is spreading along the M25, sooner or later the noose will tighten around London and choke it to death' (Ballard 2006: 169). This image addresses Ballard's concern about a collective anxiety bound to explode in the form of physical violence in post-millennial London. The violence of madness portrayed in *Kingdom Come* reveals the contemporary practice of 'canonical governmentality', and calls for a reconsideration of an organic state's unspoken need for repeated violence to justify its perpetual rejuvenation.

In contrast with verbatim theatre's obsession with an extreme naturalism, the narratives in these two novels appear to be deliberately foregrounding their fictionality, keeping the overwhelming social reality at an arm's length. This self-imposed narrative distance actually adds to the dystopian depiction of urban destruction an incisiveness only seen in political allegories. By referring to radical disturbance in

urban space, both novels review the repeated rebirth of the British ideal after crises, and reveal why the idealised Britishness is just an order temporarily restored. These two literary responses to urban revolts also suggest a possible escape from the canonical paradigm of moral judgement in Britishness narratives. Slovo's and Ballard's replays of violence are not really about arriving at a conclusion about who is responsible for the tragedy. But in most of the post-rioting investigations (and even many narrative voices in verbatim theatres), the question of who is guilty is the dominant theme. After all, the difference between sociological studies and verbatim theatre lies in the latter imposing a moral test on the audience. Being granted the responsibility of moral judgement, audiences are expected to review their perceptions of urban violence. The logical premise of such moral narratives, as suggested by the novels, demands the images of characters be stable so that their actions can be clearly defined. This premise, nevertheless, is at odds with the unstable images perceived in reality. In *Kingdom Come*, William Sangster, a respectable headmaster in Brooklands, is a typically ambiguous character. Deeply concerned about the stirred-up class and race conflicts, Sangster opens a section at school to accommodate Asian females so that they can hide away from the attack by sporting revellers and racists in St. Georges Cross T-shirts (2006: 159). But at the same time, this seemingly benign intellectual chooses to prop up a 'Big Brother' styled leader to instigate long-hidden violence among the disciplined public. By breeding a fascist state out of the local shopping mall, Sangster believes the final explosion of riots will result in harsh interference by the state and the town can return to an idealised pre-consumerist past:

> a fascist state… it's the real thing. There's no doubt about it. I've
> been watching it grow for the past year. This is soft fascism, like
> the consumer landscape. No goose-stepping, no jackboots, but
> the same emotions and the same aggression. As you say, there's
> a strong sense of community, but it isn't based on civic rights.
> Forget reason. Emotion drives everything. (Ballard 2006: 167-
> 168)

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the hierarchical structure of Britishness myths blurs the boundary of idea and ideal – hence only the perpetual chase for narrative authority, according to Britishing strategies, is seen as *moral*. Is Sangster a rioter or a

victim? Is this character's action guided by social conscience or a malicious scheme? The switch between these opposing images is so fast during the urban violence that at critical moments they coexist within one character. When Richard Pearson again stares at Sangster in the final confrontation between rioters and police, the protagonist confesses that the political metaphor of urban violence is too complicated to be covered by oversimplified moral narratives: 'I felt uneasy with him (the head teacher); his role was too ambiguous for comfort, and he had moved from hostage to principal ringleader without taking off his overcoat' (Ballard 2006: 231). As the narrators in both novels admit moral narratives' incapacity to present the complexity of riots, it is not too difficult to understand why these characters are so desperate to reject the existing paradigm of narrating a radical Britain. In fact, the explicit refusal to fall into a canonical representation of disorder, as Baucom suggests, proves to be a politicised gesture of understanding urban violence (Baucom 1999: 190-192). Similar to Henry Perowne's method of rebuilding of his idealised space in *Saturday*, Ballard's characters' systematic use of moral narratives to banish certain scapegoats from the imagined community (like the 'feral underclass' in the case of the 2011 riots) is a crucial Britishing strategy. A study of this strategy can help explain why the imagination of the British state has turned into a timeless myth.

In Slovo's and Ballard's novels, strategies of Britishness can be seen as a collection of state narratives notable for their *exclusive inclusiveness* – the exact Britishing mechanism that keeps recurring in *Wish You Were Here* to discipline those momentarily rebelling characters. To say the British mechanism seems 'inclusive' is to describe its insatiable demands to expand and absorb others as its own subjects. Behind this expansion exists a process of enforced assimilation. The 'open' system of organic Britain proves to be not so inclusive, in that for any individual to enter and remain in the imagined community, there can be no extra space allowed to go astray from established ideals of the shared space. One of the keywords recurring in such discourses of a radical British state is 'madness', a term closely attached to various depictions of riots (and rioters) throughout the three phases of violence in 2011. In *The Riots*, the three rioters who appear on the stage before everyone else are the only ones without any detailed descriptions, simply introduced as Man 1, 2, 3. According to the stage direction, 'they are disembodied voices, should be separated from the rest of the characters; they are Other – a world apart from the audience' (Slovo 2011: 7). Despite

the opportunity to speak up like the rest of the narrators, these rioters are in effect expelled from the 'rational dialogues' of this supposedly equal narrative space. In the eyes of those rational characters, the words that should be used to describe the violence ('dehumanised', 'unexplained', 'lost') confirm a deep-rooted imagination of 'the insane'. Similarly, in *Kingdom Come*, Tony Maxted, like Sangster, is another elitist plotter of local riots. In his account of the repeated occurrence of violent crimes in Brooklands, Maxted pinpoints the role of 'madness':

> people are bored, even though they don't realise it…they have tried narcotics, war, sex, (and now) madness…a voluntary insanity…the sort that we higher primates thrive on. Watch a troupe of chimpanzees. They are bored with chewing twigs. They want meat, the bloodier the better, they want to taste their enemies' fear in the flesh they grind. (Ballard 2006: 103-4)

The rioters are described in verbatim plays as *others* with whom it is impossible to hold rational conversations. And in the novels they are regarded by condescending schemers as sub-humans that can be easily manipulated to start havoc. The shared logic in these narratives is to characterise the rioters as mad – a description that also pops up in *Saturday* and *Wish You Were Here* when narrators attempt to account for the quest to break from ideals. The rioters are defined as subjects of absolute otherness excluded from the idealised imagination of an organic Britain, and only capable of resorting to animalistic, unreasonable acts of violence. But it is worth noticing that such an obsession with locating madness is bound to elicit a series of questions: if mad men are responsible for the urban destruction, where do they actually come from? Why are the mad men invisible before and immediately after the riots? According to the grand narrative of Britishness, the mad men create riots, not the other way around – just as Perowne would always perceive Baxter as the intruder, and never considers the factors transforming Baxter into a criminal. More importantly, moral narratives assert that the symptom of madness is only triggered by external/accidental factors like the Duggan case and the 2008 Financial Crisis. Drawing from such an assumption, the outburst of madness should have nothing to do with the Britishing mechanism. But the unavoidable question is: is this argument convincing enough to justify the proposition that violent London's 2000-year history of revolts is no more than a

consequence of the unexpected production of madness based on a series of pure accidents? Towards the end of *Wish You Were Here*, the same question also haunts Jack Luxton when he tries to find out the source of madness in his family. The beach vacation with Vera, as well as Tom's escape from the farmhouse, is always regarded by Jack as a sort of irrational gesture that comes out of nowhere. But when Jack finds himself also repeatedly caught in a surge of madness to break from ideals, it seems no longer justifiable to view the production of madmen as a pure accident.

A closer look at the differences between Slovo's novel and verbatim theatre may help answer the above-mentioned questions and clarify the connection between the idealised imagination of Britishness and the production of madness. Particularly important in *Ten Days* are those details that pointedly distinguish the fiction from the reality. One of these is the comparison between Mark Duggan and Ruben, whose accidental death is the fuse for riots in the novel. Slovo's portrait of this key character turns out to be full of political significance. In real life, the reason the death of Duggan could become the slow-burning fuse was largely the uncertainty of his image in various reports. On the one hand, some of his basic information was repeatedly broadcast to the public – born and lived on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham, and shot in the chest by a police marksman whilst he sat in a stationary minicab. On the other hand, as Clive Bloom observes in his report, Duggan's history remains a 'mystery', as he was said by the police to be a 'major player' in the local drug trade, while to his family he was a good father and family man 'painted by the police with planted disinformation as a notorious gang member' (2012: 77). In neither of these descriptions does Duggan seem to have anything to with the conception of 'madness', but the moral narratives have clearly focused on stressing this central figure's role as a misfit in the idealised community.

The fictional doppelganger created by Slovo is without any question a 'mad' man who has to rely on medication to survive in an everyday-life space dominated by the rule of reason. As it turns out, Ruben's appearance in the novel exposes the tension of surviving as an embodiment of insanity within this estate. In all senses, the character's existence is threatening to political ideals, especially in the eyes of the two uniformed policemen who represent the lasting enforcement of the order of reason. The social

compact concerning the tacit balance between corporeality and spatiality is severely compromised by Ruben's performance:

> he would cut a swathe down the middle of the market as if he
> was completely alone in an empty space, windmilling his arms
> and slapping open palms against his chest so hard it sounded like
> a gun going off. (Slovo 2016: 23)

All the people in the market (the policemen new to the community as well as the local residents) are more or less affected and shocked by the mad man's appearance. Those who are still talking to each other suddenly shift their attention, uttering 'trouble' (23). The lack of communication between language and body has long set a boundary between madness and reason, with the latter occupying a notably dominant position and disciplining individuals' everyday-life actions in an organic Britain. However, the function of everyday-life verbal communication within the community is, at this particular moment, overwhelmed by the irrational movement of Ruben's body, in that the only words that can burst from him ('option, action, traction, mischief') do not make any sense (22-23). In *Madness and Civilisation*, Michel Foucault contends that 'modern man no longer communicates with the madman … There is no common language; or rather, it no longer exists; the constitution of madness as mental illness bears witness to a rupture in a dialogue' (2002: xii, 12-14). These corporeal gestures by Ruben, therefore, attest to a detachment from the use of language as a disciplinary force of confinement. But similar to the post-British interpretation of *Saturday*, what really draws attention here is not Slovo's character's eccentric behaviour, but how this embodiment of madness collides with the idealised image of the state:

> We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness,
> by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their
> neighbours, and communicate and recognise each other through
> the merciless language of non-madness; to define the moment of
> this conspiracy before it was permanently established in the
> realm of truth, before it was revived by the lyricism of protest.
> (Foucault 2002: xi)

Foucault describes how the modern abhorrence of madness bears much resemblance to the sweeping fear of leprosy across Europe. It is no coincidence that the strategy of tackling mad men within the framework of political narrative has more or less been derived from the imprisonment of leprosy in the western history. As Foucault observes in *History of Madness*, the fear of leprosy disappeared from the Western world towards the end of the Middle Ages, and those leprosaria were gradually shut down in the margins of community. About four centuries later, many of the abandoned localities were opened again to imprison 'a new incarnation of disease' and perform 'renewed rites of purification of exclusion' (2006: 1). The method of special isolations was widely applied to the treatment of insanity, and was taken as natural by people (and intellectuals) at that time. But with a closer examination of the disappearance of leprosy, the history suggests the political violence hidden behind the 'Great Confinement' of madness, and how it has been turned into a strategy for constructing and restoring an organic community. One more point is worth noting in terms of the prototype of leprosy confinement. As a consequence of the widespread fear of leprosy, the use of confinement in Medieval Europe was developed into a political strategy of space. As Foucault puts it, spatial isolation is not intended to suppress leprosy, but to 'keep it at a sacred distance', to 'fix it in an inverse exaltation' (2006: 4). This custom is inherited not only because it signifies a 'distance' in the physical sense, but also because it imposes on the confined a repulsive image and value (Foucault 2006: 4). By producing an overwhelming rejection of this image, the organicist strategy succeeds in justifying the majority's imagination of space. As long as some space is proscribed as uninhabitable or only belonging to the non-human, it is very 'natural' to regard the rest as idealised territories of reason. An aspect of otherness is thus fully exposed in this method of identification. Although the idealised imagination of an organic community keeps advocating a positive means of construction, what has always supported its self-justification and self-expansion is a logic of exclusive inclusiveness.

The other point that should not be neglected relative to Foucault's understanding is the change of targets of confinement. Mad men are not the only ones to be thrown into confinement after the lepers. In 1657 the General Hospital (Hôpital Général) was founded in France and marked the starting point of confining the poor (Foucault 2006: xiii). This phenomenon prevailed across Europe (including England and Scotland),

and the subject of confinement gradually expanded from the diseased to almost anyone characterised by the imagined community as morally corrupted: the underclass, prostitutes, political radicals, and homosexuals. In response to this period of confinement, Foucault's perception is precise: the General Hospital of Paris is 'not a medical establishment', but a sort of 'semi-judicial structure', 'an administrative entity which, along with the already constituted powers, and outside of the courts, decide, judges, and executes' (2006: 37). Thus the political hint of the confinement of madness becomes a noticeably expanded definition of otherness – a significant transition from the diseased to the other in the moral sense. That is, the act of entering the isolated space itself marks banishment from the moral narrative of the imagined community, as if only such a deprivation of physical freedom can stop the moral plague.

To relate the tradition of confinement to the spatial strategy of Britishness is by no means to assert that British people only passively adopted the method from the Continent. In fact, the origins of confinement in the British Isles are even older. As noted by Foucault, 'an [English] act of 1575 covering both "the punishment of vagabonds and the relief of the poor" prescribed the construction of *houses of correction*, to number at least one per county' (2002: 40). Most of these houses of confinement have disappeared, and the few preserved are no more than a scene for tourists and academics to view and appreciate as solid proof of the advancement of civilisation. But the truth might turn out to be a total 'disillusionment' for progressivists, as the politics of space crystallised in the metaphorical form of houses of confinement (or madhouses) still lingers in the rebuilding of an organic British community. With the advance of policing techniques and the demand for individuals' constant (re)identification with the imagined community, the expansion of the British ideal has witnessed a continuous production of mad men, and the use of a modern version of confinement has never stopped. Before the outburst of riots in *Ten Days*, a seemingly elegiac description of the Lovelace Estate (later becoming the central spot that stimulates the riots) proves to be the first hint that the mad men have long been controlled and confined in an invisible madhouse:

> the estate (Lovelace) was the last stand of a twentieth-century
> modernist dream which years of neglect had turned into a
> dangerous nightmare of piss-stained crevices. It was scheduled

for demolition and boards were beginning to take the place of windows and front doors, while neighbourliness was being replaced by long farewells or midnight flits… a neon bulb winked out on the walkway opposite. Another that the council would not bother replacing; darkness was heralding the end of the Lovelace. (Slovo 2016: 4)

The made-up Lovelace community looks like an ordinary neighbourhood in Britain despite its notable traces of dilapidation. But unlike other neighbourhoods basking in the light of modernism, Lovelace has always been enveloped by boundless darkness, suggesting its status as an invisible space in the grand narrative of Britishness. This notion of invisibility is accompanied by not only a separation from the idealised British community, but also an endurance of police surveillance. In this sense, the necessity of confinement (invisibility) and the political need of constant surveillance (visibility) actually exposes the essential trick (and the self-contradiction) of narrating an imagined community. Such a community abhors the idea of madness, but it does not reject, and cannot survive without, the knowledge of the existence of madness. In *The Riots*, a narrator who lives in a similar neighbourhood keeps ranting about the experience of being treated as 'madman':

I was quite resentful of the police because of the way I'd been stopped and searched… my father was badly beaten up by officers after a stop and search, and he was fifty-seven, he wasn't the stereotypical person who might be a trouble maker, he was just driving his lorry along and got stopped, they laid into them… and of course there is the way in which it's handled, the lack of respect and dignity, we hear about, you know, inappropriate language being used, ugh excessive force. (Slovo 2011: 37)

The controversial stop-and-search method begs questions but has never been seriously revised.[12] Those who have been searched (or simply aware of the possibility of being

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[12] In Jan 2018 Sadiq Khan, the London mayor, announced that there would be a 'significant increase' in stop and searches by police. Although these searches could cause tension, the mayor stressed that they are a 'vital tool for police to keep the community safe'.

stopped) can sense clearly that they are living in a space not so different from those notorious houses of confinement – a space where individuals must be ready to be checked all the time. Within such a political space, there is no shared medium (language v. body, reason v. madness) for the discipliner and the disciplined to renegotiate their political power. In order to keep the mad man under control, each action of the disciplined must be presented in a panoramic way – an organicist philosophy (to be further discussed in Chapter Four) that can find its source in the Hobbesian politicising of the body in the seventeenth century. At the same time, the existence of an authoritative observer is not to be questioned in the contemporary representation of Britishness. By forcing the confined madmen to imagine an omnipresent observer, the strategy can ensure an internalisation of the act of self-disciplining and turn it into an instinct. This strategy is crystallised in Ruben's confrontation with the police. When the two policemen approach and ask Ruben to remove his face covering 'under Section 60 of the Public Order Act', the mad man can only respond to the request with a repeated utterance showing limited vocabulary (Slovo 2016: 23-25). Abbreviations and police terms constitute a narrative different not only from the body language of Ruben but also from the language used by the rest of the Lovelace community – another literary example of the clashes between placed experience and placeless imagination. Such exclusive terms recur throughout the text (especially in those mechanical dialogues and reports by institutes of administration and the police), as if the confusion produced by the use of language itself is important to the authority and efficiency needed to confine the mad man. In Slovo's fiction, Cathy Mason, the liaison between the police and the local community, has also witnessed the stop-and-search. According to Mason, there is one thing in the first confrontation between Ruben and the police that should not be neglected – the crowd of local onlookers express 'mounting fury' towards the police force, crying out 'leave him alone' (24). Before the tension between the madman and the police escalates, the local residents also keep a distance from Ruben – he will not hurt anyone if 'he doesn't feel threatened' (23). But when the moment of confrontation starts, they cannot help but instantly identify with that embodiment of madness. These residents are fully aware that they are not so different from Ruben and that all of them are imprisoned and closely watched in this big community of confinement. The quick reaction to the tension between the watcher and the watched indicates that the invisible mad men

already exist before the riots, and so does an extra-judicial mechanism for keeping the undesirable from the sight of idealised Britain.

When the riots finally break out, the established conception of madness almost immediately contributes to the moral narrative of Britishness. When asked about his perception of riots, the Prime Minister said, 'this is not about poverty; it is about culture – a culture that glorifies violence, shows disrespect to authority and says everything about rights but nothing about responsibilities' (Cameron 2011). Similarly, Michael Gove, Secretary of state for Education, attempted to expose the inner life of the 'feral underclass' to reveal its essential inhumanity:

> it is from that underclass that gangs draw their recruits, young offenders institutions find their inmates and prisons replenish their cells. These are young people who, whatever the material circumstances which surround them, grow up in the direst poverty – with a poverty of ambition, a poverty of discipline, a poverty of soul. (Gove qtd. in Porter 2011)

Mark Easton, the BBC Home Editor, offered a quite accurate conclusion on various responses – 'the word underclass with its connotations of fecklessness and criminality… is back' (2011). The 2011 London riots have been considered by many politicians and commentators to be closely intertwined with the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. And the public's mounting concern about the underclass overlaps with the image of the madman in the fiction. Regarding the floods of moral narratives, the claim of the return of the feral underclass actually confirms that the British people are not completely unaware of the existence of the madman within the organic state. On the contrary, what makes London (as well as the state) truly shocked is not 'madness' itself, but the fact that the mad men break out from confinement. Re-entering the forbidden space of an idealised Britain, these embodiments of insanity, regardless of the moral and judicial surveillance, resort to an amoral, animalistic carnival of violence to redefine urban space. With the mad men breaking violently away from confinement and appearing in the narrative of Britishness, many critics have come to the conclusion that disorder would seriously affect the shared imagination of British community, initiating a contemplation about the mechanism that strengthens itself

from the production of violence. In his review of the 1981 Brixton riots investigation, Baucom points out that Scarman fears 'a comprehensive infection of the general populace in which future viewers, impelled by whatever reasons, will abandon their homes, take to the streets, and… the British people will no longer be distinctly separated from the plague in the street' (1999: 192). In *Ten Days*, the fear becomes reality in Jayden, a teenager who always 'keeps on the rails' in everyday life (Slovo 2016: 101). When witnessing the riot, Jayden expresses in the form of internal monologue an unbearable impulse to shift from reason to madness:

> To be here. In this moment. With all these people. Some of whom he knew. Some of whom he didn't. All of them flushed by the heat, and the fires, and not knowing what was going to come next, and yes, now felt it flooding through him he could name it for himself: exhilaration … all those people ... who were always telling him who he was and what he had to do. Fuck them. Fuck their rules. Fuck their prohibitions. (Slovo 2016: 101)

This fear is also expressed in David Lammy's lamentation after the riots: countless youngsters failed the (moral) test when they read through those infectious Blackberry messages that summoned the long-restrained citizens to break out and terrorise the whole city (2012: 29). However, such statements reveal an incomplete understanding of the signification of madness in constructing the British ideal of how the people should behave in public space. Whilst the importance of confinement is stressed, it would be amiss not to realise that a well-designed display of a mad man constitutes an indispensable part of the British strategy of self-healing.

In further analysis on madness, Foucault observes that 'confinement, in its most general form, is explained, or at least justified, by the desire to avoid (moral) scandal' (2002: 62). But he also adds that among all the evils that could be seen as scandals and that must be hidden from the public, madness is an exception:

> it was doubtless a very old custom of the Middle Ages to display
> the insane…During the classical period, madness was shown, but
> on the other side of bars; if present, it was at a distance, under the

eyes of a reason that no longer felt any relation to it and that would not compromise itself by too close a resemblance. Madness had become a thing to look at: no longer a monster inside itself, but an animal with strange mechanisms. (2002: 64-66)

Compared with the insistence on confinement during the pre-rioting stage, the display of a mythologised image of the mad man is motivated neither by the desire to punish, nor by a sense of moral obligation to change. The key role in a display of 'the spectacle of a zoo' is not the radical rioter but the observer of madness (Slovo 2011: 58). What was missed in the analyses by both Scarman and Lammy is the British state's increased capacity to use modern media to display, and more importantly, mythologise the mad man. In *Ten Days*, Banji, an undercover police officer working in the Lovelace, accidentally becomes the leading character in the state's display of madness. The double identification of this character can explain why he presents a very unstable image before and during the riots. With his constant crossing between two narratives (the warden and the madman in a confined neighbourhood), Banji shows explicit signs of self-contradiction throughout the novel. In Ruben's confrontation with the police in the market, Banji is the first one to notice that the behaviour of the mad man is bound to draw the police's attention. In terms of Banji's reaction to stop-and-search, the professional training he has received invokes an instinctive pursuit of order and rejection of eccentric behaviour. But it is also noticeable that the experience of undercover work allows Banji to sympathise with the mad man for being disciplined by an imposed spatial violence. Such a contradiction may explain why Banji leaves without saying a single word. Banji's involvement in the second confrontation between the police and Ruben results in the latter's death. Because of this, the undercover officer starts to alienate himself from the police and join the carnival of rioters. What proves utterly absurd is that this former policeman, a supposed protector of the established law and order, is selected to be the new iconic madman (after Ruben) in the state's grand narrative of riots. On the fourth day of the riots, one loop is broadcasted day and night on television:

the camera panned away from the shafts of metal that had once been a building to the street below... flames rising, youths

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throwing more fuel on a bonfire… with a change of angle, the camera stayed on a man who had separated himself from the group and, as the camera stayed on him, looked straight at it… this man didn't bother to hide his face. He looked, dead centre, at the camera, smiled and raised an arm… threw a burning bottle. And that man was Banji. (Slovo 2016: 161)

If Ruben can be seen as representing the madman in confinement in the pre-rioting period, Banji undoubtedly moves to centre stage in the strategy of displaying madness after the riots break out. At one point, a police officer explains why it is extremely important to seize the power to manipulate the narrative of madness: 'once the press picks its face of evil, they never let go' (Slovo 2016: 167). This comment suggests the political metaphor hidden in the collective act of displaying madness. As the urban riots violently destroy and redefine the order of space, the majority of Londoners – not just residents and shopkeepers, but even the police force that is supposed to maintain order – are absent from those violent scenes. In sharp contrast, the rioters occupy the disrupted street space and show a terrifying image of madness. While the rest of the city – still ruled by reason – is shocked, the smile of the mad man conveys a sort of satisfaction that cannot be understood by the rational. The set of camera shots of Banji offers an identifiable face for the organic state. As madness finds its location in that particular face, the observers' fear about violence and disorder would persuade them to distance themselves from the insane. Hence a reestablishment of division between reason and madness, order and disorder. The display of madness could (and actually did) spread like a plague in 2011 and made the situation even worse. But the generated fear of disorder also justified shocked citizens' instant embrace of the order of reason and certainty – a ritualistic process of identification also experienced by the Luxtons in Swift's novel. This transition of attitude ensures that the multitudes' response to the urban revolts end up being a moral narrative of 'the people'. As Baucom has pointed out, such a change of attitude could also be seen in the 1980s Brixton riots, revealing the repeated trajectory of the British state to restore its originary, peaceful status after disorders (1999: 191-194).

A similar manipulation and public display of madness takes place in *Kingdom Come*. Christie, the murderer of the narrator's father, is like Ruben a character with mental

problems. A group of local elites (like Maxted and Sangster) loathe the impact of consumerism on reason and morality, foreseeing that the epidemic of madness will eventually lead to violence. In order to return to an idealised past, these elites do not try to uncover the root of madness as Richard's father does, but encourage Christie to shoot people in the Metro centre and then expose and demonise the mad man in public. The display of Christie, these characters believe, can turn the moral narrative around and contribute to rebuilding an idealised community. From this perspective, bringing the image of the mad man to the audience (the local residents) is a vital step of self-healing for idealised Britishness. The suddenly shortened distance between the insane and the observer (in the latter's imagination) gives rise to a political shock (about the violence, and even the existence of the insane), which makes it much easier for the state apparatus to get the 'consent of the public' to use extreme methods against mad men. In the summer of 2011, the desperate appeal of many citizens (especially local shopkeepers) to the state to end the riots as soon as possible was an important factor that made the deployment of rubber bullets possible. Moreover, many citizens' attitudes towards the police shifted swiftly during the riots. Before the riots start, the sympathy of the public still swing between the mad man (Ruben) and the police (agents of Operation Trident). But after watching the selected performance of madness, a sergeant who appears in Slovo's story describes with pride the citizens' attitude towards the police:

> People were like y'know waving at us and saying stay safe tonight lads and y'know and good luck and all that, so you're thinking well you're representing them aren't you, ultimately that's what we're there to do, to protect the decent people. (Slovo 2011: 32)

The stress on only protecting the 'decent' people suggests that the moral test has started way before the end of the riots. Blythe also records a similar transition in *Little Revolution*. After seeing dozens of mounted police come past and head up towards the epicentre of the riots, a Turkish shopkeeper stops his complaint ('police soft') at once and starts praising: 'I like police now, good good, good police boy' (Blythe 2014: 16). As the rioting mad men are regarded as losing their humanity and the capacity of reason, the shame elicited by such violence and destruction is not expected to be felt

by those rioters. In other words, rational observers are the ones to be driven by the sense of shame and distance themselves from the irrational. Therefore, via the strategy of displaying the mad man, the moral trajectory of narrating the riots once again points to a natural return to order and reason. Nevertheless, the strategy of showing evil to the public is double-edged. After all, the destruction caused by the appearance of madness cannot be overlooked. In order to complete the process of healing, it is requested in the post-rioting stage that the authority of moral narratives be re-established and the mad men be sent back to confinement. A re-canonisation of moral narratives depends on a gesture of reallocating narrative power to those judged to be moral and rational, and on the act of punishing the amoral and insane. Therefore, among various methods of canonisation, a strong enforcement of law and discipline mark the return of order. In *The Riots*, Greg Powell, a lawyer who used to defend rioters in the 1980s, makes a prediction even before the trials: 'experience tells us that what happens almost by reflex, is that the criminal justice system reacts in a very punitive way to send out a very clear message that you shouldn't be engaged in rioting' (Slovo 2011: 46). One rioter expresses his confusion and dismay when a sentence that would be six months under normal circumstances is extended to twenty-four months. But the only response he gets from the judge is: 'I know the sentences are very controversial, but I would think that the public would expect the sentences to be exemplary' (2011: 48). 'To be exemplary' reveals that this is in effect a political performance. In a sense, the sentencing and punishment constitute 'rites of passage' – not just for the disciplined rioters, but also for post-rioting Britain. Through different stages of the rites of passage, the state's narrative officially calls off the short carnival (what Giorgio Agamben calls a redemption of 'political bodies' in Chapter Four), and the city is enabled to re-identify with the restored order of space and morality. Since the ritualistic performance provides a renewed endorsement of a moral narrative, the mad men can once again be legally sent back to confinement.

There is only one exception to the supposedly perfect strategy of confinement in Slovo's novel – Banji's mysterious suicide before he is caught by the police. Now that the country has been bombarded by the image of Banji, the sentencing of this alpha madman would be more convincing for the state to claim that the idealised community has been completely restored. However, the expectation of an exemplary punishment and the necessity of keeping Banji's identity secret create a real dilemma for the

government. After all, the punishment of this special individual means an inevitable exposure of his former identity as a police officer, which not only undermines the moral authority of Britishness, but also exposes the British strategy of systematically producing, confining, and displaying madness. Being turned into an iconic image of insanity, Banji, due to his double identity, resists disappearing (as in the state's strategy) in the post-rioting community. For an imagined community that is still healing, it is extremely difficult to justify the continuation of confining and disciplining the insane, and in the meantime to accept the existence of a policeman who voluntarily chooses to become a mad man. In this respect, Banji's suspicious 'suicide' towards the end of the riots displays a mixed melancholia of rationality and absurdity. Even the police in the novel admit that 'there are injuries visible on his face and torso, and the site (of his death) was too messy to come to a reliable judgement on the probability of a struggle prior to death' (Slovo 2016: 311). Considering that his very existence constitutes a serious loophole in the state's strategy of re-establishing a binary discourse of reason and madness, the character's too-well-timed suicide makes readers wonder if the seemingly 'perfected' strategy is actually vulnerable and can only remain intact by creating such a convenient disappearance.

After the mad man's journey back to confinement, what is worth noticing is the rebuilding of the imagined community by the rest of the citizens – who have passed 'the moral test'. In *Riot City*, Bloom describes a very political image after the riots: a 'broom army' walked onto the streets to sweep away rubbish in a 'Blitz Spirit' – what appeared in their eyes was 'the worst scene (like a war zone) since the Second World War' (2012: 84). Once again, these two grand narratives of British trauma are linked together by their shared strategy of self-healing. From the destruction of urban space to the relocation of mad men, organic Britishness follows such a logical thread and leads its subjects to rebuild an idealised state via the strategy of exclusive inclusiveness. Like the rioters found guilty in court, even 'innocent' citizens find it hard to identify with idealised Britain again after returning to their community. The last chapter in *Ten Days* takes place 'one year after the end of the riots', and Cathy Mason returns with her daughter Lyndall to a refurbished Lovelace to celebrate the rebirth of their home. On the one hand, they are quite delighted with some conspicuous changes: the High Street is already 'abuzz with changes', with burnt-out shops taken over and refurbished to sell the kind of goods that the old residents of the Lovelace

could never have afforded (Slovo 2016: 339). But at the same time, the sight of two lines of police gives Lyndall 'claustrophobia' – 'it felt nothing like going home' (338). It seems that organic Britain not only heals itself, but also expands the scope of moral confinement and disciplining. Due to the fear of madness, the operation of Britishness strategy becomes more and more obvious and unstoppable. In the meantime, individuals only find it more difficult to tell what locality they have returned to – the bright paradise of ideal and reason, or the invisible house of confinement?

> In the history of unreason, it [confinement] marked a decisive event: the moment when madness was perceived on the social horizon of poverty, of incapacity for work, of inability to integrate with the group; the moment when madness began to rank among the problems of the city. The new meanings assigned to poverty, the importance given to the obligation to work, and all the ethical values that are linked to labour, ultimately determined the experience of madness and inflected its course. (Foucault 2002: 59)

Foucault's analysis of the political implications of confining madness is still of great value in interpreting organic Britishness in the post-rioting context. About fifty years ago, Huey Newton predicted that 'as the ruling circle continue to build their technocracy, more and more of the proletariat will become unemployable, become lumpen, until they have become the popular class, the revolutionary one' (Newton qtd. in Epps 1970). But as far as the 2011 London riots are concerned, the violent carnival launched by the underclass is not a response to Newton's call to revolution. As an inherent element of the state's strategy of self-rejuvenation, these revolts would not shake the political roots of the Britishness mythology in the first place. In the literary representations of the urban riots, embodiments of madness go through a closed cycle during the three stages of disturbance. This cycle of narrative could be read from the perspective of the Britishness strategy: the confinement of madness – the breakout of mad men – the (re)confinement of madness. A very incisive comment is recorded in *The Riots*: 'the riots were like one of those Rorschach blot tests in that everyone sees that – what they want to in them; so they were…an opportunity for everyone to rehearse positions that they already had' (Slovo 2011: 45). The sense of repetition and

steadiness suggested in this response is more of an irony to those commentators who believe that the riots might function as a social test and push problematic mechanisms to change a bit. As is revealed in these novels, the seemingly violent redefinition of urban space only results in a re-canonisation of a long existing British ideal. However, the four radical days in 2011 do expose the myth of an undying Britishness, and more significantly the political violence hidden in its strategy of systematically producing, confining, and displaying the madman.

3.2 The Tactic of Post-Britishness: The Performance of Bare Life

> Men being, by Nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this Estate, and subjected to the Political Power of another, without his own *Consent*. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his Natural Liberty, and *puts on the bonds of Civil Society* is by agreeing with other Men to joyn and unite into a Community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure Enjoyment of their Properties, and a greater Security against any that are not of it. (Locke 1990: 330-331)

> The camp is the 'nomos' of the modern… If the essence of the camp consists in the materialisation of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that a committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography. (Agamben 1998: 98)

As suggested in the previous section, the literary narratives of riots reveal that the British state's self-healing system is more than just a set of techniques of governmentality. The rebirth of an idealised British community after crises would be impossible without the continuity of its organicist structure, which not only

mythologises the originary (also imaginary) status of a community, but also makes it a moral obligation for all its subjects to constantly repeat what has been canonised in the imagined past. Such a structure, to a large extent, is not a contemporary invention but a canonical model that can be traced to British political philosophy in the seventeenth century. The 2011 London Riots, if viewed as crystallising a repeated strategy of Britishness, are more of a *natural* rejuvenation of organic state than, in Ballard's phrase, a mere 'street theatre' of madness and violence. The repeated attribution of the riots to the accidental dysfunction of (part of) the British system, triggering an eternal return to an idealised community, is an example of Britishness myths. Both Slovo and Ballard have created in their novels a group of amoral characters who tend to make use of urban riots to restore a political order of an imagined past. The appearance of such characters, however, does not necessarily attribute the functioning of 'strategy' entirely to the manipulation by certain ambitious schemers who are determined to recreate a lost paradise. In *Ten Days* and *Kingdom Come*, some characters could be blamed for the breakout of urban crisis. But what really draws the attention in these fictions is the mechanism that has been constantly producing these kinds of characters (the mad men and those making use of the occasional transgression of madness), and this has so far successfully escaped due criticism of structural violence. When the riots escalate in *Kingdom Come*, the Metro-Centre is set ablaze and turns into an 'altar' which all citizens can witness a violent redefinition of space. After the rioters, as well as those who detest but secretly nourish the violence, are sacrificed in a ritualistic way in the fire, what rises from the ashes of the building is the protagonist's dystopian prediction: 'one day an even fiercer republic would open the doors and spin the turnstiles of its beckoning paradise' (Ballard 280). A similar warning of the rebirth of an idealised community appears in *Ten Days*, and Slovo makes it clear that all survivors of the riots are fully aware that to embrace this rebuilt London is to relive a life of strict confinement. The Britishing strategy of creating a pure moral narrative to , at least in Slovo's and Ballard's works, seems not entirely successful. The riots have produced some 'unplanned remainders' that cannot be fully absorbed to legitimise the re-imagination of organic Britain. And it is these 'remainders' that make undertaking a post-British interpretation of urban riots possible.

To break from Britishness myths does not lead to a valorisation of those who commit 'violent shopping' as determined dissidents against the established order. Although the rioters in *Ten Days* and *Kingdom Come* are characterised as constantly making a gesture of confrontation, their actions and pursuits are not entirely at odds with the political principles they are supposed to subvert. As illustrated in Chapter Two, characters caught in the clashes between placed ideas and placeless ideals can easily turn into loyal narrators of Britishness myths. To pinpoint the cause of such a contradiction calls for an understanding of the state's nature of being organic, and more importantly of its connection with British political philosophy since Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and the adaptation of modern biopolitics.[13] For traditional organicist theorists, such as Rudolf Kjellén, the natural form of the state is organic, a 'super-individual creature' which is just as real as individuals, 'only disproportionately bigger and more powerful' in the course of its development (Kjellén 1924: 35). In this sense, the nature of civil society is marked by its superiority to and a *de facto* independence from individuals' lives, possessing its own 'spirit' and 'interest'. In the analysis of the rise and fall of modern biopolitics since the twentieth century, Roberto Esposito observes that the (nation-)state has actually been regarded as 'a form of life' that has a set of 'instincts' and 'natural motives' – no longer a political form that is believed to have been created by social contracts (Esposito 2008: 16-17). This biopolitical aspect of Britishing strategies emerges not only in the literary representations of the 2011 riots. If we take a second look at Henry Perowne's monologue at the beginning of *Saturday*, the narrator has already noticed that the British state is in effect an organic being. The continuity of this harmonious space, according to Perowne, largely depends on its citizens' repetition of an originary system. In other words, the subjects inside the organic framework do not have the (narrative) power to decide how to manage an imagined community. On the contrary, the organic state requires all citizens, for the sake of their own well-being, to prioritise a mechanism that naturalises the pilgrimage to an idealised past (the function of organicist repetition will be further discussed in Chapter Four).

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[13] Despite the obvious antagonisms between Hobbes and Locke, both philosophers actually shared a political interest in the making of an idealised order that (pre-)determines the way all subjects in an organic state should perform. In other words, their disputes can be seen as a polemic over what should be canonised as the natural form of state, not the existence and the legitimacy of such a form.

In the urban riots portrayed in the novels and verbatim plays, a temporary disorder does not, as Lord Scarman suggested in his report, spread like an uncontainable plague that would eventually lead to a total destruction of British community. On the contrary, the organic state automatically switches on the mechanism of self-healing to protect the shared interest of the community – the established order of space and morality in this case. As a result, the upheavals, initially presumed to be a blow to the idealised imagination of Britishness, end up being instantly absorbed by the organic state's narrative power. The political logic behind this strategy testifies to the fact that the capacity to revive Britishness is highly dependent on its organic nature. In the process of creating and confining madness, the repeated canonisation of the state's moral narrative should not be restricted to any individual's act. Instead, the mechanism of revitalisation seems to be 'consciously' driven by the organic state itself as a super-individual creature. Unlike other organic lives, the recurrence of urban crisis and the cyclical structure of the strategy to *use* madness suggest that the imagined community may undergo fall and decline but can never die. Critical moments of riot in history have not witnessed the end of organic Britishness, and they have constituted turning points for the return of an imagined community. The repeated self-rebirth of Britishness, though contradictory to the classical definition of organicism, does not shake the organic framework deeply embedded within the British state. The myth of an undying British ideal, in effect, discloses the biopolitical nature beneath the imagined community's relentless advocacy of pluralism. What has been sustaining the existence of the super-individual being (the Britishness community) is the clashes among different groups of citizens fighting for the right of life and interest. Urban riots can be seen as a direct display of such conflicts, thus, as Kjellén argues, generating an internal tension that, under specific circumstances, can push those within the community into a powerful form of cooperation:

> in view of this tension typical of life itself… the inclination arose
> in me to baptise this discipline after the special science of biology
> as biopolitics; … in the civil war between social groups one
> recognises all too clearly the ruthlessness of the life struggles for
> existence and growth, while at the same time one can detect
> within the groups a powerful cooperation for the purposes of
> existence. (Kjellén qtd. in Lemke 2011: 10)

The 2011 London riots turn out to be one of these circumstances, for they have managed to stimulate different groups of subjects to swiftly fall into distinctive forms of binary opposition. The structural boundary between reason and madness, order and disorder, emerges as a tacit conspiracy between the state and the majority of its subjects (except those characterised as being 'mad'). The use of threats of violence to revitalise the state as a living creature is notable for repeated application in British history. The original construction of Great Britain, as Linda Colley observed in *Acts of Union and Disunion* (2014), would not have been possible without invoking its nations' fear of foreign intervention and of immediate war threats from the European continent (Colley 147-148). The right of life, as the theory of biopolitics suggests, is crucial to the continuity of a civil society. This principle did prove itself in that the two World Wars marked an unprecedented cohesion within the British state. In comparison, it is the absence of violent changes in recent history that has presented 'the most profound threats' to the union of an imagined British community, especially in the post-1945 years (Colley 148-149). The repeated occurrence of urban disturbances in Britain, therefore, is largely due to the fact that the British myth, since its origin, has been closely related to the state's assumed moral obligation to protect its people (cf. Hobbes 2000: 91-110; cf. Locke 1990: 330-349).

In his theory of the beginnings of civil society, John Locke also characterises the state as a political community, a union of subjects based on shared quests for safety and interest. Unlike modern thinkers' (Kjellén's, Carl Schmitt's, and Foucault's) biopolitical perspective, the Lockean understanding of the sovereign focuses on a social contract signed at an imagined originary point in the past. In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke points out that humans' acts of 'quitting the natural condition where humans could enjoy an absolute freedom and equality' is not entirely unreasonable (1990: 350). This is because 'he seeks out, and is willing to join in Society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general Name, *Property*' (Locke 1990: 350). The protection of property is the core of the Lockean definition of the social contract, and also a driving force that persuades subjects to join the community and transfer some of their rights to the sovereign. From an organicist perspective, the concept of the social contract might be at odds with the framework of

biopolitics. In the London riots, however, the state's effective manipulation of subjects into a cooperation against violence indicates that universalist organicism and the Lockean idea of the function of civil society are well combined to legitimise an ahistorical Britishness. As an organic being, the *British community* cannot rule out the possibility that the communities within it have different and even mutually exclusive interpretations of 'interest'. The conflicts between the unanimous quest for (idealised) *Interest* of the state and individuals' varied definitions of *interests* inevitably create an unstable and unpredictable oscillation between competition and cooperation. But whenever a critical crisis of Britishness arrives, the protection of property immediately becomes the only legitimised definition of *Interest* that justifies the rebirth of organic state and the exclusion of otherness.

The integration of the Lockean conception of state into the narrative of Britishness implies that although property is objective, a strong moral sense is imposed upon it. Such a transformation of object into moral ideal can explain why various narratives (addressing the issue of racial conflicts and the expansion of policing, and so on) could be immediately silenced by the images of looting in 2011. In *Little Revolution*, Alecky Blythe presents two different paths to rebuilding the British community after the riots. The first one is in the story of Sadie and Kate. Both characters are parents on the Pembury, and their kids, suspected to be involved in lootings, are arrested by the police. In a conversation titled 'Let's Meet Again', Blythe shows her audience a familiar trace of optimism that usually rises out of the ashes of disorder and disillusion:

> Kate: I'm surprised I don't know you actually.
> …
> Sadie: Yeah… we need to um start a parents' campaign or a campaign for all kids like now.
> Kate: We definitely do because right now, up until now there hasn't been a voice.
> Sadie: Well Let's start having regular, let's start, let's get together… and pull other people in.
> Kate: Yeah definitely. (Blythe 2014: 54)

This dialogue reveals that the two characters share a living space, but one that is far from being a genuine community. Such a division between 'locality' and 'space of community' emerges in different stages of the riots. This is often ignored in the state's grand narratives, but the distinction between place and space proves to be a crucial factor in the diagnosis of organic Britishness (cf. Baucom 1999: 18-19). As suggested in the title of Blythe's play, the word 'revolution' is not chosen to refer to riotous acts, but to a potential reflection upon the making of community crystallised in conversations like Sadie's and Kate's. Displaying the spectacle of madness enables the state to unite its subjects in a shared interest of property, which adds to the moral narrative of the riots a notable sense of exclusiveness. Now that a response to such a *natural* appeal is required, certain individuals' personal interests can be sacrificed if assessed to be jeopardising the state's fulfilment of its prioritised obligation. Kate's complaint in the play reveals a frustration at being subjected to such an obligation: 'the riots seemed to have suited the police so amazingly well, as they've now managed to come in and…blanket arrest, digging for evidence afterwards and it's absolutely shocking' (Blythe 2014: 53). What shocks the characters is not just the political tension marked by the upgrade of policing. The Lockean conception of property, along with its logical connection to the legitimacy of civil society, is again placed at the centre of a collective narrative, providing the warranty for the expansion of state's power. As a consequence, there's no voice during the riots to question the state of exception, because 'people are not interested' (Blythe 2014: 54). From this perspective, Blythe's emphasis on the revolution's being 'little' suggests a mixture of banter and critique. In Kate and Sadie's second meeting, 'eighty people put their names down to be active campaigners', but nobody shows up 'when it comes to doing something' (77). The two characters' initial proposal of 'meeting again' is more than just a call for justice for their own children, it is also a direct response to a lack of real connection within the community. But in the end, Sadie has to admit that 'if nobody's interested then I'm not interested either because there's no point' (77). The two characters' marginalised narrative touches upon the counteractive interplay between individuals and *people* in the rebirth of organic Britain – the latter, representing a moral superiority, always takes the lead. This is by no means just a recent phenomenon. In his analysis of 'the right to govern' in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke held that 'men have no right to what is not reasonable, and to what is not for their benefit' (Burke 1999: 142). But as to what is for their benefit, Burke says

very clearly that 'the will of the many, and their interest must very often differ', and that the first duty of statesmen is to 'provide for the *multitude*' because it constitutes 'the first object' in all institutions (Burke 198). The term 'multitude' used in this statement is more equivalent to the idealised conception of *people* than a mere congregation of specific individuals. In the radical narratives of the 2011 riots, the imagination of *the people* and their shared *Interest* end up being the priority as the state's crisis expands. The frustration experienced by Kate and Sadie is suggestive of a concern that the rebuilding of British ideals is indeed a repeated pilgrimage to the strategies of seventeenth-century organicism.

The other paradigm of reconstruction is illustrated in the story of Siva, a local shopkeeper. It is on Sky News that Siva sees his business being looted, thus finding himself alienated from his neighbours and the imagined community as a whole. But the disillusionment about community is immediately replaced by hope and confidence in the post-riot phase, simply because the donation from local government helps refurnish Siva's shop. An interview titled 'Feeling Good' describes the opening day of Siva's new business. Since the community fulfils its duty to protect the property of the multitude, the moral connection between disillusioned characters and British ideals is rebuilt. Before Siva's shop is restored, first-person singular perspective dominates his narrative of a disrupted society. In his passionate speech during the opening day, in sharp contrast, almost all sentences begin with a proud utterance of 'we', indicating that the reconstruction of community is already accomplished, and the cohesion of union regained (Blythe 78-79). The opening day celebration can be seen as a ritual of the rebirth of organic community. One telling moment for the essence of British ideal is when, during the ceremony, a local resident puts some money into a collection bucket, arousing waves of cheering, and 'more money, money coming in, more money' (Blythe 92). This scene invokes local citizens' claim that 'it [the shop] is a bridge between communities' (Blythe 92). Their intention is to praise the social value of this shop, but the comment appears in a context that makes audiences wonder what is really holding the idealised community together.

In *Little Revolution*, Kate's and Sadie's disappointment at people's docile acceptance of the state of exception and the community's shared exhilaration about Siva's re-opened shop seem unrelated and are placed in juxtaposition throughout the verbatim

play. The endings of these two storylines, however, placed close to each other, send a strong message about the nature of organic Britishness. The different outcomes show how the organic state, based on Lockean ideas of property, manages to redefine its constituents (the multitude) by uniting those who identify with this ideal and expelling those who fail the moral test. Such a strategy is also accurately portrayed in Ballard's novel, for the protagonist discovers a very similar conspiracy between state and subjects during the investigation of his father's death:

> in the video camera tape edited by the staff, all the blood and tragic scenes are cropped out and edited. Only the heroic and calm part remain. The retreat is much like Dunkirk, everyone helping each other. That is the part that the community wishes to reserve for the present, while the nasty be left in the past. For the mall, there is no yesterday, no history to be relived, only an intense transactional present. (Ballard 2006: 46)

As these carefully-edited images are accepted by the local community as reality, Richard finally admits that 'today's politics and politicians are all about smiling and conning, and people are willing to be conned' (46). Just like the scene recorded in Blythe's verbatim play, all the characters, including Siva, his family, the locals, and the local MP, are delighted to take pictures inside and then in front of the new shop. The moment these pictures are taken, the images cling to the 'present' and turn into an idealised, ahistorical being, as if the riots had never happened. Nevertheless, with a close examination of the too-perfect operation of organicist strategy to absorb other narratives, we might have to ask if all unwanted 'remainders' have really been absorbed when the organic state rises again from the ashes of urban riots. In *Rebel Cities*, David Harvey argues that it is morally absurd for the grand narrative of the state to focus on a feral underclass while ignoring the problem that 'we live in a society where capitalism itself has become rampantly feral' (2012: 156). Harvey also articulates that 'the rioters are only doing what everyone else is doing, though in a different way – more blatantly and visibly, in the streets' (2012: 156). Harvey's interest in exploring the structure of violence rather than the morality/immorality of rioters can also be found in Ian Baucom's study of British riots:

It is worth considering the ways in which these [rioting] events open themselves to an additional understanding of newness, and in so doing, permit us to read the moment of urban rioting not as a 'black hole' in the time of the imperial afterward, but as a moment in which the affect-event – understood now as a principle of allusive repetition, as a certain uncertainty – takes place within a disciplinary structure whose orders and arrangements of meaning the riot re-collects and re-creates. (Baucom 1999: 194)

As well as the strategy of the state, the tactic of the street should not be neglected in the narrative of the 2011 riots. If the aim of Britishing strategies, as Baucom suggests, is to understate the repetition of a disciplinary structure, an exposure of the biopoliticalness of this structure is the key to a post-British interpretation of riots. These two concepts, strategy and tactics, as commonly understood, have their roots in military theories. Strategy is the identification of key campaigns that are necessary to accomplish the main objective – in most cases, winning the war. Operations are the level of planning that determine key battles necessary to win campaigns. Tactics are those techniques that are required to win battles. So the tactic is subordinate to the campaign, which is subordinate to the strategy. A redefined version of these two concepts, 'strategy' and 'tactic' constitutes the methodological basis of Michel de Certeau's everyday-life theory. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau posits tactics not as 'subordinate' to strategy but as 'opposed' to it (29-35). By linking 'strategies' with institutions and structures of power who are 'producers', de Certeau suggests that all individuals in a politicised space are consumers who use 'tactics' to act in environments characterised by strategies (de Certeau 1998: 4-9). In a further explanation of the interplay between strategy and tactic, the setting of strategy, notes de Certeau, is always the purview of power. Strategy presumes control. And the strategy is self-segregating, in the same way administration and management are self-segregating, setting itself up as a barricaded insider. As a result, strategic leaders, or the embodiment of political superstructure, become the Subjects, whereas the led and those defined as others become the Objects. In short, strategy presumes an 'in-group' that carries out campaigns. And according to de Certeau's refined defintion in 1998, a 'strategy' points to the calculus of force-relationship which becomes possible when

a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'. Political, economic, and scientific rationality is constructed on this strategic model, as a strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, or 'objects' of research) (de Certeau 1998: 22-28).

A 'tactic', in contrast, is a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (the spatial or institutional localisation), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. De Certeau characterises tactics in contrast to strategy as 'the purview of the non-powerful' (1998: 33-34). He understands tactics not as a passive and submissive subject of strategy, but as a voluntary adaptation to the environment, which has been created and constantly reshaped by the strategies of the powerful. Therefore, the logical link between these two conceptions determines that neither of them can exist without the company of the other. For instance, a committee of city planning may determine what streets there will be, but the local taxi drivers will find out how to navigate 'the lived reality' of those streets. This art of 'making-do' is what de Certeau calls bricolage, a process that often implies cooperation as much as competition. Later, in a more detailed description of the political and spatial nature of tactics, de Certeau affirms that the 'place' of a tactic belongs to the other (cf. 1998: 16-44). Some theorists, such as Agnes Heller, had already stressed that 'whatever it [a tactic] wins, it does not keep' (cf. Heller 1987: 33-38). This implies that strategies are a victory of space over time and that because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time, always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing' (cf. de Certeau 1998: xix, 29-30).

De Certeau is not the only theorist to notice the politicisation of individual subjects in urban space, and how their seemingly irrational actions are generated by such space. In *Out of Place*, Ian Baucom observes that modern riots are not constituted by randomness and madness, but are entirely politically purposive (1999: 196). Baucom's analysis, though, may be difficult to directly apply to interpretation of the atypical form of the 2011 London Riots. After all, to say that the rioters are 'politically purposive' would be an obvious romanticisation. According to what is unveiled in police investigations and literary representations, most violent activities are carried

out without distinct political appeal. It is for this reason that the organicist strategy manages to build up a connection between rioting and madness, thus justifying the act of wiping out the disorder from the collective memory. However, strategy is undermined by unpredictability, whereas tactic makes an ally of accident. Both strategy and tactic aim at nullifying the opposite's impact, but it is also noticeable that they do not interact in a turn-based pattern of gaming:

> although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances, these transverse tactics do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it. In this respect, they are not any more localisable than the technocratic (and scriptural) strategies that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models…strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces. (de Certeau 1998: 29-30)

As suggested in the previous chapter, the images of some English characters turn out to be uncertain, because their quest for placed experiences and placeless myths can be located in the same act. From the perspective of tactic, there is no distinct division of space in terms of the practice of these two concepts. On the contrary, there even arises the possibility that strategy and tactic can overlap with each other. They can be produced by the same physical gesture taking place in the same space, but generate ambiguous and even opposite political meanings. De Certeau's understanding of strategy and tactic can then invoke a new perspective on urban upheavals. Although his theory still regards the two as competitive rather than cooperative, de Certeau, unlike other Situationist thinkers, recognises that tactics do not have to be produced by subjects' conscious gestures against strategies. Rather, strategy and tactic are two sides of one coin, and neither of them can actually part from the other. Even when already-disciplined subjects devoutly obey the strategy, the gesture can still easily turn into an unintentional revolt against the political tyranny of an imagined community. Therefore, the moment when the state meets the street can be seen as a chance to perform political ambiguity. In the case of the British riots, this performance undoubtedly includes a panoramic display of the strategy of revitalising an idealised British imagination, and at the same time a post-British tactic that discloses the

structural violence long embedded in the organic ideal. In this regard, while the rioters do not intend to launch a revolution in the first place, their violent rewriting of urban space more or less enables a political reading of the street's narrative.

The tactics illustrated in Slovo's and Ballard's works mainly focus on criticising three features of organic Britishness: firstly, the nature of the state, and its ceaseless production of structural violence; secondly, the systematic creation of *bare life* and its role in the making of community; and thirdly, the establishment of states of exception and their connection with the rebirth of the organic state. In *The Riots*, a police officer claims that the responsibility of the government is to 'protect its people' (Slovo 2011: 32), the kind of statement so frequently repeated in everyday-life contexts that it has almost become a political cliché. Although the officer stops at saying 'protecting the people' and does not explain protecting people from what or whom, the left-out content turns out to be most informative about the nature of community. Likewise, in *Kingdom Come*, David Cruise is a TV star who has a huge influence in Brooklands, and gradually becomes the 'sovereign' figure in a community based in consumerism, madness and violence. In a conversation with the protagonist, Cruise makes a very honest and precise comment on the nature of an imagined community inside the British framework:

> Community? That's the word I *hate*. It's the kind of word used
> by snobby, upper-class folk who want to put ordinary people in
> their place. Community means living in a little box, driving a
> little car, going on little holidays. It means obeying the rules that
> 'they' tell you to obey… you don't agree? Frankly, the hell with
> you… I hate community. (Ballard 2006: 176)

This comment is more of a tactic of breaking up an idealised community than a strategy of building one, because it tells explicitly that the key to understanding the organic myth is to answer the question 'who are we' or 'who are the people'. Many theorists and philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Jacques Rancière, Jean-Luc Nancy, Slavoj Žižek, Eduardo Cadav, Giorgio Agamben, and Pierre Bourdieu, have responded to this question. The real content of 'we' and 'people' is always purposefully avoided in biopolitics, or simply taken for granted as common sense.

According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's definition in *The Body Politic*, sovereignty means the people govern themselves (*le peuple se gouverne lui-même*) (cf. Rousseau 2012: 7-10). People are regarded as a 'common' (*commun*) rather than a 'part' of the congregation of individuals or an 'Other' (*un grand Autre*). The existence of a 'common' is presented as a collective political will or sovereignty. In other words, people, as a concept of incorporation, can only exist as an entirety instead of being individuals. As soon as the *people* appears – the loose masses condensing – the individuals' original identities (if they ever existed in the first place, or are simply assumed later as opposed to the current status of being part of *people*) are suspended. Hence a contradiction emerges, as there are no people except subjects within the state. Only those living beyond the domain of sovereignty are the plural form of people. Therefore, the conception of the community or the people of a state is established upon a framework of 'fraternity and/ or terror' (*la fraternité-terreur*). While the state undergoes the process of thinking 'who are the people', it also decides 'who are not'. In 'This People Which Is Not One', Bruno Bosteels points out that 'whichever way we designated those who are either not the people or other than the people, there is no way of circumnavigating the fact that this category is constituted on the basis of a necessary exclusion' (Bosteels 2016: 2-3). In *Dissensus*, Rancière also stresses the importance of distinguishing *people* from *multitudes*: 'the *people* is a name of a political subject, a generic name for the set of processes of subjectivation' (2010: 85). On the use of 'people' in the identity politics of a community, Rancière notes that 'politics is the enacted discrimination of that which is placed under the name of the people, and politics always involves one people superadded to another, one people against another' (2010: 85).

Such an imagination of *people* is vital for the idealisation of state and citizenship in the thinking of Hobbes, Locke, and Burke, which still contributes to the making of Britishness in the contemporary literature. In the British context, the definition of people, abiding by the principle of (discriminative) exclusion, keeps changing. Before the 1981 Nationality Act, the British law of subjecthood, as Baucom observes in his analysis, was based on two principles. One is the validity of the *ius soli* (the law of soil), and the other is the insistence on a prescriptive law which is 'sternly devoted to custom and tradition' (Baucom 1999: 8-9). The first principle confirms that a person is included as a part of community as long as he or she was born on the sovereign land

and remains loyal to the lord. The second principle is even more significant to maintain an organic Britain. As far as the common law is concerned, the task for defenders of law is 'not to interpret but preserve it' (Baucom 1999: 9). These two principles work so well with each other that they have had a huge impact on the development of Britishness. In his commentary on the 1981 Nationality Act, Baucom argues that the law has in effect abandoned the tradition of land as well as the tradition of tradition, and that the definition of being British has changed from 'where were you born' to 'who were your parents' (Baucom 1999: 13-14). Baucom's interpretation of the change (place subordinated to time) implies that an explicit strategy of exclusion is implemented in the making of British community. With a closer examination of the construction of subjecthood before 1981, however, the logic of exclusion has always existed in the tradition of the land. In different historical contexts, the constitution of British soil has varied with the union or separation of nations. In the era of empire expansion, the British land, in the eyes of its subjects (especially those living in colonies), was more of an imagined being than a real place. Individuals' different locations in the British system largely decide the subjects' varied political imagination of the empire. Edward Heath's 1971 Immigration Act moved towards a more explicit exclusion by identifying certain territories as 'more authentically British than others' (cf. Baucom 1999: 13). Later in 1978, Margaret Thatcher, in a TV interview, used the word 'swamped' when addressing British identity in relation to immigration, which Matthew Perry described in 2014:

> we had been averaging 500-700 letters a week when, discussing immigration in a TV interview, Mrs Thatcher used the word 'swamped'. In the following week she received about 5000 letters, almost all in support, almost all reacting to that interview. I had to read them. We were swamped indeed: swamped by racist bilge. It's the things people confide in you when they think you're one of them that can be so revealing. (Perry 2014)

Before and after the Thatcherite modification of *ius soli* in 1981, all these examples reveal that if there has ever existed a canonical 'tradition' of constructing the imagined community, it is performed in the form of exclusive inclusion. In Ballard's fiction, the first day the protagonist arrives in Brooklands he witnesses on the street an outbreak

of 'religious cleansing', as a car outside a mosque is torched. After the whole area is blocked, a number of Asians, heads lowered, move through the silent crowd, guarded by the firemen and police (Ballard 2006: 10-11). As a woman in a jellaba stumbles and falls onto the ground and Richard raises hands to help, two men in St. George's shirts 'knock the protagonist off balance' and narrow eyes 'stare over his head' (Ballard 2006: 11). The contact with this woman instantly expels Richard from the rest of the community. According to the protagonist's own account of his first impression of Brooklands, he is deeply impressed by the fact that there are 'too many St. George's Crosses, racist graffiti, BNP and KKK signs on windows' (Ballard 16). During one of his early drives in the town, Richard imagines this community as marked by 'the red crusader's cross everywhere', which makes him assume that the people here are proud of their Englishness – a community sustained by some positive belief and feeling. However, it turns out that the motorway town only holds itself together by continuously vandalising those Asian shops and attacking all the ethnic minorities. In his talk with Richard Pearson, Maxted's assertion that 'the whole area is dangerous and waiting for trouble' seems to be a warning of the ensuing riots (Ballard 102). But the fact is, the community depicted by Ballard does not simply wait for trouble. Instead, its expansion calls for the active creation of conflicts within its space, because the continuity of the idealised community would be impossible without a conceptual division of 'we' and 'they'. Such a division is also noticeable in Perowne's conflict with Baxter in *Saturday*. The difference is that McEwan's protagonist, though rejecting the intrusion of Baxter, fails to realise that his first (voluntary) confrontation with the absolute other can also be seen as a situational gesture of 'inviting' the violence to his private territory. In the beginning of the novel, although Perowne deliberately downplays the tension with his wife and children, the occasional flashbacks of his conversations with rest of the family suggest that his Fitzrovia apartment, as an idealised space, is collapsing. In fact, it is after Baxter's intrusion that the whole family is spiritually reunited – a precise example of the performance of exclusion repeated in the form of organicist inclusion.

After the outbreak of the 2011 riots a large number of politicians and commentators were shocked by 'the return of feral underclass' and its role in disrupting the imagined community. This kind of response proved unnecessary, though, because the same group of subjects (or marginalised objects in the state's sense) had never been absent

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in the reconstructions of idealised community. In a 2006 York speech, Tony Blair was already admitting the existence of 'the deeply excluded':

> their poverty is not just about poverty of income, but poverty of aspiration, of opportunity, of prospects of advancement … we have to recognise that for some families, their problems are more multiple, much deeper and more pervasive than simple low income. The barriers to opportunity are about their social and human capital as much as financial…. In social exclusion we are also talking about people who either may not want to engage with services or do not know how to. (Blair 2006)

A comparison between this 2006 speech and London 2011 suggests that process of politicising the underclass does not really change. Also similar is the action taken by the British community to protect itself from *otherness*:

> running alongside the commitment to raise aspiration and encourage social participation were a number of initiatives addressing the problems of 'yob culture', the setting of a 'respectable agenda' and the implementation of zero tolerance measures against homeless people, who allegedly represented a public protection issue due to their tendency towards criminality. (Murie 2000: 116)

As is revealed by Alan Murie's analysis, there is a huge difference between the narrative of organic Britain and the actual measures taken by the organic community. In this kind of political speech (as in Blair in York and Cameron after the London riots), although the sovereign state always claims that the organic community must deal with the issue of exclusion, the choice of method remains the core of biopolitical Britishness. Since the making of Britishness strictly follows this principle of inclusive exclusion, each rebirth of the community in critical moments is in effect a straightforward presentation of the state's biopolitical nature.

The development of biopolitics in the early twentieth century was closely related to the rise and fall of Nazism. But since the 1970s, biopolitics has drawn even more attention, being understood by Michel Foucault as a new method of power, and a new political form of modernity. With an emphasis on (an absolute control of) subjects' lives in modern society, a structure of power comes into being by the employment of monitoring, rectifying, and optimising. Unlike the traditional sovereign that rests on the power of 'making subjects die' (a threat of death), biopolitical power, by means of modifying everyday life, is devoted to a philosophy of 'making the people live' (a support of life). Therefore, instead of wielding the power of suppression and destruction, the function of the state, in the modern sense, switches to 'a life administration' notable for being productive, disciplinary, and rule-driven (Foucault 2003: 242). The state's management of the Lovelace Estate in *Ten Days* can be seen as a typical example of biopolitical governmentality. In this fictional community, the residents' experience in schools and hospitals testifies to Foucault's idea that the function of law is largely replaced by a lasting enforcement of norms. By prioritising the protection of life, the community manages to transform its subjects in a standardised, disciplinary way into 'docile bodies' (cf. Agamben 1998: 10). This is exactly what happens in *The Riots*, as most of the characters' anxieties against rioters are notably affected by an already internalised knowledge of which acts would be assessed as being against the everyday-life norm. And in *Kingdom Come*, Cruise at one point discloses the reason why the subjects of his community are 'crazy for violence' even though their own bodies turn out to be the target of such violence:

> people want to be punished…. Punished and loved. But not like
> a fair-minded parent, more like a moody jailer, watching them
> through the bars. People need a little bit of abuse in their lives.
> Masochism is the new black, and always has been. The mood
> music of the future. They want discipline, and they want violence.
> Most of them want structured violence. (Ballard 2006: 147)

What should be noticed in Cruise's comment is the description of citizens as animalistic beings that must be tamed by violence. This depiction invokes the Aristotelian perception of the human as political animal (*zoon politikon*). For Plato and Aristotle alike, men are animals of state. The term 'political' is by no means

randomly inserted to point to a specific form of life. Rather, being political suggests a status of in-betweenness – being animal and non-animal at the same time. On the one hand, the process of being politicised distinguishes people from the category of animal. On the other hand, separating human from other life beings depends on the state's control and discipline of life. The birth of subjects of city-state thus can be seen a form of domestication, which, as noted by Agamben, is given the moral authority to constantly assess and even force all subjects to change their everyday-life behaviour (more detailed analysis in Chapter Four). Such an idealised relation between state and subjects can shed a light on Cruise's perception of his fellow citizens' acceptance of and even 'desire' for a systematic production of violence on themselves. This is because an unconditional embrace of the violence embedded within the framework of organic state is a premise of entering and staying in the community – a clear invocation of the Hobbesian idea that it is the bodies of all subjects that constitute the body of Leviathan. As to the Ballardian conception of a masochist multitude, Cruise's words make it very clear that when individuals are turned into docile bodies, their lives are seized and imprisoned within the political domain, which means their bodies are not only biological, but also politicised. This transformation constitutes the starting point of the construction of state as a super-organic being, and also allows the community to turn its decline into a ritual of rebirth.

As Slovo and Ballard have illustrated, the rise of biopower does not mark the threshold of modernity. Modern techniques of power actually coincide with traditional sovereign power, in that neither of them ever genuinely gives up the right over subjects' life and death. As far as English/ British political philosophy is concerned, the prototype of Leviathan can shed light on the link between subjects' bodies and the growth of idealised community. For instance, in *De homine*, Hobbes articulates that man's 'natural body' should be distinguished from his 'political body' – man is not only a natural body, but also 'a body of the city', that is, of 'the so-called political part' (Hobbes 1996: i-iii, 11-15). For the Hobbesian conception of state, it is precisely the body's 'capacity to be killed' that founds 'the natural equality of men and the necessity of the "Commonwealth"' (cf. Hobbes 1996: 93-95, Agamben 1998: 74). In his reading of Hobbes's political metaphor, Giorgio Agamben observes that the body of Leviathan is constituted by the bodies of all subjects, which means the origin of social contracting demands the absolute capacity of the subjects' bodies to be captured and disciplined

by the civil state (Agamben 1998: 74). In *Ten Days*, a similar biopolitical implication is crystallised in the death of Ruben and Banji, respectively representing images of madness before and during the riots. Ruben's radical body gestures caused by mental illness are immediately regarded by the police as a form of threat to the community. As a result, the 'mad man' is deprived of freedom in the following confrontation, which leads to the death/ disappearance of his uncontrollable body. As for Banji, after being characterised by the state's narrative as 'feral' and 'amoral' during the riots, he makes good use of his knowledge of the community's monitoring system, and escapes from the state's manhunt. Towards the end of the riots in Slovo's novel, the police eventually manage to pinpoint the location of this exiled body. When his corpse is laid bare on the table, all the surrounding police stand still and gaze at it. The scene indicates that Leviathan has regained control of this body in the biological as well as the political sense. It is at this particular moment that the state's self-healing ritual is finally accomplished. From this perspective, the myth of the British ideal is secretly founded upon a logical paradox: the more bodies (of others) that are killed, the healthier the 'population' of the organic community as a whole becomes. The disappearance of others not only allows 'us' to live a safer life, but also makes the body of community healthier. In this regard, while modern biopolitics, as Foucault suggests, advocates in all efforts an upgrade from 'make die' to 'make live', the violence upon subjects' bodies and lives has actually returned in the construct of the community.

This biopolitical paradox of life and death is pinpointed in the literary narratives of London disturbances, suggesting that the recurrence of urban riots is caused by the organic space's supreme power over its subjects' life. Drawing on Foucault's theory, Agamben points out that this kind of political violence is not produced by modernity, but has always existed as an ahistorical being (1998: 71-74). The different assumptions of the origin of such violence does not mean that Agamben's conception of biopolitics subverts Foucault's framework: both of their ideas are applicable to the narratives of riots. Foucault's assumptions mainly adopt the perspective of strategy to undertake a top-down study of the interplay between state and subject, whereas Agamben is more concerned about the possibility of tactical counteractions from within the community. For this reason, the latter's analysis aims at exposing the political violence long embedded within the fundamental structure of state. Biopolitics does not get rid of

violence in the context of modernity. Instead, violence has always been, and remains, an indispensable part of community. The theoretical aim of protecting life and the practical method of killing somehow have to find a way to reconcile and accommodate both actions within the implementation of organicist strategies to sustain the imagined community. And this is the second theme a tactical critique of riot narratives should address, because the key to demythologising Britishness myth is to reveal that the supreme power of an organic community lies in its capacity to delegate its subjects from the political category of people into 'bare life'. With the creation of bare life, or *homo sacer*, the community is able to wield its power over individuals' bodies, and unite in a non-illegal way the acts of protecting and ending lives. In this regard, the power of life has in effect parted ways with Foucault's idea of supporting subjects' lives, and has returned to the space of 'thanatopolitics' (Agamben 1998: 123).

In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben observes that the peculiar phrase 'born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life' can be read not only as an 'implication of being born (*ginomene*) in being (*ousa*)' but also as an 'inclusive exclusion (an *exceptio*) of *zoe* in the *polis*' (1998: 12). Ancient Greek political philosophy uses two terms to refer to human's life – *zoe* and *bios*. The first one points to life in a pure biological sense, whereas the latter emphasises humans' participation in political life. In his analysis of the structure of community, Agamben also observes that the moment the concept of *people* appears, two different kinds of *people* are produced under that concept. One is created by sovereign state, and can only be loyal to the interest of community (i.e. subjects). It is through separating the identity of subjecthood from people that the state manages to establish the authority and legitimacy of its rule. In contrast, the other type of 'people' – bare life – is the one abandoned by the sovereign power. Agamben's idea of *homo sacer* points exactly to the abandoned. To be 'sacred' means belonging to God, thus removed from free use and trade by humans. In other words, to make something sacred is to move it out of the domain of profane law (human law) and into that of divine law. Hence, a Hobbesian conception of 'natural violence' is encoded in the act of removing certain subjects from (the protection of) human law (2007: 73). The establishment of community is accomplished via this sort of violent division (more discussions in Chapter Four). Compared with those identifying with the community, it is the excluded that serve as the cornerstone of the organic state (cf. Agamben 1991: 105).

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However, this is not the only violence imposed upon the excluded. According to Agamben's theory, the form of religious sacrifice provides a prototype power structure for understanding the mechanism of biopolitics. Just like a ritualistic performance, the making of a commercial-minded British community is structured upon the coexistence of the state of law and the state of exception (1998: 52-55; 2007: 73-75). When a person is expelled from the domain of human law, it is mainly because the excluded is regarded by the community as violating the established norms. In the meantime, being defined as morally corrupted also means that the subject is profaned and not suitable for sacrificing (cf. 2007: 82). Thus, a form of double violence emerges as some subjects are not only excluded from the space of human law, but are also unable to enter the domain of divinity. Such a double violence results in the production of bare life, which is included into the community by way of exclusion (Agamben 2007: 80-82). In this sense, bare life is not pure animal life, it is a target simultaneously abandoned and seized by the organic state. Being deprived of the identity of subjecthood does not imply a simple return to a form of animal life that is completely separated from politics. On the contrary, by setting the state of exception and suspending human law, the sovereign maintains its political power even after a political life is reduced into a *homo sacer*. The absolute power of the organic community is crystallised in this exclusive inclusion. Since subjects can only become political bodies via such a fundamental division, this indicates an inherent existence of biopolitical fracture in the conception of community (Agamben 2000: 29-36).

According to Foucault, the disciplining of individuals should be seen as a technique of governmentality. In this sense, what the link between rioters and madness suggests is that before the final confinement is enacted the madman should be treated as animal life uncontrolled by political power. Hence, the rioters, as far as the Britishness strategy is concerned, only enter the space of politics after the outbreak of riots. From the tactical perspective, however, Agamben's conception of *homo sacer* helps reveal that bare life deprived of political rights has never managed to escape from the control of the biopolitical community. The exclusive inclusion enforced by the double violence constitutes the only way for the sovereign state to display and legitimise its supreme power. In Ballard's novel, the Metro-Centre – the building as well as its consumerist life-style – gradually turns into a space of idealised community. In his

account of Metro-Centre members' constant attacks on the ethnic minorities living in the outskirts of Brooklands, David Cruise stresses that this should not be seen as a purely racist gesture. 'The crowds who attack Asians and asylum seekers believe in the Metro-Centre, and the Asians don't come here. They have a parallel economy. They've excluded themselves, and they're paying the price' (Ballard 2006: 179). The assertion of self-exclusion instead of enforced exclusion is largely due to Cruise's identity as the sovereign of this idealised community. No matter who launches the movement of exclusion, those who do not 'believe in' the Metro-Centre are in effect reduced to being *homo sacer* – remaining in the space of Brooklands but expelled from the law of British state. As is confirmed by Cruise, it is the non-illegal act of imposing violence upon bare life that holds his community together in everyday life: 'violence is the best way of controlling the human race, making sure things don't get really out of hand' (Ballard 179). Violently expelled by the consumerist community, the *homo sacer* in Brooklands is simultaneously imprisoned in the state of exception, which causes the excluded to remain politicised.

As long as the state of exception is established, no attack on bare life is to be defined as breaking the law. The origin of the state of exception can be seen as created by a collective conspiracy within the community. For instance, the discussion between Richard and Cruise mentions that a warehouse of cheap knitwear in the immigrant community has been burned to the ground. As Cruise tells the protagonist: '[a]s always, the police arrived ten minutes after the fire engines. Almost nothing appeared in the national press, where the incidents were lumped in with account of sporting violence and binge drinking provincial towns' (Ballard 2006: 79). Similarly, when a suburban crusader army in St. George's shirts 'are out in force vandalising the Asian community', Richard is not so surprised to notice that 'nowhere is there a single policeman' (Ballard 88). Unlike the protagonist who seems unwilling to see this situation as natural, Cruise turns out to have a deeper understanding of the state of exception. It is mentioned in the novel that some Eastern European shopkeepers are intimidated by local sports club stewards until voluntary contributions are paid, and these protection rackets are tolerated by the police. According to Cruise's pejorative yet incisive comment, the stewards do the job for the police of 'keeping order in towns' (Ballard 161). The repeated occurrence of such incidents in Brooklands proves that Cruise's phrase 'as always' is no exaggeration (Ballard 160). Compared with the

horror invoked by each case of violence taking place in the state of exception, what is implied by this taken-for-granted attitude is even more terrifying. After the outbreak of mass riots in *Ten Days* and *Kingdom Come*, the still-'rational' subjects of the community, convinced by the state's biopolitical narratives, are inclined to think that the state of exception is a situational compromise that only happens in response to critical moments. But the reality is that the state of exception, as is observed by Agamben, has become the new political paradigm of contemporary biopolitics (1998: 98). In *Little Revolution*, when the question of the legitimacy of the police's actions in the riots emerges, one interviewee offers a clear picture of how the sovereign sets up the state of exception at will:

> Jerome: Erm a few months ago the police locked this whole area down, they called it a Section 60.…Yeah. I dunno what that means, yeah.
>
> Tyrone: Means they stop' n' search/anybody.
>
> Jerome: Stop' n' search anyone and that's exactly it I was over de over side of da road yeah? I've come over to see what's happening, the geezer's grabbed me, thrown me up the car, searched me, done my name-check' n' everyfink… 'n 'then after we had a little argument… geezer was squeezing me by my throat, I couldn't breathe, they can do whatever they want, they are the authority. (Blythe 2014: 50)

As seen in this conversation, even before the state of exception is invoked to tackle the urban riots, the act of suspending laws and the violence against bare life has already expanded from critical moments into the space of everyday life. When Richard volunteers to report crimes to the local police, the implicit expansion of the state of exception can explain why Sangster seems so shocked by this proposal: 'the police? We didn't think of that…' (Ballard 164). Sangster's reaction testifies to the new paradigm of exception: the official crime rate keeps dropping each year, and the Metro-Centre community's attacks on bare life are only recorded as minor clashes among sports fans. Being positioned simultaneously inside and outside the domain of law, the abandoned is repeatedly captured, employed and controlled in the state of exception to justify the structural violence of the organic space.

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In the Hobbesian model of civil society, people's power is transferred to the sovereign by social contract, which presumes a fear of violent conflicts between individuals. In this sense, the origin of the political state lies in its duty to end such fear – hence the justification for replacing the state of fear with the state of security. The assumed 'natural' transition to the state of security is a core logic that has been largely inherited in Locke's and Burke's idealisation of contracting between state and people (the link between British organicism and seventeenth-century philosophers will be further studied in Chapter Four). The modern state of security, nevertheless, subverts the Hobbesian ideal, in that the founding of organic community depends on fear. More importantly, the community even relentlessly creates fear because it provides the source of legitimacy for the existence of the state. As Agamben points out in 'Form-of-Life', the state of exception offers the required platform for sovereign power to fully present itself. Other than the state of exception, the power of community has no form of legitimation, which explains why power keeps creating emergencies on purpose (cf. 2006: 153). As suggested in Ballard's novel, now that organic Britain cannot survive without the employment of the state of exception, the violent division that plays an important role in starting urban riots exposes the originary structure of biopolitics. Within the state of exception, the structure of binary opposites (the sovereign and the *homo sacer*) determines that there is a risk for any individual to be reduced from subject to object. The violence produced by ever-increasing fear might be the only thing everlasting within a community.

The constant risk of being turned into bare life can be clearly seen in *Kingdom Come*. According to the protagonist's description of the power hierarchy of the Metro-Centre, Cruise acts as the leader most of the time. By setting a fire in the shopping mall, Cruise manages to convince his followers that their 'Mecca' is under attack and they should unite and protect their own community. As a result, the leader unilaterally declares that the Centre is in a state of exception, as his stewards can attack, and even kill, those who are identified as threatening. However, the citizen's position within a community is not permanent. After being shot in the chest, Cruise's determination to safeguard the Centre simply collapses, and he asks his followers to let him leave for medical treatment. Almost instantly his request is regarded as a betrayal and a threat to the Centre, and they refuse to send this former leader away. Four days after Cruise's death,

radical followers are still fighting for the control of his body, showing it around the shopping mall as if it is in the possession of the community as a politicised object (Ballard 2006: 255-56). In view of Ballard's depiction of the state of exception, the literary representation of the strategy of contemporary Britishness shares with the narratives of twentieth-century national socialism a similar logical thread of biopolitics. The state always prioritises the safety of the *people* as a whole over that of individuals. When it comes to the whole population, however, it is not just an aggregation of all, but also a metaphysical imagination. For this reason, the state of exception does not mean that only specific individuals are to be sacrificed. Even those defined as belonging to the community can instantly be categorised as bare life. Ultimately, in order to get rid of the threat to the organic system, the state simply transfers such a risk to its subjects.

At some point, most characters in the novels of Slovo and Ballard, as well as Perowne and the Luxton family in Chapter Two, have expressed an anxiety over the perpetual politicisation of their bodies and the danger of being excluded from their idealised space. Although the events triggering the anxiety are varied in these fictions, it is clear that there exists an originary framework that not only links all critical moments together, but also constitutes the source of structural violence on political bodies. But as mentioned above, the structural absorption of subjects does not only take place during a critical moment such as the 2011 urban riots. The repetition of this originary framework never stops outside the direct confrontation between the disciplined people and the bare life. Therefore, in Chapter Four this thesis will move on to study the everyday-life performance of organic Britishness. Though less noticeable than in violent disorder, the organicist repetition in daily life can shed more light on the canonised trajectory of returning to a Burkean ideal of tradition, and how individuals' replica of Britishness in the contemporary literature of England inevitably turns into a post-British tactic for intellectual independence.

Chapter Four

Repeating Everyday-life Rituals: The Organic Society and the Post-British Sisyphus

The lingering use of an organicist framework suggests that citizens are political bodies that constitute the body of the imagined community. This political subordination, as Ballard and Slovo have both implied in their fictions, is the source of the grand narrative of British ideals that constantly evaluates and disciplines subjects' performance. What is worth noticing is that the repetition of this kind of grand narrative (as well as the originary structure that produces the narrative) takes place not only in what Krishan Kumar calls the 'critical moments' of the state. By analysing Tom McCarthy's two fictions, this chapter expands the use of post-British perspective to study the strategies of Britishness in everyday-life context. Unlike the violent changes of spatial order during urban riots, McCarthy's works pay more attention to individuals' ritualistic repetition in those seemingly tranquil moments of daily life. In the selected novels, although some of the characters are eager to be independent from the organicist framework of their idealised community, they are also aware of their incapacity to stop the repetition of a canonical past. This dilemma makes these characters post-British Sisyphus in this moment of Englishness. Their tactics to reject the state-nation's strategies of assimilation suggest that the originary structure of British narratives, though guaranteeing the repetition of ahistorical, placeless imaginations, have also accelerated the outbreaks of identity crises.

4.1 The Organic Society: Repetition and Ritual

For 157 years, Big Ben had acted as an image of Britishness, till in mid-summer 2017, Steve Jaggs, the keeper of the clock, announced that Great Bell's famous bongs were about to fall silent, from noon on August 21 until 2021 as the iconic structure would undergo repair. This news immediately prompted criticism from Theresa May, saying 'it can't be right for Big Ben to be silent for four years' (Shirbon 2017). Compared with some more urgent political crises, the warning that the bell might not sound for at least four years was no more than a topic for an afternoon-tea break. In the meantime, there were two other related news stories that seemed more striking. Firstly, it was confirmed that BBC Radio 4, which broadcasts the chimes of Big Ben live, would instead broadcast a recording when the bells fell silent. Denis Nowlan, Head of Radio 4 station

management, admitted that various alternatives were being considered and that they came very close to using the sound of Nottingham's bells. But eventually, it was decided that pre-recording Big Ben's chimes offered the 'most reliable and resilient option' whilst the Palace of Westminster carried out its repairs (BBC 2017). The signification of the news on Big Ben is not really concern about the bell's temporary absence. After all, such a situation is not unprecedented – it last fell silent in 2007, and before that for major refurbishments between 1983 and 1985. Neither is this about demands to bring the bell back for important 'national' events –it did ring again to mark Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday 2017. The point is that the backup plan to copy the canonical chime, along with an internalised expectation for its eternal return, reveals a lingering insistence on the irreplaceability of (the authenticity and authority of) the statehood metaphor. The 'refusal of historical context' marked by the repetition of an idealised image of the state provides a vantage point from which to re-examine the development of an organic Britain and the inevitability of its cyclical crises. From a post-British perspective, a better understanding of the repetition of canonical British imaginations calls for a closer look at the source of the originary structure of British organicism. Starting from the thinking of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and becoming more mature and coherent in Edmund Burke, this structure is largely inherited in contemporary narratives, and is still canonised as the cultural law of organic Britishness.

A series of tags have been attached to the optimistic and idealistic identification of a new Britain: multicultural, open, and plural (cf. Pitcher 2009: 3-24). But these labels are not necessarily mutually exclusive with the state's often unnoticed Britishing strategies of looking backwards to a mythologised 'tradition'. Some key principles of organicism prioritising what Gardiner describes as a 'pastness-of-the-past' are still widely used in the production of political canonicity. In this chapter I will read Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* (2005) and *Satin Island* (2015) to pinpoint the originary structure of Britishness myths, as well as some characters' ritual of repetition in everyday-life context. As noted in Chapter Three, Gillian Slovo's *Ten Days* (2016) and J.G. Ballard's *Kingdom Come* (2006) touch on certain 'critical moments' when Britishing strategies are automatically triggered to heal the organic system. In comparison, McCarthy's novels address some less sensational incidents in daily life as evidence of an inherited organic Britain that is in fact quite comparable to the ideal civil state advocated by some British political philosophers since the seventeenth century.

In 'England, Your England' (1941), George Orwell affirms that 'England, together with the rest of the world, is changing'. But at the same time he also stresses that:

> like everything else it [England] can change only in certain directions, which up to a point can be foreseen. That is not to say that the future is fixed, merely that certain alternatives are possible and others not. A seed may grow or not grow, but a turnip seed never grows into a parsnip. (Orwell 1941)

Orwell's analysis on Englishness in *The Lion and the Unicorn* frequently, if not deliberately, conflates the notion of England the nation to that of Britain the state. Despite the repeated conflation of nation and state, Orwell's argument of a future civil state being decided by its roots in the past can be seen as repeating a doctrine of the Britishness ideal. Such an organicist doctrine can also be detected in the thinking of Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. For Carlyle and Arnold alike, the year of 1688 is *the* paradigm – the revolution that is a restoration – that sets up an ideal past beyond time. Few, especially among the British left, have drawn a line from Edmund Burke to Orwell in terms of their attitude towards violent changes of social order, and more importantly, towards which direction (the past or the future) does organic Britain move. On the face of the conflation of Britishness and Englishness, some scholars, such as Ian Baucom and Peter Mandler, have sometimes pointed out the influence of Edmund Burke's theory in a more than three-century imagination of state-nationhood. In *Out of Place*, Baucom offers a precise summary of Burke's Anglo-British understanding of nature and tradition:

> Burke's anti-Jacobinism amounted, in large part, to a celebration of the subject as 'he' is found cloaked in the traditions that have become a 'second' nature to him; a consonant condemnation of the 'natural' self, stripped naked of the covering cloth of tradition by the abstract speculations of the ideologues of reason; a valorisation of custom over theory. (Baucom 1999: 30)

In *The English Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*, Mandler also admits that although 'Burke is often thought of as the great progenitor of

modern thinking about Englishness', his 'English' reaction to the French Revolution is 'coupled with the multi-national and multi-ethnic nature of the British Empire' (2006: 3). This means that in Burke's own time 'these wider loyalties were strengthened and the national character remained undeveloped' (Mandler 2006: 3-4). Mandler's analysis is an important addition to Baucom's argument, as they together seize in the Burkean model a link between organicist strategies and the continuity of Britishness myths. Looking more closely at Burke's statement, some fundamental doctrines are still functioning in the modern advocacy of an idealised state-nation. Most notably, the connection between everyday-life activities and the expansion of organic society is repeatedly emphasised in Burke's proclamation in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). When referring to the Britishing strategies applied to the operation of society, Burke affirms that:

> our political system placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through in the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall renovation, and progression. (Burke 1999: 27-28)

In Burke's perception of Britain's organisational structure, one indispensable premise in maintaining an organicist ideal is an unshakable determination to inherit 'from a long line of ancestors', and at the same time repel 'a spirit of innovation' as 'the institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of Providence, are handed down to us in the same course and order' (Burke 1999: 28). Despite his advocacy of 'always acting as if in the presence of canonised forefathers', what Burke (perhaps deliberately) fails to mention is that these 'ancestors' never lived, and that only the imagination of the unlived can offer the timelessness needed for repetitions. What should be noted here is the strong indication of biopoliticalness in Burke's organicist worship of fictive ancestors. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the 'right of life' (to use Giorgio Agamben's phrase) is the core of biopolitical strategies. The fact that the ancestors in Burke's ideal never lived also means that they can never die, which is vital for the timelessness of canonicity. As Gardiner

notes in his analysis, Burke's claim that 'pre-existing legitimate authority is characterised by a reverence for the past' is proven to be in accordance with the British state's consistent 'avoidance of present-tense and active experience which the anti-formal constitution demands' (cf. Gardiner 2013: 2-3, 23). Such a conception of a 'pure' precedence is not entirely gestated by Burke's political stand or philosophical assumptions on natural law. Behind the Burkean assertion of an idealised state lies an organicist logic with strong roots in the theories of Thomas Hobbes and some British empiricists, and still, more or less, in effect in the construct of the imagined British community.

However, Burke's insistence on an outside-of-history authority, to some extent, can be seen as a continuation of a century-long debate on the framework of political ideal and social contract. Apart from its explicit aim to address the external conflict (the French Revolution), the key argument of the *Reflections* is more of a reworking of certain political philosophies developed in response to the turmoil of the Civil War era. As suggested in the previous chapter, tracing the philosophical roots of seventeenth-century organicism is vital for locating the originary structure of British narratives. Starting from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, some key ideas (such as the state of nature, the legitimacy of governance, and the moment of social contract) have been set as the essential framework of a civil state. By reviewing this framework, we will be able to understand why (the continuity of) Britishness myths must always invoke a return to an imagined origin. In *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, ideas on avoiding civil war if a legitimate and stable sovereign power exists, and on ending war in the pre-political state of nature, are defined by Hobbes as laws of nature (Hobbes 1996: 21-34; 2000: 91-107). In response to statements of other 'laws of nature' existing long before his ideas, Hobbes argues that two laws should be put before the rest. Firstly, the right to seek peace by all means if to do so is not too unsafe; and secondly, the right to adopt one particular means of seeking peace if other people agree to do the same – namely, to cancel rights that could potentially get in the way of peace (cf. Hobbes 2000: 91-93, 100-103). In other words, the right that people have to give up, in the state of nature, in order to secure peace is the 'right of nature' – the right to be one's own judge of what will make one safe and happy. According to Hobbes, so long as each is one's own judge of these things, there is no insurance against war. Therefore, the right must be given up – not a simple renunciation of the right, but its (once-for-all) transfer.

Hobbes's theory on natural state and civil society is situated in a very different context to that of Burke's statement. The subjects of their arguments also differ: while Hobbes attempts to justify the transfer of power to a sovereign authority, Burke extends the act of authorising to a broader sense of inheriting political and cultural ideals. In view of their shared detestation of revolution, both articulate the necessary establishment of supreme authority so that the societal order and the interest of commoners can be protected. Unlike the Lockean definition of natural law and civil society, Burke's understanding of social contract and the motivation of the (pre-existing) transfer of right accords with what is stated in *Leviathan*: 'to avoid, therefore, the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand times worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice, we have consecrated the state' (Burke 1999: 52). The explicit similarity lies not just in the assertion that the imagination of an ideal is a precondition for society to evolve from disorder into order, and that the transfer of one's right of judgement should be permanent (Hobbes 2000: 37-44). What also should be stressed is that both Hobbes and Burke question the right of the people to subvert the pre-existing political contract, as clearly stated in their refusal to return to chaos in the state of nature. In Hobbes, peace, the main concern of politics, is realisable only by strong sovereignty established thorough a social contract. This leads to Hobbes's conclusion that subjects have no rational grounds on which to challenge the rule of the sovereign so long as 'peace' is maintained. Likewise, in *Reflections*, Burke warns that 'no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution', and that 'he should never dream of beginning its reformation by its subversion' (1790: 52). Although these two arguments admit the possible misconduct of sovereign, the insistence on maintaining the established authority has in effect pointed out the key factor of organicism. That is, once entering a civil society, subjects are deprived of the right to renegotiate the pre-existing contract. As we have seen in Chapter Three, some characters' automatic siding with the state's narrative of madness during urban riots suggests the inheritance of these seventeenth-century frameworks. Not only does the emphasis on the state of peace ensure an immediate moral accusation against rioting, but also the mythologised moment of contracting has in effect denied the legitimacy to revise the originary structure of the state. To some extent, the imagination of a social contract can be interpreted as acknowledging the existence of a canonical origin – an idealised state that follows the law of nature. What's implied by the canonicity of the contract is that an organic state has already

possessed a 'perfect' framework since its origin, and the appearance of defects should not be attributed to the system's originary design but the subjects' malpractice of this system. Because of this organicist conception of evolution, any attempt of subversion, even in everyday-life context, would not be able to take the moral high ground because it results in more chaos instead of returning to the canonical origin. This largely explains why it is important to pinpoint the continuity of the seventeenth-century model of organicism in contemporary narratives. As illustrated in previous chapters, characters' repeated absorption into canonised imaginations cannot be ascribed to their reluctance to break from Britishness myths. In the novels of McEwan and Swift, most characters' eventual return to British ideals suggests that the self-healing process is in effect a disciplining of subjects rather than a reconsideration of the legitimacy of British framework.

Hobbes's political theory already involves a concept of a social contract, but his explicit advocacy of a totalitarian state has drawn much criticism for its failure to challenge the imagination of an ahistorical ideal (cf. Gauthier 2002: 125-147; Tricaud 2002: 107-117, 119-122). In *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke refutes Robert Filmer's idea of a divine right to absolute power, and also distinguishes himself from Hobbes with his own definition of the state of nature (cf. Locke 1990: Pt 1, chs. 1-7; Pt 2, chs. 1-5). According to Locke's theory, three shortcomings of the natural state constitute the starting point of a civil society. Firstly, the lack of a universal standard in individuals' practice of reasoning. Secondly, the absence of an impartial umpire to practice the law of nature. Thirdly, the incapacity to execute any judgement without the proper authorisation by individuals. People are imagined to have transferred their personal right of judgement to the state to protect private property, which is assumed by Locke to be the fundamental motivation for political contracting. The Lockean claim seems to criticise the then ongoing assumption that commoners should remain under an absolute authority (whether divinely established as in Filmer's view, or set up as in the equally absolutist account of Hobbes). But it has to be pointed out that the definition of 'people' is not clarified in Locke's argument. As Locke admits in the *Treaties*: 'unlike those who for some time have been in a state of nature, most people are simply born into an already existing civil society' (cf. Locke 1990: Pt 1, ch. 9). It is not by any choice of theirs that they come under its laws and authority – they entered into no agreement to unite and set up the authority. Locke attempts to use the concept of 'tacit consent' to maintain

individuals' privileged position in the act of contracting. But in view of the relationship between individuals and the civil state, it is hard to ignore that, despite the presumed 'unanimous' agreement to transfer individuals' right, there actually exists a prevalent, passive inheritance of the established ideal.

The most noticeable difference between Locke's theory and Hobbes's (as well as Burke's) organicist assumption lies in the (il-)legitimacy of cancelling the political contract (cf. Chappell 1994: 5-16). In Chapter Nineteen, 'Of the Dissolution of Government', Locke presents his idea on whether the commoners have the right to resort to the use of violence to subvert the contracted ideal:

> such revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs. Great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human frailty will be borne by the people without mutiny or murmur. But if a long train of abuses, prevarications, and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to the people… it is not to be wondered that they should then rouse themselves, and endeavour to put the rule into such hands which may secure to them the ends for which government was at first erected. (Locke 1990: 204)

The declaration that negotiation with the supreme power (even in the form of revolution) is not only a right but also an obligation seems opposed to organicist principles. According to his perception of the purpose of 'revolution', however, Locke does not question the necessity for individuals to follow the pre-existing contract if the whole political system functions as expected. But it is uncertain who is authorised to define 'little mismanagements' and 'great mistakes'. This uncertainty turns out to be self-contradictory, in that one of the initial motivations for political contracting is the concern about the lack of a universal standard of judgement. Thus, the target of a justified subversion is not the utopic imagination of civil society, but the personified sovereign power that fails to maintain the organic state. As Locke points out in the *Treatises*, the power that 'every individual gave the society when he entered into it can never revert to the individuals again, as long as the society lasts, but will always remain in the community' (1990: 213). Nevertheless, if the cancellation of the contract does not arise

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from individuals' judgement, it can only depend on the expectation and imagination of the ahistorical ideal established at the moment of contracting. This means that the Lockean idea of revolution does not call for a return to the state of nature or a critique of the idealised principles of civil society. Instead, the organicist definition of subversion is more of a re-canonisation of, or a new return to, 'the ends for which government was at first erected' (Locke 1990: 204). Hence, the repetition of such revolutions suggests a confirmation of the existence of a pre-existing order and of the legitimacy to pursue it. As suggested in *Wish You Were Here* and *Ten Days*, once characters are absorbed by Britishness myths, they will always remain the political bodies of an imagined community. According to the Lockean conception of revolution, the rebelling gestures of Baxter and Banji can only be justified as a starting point to return to a pre-existing order.

In view of the fictions by Ballard and Slovo, the British state's capacity to absorb riots smoothly would be impossible without the evolvement of its organicist philosophy. From Hobbes to Locke, it is not too hard to tell that there are still many loopholes in conceptions of a civil society: the uncertainty about the legal right to make or rewrite the social contract, the degree to which individuals' right should be transferred, and the moral narrative closely tied to a personalised authority. These account for a theoretical vulnerability that leaves these versions of civil society far from being an ahistorical, organic state. The development of organicist theory continues after Locke, and draws nourishment from the ideas of other British empiricists. Although most Scottish Enlightenment thinkers from David Hume onwards were keen to refute the idea of 'original contract', their break from the existence of a canonical political form did not stop them from arguing that a set of imaginary, timeless traditions can offer important guidance for individuals' everyday-life practice. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), Hume's argument not only builds up a more comprehensive link between moral sense and reason, it also foregrounds people's instinctive attributes to an originary model of living, thus expanding the narrow sense of political ideal to a broader epistemological discussion of the organic being (Hume 1978: 588-619). This transition is well presented in the *Reflections*, which proves to be an important signal that the organicist strategy has become more mature.

Towards the end of eighteenth century, the development of British organicism was already extended into many fields in society, and some of the key ideas in former theories had been refined in Burke's model. For instance, the two parties to social contracting were no longer the personified political authority (the king or the government) and the people, but the tradition and the people – the 'past' and the present. The importance of prioritising the abstract notion of tradition should not be underestimated, because it is one of the logical preconditions for the myth that organic Britishness never dies. The imagination of a non-existent 'tradition' avoids a moral division in a society – the canonical gap between sovereignty and people. As a result, those who should be responsible for the organic continuity are, and can only be, the individuals who have already transferred their right. In one sense, the imaginary act of contracting is not about individuals' decisions to grant their power to the state, but in effect constitutes a starting point of permanent self-disciplining. According to Locke, citizens (in the present tense) are characterised as active creators in the construct of an organic society. But in Burke's theory, the citizens are constantly supervised as to whether they are obedient enough to relive the 'past'. However, the canonised tradition of the past does not really exist in history. As Gardiner has pointed out, the past, in the Burkean sense, is *interpolated*, that is, it has never been an 'experienced present for any person in any historical time – and this clears the ground for an imaginary past' (2013: 23). Based on this logic of organicist contracting, the maintenance of a Burkean state does not rely on whether the government fulfils the contract, but on whether the subjects can perpetually repeat the imaginary past. As we can see in Chapter Three, such a logic is repeatedly hinted in *Ten Days*. After the outbreak of riots, the state's narrative never stops imposing all the moral responsibility on the subjects, and technically marginalises (if cannot entirely forbid) any suggestion of problems in its originary structure.

The evolution of the Hobbesian model of organicism did not stop in Burke, and gradually expanded its cultural influence into literary disciplines. After Burke, the strategy of creating canonical precedence keeps recurring in various forms in the development of organic Britishness. Many utilitarian theorists have attempted to subvert the idea of original contract by stressing that the subjects in any community are not molecules sharing similar interests, but that the social needs of self and community exist, as portrayed in moral narratives, in the form of a hierarchical structure. But in order to keep the promise of the happiness of the majority, the actual practice of British utilitarianism

never fundamentally strayed away from either legitimising the Hobbesian type of authority to make all situational decisions right for the greater good, or re-canonising the Lockean conception of a set of universalist, ahistorical criteria for happiness in the first place. The Hobbes-Burke legacy also feeds into the Victorian roots of English Literature, suggesting a noticeable quest for revitalising a timeless culture. For instance, in *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold presents a derogatory conception of 'Philistines' and stresses the significance of cultivating the 'great self' to preserve a morally noble and culturally canonical society (2009: 28-29). Likewise, F.R. Leavis foregrounds in *The Great Tradition* that the state is need of literary elites and canons (cf. 2011: 4-11). The English studies pioneered by theorists such as I.A. Richards in higher education inevitably contributes to the systematic production of a universalist narrative of being British. In view of these cultural constructions, it is clear that the assumption of an eternal 'pilgrim' to the established ideal underpins a shared imagination of the British state.

When Gardiner's conceptual distinction between English Literature and the literature of England was applied in Chapter Two to re-interpret the (narrative of) British state, I suggested that the foregrounded existence of an imagined community is no more than a hierarchical system of narrative – a canonised framework of binary oppositions that witnesses non-stop place-changing between central and peripheral, self and other. If the constitution of such an imagined community is put into comparison with the Burkean idea of organic society, in which 'people will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors', a shared logical assumption is the existence of a pre-existing ideal that can be used as an ideological authority and that is capable of operating as a disciplining force. In a sense, the 'need of inheritance' and the 'great mysterious incorporation' advocated by organicists is about envisioning a space in which society and individuals act respectively as assessor and assessed, discipliner and disciplined, in the perpetual practice of rewriting, absorption, and re-canonisation.

Such a practice of organicist strategy, as well as its impact on its subjects, is well portrayed in the fictions of Tom McCarthy. McCarthy's novels are an important reference, because they can be read as a diagnosis of the British condition in the twenty-first century. In *Remainder*, an anonymous anti-hero, traumatised by an accident at the very beginning of the story, finds himself helplessly estranged from the external world. As the whole fiction centres on the character's morbid obsession with reconstructing

vaguely remembered yet clearly idealised situations from his past, what is conveyed, to a large extent, is a satire on individuals' inevitable alienation in the pursuit of an organic society. In McCarthy's novel, turning the 'lived' incident into the 'inexperienced' imagination connotes the Hobbes-Locke strategy of organicism. The requirement to create ahistorical ideals, as explained above, shows a strong sense of self-contradiction. While 'history' is explicitly idealised to be a social norm that waits to be inherited, a sense of vagueness is also carefully preserved so that the 'original point' in the past is undefinable and thus relieved from any potential doubts about the legitimacy of its canonisation. Regarding the accident in *Remainder* that initiates the protagonist's quest to return to an imagined order of everyday life, the description of its cause is extremely obscure. The only relevant information is that the character is 'hit by something falling from the sky', and suffers from 'months of coma in hospital and no memory of what has happened' (McCarthy 2005: 5-7). The motivation to leave out the details of this accident is not simply about creating a bit of narrative mystery. The narrator's later practice of reconstructing the 'past' carefully bypasses this important point in the timeline, suggesting that the novel is no 'typical' narrative of trauma that traces the procedure of self-recuperation by confronting the traumatic moment.

In a brief account of the accident, the word 'settlement' is worth noting, as it is repeated in the character's psychological monologue after he comes to himself in hospital and is ordered 'not to discuss the accident and to forget it ever happened' (McCarthy 2005: 6). As far as legal compensation is concerned, there is no doubt that an immediate settlement is achieved, since 'eight and a half million pounds' has been paid in exchange for no further discussion of the accident 'in any public arena or in any recordable format' (McCarthy 2005: 8). But this kind of compensation is far from enough for the character to re-accommodate himself in social space. On the contrary, a status of psychological unsettlement never disappears. 'I don't even remember the event; it's a blank: a white slate, a black hole… the last clear memory I have is of being buffeted by wind twenty or so minutes before I was hit' (McCarthy 2005: 1, 7-8). The description of a traumatised mind implies that the memory before and after the accident remains intact. This seems to be suggesting that the irresistible addiction of repetition that constitutes the character's trajectory of returning to an idealised society should not be viewed as a sort of Freudian conception of repetition compulsion. Given that the constant repetition, according to the definition of this psychoanalytical term, refers to an attempt at mastery of their upsetting

feelings and experience, what is supposed to be revisited and reconstructed is the exact spot/ scene of the accident (cf. Malcolm 1988: 28-30). The fact that the character's anxiety results from what happens before the incident – the non-traumatised experience – invites a reconsideration of what motivates his insistence of re-enactment. As the driving force behind the anti-hero's everyday-life activities is a 'thirst for authenticity and authority', the sense of alienation is probably not due to a loss of the memory of accident, but to the rewritten nature of those intact memories. The imagined authority to perceive the boundary between order and disorder, fact and fiction, in an organic society calls for a persistent impetus to go back to an idealised past along an uninterrupted timeline. The unexpected trauma in the novel, however, creates a breaking point in the presupposed continuous trajectory of inheritance. Although the memory of the past (before the accident) is well preserved, the content is in effect reduced into a 'pure' material existence, because its authority as an ideal has been degraded. The absence that gives rise to his blankness and unsettlement is more of a detachment from an idealised precedence than the details of the accident – the exact situation a Burkean community (based on individuals' eternal return to the originary point) should avoid. This largely accounts for why the injured anti-hero almost 'spontaneously' sets out to transform the breaking point into a new starting point for the establishment of a new ideal, so that the great incorporation of organic society can resume.

In terms of informality and prioritisation of precedence, the narrative form of *Satin Island* shows how inclusive, and paradoxically exclusive at the same time, an organic system turns out to be (cf. Agamben 1998: 19-22). To an extent, this narrative (or a pile of narratives, to be more accurate) reads more like a clumsy report or manifesto than a novel. The fragmented structure turns this fiction into a miniature, textual model of an organic being: the narrative presents a sense of universal connectivity, suggesting that everyday-life activities are stimulated by an inevitable force and bear a secret logical relation to a 'temporal' point in the 'imagined' history. The organicist nature of British society can be pinpointed in the job description of the protagonist who is named as U. The name *per se* is quite suggestive, for it could be understood as a warning that every person is already captured by the organic system. The content of his task is mentioned at times, but the tremendously detailed description turns out not to be so informative. At one moment, the character is still concerned about the death of a skydiver due to a malfunctioning parachute, and a few minutes later, he simply quits the topic and switches to a study of

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the cargo cult of Vanuatan tribes (McCarthy 2015: 98, 102-103). U once introduces himself as an 'anthropologist' whose task is to garner meaning from all types of situation, distilling some pure, unadulterated essence out of common-mongrel compounds' (McCarthy 2015: 38). Although the writing of a 'Great Report' is emphasised as the research aim, there is simply no evidence towards the end of the story to suggest that the task could ever be finished. Working as the researcher and writer of the report, the protagonist, when repeatedly asked 'how the Great Report is coming along', always replies that 'it's finding its *form*' (McCarthy 2015: 44-45). However, what proves most ironic is that his research methodology and the nature of his research target is *anti-formal*. This is because once the number of the samples collected for research reaches a certain boundary and stops increasing, there emerges, in the organicist sense, a potential space or object (beyond the collection) unsupervised by the established principles of an idealised past. Should the presumed 'unadulterable essence' (an ideal) be given a writable form, the nature of the idealised imagination and its relation to the pastness-of-the-past is bound to be exposed, thus unable to sustain its canonicity via ceaseless absorption (cf. Gardiner 2012). No wonder the anthropologist cannot help lamenting that the project (on the organisation and mechanism of modern society) does not lack ambition or explicit concepts, and that 'it is all a question of form' (McCarthy 2015: 90). For instance, the constant accumulation of research materials leads U to visit a city's anthropology museum, where more than fifty thousand objects gathered from Oceania, Africa and America are preserved in a huge Faraday cage. The curator's assertion that 'you had to gather everything [from the past]' to know the present refers not only to the strategy of this specific museum, but also to the internal system of society (McCarthy 2015: 120). The logical connection between the interrupted expansion of the collection and the degradation of all objects into total waste is without any doubt a critique of the implied organicist assumption. From this perspective, the Burkean methodology employed by the fictional researcher determines that the effort of writing the report could only turn into a relentless obsession with gathering more samples. As a result, the character switches his identity between a collector of information and an analyst of phenomena, but can never put the report into form. The protagonist's inspiration from the museum collection can be seen as a representation of the late-Victorian culture of knowledge gatherings (see Thomas Richards' *Imperial Archive* in Chapter One). More importantly, the philosophy of U's expanding report marks that the anti-formal mechanism of absorbing other literatures is still upholding an idealised imagination of Britishness in today's context.

Thus there emerges an apparent contradiction between U's research aim and practice. With a closer look at the so called 'epoch-defining project on society', the keywords 'epoch' and 'society' have nothing to do with the specificity or historicity of the contemporary, but concentrate on proving the existence of a metaphysical concept of being in spatial and temporal terms. U once affirms that 'an anthropologist is not interested in singularities, but in generics' (McCarthy 2015: 42). This is clearly attested by his empiricist approach, as he is easily attracted by all incidents in everyday life, such as 'a broken oil pipe gushing its endless load into the ocean' (McCarthy 2015: 7). Nevertheless, the oil-spill dossier, as part of the Great Report, keeps expanding regardless of the limit of time and space – the research traces back to oil spills worldwide since the First World War, and then focuses on the similar blackness shared by the oil and his colleague's visage affected by thyroid cancer. The research aim, from now on, changes from defining 'this epoch' and 'this society' to pursuing an understanding of the structure of an ideal society that stresses the importance of being antiformal (McCarthy 2015: 167-169). As Gardiner argues, a unified Britain has been 'maintained through a cultural contest that could also be described as *temporal*, as it is centred on the conflict between the present-tense inscription of experience and a form of "precedent which only exists outside history"' (Gardiner 2013: 3). When the writing of the report reaches a cul-de-sac, U's epiphany about the nature of anthropology comes to be identifiable as a critique of the lasting obsession with universalist principles and canonised precedent:

> a new field, a new realm, a whole new Order of anthropological experience seemed to burst open and fulgurate before me…in my reverie, I saw a future where with my name echoing inside their heads, ethnographers – *U-thnographers*! – no longer scrolling through dead entrails of events hoping to unpack the meaning of their gestures, would instead… bring its true substance to the fore at every instant, in the instant, not as future knowledge but as the instant itself…Then the Great Report would not be something that was either to-come or completed, in-the-past: it would be *all now*. Present-tense anthropology; anthropology as way-of-life. That was it: Present-Tense Anthropology™. (McCarthy 89-90)

The theme of anthropology in the text should not only be perceived as a specific subject in a narrow sense, but also a cognitive method of a pre-existing (and still functioning) social mechanism. U's attempted re-definition of his project is indicative of a significant aspect of the post-British turn. Referring to the innumerable historical samples as 'dead entrails of events' challenges the strategy of canonising precedent, and more importantly expresses an utmost repulsion from the overwhelming impact of the universalist ideal. U's declaration of a new 'anthropology' hints that he already realises that the imaginary past in an organicist method has actually resulted in subjects' neglecting lived experience. The character's epiphany, however, does not trigger a break from the construction of organic community, but turns out to be the starting point of a new return to the imaginary precedence. This is largely due to the fact that the organic continuity calls for not only a 'past' that is outside of history, but also an insistence of correlationism that has been strongly rooted in the development of British empiricism. These two requirements, in terms of the logic and practicality of the Britishness method, are supplementary to each other. In 'New Inhumanisms: Tom McCarthy and Speculative Realism', Andrew Gibson observes that McCarthy's characters are deeply rooted in a 'correlationist frame of reference': thought must 'revolve around the knowing subject… exteriority thus becomes co-extensive with the human frame of reference, whether this last be perceptual, linguistic, discursive, ideological, communal or historical' (Gibson 2016: 231-232). Pioneered by scholars such as Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman, and Ray Brassier, one of the most crucial tasks of the 2000s turn of speculative realism was to criticise the principle of correlation that had more or less dominated western philosophy since Immanuel Kant (cf. Meillassoux 2009). This principle assumes that 'what can be known is the correlate of Thought and Being, and what lies outside that correlate is unknowable,' and is in accordance with the logic that justifies the organicist construction. A similar understanding of cognitive practice is also crystallised in the Lockean idea that subjects' motivation to transfer their own right is a quest for property preservation. The historical existence of things is replaced by subjective perceptions of (the value of) things, and some of the perceptions, via repetitions, are gradually consolidated as a set of ahistorical, informal rules. This cognitive transition marks not only a degradation of the material existence of things but also a rewriting of the nature of the human – the link between one's self-perception and the value of one's property suggests that the emergence of the idea of *people* is subject to the inheritance of the selected knowledge of this connection. Likewise in McCarthy novels, the expansion of such a knowledge in everyday life, along

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with its being empowered into the status of a universalist standard, makes the use of *repetition* the most 'natural' choice to secure the continuity of an organic continuity.

It should be noted that the actual practice of embracing ahistorical ideals turns out to be different in McCarthy's fictions. The anti-hero of *Remainder* ends up hijacking an aeroplane and imagining his death to be a form of sacred sacrifice for ideals, whereas U comes to realise that the organicist idealisation of the past cannot provide any person with the slightest chance of intellectual independence, proclaiming that the report is supposed to be an anthropology that 'bathed in presence, and in newness – bathed in it as in a deep, bubbling and nymph-saturated well' (90). Neither of the characters is ever able to be permanently independent from the originary structure of Britishness myths. The presentism envisioned by the anthropologist in *Satin Island* fails to grasp the function of the everyday-life practice of repetition – based on the principle of correlation(ism) – in a Burkean society. In fact, all the seemingly contingent events narrated in McCarthy's two novels foreground the use of repetition in the form of random *déjà vu* and strenuous re-enactment of specific scenes signifying the political and cultural reality of Britishness. One way of interpreting such repetitions is by focusing on their representation of the correlate of 'Thought and Being' as both temporal and spatial. In *Remainder*, the re-enacted scenes are marked by their everydayness, such as 'the smells and sounds of liver frying and spluttering,' and 'an old building with piano music in the distance' (McCarthy 2015: 55-58). Just as these scenes are perfected into simulacra along the timeline, the randomly chosen debris of the past is also idealised. In an essay titled 'On Vicarious Causality', Graham Harman, arguing in favour of an inorganic ontology, maintains that 'an object is in itself an infinite recess, unknowable and inaccessible by any other thing' (cf. Harman 1997: 14). According to Harman's theory, objects can be divided into real objects of everyday life and sensual ones that, via the mediation of a 'vicar', allow for interaction (Harman 1997: 201). In some ways, the repeated copying of daily scenes, to use Harman's terms, is a recognisable 'vicar' that helps establish a correlation between the imagined past and the material present. During this process, the inaccessible and mechanical (objects including everyday-life events), which could be directly observed via interaction are transformed into the knowable and organic (the pervasive correlation between objects) that is perpetuated into a disciplining system. Moreover, if the spatiality of such correlates is taken into account, all the objects included in the sub-dossiers of Great Report appear to be mutually irrelevant in geographical terms – Japanese game

avatars, British newspaper obituaries, shark attacks, and so on. But the reason these specifics should be selected to constitute this grand project remains a lingering question not just to readers but also to the fictional anthropologist. The latter, when speaking of the arbitrariness of collecting research samples, confesses that an investigation starts 'when a situation, a recurring meme would catch my eye, pique my fancy' (McCarthy 2015: 40). And according to his description of the compilation of these dossiers, there is revealed a procedure of 'following its spore, seeing where it led, collecting instances of its occurrence, assembling an inventory of all its guises and mutations', confirming that the initially placed and historical events, via constant repetitions, are rewritten into a narrative of displaced and ahistorical ideals.

This ahistorical aspect of repetition suggests that individuals' daily performance in public space is no longer up to one's own will. In his analysis of the politicalness of such performance, Richard Schechner specifies that 'everyday life is suffused with interactions that are rule-bound, conventions that are networks of reciprocal expectations and obligations' (1988: 296). In this sense, the practice of repetition in McCarthy's texts can be seen as more of a systematic and well-disciplined performance aiming at copying 'conventions' than a mere miscellany of independent and improvised actions. Thanks to the pervasiveness of correlationism, such performance by McCarthy's characters inevitably gives rise to a ritualistic process of absorption and canonising. In view of the ritualisation of everyday-life repetitions in *Remainder*, those who cannot escape the absorption of organic society are pre-programmed performers rather than independent and self-conscious subjects. To what extent the canonised precedent could be re-enacted is set as the only criterion for their actions. On the conspicuous connection between ritual and repetition, Roy Rappaport affirms that 'the term "ritual" denotes the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (Rappaport 1999: 24). And in 'Ritual Studies and Narratology', Marie-Laure Ryan illustrates three major features of ritual: firstly, it aims at dealing with the sacred; secondly, it is supposed to lead to an event that deeply transforms the participants; thirdly, the accomplishment of this event depends on the precise observance of formal requirements (language, gesture, etc.) (Ryan 2014: 27). In both novels, a shared goal of ritualistic repetition is to prove the existence of a transcendental 'truth' that can shed light on the development of organic society. Unsurprisingly, the subjects involved in the pursuit of this truth are affected by the practical operation of the targeted objects (the

principle that turns material present into idealised past), and are eventually becoming part of the network of correlation. As is depicted in *Satin Island*, Peyman, owner of the mysterious Koob-Sassen company patronising the Great Report, stands out as a typical product of organicism. In the protagonist's eye, the boss 'appears in everything, which is the same as disappearing', and he seems to be 'inhabiting a role that's been established elsewhere and already' (McCarthy 2015: 52-53). Like the rest of U's research samples, Peyman, while giving off a sense of imagined familiarity and certainty (as promised by prioritising the stable correlate over the variable object), hires the anthropologist and manages to lure him into the ritual of repetition. As a result, the industrious researcher can only suffer from endless alienation when accidentally becoming aware of the implicit yet ubiquitous requirement of connectivity within the organic system.

This ritualisation of an organic space is bound to result in the ritualisation of individual subjects' performance in everyday life. As Ryan says, ritual must 'obey fixed rules, and these rules specify that the actions must repeat other gestures or other words' (Ryan 2014: 28). That the ritualisation of repetition is always used to sustain organic society is due to the power of authority and authenticity attached to an imagined past, which, as described of Burke above, contributes to a universalist assessment of all people. Such an organicist assessment requires the performers involved to dispense with the gestures and narratives that cause conflicts with the fixed rules of their imagined community. And more importantly, the ritual of repetition calls for the assessed to voluntarily take the responsibility of passing on established norms as well as their implied organicist mentality. Correspondingly in *Remainder*, literary tropes of the ritualisation of repetition are applied to displaying (the affect of) idealised imaginations. For instance, in order to render a mythologised scene of peacefulness, the anti-hero spends a large sum of money hiring a lady to play the role of neighbour, who, according to his 'memory', would always greet him with a smile. To ensure that every detail matches the imaginary ideal, the gestures of the performer are repeated and adjusted again and again, including the timing of opening the door, her accent, her facial expressions, and which foot she is supposed to move first. Along with the gradual perfection of performance are the participant's gestures being turned into 'efficacious ones in a non-practical way, symbolic rather than material' (cf. Ryan 2014: 28). What needs pointing out is that the protagonist, as the director who initiates and supervises the re-enactment, moves on to recreate the next idealised scene when the first one has been acted out to his satisfaction. However, those

who are hired for the first scene are paid to render the ideal day after day from then on. In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Catherine Bell argues that 'ritualisation is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organisations' (Bell 2009: 197). In this sense, the anonymous protagonist's personal attempt to represent idealised imaginations of the past reveals how the performers are deprived of their sense of self by ritualised repetitions. Once absorbed into the ritual, the participants have no choice but to devote themselves to copying exactly what is inherited from a canonised imagination that defies boundaries of time and space. In other words, the subjects in the organic system, as suggested in *Satin Island*, are merely mechanical collectors who are programmed to justify the 'great incorporation', and will eventually turn into a new dossier of the Great Report (McCarthy 2015: 212-217). As suggested in McCarthy's novels, the self-healing strategies of an organic state (during critical moments) have pervaded into individual subject's every single gesture in daily life – a British evidence of the naturalisation of the state of exception in contemporary literature. In these fictions, the ritualisation of repetition shows a strong sense of biopolitics in British organicism. As long as the precedent is canonised as the only source of moral discipline, a character's absorption into an organic space also means a political body's permanent deprivation of subjectivity.

4.2 The Post-British Sisyphus: Repetition and Difference

Because of the ritualisation of repetitions in everyday life, all citizens are in effect political bodies that have no option but to contribute to the perpetuation of an idealised past (cf. Hobbes 1996: chs. 4-7, 9-10; cf. Agamben 1998: 57-67). Being 'natural', whether in the Hobbesian notion of following a divine law or in the Burkean ideal of conforming to tradition, thus always relies on the continuity of an originary structure. It is taken for granted in a Britishness narrative that individuals' present-tense practice of repetition would not be justifiable unless subject to the imaginary past. The endings of both McCarthy novels indicate that the two leading characters, despite their temporary attempts to jump outside everyday-life repetitions, seem to have been recaptured by the system without even noticing it. But at the same time, neither of these characters looks frustrated in their return to organic space, insisting that they are already different persons after the short rebellion. The ambiguity of these endings raises an important question that also confuses the protagonists in *Wish You Were Here* and *Kingdom Come*: is it possible, or is it already happening, that a temporary break from the organic system can make

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political bodies, even after being re-absorbed by Britishness narratives, reconsider their potential of intellectual independence from the organicist repetition of sameness?

As depicted in McCarthy novels, the constant expansion of the Burkean idea of organic Britain would be impossible without two preconditions. One is the coerciveness attributed to acts of repetition. Citizens are educated by the organic system to *want* to participate in the replication of an already-established ideal, and this duty has been imposed even before individuals become aware of it. In *Remainder*, the protagonist at one point sets about wondering when in his life 'he'd been the least artificial, the least second-hand' (McCarthy 2005: 23). As it turns out, the coercive absorption is present not only in the anti-hero's adulthood when the non-stop re-enactment of an idealised societal order becomes a predominant task – when consciousness begins to take shape (or, begins to be shaped by the existing order), the impulse to repeat increases constantly. '(Childhood) is the worst time. You're always performing, copying other people, things you've seen them do – and copying them badly too' (McCarthy 2005: 23). This situation continues till the end of the character's life, for he is unaware that his experiments in creation have always been an addiction to replication. The other precondition lies in the organicist strategy viewing repetitions as the unconditional production of sameness. In the context of Britishness, while there is a coercion towards the *inclusiveness* requested by the Britishing system, the production of sameness, defined as the unquestionable purpose of repetition, exposes the *exclusiveness* of being organic. This kind of inclusiveness can be regarded as one of the most significant principles of Britishness, because it rests on the premise that subjects need to be assimilated by the state. Apart from the need to construct a placeless, ahistorical imagination, the organicist obsession with a continuity characterised by the notion of sameness adds to this narrative a moral dimension. In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze offers a precise analysis of repetition's implied narrative of a moral ideal:

> what good is moral law if it does not sanctify reiteration, above
> all if it does not make reiteration possible and give us a legislative
> power from which we are excluded by the law of nature? … The
> Good holds out the possibility of repetition, of successful
> repetition and of the spirituality of repetition, because it depends
> not upon a law of nature but on a law of duty, of which, as moral

beings, we cannot be subjects without also being legislators. What is Kant's 'highest test' if not a criterion which should decide what *can* in principle be reproduced… The man of duty invented a 'test' of repetition; he decided what in principle could be repeated. (Deleuze 1994:4)

In his critique of the morality of repetition, Deleuze is concerned about whether the man of duty is indeed the 'inventor' of the 'test of repetition' (cf. 1994: 4-15). On the issue of what should be reproduced, is this decision actually made by the moral legislator, and based on established categories of Good and Evil? From Deleuze's point of view, the making of moral law is often characterised as pre-existing its supposed legislator, and the authority of a moral narrative that forbids rewriting is derived exactly from a hypothesis that the production and canonisation of such a discourse always, and can only, exist in the unreachable past. As in the political philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, and Burke, the genius of Britishness lies in its associating this moral duty of repetition with *nature*. In order to abide by the natural law, the people, though appearing to be the active narrator, are the *de facto* passive reciter of canonical values. Therefore, the only criteria to assess individuals' performance of repetition are accuracy and sameness. When a difference is noticed between what is replicated and the norm of the precedent, it is never perceived as difference in itself. Instead, difference, in the organicist sense, is subordinated to sameness, or could only be understood in terms of resemblance (cf. Deleuze 1994: 1-18, 63). In Deleuze's response to this Platonic perception (which is also inherited in the thinking of Hobbes, Locke, and Burke), difference is not about oppositions and distinctions but about 'selection' (Deleuze 1994: 63-64). In other words, division does not operate according to the question 'in what way do these things differ?' but according to the question 'which is the best?' (cf. Deleuze 1994: 58-66, cf. Williams 2003: 80). The standard of this sort of selection is not dependent on the subjective judgment of any specific individuals that are situated in the present. The basis for such a selection is myth, which is not present in that which has to be selected – they are 'only pretenders to the perfection found in myth' (Williams 80-81). Therefore, it is not so surprising that the idealised precedent, in the British sense of natural law, *must* always have the upper hand in the moral contest against all 'imperfect' copies in the contemporary literature of England.

Correspondingly, the traumatised anti-hero in *Remainder*, as well as U in *Satin Island*, notices at some point that the crisis of self-identification in an organic Britain has much to do with enforced resemblance via repetitions. As this transcendental notion of sameness extends to possess every single moment in everyday life, it automatically does the selection for its subjects according to the pre-existing moral code. Thus a combination of coerciveness and selectiveness gives rise to a permanent (self-)assessment of whether one's performance violates established norms, ensuring that all subjects remain in a transcendental trajectory – instead of looking to the future, every person is disciplined to return to the prioritised precedence (cf. Deleuze 1994: 64-66; cf. de Certeau 1998: 36-39). The shared taste of black humour in the ending of both fictions seems to suggest that this enforced (then gradually internalised) trajectory cannot be reversed. However, this may not be the whole picture of how repetition affects the imagination of organic Britain. Both characters, for some time, have been engaged in a movement away from the ideal via repetitions, and have brought chaos to the organic community. It is worth noting that not all the effects generated by the production of 'difference' are eventually diminished by the disciplining force of repetition. From the perspective of a post-British critique, the production of difference (from the idealised past) does not rely on any (historical) contingency, but on the binary nature of repetition. More importantly, the interruption of organicist narrative caused by the production of difference is unavoidable.

In both McCarthy novels the repetitions by most characters not only take on the prioritised task of producing sameness, they also present another long suppressed attribute – the connection between repetition and difference. The notion of difference here should not be viewed as serving the moral selection of the British ideal (cf. Deleuze 1994: 28-30). As Deleuze states clearly at the very beginning of his work: 'repetition is not generality', and these two conceptions 'must be distinguished' (1994: 1). Although this argument might not be a direct response to organicism, its core idea refutes the logic inherent in British empiricism that there is a positive connection between the inheritance of sameness and the maintenance of natural law:

> generality belongs to the order of laws. However, law determines
> only the resemblance of the subjects ruled by it, along with their
> equivalence to terms which it designates… if repetition is
> possible, it is due to miracle rather than to law. It is against the

law: against the similar form and the equivalent content of law. If repetition can be found in nature, it is in the name of a power which affirms itself against the law, which works underneath laws, perhaps superior to laws. If repetition exists, it expresses at once a singularity opposed to the general, a universality opposed to the particular, a distinctive opposed to the ordinary, an instantaneity opposed to variation, and an eternity opposed to permanence. (Deleuze 1994: 2-3)

According to Deleuze, the function of repetition should not be limited to presenting two major orders required by the upkeep of natural law: the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences (1994: 1-3). Instead, repetitions may lead to a transgression that puts law into question and denounces its general character in favour of a 'more profound and more artistic reality' (Deleuze 1994: 3). As far as the two novels' main characters are concerned, their endings mark their re-identification as performers of the organicist ritual of repetition. But in some sections of their performance, they practice a re-enactment that is more of a moral transgression than of a blind inheritance of the past. In McCarthy's texts, this kind of repetition can be divided into two categories, similar in terms of their relation to the making of difference, yet noticeably distinct with regards to their effects. In a sense, the division of these two categories rests on whether the act to produce difference is intentional.

The first type of repetition (of difference) refers to the fact that the characters notice the link between the established ideal of being natural and the prescriptive order of resemblance. Hence they choose to create something different from the idealised imagination, so that the repetitions can be used to counteract the internalised moral narrative. By emphasising a sense of awareness of the creation of differences, some characters aim to redraw the boundary between truth and fiction, and more importantly, to retrieve long suppressed subjectivity. For this reason, the characters show explicitly a sceptical attitude towards British ideals, and seem unbothered by any criticism of their rebellious whimsies. For example, in *Satin Island*, U, after an epiphany, comes to realise that his inability to be free in the present is due to his life-long submission to an impulse to relate to the transcendental past. In order to find a way out, his conclusion is that a present-tense anthropology fully concentrating on 'radiant nowness' must be established.

In an academic conference, at which 'contemporary' has been set as the theme, U passionately introduces his vision of a new paradigm to replace the established one (McCarthy 2015: 115-116). In his own words, the character admits that 'I wasn't ready to give all that stuff, all those half-formed notions of the concept, an outing', and that 'I'd started to harbour doubts about their viability' (McCarthy 115). This suggests that U's expectation of difference is closely tied to his motivation of confrontation and negation. No wonder this presentation is snubbed by the audience: 'the talk was met with silence, then, when the audience realised that I'd finished, a smattering of polite clapping. No one approached me to discuss it afterwards' (McCarthy 116). However, although U fails to get the audience on board with his half-formed vision, no sense of frustration can be detected in U's reaction. On the contrary, such voluntary marginalisation is valorised in his monologue as 'intellectually adventurous' (McCarthy 115). This intentional production of difference in the public thus can be seen as an attempt to disclose the confrontational relationship between political bodies and pre-existing authority. U's transition from a passive re-enactment of sameness to an active creation of difference is suggestive of his awakening: the natural law that calls for the repetition of sameness is against the nature of individual subject, and the primary step to avoid the eternal return to the past, from his point of view, relies on one's motivation to produce difference. This kind of awakening (a quest for intellectual independence) is also noticeable in some characters mentioned in previous chapters – Jack Luxton's sudden decision to leave Jebb farmhouse and the unexpected transition of officer Banji into a rioter against institutionalised British order. From a post-British perspective, there is a degree of inevitability in such a quest for independence in the contemporary literature of England. Although it is uncertain when (by which character, or in which specific gesture) this awakening will take place, the mythologising of sameness in an organic structure ensures that all characters will, in one specific moment, become aware of the fictiveness of an idealised past. For this reason, exploring and expanding differences hidden in everyday-life repetition seem to be a natural option to accomplish a counteractive narrative.

A similar evocation of differences also appears in *Remainder*. The experience of acting like a beggar and asking for money near Victoria station outweighs the protagonist's other experiments of repetition in terms of its political significance, and is mentioned twice throughout the text. Of course, a gesture or a specific scene being brought up more than once *per se* seems not extraordinary in a novel about repetition. It is the moment in

which these gestures actually take place that is worth analysing. The first occasion for the character to play the role of beggar sees him being filled with a feeling of reality for the first time since the accident. This scene is recalled later when his representation of other everyday-life scenes becomes not enough for him to regain the sensation of being authentic and natural. From then on his ritual escalates to the repetition of crimes, such as murder and bank robbery. According to the anti-hero's personal account of the re-enactment of begging, it is the first time after his traumatising experience that he is able to 'feel the tingling, a mixture of serene and intense, a feeling of intensity' (McCarthy 2005: 39). This experience marks the starting point of his ritualisation of repetition and rekindles his hope to become 'natural' again. Later on, he manages to pinpoint why this is a crucial moment in which he seems to have a taste of what he believes to be real: 'demanding money of which he most certainly had no need, and that's what's made him feel most real' (216). This gesture of self-analysis proves quite informative. The unreasonable act in a specific space leaves a smear on the supposedly flawless vision of an organic community sustained by repetitions of the reasonable. The act of begging for spare change occurs when the character has just received a huge compensation of eight and half million pounds and is on the way to meet his stockbroker. This stockbroker is recommended to the protagonist right after the signing of the compensation deal. So the logic behind this appointment is not hard to comprehend. The acquisition of property engenders the need to protect and increase one's wealth, then justifies the necessity to transfer one's own power of judgment to the professional to manage the property, and finally leads to the presumption that one's wealth is to be well looked after.

In *Remainder*, the decision to mimic begging is taken by everyone the anti-hero encounters in the organic society as a purposeful gesture of transgression, whereas his friends urge him to make constant investments and speculations to increase his wealth. The different attitudes prove ironical. His lawyer and new investment advisor perceive it as a moral duty to gain more money, totally ignoring the character's own confession that the large sum of compensation itself is the money he does not need in the first place. In other words, it would be seen as abnormal if a millionaire begged for more money on the street, though the motivation for this act is not fundamentally different from what is defined as professional investment – 'increasing one's own wealth by sharing in others' profits' (McCarthy 41). What is crystallised in the character's *intentional* creation of difference is his repulsion against non-negotiable 'common sense'. Being engaged in

repetition for the sake of increasing one's property alone is not enough. It has to be done by following canonical principles that exist even before the acquisition of the money. The new millionaire is advised not to have the repetition of investment based on his personal judgment, which means he cannot simply go for sectors he likes and finds promising (McCarthy 43). Instead, he is expected to respect the professional's authority and invest in the right way – a probability calculation to disperse the potential risk, a pure rational (and natural) procedure in the organic society (42-43). As the character initially refuses to take the advice, the response he receives is the advisor's 'flustered' look, as well as the constant persuasion in their later meetings that he should do the repetition in a correct way (43). From this perspective, the anti-hero's conscious attempt to violate established norms actually takes place even before his unconscious production of difference. Begging for the unwanted money and refusing to invest as advised are two gestures sharing the same logic: this character is desperate to break from what is defined as reasonable. A tension is thus elicited from the conflict between the transgressive repetition and the natural order of the organic society – in this case a voluntary parody of a Lockean state that sees the protection of property as the basis of British ideals. Such a tactic (an intentional mixture of difference into the prerequisite sameness) is repeatedly applied to other parts of his ritual of repetition. After all, the millionaire's later representation of the scene of a bank robbery is also a parody that can be categorised as 'demanding money of which he most certainly had no need' (cf. McCarthy 251-254). Because the anti-hero who is gradually driven mad by the imposed organicist discipline, the blatant creation of immoral differences seems to be the only 'legitimate' method to reject the moral rhetoric of sameness.

The initiative of this character to add a touch of difference to everyday-life repetitions testifies to an appeal to distancing oneself from pre-existing second-hand experience. When his contravention of law and common sense continues to expand via repetitions, a morbid excitement sheds light on the character's wish to relocate himself *outside* the organic system. Both McCarthy novels are devoted to making a distinction between their production of difference and the sameness of organicism. On the intrinsic quality of difference, both leading characters point to the issue of the historical in their critique of organic canonicity. U's insistence on prioritising a knowledge of the present completely independent from the imaginary past suggests that his break from repeating idealised sameness rests on the temporal specificity of difference. Likewise, the rebellious creation

of difference in *Remainder* also questions the credibility of an idealised vision that is outside of history. Before his systematic production of difference, the traumatised protagonist firmly believes that a sincere participation in the ritual of repetition is the only way he can become natural and re-unite with the alienated world. His sincere attempts include an exercise of 'rerouting' supervised by his physiotherapist in the hospital, involving routing the circuit that transmits commands to limb and muscles through another patch of brain. To be more specific, the patient is told to repeat (the imagination of) eating a carrot so that his body can learn how to function in a proper way (McCarthy 2005: 18). Behind this training is the theory that the repetition of resemblance can offer the trainee a sense of security and certainty in his return to society. But the pursuit of certainty is not limited to the traumatised other. For the organic society that aims at naturalising the subject again, guaranteeing that the character can be rerouted to embrace organicist principles is a condition that has to be met. Nevertheless, the repetition of rerouting not only fails to make the character become normal, but widens the gap between the subject and the organic order: 'my movements are all fake, second-hand' (McCarthy 21-22). From the anti-hero's point of view, this is largely due to the set-up of an ahistorical being as the target of repetition:

> for the first week or so they don't give you a carrot…they just ask you to picture yourself lifting a(n) (imaginary) carrot to your mouth, again and again and again, cuts circuits through your brain that will eventually allow you to perform the act itself… but then you take a carrot – they bring you a fucking carrot, gnarled, dirty and irregular in ways your imaginary carrot never was, and they stick it in your hands – and you know, you just know as soon as you see the bastard thing that it's not going to work. (McCarthy 2005: 18-19)

The character feels confused and irritated, as his hope of becoming natural and authentic again turns out to be dependent on a fake carrot that does not exist in any history. The method of returning to and replicating an ahistorical origin can only turn him into a product of second-handedness. When referring to the initial motivation of rebuilding certain scenes of his memory, the character says: 'I remembered my gestures had been seamless, perfect in the imaginary scene, and I'd merged with them and let them run

through me until there'd been no space between us' (60). Expressions such as 'I remembered' and 'I'd merged with them' emphasise the historical existence of those scenes. Also, the distinction between 'being asked to imagine an image' and 'discover an image in one's memory' reveals the character's concern about the certainty of things' existence. But as it turns out, his rebuilding of a particular scene does not give him the anticipated feeling of reality. The unreliability of the protagonist's account of the past emerges after the accident. His assertion of the scenes in the memory ('they had been real; I had been real'), to some extent, proves fictional in terms of its temporal and spatial specificity (McCarthy 60). One crucial detail is mentioned during the character's viewing of the rebuilt scene: 'swings were being installed that day. I hadn't seen swings in my original vision of the courtyard – but they'd grown there later' (McCarthy 109). The image of swings is not part of the anti-hero's memory but a childhood experience belonging to his friend Catherine. Attracted by Catherine's depiction of the idealised image, the character does not even bother hiding the fact that this element should not have been displayed in this space – a space in which everything is supposed to have truly existed in *his* past. After a few attempts at repetition, the narrator's comment on the recreated vision is that it is 'almost perfect' (112). His satisfaction with the outcome is not about his accurate copy of certain imaginary scenes. What really makes him thrilled is that he actually re-designs the space in accordance with his at-the-moment needs and judgements. The content of the scene is purposefully made different from the idealised memory, but the character is not afraid to admit it is the difference of 'nowness' that feels real. The protagonist's claim that he has attained a 'sense of reality', from a post-British perspective, can be interpreted as a political body's disobedience towards the framework of British organicism. Although this disobedience, like many contemporary Englishness narratives, often relapses into a process of re-canonisation (see in Chapter One), it accurately reveals the structural imbalance between presence and (imagined) precedence. In this sense, the anti-hero's obsession with 'nowness' is indeed a repulsion towards a transcendental moral narrative that invokes a Britishing pilgrimage to the past.

In these two fictions, therefore, we can see the existence of two different frameworks for the ritual of repetition. Each possesses a distinct pattern of interaction with an ideal conception. What can be observed in Britishness is the coexistence of a transcendental *Repetition* requested by the organic continuity and the *repetitions* used by individuals to produce other narratives. The first type (the organicist Repetition) is a one-way path of

pilgrimage to an imaginary past. This is also viewed by organic Britishness as the only legitimate approach to maintain natural law. Sameness and absolute authority are usually stressed as its intrinsic qualities, suggesting that the ritual of Repetition is in effect a form of meta-narrative. In one dossier of the Great Report, U's colleague studies the Muslim pilgrims performing the Hajj inside the giant mosque in Mecca (McCarthy 2015: 109). No evidence in the text can relate the character to Islam, nor does the conversation between U and his colleague suggest an interest in the religious implications of Mecca. The reason the researcher is so fascinated by this case is because it illustrates a pattern of movement that points to the eternal return to an original point:

> thousands, tens of thousands, of them knelt and stood in neat, concentric rows; as these static rows converged towards the cube, itself the size of a large building, that lay at the centre of the mosque, they turned into a swirl of slowly moving bodies circling the object… (It is called) *Tawaf*, circumambulation. They move anti-clockwise round the Kaaba… when, nearer the centre, they all started circling, they became a spinning comet… the process seemed endless, self-perpetuating. (McCarthy 2016: 109-110)

The scene at Mecca is portrayed by U's colleague as a ritual of Repetition that is situated in a cultural space quite different from that of organic Britain. But this particular ritual turns out to be a significant inspiration for U to pinpoint the division between Repetition and repetitions. The organic ritual of Repetition is one-way structured (see A), and the movement of the concentric rows is 'anti-clockwise' (McCarthy 110). This annual pilgrimage – moving from the outside rows towards the sacred cube that is placed at the centre of the circle – marks a return from the present to the originary point. Since the centre is set as the source of absolute truth, the repeated movement of worshipping is designed to make pilgrims feel the distance before they reach the idealised spot again. This explains why U sees in this ritual a 'meta-trajectory' of return, not only for religious pilgrims but also for every person in an organic state. Such a movement, according to the conclusion of U's Great Report, is comparable to an 'integer that rejects the possibility of being decomposed into factors' (McCarthy 110-112). This organicist stress on viewing all subjects' movement as an indivisible whole suggests that Repetition is performed not by persons but by an idealised imagination of people. Any deflection from the set course

would be defined as morally wrong, and the character who is off the track has to be disciplined to find his way back to the past.

Present
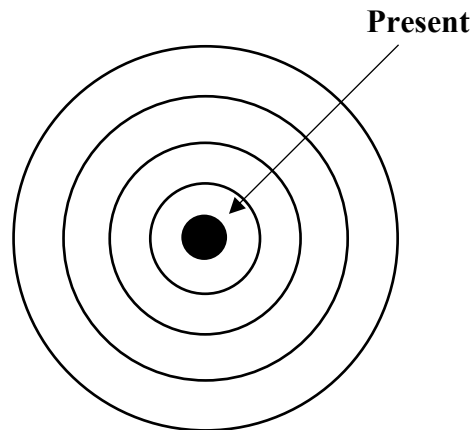
(A) The One-way Repetition of Sameness

Summit (Ideal)
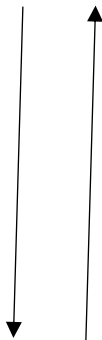
Difference (Gravity)
(B) The Two-way Repetition of Difference

The second type of ritual (by which the characters intentionally produce difference) is structurally different from the organicist imagination of Repetition (see B). On the one hand, the character's performance is still constantly assessed in terms of his distance from the ideal, and only the movement towards the timeless ideal is morally approved in organicist narratives. On the other hand, this type of ritual, as a repetition of difference, draws from the prototype of Sisyphus myth. The interplay between the participant and the idealised point is no longer a one-way pattern. Instead, the model of Repetition is replaced by a circulation constituted by two interrelated sub-rites – the rite of departure (from the summit as an idealised point) and the one of pilgrimage (that aims at a belated arrival at the top). Though the lingering organicist lens, the relationship between the two sub-rites is unequal. The departure from the ideal serves not as the ending of one round

of repetition, but the starting point of the production of difference. This explains why the Sisyphus myth almost always stresses the trajectory upwards to the summit, as if that particular section could define the purpose of everyday-life repetitions. A similar sequence of circulation is noticeable as the basic structure of contemporary Britishness in *Remainder*: the anti-hero first experiences a movement downwards (the alienation caused by the accident falling from the sky), and then he starts moving upwards (hijacking the jet and returning to the sky). The repeated upward movement is canonised by Britishness historiography, but it does not show the whole picture. The distinction between the organicist Repetition of resemblance and the subjects' use of repetitions of difference indicates that the Sisyphean trajectory would be incomplete without the post-British movement of distancing from the ahistorical ideal. It is in this part of the ritual that a literary rupture emerges between the expectation created by everyday-life repetitions and the one imposed by organic being.

The two protagonists' conscious acts to break natural law cause a temporary discontinuity of the British structure, but both seem to have been assimilated in the end. Such an outcome has much to do with the consciousness that triggers the characters' systematic production of difference in the first place. Firstly, this consciousness of difference (shared by both characters) is presented as closely connected with eccentric immoral acts. In the eyes of other citizens, the anti-hero's re-enactment of a bank robbery is by no means an acceptable method to regain one's sense of self. The canonical principle of organic Britishness ensures that the imagined community is capable of self-healing – constantly assimilating the other narrative. Its logical justification is based on a conceptual paradox. Any debate that might expose its self-contradiction is always dragged into a logical pitfall that traps dissidents in an endless loop of sophistry. Therefore, individuals' 'imperfect' acts of repetition are often defined as minor 'accidents' that can be (and will be) easily fixed by the organic system. In *Remainder*, for instance, the ritual of repetition is triggered by an accident that 'falls from the sky', and the real cause is never explained, or even mentioned later, in the text (McCarthy 2005: 1-5). Equally odd is the compensation offered on the premise that the protagonist is not allowed to relate to this specific past. In this sense, the ensuing experiments of repetition become possible only because of a miraculously random achievement of the required motivation and the (monetary) condition (McCarthy 2005: 2-14). To some extent, the principle of embracing the law of nature and the occasional deflection from the ideal are not necessarily a pair

of absolute antitheses for the continuity of British myths. On the contrary, the latter turns out to be an indispensable factor in justifying the continuation of organic order.

Drawing from Deleuze's analysis of difference and repetition, the authority of an idealised past would be groundless without a constant comparison to the repetition (of difference) located in a temporal specificity (cf. Deleuze 1994: 4-5). What is also stressed by Deleuze is the organicist approach used to fix the disruption of a political space by reiterating a canonical narrative of morality. According to Deleuze's critique of the classical paradigm of cognition: difference is usually understood merely as a 'relative measure of sameness' (cf. 1994: 28-30). Logically, the organic imagination rejects (structural) 'difference', but the self-justification of its narrative authority is built upon a division of 'Good' and 'Evil' (Deleuze 1994: 3-5). This strategy proves most applicable in the Burkean defence of organic ideals, as his argument centres around the binary opposition between the natural reform of Britain and the unnatural revolution of France. In practice, imperfect replication stimulates contradictions, and a tension between the canonised knowledge of natural law and the senses produced by placed experiences. Due to this tension, those who still abide by the organicist principle are deprived of the promised sense of certainty. This suddenly imposed feeling of discomfort and alienation, in return, justifies the need to restore a shared imagination of space – a re-establishment of the authority of the ahistorical precedent. In McCarthy's novels, the practice of two different kinds of repetition alienates, at least momentarily, the characters who are trapped inside the framework of Britishness myths. But other citizens shocked by this production of difference do not realise the real source of such chaos – the continuity of an organic state and its constant expansion. The two protagonists, along with the estrangement 'accidentally' generated by their irrational performances, are regarded by others as black sheep. Towards the end of *Remainder*, the anti-hero's addiction to representing idealised scenes escalates to hijacking an aeroplane, circling around and creating a trajectory similar to the sign of infinity '∞' (McCarthy 2005: 274-275). Despite the seemingly abrupt ending, it is not too difficult to predict that either the jet is going to crash or the passengers will bring the plane under control and have a safe landing. No matter which outcome it is, it is certain that the accidental disorder is eventually replaced by the inevitable return of order. Hence an organic re-clarification of what order should be *infinite* and what *finite*. Although McCarthy does not articulate the connection between these two texts, the first scene of U being stuck in an airport suggests that *Satin*

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Island could be a sequel to *Remainder*: 'what was causing the delay was a rogue aeroplane, some kind of private jet, which, ignoring all instructions, was flying in idiosyncratic patterns over Southern England and the Channel' (McCarthy 2015: 4). What should be foregrounded here is how the moral narrative (about restoring order) always kicks in with perfect timing. In terms of the complaint and frustration at the disorder by 'lots of other people', the opportunity to pinpoint the fundamental reason for the character's eccentric behaviour is missed out. Instead, other characters' imagination of the rebellion is again turned into an endorsement of the 'authority' and 'authenticity' of an idealised past.

The second reason the deliberate production of difference fails to achieve a real independence from organic ideals is wrong choices of target. Both protagonists are determined to distinguish themselves from mechanical replication, but their criticism of Repetition focuses on the content of ideals instead of on the source of canonicity. In the second halves of these two fictions, a series of repetitions different from the natural order seems to have emerged. On closer examination, however, the production of difference is more like a play within a play – a sub-system not so fundamentally different from organic ideals in terms of their shared narrative method. In *Remainder*, the act of hijacking the aeroplane is viewed by the anti-hero as the climax of his transgression, an attempt eventually making him believe that he has seized a moment of 'truth':

> I didn't want it to stop. I looked around me – then I had a brilliant idea. 'Tell them I'm hijacking you,' I called to the pilot… reached down into my bag, pulled out my shotgun. 'Where do you want to go?' 'Nowhere. Just keep doing this… turning back, then turning out. Then turning back again. The way we are doing it now.' I looked out of the window again. I felt really happy… Eventually the sun would set for ever…Then there'd be no more music, no more loops. Or maybe, before that, we'd just run out of fuel. For now, though, the clouds tilted and the weightlessness set in once more as we banked, turning, heading back, again. (McCarthy 2005: 274-275)

Despite the character's imagination of this vision as an absolute opposite to natural law, it is quite clear that the sub-narrative has all the necessary elements to be transformed

into a new ideal. To begin with, the intentional production of difference is accompanied by a notable quest to stretch it into a permanent imagination that can be, and should be, repeated with accuracy. The character's refusal to let the aeroplane land is one of his symbolic gestures to distance himself from the natural order. However, it is indicated in his statement that he intends to perpetuate this momentary transgression into a new idealised state. When asked about his opinion of all the experiments of repetition, the anti-hero confesses: 'the realness I was after wasn't something you could just "do" once and then have "got": it was a state, a mode – one that I needed to return to again and again and again' (McCarthy 2005: 214-215). The change of appeal is explicit – from a firm stand of breaking from ideals to a relentless construction of new ones.

Because of such a change of appeal, the character's perception of difference is tainted with a feeling of repulsion, which is in contrast with his initial method of using differences to achieve transgressions. Apart from the final act of hijacking the aeroplane, a subtle sense of contradiction has already emerged in his previous repetitions. Once he feels that a repetition of a certain scene looks perfect (when the distance between the specific production of difference and imposed second-hand imaginations is ideal), the character finds it hard to endure any ensuing difference. In order to tackle this problem, he has no choice but resort to the tactic of *absence*. Instead of observing each attempt of repetition on the spot, he just hires some professional to build a miniature model of the scenes. While the performers continue the repetition outdoors, the anti-hero only plays with the model in his room and imagines that all details of his ideal are being accurately represented. In the first place, the creation of difference is for the purpose of breaking from organic imaginations. But the moment the character's own idea is extended into a new outside-of-history ideal, the aim of repetition again switches to a production of sameness. Just like the example of Luxton brothers in *Wish You Were Here*, the paradoxical desire of a (different) sameness is repeatedly suggested by the protagonist to be an important reason the return of England the place turns into the mythologising of a new imaginary England (Swift 2012: 108-112). The characters' intentional rewriting of myths marks an awareness that canonisation is an indispensable part of Britishing strategies. Nevertheless, when such a narrative of difference again switches to a perpetual self-replication, it is clear that the initial production of difference originates from an incomplete understanding of a Britishing system. The importance of canonisation to an undying British myth does not (entirely) rest on a mechanical copy of canonical contents,

but the continuity of canonicity that guarantees the eternal imprisonment of political bodies inside the originary (narrative) structure.

Moreover, since the character decides to turn his ritual of repetition into a new round of canonisation, an absolute (narrative) authority has to be added to his production of difference. Throughout the novel, the anti-hero's repetition and its impact are never limited to himself. The canonicity of his own ideal is also imposed on the rest of the performers. When referring to his relationship with the hired performers, he admits: 'I didn't need to make them share my vision, and I didn't want them to, they just had to know what to do' (McCarthy 2005: 101). He also says in his dialogue with one of his assistants: 'I don't want you to create a look. I want to you to execute the exact look I'll dictate to you' (107). This relationship confirms that the difference he desires is regarded as a vision of his own. But at the same time, the other performers' organic subordination to idealised imaginations remains. The protagonist's critique of the content of a transcendental past other than the legitimacy of its moral authority foretells his inevitable return to the organic framework. In both novels, the tactics used by the characters after their respective epiphanies concentrate on contrastive rewritings of natural law. However, their tactics fail to disclose the real source of idealised visions, and the trajectory of characters' repetition is very similar to the Sisyphean movement. At the summit is an unreachable point that the subject is forced to approach, whereas the movement downwards is perceived as a pure opposite to the moral obligation of going upward. But even if this opposite point at the bottom could be stretched into a new desired destination, the organicist pattern of repetition, though turned upside down, would still push the characters to move in a predetermined direction.

This explains why the conscious production of difference is eventually absorbed by the organic system in the later part of the novels. The two characters do not manage to liberate themselves from timeless ideals. Some of their assistants even become more obsessed with the ritual of repetition (McCarthy 2005: 207-209). At the end point of those intentional gestures of creating differences, subjects are still faced with two pairs of organicist concepts: the incompatible production of sameness and difference, the inevitability of organic order and the fortuity of disorder. But from what can be seen in McCarthy's texts, the perpetuation of a transcendental past as natural and unavoidable may have met a backfiring in those sincere repetitions of sameness. In other words, a

precise critique of the logic of organic continuity is possible in the second type of production of differences in everyday life – the unintentional one. The two models of the conscious production of difference show the division between organic Repetition and everyday-life repetitions. The mistake made by the characters is to assume that the division cannot exist without the subjects' conscious creation. Thus the critique of Repetition is entirely based on individuals' situational judgement. But the fact is, even when individuals are sincerely responding to the expectations of organicism, the emergence of difference in their repetitions cannot be avoided. Although this kind of unconscious production of difference has yet to be applied to the characters' criticism of idealised imaginations, its existence and impact have already been noticed:

> on a childhood holiday to San Francisco many years ago, I'd stood rooted to the pavement in front of a candy store window in which taffy was being pulled, transfixed by the contortions of the huge, unmanageable lump as the machine's arms plied it, its endless metamorphoses in which, despite the regular, repeating movements that stretched and folded, stretched and slapped the taffy through the same shapes over and over again, I knew, even then, that no part of it, no molecule, would ever occupy the same spot in the overall formation twice. (McCarthy 2015: 44)

The difference generated by repetitions proves to be independent of the character's subjective will, suggesting a fundamental role change in the ritual of repetition. Instead of voluntarily initiating an act of transgression, the characters only need to be observers of those unavoidable differences. As U suggests in his report, the most annoying aspect of everyday-life repetitions is that it is practically impossible to find one perfect copy of the original. Although the continuity of the organic system calls for an endless production of exact copies, the fact that the practice of such repetitions takes place in a real history is often ignored by those rebellious characters. While differences are still produced through the characters' placed actions, their main task is to perceive difference instead of considering what difference they should create. In his response to the inevitable production of difference in imagining a literary Englishness, Ian Baucom suggests that:

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> Even the hardiest *lieu de memoire* is mutable, because it not only
> occupies space but is occupied by living subjects who, as they
> visit, inhabit, or pass through it, leave their estranging marks
> upon it, the locale also serves as the site in which the present re-
> creates the past, as a 'contact zone' in which succeeding
> generations serially destabilise the nation's acts of collective
> remembrance, and in so doing reveal England as continuously
> discontinuous with itself, as that which may repeat itself but
> always repeats with a difference. (Baucom 1999: 5)

In both McCarthy novels, a number of setbacks in the characters' pursuit of exactness (a placed experience of England) suggest that the pursuit of absolute sameness *per se* might be a pseudo-proposition. Firstly, even the strictest selection of the object for repetition depends on a degree of arbitrariness and inaccuracy. In *Remainder*, the continuity of an organic society and the act of repetition are illustrated as connected by a 'refined' knowledge of correlation. On the issue of what memories should be chosen and canonised into norms, the characters, when deliberately creating differences, can randomly add an object to, or remove a person from, their scenes of repetition. This gesture, as analysed above, is a form of conscious rebellion. But in most situations, no matter how hard the characters try to remember, it is simply impossible to repeat a scene with exact sameness. For instance, at the beginning of one of his representations, the protagonist offers a rather idealised image of the precedent – 'the smell, the spit and sizzle of the liver being cooked on the floor below; and the memory of hearing piano music, not recorded music playing on a CD or the radio, but real, live music, being played on a piano by the man who lived there, a musician' (McCarthy 2005: 58). Before each attempt, he always provides extremely detailed information about the scene he plans to copy. Despite the confident proclamation that 'I remembered all this very clearly', the 'stage directions' for the hired performers turn out to be contradictory (McCarthy 58). For instance, he claims that he is certain about the appearance of a building, but does not have any clue of its location, the time of his visit, or the reason why he possesses a memory of its image. Besides, there is no evidence to prove the reliability of his depiction of the piano player. His identity as a musician, along with the assertion that it is a 'man who lives there', is more fiction than fact. As a result, he can either offer a rather vague description ("the fifth or sixth or maybe even seventh floor of an old tenement-style building"), or admit that he couldn't "place

this memory at all" (McCarthy 2006: 58-59). This incapacity to rebuild exact scenes unveils a rupture between the present and the past. As differences keep popping up, the anti-hero confesses his utmost frustration, as the rupture cannot be bridged even by the sincerest performers in ritualised repetitions. What this character fails to realise is that the systematic production of organic ideals rests on the imposition of a single untouchable narrative, which, at the same time, should also be resilient enough to manage and absorb changes from everyday-life repetitions. From this perspective, McCarthy's literary fictions offer an opportunity to reconsider the legitimacy of canonising the originary moment of contracting. For both protagonists, the sameness of being organic does not mean an exclusion of other contents, but rather the continuity of an originary structure and its moral authority to rewrite placed differences into idealised imaginations.

Secondly, organicist repetitions constitute a ritual of enforced identification, which, after all, is a form of performance. Performers are certainly required to make gestures in accordance with an established norm – the organicist emphasis on an eternal return to the past. However, these performances are 'placed' acts, which means they must evoke subjects' situational re-interpretations of ritualised repetition. Such re-interpretations are seen as misinterpretations in the organicist context. But to a large extent, the existence of such a performativity (or a tendency to re-interpret) is independent from performers' personal choice. This is a fact that the grand narrative of organic Britishness has been desperate to deny, because it suggests the impossibility of an organic state to have absolute control of political bodies. In his dialogue with assistants, the anti-hero is extremely sensitive about how to address those hired to re-enact his vision: "'performers" isn't the right word. [It's] staff, participants, re-enactors' (McCarthy 2005: 81). But the reality is that the performativity of ritual is fully exposed once a re-enactment begins. No matter how cooperative the participants are, the protagonist has to admit: 'don't bother. It (the idealised image) is broken… it won't be right' (McCarthy 2005: 132). Sometimes the anti-hero's obsession with accuracy turns out to prove that the attempt to repeat is indeed an act of improvising. As mentioned above, the character at times is not so certain about all the details of a vision. For the purpose of not ruining the reliability of re-enactment, he'd demand that some of the performers should wear a white mask to blank it out as 'some faces had never come to him' (McCarthy 2005: 122). Masking, as a gesture of absorbing all elements of otherness, is a strategy that has to be employed in organicist repetitions. But for any attentive observers, this stage device can be regarded

as a 'blatant' revelation of performativity (McCarthy 2005: 132-135). A re-enactment, no matter how perfect it is, cannot sustain the organicist aspiration to produce moral legislation. In *Remainder*, loopholes always emerge even in the most carefully designed scenes. But the real problem for the protagonist is how he should define his ritual of repetition – a make-do ideal despite those inaccurate details, or an inevitable parody that defies the organicist notion of sameness?

The same question is raised in *Satin Island*. Although absorbed by the organic framework, U and his colleagues are also 'placed' observers with first-hand experience of the constant production of difference. According to Deleuze, passive observers are *de facto* critics in that they, compared with any constructor of ideals, are more aware of on important fact – there is no *original* article, and simulacra are selected with respect to the relation of a given actual situation to the expression of pure differences, with a view to maximising their number and intensity and in line with the need not to perpetuate the 'illusion of fixed identities or values' (cf. Deleuze 1994: 60-68). As James Williams concludes very precisely: 'selection is not between true and false pretenders but between simulacra and only simulacra' (2003: 82). In a sense, this is how the organic constitution of Britishness works – a constant projection backwards, an echo of what never substantially existed. From the post-British perspective, the end point of the critique of organicism is not about renegotiating what should be repeated. It is an ideological contest for the right to interpret the nature of repetition:

> pondering these facts, a new spectre, an even more grotesque realisation, presented itself to me: the truly terrifying thought wasn't that the Great Report might be unwritable, but – quite the opposite – that it had *already been written*. Not by a person, nor even by some nefarious cabal, but simply by a neutral and indifferent binary system that had given rise to itself, moved by itself and would perpetuate itself: some auto-alphaing and auto-omegating script – that that's what it *was*. (McCarthy 2015: 153)

The crisis of organic order is not a problem about the outcome of repetition – sameness, difference, or both at the same time. It is a problem about why the ritual of repetition, during the production of Britishness myth, demands to be seen only as a source of

sameness. Likewise, the aim of post-Britishness is not to deny the possible function of repetition to evoke sameness, but to ask if it is also possible to view everyday-life acts in a different way. The core of the contest of interpretations is the chance to reconsider the function of repetition. And more importantly, whether it is possible for a political body to momentarily break from the eternal return to an idealised past. In terms of the organicist aspect of natural law, the trajectory of a Sisyphean movement is not made possible because of the existence of Sisyphus. Nor is it out of Sisyphus's willingness to participate that the repeated acts of rolling the rock towards the summit can come into being. A similar comment on the nature of repetition has also been made by Charles Peguy: 'it is not Federation Day which commemorates or represents the fall of the Bastille, but the fall of the Bastille which celebrates and repeats all the others' (1917: 45, 114). The inevitable emergence of difference in everyday-life repetitions, however, helps clarify that organic ideals are a mere myth because Repetition can only exist outside of history. Once the act of repetition is no longer fixed with the imposed exclusive notion of sameness, the demythologisation of Britishness narrative would not be seen as 'unnatural'.

Conclusion

What We Talk When We Talk About Post-British Independence

The application of post-British approaches to contemporary literatures of England suggests a specific aim of interpretation – to uncover an *originary* method of Britishness that systematically turns England into timeless ideals. This means that post-British interpretations focus on questioning (the legitimacy of) the structural power of British narratives, and more importantly on investigating the perpetual inclusive-exclusion of politicised bodies within an organic space (cf. Agamben 1998: 4-9, 24-28). An intellectual independence from Britishness would be groundless unless political bodies first became aware of their status of being captured by the organic structure. Post-British methods of reading, to a large extent, raise the possibility of detecting in literary texts some underlying strategies of Britishness. For instance, in *The North London Book of the Dead*, Will Self tells a story of a forty-year-old bachelor unexpectedly coming across his dead mother in Crouch End. What makes this character even more shocked is the fact that the city is full of citizens who were dead and then resurrected to continue their lives in North London:

> My mother was dead. All of this made the events that transpired in the winter of the year she died even more shocking. I was walking down Crouch Hill towards Crouch End on a drizzle, bleak, Tuesday afternoon. When, coming up the other side of the road I saw mother… Well, it's like this. When you die you go and live in another part of London. And that's it. (Self 2011: 2-5)

Because of the autobiographical touch, it would be quite natural for reviewers to assume that Self is just attempting to share and contemplate the idea of death by creating a hilarious yet traumatic dialogue with posthumous parent. However, a post-British analysis is also applicable to this weird vision of the afterlife. Self's paradoxical imagination of an undying space rejuvenated by the diseased could be regarded as a political allegory of Britishness – an organic community based on ritualised repetitions in everyday life and perpetually controlling citizens' right of life. There is a notable sense

of contradiction in Self's narrative: a strong motivation of presenting the experience of English places is also captured by the 'British value' of English Literature. This kind of contradiction is not rare in the contemporary literatures of England. The model of two Londons competing with each other for an exclusive narrative power, as I have analysed in Chapter Two, can also be witnessed in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995), and in China Miéville's *King Rat* (1998) and *Un Lun Dun* (2007). In line with the critical models in this thesis, all these novels expose a hierarchical narrative structure that constantly produces the displaced imagination of a nation, and also suggest individual characters' incapacity of breaking away from the Britishing system in order to locate the real England.

The conflictual yet symbiotic relationship of British strategy and post-British tactic, as argued in Chapter One, suggests that critique of Britishness is directly caused by the continuity of the Britishing narrative framework. As we can see in the works of J.G. Ballard, Tom McCarthy, and Gillian Slovo, most of these authors' English characters' initial rebellions against being absorbed by the narratives of organic Britishness end up justifying the state-nation's eternal return to an imaginary past. The ambiguity of these characters' sense of self, from a post-British perspective, would also be worth considering when assessing contemporary narratives of David Mitchell, Julian Barnes, Hanif Kureishi, and Zadie Smith. As the counteracting interplay of Britishness and post-Britishness makes the nature of these authors' texts uncertain, there emerges the question of whether the England presented by these authors is a placed image or a new expanded ideal. This is nicely seen in the story of Jason Taylor, a sensitive teenager and the leading narrator in Mitchell's *Black Swan Green* (2006), recalling a quite symbolic scene of local children playing a game called 'British Bulldogs':

> unimportant kids' coats were put at either end of the lake as goalmouths to reach through and to defend. Girls and titches were cleared off the ice… British Bulldogs! One Two Three! Screaming like kamikazes, we charged… About a third of the Runners got captured and turned into Bulldogs for the next pass. I hate that about British Bulldogs. It forces you to be a traitor. (Mitchell 2006: 7)

There are two intertwined narrative threads in Mitchell's novel – a stammering adolescent who attempts to use fictional writings to find his own voice, and a nostalgic memory of imperial Britishness brought by the Falklands War and the sweeping influence of Thatcherism in the 1980s. As with the structures of Graham Swift's *Last Orders* (1996) and *Wish You Were Here* (2012), the existence of a space of (moral) power formed by an authoritative voice makes the two paralleled narratives intersect. Whilst the father makes the rules for everyone in the family, the voice of the state-nation also expands until the English family is fully absorbed by Britishness myths. Jason's monologues show that he is often haunted by an illusion that the unchallengeable voice of his father is no different from the assertive tone of the radio broadcaster on the updates of the Falklands. The young protagonist abhors this voice yet finds it difficult to escape from its everyday-life assimilations. Although Jason has attempted to use his writings to develop a counteractive rhetoric against his father's (as well as the radio's) verbal production of power, the 'new' form of narrative fails to overthrow the established power of space, and turns out to be another replica of the originary structure. In a sense, the protagonist's state of confusion is accurately reflected in his attitude towards the Bulldogs game. In spite of his dislike of the game, Jason has to participate so that he can keep his 'membership' of this adolescent clan instead of being kicked out to join the 'girls and titches'. No matter how perfect his tactic is and how fast he runs, being captured and turned into a British Bulldog is the only outcome as long as Jason stays in the game. Thus, the logical trick of this game lies in the fact that the motivation of the runner is at odds with the inevitable outcome (as well as the moral duty) of this role. In other words, the purpose of running is to be captured. This seemingly paradoxical design implies the fundamental principle that allow this game to continue. The spirit of British Bulldogs is all about creating a closed structure of repetition, as I have suggested of the organicist strategy of Britishness. It constantly produces runners to transform them into predators, to chase other newly created runners. Whoever is designated to play the role of runner, and whenever a runner is captured, this repetition is the key to the game's continuation.

I have suggested that the significance of such an organicist structure is largely underestimated, if not entirely neglected, in post-devolution re-imaginings of England (cf. Kumar 2015: 8-12). As argued in Chapter Three, there is a biopolitical thread that links the thinking of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben, and suggests that a post-British critique should be concerned about the

Foucauldian model (the birth of a new organic ideal and its replacement of the old) in the grand narrative of the state. On the contrary, this thesis has concentrated on criticising the systematic production of violence in an imagined community – a methodology that shares Agamben's interest in locating an 'original structure'. From this perspective, the perpetuation of organic Britishness is possible because a biopolitical framework always lingers in the making of the imagined community. As I analysed in Part Two, there is neither the theoretical basis to define the organic state as a product of modernity, nor any indication that the inherent 'original structure' would be replaced by a whole new system. This explains why ambiguous characters in contemporary literatures of England tend to shift between the roles of rebels and pilgrims. Individuals' bodies are permanently politicised in being captured by the organic state, and the creation of a political body is the originary (narrative) activity of a sovereign power (cf. Agamben 1999: 162). In the meantime, the relationship between individual subjects and the British ideal – whether they are in a state of cooperation or conflict – is totally dependent on what stage of the eternal return to the original point biopolitical Britishness has reached in rejuvenating itself. Drawing on post-British thinking, the analysis of literary texts in this thesis has thus been an attempt to reveal the automatic, ritualised practice of repetition, arguing that it is the functioning of an original (narrative) structure that has turned Britishness into a timeless myth.

A post-British interest in exposing the structural capture of individuals, though, could easily draw questions about the continuity (or perpetuity) of organicist repetition. The question of continuity can be divided into two sub-questions. Firstly, has the history of Britishness ever witnessed an end of structural rejuvenation? In Part Two of this thesis, I stressed the biopolitical nature of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British philosophy, and pointed out that the thinking of certain seventeenth-century philosophers is still applicable to understanding the contemporary re-canonisation of placeless imaginations in this moment of Englishness. Awareness of the philosophical origin of British organicism and the adaptation of this canonical model in devolutionary context is crucial to describing the continuity of an originary structure. The credibility of this argument does not rest on examining the entire history of Britishness to prove that the fundamental framework of British narrative has never changed. This research has proposed that the status of organicism on the two ends of this history (from the Hobbesian moment of social contracting to Agamben's model of the camp as the Nomos of the

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modern) is decisive in terms of judging the structural continuity of Britishness. A different yet 'advanced' system, if it ever existed during this span of history, would have transcended the organic one by absorbing the latter's source of narrative power, and having political bodies permanently liberated from structural violence. In other words, the perpetual rebirth of organic Britishness would have been terminated if there were such a breaking point in history. According to my analysis of Sisyphean characters in Chapter Four, the existence of an imagined end is questionable, because the organic structure, as well as its production of political bodies, is still inherited in repetitions of the Britishness myth today.

The second question about continuity lies in the possibility of a future break from the originary structure. As discussed in Chapter Three, the British community always heals itself, because the organic system manages to legitimise the use of violence in disorder and hide its continuous production of violence after the order is restored. The primary goal in justifying the use of violence is to naturalise the transition between order and disorder, and at the same time minimise the potential threat to the organicist framework. This is why it is so crucial for a post-British critique of the contemporary literature of England to concentrate on revealing and negating the structural violence of British ideals. In terms of the conflictual yet symbiotic model of the relationships of Britishness and post-Britishness, this thesis has suggested that post-British tactics *can* expose and criticise the structural violence of Britishing strategy. But when it comes to the question of accomplishing a fundamental 'redemption' – a permanent break from the originary structure – the conclusion this thesis has arrived at does not share Agamben's positiveness in predicting a coming independence from the biopolitical establishment:

> the twenty-four centuries that have gone by have brought only provisional and ineffective solutions. In carrying out the metaphysical task that has led it more and more to assume the form of a biopolitics, Western politics has not succeeded in constructing the link between zoē and bios, between voice and language, that would have healed the fracture. Bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion… Nevertheless, until a completely new politics – that is, a politics

no longer founded on the exception of bare life - is at hand, every theory and every praxis will remain imprisoned and immobile, and the 'beautiful day' of life will be given citizenship only either through blood death or in the perfect senselessness to which the society of the spectacle condemns it. (Agamben 1998: 11-13)

Admitting the continuity of a biopolitical structure in history, Agamben nevertheless still suggests that a new politics independent from inclusively excluding bare lives is not only possible, but is 'about to arrive' at any moment (cf. Agamben 1998: 12-14). Walter Benjamin's messianic moment of redemption is supposed to happen in an imagined future, and what is implied by this gesture of resorting to a '*deus ex machina*' resolution is an acknowledgement of the limit of rationality. Individual citizens can only pin their hopes on a placeless future ideal to overcome the fact that they are perpetually being turned into political bodies by sovereign power. However, Agamben's affirmation of a 'coming community' suggests that his idea differs from Jacques Derrida's 'yet-to-come' messianism, for his assumed moment of redemption does not exist in an imagined future but in the present. Agamben's positive attitude towards an 'ultimate escape' from original structure raises a very interesting question: considering that I have drawn from Agamben's theory of biopolitics to interpret some English literary texts, why can't this thesis offer a similar conclusion on the possibility of a once-for-all independence from the lingering Britishing system?

Instead of jumping to assert that this thesis disagrees with Agamben regarding the coming of a permanent liberation of political bodies, it is worth reconsidering the real meaning of Agamben's conception of independence. In *Homo Sacer*, there is actually a philosophical gap between the idea of 'redemption' and the idea of the 'coming community'. Agamben's theory of the coming community can be traced to Alexandre Kojève's imagination of the 'end of history' – a moment when humans and animals are no longer different, and all devices of political power, as well as the divisive structure, are turned to an inoperative status (Kojève 1982: 158-162). Agamben also adds an Aristotelian framework of 'potentiality' and 'actuality' to Kojève's theory, suggesting that such a coming community always exists, and in the meantime, has the potentiality of being eventually transformed into reality (Agamben 1998: 29-34). Thus, the messianic arrival, in Agamben's sense, does not refer to 'the end of time' (Kojève) but 'the time of

the end'. As for what can be understood as the real redemption of bare life, Agamben's definition can hardly be regarded as indicating the end of the original structure. Instead of moving towards a pre-established end point, the assumed messianic moment is in effect a temporal interruption. By creating a momentary break-up of the current state, individual subjects would be able to enter a 'peculiar sort of sabbatical vacation' (cf. Agamben 2007: 2). It has to be pointed out that the positive assertion of individuals' capacity to create break-ups might only suggest a pause of the relationship between political bodies and sovereign power. From this perspective, Agamben's idea of redemption could (only) be momentary and non-structural – the time of *an* end (in contrast with 'the time of *the* end' which suggests a final independence from the structure). Therefore, the emphasis of this post-British study on *perceiving* structural violence (rather than arguing an eternal end of this structure) is not essentially at odds with Agamben's redemption theory. As I have analysed in Chapter Four, characters in McCarthy novels can only be temporarily redeemed from the ritual of repetition. And such a non-structural break does not lead to a depoliticising of *homo sacer*. What is bound to happen after the time of an end is the recapturing and disciplining of political bodies – a new starting point of (re-)entering organic space. The function of 'being aware' of the originary structure should not be underestimated though, because it marks the gesture of perceiving that makes a momentary break-up possible and inevitable. Even if a person is reabsorbed by the organic system, being aware of structural violence provides the motivation to notice a new end point. In other words, organic Britishness can repeatedly eliminate such break-ups along the timeline, but it is unable to prevent the perception of the definite production of new ruptures.

By analysing the cause of ruptures in Britishness in selected works, this thesis has offered preliminary evidence for a post-British turn in this moment of Englishness. Also, this thesis suggests new directions for study. For one thing, it would be worth exploring more of the political philosophy that has influenced the logic of constructing British ideals. This research, especially in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, has mainly focused on the two ends of modern Britishness: the political philosophy by Hobbes, Locke, and Burke, and the adaptation of these inherited ideas in post-devolution England. But other crucial moments of cultural history could be more studied. The thesis has only slightly touched, for example, on the ideological significance of the thinking running from Matthew Arnold to F.R. Leavis and the origins of university English in maintaining an imagined

British community. And to make a stronger argument about inheriting an organicist logical thread, the thinking of some other empiricist philosophers (David Hume or George Berkeley), as well as modern communitarians, could also be taken into account. While the construction of British community has been deeply embedded within a tradition of liberalism, its tendency to swing between communitarianism and (neo-)liberalism may suggest a reconsideration of using a post-British approach to achieve a momentary break from organic Britain. Moreover, we should not neglect other more interdisciplinary frameworks that could be adopted. This thesis has pointed out a possible link between the logic of post-Britishness and theories of Agamben, de Certeau, Deleuze, and twenty-first-century speculative materialists. Instead of expanding the post-British critique into a universal paradigm, a further comparative study on British devolution and contemporary continental thought might reposition this moment of Englishness in a bigger geopolitical picture of the break-up of organic communities.

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