The Palgrave Macmillan Literature of an Independent England

Revisions of England, Englishness, and English Literature

Edited by
Claire Westall and Michael Gardiner

Literature of an Independent England

Also by Claire Westall

CROSS-GENDERED LITERARY VOICES (*ed. with Rina Kim*)

Also by Michael Gardiner

THE RETURN OF ENGLAND IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE CONSTITUTION OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE CULTURAL ROOTS OF BRITISH DEVOLUTION

SCOTTISH LITERATURE AND POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE (*ed. with Niall O'Gallagher and Graeme Macdonald*)

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Introduction

Claire Westall and Michael Gardiner

On 15 October 2012 the British Prime Minister and the Scottish First Minister signed the Edinburgh Agreement, which set out the terms for a 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. This was one of a succession of tacit admissions that what had once seemed a settled sovereignty – the British union – was in fact open to renegotiation. Typical to British logic, this required the agreement of two parties despite one claiming to be inclusive of the other (it was not England versus Scotland). Westminster's 'granting' Scotland the right to vote on self-determination echoed the postwar display of unipolar authority performed by the British colonial regime just as its empire was collapsing. It is not that this relationship was one of coloniser to colonised – the point is that sovereignty was not ceded to Britain as part of the 1706–7 Acts of Union. Rather, Westminster had to revert to imperial dominance in the language of continuity, of claiming that this all took place within the British union – that is, it stuck to the asymmetric imperial idiom of continuity while facing the possibility of its own disintegration.

Unsurprisingly, the Westminster Party leaders have confirmed that the integrity of their union is their first public responsibility. David Cameron has recently described his 'passion' for the British union, and Ed Miliband had already drifted towards a Disraelian and illogical idiom of 'one nation' influenced by Blue Labour. This Westminster consensus is particularly noticeable at a time when the British political class stands apart from the general population and from personal experience. Importantly, the Edinburgh Agreement has to be written and enacted within a British constitutional culture that relies on not having a codified set of national agreements. Moreover, that participation within the British union could be renegotiated by one nation of necessity suggests that each, and all, of the nations can renegotiate their relationship with British institutions and the British rule of law – England included. The Edinburgh Agreement, and the negotiations leading up to it, remind us that these political processes are subject to change and renegotiation and that Britain's idealised sense of its own permanence can be

historicised as deriving from its investment in specific cultural forms. Central to these forms has been the discipline of English Literature.

It was clear that literary culture was pivotal to the politics of British self-imagining throughout 2012's 'Great British Summer'. Instead of celebrating a British constitution or a codified set of rights, the literary past and its imagining of England and *by extension* Britain was heralded as part of an unchanging tradition, deflecting the need to ask pressing constitutional questions. A perpetual return to canonical authors, pastiched historical icons, and assertions of imperial instruction and enlightenment grounded British claims to world significance via the BBC's coverage of the dismal Diamond Jubilee celebrations and a corporatised as well as militarised Olympic Games. The Diamond Jubliee's para-Elizabethan glories were centred on the Thames, the river launching imperial exploration and running through financial (mis)management, and connoted canonical markers including Dickens's *Bleak House*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Eliot's *The Waste Land*, London-based texts understood as British history. Shortly after, the Olympic opening ceremony had England consumed by British imperial power as in Danny Boyle's pastoral vision this country was communally free yet always already owned and divided through land enclosure. Set to 'Jerusalem', English fields were given over to British industrial machinery, with Kenneth Branagh appearing as Isambard Kingdom Brunel only to then perform Caliban's famed speech about 'the isle full of noises'. The British Empire was seen to erase England and the industrialist spoke for – and instead of – both the imperial and domestic other as capital and empire built the British state. This erasure of England, even of an England imagined and created within the British capital, as Britain spoke to and for the world, represented a repetition of the logic of the empire's dissemination of English Literature around the globe. With these summer events running unstopped on the BBC we might ask whether the state broadcaster was attempting to position Britain as (still) central, as 'homely', and as democratically participatory while protest was (again) marginalised, the economy was suffering from the ravages of global finance, and UK troops stood in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Olympic Park.

Tensions about the *placing* of England, public protest and participation, and state responses to dissent had been growing since the Occupy campaigns of 2010–11, for which local situated-ness and personal experience were central, and these tensions were seen in another way in the violent flare-ups in England in August 2011. The 'UK riots', as they were first described, saw widespread public disorder, looting and arson, and significant police presences in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Bristol. Media reporting on this almost exclusively English phenomenon quickly declared that the UK was in crisis. As *The Sun* stated on 10 August, the riots 'shame[d the] UK'.[1] On the same day, the *Daily Mail* claimed that overseas governments were advising their citizens to '[k]eep away from Britain'.[2] *The*

Guardian unreflectively mapped the disturbances under the title 'UK riots: every verified incident' in a graphic which saw Scotland blank, Northern Ireland not displayed, and a single (seemingly unconnected) act of criminal damage in Cardiff Bay.[3] *The Telegraph*'s map of the 'UK Riots' similarly erased Scotland and Northern Ireland and had no 'incidents' marked in Wales.[4] The BBC's version was perhaps the most contorted – 'UK riots: Trouble erupts in English cities'.[5] Eventually intervening, David Cameron returned to the 'Broken Britain' trope he had been using since 2007, which was notably paradoxical since he so strenuously denies the 'break-up' of Britain. Moreover, in claiming that '[i]t is wrong to think that the state is a bystander', Cameron was again bemusing because he allowed the state to stand in for England, making it the natural determinant of English experience.[6] Such coverage marked three key issues: firstly, England was standing for the UK in the same way it had during the civilising mission of empire; secondly, and despite devolution, England was mappable but not seen or named as a national space or place; and, thirdly, there was a systemic failure to recognise British disintegration even when Britain's damaged and broken form raised national questions about England and growing public dissent. The stretching of England into Britain erased England, the place and the nation, and did so by the very same logic that had enabled English Literature to move across the globe without being defined in relation to England itself – a history in which the BBC itself has been a key participant.

With BBC Scotland, BBC Wales, and BBC Northern Ireland, it is clear that the state broadcaster knows it has to appeal to different nations within the UK differently, except, that is, when it comes to England: the BBC is England's BBC as the British state pushes itself into or takes over and thereby erases the national space of England. Nevertheless, the difficulties of this tension, and the contradictions that come from British literary culture's imagining of England and 'English' have been satirically played out on the BBC. During Comic Relief's 2007 Red Nose Day programme, charity fundraiser and comedian Catherine Tate, playing the obnoxious schoolgirl Lauren Cooper, has a classroom encounter with David Tennant as Mr Logan, a new Scottish 'English teacher'. When Mr Logan introduces himself, Lauren begins to challenge the assumptions that underpin his delivery of English Literature, even though it seems authoritative and duly centred on Shakespeare, 'the bard himself', a 'genius'. England the place and English civilising discourse become mutually contradictory in an exchange that shows the fissures between official, national, and class expectations:

Lauren: 'Sir, are you English, sir?'
Mr Logan: 'No, I'm Scottish.'
Lauren: 'So you ain't English then?'
Mr Logan: 'No I'm British.'
Lauren: 'So you ain't English then?'

Mr Logan: 'No I'm not, but as you can see I do speak English.' [. . .]
Lauren: 'Are you talking Scottish now?' [. . .]
Lauren: 'I don't think you're qualified to teach us English.'
Mr Logan: 'You don't have to be English to teach it.'
Lauren: 'Have we got double English, or double *Scottish*?'[7]

Here English Literature's ability to speak for England is brought into question, with the double layering in the key term echoed by Lauren's question of 'double English, or double *Scottish*'. The question is, if English still slides between national place, state discipline, and language, does Scottish connote Scottish literature, or a foreign, international, and different language, and if not, how do we process this asymmetry? The stakes are raised, even thrown back onto the canonical standard of Shakespeare by the Scot playing Doctor Who and stressing his British credentials in the classroom, when Lauren confidently recites 'Sonnet 130', and in doing so repositions Shakespeare *as English* – in terms which are national rather than universalist – that is, as belonging to her experience of place rather than as a civilising tool for the British Empire. Although Prime Minister Tony Blair was famously 'not bovvered' by his 2007 Red Nose encounter with the young enemy within, the Tate-Tennant example suggests that the place that is England, and England's place within the British union, are more troubled than the official presentation and that England's difficulties have been masked by the British invention of and investment in the logic of English Literature.

Devolution and the English Question

The possibility of speaking about England, and of England in relation to English Literature, gained momentum after the devolution settlements enacted in 1999. By the time the Scottish National Party (SNP) achieved a majority in the Scottish parliament in 2011 it was increasingly common to think about where devolution left England. Indeed, this moment broke the seemingly smooth or 'joined-up' idea of state and nation as the Con–Lib Westminster pact stood against, but also alongside, the SNP – overturning the supposedly seamless rule of Labour. The 2011 election also fuelled media interest in the English Question – a question or set of questions increasingly seen as the key to unravelling British state sovereignty. Political Science had long realised the importance of England and there has been a considerable critical literature on the English Question since the postwar consensus began to fade at the turn of the 1960s. However, the democratic asymmetry of the situation was iconically summed up before the first Scottish referendum in 1977 when Tam Dalyell offered his 'West Lothian Question', querying the double vote of Scottish MPs who were able to offer determining views on matters that only affected England, as well as on UK-wide issues. This now popularly cited query pointedly asks (again, with

inadvertently anti-unionist impetus) where an English voice is to be found within Britain's political structures. After the failure of the controversial devolution negotiations of 1978–79, a period of 'democratic deficit' was ushered in during which the state set itself against hearing national demands. During a post-1979 phase of governmental 'Englishing' as it is sometimes misleadingly called, the spectre of what Tom Nairn labelled 'the break-up of Britain' saw England ever more forcefully co-opted as the main agent in the reinvention of Britishness – whether understood in neo-imperial, 'Cool Britannic' or multicultural terms, keeping Englishness culturally dominant and England politically invisible or at least apparently benign throughout most of the 1980s.

During the period since the successful devolution negotiations there have been attempts to revisit the culture of England as a political force, though without the same popular purchase as the Scottish Renaissance. The very different national literary histories provided by Anthony Easthope (1998) and Ian Baucom (1999) both attempt to replace England within the trajectory of the discipline of English Literature, and insist on the alienated and unstable version of Englishness that was disseminated throughout empire. Like Easthope and Baucom, Krishan Kumar's *The Making of English National Identity* (2003) took literary history as its guide when linking union and empire in a double movement outwards. Following Linda Colley's earlier study, Kumar described a universalisation via empire, though without probing the contemporary political valency of England – something which might also be said of Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island* (2003). Robert Hazell's 2006 collection *The English Question* set out the terms of a separate settlement, and this was taken further by Arthur Aughey's comprehensive *The Politics of Englishness* (2007) and James Mitchell's authoritative *Devolution in the UK* (2009). A few popular attempts to make active the central qualities of discrete English culture also appeared around this time, including Mark Perryman's collections *Breaking Up Britain* (2008) and *Imagined Nation* (2009). While some of these discussions of England and Englishness were prompted by the late 1990s prominence of England in the wake of the 1996 European Championships, as with Perryman, later works began to see the political and constitutional ramifications as pivotal, even as the Labour government solely invested in corporate Britain. Notably, Tom Nairn's *Pariah* (2002) amplified his previous calls for a registration of the English national by pointing up the wider constitutional significance of an election – in 2001 – which he saw as based on the right to manage capital, strip England of civic status, and leave behind a need to perpetually *perform* British culture (a performance the Great British Summer extended).

Although the English Question gave rise in the 2000s to a boom of books addressing the received properties of English culture, many of these were problematic. For one thing, rather than asking structural questions about England and government they often pulled back to a 'listing' tendency of

received or imagined English properties, a tendency described by some of the essays here. Many of these accounts struggled to escape assumptions of England as ethnic (and usually dangerous), reinscribing at the level of England the British typology of race and the need to civilise or avoid others which was so central to empire-era English Literature. In addition, they often failed to work through the consequences of British devolution for England or see the manner in which English culture could be positively influenced by devolution if it recognised its own national status and refuted the long-standing fiction of the British state as 'one nation'. Most often, though, the idea of England as a nation has been conflated with a right-wing and conservative insularity that retreats from and/or stands in opposition to the world. This opposing of the national and international is markedly misplaced given that there is no way of anticipating what form England might take as a nation distinct from British imperial ideology and state dominance. England could well be open, oriented towards the world and function internationally in a way that is far removed from the British model of imperial arrogance within which it currently exists. (And this new version of England we desire.)

As the ongoing literary-disciplined presentation of British celebration suggests, although England's place has been worried over across academia and journalism, many accounts, even when dealing with literary material, have failed to address the way English Literature has formed the backbone of a state editorialising of history, or to bring up questions of how writing and representation feed directly into political bodies. As the British fabric has frayed there has appeared an increased need for criticism of the relationship between the English nation, the British state, and the formation of English Literature which stands between and ideologically connects them. To some extent the English Question is still missing the single most significant area of negotiation – literary culture. For its part, English Literature, feeling under increasing economic pressure as education is marketised, tends to dodge the questions which would challenge the form in which it has been culturally dominant. But silence over the importance of the literary stretching of England to Britain has become untenable with the economic and social crises of the end of the 2000s which were handled so revealingly poorly by British press and Westminster politicians. Events have increasingly revealed that a missing element in the cultural making and breaking of political structures has been an understanding of the absorptive British principles which structure English Literature. We have lacked ways of reading which avoid the universalist trap of seeing the export of an ideal Englishness as providing or corresponding to a genuinely national literature. We have also lacked literary histories which are local and specific to England while challenging the imperial nexus, the imperial nexus, and conversely political histories which show the structural importance of the form of English Literature. It is still widely assumed that a literature of England would hold its present British form despite any other cultural secessions which may take place. It is time though

to imagine a proactive reappraisal of the forces that have held English Literature in place, and how they change in an era of serious scepticism over, and strained defence of, the British state form. What might result is a literary criticism which asks whether Shakespeare really does naturally and instinctively straddle England the place and imperial Britain as the civilising principle, the implied question which so irritates Catherine Tate's Mr Logan.

Literature of an independent England

The primary aim of this collection then is not to make predictions about an English nation state. Instead, it is to help think through the implications of a representative and provincialised writing from and within an England able to shed the specifically British needs of English Literature. The collection starts from the position that English Literature as a civilising discipline arose within, and was pivotal for, the expansion of the British Empire – an elastic structure able to adduce 'other' peoples and literatures into its own canonicity. Indeed, Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992) and *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (1998) highlighted the British foundation of English Literature as it emerged in Scotland as part of the unionising effort to make the most of imperial access to trade routes. Moreover, Baucom's insight that the Englishness of English Literature always displaces quasi-national images as it travels around the world is one that continues to hold merit, especially as displayed through the co-option and depoliticisation of postcolonial and world literature. The continuity of the British state, and its power to protect capital in order to ensure its own continuity – which was replayed during the financial crash of 2008 – fundamentally underpins the exportation, implementation, and global impact of English Literature and the values of gentility, fairness, and civility it claimed to offer hand-in-hand with slavery, war, sustained structural inequality, and much more besides. As English Literature's British claims to universality became increasingly untenable it should have (but refused to) relinquish its imagined global superiority and predominance. In the face of decolonisation and the changing world order, it should have been made minor, local, and specific, transformed into a literature of England open to internal and international renegotiation. This is not an argument for ignoring the imperial impact of Britain, or its cultural and literary import across the world, particularly as tied to the uneven advancement of capitalism, but it is to suggest that the taken-for-granted importance of the British Empire heavily relied on English Literature, and now English Literature continues to hold on, quite tightly, to the importance invested in it by the imperial British state. In short, England needs a literature to wedge between itself and the British dominance maintained via the disciplinary force of English Literature. In a sense this is arguing for a provincialising of England's literature at the level of the national. Much more than 'postcolonialism', which maintains the

disciplinary ability to expand and acquire (as discussed later in this collection), this is a terrifying prospect for the field, since it threatens the interests which have remained marketable as an export of an imperially imagined England (of the type Boyle offered the world). A provincialised conception of England as minor ('philosophical minority' rather than the state-managed 'ethnic minority' of multiculturalism) was largely foreclosed in the twentieth century by the conceptualisation of the modern field from the early days of university English. But a more inclusive conception of self-determination for England, as derived from the dissolution of British culture, could work to challenge the canonical logic of continuity in perpetuity that links the state form and the canon of English Literature, and could push England towards a new ability to internationalise.

This collection brings together commentators at the forefront of the critical debates connecting England, Englishness, and English Literature, and considers the literariness of the British settlement and its relationship to the most populous nation within Britain. It mixes questions and approaches which have typically belonged separately to Politics and English Literature, and has offered space to an array of positions without seeking to discipline them into agreement with our editorial overview. Importantly, though, the collection addresses a series of unavoidably powerful questions: it asks how changes in the constitutional sovereignty of the UK are forcing English Literature to reimagine its relationship to England; how the national experience of life in England might be registered again in literature; what form a literature of England might take, whether such a national literature is already readable in literary texts from England; and how to avoid the assumption that England will be what is 'left over' after the British break-up. Contributors re-historicise the discipline of English Literature in terms of an understanding of the changing relationship between the parliamentary sovereignty of the British state and the public of the English nation, and explore the relationship between literature, culture, and political institutions in an England separated from or existing after the imperial nexus. At root, there is a registration of how constitutional challenge forces a reappraisal of the methodological and canonical forces welding English Literature to the British state, and of how our understanding of literary study, literary history, and literary markets is altered by England's negotiation of self-determination, understood as freedom from the assumed heritage of authority in the British creation of English Literature. The aim is to find critical positions which, as many constitutional critics have suggested, would represent the first steps towards a more inclusive, international, and worldly outlook, and to provide a forceful challenge to the state capitalism which has comfortably sold the 'racial' ephemera of individual writers within a continuant canon that claimed 'its' others as already within.

The essays here then form part of a wider argument that insists England can no longer be drawn into the endless reinvention of a state form whose

core logic is to protect itself and its consumer-subjects from political participation. Caught in the panic of a marketing and marketising logic, English Literature will likely continue to struggle to come to terms with the post-2008 difficulties of the state it serves, and it is unsurprising that it has blocked out many of the structural political changes of this era though they are so connected to the management of writing and the culture of literacy. This kind of investigation also demands a new terminology. The key term, *English* – as English Literature – has served to distance writing and culture from the experience of England. Consequently, the discursive disciplinary function will typically be denoted by capital letters – as in *E*nglish *L*iterature – while English literature, or perhaps better, the literature of England, will indicate a possible recovery of place, representation, and potential self-determination. The term *national* should also be treated with some scepticism: although certainly endangering a nepotistic and selfish view of the public, when placed back into negotiation with an anti-national state built around the needs of capital, the national could show up new sites of agency, to be understood simultaneously on literary and political planes. In some way it is likely to be part of a difficult Fanonian journey towards internationalism. Questions have to be asked then about the organisation of the discipline along national lines when this political level is increasingly realised not to be national at all, as Britain is forced to cede that its claims to the national only really made sense in imperial terms.

The collection is organised into four parts moving from political discussions of the form of a devolved or independent England (certainly not one and the same thing), through a consideration of England in canonical and contemporary literature, to an exploration of the role of the national in English Literature's disciplinary logic. Part I, 'The Politics of English Independence', asks about the rise of the question of English self-determination, and how a discrete England might be understood, today, in retrospect, and speculatively. Andrew Mycock surveys the uneven rise and potential of English national forms, while warning against the rise of 'victimhood nationalism' and suggesting that English independence has yet to gain substantial popular support. Gerry Hassan reads the contemporary debate over the political establishment's struggle to apprehend the impact of devolution for the British union and for England, and details the avoidance of negotiation maintained by Westminster political parties, particularly New Labour. Arthur Aughey then explores the intersection of the political and the cultural by analysing descriptions of England, Englishness, and English nationalism as 'lists' of real or imagined qualities – a tendency revealing the ongoing struggle with Britain as the protector of more abstract yet supposedly common and collective values.

Part II, 'England in English Literature's Canon', offers specific explorations of Englishness canonical literary texts, surveying works from the turn of the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, by authors including Arthur

Conan Doyle, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Philip Larkin. David Higgins opens by suggesting that ideas of an authentically English literature emerged particularly strongly in metropolitan writing of the post-Napoleonic era, and that the emergence of a specific kind of Englishness in liberal journals such as the *London Magazine* and the *New Monthly Magazine* should be revisited in terms of commercial and ideological conflicts with powerful Scottish periodicals such as the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh's Magazine*. Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee then looks at how in Victorian Britain England was often inscribed as a set of anxieties over colonial 'infection' and domestic malingering by relating Englishness during high empire to Arthur Conan Doyle's iconic Sherlock Holmes. In a comparative analysis of D. H. Lawrence and the speeches of the mining leader A. J. Cook, Simon Featherstone demarcates a pastoral–urban continuum with which any conception of English identity and civic nationhood has had to grapple, specifically during the General Strike of 1926, suggesting a reassessment of Lawrence as a literary shibboleth for a canonical understanding of organic English. Next John Brannigan reassesses a mid-twentieth century literary history beginning from Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941), and in particular repeated interest in eugenics and how from this point apparently insular and introverted literary texts (and authors) might be re-read through a distinct England. Willy Maley makes connections between fifteenth-century England and George Orwell's 'national' writing, and further relates imperial ideas in these two phases to the changes wrought by Tony Blair and New Labour. Finally, Graham MacPhee analyses examples of Philip Larkin's poetry to explore persistent links between England and Britain, especially as they impact on relations.

Part III, 'England's Contemporary Literary Landscape', investigates more recent literary work that raises questions about England's place within and after Britain, notably in relation to the class system. Philip Tew explores the worlds of J. G. Ballard in terms of the class fix of the routine yet traumatising violence seen across his oeuvre, and asks how this relates to the reception of England in and beyond his work. Christine Berberich reads recent dystopian novels by James Hawes and Rupert Thompson as forcing England to re-examine the idyllic imperial messages of Englishness and their relationship to contemporary Britain. John McLeod then compares work by David Dabydeen and Caryl Phillips to explore the ways in which the label 'black British' has often been used to obscure English connections, identities, and national potential by reinforcing the imperial separation of England and its others via an imagined British inclusivity. Finally, Hywel Dix uses the framework of Raymond Williams and Tom Nairn to examine recent novels, including those by Robert McLiam Wilson and Graham Swift, which, he argues, can be read as rejecting English Literature as a formal education to offer a literary England that is national and specific beyond British traditions and canonicity.

Part IV, 'English Literature as British Ideology', offers two chapters which attempt to tie together the political parameters established in Part I and English Literature's relevance to the imperial or neo-imperial state as a structuring cultural logic. It suggests ways in which English Literature was turned into a British-imperial weapon in Burkean or Arnoldian terms and via a specific conception of canonicity, as a civilising discipline relatively undisturbed in the assumption of a set of classics from early unionism to the present day. These chapters ask how English Literature is studied and produced, and begin to sketch out how a literary reading of England might be undertaken beyond this disciplinarity. Taking up the question of the re-conceptualisation of a self-determining England without the ideological state apparatus of English Literature, Michael Gardiner critiques the disciplinarity of English Literature particularly in its reliance on a coercive conservative principle of cultural value dependent on the nationless state of the UK. Claire Westall then revisits Terry Eagleton's reading of the rise and fall of English Literature by repositioning Eagleton's arguments in relation to the solid political vectors of the British state, which Eagleton often leaves unspoken, emphasising the imperial dimensions of the tension between Britain and England within literary studies and arguing for a postcolonial and post-devolutionary reformulation of English to challenge English literary studies as an expansive and absorptive designation in the current crisis of higher education.

To close the collection, Anthony Barnett, one of England's most respected democracy campaigners and founder of Charter 88 and *openDemocracy*, looks to the ramifications of the collection for English citizenship and national identity drawing us into a world of pressuring political struggles against the undemocratic British state.

Notes

1. http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3743139/As-riots-shame-the-nation-for-a-fourth-night-The-Suns-Associate-Editor-Trevor-Kavanagh-and-songwriter-and-actor-Plan-B-give-their-views.html.
2. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2024159/UK-RIOTS-2011-Keep-away-Britain-Governments-world-warn-citizens.html.
3. http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/aug/09/uk-riots-incident-map.
4. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8689355/London-riots-all-incidents-mapped-in-London-and-around-the-UK.html.
5. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-14460554. By October the BBC is reflecting on the events and describing them as 'England riots' http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14452097.
6. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/15/david-cameron-riots-broken-society.
7. Comic Relief, BBC One, 16 March 2007.

Part I

The Politics of English Independence

1
Understanding the Post-British English Nation State

Andrew Mycock

A report published by policy think-tank Demos in November 2011 suggested survey respondents in England were the most patriotically British across the United Kingdom (though Northern Ireland was overlooked). Although the report readily conflated English and British cultural and political institutions, symbols, and figures, the authors concluded that 'it is clear that English people have a weak conception of "English nationalism" ' (Wind-Cowie and Gregory 2011: 34). A subsequent report by the Institute for Public Policy Relations (IPPR) countered this view, arguing poll data identified an emerging 'English political community' underpinned by a 'deepening sense of English identity' which now sought recognition in response to the asymmetric (and unfair) nature of recent UK devolution settlements (Wyn Jones *et al*. 2012: 2). Longitudinal research suggests, however, that shifts in popular ascription to English rather than British national identity have not encouraged a more assertive English nationalism (see Ormston 2012). This might mean that the oft-noted lack of an English political 'backlash' cannot be attributed to some form of popular apathy or cognitive deficiency in identity recognition. Currently, anxieties about the political future of England are expressed mainly at elite levels by politicians, academics and the media. Many English people have instead 'remained stubbornly galvanized into inaction', appearing to interpret the process of devolution as one of rebalancing and fairness across the union which should be accommodated by the English majority (Condor 2010: 540).

For Ben Wellings there is potential for the popular ascription to cultural Englishness to become politicised and morph into a more dynamic English nationalism (see Wellings 2012). Whilst issues such as immigration, EU membership, and 'English questions' of national representation, governance, and citizenship continue to be addressed mainly within the existing parameters of the UK state, nascent English nationalism has the potential to pursue self-determinationist agendas or even independence for England. This chapter will explore the emergence of English nationalism, considering

how the English nation and state have been historically framed in relation to both the UK and the British Empire. It will consider the idea that a range of drivers have encouraged 'victimhood nationalism', and look at forms of postcolonial Englishness now seeking political expression. Finally, the chapter will analyse the small but growing literature supporting an independent English government, and further assess the possible establishment of a 'post-British' nation state and the coherence of the secessionist nationalism which this would require.

Understanding the English nation, state, and empire

It is widely accepted amongst scholars that the origins of nations are shaped by a convergence of ethnic and civic dynamics which acknowledge the interrelations and interactions between primordial interpretations of nations and nationalisms, stressing the organic and perennial nature of national communities in terms of common kinship, symbols, and rituals, and constructed interpretations, emphasising the instrumental and socially constructed nature of imagined political communities whose traditions are largely a modern invention. Although nations are often understood to intuitively seek to establish their own state, perfect congruence between the two has rarely – if ever – been achieved (see Gellner 1983). In most modern nation states, the evolution from ethnic-based statehood towards incorporative civic (state) nationalisms has involved the prioritisation of the political and cultural institutions, rituals, myths, and practices of a dominant ethno-national group and the concurrent repression of claims by rival ethno-national groups through the relegation or attempted eradication of competing minority nationalisms or ethnic cultures and polities (see Connor 1972; Kuzio 2002). This has encouraged merging and interchangeable application of nationality, a cultural concept emphasising a shared identity, and citizenship, a political concept that defines the relationship between citizen and state.

Nationhood is not a static or persistent status – nations can decline or be reborn. Not all nations intuitively seek or can achieve independent statehood, meaning nationality and citizenship are often multiple and layered. Some voluntarily share sovereignty within multinational or supranational frameworks whilst others are compelled to concede it to another colonising transnational entity. In multinational states such as the UK, one ethno-nation – in this case England – typically orchestrated the construction of both state and national culture, prioritising English political, economic, and cultural values, institutions and practices. This sometimes used to be seen as a form of English 'internal colonialism' (see Hechter 1975), though such an interpretation can overlook the pragmatic and mutually beneficial nature of British multinationalism. But efforts to impose a hegemonic Anglo-British national culture through 'state nationalisation' historically proved sporadic