

# The Era of Crises: a Thematic Analysis of Ian McEwan's *Saturday*\*

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**Abstract**—In *Saturday*, Ian McEwan draws a picture of the Western society, culture and individuals after the 9/11 attack. This essay analyzes the theme of *Saturday* in the perspective of crisis. The post-9/11 era describes the western society after terrorist attack, the ambivalence about the Iraq war, and the prevalent certainty, revealing McEwan's grand view of creation. Second, the post-industrial part dissects the consumerism, the conflicts between culture and science, and homogeneity, showing the novelist's unique thoughts on culture. At last, the analysis of individual crisis put under microscope the distorted intersubjectivity, discipline and institutionalization and recovery. This essay shows McEwan's concerns and also hopes for mankind. The thematic analysis of *Saturday* in the perspective of crisis helps unveil the writer's diverse visions and his understanding of a community of shared future for mankind, and his thoughts on crises of society, culture and individuals.

**Keywords**—crises; Ian McEwan; *Saturday*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Literary Review

Born in 1948 in Britain, Ian McEwan is one of the most prestigious contemporary novelists who still arrests attention worldwide. He is quite adept at depicting in grandeur protagonists' psychological activities, his words painting a vivid picture of romance and loathe, desire and hatred, war and peace, death and effervescence, empathy and antipathy. McEwan is an outstanding novelist and a meticulous storyteller, weaving together the nuts and bolts of his plots with precise caution.

An enlightened luminary and liberal born in modern Britain, McEwan very often puts the deep-rooted malaises of society and the weaknesses of human beings under microscope in his audacious novels, in which he also let bare the conflicts of modern England, if not of the Western world. Till now, he has already earned himself The Man Booker Prize and Somerset Maugham Award. In 2008, The Times featured him on its list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945" and The Daily Telegraph ranked him number 19 in its list of the "100 most powerful people in British culture".

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All these years of his writing career, McEwan has commanded great academic attention with many a scholar doing research and writing essays on his novels. This makes no exception for China. In recent years, Chinese scholars have laid their emphasis mainly on McEwan works, be they *Atonement*, *The Child in Time*, *The Ploughman's Lunch*, *The Cement Garden*, or *First Love*, *Last Rites*. Yu Hua, one of the most celebrated writers in China, once spoke highly of Ian McEwan, this is Ian McEwan, he who seems always to tiptoe around the boarders, the boarders between terror and comfort, coldness and warmth, absurdity and authenticity, violence and softness, reason and emotions, yet his writings weave them all together. Like a king commanding countless of territory, Ian McEwan's boarder narrative make him the king. When he depicts hope, disappointment rears its head, as do terror and comfort, coldness and warmth, absurdity and authenticity, violence and softness, reason and emotions.

A smattering of lights, however, has been shed on *Saturday*, which was written in 2004 when the Iraq war just broke out, and when the western world had yet emerged from the debris of the 9/11 attack. In such context did *Saturday* come into being, but in some intriguing way, it was confined to one single day — 15 February, 2003, which was somehow rarely seen in other novels. Its protagonist, Henry Perowne, is a contented man — a successful neurosurgeon, sitting on the high rung of the social ladder. He is blessed with a joyous domestic life, and happily married to a newspaper lawyer, Rosalind, enjoying good relations with his children, Daisy, a perspective poet, and Theo, a rather distinguished blues singer.

Entering the 21st century, albeit prosperity and technological breakthroughs, the western countries, especially democratic ones, like Britain and the U.S., has encountered multiple "crises". The hierarchal gap continues widening; terrorism once again rears its ugly head, though Al-Qaeda was wiped out, the still more blistering and sinister ISIS has been sickling innocent civilians all over the world. The author can keep counting and never exhaust the list. In *Saturday* still exists a silver bullet to the crises the author mentioned above. Because after more than a decade, *Saturday* still packs a punch in modern world. Though confined to one day, *Saturday* paints a vivid picture of the lifestyle of modern Britain, the aftermath of 9/11, the nervousness confronting the upcoming Iraq war, and most of all, the "crises" haunting the western world. Thus, *Saturday* can be analyzed from the perspective of "crisis".

### B. *The Working Definition of Crisis*

About crisis there might emerge different explanations and definitions. Merriam Webster defines it "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending, especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or a situation that has reached a critical phase (Merriam Webster). A crisis is any event that is going (or is expected) to lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society.

These definitions, however, are too broad to explain the crises discussed in *Saturday*. We still need a working definition of "crisis". Ou Rong once wrote *The Motif of Crisis in David Lodge's Fiction*, in which she wrote, "the 20th century is an age crisis and the way Lodge dramatizes this situation rounds off our survey of his four representative works. As a man in possession of multi-identities — a Catholic, a novelist, a critic, as well as a university professor, Lodge has been deeply concerned with various crises in modern Western society: crisis of religion, crisis of literature, crisis of literary criticism and crisis of higher education" (Ou Rong, 2007: 10). In the same way as Ou Rong wrote her essay, the author also summed up three crises in *Saturday*: the crisis of the post 9/11 Era, the crisis of post-industrial culture, and the crisis of the individual. Through the lens of crisis, the author will spare no efforts to break apart *Saturday*, and find a way to deal with the crises in modern world.

## II. CRISIS OF THE POST-9/11 ERA

### A. *The Aftermath of Terrorism*

Till now, it has been 18 years since the two killing planes have brought down the World Trade Center in New York. All the past years, the whole world is sparing no efforts to combat against terrorism and recovering from the trauma brought by 9/11. Writers all over the world have also tried to revive that tragedy in their books. After 9/11, some American and European writers have written many works themed on 9/11, like *The Falling Man* (2007) by Don DeLillo and *Let the Great World Spin* (2009) by Colum McCann (Dan Hansong, 2011: 3). Ian McEwan's *Saturday* is set on 15th February 2003, nearly two years after the catastrophe. On the *Saturday* morning, standing beside the shutter, Henry Perowne witnessed an airliner on fire sliding toward the Heathrow Airport. This brought back the 9/11 attack to Perowne. Could it be another terrorist attack? In an instant, his illusion of intellectual mastery over his surroundings is shattered and the euphoric views are replaced by dreadful imaginings of dread and death.

Only 18 months earlier, thousands of people on the other side of the ocean were wiped out by two suicidal planes. This one, right one above Perowne's head, zooming toward the center of London, might once more wreak havoc in his world. Now, as Perowne loos from his shutter, he wonders if he should do something, call the emergency services, maybe. It is an idle thought — there is nothing useful to be done — but the passivity of his spectator's role troubles him. His crime was to stand in the safety of his bedroom, wrapped in a

dressings gown, without moving or making a sound, half dreaming as he watched people die.

The traumas after terrorist attacks are felt throughout the western world. All the morning after he saw the plane, Perowne was on edge and tried to find a thread in TV news. This trepidation is not only found in Perowne. For Theo, Perowne's son, 9/11 is also a watershed moment. This is the first time that Theo finds out that besides family and music, there is other thing that holds sway in his life. Now he once in a while leafs through the newspapers and politics also emerges in the daily talks with his father. This dreadful mood permeates through the whole society. The 9/11 attack has not only changed how people communicate with each other, but also changed their way behaviors, transforming the individual concepts and social identities under the influence of public affairs (Ni, 2010: 68).

In the heels of the 9/11 attack, the democratic utopia led by the States collapsed. The Islamic utopia came into view. After the cold war, democratic countries spearheaded by the U.S. have been promulgating the so-called soft power the world over. In the decades between the 1980s and 2000s, the number of liberal democracies (as defined by Freedom House) expanded from around 100 to close to 150. Never before in the arc of human history had so many countries given up so many political and economic buildings for one new mode.

The U.S. has always aspired to establish a world where democracy and freedom hold sway. The democratic utopia under the disguise of freedom and democracy was almost completed. But the 9/11 attack signaled the bankruptcy of American's Holy Grail. The attack not just showcased the aversion and determination from Muslim world, but also brought into our view a Muslim utopia dreamt by the jihadists. Both utopias, the Islamic or democratic, however, are actually dystopia. On the other hand, as to moral philosophy, they have the same disputes among them as we have here: they examine what are properly good both for the body and the mind, good for human beings, and whether any outward thing can be called truly good, or if that term belong only to the endowments of the soul. They inquire likewise into the nature of virtues and pleasures; but their chief dispute is concerning the happiness of a man, and wherein it consists?

### B. *The Ambivalence of an Anti-war Demonstration*

When *Saturday* was written, the Iraq war was already under full swing, yet the novel was set one week prior to the war. And as noted earlier, the *Saturday* of the novel's title is no ordinary day; Henry Perowne witnessed an airliner on fire, which brought him back to 9/11. It is also the day of protest in London and throughout Europe against the planned invasion of Iraq led by the United States and the United Kingdom, and it turns out to be "the largest gathering of humanity in the history of the islands" (McEwan, 2004: 126). The news from television, the views Perowne saw when he drove to play squash, and the topics Perowne had with his two adult children, are all about the demonstration. And the 9/11 attack serves as the flash point, or the pretext for the

Iraq war. Through the plot of *Saturday*, we can tell that Iraq is a rotten place, a natural ally of terrorists, bound to cause mischief at some point and may as well be taken out now while the U.S. military is feeling perky after Afghanistan (McEwan, 2004: 187). It is the hotbed of terrorism, and will some day drag human beings into an unfathomable abyss. And we should use 9/11 as a pretext to wage war against Iraq. Theo and Daisy are against the Iraq war. On the one hand, there is no smoking gun showing that Iraq is colluded with terrorists. On the other hand, they worried that war begets more wars only. If the Iraq war breaks out, there would be relentless disasters.

As for Henry Perowne, the protagonist, his attitude toward the war is quiet ambivalent. For or against the war on terror, or the war in Iraq; for the termination of an odious tyrant and his crime family, for the ultimate weapons inspection, the opening of the torture prisons, locating the mass graves, the chance of liberty and prosperity, and a warning to other despots; or against the boring of civilians, the inevitable refugees and famine, illegal international action, the wrath of Arab nations and the swelling of Al-Qaeda's ranks. Either way, it amounts to a consensus of a kind, an orthodoxy of attention, a kind of subjugation in itself. "Dose he think that his ambivalence — if that's what it really is — excuses him from the general conformity" (McEwan, 2004: 330).

Henry Perowne's stance of the Iraq war changes throughout the plot. Normally he might be opposed to war, but he has been under the influence of a patient, an Iraqi professor of archaeology, Miri Taleb, who has been a victim to Hussein's sinister tyranny. As Taleb argues, "it's only terror that holds the nation together, the whole system runs on fear, and no one knows how to stop it. Now the Americans are coming, perhaps for bad reasons. But Saddam and the Ba'athists will go" (McEwan, 2004: 64). Then, having seen a professor's scars and listened to his stories of Saddam's atrocities, Perowne has been motivated to read further about Iraq and has acknowledged that Iraq was indeed a republic of fear and that Saddam's regime was held accountable for the massacres in Kurdish Iraq. As for Perowne's daughter, Daisy, on the other hand, is opposed to the Iraq war, arguing that the invasion is "completely barbaric" (McEwan, 2004: 185). McEwan is thus able, through the thoughts of Perowne as he goes about his day, and through his interactions with other characters, to allow both sides of the opinion to be imparted in an authentically dialogic way. Aspects of the argument both for and against the war are shown to have merit, and the difficulties involved in making decisive choices are lucidly dramatized (Andrew, 2010: 15).

For Henry Perowne himself, is the war justified or just an excuse for religious discrimination? Will it do well to Iraqis or wreak havoc in their country? Will it promote democracy or otherwise endanger it? Are we in a position to invade another sovereign state? Is Christianity superior to Muslim? Questions like these are hard to escape and haunt Henry Perowne all along. And it's not just about Henry Perowne, but the whole society. Every character in the story has his own stances. His two children are against the Iraq war. His

colleagues are proponent of the Iraq war. The ambivalence toward the war lets bare the huge division in society.

### C. *The Prevalence of Uncertainty*

Uncertainty is another element penetrating the post-9/11 society. It runs mainly in three ways. The first part is people's attitude towards Muslim. Do they have the same human rights as we do? Should they discriminate against the religious heterogeneity? This train of thoughts runs deeply in democratic countries like Britain and the U.S. Some argued that there is no difference between them and Arabians, for all of show are born equal. But some believed that Islam is just a dystopia that strikes as a holy grail to jihadists. There are also people like Henry Perowne, whose stance changes all the time, depending on the people around him.

In Britain, heterogeneity is worshipped, not homogeneity. But in the book, the uncertainty about the identities, the boarder between the personal and the public realms exists. Like 13-year-old Briony in McEwan's another novel, *Atonement*, suddenly aware that "the world, the social world, was unbearably complicated, with two billion voices, and everyone's thoughts striving in equal importance and everyone's claim on life as intense" (McEwan, 2001: 72) — Perowne, too, is caught between the vividness of interiority (the clarity of his private, sensuous pleasures) and the confusing demands of what lies outside. As a wealthy professional, he is better equipped than most to see off the threatening cacophony of the two billion voices. His time is spent shuttling from one privileged, embattled sanctuary to another: his handsome house, bristling with locks and panic buttons, his cream-upholstered silver Mercedes, his squash court, his surgery (Zoe, 2005: 3). Still, the otherness of the western world hankers after is on the wane. Individuals' voices are constantly submerged by the public. The uncertainty about the boarder between the individual and the public is exacerbating.

The last uncertainty is about lot, both personal and national. It's all said that providence has it. Yet, after the 9/11 attack, the western world is no longer so sure about their future. Prior to 2001, civilians live in prosperity, enjoyed waves of technological breakthroughs, and lived longer than any other generations ever did. In a nutshell, they believed that they dwelled in a wonderland that cannot be interrupted. But the bubble bursted as two plans dived into the WTO, claiming more than 2000 lives. Now, as appeared in the book, people lived in great uncertainties.

The first chapter of the novel is taken for an example: in the first pages of *Saturday*, it can be told that Perowne awoke before the break of dawn, looking out from his bedroom shutter. As he witnesses the jumbled rooftops of nighttime London, he was filled with a sense of the order of things. "Henry thinks 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, 2004: 45) But then he observed something bizarre on the horizon — a comet, or

perhaps, a meteor. As it flew nearer, he realizes it is an airliner on fire — tearing apart the night envelope towards Heathrow. Might it be another terrorist catastrophe? Or it is just a normal accident. Instantly, his illusion of intellectual mastery over his surroundings is shattered and the euphoric visions of civic cooperation are replaced by dreadful imaginings of panic and death. Now in the Post-9/11 Era, people are uncertain of their future, they don't know when terrorists will wreak havoc again. They have been living in relentless uncertainty and trepidation.

### III. CRISIS OF POST-INDUSTRIAL CULTURE

#### A. Consumerism

The book was set in the 2000s, when the post-industrial was on the rise and post-industrial consumerism took the hold of Western world. Thanks to constant technological breakthroughs and ever expanding capitalism, the consumerism was disastrously distorted. And this distortion was vividly depicted in *Saturday* and in many scenarios it strokes, in some strange sense, fetishism. It mainly takes place in economic life. Perowne's family is the embodiment of the consumerism of post-industrial culture. As a neurosurgeon, Perowne is in the high rung of the social ladder. He is, one can say, the enjoyer of modernization. In the story, he has a Mercedes S500, "A silver Mercedes S 500 with cream upholstery — and he's no longer embarrassed by it. He doesn't even love it — it's simply a sensual part of what he regards as his overgenerous share of the world's goods (McEwan, 2004: 138). The car can show off his stature and prosperity. Perowne's egoism and fetishism are typical features of modern consumerism, which makes people subject to the pleasure created by machines. In a consumption-led society dominated by merchandises and images, "the great creativity of hearts is constantly dissolved by fetishism, and individual's spiritual culture is giving way to object's material culture" (Jameson, 1987: 38).

Consumerism no doubt further compounds the already serious divisions among different classes, which was revealed in a car accident between the protagonist and a thug, who is just blue collar representing the lower classes in western society. The development of electronic products, Microsoft, information and bio-technology make the borders between human beings and objects more distorted and vaguer. This process, may not presents as the objection of human beings, but may as the humanization of objects, which become a part of our domestic life. In most cases now, people rely not on the real world, but the virtual one to confirm their identities and even their kinship and emotional bound. According to Jürgen Habermas, this interaction is due to lack of "communicative rationality", so it can be potentially violent. The 9/11 attack is the evidence of the destruction of this violence, leaving relentless trauma to people. This trauma transcends over countries, cultures, races, genders, and ages and strikes as a warning and irony to the objection of human beings and the humanization of objects (Li, 2013: 6).

#### B. The "Two Cultures"

Another crisis revealed in *Saturday* is the division between two cultures — science and literature. In the first decade of the 21st century, science and technology is taking off by leaps and bounds. But with the rise of science, literature is no doubt ignored. This is the embarrassment of contemporary urban culture. The values of humanitarianism have been replaced by mechanical logic. The emotions of human beings have been wiped out without any trace in the rational thinking of this scientific logic. The rich and luxurious goods of the contemporary city constitute a ubiquitous and magnificent picture. In essence, this is only a huge illusion of human beings. In this illusion, people forget their inner selves and forget their lives. Different individuals are assimilated into a scientific but lifeless image. In turn, it becomes abstract in the scientific world. People in modern world can find distorted material euphoria, but cannot find harmony and gaiety in literature. People who become machine vassals and material slaves are becoming more and more objectified. The glory of contemporary cities can only reflect the darkness of humanity.

The idea of "Two Cultures" was first brought up by British novelist and scientist C. P. Snow in his 1959 Rede Lecture. The thesis was that "the intellectual life of the whole Western society" was split into the titular two cultures, namely the science and humanity. And that this was a major hindrance to solving problems. In the novel, McEwan creates two characters, the neurosurgeon, Henry Perowne and his poet daughter Daisy to represent the confrontation between science and literature.

Throughout the novel, the debate on these two parallel discourses constantly appears between Perowne and Daisy. Perowne has always turned his nose up at literature and held dear to science. Daisy instead recommends him book lists to cure his philistinism, but so far, not even Tolstoy and Flaubert have done the trick, despite that under Daisy's direction, Henry has read the whole of 'Anna Karenina' and 'Madame Bovary,' two acknowledged masterpieces. At the cost of slowing his mental processes and many hours of his valuable time, he committed himself to the shifting intricacies of these sophisticated fairy stories. What did he grasp, after all? That adultery is understandable but wrong, that 19th-century women had a hard time of it, that Moscow and the Russian countryside and provincial France were once just so. If, as Daisy said, the genius was in the detail, then he was unmoved (McEwan, 2004: 122).

A neurosurgeon and a professional, Perowne is the kind of man that only takes science to his heart. After all, it is medical science that gives him a leg up in the modern world. He believes in his heart that literature is a kind of kitsch killing leisure time. He is right in some sense: literature cannot offer watertight explanations or give definite answers. What literature does help, McEwan indicates, is to capture the moral intricacies of domestic life and historical background that is lived experience.

Deep in McEwan's heart, as we can tell from his works, literature is an essential part to civilization and science. It is the imaginative aspect of literature, its lack of empirical truth

value that disturbs and alienates Henry (Susan, 2010: 64). In giving us a protagonist so averse to the charms of his own science, McEwan showcases a back to the questions about the value and purpose of literature that he brought up in "Atonement." In the novel's apogee, McEwan arranges for his protagonist to be given a clear-cut example of literature's power.

As night falls, Perowne is once again back in his well-decorated house, hosting a family reunion. His son has returned from a band performance. His daughter has just come back from Paris. His aged father-in-law also lives here. But when Rosalind comes to complete the party, it is with violent invaders in tow. The upcoming action plays out as vintage McEwan nightmare. Brandished are knives. Punched are noses. Terrifying violence is in the offing. And then, at the very moment of crisis, the recitation of a poem, *Dover Beach* by Mathew Arnold, leads to a miraculous transformation. Violence is averted by a Victorian poet. Here is the conflict between violence and love. Here, too, of course, is the transformative power of literature. This, we can say, is a preposterous scenario. Apart from the credibility-defying spectacle of the demoniac underclass reined in, even momentarily, by verse, there is the flamboyant literalism with which the novel's ideas are made manifest. Here is civilized joy threatened by thug-like hordes. Here are the twin feelings of culpability and helplessness foreshadowed at the beginning of the book. Here is the conflict between hatred and sympathy for one's enemy. Here, too, of course, is the transformative capacity of art.

### C. Homogeneity

Another significant feature of post-industrial culture is homogeneity, homogeneity of the styles of buildings, of the city's layout, of lifestyles. The buildings in London Street look all the same. On the way to visit Perowne mother, "A rectilinear curve sweeps him past recent office buildings of glass and steel where the lights are already on in the February early afternoon. He glimpses people as neat as architectural models, at their desks, before their screens, even on a *Saturday*. This is the tidy future of his childhood science fiction comics, of men and women with tight-fitting collarless jumpsuits — no pockets, trailing laces or untucked shirts — living a life beyond litter and confusion, free of clutter to fight evil" (McEwan, 2004: 283). The clarity and transparency of buildings depicts a picture of Perowne's working life, and features the rigor of modern capitalism.

In a city where efficiency and function take priority, stiff and clear space is definitive. But such logic completely overlooks the interpersonal communications and ignores the people's subtle experience of space. As buildings become commercialized machines, the people dwelling in buildings also turn to standardized people. This kind of space and this structure philosophy completely ignores the people's richness, diversity, and immanence. Human beings are sacrificed for the sake of efficiency, and became numb machines under the control of standard space (Wang, 2005: 128). But on the contrary to the surface appearance, this homogeneous building layout in fact impairs people's subjectivity.

Bureaucratic and commercialized city structures have damaged individual's freedom.

In the *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre wrote that, "the resurgence of space belongs to conceptualized spatial space, and the resurgence of space is the space of scientists, policymakers, meritocrats and societal engineers" (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). And it is in this power-oriented spatial structure that relations of production in capitalist society usurped subjects, becoming the priority, and the sentimental appeals took a back seat. The rise of spatial homogeneity and the decay of individual's heterogeneity resonate with the theme of *Saturday*. Day after day, individual's freedom, emotions, diversity and dignity have been corrupted by the homogeneity of modern society.

## IV. CRISIS OF INDIVIDUAL

### A. *The Distorted Inter-subjectivity*

In 1970s, under Thatcherism, the economic inequality was worsening; social confrontation is intensifying, Britons' spiritual world also suffered waves of crises (Wang, 2006: 2). In *Saturday*, it's not uncommon to say that when one leads a successful and prosperous life, his happiness can be guaranteed. In the book, at least seen from the surface, Perowne is happy. Perowne is a fortunate man. In addition to his worthy, fulfilling job and the panoply of upper- middle-class privileges it pays for, he is blessed with a joyous domestic life. He has two successful, attractive children — 23-year-old Daisy, who is about to publish her first collection of poetry, and 18-year-old Theo, a prodigiously talented blues musician. He also has a lovely, capable wife, Rosalind, with whom, after nearly a quarter-century of marriage, he remains deeply in love. He has two successful, attractive children, and a lovely, capable wife, Rosalind, with whom, after nearly a quarter-century of marriage, he remains deeply in love. These blessings, coupled with his confidence in the certainty of medical progress, gives rise to a satisfaction that verges perilously on complacency. In another time and place, Perowne would almost certainly be a smug man. But it is his fate to live in the early 21st century — in the "baffled and fearful" days following 9/11 and leading up to the current war in Iraq — and neither his embarrassment of riches, nor his general inclination to optimism, can protect him from the darkness of his times. We can tell from the plot that distorted inter-subjectivity haunting Perowne. Inter-subjectivity is the psychological relation between people. It is usually used in contrast to solipsistic individual experience, emphasizing people's inherently social beings. But the inter-subjectivity depicted in *Saturday* is distorted.

One significant hallmark of this distorted inter-subjectivity is apathy. While driving to a squash game in the padded privacy of his Mercedes, Perowne is forced by an antiwar march to make a detour from his usual route and becomes involved in a minor car accident. The men in the other car want immediate compensation. When Perowne refuses to do so, violence is inevitable. But he has been closely observing the leader of the trio, a thug named Baxter, and he is pretty sure he has spotted in him the early

symptoms of a degenerative illness called Huntington's disease. By confronting him with this diagnosis, he makes a distraction that allows him to escape unharmed. As a doctor, he is expected to show Baxter sympathy and care. And yet he exploits the illness to escape. This is also a feature of modern world. Under capitalism, inter-subjectivity falls prey to money, and gives way to apathy.

Another feature of the distorted inter-subjectivity is aphephobia. It is an extreme fear of being touched, which ranges from simply feeling uneasy when being touched to feel a sharp pain simply by being brushed at. It is an extremely distorted external reaction and a psychological distance. Living in modern cities, on the one hand, people want to learn and get learned. But on the other hand, they are afraid of being harmed. So they choose to stay aside psychologically. This can be seen from Perowne's relations with his family members. He is a professional neurosurgeon and in common sense is supposed to be good at dealing with people. Yet outside the hospital, he cannot establish deep communications with his two children. His interactions, even sexual relations with his wife, are mere manual actions. He has bad relations with his father-in-law. His relationship with his colleagues is all but squash match. This aphephobia has coursed through the story, and in Perowne, McEwan lays bare the inner-workings of a particularly Western, particularly contemporary life: privileged, happily secular, and marked by an unsustainable apartness from the "monstrous and spectacular scenes" (Graham, 2010: 7).

### *B. Discipline and Institutionalization*

Like the panopticon depicted in *Discipline and Punishment* (Foucault, 1999), the Britain society in *Saturday* is a same place. In this novel, Perowne's house was set in the center of London, the most prosperous in the whole city and the best place to sightsee the city. From the window, Perowne is like an observer, witnessing passers-by day after day, "cheerful lunchtime office crowds, the solemn, studious boys from the Indian hostel, lovers in quiet raptures or crisis, the crepuscular drug dealers, the ruined old lady with her wild, haunting calls..." (McEwan, 2004: 13). What he does not notice is that he is also the observed, by invisible power in modern society. The complete, sensuous flesh and blood is far from being exhausted by the abstraction and conceptualization of rationalism, and the industrial civilization of capitalism causes the exhaustion of the human soul. But his professional ethics, his tastes, his tendency, are all institutionalized and disciplined by capitalism, by industrial culture, and by the environment after 9/11. All his life is observed without him knowledge, thus all his own dispositions depraved.

Observance is ubiquitous, and makes up a spacious net, under which society's malice is under mechanic surveillance. After more than a decade of the initial publication, *Saturday* still reverberate in our time. In today's world, as artificial intelligence and cloud computing progressed by leaps and bounds, the Orwellian world is becoming a reality. Our shopping tendencies are morphed into the types the advertisers just needed. "Our society is not an open society, but an observed one" (Foucault, 1995: 32). People's personal

data is under supervision of companies like Baidu and Tencent. People's ways of life are under the influence of the communities around us. Alas, disciplined and institutionalized people are.

### *C. Recovery*

In creating a protagonist who is simultaneously Everyman, and an ardent anti-intellectual, McEwan offers his readers a hero whose psychology fits Gilroy's description. Admittedly, as an author who has long engaged in questions of Englishness and English identity, McEwan has frequently offered his readers flawed protagonists — characters such as Stephen Lewis in *The Child in Time* (1987) or Joe Rose in *Enduring Love* (1997), men who mark the particular intersection of individuated yet representative psychologies (Elizabeth, 2007: 3). But McEwan is always intended to offer a silver of hope to his readers. And despite the trauma and crises happening to Perowne, he recovers in the finale of the story.

The confrontation between Baxter, the thug, and Perowne, strikes as the very division between different classes of that time, and the reflection over the 9/11 attack. In some way, it is Perowne's egoism and apathy that cause Baxter to take offense and seek revenge. All the same, it is democratic countries' indifference and superiority that partly led to the terrorist attack. In the story, after the accident, McEwan arranges for his protagonist to cure the patient, also the thug, with empathy and love. Facing Baxter who lies on the bed in hospital, and who once threatens his and his families' lives, Perowne's morality and humanities are again more challenged. He also suffers from quasi-Hamlet choice: save him or not, this is a question. Finally, the recovery of Perowne's morality revives the "rooted, intelligent and moral ability in his self. Perowne in the end defeats himself and acts as saint. He saves Baxter's life and the hopes for himself, and evaluates his own spiritual world. This is also McEwan the writer's message to the developed countries: it's unjustified to just pin all the sins on Muslims. It's true that Islam has its own flaws, but our attitudes toward their religion should also be put under check. There is no such an advanced culture or backward culture and what is needed to do is tolerance and empathy, justice and compassion.

While buying the ingredients for a fish stew he plans to make for supper, Perowne ponders the latest scientific research indicating that fish have a higher degree of capacity for pain than has previously been assumed. "This", he thinks, "is the growing complication of the modern condition, the expanding circle of moral sympathy. Not only distant peoples are our brothers and sisters, but foxes too, and laboratory mice, and now the fish" (McEwan, 2004: 221).

## V. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, *Saturday* is undoubtedly a masterpiece in contemporary literature world that depicts in grandeur all the crises after the 9/11 attack, thus showing people the panorama of the 21st century. It shows people a string of crises: the flaws of democratic world, the divisions between different religions, the confrontation between cultures, and

most of all, the crises of society and individuals. McEwan's in-depth dissection of discipline and institutionalization modern worlds offers people a unique way of analyzing the decaying of empathy and the rise of apathy. By analyzing McEwan's way of stream of consciousness and his way of describing psychological activities, people can have a better and clearer look of novels. From the perspective of crisis to analyze *Saturday*, critiques and writers could analyze *Saturday* with an overall look at the world in the post-9/11 era. What's more, in the view of Perowne, McEwan takes his responsibilities as a novelist. In *Saturday*, McEwan also through the psychological activities reflects on the egoism of democratic countries and the middle class. He may be just a British writer, what he has unveiled is about all human beings. He is deeply wary of the decay of cultures and the receding humanities yet he holds high hopes for people's race. So he is intended to arise people's empathy, inspire them to weather the crises mentioned above, be aware of the infinite power of literature, and then usher in a new Sunday. And the author believes even in 2019 more than a decade after the debut of *Saturday*, facing the rise of terrorism, the disintegration of common values, the study of this distinguished book can extract meaningful lessons for the progress of mankind.

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