

University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Brexit in the Contemporary Novel
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Bachelor Thesis

2022

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2020/2021

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Osobní číslo: **H19169**
Studijní program: **B0231A090018 Anglický jazyk**
Specializace: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**
Téma práce: **Brexit v současném románu**
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Zásady pro vypracování

Přípravy a odchod Velké Británie ze společenství evropských států vyvolaly zájem jak politických komentátorů, tak umělců. Autorka se zaměří na vybraná díla současné britské románové prózy, ve kterých problematika brexitu, jeho příčin a následků, tvoří důležité tematické pozadí či ústřední motiv. V úvodních kapitolách se zamyslí nad otázkami britské národní identity, zejména ve spojení s významy, které si s ostrovy spojujeme. Na tomto základě detailně rozebere romány *The Cockroach* od lana McEwana a *Blood, White and Blue* od Jamese Silvestera, popř. i další texty. Cílem analýz bude zmapovat, jak tato díla využívají toposu ostrova ve spojitosti s britskou národní identitou, brexitem a členstvím Británie v Evropské unii. Soustředit se bude na okruhy témat, které si daní autoři s těmito jevy spojují a staví je do popředí svého zájmu.

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:
Rozsah grafických prací:
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Primární zdroje:

McEwan, Ian. *The Cockroach*. Folio, 2019.

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Sekundární zdroje:

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **1. dubna 2021**
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2022**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my supervisor PhDr. Ladislav Vít, Ph.D. for his invaluable advice, support and patience throughout the creative process of my bachelor thesis.

ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals with the features of British identity influenced by Brexit and their projections in the works of Ian McEwan and James Silvester. The theoretical part outlines the background of Brexit and introduces the concepts of British identity, especially political tendencies, notion of lost empire and image of insularity. The practical part demonstrates how the authors interpret the influence of Brexit on these features and shows this perception in specific examples from the novels *The Cockroach* and *Blood, White and Blue*.

KEY WORDS

Brexit, British identity, politics, empire, insularity

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá rysy britské identity ovlivněné Brexitem a jejich projekcemi v dílech Iana McEwana a Jamese Silvestera. Teoretická část nastiňuje pozadí Brexitu a uvádí koncepty britské identity, především politické tendence, představu ztraceného impéria a podobu ostrovnosti. Praktická část předvádí, jak si autoři vykládají vliv Brexitu na tyto rysy a ukazuje toto vnímání v konkrétních příkladech z románů *The Cockroach* a *Blood, White and Blue*.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Brexit, britská identita, politika, impérium, ostrovnost

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Introduction

British identity has distinct and characteristic features largely due to the island territory that British people share. Britishness is broadly connected to theoretical concepts such as remoteness and separation which the insularity evokes. Moreover, the history of the British Empire projects to the present through the British sense of political and social supremacy. These aspects got recently affected by the controversial issue of Brexit – Britain's departure from the European Union. This event emerged from a referendum which passed in 2016 when the people of the United Kingdom decided about the fate of their country in a vote. The result of the vote was rather balanced as it ended 52 % to 48 % in favour of leaving of the European Union dividing the society into two opposing halves. Even though Britain seems more detached from the European Union than other European countries due to its geographical position, the consequences of this act project in many sectors, mainly economics, tourism and politics. Firstly, the economics in Brexit affects not only the trade with the European Union, but also trade ties with other countries outside the EU. Secondly, the free flow of people between the countries which the EU provides for its members no longer applies for the United Kingdom. This fact could severely influence tourism in the UK. Thirdly, the British political system has been swayed by the rising importance of conservative parties, especially United Kingdom Independence Party which became popular before the referendum vote due to its increasing activity in the recent years.

The referendum triggered political debates about the future possibilities and threats. Probably the most important topic was the agreement about the terms of the future relationship with the European Union and it can be observed that it took years until the conditions were settled. The act of leaving the EU has also drawn attention of several artists and authors. Some of the authors discuss the issues emerging from the vote, for example Ali Smith's novel *Autumn* illustrating differences in the society divided by the vote or Sam Byers' *Perfidious Albion* showing influence of social media and politics on the events after Brexit. Indeed, even more authors who discuss the Brexit situation in their works could be mentioned, such as Linda Grant, Jonathan Coe, Melissa Harrison and other. However, this paper examines the novels *Blood, White and Blue* written by James Silvester and *The Cockroach* by a popular contemporary British author Ian McEwan. The novels reviewed in this thesis deal with the issues of British identity, especially the notion of insularity and contemporary politics which were largely affected by Brexit, specifically the social and economic changes coming with it.

This bachelor thesis demonstrates how the authors present the influence of Brexit on the lives, identity, and social status of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom in their books. The authors offer two different perspectives on the situation and the aim of this paper is to show the differences as well as similarities of those perceptions.

The first chapter contains the essential political, social and economic background of the Brexit referendum along with the description of the UK's relationship with the European Union. It further elaborates on theoretical concepts of the British identity, specifically politics, British historical sovereignty and the concept of insularity. The methodology of politics and the Empire describe the conservative tendencies in Britain and influence of media in altering opinions about political goals or topics as well as the significance of British historical sovereignty during the times of the British Empire. The second methodology depicted in this chapter is the concept of insularity. It is shown that the sense of insularity associated with the compulsive effort to protect the island territory is closely tied to prejudices against immigrants in the country. In addition, insular identity also encompasses references to British naval importance in the endeavour to dominate the sea.

The second chapter discusses the major issues of politics in Brexit and their illustrations in the novels chosen for analysis. Besides showing the impact of right-wing political parties on the vote, the authors demonstrate the role of media during the event. Lastly, the writers present their views of the sentimental concepts of Britain's historical significance stemming from the period of the British Empire when the country was an important and flourishing world power.

The topic of the third chapter covers the perception of insularity in the examined novels. Apart from examining of the impact of separation from the Continent, the chapter observes profound sense of connectedness that the island inhabitants share and how these features are affected by Brexit processes. James Silvester focuses more on the way in which immigrants are treated during Brexit and the strong sense of insular identity intertwined in the society while Ian McEwan shows the close social relationships between the islanders and their desire to overcome the feeling of disconnection from the world. Generally, the authors demonstrate the role of Brexit in the situations stemming from the identity-driven actions.

At the most general level, the authors ponder ways in which Brexit shapes opinions, ideas and personalities of the British people. It creates new ties and relationships while ending the old ones. As a result, this paper constructs a comparative analysis of the novels *Blood, White and Blue* and *The Cockroach*. It shows the differences as well as similarities in the authors' perceptions of Brexit and the British identity.

1. Brexit and the British Identity

Brexit has been a pressing event of the contemporary political situation and a serious act that affected the structural condition of the European Union. The impact of the abrupt decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union influences some of the features of British identity as well as the way in which native inhabitants of the island perceive the Continent. This chapter establishes the essential social and political background of the Brexit referendum and elaborates on fundamental concepts of British identity which closely relate to the event.

The United Kingdom is historically known to be one of the founding states of the European Union. However, the relationship between these two entities has never been punctually dependent. According to Iwona Pawlas, the connection between the UK and the European Union was rather vague in the past since the UK did not fully incorporate the structural, economical, and social patterns of the EU.¹ The separation from the mainland gave the country a great opportunity to create a unique set of rules and be partially able to make independent decisions. Therefore, the nation's historical sovereignty seemed to remain in a plausible condition under the Union's supervision. Nevertheless, the dissatisfaction of the British people did not terminate, and it came to a climax in the recent years resulting in a referendum which allowed the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and become a fully autonomous state. A British academic Thomas Sampson agrees that the 2016 referendum was the pinnacle of Britain's discontent with the current state of the events, especially uncontrollable immigration, which provokes the nation's eagerness to govern and lead. He also elaborates on the idea that the participation of immigration as a hazardous aspect of the life within the EU influenced the overall social composition of the voters and their final decision in the Brexit issue.² This means that immigration played an important role in choosing the side in the matter and each British social class responded differently to the problem. Sampson and other critics refer to the statistics of the referendum vote and note that supporters of Brexit who voted in favour of leaving the European Union were mostly older citizens and members of the working class, who were generally concerned about losing their employment due to immigration because the immigrants represented cheaper working force which is more attractive for employers.³ Their concern might seem credible, however Leonardo Scuirea

¹ Iwona Pawlas, "Brexit as a Challenge for the European Union," *Horyzonty Polityki* 7, no. 20 (2016): 59–60.

² Thomas Sampson, "Brexit: The Economics of International Disintegration," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 4 (2017): 164, 179.

³ Sampson, "Brexit: The Economics," 164; Pawlas, "Brexit as a Challenge," 64; Leonardo Scuirea, "Brexit Beyond Borders: Beginning of the EU Collapse and Return to Nationalism," *Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 2 (2017): 112–114.

presents another statistics which shows that in fact the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom continuously decreased in recent years.⁴ This point implies that generally, people do not have to be afraid of losing their jobs due to immigration. However, the data lack information about the layout of the unemployment rate. Therefore, the question is if the slump took effect in every social class or if the phenomenon avoided the working class. The later would confirm the worries, possibly leaving the working class endangered and their jobs at risk.

The British working class is not the only community which Brexit impacts. In fact, not only the United Kingdom is influenced by the referendum, but the whole Continent, especially the members of the European Union. Many factors are placed at risk, factors which help the United Kingdom to be operated smoothly and without difficulties. Some critics assume that the consequences will be observed in various sections of the economic and social systems. They specifically mention complications in trade, unrestricted movement of people and goods and political stability within the EU.⁵ These difficulties could bring a great threat to British population and its economy. With the separation from the European Union, the immigration might be reduced in the future, however the economic decline may not only affect the working class, but every social class in the United Kingdom. Despite this uncertainty, there is still a chance in restoring of old trading ties with Asia, America and other. Critics Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever claim that Brexit could in fact help to rebuild the connection with China and India which the United Kingdom renounced when it joined the European Union. Along with these ties, relationships with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America have an opportunity to be renewed.⁶ Considering this viewpoint, the UK's trade with the rest of the world might save their economy and preserve the nation's sovereignty at the same time.

The roots of Brexit possibly relate back to Britain's imperial experience and history when the state was still a vast world power and its dominance in the world was obvious. Chris Farrell agrees that Britain's lack of supremacy under the management of the European Union caused general discontent and therefore culminated into Brexit.⁷ This means that the EU severely influenced the essence of British identity and its rooted sovereignty and independence. For this

⁴ Scuire, "Brexit Beyond Borders," 114.

⁵ Scuire, "Brexit Beyond Borders," 110; Pawlas, "Brexit as a Challenge," 70; Sampson, "Brexit: The Economics," 163.

⁶ Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever, "Racism, Crisis, Brexit," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 10 (August 2017): 1805.

⁷ Chris Farrell, "'The British People Are Not Stupid': Collective Vanity and Populist Myths of Communal Intellect," *Etnofoor* 33, no. 1 (2021): 63.

reason, the rest of this chapter is predominantly dedicated to the idea of Britishness, its fundamental concepts, and manners.

Nowadays, the term Englishness is often used in the same way as a closely related term Britishness, especially behind the UK's borders. As the stems of these words imply, Englishness refers to the notion of England as a part of the United Kingdom while Britishness relates to the entire country. Hence Englishness could be perceived as a subcategory of Britishness. However, throughout the years the concepts have blended together, and their interpretations have become almost identical as acknowledged by several critics and authors. While David Matless and Alex Law arrive at a similar conclusion that Englishness and Britishness are generally viewed as if they were only one term,⁸ Krishan Kumar suggests that the notion of each of the two terms varies in the approach which one can have in relation to the country. Therefore, British becomes the "official, stiff, formal" term and English the "warm, soulful" term.⁹ This paper consequently adopts the concept of Britishness with some features of Englishness and elaborates on its fundamentals hereafter.

The true core of Britishness differs, and it shifts from one view to another. There is an abundance of stereotypes connected to the country and the people who live there. These stereotypes circulate around the world and the British identity is sometimes veiled in prejudices. Conservatism, tradition, historical significance, and more stereotypical terms can be heard in different countries. But what is the true notion of Britishness? While one might think it is simple to define one's identity, the reality is not always so straightforward. According to Bonny Norton, identity as such is a difficult process. It is deeply bounded to time and place and is therefore erratic, shifting as the history goes.¹⁰ As a result, Britishness or any other national identity cannot be unequivocally defined because it is and probably always will be in a constant evolution. However, there are certain aspects that are consistent in time and thus determinable.

The territory of British people is precisely defined by the sea and the possibilities are limited by the borders and what lies within them. Therefore, solidarity and connection between the communities are more obvious. Historian Jeremy Black fittingly notes that nationhood has common aspects. They include shared name, area, culture, history, and also distinct feeling of unity. Britishness is moreover sourced by an essence of power, empire, and strong political

⁸ David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 19; Alex Law, "Of Navies and Navels: Britain as a Mental Island," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 87, no. 4 (2005): 271–272.

⁹ Krishan Kumar, "Englishness, Britishness and empire in the Politics of English Nationhood," *British Politics* 11, no. 3 (September 2016): 355.

¹⁰ Bonny Norton, "Language, Identity, and the Ownership of English," *TESOL Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1997): 419.

influence which altogether contribute to the nation's identity awareness.¹¹ The country's sovereignty shows a great importance in the notion of British identity, because it directly shapes the way in which the country is governed. When the British Empire still existed, it was considered to be one of the most powerful and wealthiest realms of the world and according to Farrell, Kumar, and David Lowenthal, the British dwell on that notion. Heritage, historical success, and sense of superiority is historically bound to their identity, and the nostalgia for the past became immensely important for them.¹² It is practically impossible to erase a part of nation's history which is so vast and important for the fundamental structure of nation's identity. Thus, there is no wonder that this part of British history projects into present events.

Empire is in its principle a sovereign structure and it could be described as a set of nations ruled by a dominant one. Social system as substantial as this one leaves a noteworthy mark on the people within. Krishan Kumar views the identity, which is closely influenced by an empire, as a distinct entity that should be perceived individually and separately from the basic concept of nationalism. He calls it an "imperial nationalism" and furthermore elaborates on the idea that this kind of national identity is different in a sense of political and ethnic uniformity which means that the principle of imperial nationalism lies in the pursuit of this uniformity and overall stability. In addition to that there is only one dominant ethnic group or nation which controls the balance.¹³ However, the British Empire extended its territory to various places of the world making the ethnic uniformity a difficult task for the British to accomplish. Thus, Kumar further notes that the British saw it more as an opportunity to spread their own culture, tradition, but most importantly modernization and democracy.¹⁴ There is no doubt that the British Empire had a strong impact on its colonies, especially, when democracy is considered.

Democracy, even though not guaranteed in every country, might be seen as an inseparable part of today's modern world. Another element which directly affects the modern world today is the internet. It has never been easier to connect with people and express an opinion than it is now with the boom of social media. As Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta and Aprameya Rao state, political parties use this opportunity to present their objectives and visions to the public. They further mention that social media help to guide people and be more knowledgeable about

¹¹ Jeremy Black, "An English Identity?," *History Today* 48, no. 3 (1998): 6.

¹² Farrell, "The British People," 62–63; David Lowenthal, "British National Identity and the English Landscape," *Rural History* 2, no. 2 (October 1991): 209–210; Kumar, "Englishness, Britishness and empire," 359; David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 253.

¹³ Krishan Kumar, "Nation and Empire: English and British National Identity in Comparative Perspective," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 5 (October 2000): 577–580.

¹⁴ Kumar, "Nation and Empire," 591.

political system of their own country.¹⁵ The issue is that modernization has its drawbacks. There is no doubt that social media can be a remarkably useful source of information, however there is a great risk of mendacious messages, reports or even propagandas. Edward L. Bernays agrees that political parties use their status to direct the public opinion as they need it to be.¹⁶ Even though freedom of opinion is one of the fundamental features of democracy, this fact needs to be considered when a question of free will arises.

Politics has a significant impact on the way a country operates as a unit, but it also affects the lives and principally the mindsets of the inhabitants as the media make it easily visible only by talking and writing about it. And the political parties used this opportunity for propagandas before the vote for the Brexit referendum took place. According to Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin, there were extensive campaigns promoting both outcomes of the referendum. The campaign for remaining in the European Union mainly referred to the economic threats and possible impacts on the country while those who promoted the proposal for leaving the EU mentioned rising immigration and receding supremacy as the main reasons for calling the referendum.¹⁷ As a result of these political campaigns the nation was divided into two groups and the relationships within the society were most likely harmed by the conflicts between them. However, this division did not only concern the common people, but this phenomenon encompasses politics too. As the critics further note, the structure of British politics suffered a great damage because of the vote and the dominant position of the two leading political parties (Conservative and Labour) was endangered by the United Kingdom Independence Party which became popular in the recent years for its disapproval of the immigration situation.¹⁸ Because of its increasing popularity the Party might be considered a substantial influence on the result of the vote. As mentioned above, many citizens feared immigration and considered it dangerous for the British economic and social environment and this fact probably helped UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) in its ascension to the British political elite. As Ford and Goodwin report, UKIP seized the third place in the popularity contest in 2012 and thus beat the Liberals, who generally cherish and encourage ethnic diversification. UKIP's attractiveness was rising, however the statistics showed that the Party was primarily endorsed by white men who

¹⁵ Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta and Aprameya Rao, "Languaging in digital global South – North spaces in the twenty-first century: media, language and identity in political discourse," *Bandung: Journal of the Global South* 5, no. 1 (2018): 5–6.

¹⁶ Edward L. Bernays, "Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and The How," *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (May 1928): 959.

¹⁷ Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit: A Nation Divided," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (January 2017): 24.

¹⁸ Ford and Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit," 17–22.

advocated the Conservative Party prior to switching of their favour to UKIP.¹⁹ As it can be seen, the radical Conservative approach towards the immigration became even more famous and its fame escalated to the point when the British population revealed its discontent with the immigrant situation through the referendum vote which released them from the European Union.

As already established above in the chapter, the immigration is seen as a threat to the society, especially to the working class. However, the risk of losing an employment is not the only factor which the British might consider pressing. According to Insa Koch, the British are strongly motivated by pursue to protect their identity and Brexit vote therefore arose largely from their actions to guard the nation's roots.²⁰ British roots are specifically distinct as they reach far into the history, but it is not the only aspect associated with this nation. Susan Condor, Stephen Gibson, and Jackie Abell remark in their article that the identity of the country is closely associated with a sense of place which is linked to the island. They further say that another factor is a close bond to the heritage and family, but also to the culture which is completely deprived of racial prejudices and therefore sharable by everyone no matter the ethnicity.²¹ This claim implies that the immigrants of ethnic minorities are not in fact a burden on the society, but it is likely that they can adjust to the British way of life, share their values and incorporate fully into the society. On the other hand, James E. Randall argues that the foreigners who are new to the island will most likely never fully bond with the local community and therefore they will feel disconnected from the identity shared by the islanders.²² This assertion probably reflects the reality in the times of Brexit in a more resembling way as the result of the referendum vote suggests that more than a half of British citizens shifted to the more traditional and sovereign approach of identity. Ford and Goodwin agree that the main goal of the conservative voters who favoured leaving the European Union is stability which is mostly related to the idea of racial unity and dominance of one race, and therefore rejecting immigration and ethnic variety in general.²³ It can be observed that the social stability and unity is a very important phenomenon for British identity, but the issue is that Brexit generally imperils the stability of the country as a whole. The process of withdrawing from the European

¹⁹ Ford and Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit," 22–23.

²⁰ Insa Koch, "What's in a vote? Brexit beyond culture wars," *American Ethnologist* 44, no. 2 (May 2017): 226.

²¹ Susan Condor, Stephen Gibson, and Jackie Abell, "English Identity and Ethnic Diversity in the Context of UK Constitutional Change," *Ethnicities* 6, no. 2 (2006): 129.

²² James E. Randall, Peter Kitchen, Nazeem Muhajarine, Bruce Newbold, Allison Williams, and Kathleen Wilson, "Immigrants, islandness and perceptions of quality-of-life on Prince Edward Island, Canada," *Island Studies Journal* 9, no. 2 (2014): 346.

²³ Ford and Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit," 19–20.

Union includes many difficulties and the quantity of actions required for the actual departure from the EU suggests that the reality of the United Kingdom after Brexit might not be as stable as the British hope for.

Another feature of identity is a language. There is no doubt that language can be perceived as a great communication tool, but some critics see it as a significant source of identity too. Eric Hobsbawm asserts that language greatly contributes to the collective and the relationships within as it could be seen as a spiritual bond which keeps the community close. He adds that language also helps to construct culture and ethnicity.²⁴ Therefore, the British tendency to keep immigrants off the island could be attributed to this fact as well as the British desire to protect their identity. This devotion to guard the nation's origins is further encouraged by one more important idea. According to Laura Bates et al., the identity of inhabitants can be vulnerable when a larger number of newcomers come to the country. Especially islanders experience a certain change of the society and a discomfort or even anxiety which intertwine the communities.²⁵ This observation indicates that islands are fragile systems, and the newcomers seem to compromise the stability of the islanders' identity which they (the islanders) endeavour to preserve and nurture.

An insular identity is distinct from that of the Continent as it has its own unique features which make it original. It was already shown that the nature of insularity is fragile, but there is no doubt that its characteristics remain firmly consistent. When describing what insularity represents, Godfrey Baldacchino, Angeliki Mitropoulou and Ioannis Spilanis agree on the general picture which characterises insularity as a way of living. It connects the islands and unites everything the islanders share, including the sense of place, remoteness, or close society.²⁶ Even though the critics agree on the explanation of insularity, one more detail has to be considered. The insular identity involves two possible views of how it can be perceived – insularity and islandness. While both have similar foundations, according to Mitropoulou and Spilanis, insularity is usually related to more negative associations, such as separation or finiteness whereas islandness connects the ideas of social commonality and connectedness into

²⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, "Language, Culture, and National Identity," *Social Research* 63, no. 4 (1996): 1066; Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, "Language and Identity," in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, November 2004), 374.

²⁵ Laura Bates, Tara Coleman, Janine Wiles, and Robin Kearns, "Older residents' experiences of islandness, identity and precarity: Ageing on Waiheke Island," *Island Studies Journal* 14, no. 2 (November 2019): 179.

²⁶ Godfrey Baldacchino, "The Coming of Age of Island Studies," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 95, no. 3 (July 2004): 272–273; Angeliki Mitropoulou and Ioannis Spilanis, "From Insularity to Islandness: The use of place branding to achieve sustainable island tourism," *International Journal of Islands Research* 1, no. 1 (2020): 33–35.

a one energetic functional unit.²⁷ These terms have their similarities, but they should not be used interchangeably as each of them has its own qualities, which make them separate and original. This paper further explores some characteristics of both insularity and islandness; therefore, the rest of this chapter elaborates major aspects of these concepts.

Isolation is considered to be one of the key aspects of insularity. The word isolation connotes terms such as detachment, solitude, and separation and the negativity which comes from these expressions might be attached to the way the islanders are perceived. However, the idea of physical isolation can also be a great advantage for the islanders. Pete Hay, Phillip Vannini and Carsten Anckar agree on the fact that the feeling of being isolated can help to build stronger relationships in the communities. Thus, the islanders tend to be more empathetic towards each other and they may develop deeply united society.²⁸ It is apparent that even though isolation is connected to insularity, it does not necessarily exclude islandness from the observation. For example, Philip Conkling talks about islandness and its traits, which were already mentioned above, but he specifically emphasises the tight relationship with the nature and landscape and the special awareness of the physical border of the island that the islanders feel and acknowledge.²⁹ It appears that insularity and islandness interconnect and their close relation establishes beneficial cooperation where one completes the other. The boundary seems to keep the islanders in close proximity to nature, but also improves people's mutual understanding for each other and helps to create more intimate relationships.

Besides the closeness and connectedness that is associated with the boundaries of the island, the presence of the sea makes a significant contribution to the insular identity as well. For Peter Hay, Stephanos Stephanides and Susan Bassnett the aspect of the sea means an overwhelming power which highlights the detachment from the mainland. The critics point out that the islanders are conscious about its existence, yet they try to take advantage of the water barrier, using it as a tool to make a better and united society.³⁰ Some other critics acknowledge the benefits too, for example Law and Lowenthal who further introduce a specific feature which makes the sea even more important. They describe the sea as an extended British territory which

²⁷ Mitropoulou and Spilanis, "From Insularity to Islandness," 34.

²⁸ Pete Hay, "A Phenomenology of Islands," *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 22–23; Phillip Vannini, "Constellations of ferry (im)mobility: islandness as the performance and politics of insulation and isolation," *Cultural Geographies* 18, no. 2 (2011): 252–253; Carsten Anckar, "Size, Islandness, and Democracy: A Global Comparison," *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 29, no. 4 (September 2008): 436.

²⁹ Philip Conkling, "On Islanders and Islandness," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007): 192–195.

³⁰ Hay, "A Phenomenology of Islands," 22; Stephanos Stephanides and Susan Bassnett, "Islands, Literature, and Cultural Translatability," *Transtext(e)s Transcultures. Journal Of Global Cultural Studies* Hors série (January 2008): 7.

the British tend to call their own. This feeling of sea sovereignty is encouraged by history and especially by the unstable (and sometimes warlike) relationship with France.³¹ These clues lead back to the notion of hypothetical presence of the British Empire and the sense power connected to it as the rivalry between France and the United Kingdom seems to be prevailing even in the present.

To conclude, the British identity encompasses many views and concepts which could be interpreted differently. However, there are common features that the British national identity adopts. Not only is it connected to the people, their close relationships, and the sense of isolation from the world, but it also embraces the landscape and its boundaries. While the overall depiction of Britishness might appear mostly positive, it has its negatives. Even though the isolation on the island support connectedness between the islanders, the foreigners feel mostly unwelcomed because they often get rejected. In addition to that, the strong sense of sovereignty is rooted in their characters making the increase of newcomers difficult to accept, especially when Brexit inevitably influences the living in the UK at the present. Leaving the European Union is a big step towards the future, but it is not clear if it will be a bright one.

³¹ Law, "Of Navies and Navels," 271; Lowenthal, "British National Identity," 211.

2. Politics and Empire in the Contemporary Novel

Politics shapes the contemporary world and with the social media as its tool, they form a significant influence on the society. During the recent years, the United Kingdom intention to leave the European Union, which is known as Brexit, has become a major political event, as well as a significant act that has impacted the British national identity. Two of the features affected by Brexit are discussed in this chapter – the British politics and the concept of national imperial sovereignty. This chapter demonstrates how they are projected in the interpretations of Brexit in the novels *Blood, White and Blue* written by James Silvester and *The Cockroach* by Ian McEwan.

Brexit has been a pressing result of the increasing dissatisfaction of the United Kingdom with the European Union. It can be inferred that this event has shaken both the structure of the EU and the citizens living in it. Apart from influencing the society, it is apparent that the referendum has affected the political system too. Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin claim that Brexit causes deep political and social partitions. The society and politics change and consequently, deeper differences between the contrasting opinions about the UK's position in the European Union are more noticeable.³² It is observed that the vote divided the population of the United Kingdom into two conflicting parts. However, the novels chosen for analysis show that a bigger problem might occur when these differing beliefs escalate into an actual conflict and demonstration.

In the McEwan's satirical novel *The Cockroach*, the main character is Jim Sams – a cockroach who decides to transform himself into the body of the Prime Minister of the UK to complete the task of delivering and successfully executing Brexit, which is called Reversalism in the book. When he is on his way to the Downing Street, still in his cockroach form, he encounters a crowd walking in his direction. When he approaches the mob, the narrator of the story describes the scene:

Then, out of nowhere, there came down upon him a sudden storm, the thunder of ten thousand feet, and chants and bells, whistles and trumpets. Yet another rowdy demonstration. [...] Nowadays, the protests were staged almost every week. Disrupting vital services, preventing ordinary decent types from going about their lawful business. [...] He saw their banners streaming, their flags bearing down, yellow stars on a blue ground. Union Jacks too.³³

³² Ford and Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit," 17.

³³ Ian McEwan, *The Cockroach* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019), 6–7.

As the author suggests, the protests became frequent before the referendum vote. The second book *Blood, White and Blue* shows another example of this phenomenon. The story overall focuses on the pursuit to stay in the European Union because the main character Lucie Musilova, who is half-Czech and half-British, is strongly opposed to Brexit. Therefore, the author James Silvester presents a more adverse point of view to the conflict with the supporters of Brexit referendum. At one point of the book, people organise a demonstration against the result of the vote. However, the situation gets dramatic when it ends in a bomb attack.³⁴ This situation in the story implies that protests do not necessarily progress peacefully, and some complications might be considered in this action. In addition to that the demonstrations might as well highlight the people's disunity which comes to the foreground during these acts and differences between the individual members of the social classes become more evident too.

It can be observed that the society divided into groups during the vote. Some critics report the statistics which show that the Brexit vote was mostly supported by older white voters, the working class, and people with lesser education. The critics state that generally, these people have a more conservative approach to politics and life and therefore, their values differ from those of ethnic minorities or middle class which tend to defend diversity of ethnicity, sexuality, or religion.³⁵ It might be noted that all of the groups hold significant positions in the decision of the Brexit conflict, however the British politics played a particular role in the result of the vote too. According to Aristotle Kallis, the trust which people put in the centre-left political parties has aggravated in the recent years. Largely due to the immigrant situation in Britain the centre-right and even radical right parties have improved their positions and popularity in the country.³⁶ Bearing that in mind, it could be said that the right-wing parties gained a bigger support than in the past which gave the Right an advantage in the referendum vote. Ford and Goodwin report that besides the established popularity of the right-wing Conservative Party in the popularity vote, the recognition of the United Kingdom Independence Party has grown so much that it has surpassed the Liberal Democrats and become the third most favourite party.³⁷ Considering this result, it is evident that the right-wing parties have achieved to be an important influence in the modern politics and, as the result of the referendum implies, especially crucial during the vote.

³⁴ James Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue* (Great Britain: Urbane Publications, 2018), 248.

³⁵ Ford and Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit," 19; Sampson, "Brexit: The Economics," 164.

³⁶ Aristotle Kallis, "The European Union and the Mainstreaming of the Radical Right," *Insight Turkey* 20, no. 3 (2018): 64.

³⁷ Ford and Goodwin, "Britain After Brexit: A Nation Divided," 22.

The popularity of the right-wing politics is clearly mentioned in the novel *The Cockroach*. McEwan's satirical interpretation of Brexit is illustrated as a concept of reversing the money flow and the author calls it Reversalism. In one section of the book, the narrator reports the political situation in Britain during preparations for Reversalism as well as a brief history of Reversalist Party which founded and determined the Reversalist concept. The author describes the circumstances of the rise of Reversalist Party, which most likely represents an embodiment of UKIP, and its success in advocating Reversalism. He explains that

When the Reversalist Party arrived spectacularly on the scene with its populist, anti-elitist message, there were many, even among its opponents, who were already familiar with the 'counter-flow' thesis. After the Reversalists won the approval of the American president, Archie Tupper, and even more so when it began to lure voters [of the Conservative Party] away, the Conservative Party began, in reaction, a slow drift to the right and beyond. [...] In order to shore up its electoral support and placate the Reversalist wing of the party, the Conservatives promised in their 2015 election manifesto a referendum on reversing the money flow. The result was the unexpected one, largely due to an unacknowledged alliance between the working poor and the old of all classes.³⁸

As it is evident, the tendency to support the right-wing parties is acknowledged by the author too. Even though Ian McEwan uses fictional names, titles and dates, the story reflects the existing right-wing trend in a comprehensible way. In addition to that it hints on the result of the actual Brexit referendum, which the social classes mentioned above helped to achieve.

A similar occurrence of the right-wing influence is also depicted in the novel *Blood, White and Blue*. James Silvester presents a point of view of a Member of Parliament, Sir Geoffrey Hartnell, who is one of a few people in Parliament defending the European Union in the story. When he speaks to Lucie Musilova, who works as a British agent to pursue reversing Brexit, he expresses his concerns about the right-wing parties:

"[...] look around you today at what Britain has become, what everywhere always becomes when the Far Right take hold, [...]. And now thanks to Brexit, [...] they're [the Right] poised to take control, just as they were fifty years ago, only this time

³⁸ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 27–29.

they won't need an army to do it! [...] Only this time, they'll take it, and that will be the end of the Britain you and I call home.”³⁹

Silvester's view implies that the right-wing parties actually signify a threat to the system of the country, meaning that they might be able to change the way the United Kingdom functions as a unit, and Brexit offers one possibility to do so.

Another factor that Brexit influences is the Britain's relationship with other countries outside the European Union. Without the supervision of the European Union, the UK is able to create new ties, deals and agreements outside the Continent. Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever note that the UK could form new bonds with the old allies from the past – Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, but also new connections with the United States of America or China.⁴⁰ When cooperation with the member states of the European Union is out of the UK's reach, the relationships with other countries appear to be valuable as Ian McEwan and James Silvester acknowledge in their novels. The ties with the USA present an important aspect in the lives of the characters, either in a good or a bad way. However, the novels mostly show the American impact in a more unfavourable manner. In *Blood, White and Blue*, Lucie's colleague and a Member of Parliament, Kasper Algiers, expresses his opinion on the ties with the United States when he suggests that it is unlikely that the British people actually believe that the UK is economically more stable having a trade agreement with the USA without the involvement of the EU. Nevertheless, he adds that many companies and politicians approve this relationship because they are interested in its possible profitability and thus money becomes a significant motivator for endorsing the ties after all. Algiers also expresses his concerns about this cooperation and notes that in his opinion, America only exploits Britain for its wealth and therefore this connection will probably cause a severe damage to the British economy in the future.⁴¹ This part of the book demonstrates that the British might actually feel doubtful about the relationship with the USA. Despite the economic uncertainty, some individuals, communities and corporations see the financial prospects of the agreement and the novel shows that it becomes an important aspect in their final decision to vote in favour of the referendum.

The Cockroach presents the American influence in a more manipulative way. It portrays the USA as a decision-maker, an ultimate power which directly affects opinions and consequential actions. At one point in the novel, the popularity of Reversalism gradually deteriorates and the entire Britain along with other countries begin to question and even mock

³⁹ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 235.

⁴⁰ Virdee and McGeever, “Racism, Crisis, Brexit,” 1805.

⁴¹ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 203.

the idea. However, when Jim Sams persuades the American president Archie Tupper to endorse the qualities of Reversalism, the hostile opinions change to the better. The turning point for this change turns out to be a simple message on social media:

But the puzzled, weary or condescending smiles began to freeze when the tweets of the US president assumed a degree of consistency on the subject. In the name of free trade, American prosperity and greatness, and raising the poor, Reversalism was ‘good’. Prime Minister Sams was great.⁴²

After this moment, the idea of Reversalism gains its trust among the people and other countries stop criticising the concept and start considering the benefits after all. Therefore, it can be observed that this novel shows a different viewpoint on the American influence from the novel *Blood, White and Blue*. While in the first example James Silvester illustrates the United States as a potential risk for the British economy to which the people are sceptical, Ian McEwan visualises the USA as a significant authority powerful enough to alter opinions and persuade the world about its significance.

In *The Cockroach*, there is one more substantial reference to an important contact with countries of the European Union, specifically Germany. When Jim Sams finalises preparations for Reversalism, he approaches other states with a request to reverse their economies as well, or at least to cooperate with the United Kingdom in the future. Once he manages to negotiate with Germany, he reaches the German chancellor and organises a conference with her and other representatives. They talk about setting terms and conditions for their upcoming relationship but at one point of the conversation, the chancellor cannot hold her feelings back and confronts Jim who is surprised by her reaction:

“Why are you doing this? Why, to what end, are you tearing your nation apart? Why are you inflicting these demands on your best friends and pretending we’re your enemies? Why?” [...] Because. Because that’s what we’re doing. Because that’s what we believe in. Because that’s what we said we’d do. Because that’s what people said they wanted. Because I’ve come to the rescue. Because. That, ultimately, was the only answer: *because*. [...] After an anxious pause, it came in a rush. [...] “Because, Madame Chancellor, we intend to become clean, green, prosperous, united, confident and ambitious!”⁴³

⁴² McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 83.

⁴³ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 86–87.

It can be seen that the uncertainty about this regime affects not only the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, but also other countries which might be concerned about their infrastructure as well. It even appears that Jim himself slightly doubts his plans after all of his effort. However, this example is not the only one in the book which implies that some people might actually hesitate about the future of the country under the new management.

At the beginning of the book, only a few moments after Jim Sams transforms into the body of the Prime Minister, he meets with a special adviser Simon to consult some issues about the press and a growing distrust in the system. Jim still tries to accommodate to his new body, and thus he lets Simon speak without interruption. The adviser seems concerned, and he explains to Jim that the press is trying to undermine the credibility of Reversalism which results in public uncertainty spreading through Britain. He remarks that: “There’s general weariness. Creeping fear of the unknown. Anxiety about what they voted for, what they’ve unleashed.”⁴⁴ The doubts about the future are apparent and it is clear that some people might be concerned about it. Similar situation can be observed after the meeting with the adviser when some newspapers become sceptic about Jim’s intentions. The narrator mentions that Jim Sams tries to appeal to both Reversalists (supporters of Reversalism) and Clockwisers (defenders of normal money flow) and persuade them about the noble cause of Reversalism to get them on his side. However, the press acknowledge that Jim’s two-sided connections are rather suspicious, and they only make the conflict of these two beliefs worse resulting in more profound uncertainties than before. The narrator then implies that the referendum vote should be in fact reversed due to Jim’s drop in credibility:

[...] the more serious papers agreed that a no confidence might well succeed. The prime minister had alienated both the Clockwise and Reversalist tendencies within his party. He was too much the appeaser. By reaching out to both wings, he had alienated nearly everyone.⁴⁵

This example shows that the result of the referendum vote is not necessarily built on limitless trust in the system. The author demonstrates that doubts are more likely intertwined through the entire process of the vote. Moreover, media present one of the key factors which influences opinions of the society not only in situations like this.

The previous examples illustrate that the contribution of media in the matter of increasing uncertainty is significant. However, their engagement in public and political affairs is even

⁴⁴ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 16.

⁴⁵ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 19.

more extensive than that. Therefore, it can be said that media and especially social media serve an important purpose in the modern society. Ralph Schroeder claims that both conventional and digital media complete each other as they oftentimes closely cooperate. Since the public generally comes into contact with different types of media regularly, Schroeder notes that media and especially the modern ones help to shape opinions and consequently influence lives. He further says that political parties often use this opportunity to spread their visions or political awareness, but some parties use the platforms as tools to manipulate and rebuild public attitudes towards their campaign.⁴⁶ It is easy to access the necessary information in the present and media extensively contribute to this trend. Despite the fact that the platforms might serve as a useful information source, the risk of media disinformation or manipulation cannot be always avoided. The books show this phenomenon especially in the field of political propaganda as well as the way politicians use media to distribute information.

There are many situations in *The Cockroach* where media play an important role for the development of the story. Apart from the American president Archie Tupper and his effective use of social media for endorsing Reversalism, there are more examples which show how media help to twist opinions. In one case, the media promote the qualities of Reversalism before the referendum vote. The idea of Reversalism is to reverse the money flow which essentially means that on the one hand, a person has to pay for doing work assigned to him and on the other hand, gets paid for buying goods or services. This concept is beneficial for the working class, the poor and the old as it gives them the opportunity to live more comfortably. The press highlight these strengths but also add the disadvantages of the regular financial flow to be more persuasive:

Both groups, poor and old, were animated to varying degrees by nationalist zeal. In a brilliant coup, the Reversalist press managed to present their cause as a patriotic duty and a promise of national revival and purification: everything that was wrong with the stagnating wages, was caused by the direction of financial flow. If you loved your country and its people, you should upend the existing order. The old flow had merely served the interests of a contemptuous ruling elite.⁴⁷

This part of the book shows features of manipulation when forcing the readers to vote for the referendum. Some phrases even imply that the only acceptable decision is to vote for

⁴⁶ Ralph Schroeder, "The internet in theory," in *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization* (London: UCL Press, 2018), 3–6.

⁴⁷ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 29.

Reversalism. Hence it is visible that media indeed use their position in the society to report political visions.

This phenomenon is also demonstrated in *Blood, White and Blue* and it refers back to the influence of the right-wing politics as some previous examples from the book. During one of the Sir Hartnell's conversations with Lucie Musilova, he explains the structure of the Parliament and the position of media in the situation: "The Right may be numerically imbalanced in Parliament, but they hold key positions on all the relevant Select Committees and their mouth pieces sit on grand chairs in the Cabinet while their allies in the press hold the media in their palms."⁴⁸ This sample confirms the involvement of the press in politics and also the fact that some politicians use these connections for promoting their parties or controlling the information flow.

Another part of *The Cockroach* presents the role of media in shaping the public opinion during an incident which involves France and its naval force. When one of the British fishing boats crosses the boundary of the UK's waters in the story, French ship immediately destroys the boat killing the fishermen and calling Britain an intruder. Even though there is evidence that the French were in their right, the Prime Minister Jim Sams uses media to upturn the situation for the better and what appears to be a catastrophe for the United Kingdom's reputation at first, becomes a substantial propaganda in the end.⁴⁹ As noted above, it is apparent that media are able to influence the public opinion and direct the attention of readers towards desired object or information and this section of the book illustrates this phenomenon explicitly.

This aspect is closely related to the public image as well as the way in which politicians use media to draw attention to their strengths and depict their objectives in the most favourable way possible. A critic Harold D. Lasswell fittingly depicts how political propaganda works when saying:

If we state the strategy of propaganda in cultural terms, we may say that it involves the presentation of an object in a culture in such a manner that certain cultural attitudes will be organized toward it. The problem of the propagandist is to intensify the attitudes favorable to his purpose, to reverse the attitudes hostile to it, and to attract the indifferent, or, at the worst, to prevent them from assuming a hostile bent.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 238.

⁴⁹ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 73–74.

⁵⁰ Harold D. Lasswell, "The Theory of Political Propaganda," *The American Political Science Review* 21, no. 3 (August 1927): 629.

This shows that in order to lead a successful political campaign, one needs to consider which factors make the propaganda appealing and fitting for the desired effect or targeted audience. Interestingly enough, both novels demonstrate the same political act of attempting to show the most favourable appearance in public. After the French incident in *The Cockroach*, Jim Sams persuades the French to release the bodies of the dead fishermen to transport them back to the United Kingdom to be buried. The funeral is broadcasted in the entire country, therefore the coffins are wrapped in Union Jacks. At one point of the performance Jim allegedly starts to cry, but because it rains heavily and nobody can be sure if it is true, this act becomes only a convenient image made by the press to initiate a wave of public compassion and grief.⁵¹ It can be observed that the factor projected in this situation is most likely an appeal to patriotism and empathy confirming Lasswell's claims.

In *Blood, White and Blue*, Lucie Musilova mentions the same involvement of political influence during funerals of fallen British soldiers in Afghanistan where she used to work as a military chaplain. When talking with her colleague Della, Lucie portrays her experience with political performance during the time she was working in Afghanistan. She explains how: "When they bring the bodies of the fallen home, they always drape the coffin in a Union flag, as though it makes losing a loved one to some politician's fight of ego all the easier if you wrap the body in some final expression of jingoistic pointlessness."⁵² It is apparent that politics can be involved in usually ordinary activities when an opportunity to enhance the political image occurs. However, this example implies that politics is also connected to more problematic circumstances such as military conflicts not only in Afghanistan. Bearing that in mind, politics can be seen as a significant aspect influencing lives of common people either in a passive or active way.

The concept of a lost empire is inextricably linked to contemporary politics in Britain. The compulsive attachment to the past projects in Brexit as well. David Lowenthal observes that nostalgia is one of the key factors of British identity and longing for the past times is contained in that sentiment.⁵³ The period of the British Empire is historically substantial for its industrial and territorial prestige, hence there is no doubt that it had an impact on the British sense of supremacy. Krishan Kumar agrees that it is almost impossible for the British to suppress such a significant part of their history, therefore the people tend to project their former

⁵¹ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 63.

⁵² Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 54.

⁵³ David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 1 (January 1975): 3.

sovereignty into the present time and situations.⁵⁴ Considering this assertion, it can be noted that the British imperial past seems to remain to be an influence on the process of decision making of the contemporary society even during Brexit. This persisting notion of a lost empire can be seen in the analysed novels.

The author of *The Cockroach* illustrates the search for the lost history in an effort to unite the country to bring back the image of a world power. After making a thorough plan for his presentation, the Prime Minister Jim Sams performs a compelling speech in the Parliament to persuade his colleagues about the noble objectives of Reversalism (Brexit). He suggests that when the vote is done then

“[...] our mission will be to deliver Reversalism for the purpose of uniting and re-energising our great country and not only making it great again, but making it the greatest place on earth. [...] the UK will be the greatest and most prosperous economy in Europe. [...] Reversalism will bless our future – clean, green, prosperous, united, confident and ambitious.”⁵⁵

In this section of the book, Jim proposes that Reversalism can make the future of Britain better and the historical sovereignty will be restored in unity and modernization of the social and financial systems of the UK. Therefore, the society of the United Kingdom has to cooperate together in order to achieve regaining the former significance of the country.

While *The Cockroach* indicates that the nation’s sovereignty can be renewed only by a united society cooperating together, *Blood, White and Blue* suggests that historical glory can be regained only if the nation follows one powerful leader who manages to fulfil the task alone. In the second novel, this phenomenon is illustrated when media start to spread political hysteria after the bomb attack during one of the demonstrations. The narrator shows how the press portray Sir Geoffrey Hartnell as the only person able to avert Brexit, or at least alter it to a more pleasant variant for immigrants, when describing how

the most powerful of the media groups vomiting daily headlines onto the people, containing tales of [...] indecision at the heart of government and the perennial need for a ‘strong leader’ to emerge to rescue Britain in its moment of crisis – one who could unite the country, and who was respected, even admired on the world stage.

⁵⁴ Kumar, “Englishness, Britishness and empire,” 359.

⁵⁵ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 45–47.

[...] Hartnell would prove a strong leader who understood the need to unite behind the referendum result [...]⁵⁶

It is apparent that the sense of sovereignty can be provided by both society as a united system and one leading figure chosen to represent the rest of the country. However, in both options the sentiment for the lost supremacy of the Empire endures and influences how the society reaches its decisions, which is especially projected in the result of the Brexit vote.

To conclude, politics considerably affects the social structure, especially during Brexit. Moreover, the British still value the past achievements and the persisting nostalgia for the Empire which gives them an undeniable sense of lost supremacy. The novels display the dissatisfaction with the Brexit situation, mainly mentioning demonstrations. In addition to that they mention the rise of the conservative right-wing political parties which became an important factor during the vote together with increasing influence which the United States have on the UK. The books further describe how media manipulate public opinion and tilt the facts to help political parties in constructing their image. On top of all that it is shown that historical sovereignty from the times of Empire persist to guide the process of decision-making.

⁵⁶ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 251.

3. Insularity in the Contemporary Novel

The term insularity is profoundly connected with the issues of identity, migration but also finiteness and control. Some critics perceive insularity as a more negative part of being related to an island as it is closely associated with isolation and detachment.⁵⁷ However, this chapter does not only explore the issues of English insularity, but also touches on a more common and widespread interpretation of island identity – islandness – and its projections on Brexit in the selected novels *Blood, White and Blue* from the author James Silvester and *The Cockroach* written by Ian McEwan.

The identity of islanders is bound to conceptual features like seclusion and solitude. Owing to the isolation and close relations within the communities, it might be difficult for some islanders to welcome newcomers onto their land. According to Philip Conkling, the residents of islands often share a self-contained society that refuses the outsiders and highlights their (the islanders’) identity as distinct and significant in its psychological sense.⁵⁸ Considering this fact and the characteristics of Brexit mentioned above in the first chapter, there is no wonder that the projection of the reserved nature of the English people and rejection of foreigners in the country can be seen in the novels.

James Silvester shows this phenomenon clearly in his novel *Blood, White and Blue*. An immense part of the story lies on the foundations of total separation of true British people from the immigrants living in the United Kingdom. The author also shows the raw resentment towards the foreigners, for example when the main character of the book Lucie Musilova, who has a Czech mother and a British father, describes the attitude of the British towards her origins:

“I grew up between here and the UK, but neither feels like home anymore. Here [in the Czech Republic], people resent the treatment of the EU nationals in Britain and don’t entirely trust that I’m not part of that, and back there [in the UK] I get looked at like I’m hybrid and get the very same treatment myself [...]”⁵⁹

Lucie Musilova works as a British spy and therefore she frequently travels across Europe. However, she has lived in the UK for most of the time of her life and yet has been treated with contempt ever since she moved to the island. Certain detachment that islanders keep from the outsiders is acknowledged even in island scholarship. For example, already in 2005, Godfrey Baldacchino asserts that islands are separate worlds, and the inhabitants only care about their

⁵⁷ Baldacchino, “The Coming of Age,” 272; Mitropoulou and Spilanis, “From Insularity to Islandness,” 34.

⁵⁸ Conkling, “On Islanders and Islandness,” 194.

⁵⁹ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 145.

own society, nature, and economy.⁶⁰ However, with Brexit changing the whole social structure, these hard feelings became even more up to date, having affected many immigrants not only mentally but also physically. The novel further shows that the act of violence against the people from other countries is seen commonly in the streets when Lucie Musilova tells a story to her superior about her Slovak friend who was molested in the city or she later adds another example of this behaviour when remembering a group of Polish people who were insulted verbally by British during a walk in a city and all of this because they took a risk and spoke another language.⁶¹ This passage of the book illustrates that the current situation in the United Kingdoms – the xenophobic treatment the immigrants receive from the British appears to be a substantial problem which makes the lives of immigrants uneasy. James Silvester also demonstrates that the fact that immigrants speak different languages apart from English is perceived as another substantial problem for the country. At the end of *Blood, White and Blue*, Sir Hartnell discloses to Lucie Musilova that he pretended his intentions to revert Brexit the whole time and because of this act he has to face Lord Barrington Hurndall who accuses him of ruining their plan to deceive the people and execute Brexit after all. Lord Hurndall is a former Member of Parliament who sees Brexit as a way to liberate the country from the immigrant pressure. He confronts Hartnell and blames him:

“You considered yourself of greater importance than the Project [achieving Brexit]! And because of your weakness, you betrayed it, you betrayed [...] the country! Good god man, look at what they’ve [the immigrants] done to the country! A thousand languages on every street and precious few of them English! We could have stopped all that, but for your cowardice!”⁶²

It can be observed that language presents an important part of the Brexit conflict. It might be attributed to the fact that language is a potent source of identity as noted in chapter one. As a result, the book shows that one of the main goals of Brexit is to end the immigration flow and preferably seclude the immigrants from the pure British population or even expel them from the island.

Since the Brexit referendum passed with 52 % of votes, this controversy is intertwined in all social classes, not only the common people of working class. The novel especially presents the government as an important force which endeavours to stop the immigration waves. As the

⁶⁰ Godfrey Baldacchino, “Editorial: Islands: Objects of Representation”, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 87, no. 4 (2005): 248.

⁶¹ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 296.

⁶² Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 284.

main reason, the government states the outcomes of the immigration overflow, especially how the incomers influence the economy by stealing jobs from the British people.⁶³ It can be noted that the fear of damaging the job market might seem only superficial due to Britain's vast population and economy. Satnam Virdee, Brendan McGeever, Alex Law and other critics assert that British see the immigrants as a financial and safety risk despite the fact that the damage of the labour market is only minor and insignificant for the British society.⁶⁴ Considering this fact and the previously portrayed mental and physical abuse of the settled outsiders coming from the British people, their actions could be seen as a result of insufficient knowledge about the social and economic situation in the UK. Although the seclusion and resentment are explicitly addressed in the book, the two social groups – immigrants and islanders – could possibly develop more pleasant relationship as Conkling implies in his article. He assumes that new inhabitants from the Continent are able to assimilate to the insular life, habits, culture, and system.⁶⁵ Even though the British could possibly form a new society based on this knowledge, the question is if they were willing to do so, because there is no guarantee that the Brexit referendum will stop the foreigners from settling in. The authors of the novels analysed in this paper have the same perspective, as neither of them mentioned anything that would indicate a decrease in the number of immigrants.

The problem lies in the fact that the islanders usually have a strong sense of identity that they feel the foreigners disrupt and it is observed by several critics. They claim that the perception of island identity intertwines the whole original island population and the connections within the community are powerful and specifically distinguishing.⁶⁶ Even though the unity of the nation reaches far into the history as described above in chapter one, this unanimity collapsed when the referendum was called, and it divided the voters into two halves with completely contrasting opinions. Therefore, it is apparent that Brexit has changed the attitude towards the British sense of connectedness and separated the society. And although James E. Randall mentions that the newcomers “have a weaker and less distinct sense of belonging” because they are not a part of the original social structure of the island,⁶⁷ the immigrants are not the only ones who face the difficulties to fit in the society, because the islanders that voted for staying in the European Union get the very same treatment.

⁶³ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 250.

⁶⁴ Virdee and McGeever, “Racism, Crisis, Brexit,” 1806; Law, “Of Navies and Navels,” 274; Mitropoulou and Spilanis, “From Insularity to Islandness,” 35.

⁶⁵ Conkling, “On Islanders and Islandness,” 200.

⁶⁶ Baldacchino, “Editorial: Islands,” 248; Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 23; Vannini, “Constellations of ferry (im)mobility,” 252–253.

⁶⁷ Randall et al., “Immigrants, islandness and perceptions,” 346.

In James Silvester's novel there are protests against the referendum where the common people who voted in favour of remaining part of the European Union try to make the government listen. The narrator describes how

representatives of the 48 %, their EU and British flags waving proudly [...]. The regular, ordinary people whose lives had been flipped around and spat on thanks to a marginal victory in a gerrymandered and deceitful referendum and branded as traitorous saboteurs when pointing out the dangers and woes the folly continued to be responsible for. Hardworking British people of all classes, origins and persuasions were and would continue to pay the price alongside their immigrant neighbours in the poisonous atmosphere that had fermented in Britain since the vote was called [...] ⁶⁸

In this part of the book, it is apparent that the damage has been done to people of all social classes regardless their status or even nationality. It implies that, when conflicts escalate, the prosperity and prestige of the labour market unsaturated by foreigners recedes to the background, even though it has been the primary reason for leaving the EU that the supporters of the referendum wanted. The situation in the book further intensifies, and the protest ends with a bomb attack killing and wounding several people. It is after this act that Brexit supporters, journalists, internet commentators and more individuals start to blame the disaster on the protesters, saying that they did it to themselves, and the bomb was their own doing. ⁶⁹ When no immigrant is around the British even turn against each other, blaming each other and everybody around. However, this event would not possibly have happened if the British had accepted the fact that the world is changing, and their identity is changing accordingly. Foreigners will probably not suddenly disappear from the island and therefore the compromised community will most likely have to become the British new feel of normal.

In the novel *The Cockroach* written by Ian McEwan, the Brexit situation, which lies beneath the author's idea of Reversalism, is presented from the viewpoint of a cockroach transformed into a body of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the projection of insular identity is described from the government point of view with the cockroach Jim Sams as the main character of the story. To deliver Reversalism (Brexit) into action is Jim's main goal and it is presented as a noble quest for establishing the common good that everyone deserves. Reversalist concept suggests that the economy should be reversed – employees paying

⁶⁸ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 241–242.

⁶⁹ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 250.

their salary to the employer, shops paying the customers for buying the goods and so forth. Jim Sams sees this mission as an opportunity to connect the society, to make it better and Reversalism is the way to make it happen, even though it is illustrated as if its objectives were beyond an individual's understanding. When Jim is on his way to the Downing Street to incarnate into the British Prime Minister, the narrator describes his quest notably: "He was a tiny element in a scheme of a magnitude that no single individual could comprehend."⁷⁰ Does it mean that common people cannot know what is good for them and the government has to decide on their behalf or that the sense of community is so strong that anybody could make decisions and still satisfy everyone? According to Pete Hay, the connectedness of islanders generally arises from insularity – the isolation on the island, the tangible borders starting with the sea. And that is what makes the bond between the people so powerful.⁷¹ This assertion implies that the decisions made by the government are for the common good and therefore should be unanimous with the opinions of the rest of the population. The connectedness between the islanders suggests that anyone could actually make the decision in the best interest of the collective.

James Silvester shows another side of this hypothesis in his novel. The main character Lucie Musilova presents a view of Brexit from the perspective of a common citizen, not a member of the government. Thus, when she discusses the current state of the government and the Brexit situation with her colleague Kasper Algers, who is one of a few Members of Parliament opposing the referendum, he tells her: "In the main these people are interested in their own money, how to make more of it... [and] the good of the country is a long way down their list of priorities."⁷² This statement suggests that the collective good might not actually be the main reason why the referendum was called in the first place. An analyst Leonardo Scuirea presents a valid point for the economical side of Brexit. He notes that the European Union follows a strict set of rules including those which reduce the flow of the government's grants to the private corporations. Therefore, if the United Kingdom became more incorporated to the European Union, the movement of the government funds would be restricted even more.⁷³ This is a valid reason why the companies would rather choose to leave the EU and its restrictions. Hence Brexit may seem like a decent starting point to welcome new opportunities without the control of the European Union. Even in *The Cockroach* the narrator describes the Reversalism

⁷⁰ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 6.

⁷¹ Hay, "A Phenomenology of Islands," 22–23.

⁷² Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 203.

⁷³ Scuirea, "Brexit Beyond Borders," 113.

as a way to become independent and “to be set free from a loathsome servitude [of the EU].”⁷⁴ As it can be observed, the European Union is mostly depicted as the tyrannical leader when the management of money is considered. It is apparent that money is a great motivator and probably one of the reasons why the referendum passed. After all, at the end of the novel, not only does the author reveal his true opinion on Brexit, but he also confirms the assumptions about the motives that inspired leaving the EU. Therefore, when Jim Sams accomplishes his goal and the referendum passes, he decides to come back to the life of a cockroach. He leaves the body of the Prime Minister, abandons the Downing Street, and meets with his cockroach community. During their assembly he gives a speech about his great success in the government and informs the others about the possible benefits which Brexit could bring when he says: “Where they [people] have embraced poverty, filth, squalor, we have grown in strength. [...] When that peculiar madness, Reversalism, makes the general human population poorer, which it must, we are bound to thrive.”⁷⁵ Indeed, money is presented as a powerful tool which conducts how the society behaves and it seems to influence the government, companies, and common people equally.

The novel *Blood, White and Blue* shows that even though money plays an immense role during Brexit, there is still hope that somebody might actually take actions for the well-being of the UK. Lucie Musilova’s mission as a British agent is to help Sir Geoffrey Hartnell, who is considered to be the only Member of Parliament able to win the fight against Brexit and to become the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, so he could lead Britain to the brighter future while remaining in the European Union. When Lucie talks about him with her second colleague Della Quince, she says: “[...] he’s probably the only one of us left in the Service who does it all for Queen and Country, for the Blood, White and Blue. [...] [this phrase means] the good of the country [...]”⁷⁶ This part of the book indicates that remaining in the EU would be a better decision for the collective. However, Jim Sams from *The Cockroach* presents an opposing idea which pictures Brexit as the solution for society to flourish when he declares: “Reversalism will bless our future – clean, green, prosperous, united, confident and ambitious.”⁷⁷ The concept of unified community is further highlighted by the author when Jim tries to persuade the Parliament that Reversalism is a beneficial idea for the entire society as it should make the economy stronger and the people more united because the purpose of the

⁷⁴ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 22.

⁷⁵ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 98.

⁷⁶ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 54.

⁷⁷ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 47.

referendum is primarily the prosperity of the country and therefore the common good.⁷⁸ The community forms a significant pillar of the insular identity. Hence, the collective welfare should be secured and cherished, and this example suggests that it could be achieved by Brexit.

While *The Cockroach* builds on the premise of power in unity, *Blood, White and Blue* propose that only an individual can successfully make the UK thrive. It is not the collective which leads the process of creating a better country. In the novel, it is Sir Geoffrey Hartnell who is depicted as a strong leader who becomes a symbol of the flourishing society and the only person able to stop the exclusion of foreigners.⁷⁹ On the contrary, *The Cockroach* builds the foundation of success on the collective effort and cooperation. Even though, Jim Sams is presented similarly to Hartnell, the communal endeavour prevails over the actions of an individual. A special attention is given to the Members of Parliament. When Jim Sams walks into a Cabinet meeting for the first time, he looks over his colleagues and it is in this moment that he realises that practically everyone in the room shares his insect origins as he was able to recognise them by their eyes.⁸⁰ In this situation, the connectedness of the community is notably shown and the bond between the individuals is presented by a mere look in the eye. Even though Ian McEwan exaggerates the bond between the community, Conkling asserts that the insular identity is in fact the product of the intertwined social bonds and the closeness to nature on the island. The limited space intensifies the awareness of the place and consequently the nature. Therefore, there is no doubt that the sea also presents a valuable aspect of the profound sense of islandness.⁸¹ Even though the borders virtually imprison the people on the island and the sea becomes an obstruction in the free movement, the islanders have the opportunity to connect with their own roots through nature or history. The British can either decide to do so and accept the isolation as an essential part of their existence or they can rather try to overcome the boundaries and connect with the rest of the world behind the sea or even attempt to prove their historical sovereignty by dominating it.

The sea remains a definite border which cannot be moved. Thus, the isolation within the nation might be even more apparent and it can also influence the islanders' identity. David Lowenthal claims that it is the sea what makes the insular identity original. Apart from the fact that it establishes the boundaries, it restricts the size of the land, and therefore the inhabitants need to cooperate with what they have available.⁸² When looking at the sea as a physical border,

⁷⁸ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 45.

⁷⁹ Silvester, *Blood, White and Blue*, 43.

⁸⁰ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 20.

⁸¹ Conkling, "On Islanders and Islandness," 192, 200.

⁸² Lowenthal, "British National Identity," 214.

one might feel desperate to overcome the sense of limitation and disconnection. And the British navy is an exquisite example of showing that isolation is only limited by the borders of one's mind. Ships help to expand the imaginary territory and thus connect the islanders with the mainland, but their roots on the island keep pulling them back and thus the island identity prevails. Stephanos Stephanides and Susan Bassnett confirm that the islanders know exactly that the land within the border is their own and they want to specifically distinguish it from the Continent.⁸³ And one of the features of islandness is its bond to the sea. In the case of Britain, the sea has historically been one of its domains of power. At one point in *The Cockroach*, a British fishing boat is destroyed by a French frigate for fishing in their territory and six men are consequently killed. Even though it is clear that the attack was legitimate, Jim Sams tries to use the situation for his own good. He makes an impressive propaganda against France with United States on his side, and he promotes the qualities of Reversalism at the same time. At the end, due to twisted information and British commitment to appear powerful, France is humiliated in front of the whole world because of a spreading rumour that they are cruel murderers.⁸⁴ Therefore, the novel remarkably presents that the isolation on the island is only fabricated in the mind, and it can be overcome by spreading the borders virtually over the sea and dominating it. In this case, Britain does not dominate the sea physically, but it rather shows its supremacy by impersonating a metaphysical ruler of the sea.

In conclusion, Brexit deeply influences the core features of British insularity, especially the tight relationships between the islanders. They believe that the immigrants disrupt these connections and bonds, hence the islanders choose to exclude the foreigners from the society and blame them for the declining economy. Silvester's novel shows how the immigrants are rejected and oppressed by the British and the main character of the book Lucie Musilova, who is half-British and half-Czech agent, represents these experiences. The book suggests that this treatment is more intensified by the unstable post-referendum situation. The positive view of the insular identity is demonstrated in McEwan's novel where the close relationships and the collective power perform dominant roles. Brexit in the role of Reversalism is supposed to unite the society and it is presented as a step for the better future of the collective good. McEwan suggest that the connectedness of the society is a strong feature, and it is amplified by the borders of the island and the sea which the British tend to try dominating to emphasise their historical sovereignty.

⁸³ Stephanides and Bassnett, "Islands, Literature," 19.

⁸⁴ McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 38–53.

Conclusion

Britain's departure from the European Union has been a pressing act of the recent years. It has affected many aspects of the British identity, including the political structure, sentiment for the lost British Empire as well as the sense of remoteness and separation originating in British insularity. This paper explores how Brexit influenced these characteristics in the works of two British authors James Silvester and Ian McEwan and their novels *Blood, White and Blue* and *The Cockroach*.

Politics presents one of the aspects of British identity and it can be observed that Brexit has affected not only the political system but also the British sense of supremacy related to the history of the British Empire. The referendum vote divided the British society into two halves and the growing dissatisfaction with the situation as well as an impact of the vote to the British identity projects into the novels. While McEwan adopts a satirical approach to the events, James Silvester emphasises the discomfort of the people and the negative developments resulting in demonstrations. Both authors observe that Brexit supporters helped the conservative right-wing parties to grow in power which the opponents of the referendum perceived as a significant threat to the relationship with the European Union. The act of leaving the EU anticipates economic and social difficulties for the UK, however the novels mention a possibility of renewing trade ties with other countries outside Europe, especially the United States of America. Even though the USA might present a financial backup for Britain, the authors describe this relationship as unreliable resulting in considerable distrust in the new system. *The Cockroach* further presents general uncertainty about Brexit stemming from the involvement of media. Both novels demonstrate that media also influence the structure of political system by constant manipulation. They are illustrated as tools able to alter the public opinion and sway the decisions, especially during the referendum vote. In addition, media help the political parties to promote their visions and propaganda. Another factor of the British identity presented in the novels is the concept of lost sovereignty rooted in the history of the British Empire and it is closely connected to politics as well. This feature intertwines both novels while showing the British endeavour to regain their sovereignty back. The writers' opinions about who is seen as a tool to reclaim the dominance back differ. While James Silvester provides a role of a strong leader who is able to re-establish the British supremacy, Ian McEwan believes that this goal can be achieved only if the society unites and cooperates.

Another fundamental characteristic of the British identity is undoubtedly the insularity and the ensuing feeling of remoteness and separation. The islanders are fully aware of their

territory, which often develops into rejection or even resentments towards the European immigrants on the island. Brexit emphasises these feelings; therefore, the foreigners are frequently oppressed and abused which is explicitly described in *Blood, White and Blue*. The British perceive the newcomers as a risk for the safety of the country as well as the working-class job market, even though the book shows that the British present a greater danger for the immigrants. Additionally, some of the characters in the book believe that the foreigners are the ones who affect the British identity the most since they import their cultures and languages to the United Kingdom and Brexit is supposed to prevent that. *The Cockroach* illustrate Brexit as a tool to overcome the insular disconnection and unite the country to make Britain flourish and thrive under the new system without supervision of the European Union. The novel also shows a strong connection between the islanders, which helps to preserve the collective welfare. Moreover, the sea remains to be a tangible border of the island which highlights the sense of separation from the rest of the world. However, the characters feel that the territory of their rule can be expanded by overcoming the notion of detachment and dominating the sea as well and Ian McEwan shows this phenomenon in conflict with France.

Brexit has challenged the contemporary image of the British identity and influenced the way in which it is perceived in the recent years. This thesis reviews how Brexit projects into the field of politics as well as into the common features of Britishness in the books *Blood, White and Blue* by James Silvester and *The Cockroach* by Ian McEwan. The analysis of the novels confirms that the authors recognised the political, economic and social changes in society which Brexit caused, and they embedded these factors into the stories. It can be observed that the referendum had a significant impact on the authors, and thus they explicitly display their attitudes towards the event in their works. They show that Brexit has left noteworthy marks on the lives of the inhabitants of Britain as well as the people from the rest of the world. Therefore, it can be said that Brexit is not only a domestic affair, but a crucial worldwide event.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se věnuje konceptu britské identity a jejím proměnám během Brexitu. Konkrétně se pak zabývá politickými tendencemi Británie pod vlivem médií, představou ztracené nadřazenosti pramenící z historie Britského impéria a pojmem ostrovnosti propojeným s dílčími tématy izolovanosti, semknutosti a blízkým vztahem k moři. Celkovým cílem této práce je poukázat na tuto problematiku v konkrétních příkladech z knih *The Cockroach* od Iana McEwana a *Blood, White and Blue* od Jamese Silvestera. Práce je rozdělená do tří hlavních kapitol, z nichž první je teoretická a zbylé dvě praktické.

Odchod Británie z Evropské Unie může být považován za podstatnou událost posledních let. Stejně tak je důležité zmínit, že kromě vztahů Spojeného království s ostatními státy nejen uvnitř Unie, je tímto aktem ovlivněna také často stereotypizovaná podstata britské identity. První kapitola představuje potřebné sociální a politické pozadí Brexitu a poukazuje na základní rysy britské identity, které úzce souvisí právě s referendem o Brexitu. Je ukázána souvislost imigrace s počátkem Brexitu, konkrétně skutečnost, že dělnická třída viděla v cizincích hrozbu pro budoucnost pracovního trhu a starší konzervativní občané Británie vnímali imigranty jako překážku pro znovunastolení britské suverenity pramenící z historie Britského impéria. Tato nespokojenost kulminovala až do bodu, kdy bylo referendum o členství v Evropské Unii v roce 2016 schváleno a Spojené království se tak odsoudilo k nutné změně chodu a struktury celého státu. Změny mohou být pozorovány na mezinárodním měřítku, tedy jak ve vztazích se státy Evropské Unie, tak se státy ve zbytku světa, které se pro Británii kvůli Brexitu staly obchodními cíli. Dále se Brexit stal změnou pro integritu samotného Spojeného království, a to hlavně pro lidi v něm, jejich vztahy, přesvědčení, názory a také identitu samotnou. A právě rysům britské identity souvisejícím s vlivem Brexitu se věnuje zbytek první kapitoly. Je zmíněna nostalgie po suverenitě v časech Britského impéria a jeho historická významnost, která se stala výrazným motivem při volbách o referendu. Dále je ukázána důležitost médií při Brexitu pro jejich značnou schopnost ovlivňovat veřejné mínění, čehož notně využívají politické strany pro svoji propagandu. Během doby před Brexitem se však díky politickým kampaním veřejnost rozdělila na dvě poloviny, a tato rozpolcenost se projevila také na politické struktuře. Ta prošla značnými změnami, a to hlavně v oblíbenosti určitých stran, a tedy i tendencích obyvatel tyto strany volit. Vedle obecně známých stran, jako je strana Konzervativní, Liberální a Labouristická, se totiž na vrchol dostala i Strana nezávislosti Spojeného království (UKIP), která zastává podobné hodnoty jako strana Konzervativní, a tudíž se hlavně zastává názoru, že imigrace by měla být zastavena, protože je nebezpečná pro britskou společnost. Zastánci Brexitu z řad běžných

obyvatel dále vnímají imigranty jako risk pro celistvost a stabilitu ostrova, a proto cizince odmítají. Tato skutečnost je spojená přímo s konceptem ostrovnosti a dalšími rysy vázanými k tomuto pojmu, hlavně k pocitu izolovanosti, odlehlosti a samoty, ale stejně tak k semknutosti, bezprostřednosti a blízkým vztahům v komunitě. Posledně poukazuje první kapitola na historickou i teritoriální důležitost moře jako entity, které jsou Briti souzeni vládnout.

Druhá kapitola demonstruje, jak autoři analyzovaných románů prezentují vliv politiky a přetrvávajícího pocitu nadvlády pocházející z dob Britského impéria na postavy v knihách. Referendum rozdělilo společnost na odpůrce a podporovatele odchodu z Evropské Unie a autoři ukazují stoupající nespokojenost spojenou s touto situací. Zatímco Ian McEwan zaujímá spíše satirický postoj k událostem, James Silvester zdůrazňuje vážnost situace a diskomfort obyvatelstva ve vyostřených okolnostech. Převážně pak zmiňuje demonstrace proti referendu. Oba autoři pozorují trend politického konzervatismu přispívající k rozpolcenosti společnosti, který vnímají jako hrozbu pro budoucnost Británie, a to hlavně v oblastech ekonomiky a vztahů s Evropskou Unií. Romány na druhé straně poukazují na vazbu se Spojenými státy a možnost obnovení obchodních styků s touto velmocí. Autoři však do tohoto vztahu nevkládají příliš důvěry, a to se také odráží na chování postav při diskuzích o této možnosti, což má následně za výsledek obecnou nedůvěru v celý systém budoucího Spojeného království. Román *The Cockroach* dále rozsáhle popisuje skeptičnost ke konfliktům pramenící z vystupování médií. Obě knihy pak zobrazují významnost médií v politice, a to hlavně častou manipulaci. Média jsou prezentována jako nástroj pro manipulaci veřejného mínění schopný převrátit názory a rozhodnutí ve vlastní prospěch, což se ukázalo jako prospěšné pro účely politické propagandy. Dalším důležitým faktorem britské identity ovlivněným Brexitem se pro autory stal koncept ztracené suverenity přetrvávající z dob Britského impéria, kdy byla Británie jednou s nejvýznamnějších světových velmocí. Tento rys se prolíná v obou knihách a je prezentován jako velmi důležitá součást procesu rozhodování při volbách o referendu, převážně kvůli snaze získat suverenitu zpět. Autoři však na tuto skutečnost mají odlišný pohled. Zatímco Silvester utváří roli silného vůdce jako hlavního a jediného aktéra v honu za znovuoobnovení britské nadvlády, McEwan předpokládá, že historická významnost Británie se dá oživit pouze kolektivním úsilím a spoluprací.

Součástí ostrovní identity je nepochybně vnímání izolovanosti, odlehlosti a odloučení od kontinentu. Třetí kapitola předvádí, jak se některé atributy ostrovnosti přenáší do zkoumaných románů. Je ukázáno, že ostrované ve snaze ochránit své území odmítají a vylučují cizince ze svých komunit a často si k nim vybudují nenávistný a násilnický vztah. Na tuto skutečnost převážně poukazuje román *Blood, White and Blue*, kde jsou rozsáhle popsány situace, do

kterých se imigranti mohou kvůli tomuto odporu dostat. Přistěhovalci jsou vnímáni jako bezpečnostní a ekonomický risk pro společnost Spojeného království, avšak James Silvester zdůrazňuje, že to jsou právě Briti, kteří představují hrozbu v tomto vztahu. Některé postavy v románu dále věří, že imigranti jsou hlavním faktorem působícím změnu britské identity kvůli tomu, že s sebou přinášejí nové cizí zvyky, jazyky a celé kultury, a tak narušují integritu britské sjednocenosti. Autor tak poukazuje na fakt, že Briti jsou přesvědčeni o tom, že Brexit imigraci zarazí a ukončí tak pochybnosti a strach ostrovanů. *The Cockroach* vnímá Brexit jako nástroj pro překonání izolovanosti a odloučení pramenící z podstaty ostrovnosti proto, aby mohla Británie nabýt zpátky svojí bývalou slávu a znovu vzkvétat jako za dob Britského impéria, a to hlavně bez dozoru Evropské Unie. Román dále ukazuje silnou propojenost a těsné vztahy mezi ostrovany společně s pevnou vazbou k moři jako hmatatelné hranici ostrova prohlubující pocit izolace od zbytku světa. Postavy románu však předvádějí, že tato hranice může být s pevnou vůlí překonána a odtržení od pevniny potlačeno vládou nad mořem a McEwan ukazuje tento fenomén při konfliktu Británie s Francií.

Rozbor děl od Jamese Silvestera a Iana McEwana naznačuje, že Brexit zastává významnou roli v každodenním životě Britů a zanechává na nich své stopy. Autoři proto zobrazují své postoje ve svých knihách a přibližují tak čtenáře k současné realitě ve Spojeném království.

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