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The 'Others' in Post-Brexit Britain:

A Literary Analysis of Brexit Literature

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Declaration

I, Esther van der Veen, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled "**The 'Others' in Post-Brexit Britain: A Literary Analysis of Brexit Literature**", submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

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Abstract:

In June 2016, Britain made the unprecedented and shocking decision to leave the European Union, but Brexit revealed a deeply divided country. Many variables, such as age, educational level, yearly income, and unemployment rates, played a role in the Referendum results. The academic field is highly interested in the explanations for referendum and its consequences. A new literary genre emerged, Brexlit, which concerns itself with the same questions. This thesis will explore Britain's dividedness by specifically focus on (British) populism and the process of othering. By close reading three Brexlit novels (Ali Smith's *Autumn*, Amanda Craig's *The Lie of the Land*, and John Lanchester's *The Wall*), this thesis aims to gain a deeper understanding of how Brexit's 'others' are envisioned in post-Brexit Britain and aims to explore the relationship between the British 'self' and these 'others'.

Key words: Brexit, Brexit Literature, Populism, Othering, Dividedness

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Table of Contents:

1. Introduction

On June 23rd, 2016, Britain made the historic and shocking decision. British voters had cast their ballots and had chosen, albeit by a small margin (52 per cent), in favour of leaving the European Union (EU).[1] It was precisely this minimal difference between the pro-Brexit and pro-EU sides that revealed a deeply divided country.

Rather than regarding Brexit as a "mono-causal event",[2] many researchers have posited that the referendum results were influenced by multiple factors, including age,[3] education,[4] employment levels and yearly earnings,[5] as well as social class.[6] However, it is argued that populism and the concept of othering have played a crucial role in Britain's dividedness and the belief that the EU as well as migrants represented 'others' which were "somehow alien to the UK, its history, culture and values.".[7]

"Othering refers to the process of labelling defining those who we perceive to be in a different group as somehow deviant."[8] And this process of othering can be based on different categorisations such as race, religion, culture and nationality.[9] Best adds that the categorisations of 'others' are not set in stone but rather are created and have to be continuously maintained and are a cultural practice.[10] Thus, the perpetuation of the existence of 'others' in the context of Brexit must have been an active process. The purpose of this

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[1] BBC News. "EU Referendum Results." 23 June 2016. Accessed 13 February 2021. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results.

[2] Arno van der Zwet, Murray Stewart Leith, Duncan Sim, and Elizabeth Boyle, "Brexit, Europe and Othering," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (2020), 517, accessed 4 March 2023, doi:10.1080/21582041.2020.1851393.

[3] Rob Ford, and Maria Sobolewska, "Demographic trends will pull British public opinion in a pro-European direction," LSE (blog), 1 May 2018, accessed 22 May 2023, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/05/01/demographic-trends-will-pull-british-public-opinion-in-a-pro-european-direction/. ; BBC News, "EU Referendum Results."; Robin Finlay et al., "Race, Place and Young People in the Age of Brexit," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* (2020), 19, accessed 27 April 2023, doi: 10.1177/0263774X18811923d.

[4] Statista Research Department. "Brexit Votes in the United Kingdom by Educational Attainment 2016," accessed 22 May 2023. https://www.statista.com/statistics/572613/eu-referendum-decision-by-highest-educational-attainment-uk/

[5] Anushka Asthana, "People who felt marginalised drove Brexit vote, study finds," *The Guardian*, 31 August 2016, accessed 22 May 2023.; Matthew J. Goodwin, and Oliver Heath, "The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result," *The Political Quarterly* (2016): 326, doi: 10.1111/1467-923X.12285.

[6] Lorenza Antonucci, Laszlo Horvath, and André Krouwel, "Brexit was not the voice of the working class nor of the uneducated – it was of the squeezed middle," LSE (blog), 13 October 2017, accessed 22 May 2023, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/brexit-and-the-squeezed-middle/.

[7] Van der Zwet et al., "Brexit, Europe and Othering," 517; Sara Hobolt, "The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, A Divided Continent," *Journal of European Public Policy* (2016): 1261, doi:10.1080/13501763.2016.1225785.

[8] Van der Zwet et al., "Brexit, Europe and Othering," 517.

[9] Moritz Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," in *European Societies, Migration, and the Law: The 'Others' amongst 'Us'*, eds. Moritz Jesse (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.

[10] Shaun Best, *Understanding Social Divisions* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), 2.

thesis is to further understand this process of othering towards certain groups in the context of Brexit.

This thesis will try to gain more understanding of the process of othering through the reading of Brexit literature. First and foremost, Brexit is not only a political, economic and social phenomenon: it is, above all, a cultural one.[11] Moya further argues that especially literature plays a valuable role in addressing (political) beliefs about one's 'self' and 'others'.[12] As Moya writes: "Literature […] is a dynamic system of communication through which the manifold ideologies that shape and motivate humans' diverse cultural practices are circulated."[13] A literary text, thus, can serve "as an excavation of, and a meditation on, the pervasive sociocultural ideas […] of the social worlds […] within which both authors and readers live."[14] Literature can, thus, help us gain insight into a deeply divided country in which populism and othering are said to play a crucial role.[15] And in reaction to Brexit, a large number of publications of literary works with much speed quickly caught the attention of many researchers who soon began to consider this wave of publications as the emergence of a completely new literary genre: Brexit Literature (Brexlit).[16] Brexlit as a genre explores the anxieties and factures that Brexit exposed.[17] Hence why this thesis will explore and close read three Brexlit novels in order to further understand how the concepts of populism and othering relate to the Brexit Referendum, but most importantly, to further understand the process of othering of certain groups and what the role of Brexit's 'others' are in post-Brexit Britain. The main question that this thesis hopes to answer is: "How is the life of Brexit's 'others' envisioned in post-Brexit Britain?" To further explore the position of the 'others' in post-Brexit Britain, the following sub-question will be asked too: "How is the relationship between the British 'self' and the 'others' in post-Brexit Britain?"

In order to answer these questions, this thesis will first try to trace the division lines within British society which the Brexit Referendum has exposed. Then attention will be paid

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[11] Robert Eaglestone, "Introduction: Brexit and Literature," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses*, ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

[12] Paula Moya, *The Social Imperative: Race, Close Reading, and Contemporary Literary Criticism* (Standford, USA: Standford University Press, 2015), 9.

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] Ibid., 9.

[15] Nelson Arteaga Botello, "The Landscape of Meaning, a Metaphor in Process," *Czech Sociological Review* 51, no. 3 (2015), 494, accessed 30 July 2022, doi: 10.13060/00380288.2015.51.3.190.; Julie Latja-Novak, "Black Lives Matter – Also in Literature," *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 22 June 2020, accessed on 31 July 2022, https://www.oeaw.ac.at/detail/news/black-lives-matter-also-in-literature.

[16] Kristian Shaw, "Introduction: The European Question," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 2.

[17] Ibid.

to the new literary movement, Brexit Literature, which has become involved in the search for an explanation of Brexit, too. Then, the concept of populism, generally argued to be one of the most significant dimensions of Brexit,[18] will be discussed. Especially two core aspects of populism, namely the anti-establishment aspect as well as nativism, will be highlighted and explored within the context of Brexit. Further, this thesis will discuss a process of othering that was part of British populism. Othering will first be discussed in a general sense, after which a closer look will be taken at the process of othering in the context of Brexit. The following chapter will consist of a close reading of three Brexit novels: Ali Smith's *Autumn*, Amanda Craig's *The Lie of the Land*, and John Lanchester's *The Wall*. These three novels will be read through a lens of populism and othering. By using populism and othering as a lens, this thesis hopes to gain more insight into the anti-establishment and nativism sentiments of Brexit and to understand the process of othering and the role of 'others', specifically the global 'other' and the ethno-racial 'other', in fictional post-Brexit Britain. In the close reading, special attention will be given to the imagery of borders. For the discussion, a synthesis of the three close readings will be given. Furthermore, the discussion will delve deeper into the literary discussion on the process of othering in relation to Brexit and will discuss how Brexit literature discusses the role of 'others' in post-Brexit Britain.

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[18] Youssef Ferdjana, "Brexit and the Emergence of a new English Identity," *Observatoire De La Société Britannique* 28 (2022), 52, accessed 17 April 2023, doi: 10.4000/osb.5588.

2. Background Information

2.1 A Deeply Divided Britain

In the morning of June 24th, 2016, when the result of the EU Referendum was announced, it became clear just how divided Britain truly was. A brief look at the headlines of the newspapers published immediately after the victory of the Leave Campaign show this stark contrast between the two sides of the Brexit debate. Some media outlets were rejoicing Britain's decision to leave the EU. *The Sun* had, days ahead of the EU referendum, already urged its readers to "BeLEAVE in Britain"[19] and celebrated Britain's EU exit with the words: "See EU Later!"[20] *The Daily Mail* wrote that "the quiet people of Britain [had risen] up against an arrogant, out-of-touch political class and a contemptuous Brussels elite."[21] And *The Daily Express* argued that Britain's "crusade [had ended] in glorious victory."[22] Other media outlets expressed their shock instead. *The Financial Times* wrote, a week prior to Brexit, that Britain that it was "no time to revert to Little England. We are Great Britain. […] The vote must be 'Remain'."[23] *The Evening Standard* spoke about the "shockwaves" that the Brexit Referendum has sent through the nation.[24] *The Guardian* stated that it was "Over. And out"[25] and that the dramatic vote showed a divided nation.[26] *The Times* also wrote that Brexit would leave "the country deeply divided."[27]

Initially, "the startling result of the EU Referendum of June 23rd, 2016, at first [denied] explanation."[28] But it was precisely the unexpectedness of the Referendum that raised many questions and researchers started looking for explanations. The dividedness that these

[19] The Sun, "Sun Says We urge our readers to beLEAVE in Britain and vote to quit the EU on June 23," 13 June 2016, accessed 12 June 2022, https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1277920/we-urge-our-readers-to-believe-in-britain-and-vote-to-leave-the-eu-in-referendum-on-june-23/.

[20] Alex Morrison, "Newspaper Headlines: See EU Later and Cameron Resigns," *BBC News* (2016), accessed 23 May 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-the-papers-36613624.

[21] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3659143/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-bow-Britain-quiet-people-country-rise-against-arrogant-touch-political-class-contemptuous-Brussels-elite.html

[22] Macer Hall, "Loud and proud Daily Express praised for leading crusade to get Britain out of the EU," *The Daily Express*, 24 June 2016, accessed 12 June 2022, https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/682963/Daily-Express-crusade-Britain-EU-European-Union.

[23] The Financial Times, "Britain should vote to stay in the EU," 15 June 2016, accessed 13 June 2022, https://www.ft.com/content/3748166e-3151-11e6-ad39-3fee5ffe5b5b.

[24] CBS News, "Global Reactions to Brexit," 24 June 2016, accessed 13 June 2022, https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/global-reactions-to-brexit/2/.

[25] The Guardian, "Newspapers from around the world react to the European Union referendum result and David Cameron's resignation," 25 June 2022, accessed 13 June 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/media/gallery/2016/jun/25/brexit-front-pages-in-pictures.

[26] Anushka Asthana, Ben Quinn, and Rowena Mason, "UK votes to leave EU after dramatic night divides nation," *The Guardian*, 24 June 2016, accessed 12 June 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/24/britain-votes-for-brexit-eu-referendum-david-cameron.

[27] Francis Elliott, and Sam Coates, "Britain votes for Brexit," *The Sunday Times,* 24 June 2016, accessed 13 June 2022, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/closest-call-for-britain-5rcrxnjh0.

[28] Gerard Delantly, "A Divided Nation in a Divided Europe: Emerging Cleavages and the Crisis of European Integration," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 111.

newspaper headlines hinted at were, as a matter of fact, quite an accurate reflection of the lack of concord in British society according to Ford and Sobolewska.[29] Many studies and reports revealed that many variables such as age, education, employment and yearly earnings, and social class explained why British voters voted for or against Britain's withdrawal from the EU.[30]

The first and one of the clearest indicators of how people voted, and which showed the degree to which voters were divided, was age.[31] Almost three quarters of voters aged 17 to 24 were in favour of remaining in the EU.[32] On the other hand, of the voters aged 65 and older, only 40 per cent voted Remain.[33] Another indicator of voting behaviour was one's education. According to a study published by Statista, 65 per cent of voters with no qualifications voted in favour of Brexit. In contrast, 74 per cent of voters with a university degree voted to remain in the EU.[34] Thirdly, one's employment and annual income is said to have played a significant role in voters' decisions. Goodwin and Heath found that approximately 60 per cent of unemployed voters voted in favour of Brexit, whereas 45 per cent of employed voters went for the same option.[35] In addition, household incomes also showed quite a stark difference between voters. 58 per cent of the families earning less than £20,000 annually voted for Brexit. Only 35 per cent of households earning more than £65,000 a year voted in favour of Brexit.[36] However, economic prosperity and deprivation did not only influence one's voting behaviour on an individual level. The economic state of the region voters lived in also played a role. Generally, regions with higher levels of poverty, lower incomes, limited economic incomes, and higher unemployment rates were far more likely to vote in favour of Brexit.[37] Last but not least, some argue that class, too, played a role in Brexit with divisions along

[29] Rob Ford, and Maria Sobolewska, "Demographic trends will pull British public opinion in a pro-European direction," LSE (blog), 1 May 2018, accessed 22 May 2023, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/05/01/demographic-trends-will-pull-british-public-opinion-in-a-pro-european-direction/.

[30] Arno van der Zwet, Murray Stewart Leith, Duncan Sim, and Elizabeth Boyle, "Brexit, Europe and Othering," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (2020), 517, accessed 4 March 2023, doi:10.1080/21582041.2020.1851393.

[31] Ford & Sobolewska, "Demographic trends."

[32] Ibid.

[33] BBC News. "EU Referendum Results." 23 June 2016. Accessed 13 February 2021. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results.

[34] Statista Research Department. "Brexit Votes in the United Kingdom by Educational Attainment 2016," accessed 22 May 2023. https://www.statista.com/statistics/572613/eu-referendum-decision-by-highest-educational-attainment-uk/

[35] Matthew J. Goodwin, and Oliver Heath, "The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result," *The Political Quarterly* (2016): 326, doi: 10.1111/1467-923X.12285.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Eleonora Alabrese et al., "Who voted for Brexit? Individual and regional data combined," *European Journal of Political Economy* (2019), 135, accessed 24 April 2023. doi: 10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2018.08.002.

socio-economic lines contributing to the outcome of the Referendum. Researchers such as Telford argue that it was predominantly the working class that was the driving force of Brexit.[38] However, other researchers such as Antonucci, Horvath, and Krouwel disagree and argue that, while approximately two-thirds of the working class did indeed vote in favour of Brexit,[39] it was the middle class who ultimately determined the Referendum result.[40] Overall, there is a consensus that one's social class did indeed influence voters' voting behaviour to some extent, but certainly not to the same extent as, for instance, their age or education did.[41]

In short, researchers have found many variables which can possibly explain the voting behaviour of the British voters. For instance, the Referendum results have shown a great generation gap, but also a stark dividedness between higher and lower-educated citizens. Wealthier and less well-off citizens are also deeply divided. However, these findings mainly expose the division lines of British society and they do not yet provide a possible explanation for Britain's sheer dividedness. But before this thesis will delve deeper into this potential explanation (in the Theoretical Framwork, chapter 3), attention will first be given to a new literary genre, Brexit Literature, that also deals with the deeply divided post-Brexit landscape and searches for explanations for Britain's "anxieties and fractures."[42]

2.2 Brexit Literature

According to Eaglestone, culture lies at the heart of Brexit, yet that this culture side of Brexit is given too little attention in comparison to Brexit's political, socio-ecomomic, and administrative elements. He argues that "Brexit grew from cultural beliefs, real or imaginary" and that "the arguments before, during and after the referendum were – and are – arguments about culture."[43] Many researchers, such as Habermann and Keller,[44] Gelfand,[45] and

[38] Luke Telford, "Brexit and the working class on Teesside: Moving beyond reductionism," *Capital & Class* (2019), accessed 28 April 2023, doi: 10.1177/0309816819873310.

[39] Statista Research Department. "Brexit Votes in the United Kingdom by Educational Attainment 2016," accessed 22 May 2023. https://www.statista.com/statistics/572613/eu-referendum-decision-by-highest-educational-attainment-uk/

[40] Lorenza Antonucci, Laszlo Horvath, and André Krouwel, "Brexit was not the voice of the working class nor of the uneducated – it was of the squeezed middle," LSE (blog), 13 October 2017, accessed 22 May 2023, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/brexit-and-the-squeezed-middle/.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Kristian Shaw, "An Imperfect Union: British Eurosceptic fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 37.

[43] Robert Eaglestone, "Introduction: Brexit and Literature," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses*, ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

[44] Ina Habermann and Daniela Keller, "Introduction: In the Shallows of National Identity," in *Brexit and Beyond: Nation and Identity*, ed. Daniela Keller and Ina Habermann (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2021), 12.

[45] Michele Gelfand, "Culture as the menacing force behind today's crazy politics," *The Economist*, 28 January 2019, accessed 22 May 2022, https://www.economist.com/open-future/2019/01/28/culture-as-the-menacing-force-behind-todays-crazy-politics.

Leerssen,[46] agree that solely focusing on the political, socio-economic and administrative aspects of Brexit underestimates and even undermines the "more fuzzy phenomena such as cultural myths, narratives and images."[47] Herrschaft-Iden, additionally, emphasises that politics and literature are intrinsically, or even intimately, linked.[48] Hassan explains that divisive political events affect individuals from all walks of life, who collectively have to try and make sense of such events.[49] The role of literature in these situations is to transform the "raw emotion of the most divisive political issues […] into words."[50]

Brexit is, arguably, one of the most politically divisive moments in British history. And indeed, after the EU Referendum, a large number of books were published, which all, in some way, reacted to Brexit.[51] This wave of publications was quickly recognized as the emergence of a completely new literary movement which was given the name "Brexlit."[52]

Initially, there was some disagreement who had coined the term 'Brexlit' to refer to literary works which responded to the EU Referendum.[53] A small number of newspapers and literary blogs acknowledge Day as the creator of the term 'Brexlit'.[54] However, Shaw is more widely recognized as the one who coined the term based on the fact that Shaw had mentioned the term even before the actual EU Referendum.[55] Shaw was also one of the first researchers to come up with a definition of Brexlit, which is cited in the vast majority of studies on Brexit

[46] Joep Leerssen, "Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture," *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 4 (2006), 560, accessed 13 May 2022, doi: 10.1111/j.1469-8129.2006.00253.x.
[47] Habermann and Keller, "Introduction: In the Shallows," 12.
[48] Marlene Herrschaft-Iden, "EU enlargement and the freedom of movement: Imagined communities in the Conservative Party's Discourse on Europe (1997-2016)," in *The Road to Brexit: A Cultural Perspective on British Attitudes to Europe*, ed. Ina Habermann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 70.
[49] Waleed Ebrahim Hassan, "The Impact of Political Events on the Development of Society Visual Culture," *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 51 (2012), 908, accessed 18 June 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.08.262.
[50] John Self, "How Brexit has reshaped the British Novel," feature on the Penguin website, 31 January 2020, accessed 13 March 2021, https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2020/jan/how-writers-responded-to-brexit-in-novels.html.
[51] David Martin Jones, "Brexlit and the Decline of the English Novel," *The Critic*, January 2020, accessed 27 May 2021, https://thecritic.co.uk/issues/january-2020/brexlit-and-the-decline-of-the-english-novel/.
[52] Jon Day, "Brexlit: The New Landscape of British Fiction," *The Financial Times,* 28 July 2017, accessed 26 May 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/30ec47b4-7204-11e7-93ff-99f383b09ff9.
[53] Kristian Shaw, "BrexLit," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses,* ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), p.18.; Harald Pittel, "Fiction in Dark Times: the Brexit Novel and Ali Smith," *Hard Times* 101, no.1 (2018), 58, accessed 14 March 2021.
[54] Jon Day, "Brexlit: The New Landscape of British Fiction," *The Financial Times,* 28 July 2017, accessed 26 May 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/30ec47b4-7204-11e7-93ff-99f383b09ff9.; Dulcie Everitt, "BrexLit: The Problem of Englishness in Pre- and Post-Brexit Referendum Literature," *English Honors Papers* 46 (2020), 47, accessed 20 June 2021.
[55] Kristian Shaw, "BrexLit," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses,* ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), 18.; Vedrana Veličković, "Eastern Europeans and Brexlit," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no.5 (2020), 649, accessed 24 April 2021, doi:10.1080/17449855.2020.1816692.; Kristian Shaw, "Introduction: The European Question," in *Brexlit Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 4.

Literature. According to Shaw, Brexlit is a genre which "concerns fictions that either directly respond or imaginatively allude to Brexit's exit from the EU, or engage with the subsequent socio-cultural, economic, racial or cosmopolitical consequences of Britain's withdrawal."[56] Thus, "Brexit has given us a range of novels which seek to represent more closely the political reality of [a] divided kingdom [and an] evergreen uncertainty."[57] Just like researchers, these works of Brexit Literature seek to find "the underlying factors of which Brexit is a symptom."[58]

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[56] Shaw, "Brexlit," 18.
[57] John Self, "How Brexit has reshaped the British Novel," feature on the Penguin website, 31 January 2020, accessed 13 March 2021, https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2020/jan/how-writers-responded-to-brexit-in-novels.html.
[58] Ibid.

3. Theoretical Framework

As discussed in the Background Information section, both researchers and Brexlit authors alike wished to find an explanation for the dividedness that Brexit had brought to light. The overall consensus is that an essential element within the explanation of Brexit lies in populism and the concept of othering. First, populism and its core aspects will be discussed, after which the British manifestation of populism and its aspects will be explored. Then the link between populism and othering will briefly be discussed. Similar to the structure of the discussion on populism, the concept of othering will first be discussed in general, after which it will be examined which 'others' can be identified in the context of Brexit and what sets the British process of othering apart from other practices of othering.

3.1 Populism

Although Brexit is seen as one of the largest political crises in British history, researchers generally agree that Brexit should not be regarded as a standalone political event but rather should be considered an expression of a more global trend: populism. Calhoun, for instance, points out that populism dominated the debate in the run-up to the referendum.[59] Shore calls Brexit a symptom of populism,[60] and Iakhnis et al. describe populism as a "potent force" in the Brexit debate.[61]

Recently, populism has gathered substantial interest from scientists as well as political analysts[62] in spite of the fact that the concept of populism is seen as "essentially contested."[63] In the Cambridge dictionary, populism is defined as the "political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want."[64] This definition does, however, receive criticism repeatedly for its shallow understanding of the concept. Yet, in their pursuit to produce a clearer interpretation of the concept populism, scholars have diverged over the core and its attributes regularly. As a result, a plethora of

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[59] Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 63.

[60] Cris Shore, "How Did it Come to This? Britain, Brexit and Euroscepticism from an Anthropological Perspective," (paper presented at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).

[61] Evginiia Iakhnis, Brian Rathbun, Jason Reifler, and Thomas J. Scotto, "Populist Referendum: Was Brexit an expression of nativist and anti-elitist sentiment?," *Research and Politics* (2018), 5, accessed 13 March 2022, doi: 10.1177/2053168018773964.

[62] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.; Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2014), 1, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2459387.

[63] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "*Populism,*", 2.

[64] "Populism," *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/populism.

different formulations of the concept have been created.[65] All which tend to be associated with, or even fused, with specific phenomena in distinct world regions.[66] The conceptualisation of populism is further complicated by the fact that it is "seldom claimed by the people or organisations themselves, [but is rather] ascribed to others, most often with a negative connotation."[67] Clearly, it is a challenge to find "a common ideological denominator that connects the various ostensibly populist movements."[68]

A general consensus has been reached, however, that populism is an ideology which objective is to create a juxtaposition between a homogenous and an antagonistic camp, "the pure people" versus the dangerous 'other'.[69] The virtue of the ordinary people is emphasised in contrast to a common foe whose aim it is to harm the "good [and] decent" people.[70] In the context of a "profound discontent with representative politics" and "[unresponsiveness] to popular demands," populist leaders promise to defend and protect the people's interests in contrast to the mainstream parties.[71] The rhetoric used to create this juxtaposition in society is one of emotionality rather than rationality.[72] Specifically, populism has been linked to feelings of anxiety,[73] anger,[74] and fear.[75] Thus, by capitalising on already existing grievances and fears,

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[65] Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001), 1, accessed 25 May 2022, doi: 10.2307/422412.

[66] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.; Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2014), 2, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2459387.

[67] Ibid.; Ronald F. Inglehart, and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2016), 6, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2818659.

[68] Gidron and Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism," 5.

[69] Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism," 6.; Evginiia Iakhnis, Brian Rathbun, Jason Reifler, and Thomas J. Scotto, "Populist Referendum: Was Brexit an expression of nativist and anti-elitist sentiment?," *Research and Politics* (2018), 2, accessed 13 March 2022, doi: 10.1177/2053168018773964.; Dominique S. Wirz, "Persuasion Through Emotion? An Experimental Test of the Emotion-Eliciting Nature of Populist Communication," *International Journal of Communication* 12 (2018), 1115, accessed 22 May 2022, doi: 10.5167/uzh-149959.

[70] Inglehart and Norris, "Trump, Brexit and the Rise," 6.

[71] Monika Verbalyte, Donatella Bonansinga, and Theofanis Exadaktylos, "When emotions run hight: affective response to crises in Europe," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 35, no. 1 (2022), 4, accessed 22 May 2022, doi: 10.1080/13511610.2022.2040832.

[72] Dominique S. Wirz, "Persuasion Through Emotion?" 1115. Agneta Fischer, David Abadi, and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "What is the Role of Emotions in Populism?," Blog on the DEMOS website, 25 September 2019, accessed 1 May 2022, https://demos-h2020.eu/en/blog/2019/09/what-is-the-role-of-emotions-in-populism.; Antonio Martella and Roberta Bracciale, "Populism and emotions: Italian political leaders' communicative strategies to engage Facebook users," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 35, no. 1 (2022), 81, accessed 5 May 2022, doi: 10.1080/13511610.2021.1951681.

[73] Catarina Kinnvall and Ted Svensson, "Exploring the populist 'mind': Anxiety, fantasy, and everyday populism," *The British Journal of Politis and International Relations* 24, no. 3 (2022), 526, accessed 16 May 2022, doi: 10.1177/13691481221075925.

[74] Guillem Rico, Marc Guinjoan, and Eva Anduiza, "Empowered and enraged: Political efficacy, anger and support for populism in Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 59, no. 4 (2019), 797, accessed 5 May 2022, doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.12374.

[75] Matthew Levinger, "Love, Fear, Anger: The Emotional Arc of Populist Rhetoric," *Narrative and Conflict: Explorations of Theory and Practice* 6, no. 1 (2017), 5, accessed 13 May 2022, doi: 10.13021/G8ncetp.v6.1.2017.1954.

populist leaders attempt to strengthen a sense of 'us' in stark contrast to 'others' or 'them', which in turn strengthen their own power over the 'us'.

As mentioned above, populism is quite difficult to define as the expression of populism also depends on a specific location as well as a specific time. One form of populism at a certain place and time can differ drastically from another form of populism somewhere else. Based on Mudde's contribution to the literature especially, three core elements of populism can be identified: a combination of a "general will" and authoritarianism, anti-establishment, and nativism.[76]

The first core characteristic of a "general will" and authoritarianism is considered to have had quite an insignificant role, or even an irrelevant one, in the case of Brexit. This element refers to the idea that the people ensemble as a whole into a community and legislate to accomplish their common interest.[77] Politicians, in this case, should be "enlightened enough to see what the general will is, and charismatic enough to form individual citizens into a cohesive community that can be counted on to will it."[78] Which in turn, as Inglehart & Norris point out, can create authoritarian leanings as voters favour the personal power of one political leader specifically.[79] Donald Trump's presidency in the United States illustrates this phenomenon, for instance. But Europe, too, has seen a rise in nationalist, right-wing politicians who have garnered quite large followings. French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen and his daughter Marine Le Pen's *Rassemblement National* in France and Geert Wilders' *Party for Freedom* and Thierry Baudet's *Forum for Democracy* in the Netherlands are only a few examples of this trend.

Farage's position as an authoritarian political leader is somewhat complicated and salient. It is generally argued that Farage's presence and influence as a political leader has been less significant in comparison to the aforementioned examples as UKIP only gained popularity shortly before the Brexit Referendum and has since suffered a heavy defeat in the first general elections in Britain after Brexit, suggesting that Farage and UKIP played a pivotal role in Brexit alone and normally are not as influential.[80] Thus, while authoritarianism generally is one of the core elements of populism, in the case of Brexit, it has played a less significant role.

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[76] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9-11.; Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2014), 1, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2459387.

[77] Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism," 16.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ronald F. Inglehart, and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2016), 6, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2818659.

[80] Akshat Rathi, "The party that birthed Brexit has sunk into total oblivion," *Quartz*, 9 June 2017, accessed 10 June 2022, https://qz.com/1002422/uk-election-the-rise-and-fall-of-ukip-the-party-that-birthed-brexit/.

3.1.1 Anti-Establishment Aspect of Brexit

An anti-establishment sentiment is generally identified as the second core element of populism. As mentioned previously, populism tends to promote a philosophy in which the "wisdom and virtue of ordinary people (the silent majority)" is contrary to the depraved, corrupt elite.[81] However, literature suggests that populism fails to define or identify "the elite"; rather, it reflects a deep resentment of any authority whether political, economic, cultural, and so forth.[82] The foe is "one homogenous corrupt group that works against the general will of the people."[83] In Britain's case, especially two enemies or elites are repeatedly identified as the threat to the "ordinary people", namely the EU and the globalised elite.

3.1.1.1 Anti-EU Sentiment

The relationship between the UK and the EU is generally described as a complicated one. Wilson, for instance, describes the relationship as "complex,"[84] while Holmwood calls the relationship a mutually uneasy one.[85] Susen and Shaw mostly blame Britain for the somewhat tense relationship as they describe Britain as a "trouble-maker"[86] and an "awkward partner in the European project."[87]

Linked to the common rhetoric of populist politics playing into a population's fears and considering the difficult relationship between the UK and the EU, many researchers argue that Britain has repeatedly used the EU as a scapegoat for its own domestic issues.[88] And while the Brexit campaign did not actually concern domestic economic policies, "the economic malaise helped turn the mood of the country sour" and started to play a significant role in the run-up to the referendum.[89] For example, Britain blamed the increasing housing prices and a slow recovery from the 2008 financial crisis while these issues had, in reality, burdened Britain for

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[81] Ronald F. Inglehart, and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2016), 6, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2818659.

[82] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11.

[83] Ibid., 12.

[84] Sam Wilson, "Britain and the EU: A long and rocky relationship," *BBC News,* 1 April 2014, accessed 11 June 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-26515129.

[85] John Holmwood, "Exit from the Perspective of Entry," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 31.

[86] Simon Susen, "No Exit From Brexit?," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 155.

[87] Kristian Shaw, "An Imperfect Union: British Eurosceptic fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 37.; Kristian Shaw, "Conclusion: Life after Europe," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 215.

[88] Humaira Mahmud, "Brexit: The scapegoating of the EU for the failures of British Neoliberalism?," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2021), 13, accessed 3 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3854841.; Jonathan Hearn, "Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalization and the Balance of Power in the Making of Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 22.

[89] Ibid., 58.

over a decade.[90] Pro-Brexit politicians, however, gladly seized the opportunity to specifically use the EU as a scapegoat for these economic concerns. Their main argument was that the EU took more from Britain than it gave in return. Another example is the Leave Campaign's claim that Brexit would give Britain £350 million extra every week which could instead be invested in domestic affairs such as the NHS.[91] Many news sources, such as *The Independent,*[92] as well as FullFact[93] and the UK Statistics Authority reprimanded the Leave Campaign for "[their] clear misuse of official statistics".[94] However, Boris Johnson, then foreign secretary, countered the critique by arguing that the original sum of gross weekly contribution to the EU was an "underestimate" even.[95] These examples accurately illustrate the anti-establishment of populism. The enemy, in this case the EU elite in Brussels, is deliberately attempting to create economic havoc in Britain while simultaneously is trying to steal from the normal people of Britain in the process.[96] And although these claims by the Leave Campaign have been proven to be false, facts are deemed less important in populist discourse. Instead, the Leave Campaign played into the electorate's concerns and frustrations and redirected those to an easy scapegoat.

3.1.1.2 Anti-Globisation Sentiment

Various researchers, such as Calhoun and Hearn, have tried to further understand the reason why the EU is often used as a scapegoat in Britain. They speculate that the EU is easier to identify, as it has its own institutions and politicians.[97] Hearn further explains that it is extremely difficult to recognise which parts of everyday life have become Europeanised. Thus, making it easier to blame the EU for those aspects of life that have worsened.[98] The overall

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[90] Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 62.

[91] Adam Payne, "Boris Johnson says his £350 million a week Brexit claim was an 'underestimate'," *Business Insider*, 16 January 2018, accessed 22 May 2022, https://www.businessinsider.nl/boris-johnson-says-his-350-million-a-week-brexit-claim-was-an-underestimate-2018-1/.

[92] Benjamin Kentish, "Boris Johnson 'misused' figures with £350m Brexit claim, UK statistics chief says," *The Independent*, 17 September 2017, accessed 22 May 2022, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-350m-brexit-nhs-misled-uk-statistics-authority-the-telegraph-sir-david-norgrove-amber-rudd-a7951711.html.

[93] FullFact, "£350 million EU claim "a clear misuse of official statistics"," 19 September 2017, accessed 22 May 2022, https://fullfact.org/europe/350-million-week-boris-johnson-statistics-authority-misuse/.

[94] UK Statistics Authority, "Use of '£350million per week' figure to describe UK's financial contributions to the EU," 17 March 2020, accessed 22 May 2022, https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/use-of-350million-per-week-figure-to-describe-uks-financial-contributions-to-the-eu/.

[95] BBC, "£350m Brexit claim was 'too low', says Boris Johnson," 16 January 2018, accessed 22 May 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42698981.

[96] Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," 59.

[97] Jonathan Hearn, "Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalization and the Balance of Power in the Making of Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 22.

[98] Adrian Favell, "European Union Versus European Society: Sociologists on Brexit and the Failure of Europeanization," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 194.

consensus, however, is that this anti-EU sentiment which was prevalent in the Brexit discourse is only a fraction of deeper, fundamental feeling of lack of control with regard to globalisation.[99]

As Lehmann argues that, when it comes to globalisation, "there is a strong perception that the rise of inequality and the absence of inclusion arise from the fact that globalisation benefits the rich and discriminates against the poor."[100] This perception motivated the Leave Campaign to pit the 'winners' and 'losers' against each other, which is again consistent with populism's objective to create a juxtaposition between 'the pure people' versus a dangerous 'other'. Many cities and their citizens had financially benefited from globalisation. Many citizens belonging to the working class and middle class and often living in the rural regions of Britain, were actually hurt by globalisation. They had to deal with fewer job opportunities, rising housing prices and stagnant wages.[101]Thus, the prosperity that Britain had enjoyed because of globalisation had not been distributed equally.[102] The Leave Campaign used the discontent of the latter group to fuel resentment towards those whose financial situation had improved as a result of globalisation. It was, therefore, a vote against a so-called 'global elite' who had failed to equally and fairly distribute the wealth that globalisation had brought Britain and who seemed to be quite indifferent to the 'losers' of globalisation and their (financial) concerns.[103]

3.1.2 Nativism

The third core aspect identified in the literature on populism is nativism which concentrates on the construction of "the people".[104] Nativism emphasises that "the people" are a uniform whole and creates a debate on who should be included or excluded.[105] The fact that "the people is an empty signifier [...] makes [it] such a powerful political ideology and

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[99] Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 61.

[100] Jean-Pierre Lehmann, "Demographic trends will pull British public opinion in a pro-European direction," (blog), accessed 3 May 2023, from https://www.imd.org/research-knowledge/articles/brexit-shows-up-the-failures-of-globalisation/.

[101] Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," 66.

[102] Ibid., 61.; Humaira Mahmud, "Brexit: The scapegoating of the EU for the failures of British Neoliberalism?," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2021), 2, accessed 3 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3854841

[103] Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," 66.

[104] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9.

[105] Ronald F. Inglehart, and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2016), 7, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2818659.; Evginiia Iakhnis, Brian Rathbun, Jason Reifler, and Thomas J. Scotto, "Populist Referendum: Was Brexit an expression of nativist and anti-elitist sentiment?," *Research and Politics* (2018), 5, accessed 13 March 2022, doi: 10.1177/2053168018773964.

phenomenon."[106] It can take on different identities; there is much ability to flexibly frame "the people" in ample number of ways so it can become appealing to "different constituencies and articulate their demands, it can generate a shared identity between different groups and facilitate their support for a common cause."[107] In short, nativism is an ideology that aims to define an "us" in striking contrast to "them", aliens to the native group.[108]

Although the debate surrounding Brexit did discuss Britain's membership of the EU and even though the discussion about immigration had partly to do with Britain's economic anxieties, it was "less a debate on the pros and cons of membership than a proxy for discussions about race and migration."[109] To a certain extent, the Leave Campaign's discussion on immigration was concerned with economic worries. For example, the Leave Campaign argued that European immigrants, immigrants from former British colonies as well as refugees were after the money, the jobs and the homes that rightfully belonged to the British people. Complexly intertwining the aforementioned economic concerns of many British citizens, the narrative was created that immigrants posed a serious threat to economic situation of the native, British people or the 'us'.[110]

However, the debate on immigration was mainly concerned with a "threatened British identity"[111] The frequent use of slogans such as "We Want Our Country Back"[112] and "Let's Take Back Control"[113] by the Leave Campaign illustrate this widespread feeling. "The idea that [British] culture and national identity [were] threatened by an influx of [immigrants was] foundational."[114] Mitra writes that the Leave Campaign spread the message that the period in which the white, British population had claim over the nation was under threat and this idea

[106] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Cas Mudde, "Putting Our Own People First," *Foreign Policy*, 29 September 2019, accessed 10 May 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/29/putting-our-own-people-first-nativism-us-vs-them-far-right-parties-lega-fpo-kkk-europe-usa/.
[109] Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Locating Brexit in the Pragmatics of Race, Citizenship and Empire," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 91.
[110] Jonathan Hearn, "Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalization and the Balance of Power in the Making of Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 21.
[111] ibid.
[112] BBC. "UKIP Leader Nigel Farage: 'We Want Our Country Back.'" 25 September 2015. Accessed 2 February 2023. https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-34356165.
[113] Kehinde Andrews, "Take back control: how colonial nostalgia still informs political discourse [blog]. Accessed 27 May 2023, from https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2021/02/kehinde-andrews-brexit-uk-colonial-history-racism-politics.
[114] Jonathan Portes, "Why the panic over rising immigration? The post-Brexit system is working," *The Guardian*, 23 May 2023, accessed 30 May 2023, from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/may/23/panic-immigration-brexit-wages-uk-economy

caught on.[115] There was a widespread concern that immigrants would gradually replace the British citizens to become the dominant group in Britain.

3.1.3 British Populism

In a nutshell, populism's main goal is to create a distance between a homogenous in-group, 'us', and a 'deviant' out-group, 'them'.[116] The latter group, the 'them' or the 'other', is argued to pose a serious threat to the existence of the 'us'.[117] By blaming widespread grievances and fears on 'others', populist leaders attempt to strengthen this dichotomy between the 'us' and the 'them' and portray themselves as the political leaders who can protect the in-group from the dangerous 'others'. This process of creating a stark distinction between an in-group, an 'us', and an out-group, a 'them', is called othering. In Britain's case, there are two groups in the Brexit debate that are labelled dangerous and are continuously blamed for Britain's domestic issues: the European or the global 'other' and the ethno-racial or immigrant 'other'. More specifically, "the populist rhetoric underlying the campaign to leave the EU not only juxtaposed the common white man against the liberal elite but also presented immigration as the fulcrum of all perceived societal and economic ills in the country."[118]

But to fully understand these 'others' of British populism, it is necessary to take a step back first and discuss the process of othering in general. This will help to further understand the British process of othering and will help to recognise what sets the British process of othering apart from other cases of othering. Hence, in the following chapter, will first give a brief overview of the origin of the concept, after which the unique aspects of British othering will be discussed. This thesis will then look at how these unique aspects in combination with British populism have led to the othering of the European or global 'other' as well as the ethno-racial 'other'.

3.2 Othering

The concept of othering has its origins in Said's *Orientalism*. Said introduced the term 'Orientalism' as a critical concept to capture the West's tendency to negatively depict and portray the East, or the Orient. In Said's words, 'Orientalism' is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[119] These words refer to the Western discourse in which the West is depicted as the beacon of modernity and civilisation while the East, in contrast, is presented as exotic, backward, and essentially the West's inferior.

In this narrative, the East completely lacks the potential to ever become as civilized and progressive as the West.[120] This belief in Europe's superiority has also been used as a justification for imperialism in the 18th and 19th century as it was Europe's duty to enlighten precarious places.[121] The East was not conquered for the West's own economic benefits and territorial interests, but the Orient was conquered for its own sake.[122] However, despite the West's efforts, there is also the notion that the East will always be unable to follow the West's example of civilisation.[123] Paradoxically, the East is seen as both inferior and a threat.[124] While the East should follow the West's example, it will not be able to do so which is, in turn, seen as a peril for Western civilisation.[125] Thus, Said's *Orientalism* describes a power dynamic between the Occident and the Orient in which the West deems itself superior to the East and believes it has a duty to civilise the East.[126]

Inspired by Said's *Orientalism*, Spivak coined the term othering to describe how colonists perpetually create negative and inferior perceptions and presumptions about their colonies and their inhabitants. As Spivak writes: Othering is "a process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonises, excludes and marginalises [...] [as well as] the business of creating the enemy in order that the empire might define itself by its geographical and racial others."[127] Moving beyond Said's binary of the West and the East, Spivak argues that the construction of superiority and inferiority is a process that can occur between colonisers and the colonised as well.

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[119] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Toronto, Canada: First Vintage Books, 1978), 11.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Marina Tovar, "Edward Said's Orientalism: A Criticism of The West's Construction of the East," 1 August 2022, accessed 22 April 2023, https://theiacs.org/edward-saids-orientalism-a-criticism-of-the-wests-construction-of-the-east/.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Said, *Orientalism,* 11.
[124] Ahmet Tarik Türkmenoğlu, "Orientalist Traces in the Brexit Referendum: A Semiotic Analysis on the Brexit Posters," *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi* (2022), 63, accessed 23 April 2023, doi: 10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1055595.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," *History and Theory* (1985): 263-265.

In more recent years, researchers have argued that othering does not only occur between the West and the East or within an imperial context but that it can occur within any political, social, or cultural context and can encompass a wide array of categorisations, including (but not limited to) race, religion, culture, and nationality.[128] Based on perceived differences, a dominant in-group can ascribe negative characteristics and inferiority to those who they deem to belong to the out-group.[129] However, "the construction of these differences at a specific time and place […] decide whether othering occurs."[130] For example, one group of people who belong to the dominant group in one state can be regarded as the out-group in a different country elsewhere in the world. Thus, location and time play a significant role in the process of othering.

In addition, the image of 'others' depends entirely on the image of the 'self' in the process of 'othering'. Spivak already briefly touched upon this aspect of othering, but Jesse explains more elaborately that the 'self' and the 'other' are "two inseparable sides of the same coin. The 'other' only exists relative to the 'self', and vice versa."[131] In any case of 'othering', there is a dominant in-group ('self' or 'us') which constructs one or multiple out-groups ('other' or 'them') based on perceived differences.[132] And crucial to this process is "a shared understanding that the 'other' is different from oneself."[133]

However, this separation of the 'self' and the 'other' hardly ever happens in a positive way. As Jesse writes: "central to the construction of 'otherness' is the asymmetry in power relationships, wherein only the dominant group is in a position to impose the value of its particularity and to devaluate the particularity of others while imposing corresponding discriminatory measures."[134] In other words, as the in-group regards the out-group as inferior, the in-group can impose its own beliefs, views, and its identity onto the out-group. And the differences – real or imagined – attributed to the 'inferior' group by the dominant group are generally stigmatised and "presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination."[135]

Jesse explains that this process can also serve a significant social function in society. The purpose involves consolidating the bond within the in-group by fostering a collective belief in their "moral superiority" over the 'other'. The 'other' becomes a "suitable enemy" that unites

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[128] Moritz Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," in *European Societies, Migration, and the Law: The 'Others' amongst 'Us'*, eds. Moritz Jesse (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., 21-22.
[135] Ibid., 20.

the in-group.[136] This construction of 'otherness' can result in the devaluation, and in some extreme cases the complete dehumanisation, of the out-group. This dehumanisation of the out-group makes it easier to keep the out-group at a distance and to not sympathise with 'others'. Paradoxically, while the out-group is regarded as inferior to the in-group, they are usually viewed as a threat to the in-group. This further urges the in-group to unite and to confront this peril collectively.[137]

Othering can have a legal aspect, too. Citizenship is "the symbol and legal expression of belonging to a nation-state. All non-citizens are non-members in this community and are, per definition, legal outsiders" or legal 'others'.[138] Citizenship represents membership in a nation-state and provides individuals with the 'rights to have rights'. In other words, citizenship creates "a vertical bond between the individual and the state with a bundle of reciprocal rights and duties."[139] However, those who are regarded as 'others', or non-citizens, cannot rely on this bond between state and citizen. These 'others', often foreigners who reside in a state as immigrant, are excluded from the membership in a nation-state. "They are the natural, classic 'other' in a society defined by citizenship and nationality."[140]

In contrast to the marginalisation, exclusion, and dehumanisation of the 'other' is the 'glorification' of the 'self'. As Jesse explains, the process of 'othering' creates "a dichotomous understanding of the people that inhabit our world."[141] As mentioned before, in the dominant discourse, there is the 'self' or 'us' on one side, who are perceived as "flawlessy moral, courageous, and good,"[142] and the 'other' or 'them', who are lacking in terms of "intelligence, virtue, or any other positive traits."[143] But it is not only the glorification of the present 'self' but it also involves the glorification of the in-group's past.[144] Van Houtum explains that this sense of superiority of the 'self' is internalised "through selective historical remembering."[145] In other words, by cherry-picking certain chapters of the 'self's' past, a type of nostalgia is creates which

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[136] Moritz Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," in *European Societies, Migration, and the Law: The 'Others' amongst 'Us'*, eds. Moritz Jesse (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 23.
[137] Ibid.; Ahmet Tarik Türkmenoğlu, "Orientalist Traces in the Brexit Referendum: A Semiotic Analysis on the Brexit Posters," *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi* (2022), 63, accessed 23 April 2023, doi: 10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1055595.
[138] Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," 26.
[139] Ibid., 27.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., 24.
[142] Henk van Houtum, "Beyond Borderism: Overcoming Discriminative B/Ordering and Othering," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* (2021), 37, accessed 30 March 2023, doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12473.
[143] Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," 27.
[144] Robert Eaglestone, "Cruel Nostalgia and the Memory of the Second World War," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses*, ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), p.103-104.
[145] Henk van Houtum, "Beyond Borderism: Overcoming Discriminative B/Ordering and Othering," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* (2021), 37, accessed 30 March 2023, doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12473.

reinforces the belief of the 'self's' superiority in any context and both in the past as well as the present.[146]

In short, othering is "the process of labelling and defining those who we perceive to be in a different group as somehow deviant."[147] The perceived differences of 'others' can be based on race, religion, culture and nationality among others and the process of othering also depends on time and location. However, in all cases of othering, there is an understanding that the 'other' is completely different from the 'self'. In addition, othering is generally characterised by an asymmetrical power balance wherein only the in-group is in the position to impose the value of particularities. And this power imbalance often results in the (political, social, and legal) marginalisation, exclusion, and sometimes dehumanisation of 'others' in comparison to the glorification of the past and present of the 'self'.

3.2.1 British Othering

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter about the process of othering in general, every othering process depends heavily on time and place. In the context of Brexit, there are particularly three unique aspects that should be discussed in more detail first before the 'others' of Brexit can be discussed: Britain's past as an empire[148] and Britain as an Island Nation.[149]

Concerning Britain's imperial past, a national identity and citizenship normally develop in the context of a nation-state.[150] In the vast majority of cases, nation-states have created a national identity and citizenship based on either their cultural or political unity (e.g. Germany and France). Britain, however, does not fall in either category, for two reasons. First of all, the development of common national sentiments and cultural unity was thwarted by the nature of Great Britain which comprised four different nations.[151] Each nation had very different histories and only have shared a relatively brief history as one country. Secondly, Britain's citizenship and national identity should not be considered in the political context of a nation-state, but

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[146] Ibid.; Robert Eaglestone, "Cruel Nostalgia and the Memory of the Second World War," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses*, ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), p.103-104.
[147] Arno van der Zwet, Murray Stewart Leith, Duncan Sim, and Elizabeth Boyle, "Brexit, Europe and Othering," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (2020), 517, accessed 4 March 2023, doi:10.1080/21582041.2020.1851393.
[148] Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Locating Brexit in the Pragmatics of Race, Citizenship and Empire," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 92-93.
[149] Van der Zwet et al., "Brexit, Europe and Othering," 527.
[150] Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Locating Brexit," 92-93.
[151] Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Locating Brexit in the Pragmatics of Race, Citizenship and Empire," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 92-93.

rather the political context of an empire.[152] Calhoun argues that British national identity was "anchored" in the Empire and that specifically the Empire truly united Britain.[153] The collapse of Britain's Empire suddenly forced Britain to reinvent its national identity and idea of citizenship.[154] In the process, Britain created new racial hierarchies. Whereas citizens of the Empire's colonies were originally treated the same as British citizens, with the same rights and duties, Britain demoted these citizens to second-rank citizens after the fall of the British Empire.[155] Overall, the UK attempted to limit entry to the country to individuals who were born in former colonies.[156] In more extreme cases, individuals, mostly non-white imperial subjects, lost their right to British citizenship altogether, or their British citizenship was revoked leaving them stateless.[157]

The second aspect, Britain as an island nation, concerns an age-old belief in British exceptionalism.[158] For centuries, Britain's island-ness has symbolised Britain's superiority in comparison to all nations in the world.[159] While completely separated from mainland, it was Britain that was able to build the largest empire in history without having to rely on any other nation.[160] Britain's geography has also represented a country that considers itself to be starkly different from and fundamentally less European than other EU member states.[161] Shaw writes that Britain has always been rather Eurosceptic, that the country has always viewed itself as exceptional in comparison to its European neighbours, and that Britain "[refuses] to feel

[152] Ibid.; Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 57-58.; Ailsa Henderson, "The English on Britain in the World," in *Englishness: The Political Force Transforming Britain*, ed. Ailsa Henderson and Richard Wyn Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 82.
[153] Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism, and Brexit," 57-58.
[154] Bhambra, "Locating Brexit," 91-92.
[155] John Holmwood, "Exit from the Perspective of Entry," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 35-36.; Bhambra, "Locating Brexit," 92.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Rachel Pougnet, Citizenship and the fall of the British Empire: A system of exclusion (blog; 2020), accessed 31 May 2023, https://www.statelessness.eu/updates/blog/citizenship-and-fall-british-empire-system-exclusion.
[158] Gerard Delantly, "A Divided Nation in a Divided Europe: Emerging Cleavages and the Crisis of European Integration," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 113.; Mandy Beck, "The Island Nation and Euroscepticism: Revisiting Europe's Heritage in Brexit Poetry," *Cultural Intertexts* (2022), 20, accessed 11 May 2022.
[159] Kristian Shaw, "An Imperfect Union: British Eurosceptic fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 37.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Many researchers argue that Britain, against this strong belief, has never been truly independent or sovereign since its common political unity since 1707. Although Britain was the leader of the Empire, it was still part of a larger collective. Following the Empire, Britain became part of the Commonwealth as well as the EU. Arguably, there has never truly been an island nation.; e.g. Bhambra, "Locating Brexit,"(London: Anthem Press, 2017).

European."[162] Britain's separation from, thus, Europe reflects "a symbolic incompatibility" with Europe and perhaps with the entire world.[163]

3.2.2 Brexit's 'Others'

The emergence of Europeans or the global elite as well as immigrants as Britain's 'others' is "historically [and geographically] complicated"[164] as it is the result of a complex combination of several factors. First of all, the collapse of the British Empire, which in its size cannot be compared to any other empire the world has ever seen, turned Britain from a global superpower to a country without any role.[165] Further, as British identity was deeply rooted in the British Empire, Britain was faced with the difficult task to reinvent the national identity entirely after the collapse of their empire.

At the same time that Britain was demoted from empire to nation-state, the EU (the EEC then) was a "more successful political and economic venture than what was left of the Commonwealth."[166] While Britain felt compelled to join the EEC, it was reluctant to do so as by joining, "the UK was giving up a global role."[167] Not only had Britain lost its empire, it now had to lower itself to the same level as other European countries which it had looked down on for centuries. In addition, Britain had to give up part of its sovereignty over certain issues in order to join the EEC. While other European nations had already given up their empires, Britain struggled to truly let go of their "imperial mindset."[168] Especially as both the loss of the British Empire and the cooperation with European countries ran counter to the age-long belief that Britain was the most exceptional country in the world.

Thus, the othering of these two groups which have been identified earlier in this thesis has been a long process. Concerning the ethno-racial or immigrant 'other', for a long time, this group was treated as an equal in the British Empire. However, with the Fall of the British Empire changed this treatment drastically. No longer were the citizens of Britain's former colonies equals but second-rank citizens. This can be seen as the start of the process of othering of the immigrant 'other'. Although this process of othering was still limited to the citizens of

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[162] Kristian Shaw, "An Imperfect Union: British Eurosceptic fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 37.
[163] Kristian Shaw, "An Imperfect Union: British Eurosceptic fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 37.
[164] Arno van der Zwet, Murray Stewart Leith, Duncan Sim, and Elizabeth Boyle, "Brexit, Europe and Othering," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (2020), 517, accessed 4 March 2023, doi:10.1080/21582041.2020.1851393
[165] Ibid.
[166] Van der Zwet, "Brexit, Europe and Othering," 519.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.

former colonies, Britain was clearly, purposely excluding certain individuals based on their descent as well as their racially different appearance. In the case of the European other, it is more difficult to pinpoint a certain moment in time at which the othering began. Yet, it is clear that Britain had long believed in its own superiority, especially compared to mainland Europe. All in all, the 'others' of Brexit had been Britain's 'others' for much longer.

3.3 Methodology

In *Orientalism*, Said argued that literature is a tool which can both produce and reinforce ideas surrounding the ideas of one's 'self' or an 'other'. [169] Förnas agrees that identities, whether that of the 'self' or of the 'other', are "constructed through narrative acts."[170] He further explains that identities emerge "through acts of interpretation in which people use signs, symbols and [specifically] texts of various kinds as expressions that characterise themselves or others."[171] Humlebæk agrees that identities are constructed through narratives about the collective and that they depend on "drawing borders between the collective 'we' and the 'others' […] and the spread of coherent ideas about the fundamental identity of the 'we-group' among the members of the collective 'itself'."[172] Specifically discussing Brexit, Eaglestone argues that literature is an appropriate way to discuss or to explore the ideas and arguments about identity which, according to Eaglestone, lie at the heart of Brexit.[173] In short, literature can help us gain insight into the process of othering and the ideas surrounding the British 'self' as well as the 'others' in post-Brexit Britain as narratives produce and reinforce the borders between the collective 'us' in contrast to 'others'. Hence why this thesis will use literature to explore and gain understanding of the role of 'others', more specifically the European or global 'other' and the ethno-racial or immigrant 'other', in post-Brexit Britain. To achieve this, three Brexlit novels will be close-read: Ali Smith's *Autumn*, Amanda Craig's *The Lie of the Land*, and John Lanchester's *The Wall*.

These three novels will be read through a lens of populism and othering. As discussed earlier in this chapter, giving a definition of both populism and othering can be quite challenging

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[169] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Toronto, Canada: First Vintage Books, 1978), 11.

[170] Johan Förnas, "Europe Faces Europe: An Introduction," in *Europe Faces Europe: Narratives from Its Eastern Half*, ed. Johan Förnas (Bristol: Intellect, 2017), 13.

[171] Ibid., 12.

[172] Carsten Humlebæk, "National Identities: Temporality and Narration," *Genealogy* 2, no. 4 (2018), 1, accessed 12 June 2022, doi: 10.3390/genealogy2040036.

[173] Robert Eaglestone, "Introduction: Brexit and Literature," in *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses*, ed. Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

as both can change depending on time and location.[174] However, many researchers, such as Iakhnis et al., Calhoun and Shore, have argued that of the three core aspects of populism, an anti-establishment sentiment and a nativism sentiment were heavily prevalent in the Brexit debate and thus, can be discussed and explored in literature, too. In practice this means that this thesis will specifically be looking for a dichotomy between the 'ordinary people', the 'us', and 'the elite'. As mentioned before, 'the elite' is an empty signifier. This means that it can take on different identities in different contexts.[175] In Brexit's case, 'the elite' refers to those who are considered to be the 'winners' of globalisation or individuals in favour of the EU. Concerning aspect of nativism, a dichotomy between the 'us', again the British people, and the immigrant or ethno-racial 'other', 'them', will be searched for. Only looking for and possibly recognising these dichotomies is unsatisfactory. This thesis would like to understand this process of othering of 'others' in post-Brexit Britain. Furthermore, this thesis' aim is to further understand the role of these two 'others' in post-Brexit Britain. Hence, several questions will be asked while close reading the text. What and how is the relationship between the British 'us' and Brexit's 'others'? How does the process of othering manifest itself in Brexit literature? And what role do the global 'other' as well as the immigrant 'other' play in post-Brexit Britain?

Last but not least, special attention will be paid to the use of borders, whether literally or metaphorically, in the Brexit novels. Schaff,[176] Steveker,[177] and Henneböhl, among others, argue that the imagery of borders is one of the most important leitmotifs in Brexit literature as it is used to trace the divisory lines running through British society,[178] but it is also used to symbolise Britain's Island Mentality as well as a belief in British exceptionalism.[179]

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[174] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9-11.; Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2014), 1, accessed 14 May 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2459387.; Moritz Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," in *European Societies, Migration, and the Law: The 'Others' amongst 'Us'*, eds. Moritz Jesse (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.

[175] Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism," 9.

[176] Barbara Schaff, "Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK," (introduction at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).

[177] Lena Steveker, "Fenced Off and Walled In: Narrating British Borders in Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)," (paper presented at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).

[178] Ibid.

[179] Dennis Henneböhl, "The Representation of External and Internal Borders and Their Interaction with National Identity in Ali Smith's '*Seasonal Quartet*'," (paper presented at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).

3.3.2 Novel Selection

Before analysing the novels, it is important to justify the selection of the literary texts of this thesis. Especially when being aware of the fact that Brexlit is still a fairly new genre. Yet, Brexlit is also a thriving genre.[180] Shaw, for instance, has already identified over a hundred Brexlit publications.[181] This number includes both pre-Brexit ad post-Brexit publications.However, there is still a debate on whether this number of publications should include both post-Brexit and pre-Brexit noves. While a large number of researchers argue that these publications grapple with the same issues and that there is not a clear divide between novels published before and after the referendum,[182] others argue that Brexit fiction is in reaction to the referendum and its outcome.[183] They, therefore, argue that only post-Brexit fictions should be considered in the body of Brexit literature. This thesis will focus on post-Brexit novels only to avoid this debate.

Another aspect which influenced the selection of novels was whether the literary works did indeed engage with the two 'others' that were identified earlier in this chapter. And although this narrows down the possible research material, there are still a handful of options left.[184]

Thus, a third aspect was used to narrow it down even further: the extent to which authors have said to have been inspired by Brexit while writing their novels. In particular, the authors of these three novels have indicated that Brexit has impacted their work to extremely varying degrees. This choice was made in order to see whether these different degrees of inspiration have also led to differences in the way the lives of 'others' are envisioned differently. Ali Smith has very clearly and repeatedly communicated that Brexit was a major driving force behind her seasonal quartet of which *Autumn* is its opening novel. In several interviews,[185] Smith has said that "turbulent Brexit Britain"[186] was an important inspiration for her new novel. Amanda Craig leaves the question about the role of Brexit in her work a little more open for interpretation. She does not explicitly say that her work was inspired by Brexit, but does write, on her own website,

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[180] Barbara Schaff, "Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK," (introduction at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).

[181] Kristian Shaw, "Introduction: The European Question," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 4.

[182] Ibid., 4.; Jon Day, "Brexlit: The New Landscape of British Fiction," *The Financial Times,* 28 July 2017, accessed 26 May 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/30ec47b4-7204-11e7-93ff-99f383b09ff9.; Harald Pittel, "Fiction in Dark Times: the Brexit Novel and Ali Smith," *Hard Times* 101, no.1 (2018), 58, accessed 14 March 2021.

[183] Vedrana Veličković, "Eastern Europeans and Brexlit," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no.5 (2020), 649, accessed 24 April 2021, doi:10.1080/17449855.2020.1816692.

[184] Sarah Moss, The Ghost Wall; Ali Smith's entire seasonal quartet; Ian McEwan, the Cockroach; Jonathan Coe, Middle England; Time of Lies, Douglas Board; The Man Who Saw Everything, Deborah Levy; Rabbitman, Michael Paraskos; among others.

[185] Penguin Books, "Ali Smith on Autumn, Brexit, and the shortness of life, 11 October 2016, accessed 6 May 2022, https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2016/10/ali-smith-on-autumn.

[186] https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/16/ali-smith-autumn-interview-how-can-we-live-ina-world-and-not-put-a-hand-across-a-divide-brexit-profu

that she takes inspiration from and that her work responds to current affairs in modern life in Britain.[187] Furthermore, her work is generally regarded by many reviewers and researchers as Brexit literature.[188] John Lanchester, on the other hand, stresses, in multiple interviews, that *The Wall* should not be read as "a riff on Brexit."[189] Later, Lanchester repeated once again that he did not consciously write *The Wall* as a Brexlit novel.[190]

Clearly, all three authors were inspired by Brexit in varying degrees. Smith has called Brexit one of her most important inspirations for *Autumn,* Craig has shared that her work is always inspired by current affairs in Britain, while Lanchester continuously argues that it was not his intention to write a Brexlit novel. The question now arises whether the extent to which Brexit was seen as a source of inspiration for the novels has led to differences in how the novels speak about 'others'?

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[187] Amanda Craig Books, "The Lie of the Land," 2017, accessed 30 June 2022, https://www.amandacraig.com/books/the-lie-of-the-land/#.

[188] Jackie McGlone, "Review: The Lie of the Land, by Amanda Craig," Review of *The Lie of the Land,* by Amanda Craig, *The Herald,* 16 June 2017, accessed 14 April 2022, https://www.heraldscotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/15351326.review-lie-land-amanda-craig/.

[189] Lisa Allardice, "John Lanchester: 'Walls were coming down around the world – now they are springing up'," *The Guardian,* 11 January 2019, accessed 15 July 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/11/john-lanchester-interview-the-wall.; James Kidd, "John Lanchester on walls, Brexit, Trump, climate change and his latest novel," *Arts & Culture,* 15 February 2022, accessed 14 April 2022, https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/books/john-lanchester-on-walls-brexit-trump-climate-change-and-his-latest-novel-1.826098.

[190] Benjamin Kunkel, "After the Flood," *Bookforum,* February 2019, accessed 14 April 2022, https://www.bookforum.com/print/2505/john-lanchester-discusses-his-new-novel-about-climate-change-and-migration-the-wall-20628.

4. Analysis
4.1 Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016)

Merely four months after the Brexit referendum and Britain's decision to leave the EU, *Autumn* was published. As the opening of Ali Smith's seasonal quartet, *Autumn* tells the tale of a remarkable, somewhat unconventional friendship between the 101-year-old retiree Daniel Gluck and 69-years-younger Elisabeth Demand, who is an art history junior lecturer at a university in London.[191] Initially becoming neighbours in 1993, Daniel and Elisabeth quickly form a friendship particularly marked by literature, art, and storytelling and by a continuous search to understand reality and the world around them. At present time, their friendship has lapsed into sad circumstances. Daniel is slowly withering in an elder-care facility, somewhere in between life and death, but their extraordinary relationship is as strong as ever as Elisabeth visits her comatose friend regularly. The world around them, however, has changed drastically. Britain looks more bleak than ever after Brexit as it has become a country characterised by "people saying stuff to each other and none of it actually ever becoming dialogue."[192]

Time plays a crucial role in both the novel and the friendship between the neighbours. Smith herself describes her contemporary novel as "a sort of time-sensitive experiment" in which "time and the novel meet."[193] She further says her aim is to explore "what time is, [and] how we experience it."[194] And indeed, as Sarah Lyall writes, "chronology skips forward and backward and sideways, moving slowly and then quickly" in *Autumn*.[195] The novel's opening scene exemplifies this. Daniel is neither dead nor alive, or he is both simultaneously. He is both "naked as the day [he] was born"[196] yet "he knows he is dead, he must be dead, he is surely dead."[197] This "disjointed temporality" is further explored through a series of flashbacks.[198] Brief fragments of Daniel's youth in continental Europe in the 1930s and Elisabeth's childhood in the 1990s as well as the exploration of Pauline Boty's art alternate with the present. Thus, the past, the present, and timelessness all co-exist in *Autumn*. This disjointed sense of time

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[191] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 132.
[192] Ibid., 112.
[193] Ali Smith, "I thought it would be about the seasons: Ali Smith on writing Autumn," *The Guardian*, 21 September 2019, accessed 15 June 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/21/i-initially-thought-it-would-be-about-the-season-ali-smith-on-writing-autumn.
[194] Joanna Kavenna, "Autumn by Ali Smith review – a beautiful, transient symphony," *The Guardian,* 12 October 2016, accessed 15 June 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/12/autumn-ali-smith-review.
[195] Sarah Lyall, "From Ali Smith, It's the First Great Brexit Novel," *The New York Times*, 17 February 2017, accessed 17 June 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/17/books/review/autumn-ali-smith.html.
[196] Smith, *Autumn*, 3.
[197] Ibid., 6.
[198] Kristian Shaw, "L'espirit de L'escalier: Post-Brexit Fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 208.

highlights the transience but also the recurrence of time. While moments are fleeting, they are repetitive and cyclical, too. They come and go like the seasons.

4.1.1 Analysis Autumn

Both Daniel and Elisabeth's surnames suggest that the two friends stand at the periphery of, or even outside of, English society. Daniel's last name, Gluck, comes from the German – Glück – meaning luck or fortune. Daniel himself explains that his surname "means [he's] lucky and happy."[199] However, it also alludes to the term Glückssucher, or fortune seeker in English. In the context of Brexit, immigrants were repeatedly portrayed as fortune seekers, rather than refugees, who were merely out to steal jobs, housing, and benefits.[200] And especially Daniel's background as a German refugee in the 1930s reinforces this suggestion.[201]

While Elisabeth believes she is entirely English, according to Daniel, her surname Demand is actually "originally French."[202] Daniel tells her he believes "it comes from the French words de and monde, put together, which means, when you translate it, of the world."[203] This does not only allude to the idea that Elisabeth is a cosmopolitan citizen,[204] it may suggest that she is not seen as a citizen at all for that matter. Especially if Theresa May's words are kept in mind: "But if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what the very word 'citizenship' means."[205]

But not only their names suggest that Elisabeth and Daniel are considered outsiders, both of them are also subject to exclusionary actions by others in their daily lives. In Elisabeth's case, her unsuccessful attempts to renew her passport reinforces her status as an 'other' in Smith's post-Brexit Britain.[206] At the post office,[207] her name, once again, forms the first

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[199] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 51.
[200] Simon Tilford, "Britain, Immigration and Brexit," *CER Bulletin* 105 (30 November 2015): 1-2.
[201] Smith, *Autumn,* 170.
[202] Ibid., 50.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Kristian Shaw, "L'espirit de L'escalier: Post-Brexit Fictions," in *Brexlit: British Literature and the European Project* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 208.
[205] BBC, "Mrs May, we are all citizens of the world, says philosopher," 29 October 2016, accessed 2 July 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-37788717.
[206] The impression is made that Elisabeth's mother is very much pro-EU. When shown the new passport, Elisabeth's mother points to the words European Union on the passport cover and becomes sad. She knows that the passport will most likely change once the UK officially leaves the EU, but she wants to keep the EU passport instead.
[207] While waiting for her turn, "Elisabeth sits down on the circular communal seating unit in the middle of the room. Something inside it is broken, so that when she does this something clanks inside its structure." (16) The seating arrangement bears a resemblance to the circle of the stars on the EU flag. One of the seats, or rather one of the stars on the flag, is broken. As Britain has decided to leave the EU, the unity, that the flag symbolises, is broken too. "The people sitting on the communal seat are almost all exactly the same people who were here when she first came in." (17) The same Member States are still there as to when the UK became a Member State of the EU in 1973 yet the relationship has changed drastically. "It's funny to be sitting on such an uncommunal

obstacle in her attempt to get a new passport. The man behind the counter questions whether her name is spelled correctly. When she confirms that her name is indeed spelled with an s rather than with a z, he quickly remarks that "it's people from other countries that spell it like this, isn't it?"[208] And while flipping through her outdated passport, he surprisedly notices that "it does say you're UK."[209] But not only her name, her appearance is seen as a problem as well. Handing over her new passport photo, she is told that her face is the wrong size and that the photo is not admissible. On a form, "[the man] writes in the box next to the word *Other:* HEAD INCORRECT SIZE."[210] And even when she comes back with new photos, taken with instructions of the man, the photos are denied again. This time, a woman behind the counter tells her that her eyes are "too small" and that they "don't sit with the permissible regularity inside the shaded area."[211] On two separate occasions, two different people find it dubious when Elisabeth tries to renew her passport. Apparently both her name and appearance differ from what the two employees associate with British citizens, or the 'us'. This implication is reinforced when Elisabeth's problem, of wrong physical features, is written down in the box *Other.* While this title on the box probably just indicates that Elisabeth's problem is not very common, Smith's word choice does suggest that Elisabeth is indeed seen as an 'other'.

However, the Post Office scene is more than Elisabeth trying to fight her way through the tangled forests that is bureaucracy and a few people who do not cooperate.[212] The scene reveals that within the UK's borders, Elisabeth is actively being ostracised. As Ruth Wodak argues, the possession of a passport is one of the most significant symbols of "inclusion and exclusion" by a nation state.[213] A passport is not only a document that allows one to cross borders, "acquisition of citizenship becomes the legal means for inclusion" as well.[214] A passport is thus one of the most important, and one of the most tangible objects, associated with the belonging to a nation-state. Other citizens denying Elisabeth the ownership of a UK passport

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communal chair." (18) At the time *Autumn* was published, Britain's decision to leave the EU had not yet officially been implemented. Britain was neither fully a member anymore nor was it an outsider yet, hence it sat on an uncommunal communal chair.

[208] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 22.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid., 25.

[211] Ibid., 108.

[212] Without a passport, she is unable to travel to any other country. This would especially be the case after the eventual hard Brexit, although this was not yet known at the time of the publication of *Autumn.* As with her surname Demand, this once again refers to the idea that one is a citizen of nowhere when you are a global citizen. In this case, without a passport she is indeed a citizen of nowhere.

[213] Ruth Wodak, "'Us' and 'Them': Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination via Discourse," in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, ed. Gerard Delantly, Ruth Wodak, and Paul Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 60.

[214] Ibid.

suggests that Elisabeth is not seen as a fellow citizen, not as a person belonging to the 'us', but rather to the 'others'.

A flashback to Daniel's youth in 1930s France shows that this distinguishing between people based on physical features is not a new practice. Rather, history is repeating itself. In a foreign country, Daniel realises that "all the people on the train can see from his clothes that he's not from there."[215] This uncomfortable realisation that he is alien in France is further emphasised by the fact that "the people round them are talking about the necessity of developing a scientific and legal means of gauging exactly who's what."[216] In hindsight, Nazi eugenics, during the 1930s and 1940s, began to gain a foothold and gradually spread from Nazi Germany to the rest of Europe. Smith seems to draw a parallel between Elisabeth's unsuccessful efforts to obtain a new passport due to 'incorrect' facial features and the 'othering' of people based on their appearance during the Nazi regime. While Elisabeth's struggle to get a new passport seem somewhat comical and harmless, Smith seems to warn that this 'othering' can actually have a far-reaching, devastating impact as seen eight decades ago. Then, too, people knew that "something's going to happen. It [was] already happening. Everybody [knew]. But everybody [was] pretending it's not happening."[217] Yet, people looked away and believed that it would blow over again.

This exclusion that Elisabeth experiences by others denying her the ownership of a passport is, however, quite difficult to recognise (and therefore more difficult to prove). The exclusion of many 'others' in *Autumn* happens much more openly. For example, a Spanish couple, clearly on a holiday, are verbally harassed while waiting for a taxi. "The people behind them in the queue shouted at them. What they shouted at them was to go home. This isn't Europe, they shouted. Go back to Europe." [218] And this incident of 'others' being told to go home is not a standalone one but is rather one in a series of incidents. For instance, a week after the referendum, Elisabeth is going for a walk in her mother's village when she passes a cottage "whose front, from the door to across the window, has been painted with black paint and the words GO and HOME."[219]

The repetition of this message to go home, or at least leave Britain, creates an unwelcoming, unsafe environment for many people, the 'others,' in *Autumn*'s Britain. Wherever one goes, who is believed to be or seen as an 'other,' the message that they do not

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[215] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 99.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 130.
[219] Ibid., 53.

belong continues to follow them. And thus, while the Brexit debate was supposed to be about immigration and border control, Smith insinuates that this rhetoric goes deeper than those issues alone. Rather, "all across the country, racist bile was general."[220] Smith seems to suggest that the call for less immigration was not so much for the financial protection of the British people but was merely an excuse and justification for an increasingly widespread presence of xenophobia.

Actually how almost mundane and widely accepted openly expressed xenophobia has become is illustrated by a debate on the national radio. A spokesman claims that "first we'll get the Poles. And then we'll get the Muslims. Then we'll get the gyppos, then the gays. You lot are on the run and we're coming for you."[221] But while this intimidating statement targets many different groups of people, who all clearly do not belong to the white, English middle and working class, "the chair of the panel didn't berate, or comment on, or even acknowledge the threat the man had just made."[222] This complete lack of response and indifference to the statement implies that such xenophobic rhetoric and sentiments have become normalised and the dominant mindset in post-Brexit Britain.

This seemingly insurmountable riff between the 'us' and the 'other' in *Autumn*'s post-Brexit Britain is also expressed through the use of various forms of borders. According to Henneböhl[223] and Schaff,[224] among others, borders are a recurring element in many Brexit fictions to depict a division between groups of people. In *Autumn*, two different types of borders are mainly used: a beach and a fence. As mentioned earlier, *Autumn*'s opening scene sees Daniel walking on the beach. In an almost dream-like state, somewhere between life and death, he finds that "there's a washed-up body" of "a dead person."[225] "Just along from this dead person, there is another dead person. Beyond it, another, and another. He looks along a shore at the dark line of the tide-dumped dead."[226] In stark contrast with the washed-up bodies, Daniel notices many people further on the beach "holidaying up the shore from the dead."[227] Both the bodies and the people holidaying are on the same beach, yet there is a clear separation between the two groups, implying that there is indeed an extreme dichotomy between the 'us' and the 'other' in

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[220] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 60.
[221] Ibid., 197.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Dennis Henneböhl, "The Representation of External and Internal Borders and Their Interaction with National Identity in Ali Smith's '*Seasonal Quartet*'," (paper presented at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).
[224] Barbara Schaff, "Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK," (introduction at the Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK Conference, University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, 5-7 May 2021).
[225] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 12.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.

Britain and that Britain has become a country not only increasingly unwelcoming to 'others,' but also indifferent to the horrors that 'others' have to endure, even if it concerns matters of life and death, and instead focus on their own lives and interests only. This idea is reinforced by the anonymity of the washed-up bodies. They are faceless, nameless, without (national) identity. While the scene suggests that a horrific drama, which has cost human lives, has taken place, Smith does not reveal what exactly happened prior to this sight. This prompts the reader to fill in who these people were and where they came from before they washed ashore, "dripping sea," on the British coast.[228]

The second form of a border comes in the form of a new fence, "a mass of chainlink metal"[229] surrounding "common land,"[230] and which "[blocks] the way as far as the eye can see no matter which way [Elisabeth] turns her head."[231] The fence is the most tangible manifestation of the dividing line between the 'us' and the 'other'. First of all, it creates the image of deliberate exclusion of people as it prevents people from physically entering a certain piece of land. This can refer, for example, to the Brexit debate in which more and better border control was often repeated. Yet, Elisabeth is not allowed to walk even near the fence either. She is told by a patrol guard that she is walking on "private land"[232] and that she will be forcibly removed and detained if she does not leave the fence's perimeter.[233] Suggesting that the 'others' are not only prevented from entering the country, but that the 'others' who already live in the country should be excluded from society, too.

But while 'othering' is portrayed as something common in post-Brexit Britain in *Autumn*, it does not mean that the 'others' stay quiet and accept the way they are treated. Instead they stand up for themselves and fight back. For example, as Elisabeth passes the cottage, on which the words GO and HOME were previously painted, a new message in bright, colourful paint has been added: "WE ARE ALREADY HOME THANK YOU."[234] This message suggests that, although they are continuously told that there is no room for them in Britain, the 'others' are defiant. They refuse to be told who they are and where they belong. Similarly, when Elisabeth is told that she is not allowed to come anywhere near the fence, she does not let the guard's threat of detainment scare her away. Rather, she confronts him, questions why she is not allowed to come near the fence. The communication they have, while they are both on an

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[228] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 12.
[229] Ibid., 56.
[230] Ibid., 140.
[231] Ibid., 56.
[232] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 140.
[233] Ibid., 141-142.
[234] Ibid., 138.

other side of the same fence, also suggests that there will always be possibilities of crossing borders regardless of all efforts to exclude certain groups of people. The fence is perhaps the most tangible object representing 'othering,' but the communication between Elisabeth and the patrol guard shows that people reaching past the divide can never truly be avoided and prevented.[235] The 'others' will continue to stand up for themselves, and some British citizens, too, will continue fighting against the division.[236]

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[235] Flora is a recurring element in the defiance of the 'others' against the hostile treatment they deal with. For example, in response to the words GO HOME written on the cottage, not only a reply was written, but a tree and flowers were painted underneath it, too. In this scene, the fence is overgrown with weeds and flowers. The flowers overgrowing the fence and painted on the cottage suggests that the exclusion of certain people is impossible. Despite all efforts to shut 'others' out, literally and figuratively, nature overgrows this unnatural process.

[236] Elisabeth's mother, for instance, is planning to go to the fence every day to bombard it until it is removed again.

4.2 Amanda Craig's The Lie of the Land (2017)

"[Exposing] the fault lines in post EU referendum Britain,"[237] *The Lie of the Land* tells the story of a previously successful London-based couple, Lottie and Quentin Bredin, who are horrified to find they cannot afford a divorce. The main reason being that both lost their jobs in the recession.[238] The only solution they find is to move to a cheaper dwelling in the countryside while renting out their London home in order to save enough money for the disintegration of their marriage. Together with Lottie's teenage son Xan and their twin girls, Rosie and Stella, the dysfunctional family settles at Farm House in Devon.

In a multi-layered story line, four characters open a window to post-Brexit Britain on the countryside and all the political and social issues that preoccupy the daily lives of the people in rural Britain. The three adult family members of the Bredin family all experience their own culture shock and struggle to acclimate to their new surroundings. And at a distance, local health visitor and sheep farmer Sally Verity sees the family settling down and trying to find their way in their new environment. Circumstances are further complicated by an unresolved murder which happened on the land of the family Bredin's new home.

4.2.1 Analysis The Lie of the Land

Similar to Smith's *Autumn*, Craig explores the periphery of British society, too, by creating multiple characters with a non-British heritage. Lottie has German heritage which suggests that she may be a European 'other' and not a full British member of society. Quentin, too, is "not entirely English, having a Jewish South African mother." His originally French name seems to reinforce the idea that Quentin's character should be considered an global 'other', too. In addition, Lottie and Quentin's place of residence also does not seem to be an arbitrary choice. London is Britain's glocal cultural centre and true multicultural hotspot.

Yet, they are forced to leave their house in London behind and move to the countryside. By moving the family from Britain's centre of globalisation to the countryside, Craig seems to trace one of the divisive lines that the EU Referendum exposed; the line between city and region. And Craig, indeed, seems to further explore this tension between the Londoners and the villagers in Lottie and Quentin's first week in the village. Most villagers avoid them and a few mutter that these newcomers ""arrive without knowing anything about anything." [239] This

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[237] Vedrana Veličković, "Eastern Europeans and Brexlit," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no.5 (2020), p.653, accessed 24 April 2021, doi:10.1080/17449855.2020.1816692.
[238] Amanda Craig Books, "The Lie of the Land," 2017, accessed 30 June 2022, https://www.amandacraig.com/books/the-lie-of-the-land/#.
[239] Amanda Craig, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2017), 99.

remark seems to refer to a sentiment many pro-Brexit politicians were only too keen to capitalise on during the Brexit debate: the belief that the global or European 'other' was indifferent to the real struggles of British life in the countryside. And interestingly, Quentin is indeed indifferent.

"His main aim is to get through this year with as little contact as possible with yet another yokel."[240] Thus, both the villagers and Quentin are already full of prejudice and rule out any contact with each other in advance. With this, Craig seems to be referring to the Brexit debate which was highly polarising and to the divisions in the country which appear to be as entrenched as ever. And the disunity that already has the entire country in its grip seems especially to difficult to overcome if both sides are unwilling to talk. In this scene, Craig seems to show that the 'us' and the global 'others' in the country seem to be further apart than ever.

But where there is some tension between Quentin and the villagers, Xan, Lottie and Quentin's (step)son, is clearly seen as an outsider. Like his (step)parents, Xan has multicultural roots as well, but what sets him apart from his family, or anyone in town for that matter, is that he is black.[241] And his appearance makes him subject to exclusionary actions as well as racism on a regular basis. For example, while Xan is doing groceries with his mother, he is randomly approached by a little girl who innocently asks him "if he [is] made of chocolate."[242] While the girl had no ill-intentions, it is those racist micro-aggressions that he has to deal with on a daily basis. Actually how normal these instances seem to be shows that racism is widely, openly accepted and that while "the locals [actually] don't even know how racist they are."[243] And the racism towards Xan goes even further than these questions. Conscious, targeted racism is also Xan's reality. He is, for instance, called "monkey."[244] The process of othering often goes hand in hand with the exclusion and marginalisation and even in extreme cases with the dehumanisation of 'others'.[245] Xan is not even seen as a human being who belongs to the 'others' but as an animal. In Craig's post-Brexit Britain, society seems so permeated with racism that its citizens do not even notice it anymore or actively do not care.

Another one of Xan's other racist experiences bears a striking resemblance to Elisabeth's experience in the Post Office in *Autumn*. On the first day of his new job, Xan is

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[240] Amanda Craig, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2017), 33.
[241] Ibid., 103 & 276.
[242] Ibed., 65.
[243] Ibed.
[244] Ibed., 374.
[245] Moritz Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," in *European Societies, Migration, and the Law: The 'Others' amongst 'Us'*, eds. Moritz Jesse (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.

mistaken for "an illegal immigrant."[246] He is repeatedly asked whether he speaks or can read English. When replying "I *am* English," "the man looks doubtfully at him and says, [...] any ID?"[247] Like Elisabeth in *Autumn*, Xan is not taken at his word. Only when he shows identification is it reluctantly accepted that he is indeed English. Again, a passport is not only about "one's membership of a political community" and the rights and duties that come with it.[248] A passport "can be instrumentalised as blurring intra-ethnic boundaries and erase symbolic stigmas of otherness."[249] As mentioned before, holding a passport is a significant association with belonging to a nation-state. Xan's fellow citizens question the validity of Xan's ownership of this important document, however. This suggests that Xan, based on his appearance, is not seen as part of the British 'us' but is rather seen as a person belonging to the 'others'. Craig, perhaps subconsciously, draws a parallel with Ali Smith, too. Both Elisabeth in *Autumn* and Xan in *The Lie of the Land* are denied membership to the nation-state by their fellow citizens purely based on their physical appearance. Furthermore, it becomes clear that those who are perceived as 'others' based on their physical features are seen as 'less'. This could also possibly refer to Britain's past as an Empire in which non-white, non-British citizens were regarded as second-rank citizens. And especially the passports of those citizens who had different racial features were completely revoked. Craig seems to suggest that the remnants of this hierarchy of citizens is still in existence.

Just as in Smith's *Autumn*, just how mundane and widely accepted racist and xenophobic attitudes are in post-Brexit Britain, becomes clear in a discussion about the Murder Mystery of Farm House in the local pub. A local villager says that "the consensus is that it must have been gypsies"[250] or "a lunatic or an Islamic fundamentalist."[251] In any case, the overall conclusion is that the perpetrator is "not from around here."[252] Additionally, the locals warn each other about the Eastern European migrant workers who are employed in the local factory. These migrant workers are said to "take jobs and homes from English people"[253] as well as

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[246] Craig, *The Lie of the Land*, 68.
[247] Amanda Craig, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2017), 68.
[248] Kristina Bakkær Simonsen, "Does Citizenship Always Further Immigrants' Feeling of Belonging to the Host Nation? A Study of Policies and Public Attitudes in 14 Western Democracies," *Comparative Migration Studies* 5, no. 3 (2017), 1, accessed 12 July 2022, doi: 10.1186/s40878-017-0050-6.
[249] Szabolcs Pogonyi, "The Passport as Means of Identity Management: Making and Unmaking Ethnic Boundaries through Citizenship," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45 (2018), 991, accessed 11 July 2022, doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440493.
[250] The use of the term 'gypsy' to refer to a member of the Roma people is often seen as offensive and could be seen as an equivalent to the word used to insult Xan.
[251] Craig, *The Lie of the Land*, 202.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Amanda Craig, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2017), 211.

"benefits."[254] "You think they can get what we offer in Poland? Course not."[255] And "a little British baby is what [the Eastern European women], and benefits."[256] As one man begins to speak, the other people in the pub join in with him and use the same populist rhetoric often used by the Leave Campaign in the Brexit debate is openly shared. Just as in the Brexit debate, here too, the anti-immigration arguments are first presented as economic concerns. The Poles are said to be after the money and the benefits of the villagers. The locals' warnings to watch out for the Eastern European migrant workers show how entrenched this rhetoric that immigrants are to blame for the country's economic malaise. And thus, the Brexit debate was "less a debate on the pros and cons of membership than a proxy for discussions about race and migration."[257] And with the accumulation of racist incidents throughout the novel, Craig seems to insinuate, as Smith did in *Autumn*, that the call for less immigration was not so much for the financial protection of the British people but was merely an excuse for a widely accepted xenophobia.

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[254] Amanda Craig, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2017), 74.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Amanda Craig, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2017), 211.
[257] Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Locating Brexit in the Pragmatics of Race, Citizenship and Empire," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 91.

4.3 John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)

Devastated by the Change,[258] an "environmental catastrophe,"[259] the world is no longer as we know it but is ravaged by crop failures, countries breaking down,[260] and people starving and drowning worldwide.[261] The only country that apparently has survived all this reasonably unscathed is the UK. Here, the Change was "experienced [as] one particular shift, of sea level and weather, over a period of years it is true."[262] Yet, it felt "like an incident that happened, a defined moment in time with a before and an after."[263] But while the Change felt like a solitary event behind the Wall,[264] for the Others it is an ongoing process which forces them to flee their homes until this day and look for a safe haven.[265]

And the only safe haven left is Britain as it is the only country that has remained relatively unharmed and "recognisable."[266] People from all over the world risk their lives to reach the British shores. However, the dominant political message instilled in the people is that these Others only want to see the British people "drown, to be overrun, to be washed away.[267] Inciting a strong fear of invasion, the same politicians warn the country that this should not happen because the UK "is the best country in the world."[268]

In order to stop the Others, a "ten thousand kilometres long" Wall,[269] or "the National Coastal Defence structure," is built around the country.[270] At all times, "more than three hundred thousand people [are] involved in defending the Wall. That's why everybody goes to the Wall, no exceptions."[271] While (Coast) Guards and the Flight scan the sea and the sky in search for Others, the Defenders are the only ones who come face-to-face with the Others and have the duty to defend the British Fortress with all their might, even if it means fighting to

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[258] In other parts of the world, people call the Change *Kuishia*, which means "the ending" in Swahili. (82) This shows how the environmental disaster is experienced differently in other parts of the world in comparison to Britain.

[259] Lisa Allardice, "John Lanchester: 'Walls were coming down around the world – now they are springing up'," *The Guardian*, 11 January 2019, accessed 15 July 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/11/john-lanchester-interview-the-wall.

[260] John Lanchester, *The Wall* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2019), 11.

[261] Ibid., 35.

[262] Ibid., 110.

[263] Ibid.

[264] The Change is described as a years-long process but what felt like a solitary event. Brexit could be compared to this description, too. The concerns at the heart of the debate had been building up for years but ended in a sudden, unprecedented decision.

[265] John Lanchester, *The Wall*, 111.

[266] Lucas Wittman, "Dystopian Novel *The Wall* Shows Us What Goes Down When a Wall Goes Up," *Time*, 7 March 2019, accessed 15 July 2022., https://time.com/5546787/john-lanchester-the-wall-book-review/.

[267] Lanchester, *The Wall*, 112.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid., 34.

[270] Ibid., 21.

[271] Ibid., 34.

the death. If the Defenders fail to stop the Others from crossing the Wall, there is only one fate that awaits them: they will be put to sea themselves; "for every other who [gets] over the Wall, one Defender [will] be put to sea."[272]

The Wall tells the story of "everyman named Joseph Kavanagh, who […] is conscripted to serve as an armed 'Defender' on the Wall."[273] However, after several months of service on the Wall, this cursed fate of exile befalls on him, his girlfriend Hifa, the Captain of the Wall, and his colleagues.[274] And their dangerous pursuit of finding a place of safety begins.

4.3.1 Analysis The Wall

Taking back control over the British borders and limiting immigration eventually became one of the most important points of the pro-Brexit side of the debate. Britain's own citizens should become the country's first priority again and in order to do so successfully, 'others' should be kept out of the country as much as possible. John Lanchester's endless wall surrounding Britain is the most literal interpretation of this rhetoric. In a world ravaged by the Change, Britain initially built the Wall to protect the country and its citizens from dangerously rising sea levels. In the course of time, however, the Wall's purpose shifted from being an instrument of protection to rather being an instrument of separation. Its main function seems to be to physically separate Britain from the rest of the world and to make it nearly impossible for the 'Others', the less fortunate ones who have to flee their homes because of the Change, to enter the country. The Wall, thus, seems to not only symbolise an actual border, but also the "dichotomisation of the world's inhabitants into 'us' versus 'them'."[275] It physically shields Britain from the Change as well as the rest of the world and figuratively separates the 'us' from the 'others'. What many wanted to achieve with Brexit has become reality in Lanchester's post-Brexit Britain: Britain has complete control over its borders.

Lanchester's choice to call all those who are trying to find the only safe location in the world 'others' seems to be a slight nod to the Brexit debate in which the EU immigrants were conflated with non-EU immigrants and the economic immigrants were conflated with refugees. By making no distinction between 'others', everyone becomes a dangerous threat to the in-

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[272] John Lanchester, *The Wall* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2019), 11.
[273] Lucas Wittman, "Dystopian Novel *The Wall* Shows Us What Goes Down When a Wall Goes Up," *Time,* 7 March 2019, accessed 15 July 2022., https://time.com/5546787/john-lanchester-the-wall-book-review/.
[274] Lanchester, *The Wall,* 111.
[275] Michael Moore, "On the Signification of Walls in Verbal and Visual Art," *Leonardo* 12, no. 4 (1979), 311, accessed 23 July 2022, doi: 10.2307/1573896.

group. This populistic tactic is also applicable for the Wall as no one is allowed in the country and every Other is seen as a threat.

At least, that is Britain's aim. Border crossings still happen every now and then. The few 'Others' that do successfully manage to climb the Wall and enter Britain awaits a life behind the Wall in which they will be treated as less than human beings. "They're always caught and offered the standard choice[:]"[276] "being euthanised, becoming Help or being put back to sea."[277] As the first and the last choice equate to death, the majority of the 'Others' chooses to become Help. But while this choice means they will stay alive, it also means a lifelong enslavement. Lanchester creates a post-Brexit Britain in which the 'Others'' right to freedom is taken away completely and in which they are forced into involuntary servitude, or even modern slavery.[278] Just like in Craig's Britain, here too, we see the dehumanisation of the 'others'. Like Craig's *The Lie of the Land*, 'others' in post-Brexit Britain are 'less' than actual human beings. As Jesse argued, the dehumanisation of an out-group is a rare and extreme form of othering. Britain has a history of treating certain citizens, those who lived in former colonies, as second-rank citizens. However, the extreme othering in Lanchester's Britain seems to suggest that there are no first and second rank citizens anymore. Rather, there are only exceptional British citizens and 'others' who are less than human beings.

This idea of British superiority is further illustrated by the fact that the children of 'others' are taken away from their real parents in order to be raised as real citizens. [279] The power dynamics are strongly established: British culture is superior to any of the Others' cultures. The 'us' even believe that taking the children from their parents is a beautiful gift of "providing welfare and shelter and refuge to the wretched of the world."[280] Clearly, the sense of superiority is so pervasive in *The Wall*'s post-Brexit Britain that the inhumane way in which the 'Others' are treated is seen, not as shameful, but as charitable. By separating the children from their parents, they are stripped of their parents' culture, and forced to assimilate in British society and culture. Thus, the chance that the British national identity will be influenced by other cultures is immediately nipped in the bud and British identity is spread further. In a sense, this process does not only show a British feeling of superiority but also reveals a deeply hidden fear of lack of control.

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[276] John Lanchester, *The Wall*, 47.
[277] John Lanchester, *The Wall* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2019), 47.
[278] Ibid., 191.
[279] Ibid., 47.
[280] Ibid., 148.

Then moving on the cosmopolitan 'others' in *The Wall*, they have a completely different role within the Wall. Initially, these 'Others' are admired by the British people. They are seen as having warned the country of the dangers posed by the outsiders out on the sea and therefore having kept the country safe. Kavanagh even secretly hopes to become "one of them" instead of "one of us."[281]However, slowly the realisation dawns that the elite tells the people that "everyone goes to the Wall, no exceptions,"[282] but that they "[have] clearly never been on the Wall."[283] This realisation seems to hint at a detachment between the elite and the 'normal' people, which was also a concern that frequently emerged in the Brexit debate. And indeed, the elite in *The Wall* is still able to cross borders freely, while the rest of the country is mainly trying to survive and to protect the country. Like Craig, Lanchester seems to refer to the sentiment that the so-called 'losers' of globalisation felt negatively disadvantaged and felt as if they were not cared for by those who are the so-called 'winners' of globalisation.

Thus, in *The Wall* too, just like in the other two novels, the contrast between the British 'us' and the 'others' seem almost unbridgeable. Lanchester, nevertheless, shows that it is not as black-and-white as it seems. Namely, an 'Other' can be promoted to being a 'Defender', while the 'Defender' can be demoted to being an 'Other' instantly. The latter scenario is also a fate that befalls Kavanagh. Along with Hifa, the Captain, and several other Defenders, he is put to sea as a repercussion for their failure to protect the country from the 'Others'. Here, too, an element returns which also appeared in both *Autumn* and *The Lie of the Land*. "Everybody in the country has a chip."[284] This chip is one's official document of identification and could be seen as an equivalent to a passport or ID in the other two novels. Once it becomes clear that Kavanagh and the others will be banished to the sea, "one by one [they are] brought to the medical centre and put under general anaesthetic while [their] chips [are] removed. No biometric ID, no life. Not in this country."[285] The removal of their chips symbolises that their citizenship is revoked and that they are no longer tied to Britain in any shape or form. Thus, the 'us' can easily become 'others'. And these new 'others' are immediately denied the physical symbol of belonging to the nation-state and thus, they become citizens of nowhere.

And the transition to becoming an 'Other' is not only a physical but a mental one as well. During his time in Britain, Kavanagh was "brought up not to think about Others in terms

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[281] Jonathan Hearn, "Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalization and the Balance of Power in the Making of Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 28.
[282] John Lanchester, *The Wall* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2019), 109.
[283] Ibed.
[284] Ibid., 47.
[285] Ibed., 182.

of where they come from or who they are, to ignore it all – they were just Others."[286] He is taught that the 'Others' should remain face- and nameless and that it is unnecessary to understand them. Once at sea, "[he] was one of them, they weren't Others any more? If [he] was an Other and they were Others perhaps none of us were Others but instead we are a new us. It was confusing."[287] Suddenly, he is neither Defender nor 'Other' yet either. It is especially in this scene that the division line between the two groups is deconstructed. It is possible to identify as neither or both, but it is clearly not a matter of either/or. With Kavanagh's journey, Lanchester once again seems to suggest that there are many more shades of grey than one might think. There are many ways of 'othering', the wall being the most tangible object representing this process in this particular novel, but Kavanagh having to cross the wall and his subsequent journey show that people will, regardless of all efforts to exclude groups of people, reach past the divide.

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[286] John Lanchester, *The Wall* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2019), 203.
[287] Ibid.

5. Discussion:

In the methodology, this thesis promised to explore the anti-establishment and nativism sentiment of British populism (and especially the dichotomies as a result of these sentiments), the relationship between the British 'self' and Brexit's 'others', and how the process of othering manifests itself in Brexit Literature. Last but not least, special attention would be paid to the use of borders, either literally or metaphorically.

As Van der Zwet et al. explained, othering is a process of labelling of those who we perceive to be in another group to be 'abnormal' based on any type of categorisations.[288] As discussed in the Theoretical Framework, in the case of Brexit, two different 'others' are generally recognized: the European or global 'other' and the ethno-racial 'other'. While these two 'others' both played significant role in all three novels, it was striking how differently they were treated in the literary post-Brexit Britain. The global or European 'others' were able to live their lives just the way they wanted to without having to fear any extreme othering practices against them. The most extreme form of 'othering' towards the global 'others' in the novels were certain prejudices held about them, but which influenced their lives barely.

However, this does not apply to the immigrant or ethno-racial 'others' in post-Brexit Britain. As Jesse explained, there are different types of othering such as the marginalisation, the exclusion and, in extreme cases, the dehumanisation of 'others'.[289] One of the aspects of othering that all three authors envision in their post-Brexit Britain is the normality, even the mundanity, and the widespread acceptance of xenophobia and racism. Intimidating statements targeting a group of 'others' are often met with a lack of response or just indifference implying that such rhetoric and sentiments have become normalised and perhaps even dominant.

Interestingly, all three novels also put a heavy emphasis on the legal aspect of othering. Citizenship is the ultimate symbol of belonging to a nation-state. All non-citizens are non-members in this community and are, per definition, legal 'others'.[290] In *Autumn,* we see how Elisabeth is denied a new passport twice. The reason she is given is that her eyes as well as her head are the wrong size. Based on physical appearance is she actively marginalised and are attempts made to legally exclude her as well. In *The Lie of the* Land, Xan has a similar experience. On his first day of work, his boss does not believe he is English which is again

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[288]Arno van der Zwet, Murray Stewart Leith, Duncan Sim, and Elizabeth Boyle, "Brexit, Europe and Othering," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (2020), 517, accessed 4 March 2023, doi:10.1080/21582041.2020.1851393.

[289] Moritz Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," in *European Societies, Migration, and the Law: The 'Others' amongst 'Us',* eds. Moritz Jesse (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.

[290] Jesse, "The Immigrant as the 'Other'," 26.

based on his physical appearance. Only his ID proved he belonged to the same group, but even despite the evidence, his colleagues only accept it reluctantly. As a passport is the most tangible object of inclusion, other citizens denying or questioning their ownership of a passport suggests that they are not seen as fellow citizens and as a people belonging to the in-group, the 'us'. They are clearly, based on their appearance, perceived as 'others'. In *The Wall* too, Kavanaugh's identification is revoked when he is banished to sea and demoted to being an 'other'. What is striking about the identification in *The Wall* is that the identification is physical, in the form of a chip. Thus, physical characteristics, or even the body itself, appear to play a crucial role in the possession of or the acquisition of an identity document in post-Brexit Britain. And herein seems to lie the message that we must ensure that history does not repeat itself. While Elisabeth and Xan's situations seemed harmless, all three writers seem to warn that othering based on physical appearance has been done before and with far-reaching consequences.

And that practices of othering can have far-reaching consequences and can go too far already becomes clear in all three novels. For example, in *The Lie of the Land*, Xan is called a monkey. Only one, single word shows how the ethno-racial 'other' is viewed by the British 'us', namely as less than a human being. In *The Wall* the dehumanisation of the 'others' goes even further. Those who successfully manage to climb the Wall are given two options: death or lifelong slavery. And last but not least, the dehumanisation of 'others' can be observed, too. Daniel's scene at the beach shows many bodies that have washed up, yet they are faceless and remain nameless. In stark contrast, people are holidaying further up on the beach. In all cases, a starker contrast between the British 'self' and the 'others' could not be made. All in all, the ethno-racial or immigrant 'others' in post-Brexit Britain are regularly subject to exclusionary actions or other othering practices. Even in the most extreme forms.

Last but not least, the close reading has also focused on the use of borders as a leitmotif. In Craig's *The Lie of the Land*, bordering or the imagery of a border did not play any role in the novel. In both Smith's *Autumn* and Lanchester's *The Wall*, on the other hand, borders did indeed play a significant role in the novels. However in a completely different way. In *The Wall*, borders, or in this case the Wall, symbolize a complete, almost hermetic closure from the rest of the world. Everyone on or within the Wall is entirely confined without any prospect of ever setting foot outside of it. Thus, Lanchester's conceptualises borders are impenetrable and inward-looking. A physical barrier sheltering the 'us' from the 'others'. Ali Smith does the opposite of that. When Elisabeth stumbles upon a new fence, which is the most tangible manifestation of a dividing line in *Autumn*, she starts communicating with the

guard who wants to send her away.[291] The communication through the fence symbolises a rejection of borders as territorial confinement. While Lanchester sees borders as limitations, Smith considers them to be opportunities. In *Autumn*, borders are places where people can come together, can make contact with others and where people can unite. Smith's borders are open and outward-looking. And this difference in use of borders in Brexlit literature is, in essence, also the message that all three novels seem to want to convey. Britain has been cooped up within Lanchester's Wall for too long with the result that everyone within those walls has become, to a certain degree, more inward-looking and that approaching each other seems to be an impossible task. Smith, however, shows that there is still hope. Namely, she shows that borders do not have to act like borders at all. Instead borders could become meeting places as well. While Britain is more divided, and arguably more inward-looking, than ever, that does not mean that the tide cannot turn. But it does mean that action is needed.

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[291] Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 12.

6. Conclusion:

Through the close reading of three Brexlit novels, Ali Smith's *Autumn,* Amanda Craig's *The Lie of the Land* and John Lanchester's *The Wall,* this thesis's aim was to answer the question: "How is the life of Brexit's 'others' envisioned in post-Brexit Britain?" To gain further insight into the position of the 'others' in post-Brexit Britain, the following sub-question was also asked: "How is the relationship between the British 'self' and the 'others' in post-Brexit Britain?"

A simple answer cannot be given to the questions of how life is envisioned for the 'others' of Brexit in post-Brexit Britain and what the relationship is between the British 'Self' and the 'others'. First and foremost, because the differences between the 'others' are great. Whereas life for the European or global 'other' does not seem to differ much in comparison to that of the British in-group, a much bleaker life is envisioned for the ethno-racial or immigrant 'other' in post-Brexit Britain. A life in which they will have to deal with unintentional as well as intentional othering practices and racism on a daily basis. A life in which members of the dominant group in British society will actively try to marginalise, ostracise, and, in extreme cases, will dehumanise you.

However, there is a warning for all citizens in post-Brexit Britain. Namely that othering can have far-reaching consequences which cannot yet be foreseen. And these consequences will not only be felty by others, but also as society in general. But not all hope is lost.

While at first glance, all three novels seem to foreshadow a bleak future for Britain, all three novels also give a glimmer of hope in the midst of the great dividedness. That is, to keep talking to each other and most importantly, to listen to each other. It is in conversation that you will realise that we are not so different from each other after all. In their novels, Ali Smith, Amanda Craig and John Lanchester have also shown that boundaries can be pushed and harmony can be found. And perhaps even the most divided country can become a place where everyone feels right at home.

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