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Master Thesis

Englishness in Selected Novels of  
Contemporary Immigrant Writers in Great  
Britain

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The last few years have seen a renewed interest in the subject of a national character. A vast amount of material has been published on the topic of national psychology, a fact which caused a great deal of academics across the disciplines, as well as ordinary people, to involve in much debate revolving around the claim that members of one nation may have a different set of characteristic traits from people of other nationalities.

The assumptions that, for instance, a German person has distinct values, attitudes, skills and emotions from an English person are highly controversial and criticized for the difficulties which necessarily arise when discussing a national psychology. Critics of the concept warn of unavoidable subjectivity in the interpretation of a particular nation, arguing that a researcher studying a nation will always be influenced by his or her own national identity. Hence the perceptions of one nation held by researchers of two distinct nationalities are likely to differ depending on their individual nationalities. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the changing nature of nations which are by no means constant entities, with their characteristic qualities changing overtime in relation to historical events. Finally, the concept of a national psychology is further problematic for the increasingly multicultural nature of many societies which can lead to confusions regarding national identities of people born in one country but relocating elsewhere afterwards. Besides, bringing their own characteristic values and culture with them, immigrants have the undeniable capability of influencing the people of their new country, a fact which must not be underrated in the era of globalisation.

While being fully aware of the implications of defining a national psychology listed above, the author of this thesis is of the opinion that there is such thing as a national character, though the concept requires other treatment than strictly scientific which is based on a set of characteristics proved to exist in a particular nation. Rather than being measurable and exact, the concept of nations having particular qualities is present in people's minds and, despite the idea not being considered politically correct these days, it is apparent that people are in fact aware of the differences between cultures (although their perceptions will be highly individual and subjective). Taking into account the national identity of the person describing another nation, the concept is therefore best approached from the perspective of authors writing about a particular nation despite their foreign origins.

Therefore, it is the aim of this thesis to study selected novels of four contemporary writers living in England and examine them for their perception of the English people. For these authors were either born outside the United Kingdom and subsequently relocated to the country, or they were born in England to immigrant parents, it can be assumed that their account of the people will vary with respect to their own origin. The authors and the novels examined are Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (representing the point of view of the Japanese), Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet* (representing the perception of the Chinese), Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (representing the Pakistani point of view) and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (representing observations of the Jamaican).

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is focused on the basic concepts essential for the correct understanding of Englishness. These terms are *nation*, *identity*, *stereotypes* and *national stereotypes*. Besides, the idea of Englishness is discussed in great detail and approaches of different scholars and authors are illustrated. Some of these writers are English, some immigrants living in England and others describe the people from "outside," i.e. from a different country. In the second part of the thesis, four novels by contemporary writers residing in England, yet being of a different origin, are studied and analyzed for their authors' perception of English people, assuming their observations will be effected by their own cultural background.

# 1 THE BASIC CONCEPTS

## 1.1 The Concept of *Nation*

There have been a number of attempts to define the term *nation*, however, there has been no consensus and therefore the understanding of the term among various scholars has varied significantly. The attempts of definitions to describe the concept have been affected not only by the historical period in which they originated, but also by the particular perspective from which the concept was studied. It is therefore inevitable that the same concept will not be defined identically across various fields of study and the term *nation* will have a different meaning for a sociologist and for an anthropologist or a political scientist.

In an attempt to define *nation*, both laymen and scholars frequently confuse the term with another concept, i.e. *state*. However, while the former “consists of an ethnic or cultural community,” the latter “is a political entity with a high degree of sovereignty.” Indeed, a group of people can be recognized as a nation without being a sovereign state, such as the Native American Iroquois (Miscovic). Peter Ravn Rasmussen, a historian at a University of Copenhagen, claims that more than a century of faulty thinking that the two concepts overlap and a state is defined on the basis of the national identity of the people living there, is to be blamed. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, a significant need to redefine the concept of *nation* has aroused due to the essential role the idea of nation played in various important events, such as the World War II (Rasmussen).

However, as Pierre Manent, a French teacher of political philosophy famous for his euroscepticism, suggests, the events during the 20<sup>th</sup> century also contributed to the fact that the concept of *nation* has since been perceived by many sociologists as well as philosophers as “bad” which resulted in the lack of interest concerning its definition. Instead, the term *nationalism* quickly rose in popularity, with social scientists studying the concept which “already includes a judgment and a condemnation” (Manent 24).

The word *nation* comes from Latin *natio*, meaning “origin, membership of a community, a relationship to an entity within which one was born.” The term first gained its political connotation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe when it described citizens “who shared political power with the king.” It was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, that the concept itself became popular, mainly due to the historical milestones, such as the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the United States, the 1787 American Constitution

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and the French Revolution. While the French conception of nation was based on “community of all citizens enjoying equal rights,” the Germans had a different view and claimed that “the nation was not a sum of individuals but a collective entity with a specific language and culture and specific historical traditions.” In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term was equated with the term *state* in the Western world and as a consequence, these two notions have frequently been in use interchangeably since. Both the French and German definitions of the word *nation*, however, are still valid today (Frunđa).

While some researchers, such as Professor Peter Kovacs from the University of Miskolc, Hungary, argue that it is not possible to find a common definition of the term due to its different meanings in different languages and its relation to various political ideologies, Mr Stanko Nick, member of the Venice Commission on behalf of Croatia and Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia to Hungary, gave the following comprehensive definition of the concept of *nation* to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights in the year of 2005:

A nation is a specific political, social, economic and cultural community, often with a common language, culture and history, living in neighbouring territories, with ‘independent’ political institutions and social organisations; it presupposes a politically sovereign people, master of its own territory, with its own economic life and its state or, failing this, which aspires strongly to these things. (Frunđa)

Regarding the mention of the word *nation* in the present-day European states’ constitutions, the term rarely refers to an identity. Instead, the term *peoples* is frequently used and the definition of the term *nation* is missing. Indeed, according to an analysis for the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, done by György Frunđa, a Romanian jurist, politician and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European states can be divided into five main groups, depending on the use of the word *nation* in their constitutions. The groups are the following: “states whose constitution refers explicitly or exclusively to the concept of “nation”, in the sense of a civic nation” (Belgium, France, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Turkey), “states whose constitution refers explicitly or exclusively to the concept of “nation”, in the sense

of an ethnic nation” (Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Albania), “states in which the concepts of “nation”, as an entity that gives identity, and “people”, as a sovereign entity (democratic foundation of the state), exist side by side” (Spain, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Greece), “states whose constitution makes no mention of the word or concept of “nation” but refers solely to the “people” as the holder of sovereignty” (Andorra, Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Portugal, Sweden) and finally “states where neither the concept of “nation” nor that of “people” appears in the Constitution” (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) (Frunda).

The modern definition of the term does not merely take into account “blood relation” and common ancestry, which was considered relevant throughout history. Instead, it focuses on more complex factors and ancestry is only one of them.

According to Peter Ravn Rasmussen, these other factors include “a shared cultural heritage,” common language (this factor is especially relevant to nations speaking languages which are unique and difficult to learn, e.g. Japanese or Finnish) and “a sense of identification by members with the nation.” Rasmussen does not include the factor of “a shared territory” to this list, explaining that it was the nationalists who created the notion of a nation-state – a nation defined solely by a territory. Nations, however, have been undergoing changes all the time and can never be constant due to their nature (Rasmussen).

Antony Easthope, a Professor of English and Cultural Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University, thinks that there are three main difficulties in analyzing *nation*. Firstly, the concept is often thought of as a form of ideology with the aim of “promoting a particular social group” and therefore has a negative connotation (Easthope 6). Secondly, nation is often perceived as an imagined, functional community in the sense that people of one nation will never be able to meet all the members of their community (Easthope 8). The third difficulty is that historical development has two aspects – real (economic, social and political) and subjective (culture, discourse, identity). The concept of *nation* belongs to the second category and is therefore perceived as “less serious” (Easthope 11). According to Easthope, these three problems make it difficult to define the term correctly.

## 1.2 The Concept of *Identity*

Similarly to the term *nation*, the concept of *identity* has not been defined clearly and its understanding varies greatly.

The term first rose into prominence owing to a German-American psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson and his theory of psychosocial development. Inspired by Sigmund Freud's psychosexual development, he developed a theory of psychosocial development and coined the terms *ego identity* and *identity crisis*. He defines *ego identity* as "the conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction." While we first start developing our own identity as small children and the sense of our self is particularly important during adolescent years, it is an ongoing process continuing for the rest of our life. Our identity is never constant and undergoes changes regularly, depending on our personal social experiences (Cherry).

One of the founders of the interdisciplinary field of nationalism studies and a Professor Emeritus of Nationalism and Ethnicity at the London School of Economics, Anthony D. Smith, suggests that our individual self is composed of five elements, namely gender, territory, social class, religion and ethnic identity. He then elaborates this question further and says that despite feminism, the category of gender is taken for granted in our modern world and is therefore more fundamental than the other two elements. Regarding the category of space or territory, Smith claims that although people's location may appear to have a "cohesive quality", it is less fundamental than the category of gender since "regions easily fragment into localities, and localities may easily disintegrate into separate settlements" (Smith 4-8).

James D. Fearon, a Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, attempted to analyze the current usage of the word *identity* in ordinary language and social science discourse. In his research paper *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?*, he stresses the fact that even nowadays, the meaning of the term derives from Erikson's theory of psychosocial development from the 1950s. However, during the late 1980's and 1990s, as a consequence of multiculturalism, the term acquired additional meaning in the fields such as history, anthropology and most of all humanities. Indeed, the term started to be overused heavily in discourses on the topics such as race, social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other social categories. However, political scientists have maintained reluctance to the term *identity* and have approached the concept with a degree of skepticism, considering the term inaccurate, primarily for the reason that dictionary

definitions of the term differ in their descriptions significantly and therefore contributing to the vagueness. Fearon summarizes his findings by concluding:

in ordinary speech and most academic writing, “identity” means either (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and allegedly characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) a socially distinguishing feature that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or, of course, both (a) and (b) at once). (Fearon 36)

The idea that the definition of the term *identity* has not been unified is also supported by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper from the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Michigan respectively, who in their paper *Beyond “identity”* explore the ambiguous quality of the concept and identify five key definitions of *identity* based on its usage in a scholarly context. Their conclusion draws attention to the fact that not only are the various definitions strikingly different from one another, but they also “point in sharply different directions” (Brubaker and Cooper).

### **1.3 The Concept of *Stereotypes***

The term *stereotype* has its origins in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was used by the French printer Didot to denote the process used to produce reproductions. However, it was not until the year of 1922 that the term was first used in the context of psychology. The man responsible for coining the term was the American writer and reporter Walter Lippmann (“The Psychology of Prejudice: An Overview”).

In his book *Public Opinion* (1922), he argues that it is the human need for economy and simplification which is responsible for perceiving others in a stereotypical way, therefore people tend to generalize more when they are distracted or busy. Indeed, human need to generalize and adapt to the world around us causes us to misinterpret the reality. Lippmann explains the process by stating that “The signs stand for ideas, and these ideas we fill out with our stock of images. We do not so much see this man and that sunset; rather we notice that the thing is man or sunset, and then see chiefly what our mind is already full of on those subjects” (Lippmann 59). Therefore, stereotypes are in fact what “we are told about the world before we see it” and their character as well as gullibility

should be taken into account before they are judged (Lippmann 60, 61). Besides stereotypes, Lippmann discussed other issues influencing the public's perception in *Public Opinion*. However, with his notion of stereotypes, he had a huge influence on the world of psychology and media studies and brought the term to the consciousness of a wider public.

The first important research concerning stereotypes dates back to 1933 and was conducted by Daniel Katz and Kenneth Braly. In this study, 100 university students were asked to describe traits most typical for members of ten social groups, such as Jews. The results showed that they chose similar adjectives to describe the racial and ethnic groups. ("The Psychology of Prejudice: An Overview").

The term *stereotype* is frequently confused with the term *prejudice*. In his article *The Meaning of Stereotypes*, James W. Rinehart from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at The Ohio State University explains *prejudice* "as a feeling of hostility toward the members of racial, nationality, and ethnic groups," while *stereotypes* refer to "the beliefs people have about such members" (Rinehart 136). Hence, stereotyping involves applying various traits, such as intellectual, physical or personality, to the members of a particular social group. These traits are rarely based on rational judgment and are largely negative, therefore may cause harm to the members of these groups and, furthermore, give rise to discrimination (Rinehart 137).

One feature which is common to all stereotypes is the belief that the traits can be applied to all members of the social group without an exception. Also, stereotypes do not necessary need to be based on true facts (in fact, they can be entirely untrue) and yet, people would believe in them without examining the data first.

Rinehart notices that since 1933, sociologists have been taking great interest in the topic of stereotypes. He summarizes their findings and research by giving four conclusions: (1) "There is high agreement concerning the traits used to describe particular groups." (2) "People of diverse ethnic and national origins tend to stereotype the members of certain groups, such as Negroes, in similar terms." (3) "Members of minority groups frequently stereotype themselves in much the same manner as others stereotype them." (4) "While similar traits are sometimes applied to several groups, in general the stereotypic depictions of groups are mutually exclusive" (Rinehart 139). While it is true that in America, the most commonly stereotyped social groups are the Jews and Negroes, stereotypes can be applied to any social group and are not limited merely to minorities.

Indeed, this thesis deals with the stereotypes people have about the English who are a majority in England.

The act of perceiving the world through stereotypes is a learnt process – children learn these stereotypical traits through interaction with the others (not only their peers but also people who are responsible for their learning, such as parents, grandparents and teachers). However, Rinehart challenges the question why people struggle to change their stereotypical beliefs even later in their life, despite the fact they are clearly not based on rational facts. He argues that one reason behind a person otherwise thinking logically and rationally is that “either deviations from the stereotype are not perceived, or they are distorted to fit the stereotype.” Furthermore, if a person meets an intelligent Negro doctor who does not fit into their simplified category of an “uneducated Negro”, they may assume he fits better into another stereotypical category, such as the category of a “smart doctor”. Finally, when encountering a member of a group who differs from the stereotypical image a person holds, “the stereotype may be regarded as if it were an empirical generalization - i.e., a proposition based upon actual observation” (Rinehart 141).

Despite the majority of stereotypes being negative, they can also be positive or neutral, meaning they exist without being accompanied by prejudice and discrimination. Indeed, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination are independent of one another and can exist separately.

#### **1.4 The Concept of *National Stereotypes***

While stereotypes are most commonly applied to the members of ethnic or racial groups, they can similarly distort our perception of the individual members of a particular nation. This topic has been of interest to various anthropologists, psychiatrists, psychologists and sociologists. National character studies is the field of study dealing with this issue and taking interest in the various stereotypes applied to different nations, as well as their origins and consequences they bring. One of the sociologists studying this phenomenon was Alex Inkeles, professor at the University of Harvard and Stanford, whose research into Soviet Russian society made him famous (cf. *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (1950)) and even influenced the foreign policy of the USA toward the USSR.

According to Inkeles, social scientists concerned with the national character differ widely in their methods, however, “they have in common a psychological approach to the roots of social phenomena like war, revolution and crime, and share the assumption that societies can be most meaningfully understood in terms of national character” (Inkeles 156). Furthermore, they agree that for a change to have a lasting and positive impact on people, the national character must change first. On the other hand, some scholars – members of the political school – have argued against this psychological approach, claiming that it is unscientific, vague, mystical and not based on appropriate research. Indeed, they believe that “societies and social movements can be most meaningfully understood in terms of political and socio-economic analysis” (Inkeles 157).

Kenneth W. Terhune, a professor at the Cornell University, attempted to examine the validity of the concept of a national character in his monograph *From national character to national behavior: a reformulation* (1970). In the introduction, he lists the four main reasons behind the concept not being considered scientific enough among some scholars. He notes that (1) the study is “full of conceptual confusions and methodological difficulties,” (2) today’s multicultural societies may be diverse, (3) the national character may not be applicable to the political leaders and the elite, (4) the behaviour of the political elite may be affected “by the hard facts of power, geography, economics, and history” (Terhune 203).

He describes the concepts of national character as system properties consisting of analytic (“measuring the sociopsychological characteristics of individual members”), structural (“determining the relationships among the members”) and global properties (“derived from the system outputs”) (Terhune 210).

In the summary of the main points in his monograph, Terhune concludes that, besides other things, the study of a national character focuses mostly on the adult members of the population. He suggests that the traditional view that the psychological traits of a nation must be homogenous and they must be unique to that nation in order to assume the existence of a national character, should be replaced by a new attitude. Therefore, every nation could be characterized by a certain set of behaviour patterns. Furthermore, “social personality characteristics are likely to be more widespread and less variant within the nation, and more distinctive to the nation, than other psychological aspects.” Also, because various differences between generations of a nation exist, it would be useful

to predict future behaviour or intentions of a particular nation based on a young generation (Terhune 259, 260).

This thesis is based on the psychological approach discussed above, taking into account the national character of the English people. The author strongly believes that certain patterns of national behaviour exist which control the acts and conducts of members of the particular social group.

## 2 ENGLISHNESS

### 2.1 The Concept of *Englishness*

The term *Englishness* is not to be confused with the term *Britishness*. Even though these two labels have been used interchangeably in some contexts, it is essential for the understanding of this thesis to take into account that *Britishness* is in fact a hypernym of *Englishness*. Therefore, a person considering themselves to be British does not necessarily have to be English, i.e. they can identify themselves as Scottish, Irish or Welsh.

It has been argued by scholars that the notion of Englishness is both a controversial and a problematic concept. Indeed, Floriane Reviron-Piégay from the Jean Monnet University in France claims that the definitions of the concept will differ significantly depending on whether defined by an English person or someone from outside and explains the reason for the idea of *Englishness* being controversial in her article *The Dilemma of Englishness* (2009). She highlights that from the eighteenth until the twentieth century, the English did not feel the urge to distinguish themselves from the British, knowing that great achievements such as the industrial revolution, the Empire, and the two world wars were all accomplishments of the British. On the other hand, the Scots and the Welsh did not share this feeling and “because they were aware that Britain and the Empire were first and foremost English creations,” they tended to define themselves separately from the English and cherished their *Scotishness* and *Welshness*. When the English could no longer rely on their Empire, they slowly began to assert their own national identity. Yet, as Piégay observes, “because they were aware of their supremacy, they did not have to claim their specificity as a nation, a mark perhaps of a quality which is said to be typically English namely reticence or restraint.” Therefore, Englishness as such existed more as a cultural phenomenon but lacked political representation (Reviron- Piégay 2-3).

Apart from the end of the Empire, the concept of *Britishness* suffered even further during the twentieth century due to the phenomena such as deindustrialization, massive immigration and the European Union. Hence, as Piégay concludes, a new necessity arises to redefine the concept of *Englishness* without relying on the aggressive philosophies of the British National Party (Reviron- Piégay 3).

Krishan Kumar, Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Virginia, is concerned with the problem of Britishness versus Englishness in his *The Making of English*

*National Identity* (2003). He explains that the fact that not only the English but also the Scottish and people from outside Britain frequently confuse the two terms and often say “English” when they actually mean “British,” refers to the huge influence the English has had throughout history. In fact, the term English usually stands for “all the major events and achievements of national life,” while the Scottish, Irish and Welsh are mentioned merely in jokes and have only supportive, peripheral role. The English can be apologetic about their superior behaviour, however, they would also defend themselves. Kumar quotes the famous English lexicographer Henry Watson Fowler, who in his *Modern English Usage* (1926) described the essential difference between being called an Englishman and residing in England, and being called a Briton and residing in Britain. For Fowler, the first label is charged with patriotic emotions, while the latter one is empty and boring (Kumar 2).

Kumar also talks about A. J. P. Taylor who in his *Preface to The Oxford History of England* (1965) argues that “when the Oxford History of England was launched a generation ago, “England” was still an all-embracing word.” He emphasizes the importance of avoiding the “incorrect term” and using the term Great Britain instead (Kumar 3).

Today’s scholarly world is more politically correct and writers therefore tend to distinguish between the terms English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh, which is apparent from the title of works such as Hugh Kearney’s *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (1995) or Norman Davies’s *The Isles: A History* (1999). However, even nowadays, not all scholars and authors follow this “four nations” approach. According to Kumar, the practice of using the term England to also cover Scotland, Wales and Ireland has “grown rather than diminished, despite the irritation it causes the non-English inhabitants of the British Isles” (Kumar 4, 7).

## **2.2 Englishness as Seen from the Perspective of the English**

When discussing the nature and stereotypical characteristics of any nation, it is only to be expected that these traits will differ depending on the perspective – members of the nation being examined will likely have a certain idea of what it means to identify themselves with their nation. The way they see themselves, however, might be rather subjective and therefore vastly different from the way they are being perceived by members of other

nations. This “view from outside” will necessarily be effected by both the historical and current relations between the two particular nations, as well as the mentality and national identity of the “outsider.” In fact, what an American considers to be a distinct trait of English mentality could be ignored and regarded as normal by, for instance, a Japanese; the reason being their respective mentalities and the fact that the Japanese share this habit or characteristic with the English and therefore would not even notice it, whereas the American would consider this “marked” and “peculiar” simply for not sharing this trait with the English. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the English as seen “from the inside.” Although an attempt has been made to list some of the most influential works of the twentieth and twenty-first century literature dealing with this topic, the following chapter should in no sense be considered as comprehensive.

One of the most celebrated authors intrigued by the notion Englishness during the twentieth century was George Orwell whose celebrated essay *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (1941) was written during the Blitz. In this work, he “wonders aloud if there is anything in this country worth defending, even dying for” and discusses the ineffectiveness of the class system during the war as well as his wish for a Socialist revolution to take place.

The fact that Orwell focused on the concept of Englishness in his numerous essays, *The English People* (1947) being among others, is not a mere coincidence. Indeed, he used the concept of English nationalism for political purposes to help illustrate his socialist ideas and fight against fascism. Although this form of political writing was no exception in Orwell’s time, the author himself felt deep aversion to his propaganda writings. Ben Clarke, supported by beliefs of numerous other scholars and writers, argues in his article *Orwell and Englishness*, published in *The Review of English Studies* journal, notes that Orwell uses a binary model in his descriptions of the English. In fact, “his representations of England are, however, contradictory, encompassing a simultaneous commitment to the modern towns of the ‘technical experts,’ the urban working class, and the rural order of his Edwardian childhood” (Clarke 83).

His political essays contain lists of characteristic English qualities. In *The Lion and the Unicorn*, for instance, Orwell argues that “the English are not gifted artistically, not intellectual in comparison with other Europeans, have a horror of abstract thought, and possess a certain power of acting without taking thought.” They also believe “in justice, liberty and objective truth.” Also, what Orwell considers as an exceptional quality

of a nation is the English “habit of not killing one another,” meaning the majority of changes taking place within the society have a peaceful and legal character (Clarke 94, 95).

In *The English People*, he insists that his own nation must be perceived by any foreign observer as artistically insensitive, nevertheless, gentle. Moreover, he lists their respect for legality, suspicion of foreigners, sentimentality about animals, hypocrisy, exaggerated class distinctions, and an obsession with sport” among other common character traits of the English (Clarke 94, 95).

Not only did Orwell deal with the concept of Englishness in his works, but the author himself was the embodiment of Englishness. Indeed, he has been described by the American writer Edmund Wilson as having the peculiar English qualities, such as “readiness to think for himself, courage to speak his mind, the tendency to deal with concrete realities rather than theoretical positions, and a prose style that is both downright and discipline” (Clarke 85).

The fascination with the concept of Englishness has not ceased with Orwell’s death, however, as is apparent from the vast volume of literature on the topic published during the course of the second half of the twentieth century. In 1974, for example, Paul Jennings and John Gorham published *The English Difference* which contained several essays on various English topics, some of which are more serious than others, and was accompanied by illustrations (Bragg).

On the other hand, *The English World: History, Character, and People* (1982), edited by Robert Blake, author of an important biography of Disraeli and a history of the Conservative Party, caused controversy among historians and some members of the public due to its notion of a national character and the idea of the Englishness of England.

### **2.3 Englishness According to Jeremy Paxman**

In 1998, Jeremy Paxman, a British journalist, author and broadcaster, published his book *The English: A Portrait of a People*, in which he discusses what it means to be an Englishman and how the concept has changed since the World War II. He argues that while in the past, the English were one of the most recognizable and easily distinguishable people in the world due to their distinct manners, clothes as well as language, this is no

longer true. Indeed, Paxman blames four elements, namely the end of empire, the concept of the United Kingdom and all the countries within it, the European Union threatening to seize control over the United Kingdom, and the “uncontrollability” of globalization for the anxiety of the present-day English concerning their own identity. Therefore, he seeks answers to what it means to be an Englishman today and focuses on the contrast between the idea of an Englishman (the myth) and the actual Englishman (the reality). (viii)

He explains that people do not celebrate St. George’s Day, the patron of England, for “any public display of national pride is not merely unsophisticated but somehow morally reprehensible.” The reason can be found in the past: “the English didn’t need to concern themselves with the symbols of their own identity” (Paxman 12) since they had their Empire as a constant reminder of their great power, giving them the purpose that they have a duty to save all the unfortunate people who were not born English. As Cecil Rhodes famously said, “to have been born English, was to have won first prize in the lottery of life” (Paxman 66). Therefore, the English did not consider it necessary to reflect at length upon their own identity.

While the respectable English society of the past may have evaporated, some characteristics of the people remained constant, for example their belief that “we are not put on earth to enjoy ourselves,” “the importance of a sense of duty” or “the emotions are there to be controlled” (Paxman 5). Similarly, the popular belief that the English hate the French, has its roots in history and is still as much alive today. Indeed, Paxman considers his countrymen’s negative feelings towards their neighbours as one of the defining characteristics of the English and explains that in the past, “there was a general tendency to ascribe almost *any* irregular or bad behaviour to the French.” Therefore, English language is abundant with phrases such as *Pardon my French*, referring to a person’s bad language, or *French leave*, referring to absence without permission (Paxman 25). Moreover, the English still indulge in stories about the French, such as the tale from Hartlepool, saying that “when a live monkey was washed ashore from a shipwreck during the Napoleonic wars, local people hanged it from a gallows on the beach, on the grounds that since it had been unable to understand their questions, it must have been a French spy” (Paxman 56).

While the French have been considered as their ancestral enemy, the English have always been suspicious and disdainful of foreign nations, which might account for their dissatisfaction with the European Union and current attempts to leave Europe.

Regarding their faith, the English tend to favour the Church of England; the reason being their highly independent minds. Indeed, Anglicanism owes its vast popularity with the English for it is “rooted in everyday world” (Paxman 97) and is “pragmatic, comfortable and unobtrusive” which appeals to the people (Paxman 98). Moreover, going deeper in history, the Church of England can also be credited with the English obsession with words and literature. As Paxman suggests, the events in the aftermath of the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536) led to vandalism and destruction of valuable works of art. As a consequence, “the English cultural tradition cut itself off from the rest of Europe” (Paxman 109) and the visual art was replaced by the verbal. The fact that the “English were too busy writing to paint” created the rich literary tradition, including Shakespeare, which the country is so distinguished for (Paxman 111).

The author also examines the English obsession with privacy, frequently perceived by foreign visitors as disdain for strangers (“Britannia may no longer rule the waves, but the English can still make foreigners feel small.”) (Paxman 117). The fact that they value their privacy above everything else and gatherings with friends rarely take place in their home, can be attributed to the “sufficiency and independence of their mind,” as well as the damp weather forcing people to spend time indoors (Paxman 120). As a consequence to this, it is considered essential to own a house, rather than rent it; hence the saying “An Englishman’s house is his castle.”

Another typical trait of the English, which is still valid today, is their disdain of intellectuals. According to Paxman, “if you are going to be an intellectual in England, you had better do it discreetly, and certainly not call yourself an intellectual.” It is not appropriate to be passionate about one’s “beliefs or to believe that every problem has a solution. Above all, don’t look clever” (Paxman 188). The reason for this distaste to abstract ideas is their pragmatic mind and preference for common sense rather than complex philosophies, which might also account for the number of great scientific discoveries in the history of England (Paxman 193).

Moreover, the practical mind of the English also explains their obsession with games and the fact that most of the types of sports, or at least sport rules, were invented in England.

The quality which Paxman considers most impressive about his people is their sense of being aware of their rights. He believes that their sense of independence also contributed

to the fact that the English have never been interested in fascism or communism – they are too skeptical about what the state can accomplish (Paxman 138).

It is essential to understand the contrast between how the English like to see themselves and the actual reality. While in the past, a clear idea of the character of the English existed in people's minds and the English liked to think of themselves as "stoical, homely, quiet, disciplined, self-denying, kindly, honourable and dignified people" (Paxman 3), this picture no longer fits the reality. In fact, during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the qualities listed above were in high demand and public schools realized it was their responsibility to breed gentlemen with the sense of duty who would later serve as colonial administrators in the Empire. However, these stereotypical qualities of the English disappeared with the end of Empire for they were no longer needed.

Nevertheless, a certain, if outdated, image of England is still in the English people's collective unconscious – "there exists another England. It is not the country in which the English actually live, but the place where they *imagine* they are living in." This idea of their country, mostly associated with rural life which no longer represents an attainable goal for the majority of the English, "is so powerful because it is a sort of haven" (Paxman 144). It is the archetypal idea of England which becomes most prominent in times of danger and stress, such as during the war. Indeed, the author says that the last time his nation had a clear sense of purpose and the perception of the country matched that of the reality was during the World War II. The post-war England is more likely to be associated with the violence of hooligans and materialism, yet, the archetypal England is still very much alive even in the twenty-first century.

To conclude, Paxman believes that being English is a matter of choice and it is therefore a state of mind: "England itself has ceased to be a mere country and become a place of the mind..." (Paxman 264). He believes that in today's busy world, "the most vital sense of national identity is the individual awareness of the country of the mind" (Paxman 265). Since his arguments and findings are based not only on his own personal observations and interviews with people, but also on reliable research and historical literature, Paxman's book offers a valuable analysis of what it means to be English today and, referring to some of the crucial historical events in English history, provides possible reasons for these characteristics.

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## 2.4 Englishness According to Kate Fox

Kate Fox, a social anthropologist representing essentialism (Oxford Dictionary explains essentialism as “a belief that things have a set of characteristics which make them what they are, and that the task of science and philosophy is their discovery and expression; the doctrine that essence is prior to existence” (“Essentialism”), attempts to describe some features of the English mentality in her *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour* (2004). Fox relied on her background in social anthropology to observe the English people, using a research method called “participant observation,” meaning she actively participated in the life of the subjects observed in order to gain insight into their behaviour. She lists the reasons behind researching the English rather than the British by saying that England is a nation and therefore has its own distinctive culture, “whereas Britain is a purely political construct.” Besides, even though there may be overlap between the different cultures across Britain, they should still be treated as different and independent of each other. Finally, she emphasizes the fact that when the general term *Britishness* is used, it almost always denotes *Englishness*, rather than *Welshness* or *Scotishness* (Fox 21).

Fox defines *Englishness* on the basis of the central – “core”– characteristics and three “clusters.” She explains that the core of the English mentality stands for “*social dis-ease*.” Under this label, she lists all the “chronic social inhibitions” of the English, namely inability to engage in a normal conversation without being overly polite, awkwardness and embarrassment in all social situations. She claims that both the “English reserve” and “English hooliganism,” first being famous and the latter being infamous, are results of this dis-ease. Indeed, the English tend to be moving between two extremes – they are either overly polite and restrained or loud and violent as is the case with the notoriously wild football fans.

Additionally, this peculiar social behaviour goes hand in hand with the obsession with privacy. To summarize this chapter, Fox lists some key phrases in English language indicating the social dis-ease (“An Englishman’s home is his castle.”, “Don’t make a fuss/scene.” or “Don’t draw attention to yourself.”) (Fox 401, 402).

She continues to talk about reflexes, such as sense of *humour* which she describes as “our most effective built-in antidote to our social dis-ease.” She explains the English simply cannot function without their humour, being it teasing, irony, sarcasm or wordplay, and it is therefore not limited only to separate kind of talk. In fact, it is pervasive through

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all of their social interactions. It should be no surprise, according to Fox, that the national catchphrase of the English is “Oh, come off it!” and “Typical!” (Fox 402, 403).

Alongside humour, *moderation* is also among the reflexes typical for the English behaviour. It represents the urge to do everything in moderation and resistance towards excessive behaviour of any kind. Moreover, the English conservative ideology may stem from the fear of change and the need for security and domesticity. The key phrases listed are “Can’t be bothered.”, “A nice cup of tea.” or “Don’t overdo it.” (Fox 403).

Fox also talks about *moaning* as another feature of English mentality. While this trait may be equally characteristic of other nations, it is not merely the quantity of it, but also the quality of complaining which Fox finds striking and unique to the English. The distinctive nature of the English moaning is its ineffectiveness. The reason may be their dislike towards change, nevertheless, they indulge in this type of conversation purely for the pleasure of it – it gives them the opportunity to exercise their wit and also serves as a bonding experience with other people. English language is also rich in phrases encompassing the English love for moaning, including “Mustn’t grumble.” or “The country’s going to the dogs.” (Fox 405, 406).

Needless to say, the list of the traits of the English mentality would not be complete without the mention of *class-consciousness*. Fox highlights that despite the fact that social classes are present in the majority of nations, she has observed four unique characteristics of the English class system, namely (1) the degree to which the class determines the taste and social interactions of the people, (2) the factors determining the class do not include wealth or occupation; instead people are judged based on their “speech, manner, taste and lifestyle choices,” (3) the sensitivity with which the class is perceived and finally (4) the fact that the English deny all of the above. The key phrases include “Mondeo Man.” or “It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate him or despise him.” (Fox 406).

Fox also talks about the values of the English, *fair play* being one of the essential ones for it “is an underlying theme in most aspects of our unwritten etiquette” and foundation of the English moral code. However, *courtesy* is also a fundamental part of the mentality of any English person, being most commonly represented by excessive saying “sorry” even though no logical reason to apologize exist. However, Fox reminds us that there is nothing sincere or friendly about the English saying sorry or thank you. In fact, “politeness by definition involves a degree of artifice and hypocrisy, but English courtesy seems to be

almost entirely a matter of form, of obedience to a set of rules rather than expression of genuine concern.” Key phrases, other than “sorry” and “thank you” found in English language include “Excuse me, sorry, but you couldn’t possibly pass the marmalade, could you?”, “Excuse me, I’m terribly sorry but you seem to be standing on my foot.” or “With all due respect, the right honourable gentleman is being a bit economical with the truth.” (Fox 407, 408).

The final characteristic trait of the English described by Fox is *modesty*. She thinks that the English have “rules actively prescribing self-deprecation and self-mockery.” Key phrases include “Don’t blow your own trumpet.”, or “Don’t boast.” (Fox 408, 409).

Finally, to conclude her research, Fox reflects on what causes the core of the English mentality – social dis-ease. She is fully aware she is not the first scholar to talk about the English reserve, however, she suggests her contribution resides in the realization that both the reserve and the loutishness – despite being “seemingly contradictory” tendencies – “are part of the same syndrome.” She questions the idea that the weather is the major cause of such anti-social behaviour since it does not differ much from the weather of other European countries. Moreover, she also challenges the belief of some writers who claim that the English mentality has been influenced mainly by various historical events, such as the fact they lost the Empire or the extremely reserved rules of behaviour taught to children at public schools. Fox argues that the English have displayed this peculiar behaviour for such a long time and therefore “its onset or emergence cannot be attributed to any particular historical event or process.” Social scientists have also argued that geography, mainly the fact that England is a relatively small and densely populated island isolated from the rest of Europe, should be taken into account. However, Fox also challenges these views by saying England is not the only country with such geography and yet it is so distinct. Hence, this may be one of the factors contributing to the English mentality, but not the sole one. Finally, she closes the chapter by admitting she has not found the final answer to what causes the English bi-polar mentality (Fox 412, 413).

## **2.5 Overview of Other Major Works of Literature on Englishness**

Some of other recent works of literature on the topic of Englishness include Robert Colls’ *Identity of England* (2004), where the author tries to find the connection between the old identity of the English in the past and their new identity today;. In *The Politics*

of *Englishness* (2007), Arthur Aughey offers a unique perspective on the English by providing debates and interesting suggestions for literature on the English question.

Listing the major works on Englishness, Julian Barnes' *England, England* (2008) must not be forgotten. This work of fiction is interwoven with all things English with one of its symbols being an artificially-created island whose purpose is to show everything which is considered truly English by general public, including its typical customs and traditions.

Another book dealing with English culture as well as the English identity is Simon Featherstone's *Englishness: Twentieth-Century Popular Culture and the Forming of English Identity* (2008). It includes various case studies, is a survey of twentieth-century English cultures and Featherstone attempts to define the English struggles in search of their own identity.

Roger Scruton's *England: An Elegy* (2010) is a philosophical work where he ponders about England, its culture and institutions, but also its residents being distinct from others, and mourns the death of England. Finally, Matt Rudd's *The English: A Field Guide* (2013) is one of the most recent additions to the wide collection of books on the English. Written in a noticeably less serious tone, Rudd attempts to discover what makes the English people tick.

## **2.6 Englishness from the Perspective of Immigrant Writers**

As already mentioned above, the English people born and raised in England will inevitably perceive themselves differently from members of other nations. Similarly, immigrants who were born and raised outside England might hold different views and contribute to the discussion from yet another perspective - from the perspective of someone who was raised in a certain manner, surrounded by a certain culture and people and later moving abroad, suddenly experiencing close interaction with members of a different nation and therefore being exposed to different culture and people with all their manners and peculiarities. Three examples of such immigrant writers, namely T. S. Eliot, George Mikes and Peter Mandler, will be discussed in this chapter.

T. S. Eliot, the renowned writer born in America but renouncing his American citizenship after immigrating to England and acquiring British citizenship instead, attempted to define English culture in his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1973). In this essay, he lists "Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the Twelfth of August, a cup

final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, 19th Century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar” as things peculiar to the English (Abrams). Even though the essence of what it meant to be quintessentially English during the writer’s time may be captured accurately by Eliot, this list is rather outdated and cannot be considered satisfactory for today’s application, as is the case with majority of the non-contemporary pieces of writing.

George Mikes, the author of Hungarian origin who also acquired British citizenship after moving to London, was interested in depicting the life in different countries and commenting on various aspects of life in a humorous fashion. He was fascinated by the national stereotypes which he liked to expose and ridicule. Apart from his popular first book on the English called *How to be an Alien: a Handbook for Beginners and More Advanced Pupils* (1946), he published a number of other, mainly light-hearted observations, such as *How to Unite Nations* (1963, on the United Nations), *The Land of the Rising Yen* (1970, on the Japanese) or *How to be Poor* (1983) (Kabdebo 764). In 1986, a collection of three of his books on the character of the English, namely *How to be an Alien, How to be Inimitable and How to be Decadent*, was published under the title *How to be a Brit*.

The first part of the book, named *How to be an Alien*, begins with the warning that “in England everything is the other way round,” from English people looking their worst on Sundays, while people on the Continent wear their most decent clothes and make all the efforts to look their best, to the distinct way of using their fork (people on the Continent use it in the same manner as a shovel, whereas the English maintain their odd ways by pushing the food on top of it) (Mikes 20).

Mikes continues to discuss the peculiarities of the nation by mentioning the importance of talking about the weather, explaining that while people elsewhere in Europe would consider this topic too dull, the English regard it as fascinating and require others to become good at it, which also includes being capable of understanding the most basic rule: the person must express agreement with the statement about the weather, by no means contradicting it (Mikes 26, 27). Besides their great interest in discussing the weather, Mikes regards the English love for understatement as another distinct characteristic of the people and claims that while other people have souls, the English have understatement. This peculiar form of speech is most evident in young people’s courting; while an average young man would declare his love for a woman

by charming her with sweet and romantic words, an English gentleman would employ understatement and merely say “I don’t object to you, you know.” (Mikes 30). This form of verbal expression is indeed peculiar to the nation and commonly misinterpreted by the foreigners. Similarly, the habit of tea drinking has different rules in England than on the Continent for the English prefer the liquid with no sugar, but a considerable amount of cold milk instead, resulting in a bland and mud-like beverage which is, however, not recommended to refuse if offered by an English person (Mikes 32). Mikes then ponders on a number of other English oddities, such as their preference for walking in silence when accompanied by a friend, yet talking cheerfully when going for a walk with their dog (Mikes 56), or their love of queuing which he considers a great passion of the nation, though the English themselves are not willing to admit it (Mikes 54).

The second part of the book, named *How to be Inimitable*, is concerned with what the author calls the Old English and the New English, referring to the contrast between the old and young generation of the people. Finally, in the third and also the last section of the book, titled *How to be Decadent*, Mikes argues that the English are gradually destroying their own country, motivated by their belief in fair play. In fact, during the years followed by the World War II, they stated: “Let’s be fair. We have been Top Nation for centuries. We have done splendidly well once again. Now we must give others a chance. Let’s decline.” Indeed, the nation kept its promise and this conscious decision was followed by a number of decadent tendencies, namely the end of the Empire or export of low quality goods (Mikes 185, 186). Mikes concludes the book by pointing to the fact that people in his adopted country have changed significantly since he first arrived there, making his debut book, *How to be an Alien*, considerably less relevant.

While Mikes’s book on English people is humorous and written from the perspective of a journalist, Peter Mandler, the American professor of Modern Cultural History at Cambridge University, used a different approach. In his carefully researched study, which he called *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (2006), he uses a wealth of diverse historical materials to study the idea of a national character. He argues that the concept of national character has often been confused with the concept of national identity, a common misconception accounting for the fact that researchers frequently assume very little has been written on the topic of Englishness. While they mostly refer to the national identity of the English people, a more recent concept developed particularly in 1960s, Mandler explores the idea

of national character, taking advantage of the large volume of material available (Mandler 5).

However, even the concept of English national character developed relatively late. In fact, the historian explains his decision to begin his research on the English character with Edmund Burke (1729-1797) by claiming that it is this influential politician who is regarded by many to be the creator of Englishness. Burke's development of the concept was a reaction to the French Revolution which contributed to the interest in national character in France and Germany. In England, however, the idea "remained undeveloped," largely due to the homogeneity of the United Kingdom and the British Empire with all their nations and ethnicities (Mandler 3). Moreover, the English conservatives ignored the concept of national character for, despite being patriotic, "they neither wanted nor needed an idea of an English people of similar traits or qualities" (Mandler 29). Rather, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were defined by what the historian describes as a "civilization" model of nations. Using this approach, the English defined themselves and other nations based on their level of development and progression in comparison with other nations. While this method had been useful during the years of glory of the British Empire, reminding the English of their superiority, it was soon replaced by a different approach when, later in the nineteenth century, the rise of liberal, democratic and radical ways of thinking led to redefining the concept of national character (Mandler 52). The term, as is now being understood by scholars and used throughout Mandler's book, refers to the characteristic traits of behaviour which are "deep-seated" in people's minds and therefore remaining largely constant and resistant to change throughout the history (Mandler 2).

## **2.7 A View from the Outside - Englishness in Czech Literature**

For the purpose of identifying common stereotypes of the English in literature as seen from the perspective of Czech people, a monograph by a Czech philologist and linguist Jaroslav Peprník, *Anglie očima české literatury od středověku po rok 2000* (2000), has been used.

In his publication, Peprník used around 500 works of Czech literature in order to find references to England and its people. In the Introduction to his book, he explains that the majority of writers examined never visited England in the course of their lives; their perception of the nation was therefore based on the common stereotypes and knowledge

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of England which were already deeply rooted in the subconscious of Czech people at the time.

The monograph is divided into seven topics: (1) English language and its knowledge, (2) Geography, (3) Public figures, (4) History and politics, (5) Writers, (6) Artists and (7) Stereotypes of the character and behaviour. It is the final topic which is of the greatest interest to this thesis.

Physical appearance is the first aspect discussed in the chapter. In fact, English men were frequently portrayed by Czech writers as *tall* and thin, *with* a characteristic *moustache*. Regarding English women, they were generally described as more attractive by the nineteenth century authors than a century later. Also, the writers frequently expressed their amazement at the English ability not to feel cold in unpleasant weather while wearing very few clothes. The English were mostly praised for being *stylish* and *elegant*, with *excellent taste in clothes and high quality fashion*. On the other hand, a gradual change from wearing traditional top hats and suits of the past centuries to the preference of casual clothes more recently is also evident.

Peprník is then concerned with a portrayal of the inner characteristics of the English as perceived by the Czech authors. They were most frequently described as *calm*, even *phlegmatic*; *emotionless* and *gloomy*, but also as *polite*, *courteous*, *willing* or *philanthropic*. Other adjectives used to describe the English were *secretive* and *private*, *reserved*, *inconspicuous* (even though members of the higher classes were more likely to be perceived as eccentric), *fair*, *loyal*, *strong-willed*, *conservative* (perceived as both negative and positive personality trait), *freedom-loving*, *nonintellectual* and *empirical* (adjectives attributed to the aristocracy and higher class), *punctual*, *prudish*, *hypocritical*, *disdainful* (arrogant towards the inferior and ignoring smaller nations) and *imperialist*.

Furthermore, a number of examples of the English lifestyle in Czech literature are given. The Czech authors noticed *comfort* as one of their highest values. With regard to food, English cuisine was mostly considered *unpalatable*, as was English coffee. The habit of *tea* drinking was regarded as another English stereotype. Besides their eating and drinking habits, the English were also known for their *love of animals*, most importantly cats, dogs and horses; *love of sports*, unnatural interest in *weather* and various *ceremonies*, different *measurements* and *transport* (driving on the left). Overall, England is regarded as a *well-ordered country* where “*everything works perfectly*” (Peprník 425-458).

Since these stereotypes were held by people who, in some cases, never visited the country of interest, they did not necessarily reflect the reality. However, they help to illustrate how English mentality has been seen from the perspective of “outsiders” whose idea of a different nation is likely to reflect their own national mentality and what they consider “normal” and “abnormal.” Moreover, the fact that the perception of the nation has not undergone dramatic changes in the course of time only confirms that national stereotypes are deeply rooted in people’s mind.

### 3 KAZUO ISHIGURO

#### 3.1 Ishiguro's Background

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in the Japanese city of Nagasaki in 1954. At a tender age of five, he moved to Great Britain where he later attended the University of Kent and obtained his Bachelor's degree in English and Philosophy. He then continued to develop his writing skills by attending the creative-writing course at the University of East Anglia where he obtained his Master's degree. Before his career as an author, he worked as a community worker and wrote songs and lyrics for popular bands.

His first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) was awarded the Winifred Holtby award. His literary debut was soon followed by other successful books, namely *An Artist of the Floating World* (published in 1986 and awarded the Whitbread Prize), *The Remains of the Day* (published in 1989 and awarded the Booker Prize), *The Unconsoled* (1995), *When We Were Orphans* (2000), *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *The Buried Giant* (2015). He was awarded the OBE in 1995 and Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres 1998 (Wroe).

Ishiguro's writing style has been considered by many to be influenced by Japanese writing. The author himself, however, has insisted on disproving these claims, arguing that he is not familiar with the Japanese style of writing. Discussing his Japanese origins, he claims that growing up in England, he was certainly less Japanese than other children who were brought up in Japan. Nevertheless, Ishiguro, was raised by his Japanese parents which, as he admits, helped him understand the basic concepts in Japanese culture, such as family and marriage. What he did not feel qualified to comment on, was the Japanese state of economy or politics. While, as he says, he wrote his first two novels to "appeal to the Japanese side of" him, *The Remains of the Day* was written with the intention to avoid setting another book in Japan. Having spent most of his life in England (in fact, he first revisited Japan thirty years after moving to Britain) and having little knowledge of his country of origin, it has not been his intention to write novels on his Japanese heritage. Instead, he "was wanting to write about universal themes" (Kridler 149) and characterizes his novels as international, appealing to people of all backgrounds and nationalities. Yes, while Ishiguro does not consciously follow the Japanese tradition in his novels, the facts that he was raised by Japanese parents and taught Japanese values are likely to have an effect on his writing.

The following chapter deals with the author's *The Remains of the Day* for the novel's setting (English great houses and countryside) and main characters (English butler and a lord among others) epitome Englishness.

### **3.2 Englishness in *The Remains of the Day***

For the protagonist of Ishiguro's third novel is an English butler, named Stevens, who is employed in one of England's greatest houses, Darlington Hall, the author's portrayal of Englishness mainly concerns one category of an Englishman – the one of an English butler. Nevertheless, there are other minor characters needed to be taken into account, such as Lord Darlington (representing aristocracy), Miss Kenton (the head housekeeper) and ordinary village people (representing working class). One of the primary concerns of Ishiguro's novel is the nature of dignity, a concept which in itself is considered by many as a vital element of the English psyche, as well as the essential characteristics of a great butler. Therefore, the portrayal of the nation in *The Remains of the Day* can be divided into four categories: (1) the characteristics of a great butler, (2) other distinct qualities of the English, (3) Englishmen's passions and (4) their view of and interaction with the foreigners.

As mentioned above, Stevens dedicates much time to pondering on what it means to be a great butler and dignity is the quality he mentions regularly. He considers it superior to all the other qualities essential in a true gentleman and a butler serving him. In fact, when questioned by a village man Mr. Morgan about the nature of a gentleman, he replies that it is indeed dignity. However, while Stevens remains convinced this is the quality all great English butlers should strive for, Mr. Harry Smith, another village man, thinks otherwise. He argues that dignity is not limited merely to noble gentlemen and understands the concept in terms of war, claiming that the main reason the English fought Hitler was indeed dignity (Ishiguro 186). He supports this belief by explaining that ordinary English men risked their lives in the World War II for the purpose of acquiring freedom and, consequently, dignity. It is clear that while Stevens associates dignity with being a gentleman, working-class people are of different opinion, thinking dignity is independent of being rich or poor; it is simply a matter of being a free citizen.

While Stevens associates being a gentleman with the noble quality of dignity, Mr. Cardinal, a visitor at Darlington Hall, is of a different opinion, also mentioning war. He argues that Lord Darlington is the essence of what it means to be a true gentleman since he fought in the war and then offered his kindness and generosity to the defeated Germans (Ishiguro 223). However, Mr. Cardinal is aware of the post-war world undergoing rapid changes and therefore noble people with their fine ideas are therefore placed at a disadvantage. Indeed, Lord Darlington, being considered a traitor by newspapers for his help to the former foe, is an example of how such noble gentlemen with high values can be manipulated (Ishiguro 224).

Another key aspect of being a gentleman and a true English butler, according to Stevens, is loyalty. In fact, he believes that a butler must avoid formulating strong opinions, providing they are in conflict with his employer (Ishiguro 200). He adds that there is nothing undignified about being loyal to his Lord. On the contrary, dignity, being an essential quality of any great butler, cannot exist without loyalty (Ishiguro 201).

Besides loyalty, the butler considers emotional restraint as another personality trait vital to his profession. In fact, it is the ability to control one's emotions at all times which is considered by Stevens as imperative to dignity. The butler's father is the perfect example of such restraint, with not a trace of emotion present in his face on the occasion of being told by his own son of his incapability to perform certain duties around the house due to the old man's deteriorating health. Despite clearly feeling intensely saddened and disappointed by the news, Steven's father is a master of deception, managing to suppress all his feelings and maintain a dignified façade. Furthermore, the fact that he rarely talks to his only son is not a sign of the lack of paternal love. Instead, there has been a consensus between the father and the son to avoid any form of display of affection and therefore preserve their dignity. Their relationship does not undergo a significant change even during the moments before the event of the older butler's dying, when Stevens makes his preferences clear by deciding to serve his Lord and performing the duties of a butler as is required of him, instead of spending the last moments with his dying father. On his deathbed, however, Steven's father finally realizes he might not have been the most loving father and expresses the concerns to his son. Not only might be these few sincere words the very last coming from his mouth, they are also rather heartfelt, considering the cold nature of the two men's relationship.

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Stevens's reserved character, however, does not merely affect the relationship with his father; the butler is also unable to relate to his colleague, Miss Kenton, to whom he clearly feels deep affection. One example of this innate inability is when he orders Miss Kenton to dismiss two of the employees for their Jewish origin. She, despite being convinced of this decision being wrong, follows the order but threatens to resign from her job due to this shameful incident. Eventually, she decides otherwise, and is shocked later when Stevens reveals he shared his doubts about the dismissal of the maids with his colleague, yet was unable to express them to her. After Miss Kenton asks "Why, Mr. Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?", he replies in surprise, defending himself by saying that he expected her to somehow naturally guess his opinion on the matter discussed (Ishiguro 154). This incident demonstrates that the butler assumes it is needless to express his emotions since other people understand just the same. Another example of the butler being stiff and emotionless is illustrated when Miss Kenton is grieving for her recently deceased relative and Stevens lacks the ability to approach his colleague in her fragile state in order to give her comfort. Instead, he just inquires politely about her duties, worrying whether she is experiencing difficulties managing the new members of the staff (Ishiguro 177). By saying this, he manages to satisfy his urge to say something polite while still maintaining his reserved façade. Similarly, on Miss Kenton's announcing her resignation from the job owing to her starting married life, Stevens is reluctant to express his feelings. He offers his congratulations, however, he merely manages to deliver the following speech: "I will do my best to secure a replacement at the earliest opportunity, Miss Kenton. Now if you excuse me, I must return upstairs." Naturally, his words have a hurting effect on his female colleague who struggles to come to terms with the fact that these are the only words he utters on her departure before again returning to his post for he feels his presence is required upstairs and, moreover, some significant issues are being discussed by gentlemen there (Ishiguro 219).

It is apparent that Miss Kenton is a less inhibited and more open, almost animate character. She is certainly less reserved than the male protagonist. Indeed, several years following her resignation from the house, the couple meets once again and she dares to express her feelings, revealing she considered spending her life with Stevens in the past. Needless to say, the butler is startled and, for the first time, admits feeling greatly saddened upon hearing the words of his former colleague. Moreover, he even admits his "heart was breaking" (Ishiguro 239). In Ishiguro's own words, this episode represents the sole point

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Stevens's "rigid defence would crack, and a hitherto concealed tragic romanticism would be glimpsed" (Ishiguro, *Kazuo Ishiguro: how I wrote*). Nevertheless, this happens only for a brief moment and his emotional restraint is soon restored.

Stevens's inability to hold a light-hearted conversation and banter is yet another proof of his reserved nature. In fact, lacking the ability to recognize a joke, Stevens has difficulties identifying when he is expected to show amusement when conversing with others. These moments of discomfort are most apparent from the interaction with his new employer, Mr. Farraday, who makes frequent amusing remarks, expecting his butler to react accordingly. Yet, Stevens lacks the social skills and, not knowing what is required of him, feels awkward, rather than amused by these remarks (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 15). Reflecting upon these embarrassing incidents, he therefore makes a commitment to improve his communication skills and learn the secrets of bantering. However, having since attempted to enrich the conversation with a number of awkward remarks, he is often left misunderstood and unsure of the appropriateness of his jokes. One such example is when Stevens is staying in a village of Taunton and, talking to the village people, he fails in an attempt to utter a witty remark. Instead, he is once again left feeling awkward and embarrassed for not being understood by his audience. Moreover, he feels disappointed for having devoted his efforts and time to improving his bantering skills - to no avail (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 130). Apparently, Stevens's reserved and stiff nature is difficult to change.

Aside from his aloofness, the character is also relatively humble and reluctant to boast. However, despite his conscious effort to avoid boasting and hence maintain his dignity, he would occasionally make subtle comments on his past achievements and, upon becoming aware of his "inappropriate thoughts," he would justify them by adding remarks such as "I do not believe I am being unduly boastful..." (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 5). On another occasion, he would describe at great length the proud moments of his career, only to eventually add "That is not to say I consider I became, necessarily, 'a great' butler; it is hardly for me, in any case, to make judgments of this sort." (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 70). This denial of his own achievements is indeed characteristic of the butler.

Both Stevens's humble personality and his emotional restraint are also closely related to the regular occurrences of understatement in his speech. One such example is the occasion when he explains vividly the demanding aspects of his profession, only to eventually label them as simply "daunting" (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 7). It is

apparent from the indirect description of his job that the nature of the profession is far from that, yet Stevens's humble and reserved nature dictates him to avoid strong expressions.

In addition to the list of Stevens's qualities, his politeness can be equally regarded as one of these. Furthermore, it is not only the male protagonist who manages to maintain his dignity and be polite at all times, no matter the circumstances. In fact, the good manners are most evident during the arguments between him and Miss Kenton, when both the characters once again display their capacity for emotional restraint, understatement and courtesy, while still managing the exchange of opposing opinions and therefore maintaining their dignity.

Besides politeness, honour is another highly regarded quality among the English characters in the novel, with Lord Darlington being the most representative of this moral code. It is his honourable nature, a quality related to dignity, which Stevens adores in his employer. He makes an effort to describe the conversations between the nobleman and his visitors from abroad and it is during the important events such as at the conference in Darlington Hall when confronted by his foreign visitors, that his Lord's honourable quality is most evident. In fact, on the final day of the crucial event, one of the American guests, Mr. Lewis, condemns him as a naive amateur. To this Lord Darlington replies politely that what the American refers to as amateurism, is by English people described as "honour." He then proceeds to condemn what Mr. Lewis calls "professionalism," arguing it is nothing more than a euphemism for actions of people driven by money and possessions. Moreover, he refers to Mr. Lewis' concept of professionalism as "ordering one's priorities according to greed and advantage rather than the desire to see goodness and justice prevail in the world." He concludes this argument by saying he has no desire whatsoever to acquire such professionalism (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 103). Indeed, Lord Darlington's honour is another proof of him being a true English gentleman.

As can be seen from the incident described above, Ishiguro's characters also consider justice as their principal value. Indeed, fairness is yet another quality of Lord Darlington admired by Stevens who defends his Lord after he was accused of helping the Germans after the war. While his employer argues that he fought the war because he wanted to see justice win in the world, Stevens agrees with him, stating he has no doubts that the desire to see injustice being defeated was his true motivation for his decisions (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 73). He further continues to defend the actions of his employer, adding that the great house became the place where his closest allies would gather with

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the purpose of resolving the unfair treatment of post-war Germany. Stevens remembers that “some were gentlemen who felt strongly, like his lordship himself, that fair play had not been done at Versailles and that it was immoral to go on punishing a nation for a war that was now over” (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 75). Therefore, the concept of justice and fair treatment is representative of yet another trait of the English characters in *The Remains of the Day*.

Similarly, the idea of the English dwelling on their traditions is also a feature of the nation occurring regularly in Ishiguro’s novel. The characters are reluctant to change, despite being aware of the modern world undergoing rapid changes. While Stevens admits at one point that “there is no virtue at all in clinging as some do to tradition merely for its own sake” (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 7), he is no exception and also finds comfort in the old and familiar. Likewise, even Lord Darlington himself contemplates the future of his beloved country, admitting: “We’re really so slow in this country to recognize when a thing’s outmoded. Other great nations know full well that to meet the challenges of each new age means discarding old, sometimes well-loved methods. Not so here in Britain” (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 197). He concludes by complaining hopelessly that his people are always the last to acknowledge the world has changed and they should do the same (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 198). While these examples are concerned with politics, the idea of English people dwelling on their past could easily apply to any area of their life.

Their interest in history, traditions and nostalgia might also account for their deep affection for the houses and residences, represented in Ishiguro’s novel by the impressive Darlington Hall. In fact, the characters’ attachment to their jobs can be attributed not only to their affection for their employer, but also for the house itself. Both Stevens and Miss Kenton, as well as other minor characters, feel certain connection with the history of the house and are proud to be part of “something grand” and noble. Therefore, it is only natural that when Stevens leaves the house for the first time for the purpose of embarking on what he refers to as “a professional trip,” he finds himself rather perplexed by the sudden change of environment. As he describes the first moments of his motoring trip, “The feeling swept over me that I had truly left Darlington Hall behind, and I must confess I did feel a slight sense of alarm...” (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 24). Moreover, the idea of the English being strongly attached to their houses is also supported by the fact that crucial political debates are held in the great houses of England (Ishiguro,

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*The Remains of the Day* 115). It is this status of the mansions which contributes to their popularity with the English.

Despite the English characters' admiration for their houses, they also feel great connection with nature and countryside. This is clearly illustrated by Stevens who, before embarking on his trip, finds pleasure in reading Mrs. Jane Symons's *The Wonder of England*, describing the delights of English countryside. In fact, the butler spends significant amount of time researching the places he might visit after his departure from Darlington Hall, feeling admiration for the great nature of his country. Once he eventually leaves the house, he is less concerned with the charms of the towns and cathedrals – instead, he recalls “that marvelous view encountered this morning of the rolling English countryside.” Besides, he is of the opinion that despite the globe being abundant with magnificent scenery and wonders of nature, “the English landscape at its finest... possesses a quality that the landscapes of other nations, however more superficially dramatic, inevitably fail to possess.” He continues to wonder about the distinct quality of the English countryside which he summarizes as “greatness.” Also, he sees a connection between his country being called *Great Britain* and, being aware of the possibility that some people might consider the term immodest, he defends its use, explaining that the greatness of the English countryside justifies such vulgar term (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 28). Talking about greatness of nature, he thinks that “it is the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it” (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 28-29). It is evident from Stevens's words that the countryside displays similar characteristic as an Englishman, namely restraint which might account for the butler's fascination with it.

While the English reserve explains their love for countryside, it also affects their interaction with people of different nationalities. Stevens's his new employer Mr. Farraday, who, as an American, is perceived by Stevens as a very straightforward man who finds great pleasure in bantering. The fact that the employer is incomparably more direct than Lord Darlington, therefore causing embarrassment for the butler, is evident on several occasions, such as when Stevens asks the American for permission to embark on the motoring trip with the purpose of talking to Miss Kenton and persuade her to return to the house. Mr. Farraday unwittingly makes Stevens feel awkward by implying that

the butler's real reason for visiting his old lady-friend is a mere pleasure. Despite this incident having caused great distress to Stevens, he would still defend his employer, explaining that he is an American and their manners are different, though this sort of communication would never occur under Lord Darlington (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 14).

While the Americans are seen as friendly, if too open, the French, on the other hand, are often thought of in a despicable manner. The English opinion on their closest European neighbours is most evident from Lord Darlington's bitter remarks upon reading the newspaper, commenting on the French: "And to think we have to be seen by the world to be arm in arm with them. One wishes for a good bath at the mere reminder" (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* 76). Referring to the Versailles treaty, his attitude to the French is one of disgust and contempt. He defends his strong opinions by arguing the English would never act this barbarous way. Despite the French demonstrating violent behaviour towards the Germans, Mr. Dupont, a Frenchman visiting Darlington Hall, represents a person who is essentially seen as a soft wimp. By portraying a man who complains about his minor ailments in an obsessive way and therefore being intrusive to busy Stevens, Ishiguro implies there is another side of the French character, cowardice.

In conclusion, the most prominent characteristic of the English, being represented mainly by the butler Stevens in Ishiguro's novel, is dignity. It is this quality which is the most basic element of being a genuine English gentleman and a true English butler. Moreover, dignity is related to the English emotional restraint as well as their reserve nature which is in contrast with the openness of the American characters, represented in most of the cases by the new owner of the Darlington Hall, Mr. Farraday.

## 4 TIMOTHY MO

### 4.1 Mo's Background

Mo was born in 1950 in Hong Kong to a Cantonese father and an English mother, however, he has been living in England since the age of ten. After his graduation from St John's College in Oxford, he worked as a journalist before establishing himself as a successful novelist.

His first novel, *The Monkey King* (1978) was already a triumph for it was awarded the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. The novel was soon followed by *Sour Sweet* (published in 1982, awarded Hawthornden Prize), *An Insular Possession* (1986), *The Redundancy of Courage* (1991), *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* (1995), *Renegade or Halo 2* (published in 1999, awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction) and *Pure* (2012) ("Writers – Timothy Mo").

In his novels, Mo focuses on the "people who are on the fringe of several empires," such as Hong Kong and London as is the case with the Chinese immigrant family in *Sour Sweet* (Hall 92). He explains that in his writing, he is interested in the clash of cultures and dislocation. In fact, the author himself has not felt at ease in England and describes Britain as "antiseptic – a slow, safe, orderly society" which makes him feel suffocated. He adds that he does not feel strictly Asian nor English; instead, his identity is variable, depending on the people he surrounds himself with. Therefore, he feels English when interacting with English people, while his Asian identity becomes stronger when he spends time with his Chinese family. In his novels, however, the two identities are combined (Jaggi).

For the purpose of this thesis, the author's second novel, *Sour Sweet*, will be discussed in detail, the reason being the fact that it is set in London and deals with the theme of immigrant experience.

### 4.2 English Mentality in *Sour Sweet*

In *Sour Sweet*, Mo tells a story of a Chinese immigrant family who moves from Hong Kong to London in search of a more promising future. Having been brought up in China, Chen and Lily's cultural heritage and the Chinese way of life is deeply rooted in their mind, leading to occasional misunderstandings of the people in their new country while

the family is attempting to make a new home for themselves, sharing the apartment with Lily's elder sister Mui and raising their young son.

The Chinese perception of the English portrayed by Mo can be divided into four main categories: (1) negative traits of the English as seen from the perspective of the Chinese characters, (2) positive and neutral traits of the English observed by the immigrants, (3) physical appearance of the English and (4) their view of the English institutions. These will be dealt with in detail in separate paragraphs in the following text.

Concerning the negative characteristics of the English, the Chinese characters see them as strange and odd (Mo 120). In fact, they repeatedly utter pointed remarks on the subject, one such example being Lily who, being concerned about her husband's health, makes an observation that "it's for your own protection, Husband. Do you want to see me a widow in this strange country?" (Mo 135). On another occasion, she cannot resist to remark bitterly on the uncivilised nature of the English, saying "Imagine the English having a tea song. This was really quite civilised of them – for a change" (Mo 219). She also explains her belief that the nation is eccentric by listing numerous examples of such quirky behaviour, for example the odd and far too common vice of not paying bills, which she suspects might be a national sport of the English given how commonly this practice occurs, not being restricted only to the working classes but also prevalent among the most respectable-looking of customers.

The English are also perceived as "aliens" and "foreign devils" who just try to exploit the immigrants all the time. Their feelings of hostility in the English society persist despite Chen being aware of the fact that "no one had yet assaulted, insulted, so much as looked twice at him" (Mo 5). To an inattentive observer, the English might seem polite and decent on the outside, however, Chen is aware of their hostility towards foreigners. Indeed, the English women's accusatory manner of staring at him because he is Chinese causes him to feel self-conscious and uncomfortable when waiting for the bus to get to work (Mo 13).

Another negative trait of the English is their loud and rowdy behaviour. That the English are seen as essentially violent people even despite their polite and sometimes carefully polished manners, is evident from Mo's rough description of the neighborhood, where the Chens decide to build their new business, being described as "guttled," ruined and demolished by the brute people. Upon visiting the premises, the family encounters several English workmen which leads to Chen feeling uncomfortable due to his distaste

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for this particular class of Englishmen for whom he feels nothing but fear and resentment. Indeed, when his wife and sister-in-law stare at the men, feeling curious, he is fully aware of the possibility of causing offence to the English for “the English were peppery, often manufacturing pretexts for anger where none reasonably existed.” Since maintaining a prolonged eye contact or, on the other hand, “failure to meet their round eye at all” (Mo 88) could easily cause trouble, he urges the women to leave promptly. The fact that the English are essentially violent, animal-like people, is also apparent from their eating habits.

In fact, Lily struggles to understand their “finding pleasure in fencing with chopsticks and wearing inverted rice-bowls on the head like brittle skull-caps, writing odd things on the lavatory walls, and mixing the food on their plates in a disgusting way before putting soya sauce on everything” (Mo 34). Besides, the English relationship to food is described as disgraceful and any inedible food or meal is referred to as “rubbish only fit for the English” and “fit only for foreign devils” (Mo 21) or “so indescribably alien” (Mo 141).

Besides, the nation is frequently depicted as careless of the consequences of their own deeds which is reflected in the general approach to caring for the elderly people. The English attitude to their parents is described as “nothing less than shameful neglect, a national disgrace” (Mo 91) and, as Lily laments the state of the society, “terrible callousness” (Mo 95) in comparison with the traditional approach of the Chinese who feel great responsibility for their elderly parents. She goes even further and asks herself a rhetorical question: “How could they have such a degraded sense of their responsibilities?” (Mo 142). She certainly favours the Chinese way of caring for the old citizens which is based on showing respect for the elderly. Likewise, Chen even makes a comparison of the English attitude to food and their care of the elderly, being firmly convinced that “English tastebuds must be as degraded as their care of their parents” (Mo 111). Clearly, the English indifference is seen as yet another negative characteristic of the nation.

While the English are predominantly viewed in a negative manner, the Chinese characters also occasionally observe and comment on certain traits which they perceive as neutral and simply typical for the nation, such as their passion for gardening. Pruning roses is seen as a quintessentially English occupation, as Lily observes (Mo 96).

Similarly, the habit of tea-drinking is also among the frequently mentioned quirks typical for the English, with the workmen suspending their work in order to have their tea-

break. However, although tea-drinking might be expected to have a more prominent role when observing the English and listing their characteristic traits, it is understandable that the tea ceremony is not regarded as too distinct from the perspective of the people of Chinese origin, who themselves consider this habit, so commonly associated with the English, as part of their own cultural heritage.

Regarding slightly more positive attitude to the English, it is Mui who does not share the beliefs in the alien English with Lily and Chen. In fact, she would defend the people regularly (much to the surprise and irritation of her younger sister) and even finds herself adoring them, as illustrated in the following scene: “She tittered. This was out of nervousness, embarrassment, and excitement of seeing a flash and blood Englishman, as opposed to a flickering one-dimensional image on the screen, in her house for the first time. You couldn’t very well get a more flesh and blood specimen, redder and hairier, than the present example of an Englishman” (Mo 109). Mui’s tolerant view of the English is likely to have roots in her fascination with television. In fact, after the arrival to her new country, she initially acquired rather “alarming” picture of the nation (Mo 14), causing her reluctance to leave the apartment during her first years in London. However, having no knowledge of the new language and no reason to leave the comfort of the flat, she spent her time watching English television programmes. Not only did this fixation with television helped her acquire knowledge of the language, but her love for the popular series, which followed after the news on a daily basis, assisted her in understanding the English people better. Despite initially feeling horror when watching the English characters in her favourite programmes and observing their lifestyle which was strikingly different from what she was used to in Hong Kong (she even invented her own names for them, such as “Drinker,” “Cripple,” “Crafter,” “Bad Girl,” based on their odd behaviour) (Mo 14), she is eventually able to understand the people around her and their motivations better than her younger sister and brother-in-law.

Moving on to the physical attributes of the nation, the English are regularly pictured as comparatively larger in size, which is, however, understandable due to the genetic racial differences between the Asian and Western European people. Yet, this particular dissimilarity of appearance is frequently commented upon throughout the novel, with the Chinese characters considering themselves superior in comparison with the “large” English; the fact also taken into account during the preparations of their new restaurant business when it is decided the benches must be larger in size in order to accommodate

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the “English backsides” comfortably (Mo 100). The superior attitude towards the English regarding their body size is further apparent from Chen’s determination to start exercising for the purpose of not ending up like an Englishman (Mo 115). Lily considers it ironic that despite the English being relatively plump, they have a tendency to judge other people on their physical appearance rather than taking into account their inner qualities. Lily’s lamenting, however, does not stop here as she further comments on English schools.

In fact, she is appalled by the unsatisfactory quality of the English school system, referring to it as peculiar, eccentric (Mo 236) and frivolous (Mo 245). She also believes this results from the inability of the English to find the right balance and therefore fluctuating between the two extremes. She regards this extreme behaviour as peculiar to the English, arguing that “their discipline was either lax to the point of non-existence or ferocious – like beating Hong Kong factory workers senseless with truncheons and then giving them free medical treatment” (Mo 255).

Nevertheless, she acknowledges the high quality of the English health care, admitting the English had slightly improved their reputation in her mind (Mo 254). Having herself very little personal experience with regard to health care in the country, she is clearly impressed after her husband’s elderly father injures himself and requires a hospital treatment followed by regular visits of an ambulance collecting him directly at the house.

While Lily is pleased with the health care, Mui praises the English police which she claims is the greatest in the world (Mo 159). However, her view is likely to be effected by the media and Mui’s favourite television programme concerning the English police force. Yet, she still maintains it is of the finest quality.

In terms of the state authorities and their immigration policies, Mui argues that the English are reluctant to welcome a great many foreign people in their country and claims that the laws concerning the issues of immigration are strict (Mo 215). In fact, she is aware that the authorities are much stricter than when she first arrived in the country, an idea once again likely to reflect opinion of the public media, rather than her own experience.

To conclude, the Chinese characters in Timothy Mo’s *Sour Sweet* consider themselves superior to their host country and have a hostile attitude towards the English, commonly referring to them as “foreign devils” or “aliens” whose most distinctive attributes are “being quirky, weird and strange.” However, Lily’s elder sister Mui, being more tolerant, can be regarded as an exception which can be attributed to the fact that during her early years in England, she frequently found pleasure in watching television and immersed

herself in the English way of life which has contributed to her being more understanding than her stubborn relatives.

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## 5 HANIF KUREISHI

### 5.1 Kureishi's Background

Hanif Kureishi was born in 1954 in London, England. He attended Lancaster University, where he studied philosophy, but he never graduated from the university. Instead, he decided to study philosophy at King's College London and finally obtained his degree.

His first success came in 1985 when he wrote *My Beautiful Laundrette*, a screenplay with autobiographical elements for which Kureishi was awarded the New York Film Critics Best Screenplay Award. Since then, he has published several other plays and screenplays, as well as a number of critically acclaimed novels, namely *The Buddha of Suburbia* (published in 1990 and awarded the Whitbread First Novel Award), *The Black Album* (1995), *Intimacy* (1998), *Gabriel's Gift* (2001), *The Body* (2003), *Something to Tell You* (2008) and *The Last Word* (2014). Besides, he is the author of two collections of stories, *Love in a Blue Time* (1997) and *Midnight All Day* (1999). In 2008, the writer was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) ("The author").

Regarding Kureishi's identity, it must be highlighted that he was in fact born into a mixed family, his mother being English and father being of Indian origin (he later moved to Pakistan). The author himself comments on his roots by saying that: "I am a sort of English kid, but I was always linked to the Empire. Not only am I the child of a mixed marriage, but I always had that history." Growing up in Bromley, London, his childhood and teenage years were defined by racist attacks. In the London suburbs, he was merely a Pakistani and people ignored the fact that he was born in England to an English mother. Therefore, he initially made great efforts to suppress his eastern self. It was through books that he was gradually uncovering his own identity, being aware of the fact that he is anything but singular. Indeed, he discovered there was a part of him which was shy and another which was arrogant; there was a good side of him and equally a bad side of him – a duality reflecting the mixed nature of his parents' marriage (McCRum).

He has put both the negative experience with racism and his "dual personality" to good use, though, having become one of the leading multicultural writers in Britain. His first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which was made into a TV series by BBC in 1993, was inspired by his childhood in the hostile and racist English suburb of Bromley. It is this Kureishi's autobiographical novel which will be subjected to the discussion of Englishness in the following section of the thesis.

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## 5.2 English People as Perceived by the Characters in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Hanif Kureishi's first novel, for which he had been awarded the Whitbread Award, was published in 1990. It tells a story of Karim Amir, a teenage boy who lives in London with his English mother and Indian father. For he is half-Indian and, in his own words, "an Englishman born and bred, almost" (Kureishi 3), he feels restless and his life is filled with struggle as he is trying to come to terms with his own identity, being torn between his own Indian heritage and the desire to belong to the English society and be more English-like. Similarly, his father Haroon, who was born in India, keeps his Indian values and traditions, while making attempts to assimilate to the western society and gain respect from the English.

Despite Kureishi's Pakistani heritage, the author tells the story from the perspective of the young narrator, Karim, who is half-Indian. The following part of the thesis is concerned with the portrayal of the English people by the novel's author, assuming he has imprinted his own views of the nation in his characters, being they Indian, English or otherwise. Since the characters recognize a number of positive as well as negative characteristics in the English, they are divided accordingly, beginning with a more plentiful group of negative traits, followed by features considered either as neutral or positive by the characters.

While at times, the characters talk about the British, rather than the English (mainly in relation to the government and Empire), it can be assumed that it is the English they have in mind for it was precisely this nation which ruled the colonies. Moreover, it is the English, rather than the Scottish, Welsh or Irish, with whom the characters interact in London.

The most prominent characteristic of the nation from the perspective of the Indian characters is their despicable nature. The conviction that the English deserve nothing but contempt has its origins in Haroon's childhood which he spent in India, a country governed by the superior British. He remembers the bitter games of cricket in which the Indians had to let the British win the match, no matter the actual abilities of the players (Kureishi 23). He may work for the British government now, yet he still recalls vividly how the British were ridiculed and mocked by the Indians (Kureishi 26). However, while the British

considered themselves superior in their colonies, it is clear that Haroon has always felt superior over them owing to the political situation and the fact that his own country was under the British rule. In his son's words, "for him in India the British were ridiculous, stiff, unconfident, rule-bound" (Kureishi 250). Naturally, the Indian had feelings of scorn and contempt for the English. He thinks that "you couldn't let the ex-colonialists see you on your knees, for that was where they expected you to be" (Kureishi 250). Therefore, he considers it vital not to grant them the pleasure of seeing the immigrants fail. Besides, he believes that the English are "exhausted" and with the end of their great Empire, they also lost their capacity for achievements which is seen by Haroon as his own opportunity to succeed. While the reason behind the Indian contempt for the nation is justifiable, it is also the English themselves who "feel small," as illustrated by Haroon's wife. In fact, she complains about not being liked by Eva, her husband's English friend and later a lover and wife, saying she is "not Indian enough for her," being "only English" (Kureishi 5). She refers to the fact that in London of the 1970s, people were fascinated with everything exotic, including, to certain extent, the immigrants. Yet, the fact, that the English were attracted by the foreign and unknown (as illustrated by Maroon whose spiritual teachings become very popular with Londoners), does not disprove the presence of racism in their society.

Indeed, the English are portrayed as very racist. This negative quality of the English is evident in a number of cases, such as when Haroon visits Eva to give a spiritual teaching and another guest, an Englishman, makes an impolite inquiry about why an Indian has been invited to the party. He suggests the guests will be bored and asks with arrogance whether the Indian "has got his camel parked outside" (Kureishi 12). This incident supports the idea that the immigrants are admired for their exoticism with the English enjoying Haroon's teachings, while on the other hand, they are still despised by the same people as immigrants. Similarly, Haroon's English sister-in-law and her husband never call him by his Indian name. Instead, they refer to him as "Harry," drawing attention away from their relative's origin (Kureishi 33). Haroon himself is fully aware of this and when talking to his best friend Anwar, also an Indian, he argues that "the whites will never promote us. Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don't have to deal with them – they still think they have an Empire when they don't have two pennies to rub together" (Kureishi 27). As suggested by his argument, the Indian feels threatened by the English. However, it is not only Haroon who is experiencing difficulties due to his Indian heritage.

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In fact, his younger son Amar is so ashamed of his foreign name in front of his English friends that he calls himself Allie. Moreover, he reads English fashion magazines and pays attention to his appearance in order to merge with the English and avoid racial trouble (Kureishi 19). His older brother, Karim, is also familiar with racism, specifically owing to his interaction with an Englishman he calls “Hairy Back.” In fact, Karim feels attracted to this man’s daughter, provoking the Englishman to a racist outburst. The boy is being threatened, called “Blackie” (apparently, the man is not able to distinguish between Indian and black people) and forced to leave the premises (Kureishi 40). As Karim comments on the position of immigrants in the English society, they are supposed to be English, yet the English see them as nothing but “wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it” (Kureishi 53). Indeed, racism becomes the ever-present element defining their lives, which is also evident from Karim’s description of his friend Jamila’s (her father also being an Indian) London suburb. It is portrayed as very poor, with lots of neo-fascist groups operating in the area, causing violence. Karim’s friend even “kept buckets of water around her bed in case the shop was firebombed in the night” (Kureishi 56) and it was the presence of these dangerous thugs which led to Jamila’s family feeling constantly in fear of their lives. Naturally, her own personal experience convinced her that she lives in a racist country and people who are oppressed and experience violence on a daily basis, like her and Karim, need sympathy (Kureishi 108). What is more, even Eva, being white English, admits her own country is “callous and bereft of grace” and the idea of a tolerant and decent England has become a mere myth (Kureishi 228). In fact, it is her disillusion with the country which might explain her fascination with Haroon and his exotic teachings. While their racist behaviour is one of the most prominent features of the English described by Kureishi, it is far from their only characteristic trait.

The Indian characters are also shaken by the English materialism. Haroon struggles to come to terms with the lack of spirituality and complains that people are only concerned with material objects and their sole aim is to accumulate substantial wealth. He defines the English society as being driven by greed and likes to discuss this topic at his English relatives’ parties. This topic, however, is considered inappropriate by the English and he is being constantly discouraged by his wife from expressing his views in front of other guests (Kureishi 42). While the westerners are not necessarily aware of their consumerism, the immigrants notice the suburban streets full of frantic shoppers. Karim observes that “Saturday afternoons, when the streets were solid with white faces, was a carnival

of consumerism as goods were ripped from shelves.” Moreover, the English greed is most apparent each year after Christmas, when people camp outside the big department stores for days before they even open their door to the customers. Again, they are driven by their desire to acquire yet another unnecessary product (Kureishi 65). Eventually, Haroon is so disappointed with the English society that, when talking to a journalist, he admits that while it is true that when he was young, he considered “the Englishman as a superior being” (Kureishi 263), he was forced to change his mind. He argues the nation has achieved a great deal, the Empire created the richest society in the history of the world, accumulated significant wealth and secured its people’s safety, yet there is one element missing – soul (Kureishi 264). It is the English materialism and their lack of spirituality that leads to Haroon becoming the Buddha of Suburbia, teaching white Londoners the secrets of their soul.

Besides being materialists, the English are also described as being greatly concerned with their neighbours’ opinion. Living in a London suburb, Karim struggles to understand the behaviour of his mother who would always comb her hair prior to going to the garden and hanging out the clothes (Kureishi 188). According to his own words, however, this fear is not characteristic of his mother only. In fact, he considers this concern as one of the defining characteristics of the English suburban life.

It is not only immigrants or characters of mixed background, however, who comment on the negative qualities of the English. In fact, in several cases the English themselves remark on their nation, one such example being Eva as mentioned above. Similarly, Karim’s white, middle-class girlfriend Eleanor comments on the English lifestyle, saying: “The way the English sleep and eat is enough to make you want to emigrate to Italy” (Kureishi 220). In fact, despite her coming from a privileged family, she feels great dissatisfaction with herself and her life. Another white English character, Charlie, refers to his people as “self-righteous and moral, so loveless and incapable of dancing,” and narrow (Kureishi 254). He adds that in England, “no one believes in anything” and “it’s a nice place if you’re rich, but otherwise it’s a fucking swamp of prejudice, class confusion, the whole thing. Nothing works over there. And no one works –” (Kureishi 256). He talks about his country in this scornful manner despite him profiting from selling Englishness overseas, by being a successful, all-English singer in New York. Even the famous theatre director, Pyke, decides to write a play revolving “around the only subject there is in England,” which is the topic of class (Kureishi 164). His confidence that it is the class

differences which will attract the audience to his play, supports the argument that the English are aware of their society being very hierarchical.

While the characters of Kureishi's novel are primarily concerned with the negative traits of the English, some of them also comment on their positive characteristics, such as their politeness. In particular, Changez, the Indian national who marries Jamila, feels no hatred to his new country. In fact, soon after he arrives in England, he only has praise for the English, saying they are polite and considerate. He also defends English women, claiming they do not share the pleasure with the Indians in humiliating others at all times (Kureishi 223). It is clear that Changez considers it easier to adjust to his new life among the western people than other Indian characters.

Their love for DIY (do-it-yourself) is mentioned as another distinct feature of the English. When Karim describes a prominent Victorian suburb, he explains that the English get great satisfaction from creating and improving their homes. He is concerned with the fact that this "painstaking accumulation of comfort and, with it, status – the concrete display of earned cash" (Kureishi 75) is a result of the class system. He reflects upon this further, concluding that "display was the game. How many times on a visit to families in the neighborhood, before being offered a cup of tea, had we been taken around a house..." (Kureishi 75). The sole purpose of these "house tours" was to boast about the hosts' possessions and evoke feelings of admiration in the guests. The Indian characters, however, secretly adore the English houses.

In conclusion of the Kureishi's novel, the characters' overall view of the English is rather negative. Their relationship with the western people could be summarized as consisting of the feelings of disdain and scorn which results from India having been under the British rule. Despite the Empire no longer being a reality, the characters still experience hostility with the English manifesting their superiority in the form of racism. Although Haroom and Karim despise the English, they still make conscious efforts to be more like them and seek their approval and respect.

## 6 ANDREA LEVY

### 6.1 Levy's Background

Andrea Levy was born in London in 1956 to Jamaican parents. She began writing in her mid-thirties after attending creative writing courses and realizing there were very few books by black British authors. Inspired by her heritage, she decided to write her own book and in 1994 her first novel, *Every Light in the House Burnin'*, was published. The semi-autobiographical book was followed by *Never Far from Nowhere* (1996), *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999) and *Small Island* (2004), which was awarded the Orange Prize for Fiction, the Whitbread Book of the Year and the Commonwealth Writers Prize. Her last novel is *The Long Song* (2010) was the winner of the Walter Scott Prize ("Author").

In *Small Island*, Levy explores the struggles Jamaican immigrants face on their arrival to England but she is also equally concerned with the English people and their post-war anxieties, the arrival of coloured immigrants to their country being one of them. For the story is told from both the perspective of the immigrants, judging the English, and the perspective of the English themselves, adjusting to the changes happening in England after the war, this novel is ideal for study of Englishness.

### 6.2 The English from the Perspective of the Jamaicans in *Small Island*

The novel for which Levy has been awarded the Orange Prize for Fiction (2004), Whitbread Novel Award (2004) and Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the best book as well as being the overall winner (2005) was published in 2004 and adapted for television five years later. It tells a story of four characters, two of whom being Jamaican (Hortense and Gilbert) and two being English (Queenie Bligh and Bernard). Both the Jamaican characters long for the new, better life in England, which they idealize. They decide to marry in order to arrive to England as a married couple and secure a more prosperous future for themselves there. However, once they are in the country, they have to face the cruel reality of the post-war England in no way resembling the golden, welcoming country they once imagined it would be. They are disillusioned with the English people being racist and hostile. The only person willing to accommodate the coloured immigrants is Queenie who is still waiting for her husband's return from the war. Despite her being

understanding of her lodgers, the Jamaican couple struggle to come to terms with the reality of England and even with their own marriage.

For the purpose of this thesis, the description of Englishness from the perspective of the Jamaicans in *Small Island* is divided into three main areas: (1) the Jamaicans' image of England before their arrival to the country, (2) the reality after their arrival and (3) the relationship of the English to the Jamaican immigrants.

England, referred to as the Mother Country by Jamaicans, is highly idealized and essentially seen as a land of promise. Since the inhabitants of Jamaica are brainwashed by both the media and their English teachers to believe life in the west is effortless and they are also constantly reminded of the positive traits of the English, they feel very proud to live in one of the great country's colonies. Therefore, it is only natural that young Jamaican men fight the war for the country which is not even their own and many do so voluntarily. However, the facts and ideals these people are made to believe are oftentimes exaggerated and not based on reality, as some characters reveal upon their arrival to England.

In the naïve minds of the Jamaicans, England is seen as a land of sheep and shepherds (Levy 43) where everyone walks "on a blanket of gold" (Levy 90), hence the dream of leaving their economically deprived island for a more prosperous life in the Mother Country. Hortense, having become convinced that England is her destiny, dreams about her new life in the west, imagining the warm welcome upon her arrival. She pictures the modest, yet comfortable house (barring in mind that apparently "the houses are placed so close together... that it is possible to look on your neighbour in the adjacent and opposite dwelling") (Levy 85) she would one day occupy with her very helpful husband, their blissful moments of tea drinking and the polite manners of genuine English people walking in the streets filled with red buses (Levy 100, 101).

In fact, it was English manners and Christian discipline that she was taught at her Jamaican school by teachers from England – all for the purpose of breeding obedient and well-disciplined inhabitants of the British colony island who admire and are willing to make sacrifices for their Mother Country.

The English female teachers who come to the small island in order to assist in breeding the ideal and submissive residents of Jamaica, are admired by the young black girls for being delicate (a Welsh female teacher, however, is perceived as rather rough and less

feminine in comparison), with their firm, carefully polished English manners and porcelain complexion (Levy 64). They are considered the ideals of a great teacher by Hortense who herself has aspirations of acquiring a teaching position at a prestigious school. She has nothing but admiration for her tutors who radiate divine superiority and have the ability to silence and discipline even the most disobedient children just by displaying their unshakable confidence. Hortense feels inspired, being aware that “their formal elocution, their eminent intelligence, their imperial demeanor demanded and received obedience from all who beheld them” (Levy 69). She feels great disappointment when, despite making every effort to be respected by her pupils in a similar manner as her own former tutors, she fails to be regarded as the authority.

While young Jamaican girls are clearly inspired by their English mentors, more experienced women hold different views, having no illusions about English women. Such an example can be the elderly lady letting Hortense a room before the young woman departs to join her husband in the promised land. In fact, the lady is appalled at the mere thought of leaving a young man alone in England, being convinced that the savage white English women will be attracted to the black man, who, like any other young man, has certain urges, and they will be eager to lure him away from his naïve wife (Levy 107). Hortense, however, feels insulted by the landlady and refuses to believe anything she has heard, still being convinced of the good manners of the English.

It is not only Jamaican people who idealize England, though, as shown by an Indian character named Ashok who holds clear views on what it means to be English. When talking to Bernard, who himself is a genuine Englishman employed in India after the war, Ashok implies that he associates England with a good cup of tea and white cliffs (Levy 384). He is in disbelief that any Englishman would stay in India even after the war has ended, instead of immediately returning back to their great and prosperous country. He speaks very highly of the English, though, arguing it is them who taught him English language and that all great things in his poor country have been brought in by the English – fair-play, the rule of law, the game of cricket, taxes and railway (which he regards as a gift to “an ignorant people”) being among such inventions. He also praises the king, defending him despite his speech impediment. Moreover, he adds he does not believe the English should leave his country for he is convinced they are there in the interest of the Indian people. In fact, they protect his country from the Japanese since their “British bulldog understands that there is nothing worse than foreigners invading your land” (Levy 385,

386). While Ashok uses the terms *English* and *British* interchangeably, it can be assumed that it is the English he has in mind for it was predominantly this particular nation which was responsible for colonizing India.

As the characters and incidents described above illustrate, it is apparent that the people from countries colonized by the British idealize England. The reality is, however, rather different, which is something the young Jamaican men, recruited for the war, discover soon after their arrival to their Mother Country.

As Gilbert believes, the first impression most of these hopeful boys have of London, (being the first English city they experience) is of a place shrouded in smoke, lacking colour and being defined by distinctive dowdiness. They are also amazed at the sight of the English women looking glum as they stare at the men (Levy 212). Naturally, the young men are shocked by the western world being vastly different from both their quiet and peaceful life in Jamaica as well as the optimistic image of England they learnt to admire in their mind.

One of the most disappointing images the Jamaican immigrants encounter upon their arrival to the country is that of the ever-present dirt and chaos. While the fact that the England is suffering during the war must be taken into account, it is evident that the characters are horrified by the conditions in what they used to consider a civilized country. They are appalled by the demolished streets and run-down houses with their windows shattered an uncomfortable reminder of the bombs and war raids. Moreover, it is not only the men who feel frustrated by the dirt, as Hortense regularly complains about the lack of hygiene and terrible conditions in her new English home. She is shocked to realize there are mice in the house, a fact which is taken as a matter-of-course by the English. Also, she struggles to understand that the English are comfortable washing their face in the same dirty basin as they wash their muddy vegetable and has difficulties adjusting to the new way of life, in no way resembling the world she pictured for herself back in Jamaica.

These gloomy prospects are further enhanced by the sight of the grey sky, with the sun hardly visible due to the clouds, and the windy conditions. In fact, Hortense feels so cold upon her first awakening in her new English home, that she first refuses to leave bed, being aware of the smoke coming from both her and her husband's mouth. She never imagined her life in the Mother Country would start with so much chillness that her husband would have to wear a thick coat inside. Besides, she is alarmed by the winter darkness

in the morning and in the late afternoon, missing the comforting warmth of the Jamaican sun (Levy 119, 220). While the Jamaicans have obvious preferences for the sun, Queenie Bligh, representing an English woman, feels uncomfortable in hot weather. In her husband's words, she always complains about the heat, saying she feels like in an oven, and she would put a wet cloth on her neck in order to cool herself down (Levy 356).

It is also apparent that the English have very different ideas from the Jamaicans of what they consider to be an ideal holiday. This is most evident when Gilbert with his men visit a training camp in Yorkshire and his reaction to the countryside is that of bewilderment. He comments on it, saying that "pure imagination was needed to see how in peacetime English families could actually enjoy a holiday at this woebegone place." The black men feel so cold in the old holiday home, their bodies shivering underneath the layers of winter clothes, that they have serious concerns of their health. Their English sergeant, however, feels otherwise, as he proves by entering their room, complaining of the "tropical heat" and ordering the men to open the windows immediately (Levy 134, 135). This incident is once again supportive of the fact that the English are used to different weather conditions than the Jamaicans.

While the weather certainly causes difficulties to the immigrants, it is not the only inconvenience they must encounter for they also struggle with what the English regard as food. In fact, Gilbert describes the English cuisine as "prepared in a pan of boiling water, the sole purpose of which was to rid it of taste and texture." He further expresses his sheer disbelief upon what they consider edible, saying that "how the English built empires when their armies marched on nothing but mush should be one of the wonders of the world" (Levy 126). He compares the food with the meals of his home country and concludes that after having seen the English food all boiled in the same manner and looking grey and tasteless on the plate, he should consider himself lucky that the English did not decide to order their colonies to cook their food in this manner and they still let them use the frying method and various spices instead (Levy 126). On another occasion, Gilbert expresses his distaste for English food by asking: "Who cared about law as long as the British were not cooking the food?" (Levy 128). This simple question summarizes his relationship to food in the Mother Country. Yet, when he first arrives to England, he brings with himself a number of stereotypes about English food and is later surprised to learn the facts, such as that pork pie is not a delicacy. Rather, the English themselves admit that they are "the only daft enough to eat it" (Levy 176). Equally, when Gilbert asks Queenie about

rock buns, she replies that she is “daft enough to eat it,” reminding him the country is at war and the English should consider themselves lucky to have any food at all (Levy 179). Even Hortense is gradually losing her illusions regarding English food when being given fish and chips by Gilbert. Seeing the woman slightly startled, her husband kindly explains to her the way the English eat the popular dish, saying that it is eaten directly from the newspaper and no plates or cutlery are necessary. They both condemn such behaviour and agree that the English are in fact barbaric (Levy 328).

The fact that the English are seen as shabby barbarians in the eyes of the Jamaican immigrants is also apparent from the immigrants’ opinion on their clothes. Hortense complains about Englishwomen looking unkempt and scruffy. She is concerned with Queenie in particular, whom she regards as dowdy. When commenting on her attire, the black woman argues it is scruffy and fit for a homeless person, with not a brooch or jewel to accompany it. Moreover, she struggles to comprehend the lack of gloves and hats in English women’s wardrobes and is surprised to realize they all look the same, making the English streets look even more grey and gloomy due to their colourless garments (Levy 330). Hortense concludes that the English females are rather peculiar and, in fact, she regards her landlady, Queenie Bligh, as the most peculiar of them all.

Apart from their peculiar style of clothing, the English characters in Levy’s novel also consider themselves to be superior to others. This is proven by Bernard who, being employed in India, boasts of the British being the world’s saviours. He speaks of the Indians as “the ragged bunch of illiterates” who would not survive without the British interference (Levy 375). Similarly, he implies the superiority of the English by arguing that no Englishman would ever be content with the filthy and animal-like conditions of the Indian prison cell he finds himself in. He adds that while such environment is perfectly suitable for the coloured people, it is certainly below him, being an Englishman, to occupy such premises (Levy 401). What is more, he once again employs his feelings of superiority when he is persuaded to take an advantage of an Indian prostitute and realizes she is too young to be selling her body. Indeed, he begins to apologize to her, promises he will not touch her anymore and he continues to repeat several times that he is an Englishman, meaning respectable and decent. With this level of superiority forced upon their colonies, it is understandable that the Jamaicans and other colonized nations began to idealize the English, believing they simply must have special qualities.

While the immigrants are clearly disappointed when faced with the harsh reality of England, the English people also struggle to come to terms with the changes happening during and after the war. They consider it difficult to accept the coloured people in what used to be all-white English society and their profound racism (Queenie Bligh being an exception) is the reaction to the feelings of threat from the immigrants combined with the English superiority. Their racism manifests itself in a range of different forms, though.

Queenie, being one of the first Londoners to offer accommodation to black lodgers, finds herself bullied by her neighbours who complain about the once-respectable neighborhood being ruined by the coloured. Blanche, in particular, despises the black people and struggles to understand that her nearly-widowed neighbour is content to be alone in her house with the “coloureds.” She is convinced that they are savage, know nothing about English manners and wash their faces in oil, hence the unpleasant smell (Levy 116). Queenie, however, is not troubled by these remarks and quickly befriends her lodgers, despite being aware of the fact that her husband would not approve of them. Eventually, Blanche decides to move, explaining that the reason for her decision is her insistent husband who fought in the war for good old Britain, only to return home and find his street occupied by immigrants. Therefore, they made the painful decision to sell the precious house which has belonged to Blanche’s family for generations and move as far away from the coloured (whose invasion she compares to Hitler’s raid) as possible (Levy 117). When Bernard, suddenly reappears on the doorstep of his old house, he has difficulties recognizing it. Not only did the war have a damaging effect on the building, it is also full of coloured people and his own wife expects him to share the house with them. He disagrees with his neighbour, Mr. Todd, who compares the immigrants to children who do not know manners. In fact, Bernard is convinced of their cunning character which they are using to their own advantage. Having just returned from the war, he believes that he fought for the right to live among his own people and “the recipe for a quiet life is each to their own.” He argues that the British know the rules of fair-play and therefore eventually left India to the Indians and the Jamaicans should act accordingly. He adds that “it would be a kindness to return them to the backward place they came from,” once again asserting the superiority of his country. The Englishman now feels betrayed by his own wife and wishes for the immigrants to die of the cold climate which they are not used to (Levy 469).

The black people are fully aware of their difficult position among the English and Gilbert describes the stares they receive as strange, suspicious gazes which are

followed by the Englishmen's eyes quickly looking away "as if seeing something unsavoury" (Levy 315). The Jamaican man, however, developed his own strategy to help him deal with these hostile reactions. In fact, he cites politeness as the best policy. While the English expect him to act like a savage and the children are surprised he is able to speak at all, he would always astonish them by acting in a very polite and cultured manner, making them forget for a brief moment that he is in fact coloured (Levy 165).

Slowly adjusting to their life with the black people, the English develop particular rules of behaviour in order to reduce the friction between the two races; one such example being the situation when an English person is passing an immigrant and, providing there is not enough space on the pavement for both of them, the coloured person is obliged to step into the road so that the white person can continue walking comfortably. As Mrs. Bligh says, this simply represents good manners and respect to the host country (Levy 335).

To conclude, Andrea Levy highlights the stark contrast between the Jamaican people's ideas of England, which they consider their Mother Country, and the harsh reality of the post-war London with its hostile people not being ready to welcome the immigrants. The disillusionment of the Jamaicans after their first contact with the reality of England is best summarized by Gilbert's thoughts before the arrival back to the country of his origin: "No more shivering with winter cold – my teeth would have no reason to chatter. Let me forget the dreadful sausage and boiling potatoes... And no, thank you, I do not want another cup of tea" (Levy 196). Nevertheless, he soon returns to England, accompanied by his new wife, with the prospects of acquiring a better future. He realizes shortly that as a civilian, his life among the English will be even more difficult, facing a number of obstacles, racism and cold weather being only a few of these. Yet, the post-war England is slowly undergoing changes and some forward-looking people, such as Queenie Bligh, give the immigrants hope that their dreams might one day become a reality.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis was set out to explore the concept of Englishness and has analyzed four novels by contemporary novelists of other than English origin with the purpose of identifying the authors' view of English people and discovering the extent to which the novelists' own origin impacts their perceptions. The novels under scrutiny have been *The Remains of the Day* by the author of Japanese origin, Kazuo Ishiguro; *Sour Sweet* by the British Chinese author, Timothy Mo; *The Buddha of Suburbia* by the author of British Pakistani origin, Hanif Kureishi and *Small Island* by the author of Jamaican origin, Andrea Levy.

In three of the novels analyzed, namely *Sour Sweet*, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Small Island*, English people were predominantly portrayed in a negative manner. Given the characters commenting on the nature of the people in these novels were largely non-English immigrants whose perceptions of the nation as well as their expectations were inevitably affected by the culture of their origin, the clashes with English people and feelings of confusion are natural and only to be expected. This is not the case in *The Remains of the Day*, however, with the English butler Stevens being the primary source of commentary on the English, as well representing the people himself and therefore indirectly supplying the reader with useful thoughts on what it means to be English. Unlike in the remaining three novels, Ishiguro's commentaries on the people, both implicit and explicit, are largely of positive or neutral nature.

For this Ishiguro's novel is primarily concerned with the concept of dignity, it is also the most prominent characteristic of English people. Besides, it is closely related to other dominant features of the people, particularly loyalty and their reserved nature. These specific qualities, however, are rarely mentioned in the other three novels.

As mentioned above, the Chinese characters in Mo's *Sour Sweet* have less favourable view of the nation than the English butler in Ishiguro's novel. As immigrants coming from a country with different set of rules of behaviour and traditions, they mostly regard the English with contempt and disrespect. Struggling to secure a better future for themselves and their young son, they are confused by the manners of the English and consider them odd and alien-like. Nevertheless, all the three major characters find their own ways how to cope and interact with the people in their new country. While Chen regularly feels intimidated by the English and therefore prefers to ignore them as much as his profession allows him to, his wife Lily has a different approach, regarding herself as superior to the English. Furthermore, her sister Mui soon becomes westernized as a result

of her passion for the English television and other media, and therefore acquires a better understanding of the people of her new country than her relatives. On that account, she becomes an intermediary between the other Chinese characters and English people, assisting one side with understanding the world of the other. With Mui experiencing the fewest difficulties from the three Chinese characters with assimilation to the English society, Mo indicates that for an immigrant person arriving to England with the desire to understand the people, it is easier and more effective to immerse oneself into the culture and society through passive observation of the media, rather than actually working and interacting with the real people.

Similarly to the two Chinese characters in *Sour Sweet*, the characters of Indian origin in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* also regard the English with contempt, a fact which can be attributed to the long history of the British rule in the country of their origin. Both the first and the second generation of immigrants, however, equally feel admiration for the English and secretly want to resemble them physically as well as mentally. The effect of the British Empire on the Indian mindset, manifested by the disdain of the English on one hand and admiration on another, is evident. This is despite the fact that almost any interaction with the English is defined by their inherent racism, a trait considered by Kureishi as characteristic of the nation and featuring plentifully in his novel.

The idea of racism as one of the most defining characteristics of the English is also employed in the novel of the British-Jamaican author, Andrea Levy, whose Jamaican characters represent the great disillusionment with what they refer to as their Mother Country.

Their disappointment with the land and its people is enhanced by the immigrant characters' excessive idealization of England due to their English teachers' subtle, yet powerful, brainwashing techniques throughout their childhood years. Moreover, the fact that England has just emerged from the darkness of war, with the ruins and dirt covering everything, also contributes to the immigrants' negative perception of the country. The severe consequences of the World War II apparently have negative effect on the portrayal of Englishness in the novel.

Examining the depiction of Englishness in the four novels studied, it becomes evident that their author's cultural background is of crucial importance and affects the perception of the English mentality. While Mo pays attention to the oddity of the English caused by the contrast between the eastern and western values, Kureishi is more aware

of the combination of contempt and admiration of the English, with his Indian characters being affected by politics of the Empire. Similarly, Levy's characters' perception of the country and its people is influenced negatively by the fact that their island has been under the British rule, with the colonizers employing British teachers to spread the idea of the English superiority in the colony. On the other hand, Ishiguro's novel does not deal with the experience of immigrants and their inner struggles. In fact, the author made a conscious decision to produce a book concerning truly English characters in order to avoid being associated with the Japanese style of writing and Japanese culture for he does not consider himself to be a Japanese author. As a result, the effect of his Japanese background is less apparent in *The Remains of the Day*. Instead, it is concerned with the portrayal of one specific class of Englishman, the butler, and the nature of dignity.

## RESUMÉ

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problematikou angličanství a anglické mentality v britské literatuře, a to především z pohledu imigrantů. Práce si klade za svůj hlavní cíl popsat, jakým způsobem vnímají vybraní současní spisovatelé různého původu, kteří píšou ve Velké Británii, anglickou mentalitu a angličanství jako takové a zjistit, jak se jednotlivé pohledy liší na základě původu autora.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí, z nichž první se zabývá vymezením základních termínů, jako je pojem *národ*, *identita*, *stereotyp* a *národní stereotyp*. Vzhledem k obtížné definovatelnosti těchto pojmů z důvodu jejich neexaktnosti jsou v práci uvedeny názory a pohledy různých odborníků ze světa sociologie, antropologie, politologie i dalších humanitních oborů.

Stejný přístup je aplikován i na problematický pojem *angličanství*. Důraz je kladen na rozdíl mezi termínem *angličanství* a *britství* z důvodu časté záměny těchto slov, ke které docházelo a stále dochází jak v krásné literatuře, tak v literatuře odborného charakteru. Pokud se v literatuře objeví pojem *britství* (anglicky *Britishness*), popřípadě *Brit* (anglicky *British*, *Brit*, *Briton*), autor v naprosté většině odkazuje na *angličanství* (anglicky *Englishness*), popřípadě na *Angličana* (anglicky *English*). Termín *Brit* tedy nejčastěji označuje především obyvatele jedné části Velké Británie, tj. Anglie, aniž by se vztahoval na obyvatele Walesu, Skotska a Severního Irska. Po vymezení pojmu *angličanství* se práce zabývá pohledem samotných Angličanů na to, jaké charakterové rysy, symboly a stereotypy považují za typicky anglické. Podrobně je popsán názor britského novináře a spisovatele Jeremyho Paxmana, který se věnoval problematice anglické mentality v knize *Angličané - Portrét národa*, a britské antropoložky Kate Fox, která obyvatele Anglie rozebrala ve své knize *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*. Anglická mentalita je dále popsána z pohledu imigrantů, jež jsou zastoupeni T. S. Eliotem a Peterem Mandlerem, kteří jsou původem z USA, a Georgem Mikešem, narozeným v Maďarsku. První část práce je dále doplněna o pohled na Angličany očima české literatury. K tomuto účelu je použita kniha profesora Jaroslava Peprníka *Anglie očima české literatury*, která zprostředkovává obraz země, jak byla již od středověku vnímána v českými spisovateli.

Druhá část práce je praktického charakteru. Pozornost je věnována konkrétním románům spisovatelů píšících ve Velké Británii, kteří do země emigrovali, popřípadě se zde narodili rodičům přistěhovalcům. Jedná se o romány *Soumrak dne* od Kazua Ishigura, *Sour Sweet* od Timothy Mo, *Buddha z předměstí* od Hanifa Kureishiho a *Malý ostrov*

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od Andrey Levy. Tyto knihy jsou podrobeny důkladné analýze za účelem identifikace anglické mentality. Výsledky analýzy jsou poté popsány v závěru práce, který potvrzuje skutečnost, že autorův vlastní původ má přímý vliv na to, jak ve svém románu popisuje Angličany a kterou jejich vlastnost považuje za dominantní. Zatímco pro spisovatele čínského původu, Mo, je klíčová anglická podivnost, která ústí z rozdílů mezi východní a západní kulturou, Kureishiho postavy indického původu vnímají především anglickou povýšenost a nadřazenost na straně jedné, avšak zároveň se jim snaží co nejvíce podobat na straně druhé. Tato vnitřní rozpolcenost je zapříčiněna skutečností, že Indie byla součástí britského impéria a Indové byly tedy považovány za podřadný národ, který se musel Angličanům klanět. Kureishi dále popisuje Angličany jako národ nesnášenlivých rasistů, což je mimo jiné hlavní téma románu Andrey Levy. Autorka se zaměřuje na idealizaci Angličanů v představách obyvatelů Jamaiky a jejich prožvení po příjezdu do Anglie, země zaslíbené. Kromě všudypřítomného rasismu je dále Anglie vyobrazena jako země plná špíny, sutin (imigranti přicházejí do země značně poznamenané válkou) a chladného počasí, na které nejsou obyvatelé karibského ostrova zvyklí.

Zatímco výše zmiňovaní autoři se ve svých románech zaměřují na zkušenost imigrantů, Kazuo Ishiguro psal *Soumrak dne* s tím, že po svých předchozích románech již nechce být spojován s japonskou kulturou. Tento román tedy zasadil do typicky anglického prostředí a jako hlavního hrdinu si zvolil charakteristicky anglickou postavu – sluhu věrně sloužícího svému pánovi ve staroanglickém sídle. Vzhledem k Ishigurově snaze potlačit své japonské kořeny vznikl román, který popisuje specifickou kategorii Angličana, tedy anglického sluhu, pro nějž nejvyšší hodnotu představuje lidská důstojnost – vlastnost, kterou Ishiguro považuje za typicky anglickou. Ze všech čtyřech zkoumaných románů je právě *Soumrak dne* jediným, kde převažují pozitivní vlastnosti národa nad těmi negativními, což je pravděpodobně následkem autorova rozhodnutí oprostít se od jeho japonského kulturního dědictví.

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## ANOTACE

Příjmení a jméno: Kučerová Tereza

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Anglická mentalita ve vybraných románech spisovatelů - imigrantů ve Velké Británii

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Libor Práger, Ph.D.

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Klíčová slova: národ, identita, národní stereotypy, angličanství, anglická mentalita, Kazuo Ishiguro, Timothy Mo, Hanif Kureishi, Andrea Levy

Diplomová práce se zabývá tématem anglické mentality z pohledu současných spisovatelů, kteří imigrovali do Velké Británie nebo už se v zemi narodili, avšak jsou potomci přistěhovalců. Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí, z nichž první se zabývá vymezením základních termínů a popisem myšlenek týkajících se tématu, konkrétně národ, identita a stereotypy. Tato část se dále zaměřuje na samotný pojem angličanství a uvádí pohledy různých spisovatelů, z nichž někteří jsou rodilí Angličané, jiní do Anglie imigrovali a další angličanství popisují z pohledu cizince žijícího v jiné zemi. V druhé části práce jsou podrobně zkoumány čtyři romány současných britských spisovatelů různého původu. Konkrétně se jedná o *Soumrak dne* od Kazua Ishigura, *Sour Sweet* od Timothy Mo, *Buddha z předměstí* od Hanifa Kureishiho a *Malý ostrov* od Andrey Levy. Tyto romány jsou podrobeny důkladné analýze, která si klade za cíl popsat, jak uvedení autoři vnímají anglickou mentalitu a angličanství.

## ANNOTATION

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This master thesis deals with the issue of Englishness from the perspective of writers who either immigrated to Great Britain or were born in the country but their parents are of foreign origin. The thesis is divided into two parts. The aim of the first part is to introduce the basic concepts crucial for the discussion of Englishness, namely nation, identity and stereotypes. It also focuses on the idea of Englishness itself, with some major approaches to the concept discussed in this section. These are represented by three groups of writers: authors of English origin residing in England, authors who immigrated to the country and finally, authors who comment on the nature of English people from the outside. The second part of the thesis focuses on four contemporary novelists, each of them of a different origin, writing in England. The authors and the novels examined are Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Andrea Levy's *Small Island*.

The novels are studied in detail and analyzed for their authors' perception of English people.