The Island Nation and Euroscepticism:
Revisiting Europe's Heritage in Brexit Poetry

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Abstract

The idea of "Britain and Europe" that David Cameron emphasised in his speech on 23 January 2013 is a curious one – it evokes a shared history full of intricate twists, which spans over several centuries, and at the same time, preserves the apparent incompatibility of the island nation and the continent. Cameron even proposed an "in-out referendum" to determine the future of the British people, and its realisation in 2016 made Brexit an unexpected reality and signifies a crucial setback in the recent history of the European project. Brexit is furthermore an expression of "a perceived cultural distinction between Britain and Europe" (Spiering 2015) that seems to persist in British discourse specifically.

The paper thus uses Menno Spiering's concept of "British Euroscepticism" (2004), a unique form of Euroscepticism in terms of history, politics and culture, to discuss the cultural aspects of British differentness as entailing not only an opposition to Europe but also a potential to reflect on shared values and experiences. Based on this, the paper will trace the presentation of Europe in contemporary literature that emerged as a reaction to Brexit, especially poetry by Simon Armitage, Sean O'Brien and David Clarke, to ascertain the British perspective on the continent as either the paradigmatic Other or a constituent part for defining British identity.

Keywords: *Euroscepticism, Brexit, Brexit literature, contemporary poetry*

Introduction

In his now well-known EU speech at Bloomberg on 23 January 2013, David Cameron emphasised the idea of "Britain and Europe", which is a term commonly used by the British, but also a combination that might seem curious to the rest of Europe. With this idea, Cameron evoked a shared British-European history of several centuries, which is full of intricate twists and complex shifts, and at the same time affirmed the apparent incompatibility of the island nation and the continent. In so doing, he reframed the much debated political and economic UK-EU relationship, which was the original topic of his speech, in a dichotomy of Britain on the one end and Europe on the other. The reason why Britain should be seen as somehow separate from

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Europe, hence the United Kingdom as essentially different from the other member states of the European Union, is justified by Britain's geography and "British sensibility" (2013). In hindsight, it seems rather logical that Cameron's speech would culminate in the proposition of an "in-out referendum" (2013) to determine the future of the British people, albeit with a warning of the possible consequences of an exit.

The realisation of the referendum and the UK's actual decision to leave the EU three years later in 2016 made Brexit an unexpected reality, and undoubtedly constitutes one of the most crucial setbacks in the recent history of the European project. It is also an expression of "a perceived cultural distinction between Britain and Europe" (Spiering 2015a: 3) that persists in British discourse specifically. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to outline the reasons for this (self-)perception that stems from what Menno Spiering has called "British Euroscepticism" (2004: 127). The latter is itself embedded in culture, which can both function as a source that causes differentiation as well as a means to reflect on the bonds between Britain and Europe. To be more precise, this paper seeks to analyse the concept of Europe in the context of Brexit literature (i.e. texts that deal with topics surrounding the UK's exit), particularly in poetry, to determine whether the continent is indeed represented as the paradigmatic Other (e.g. Spiering 2020; Colley 1992) or rather as an integral part for defining British identity.

British Euroscepticism
Contrary to what David Cameron's aforementioned speech might suggest, the dichotomy between "Britain and Europe" that is predominantly perceived by the British is not an entirely new or recent one. In fact, its dissemination as a transparent cultural and political notion began at least in the 1990s, although it perpetually surfaced in the British consciousness during and after Europe-related crises, such as the Great War, the Second World War, or the post-war period (Spiering 2004: 127; Reynolds 2019: 56). And while Britain admittedly "has a long history of not identifying with things European" (Spiering 2015a: 6), the situation changed significantly with the emergence of Euroscepticism in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher's premiership that added to the UK's problematic standing in Europe, but particularly in the European Union. According to Anthony Forster, "the term Euroscepticism has been employed as a generic label that defines a negative point of view towards the European Union (EU)" (2002: 1-2) and refers to a form of resistance to European integration. This manifested itself with the speeches by Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell in 1962 about "Britain's non-European identity" (Reynolds 2019: 56) as well as by

Margaret Thatcher [1] in Bruges in 1988 and gained momentum with the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) since 2013 when Euroscepticism became a political campaign that was directed against the EU.

What is noteworthy about the United Kingdom is that it was said to be "amongst the most Eurosceptic countries in the EU" (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2018: 444) decades before Brexit and that this type of Euroscepticism is distinct from that of other European countries. As Menno Spiering further argues:

> In Britain, the tendency to see Europe as an undifferentiated "abroad" is deeply ingrained. As of the sixteenth century in the English language the terms "Europe" and "European" began to be used also to denote an outside, even alien entity, reflecting a growing national trend to contrast the English (or British) with "the Europeans" […]. What is special about the British case is that one of these out-groups is, and has been for a long time, the Europeans *en masse*. In other European countries, such a differentiation makes no sense (2004: 144-45, italics in original).

Notwithstanding the fact that negative attitudes towards the EU are not uncommon among its member states, this specific line of thought is what ultimately constitutes "British Euroscepticism" (ibid.), which involves two opposing identities – the British and the European – as well as defining Europe as the Other. National identity can hence be seen as partially deriving from an *us* vs. *them* binary opposition and "a discourse of differentness" (Spiering 2020: 126). This discourse, as indicated by Spiering, has historical origins and multiple implications. While not all of them can be delineated here, there are some major historical and political developments worth mentioning. There was, for example, the continent's Catholic dominance (especially of Spain and France) that contrasted the rise of Protestantism on the island from the sixteenth century onwards; French and Irish invasions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries caused persistent tensions between the countries; the configuration of Great Britain as an entity (by incorporating Scotland in 1707 and later Ireland in 1801) reinforced the idea of the island nation; the establishment of the USA as a close ally during the two world wars as well as the loss of the Empire and Britain's search for a new role in the mid-twentieth century promoted a globally orientated perspective instead of a European one; and finally, devolution increased the focus on national identity in England since the 1990s, which fuelled English exceptionalism (Reynolds 2019: 65-71; Spiering 2015a: 5, 26) [2]. As a result, Britain viewed itself as opposed to rather than connected to Europe. Moreover, in the second half of the twentieth century,

the image of Europe as the EEC and then the EU became ingrained into the British psyche, which spurred historical stereotypes relating primarily to the founding members France and Germany [3]. Overall, this means that Britain had had an uneasy standing within the EEC/EU from the very start due to various factors.

Additionally, populist and post-truth discourses contributed to the perceived distance between the island and the continent by intensifying Euroscepticism even further in the last few years. Massimiliano Demata, for example, maintains that "Populist movements in Europe have expanded in the last decade or so mainly because of a widespread sense of distrust towards the EU and the individual national political establishments" (2019: 124). In the case of Britain, the EU was often portrayed by the media [4] or certain political parties and politicians as an institution of the political "elite", which had lost the sense of the "general will" of "the people" (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 6, 18). For this reason, British populists (whether right-wing like Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson, or left-wing like Jeremy Corbyn) used Eurosceptic attitudes in order to promote their political agenda and simultaneously presented themselves as the real spokesperson for "the people", who had thus far not been represented properly or were not able to act as "sovereign" – even though the notion of "the people" itself is questionable in general (9-10).

Another point is that within populist discourses, similar mechanisms of othering that Spiering mentions in the context of "British Euroscepticism" are applied, because "the [political] establishment" and everyone not belonging to the "true people" from a nationalist perspective (i.e. foreigners, immigrants, refugees, etc.) are created as out-groups (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 34; Wodak 2017: 554-556). This, however, is an oversimplification of heterogenous societies on the basis of entirely different aspects, such as social or ethnic origins, skin colour, or religion, and easily leads to an exclusion of certain persons in order to confirm the identification of the in-group. Within "British Euroscepticism" such forms of othering encompass a hierarchical level as well: "The Other defines the Self by being unequal, sometimes unthreateningly so (in the sense of being exotic, strange and wonderful), but mostly the Other is regarded as inferior, and a possible menace to the own identity" (Spiering 2015a: 22-23). Accordingly, UKIP, for example, focused on immigration in an exaggerated and xenophobic manner during the Leave campaign and blamed the EU for being too elitist, arrogant and bureaucratically complex to find simple solutions for the fears of the British people (Rowinski 2021: 149f.; Startin 2018: 461).

Yet, the previously described "oppositional thinking" (Spiering 2015a: 23) towards Europe also decisively effected British nation-building from the eighteenth century onwards, because "Europe provided a kind of unity and cultural cohesion to an otherwise heterogeneous United Kingdom", so much so that even the British constitutional debate was "Europeanis[ed]" (Stolz 2020: 89, 92) over decades in the late twentieth century. Recently, the Scottish referendum in 2014 and, more clearly, the Brexit referendum laid bare an internal division of the island towards European integration (95), but the perception of Europe as the Other nevertheless remains. This is furthermore based on a paradox of British Euroscepticism, namely that Europe appears simultaneously "as a non-diverse monolith" from which Britain distances itself and also as "an extremely diverse collection of nation states", which can hardly be combined into a European whole (Spiering 2015b: 31). Even though in both views the idea of "Europe as an external entity" (31) becomes difficult to uphold, its cultural relevance can also be traced in art and literary texts. In the following, the discussion will therefore turn to literature that developed in the context of Brexit to explore the present sense of Europe as the Other and to re-evaluate the shared British-European history and cultural heritage.

Brexit poetry
The impact of the referendum in 2016 and the UK's actual exit in 2020 (with a withdrawal agreement reached in January 2020 and a transition period until January 2021) is far from merely economic, political, social, or historical – it also has a strong cultural dimension, which reveals itself in a new set of texts called "Brexlit" (Shaw 2018, 2021). Ever since Brexit became an option, literary responses by well-known writers like Ali Smith, Jonathan Coe, Ian McEwan or Carol Ann Duffy in fiction and drama to "the causal factors and motivating impulses of Brexit" (Shaw 2021: 3) appeared continuously. Added to this is the emergence of more or less new writers, such as Olivia Lang, Anthony Cartwright or Sam Byers, who receive attention because of their novels that deal with Brexit's implications. By now, a large number of texts has been published which can be attributed to the "Brexlit" genre, but scholarly research on this phenomenon is relatively scarce or still evolving. Especially in the case of Brexit poetry, little has been thoroughly analysed and discussed (e.g. Cosslett 2019; Klepuszewski 2021; Varty 2018; Wheatley 2018), because poetry is considered marginal in comparison to the novel as *the* medium to depict "existing cultural imaginaries and patriotic attachments" (Shaw 2021: 3) in Britain.

The present paper, however, intends to show the significance of poetry within the literary discourse on Brexit due to its ability to represent complex subjects with sharpness, brevity, imagery, and lucidity. Thus, the main question of the subsequent analysis is whether Brexit poetry draws a different image when it comes to Europe, i.e. does it avoid European issues and concentrate mostly on Britain like the rest of Brexlit, as Jon Day maintains (2017)? And is British Euroscepticism part of the overall perspective in the poems?

In contrast to "Brexlit" fiction, which has already been divided into subgenres, such as political or intimate (Day 2017), satirical/dystopian, testimonial/verbatim or realist/panoramic (Zwierlein and Rostek 2019), Brexit poetry has not been classified yet. Wojciech Klepuszewski offers a general distinction between poems written by professional writers and by the public (2021: 158-159), which is often circulated online via social media or blogs and gives voice to public opinion in a less sophisticated style. Carol Ann Duffy, Simon Armitage, Andrew Motion and Sean O'Brien are among the established writers who commented on Brexit early on and, as Poets Laureate (except for O'Brien), their texts have considerably more cultural impact. Andrew Motion's poem "After the EU referendum: In the Air" (2016), for example, captures the atmosphere of uncertainty and a sense of disbelief after the Brexit vote with an interesting analogy between history and an albatross: "History flies onward like the lonely albatross […] / riding the wind until it decides enough / is enough and lands roughly where it pleases" (l. 13-16). The witty comparison at the end brightens the melancholic mood of the four stanzas. Still, the perspective of Motion's speaker is introspective, rather turning towards his country and observing the British from a bird's eye view than looking outside.

"The Brink" by Simon Armitage (2019: 151-164) operates in another way. The poem is determined by constant movement, as the speaker travels by train to the South-East of Britain. The journey through Kent is described in short and erratic snapshots of observations, thoughts, scenes and memories, because the text was originally written as a film script for the Art 50 project (197), and the presence of Europe on the other side of Dover pervades many stanzas. In the beginning, there is a list of European cities, then of languages, philosophers, soccer players, musicians, and food. The speaker also remarks that "You're keeping your baggage with you at all times" (151), as if not only referring to suitcases but on a broader level to the cultural (European) baggage that Britain carries with it no matter where it goes after leaving the EU. There are, furthermore, references to the referendum in terms of the European flag (155), outspoken Brexiteers (161)

or EU-related word plays (160), which are textually embedded in descriptions of everyday situations in a calm but critical tone. In sum, the structure of the poem gives the impression that it is less about a train ride through the scenic attractions of the South-East (i.e. affirming national stereotypes of the beautiful English countryside) but more about confronting oneself with the themes of leaving the EU and the partial loss of one's cultural heritage. An attachment to Europe is clearly carried across in the rapid line breaks. The poem's title itself derives from the island's geographical proximity to the continent: "Kent – where the country looks over the edge, / waits on the brink. / Is that Europe on the other side?" (159). "The Brink" is thus one example of literary response to Brexit that focuses on the bonds between Britain and Europe instead of on Eurosceptic tendencies.

Sean O'Brien dedicates a whole series of poems to this topic in his 2018 collection, which is significantly called *Europa*. The language choice of the German *Europa* is interesting since it indicates both a deep-rootedness of Europe in the UK's history but also Germany's pre-eminence in the EU. At the same time, one is inevitably reminded of the famous Greek myth about Zeus transforming into a bull to steal away Europa. There are even more intertextual references to Homer or Ovid and to other stories of mythological figures in the poems, as will be shown below.

The collection opens with "You Are Now Entering Europa", where Brexit is merely implied but imminent (Beck 2021: 210-211). It threateningly closes in on the speaker (a poet) in the form of grass that is moving and growing everywhere: "The grass is in the street, […] / Is at the door, is on the stairs, / Is in my room, my mouth, is me" (O'Brien 2018: 1, l. 10-16). While grass might be an unusual metaphor for something negative and alarming, it illustrates how the ordinary can suddenly become uncanny due to an unexpected twist – similar to the situation in the summer of 2016. This is connected to the central paradox of the poet's work, which is "So near to its conclusion now / That I will never finish it" (l. 13-14), meaning it is somehow entirely futile to write, to act or to continue. O'Brien here describes the emotional aftermath of the vote: there is coldness and dreariness (l. 1-6), but above all hopelessness. The speaker, however, does not give up in the end. In an act of resistance, he concludes: "How blest I am, to have my work, / To tend the graveyard I become" (l. 18-19). This can also be read as a statement against a further estrangement of the UK towards the EU (Beck 2021: 211).

The subsequent poem "Dead Ground" proceeds with the grass-motif and the prevailing mood of change and uncertainty (O'Brien 2018: 2-4).

Additionally, O'Brien deconstructs national symbols and cultural items of Britain, itself an "imaginary country" (l. 12), to demonstrate that a lot about it is illusive and artificial. Reading this in the context of British Euroscepticism, the core identity, or "Self" in Spiering's words, turns out to be empty and this prompts the question if there is actually a genuine British culture: "The never-was and never-will, / Where ownership is all there is. / You are yourself possessed, / Except you call it geography […]" (l. 40-43). What follows is an almost accusing enumeration of examples about misleading beliefs of cultural dominance, which is surely directed towards the British (or especially Brexiteers) themselves, and a warning about the devil who "sits / Enthroned on smoking ash / To count the takings" (l. 52-54). This again exemplifies O'Brien's aptness with metaphorical allusion but makes the overall criticism not less apparent.

A similar attitude can be found in the poem "The Chase", where a derelict roadhouse becomes a symbol of the British nation's state after the referendum: "It fell on hard times, then on harder ones / And kept falling through false floors" (O'Brien 2018: 6, l. 6-7). The polyptoton of "hard" and the consonance of "fell", "falling", "false floors" across the lines intensify the impression that mistakes have been made for a long time, but there will be no solution. Besides the omnipresent debris and decay in every stanza, the past British glory is also completely gone. Consequently, the speaker says: "What began / One pale late summer evening here / Will end when darkness brings instructions / To prepare for the eternal Soon" (l. 25-28) – or in other words, what began on 23 June 2016 will end when there is a Brexit deal and the UK's withdrawal is put into effect. In any case, the outcome will not be positive for Britain, which is suggested repetitively in the collection, for example, in "Away You Go", "Exile" and "World's End" (O'Brien 2018: 9, 15, 47). In the latter, the world comes to an end with a "step into the dark" (O'Brien 2018: 47, l. 18) that is symptomatic of Britain's role after Brexit. A lot of it is unclear and yet there is an anticipation of the worst, since British Euroscepticism encourages rejection and isolation of its geographically closest international partner [5].

Apart from reflecting on the origins and consequences of Brexit on the British side, a second major thematic strand in O'Brien's *Europa* are the long-lasting cultural ties to Europe. In fact, they seem to be the more important issue, with which he deals poetically. Undoubtedly, "Zorn" (German for "anger" or "rage") (O'Brien 2018: 5) stands out in this section of poems because of its resonance of Homer's *The Iliad*. It is a kind of rewrite of "The Rage of Achilles" with regard to the present situation:

> Somewhere in the house, I howl.
> Of this much I am certain, though
> These days I no longer hear (O'Brien 2018: 5, l. 1-3).

> Rage-Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
> murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
> hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls, […]
> (Homer/Fagles 1990: 77).

In both texts, the initial lines depict the emotional intensity of rage and its destructive force. They also mention a house. Homer refers to the "house of death" (i.e. Hades to which Achilles sends a lot of souls). O'Brien is more ambiguous, but later adds: "It's me again, […] / Sealed between these walls, a howling / Absence of the sort you often find / In older houses such as this" (l. 20-24), which creates a connection to the speaker, who is both everywhere and simultaneously not there. Thus, the unspecified speaker embodies the essence of the feeling itself that uncontrollably spreads around an old house, which likely stands for Europe. In short, there is an atmosphere of anger in Europe (pro-European Britons included) as a response to the referendum, which O'Brien equates with Achilles' fierce and murderous fighting skills. Rage functions in both texts as a central trope, a *pars pro toto* for an unstoppable force. Once it is unleashed, or once Brexit is set in motion, the consequences will be dramatic. Nevertheless, O'Brien uses *The Iliad* not only to oppose Brexit, since Troy eventually cannot prevent its own destruction, but to emphasise the relevance of the shared history of Britain and Europe: "history, / A word we'd long supposed / Was exiled to the snowfield itself" (l. 10-12).

What is more, he invokes all kinds of myths and tales in his poems – either of destruction or of being out of touch with reality. Dark forces can be found in "Translation" or "Apollyon" (O'Brien 2018: 10, 25), which is the Greek name of an apocalyptic archangel and literally means "destruction". Backwardness, on the other hand, pervades "Signs and Wonders" (12), which alludes to the old British children's show *The Rubovian Legend* about a place in Europe where the people are stuck in the past century and magic still works, or "Hence, Loathèd Melancholy" (23) with its reference to the British Harlequinade, a humorous theatre performance that originated in Italy. These contrasting stories underline the European literary tradition, which is abundant and multi-layered. O'Brien also effortlessly incorporates the main European languages, German, French, Italian and Spanish, in the collection to demonstrate his awareness of British-European history on a linguistic level. Consequently, *Europa* should be read as a book about Europe

and against Euroscepticism, because, besides its critical stance on Brexit, it is a celebration of the continent's many sides and its lasting influence on Britain. As a result, it seems that Britain and Europe are not that different, even though there are different cultures. In the follow-up collection *It Says Here* (2020), O'Brien continues the main elements of *Europa* and elaborates the significance of history, especially in the ten cantos of "Hammersmith" (O'Brien 2020: 23-66), where past and present often blur.

As an example of a younger generation of poets who occupy themselves with Britain and Europe after Brexit, one should mention David Clarke. His book *The Europeans* is "a comparative cultural analysis, a social satire and political commentary, a portrait of us and them, here and there, home and away", as Paul Stephenson accurately writes in his review (Clarke 2019). The first poem "Invitation" (9) is about "the Hotel Europa" – the German version of the word and the introduction of the setting being quite similar to O'Brien's "You Are Now Entering Europa" – where the speaker reflects on Europe's idiosyncrasies from a British perspective in a playful manner: "Meet me in the lobby of the Hotel Europa, / the high lobby shadowed by palms, / where men in uniform stride with stiff / purpose and the pianist gifts us bland jazz" (l. 1-4). It is a place that is full of history and hidden surprises, though its gradual "obsolescence" (l. 35) cannot be denied. The hotel welcomes everyone like a haven, but the speaker finally realises: "And if we've ever cause to quit the Hotel Europa, / let us not be consumed by recrimination / and regret. Call it a dream, / a happy accident. If you must, a lie" (l. 37-40). Formulated like a request, or an invitation in view of the poem's title, to separate in mutual agreement these last lines cannot be but a wish – politically at least, since the referendum's outcome or the Brexit negotiations afterwards occasionally lead to absurd accusations on the UK's and the EU's part, which will have a lasting effect on the prospective relationship. Yet, the end of the poem is also directed at the Britons and Europeans, inviting them to remember their historic bond and the benefits of cultural exchange.

The same is true for the poem "The Europeans" (Clarke 2019: 14), which again presents them from a British perspective. The speaker characterises their behaviour, appearance and habits in witty descriptions: "The Europeans were volatile or taciturn, hearty / or shiftless. Really, you could take your pick" (l.13-14). They are obviously not the monolithic group of people that Eurosceptics would want them to be (Spiering 2015b: 31). Additionally, the historic weight of crucial events and wars can be felt, or literally be touched, everywhere in Europe: "In their cities, / the streets were museums. Someone had been shot / heroically on every corner. You could

still put your finger / into the bullet holes in the masonry, […]" (l. 16-19). This is a gripping visualisation of the past's impression on the presence. Apart from this, there is a reference to the European literary tradition as well (l. 20-21) like in O'Brien's texts. Both poets weave European features into their collections explicitly and implicitly. In sum, Clarke's *The Europeans* is in line with O'Brien's *Europa* in its orientation towards the continent, albeit in a lighter tone, and not focussing exclusively on Britain or the failure of Brexit. This marks the current trend in Brexit poetry and attests to the genre's distinctiveness, which is why some tentative conclusions can already be drawn about poetic "Brexlit".

Conclusion

Britain and Europe share a long, powerful history and a cultural heritage, which cannot be overlooked – or to put it in David Cameron's words: "We have helped to *write* European history, and Europe has helped *write* ours" (2013, emphasis added). And as this paper has argued, it is literally written and re-written in form of contemporary poetry, which reacts to Brexit and, more importantly, scrutinises British Euroscepticism. According to Menno Spiering, the UK would not have been able to define itself as being unique within but also supposedly independent from Europe (or the EU) without perceiving it as the Other or the continental culture in direct contrast to the island mentality. However, rapprochement with Europe and cultural reconciliation arise in the literary texts which have been previously discussed. In the poems by Simon Armitage, Sean O'Brien and David Clarke, Europe and Britain are not presented as two distinct entities – even though the British perspective is still somehow set apart from the European, an oppositional thinking seems to have been overcome, after Brexit worsened the internal division of the UK.

Can Brexit poetry, therefore, be termed "political"? The poems are definitely political in that their creative inspiration derives from political events and their style is far from neutral. But to classify them as merely political (Day 2017) would disregard the poets' literary achievements in the collections. Broadly, this type of poetry can be classified as introspective (i.e. concerned with the reasons and impact of Brexit) on the one hand, and outward-looking (i.e. returning to the European culture in search of common ground, yet not in the sense of an overall "cosmopolitanism" in "Brexlit" (Shaw 2018: 16)), on the other. The latter specifically employs Europhile elements and intertextual references to culture, literature, history, etc. to highlight that British identity is intertwined with European identity. Other writers like Carol Ann Duffy with *Sincerity* (2018) or Jane Commane with

Assembly Lines (2018) can be counted among those who combine these two strands as well. Structurally, the poems typically use run-on lines, also over stanzas, to connect the seemingly disconnected parts again. To conclude, Brexit poetry attempts to counterbalance the predominance of Eurosceptic tendencies in public and political discourse by revisiting Europe's heritage.

Notes

[1] In her speech, Thatcher expressed her doubts about the European project with regard to sovereignty and ideological aspects: "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels. Certainly, we want to see Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way which preserves the different traditions, parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries" (Thatcher 1988).

[2] There are a number of works, which provide a detailed overview, e.g. Stevens (2021); Tournier-Sol and Gifford (2015); Tombs (2021).

[3] France, a major antagonist in the past centuries, vetoed the UK's application for the EEC twice in the 1960s. Within the newly founded community, the image of Germany, formerly responsible for the horrors of the Second World War, soon started to be replaced by that of a powerful and united Germany, which led to growing anxiety on the British side in the 1980s (Reynolds 2019: 97, 101).

[4] In this regard, it is important to note that British media is mostly Eurosceptic and disseminates this kind of discourse further (e.g. Daddow 2015).

[5] Oppermann, Beasley and Kaarbo argue convincingly that the United Kingdom will probably end up in an isolationist role in terms of foreign policy after Brexit created a "role crisis" (2020: 145).

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