PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

THE EXPLORATION AND REPRESENTATION OF "ENGLISHNESS" IN IAN MCEWAN'S NOVEL "THE INNOCENT"

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Introduction. Postmodern writers and scholars have focused on examining national identities as constructed phenomena. In modern British literature, such writers as Julian Barnes ("England, England"), Salman Rushdie ("The Satanic Verses") and many others have deconstructed and revised English national identity and traditional notion of "Englishness" [1]. Ian McEwan, one of the critically acclaimed modern British authors, is known for his psychologically complex novels that explore themes of morality, identity, and relationships. He has addressed the representation of the English and "Englishness" in his novels "Atonement", "The Cockroach", "Saturday" and others [2; 3; 4].

Aim. This paper aims to demonstrate how Ian McEwan explores and represents the concept and features of "Englishness" in his novel "The Innocent" (1990) through the character evolution and relationships of the protagonist.

Major issues. Ian McEwan's "The Innocent" is a novel that intricately weaves themes of identity, relationships, and geopolitics in the tense atmosphere of Cold War Berlin. The novel creates the image of the English and explores the concept of "Englishness" through the evolution of the protagonist, Leonard Marnham, and his interactions with other characters, particularly Americans and Germans. "Englishness" is portrayed as a complex and evolving identity, shaped by historical context, personal traits, and international relationships. This paper will examine the representation of "Englishness" in the novel, Leonard's personal embodiment of English traits, and their reception by other nations.

The author of the novel consistently uses "English", "Englishman" and "Englishness" (53 references) rather than "British" (21 references), reflecting both the historical period and the specific identity and suggesting a deliberate focus on English rather than British national identity [5]. The distinction between "Englishness" and Britishness is a recurring theme, with the narrative

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focusing on Leonard's English identity rather than a broader British one. As Ian McEwan said in one of his interviews, "I am an English writer, not a British one" [6].

McEwan's portrayal of "Englishness" is rooted in traditional stereotypes, particularly emotional restraint, social awkwardness, and adherence to customs. Leonard Marnham, described as a "clumsy, reticent Englishman who knew so little about his feelings" [5, p. 105], embodies the archetype of a reserved Englishman. His inability to express his emotions openly is a recurring theme [5, p. 16, 52, 99–100, 105], highlighting the cultural expectation of stoicism and self-control. This emotional restraint is both a source of strength and a limitation for Leonard, as it prevents him from fully engaging with his feelings and relationships [p. 24, 75, 90, 105, 135–136].

Social awkwardness is another defining characteristic of Leonard's "Englishness". His "English dither" [5, p. 4] in conversations, particularly with Americans, underscores his discomfort in social situations and his tendency to overthink [5, p. 4, 8, 40, 47, 90, 105]. This hesitation contrasts sharply with the confidence and directness of the Americans, further emphasizing Leonard's cultural identity [5, p. 7, 23, 115]. His awkwardness is also evident in his interactions with Maria, where his shyness and lack of experience make him endearing but also highlight his naivety [5, p. 73, 223].

References to English traditions, such as tea-making "in the English style" [5, p. 50] or English sausages [5, p. 78], serve as markers of Leonard's cultural identity. These small rituals provide comfort and a sense of familiarity in the foreign and often hostile environment of Berlin. However, they also underscore the insularity of "Englishness", as Leonard clings to these customs as a way of maintaining his identity in a rapidly changing world.

The novel situates the representation of the English within the broader geopolitical context of the Cold War, where shifting power dynamics challenge traditional notions of national identity. Leonard's observation that "his "Englishness" was not quite the comfort it had been to a preceding generation" [5, p. 7] reflects the decline of British influence in the post-war world. Unlike his father's generation, which took pride in Britain's victory in World War II [5, p. 5], Leonard belongs to a generation grappling with the reality of a diminished empire and the rise of new superpowers.

The contrast between English and American confidence is a recurring theme in the novel. Leonard notes that "Americans seemed utterly at ease being themselves" [5, p. 7], highlighting the cultural differences between the two allies. While the Americans exude self-assurance and assertiveness, Leonard's "Englishness" is characterized by hesitation and self-doubt [5, p. 55, 115–116]. This dynamic is further illustrated in Leonard's professional interactions, where he feels overshadowed by his American colleagues, such as Bob Glass.

The Americans' dominance in the surveillance project underscores the shifting balance of power between the two nations [5, p. 1, 11, 221]. This perception of "Englishness" is also reflected in the way the Americans view their British counterparts. Bob Glass's remark, "The British … They're so busy being gentlemen. They don't do their jobs" [5, p. 9], encapsulates the stereotype of English politeness as a hindrance to efficiency.

The English are also characterized by their position between the victorious allies and the defeated Germans. Leonard's initial perception of Germany as "above all a defeated nation" reflects the lingering pride and superiority of the British as victors of the war [5, p. 5]. However, this perspective is complicated by his growing relationship with Maria and his increasing awareness of post-war Berlin. The novel portrays "Englishness" as both a source of pride and a burden.

Leonard Marnham serves as a microcosm of "Englishness", embodying its defining traits while also struggling with its limitations. There are 15 predicates in the novel which directly refer to Leonard as being English, accompanied by such characteristics as "shy" [5, p. 53], "quiet" [5, p. 89], "clumsy, reticent" [5, p. 105], "kind and gentle" [5, p. 223]. His shyness and reserve are central to his character, as seen in his interactions with Maria and his colleagues. Maria describes him as a "shy Englishman with the steady gaze and the long lashes" [5, p. 53], emphasizing his quiet demeanour and introspective nature. This shyness, while endearing, also isolates Leonard, as he finds it difficult to connect with others. Leonard's struggle between traditional English restraint and personal growth is a key theme in the novel. His journey from a timid, inexperienced young man to someone capable of committing both love and violence reflects the tension between his cultural upbringing and individual desires.

Leonard's relationships with Maria and his American colleagues play a crucial role in his evolution as a character and his manifestation of "Englishness". His relationship with Maria symbolizes the potential for reconciliation and healing between nations. As Bob Glass notes, "Leonard and Maria belong to countries that ten years ago were at war. By engaging to be married, they are bringing their own peace, in their own way, to their nations" [5, p. 124]. Their love transcends the historical enmity between England and Germany, offering a vision of hope and unity in a divided world. The novel suggests that personal relationships, such as marriages across borders, can foster understanding and make it "slightly harder each time for them to go to war ever again" [5, p. 124].

In contrast, Leonard's professional dynamics with the Americans highlight the challenges of collaboration and the cultural differences between the two nations. Leonard's discomfort with the Americans' assertiveness underscores

his sense of inferiority and his struggle to assert himself [5, p. 3–4, 127]. For example, he feels self-conscious about his appearance and behaviour [5, p. 4, 7], as seen when he decides against removing his tie "in case the two Americans had already noticed … it" [5, p. 28]. This insecurity reflects the broader tension between the declining British Empire and the rising American superpower.

In "The Innocent", Ian McEwan uses Leonard Marnham's character and experiences to explore the complexities of "Englishness" in the context of post-war Berlin. Through Leonard's emotional restraint, social awkwardness, and adherence to tradition, the novel portrays "Englishness" as both a source of identity and a limitation. The power dynamics of the Cold War challenge traditional English identity, as Leonard navigates his position between the confident Americans and the defeated Germans. The novel suggests that "Englishness", like Leonard himself, is a fluid and evolving identity, shaped by historical context, personal experiences, and international relationships.

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