

# MEDIA'S ROLE IN CREATING THE ILLUSION OF FREEDOM DURING THE UK REFERENDUM REFLECTED IN SAM BYERS' *PERFIDIOUS ALBION*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Sam Byers' depiction of the media as an efficient tool of creating the illusion of freedom and manipulating the voters in the Brexit campaign. Byers' novel published two years after the Referendum, in a time of confusion and uncertainty, as an emotional response to the turbulent period in the UK's history invites us to reflect on media's power to feed the illusion of a liberating move, incite fear and provoke anxiety and tension. Our study is divided into two sections, the first one dealing with the structure of the novel, the grammar features and the lexis, the figures of speech and the employment of evocative names, and, the second section exploring the elements of the novel that enable the author to capture the mood of a nation divided by Brexit and losing its identity.

The article concludes that Byers' novel insists on the media's impact during a tumultuous time in the UK history and underlines the new paradigm of journalism which seems to be focusing on reaction rather than on objectivity.

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## 1. Introduction

Sam Byers is a British novelist, whose debut novel entitled *Idiopathy* was published in 2013. In 2018, he published *Perfidious Albion*, in which he approaches themes such as the comfort of daily life and personal liberation and the human being's fixation on wellness which he will develop in his latest novel published in 2021, *Come Join our Disease*. In *Perfidious Albion*, Byers focuses on the idea that human beings have reached a point of carelessness and scrupulousness while the society around them lost its values and the planet around them decays.

Although relatively recently published, the novel has raised interest among journalists, scholars and literary critics, but no complex and detailed study has been previously undertaken on this literary text. Everitt wrote about *Brexit* in 2021, making the distinction between hopeful and hopeless *Brexit* fiction and including Byers' novel in the *hopeless* category of *Brexit* fiction. Our perspective on the novel was formed by examining Byers' interviews and online literary reviews.

### 1.1. Conceptual Delimitations

After the 2016 referendum, the UK had to withdraw from the EU as softly as possible, doing its best to protect its citizens' rights and to maintain the best relations with the former partners considering that a good part of the British economy was fuelled by laws and agreements with the European countries. The whole process of UK's leaving the EU was called *Brexit*, a term coined by Peter Wilding who added *Brexit* to its volumes. He wrote about "Brexit" in May 2012, eight months before the then Prime Minister David Cameron had announced he would be holding a referendum: "Unless a clear view is pushed that Britain must lead in Europe at the very least to achieve the completion of the single market then the portmanteau for Greek euro exit might be followed by another sad word, *Brexit*" was his prediction quoted by Sean O'Grady, in *The Independent*, *Brexiticon*:

*A full dictionary of Brexit-related jargon*, 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2018. It seems Wilding was inspired by the term Grexit as at the beginning of 2012 the whole world was talking about the Greek crisis and the possible withdrawal of the Greek from the euro zone. In 2016, Collins Dictionary named *Brexit* the word of the year while O'Neill considered it "the word on everyone's lips". (Moseley T., 2016) Specialists in linguistics talk about the interesting way in which the word "exit" behaves like suffix and the fact that new suffixes usually arise rarely.

Some scholars consider UK's decision of leaving the EU as relying on irrationality and intolerance leading Britain on the way to hysteria and narrow-mindedness. Others consider Brexit just another way in which the British citizens wanted to show that they do matter and that they really are different. It may not be an antithesis to European Integration but rather a way to differentiate Britishness from Europe. Nevertheless, within the borders of the UK, the divisions, which some authors considered to have been born in the pre-Brexit period, therefore were not considered a consequence of the Brexit phenomenon, led to a national crisis.

The fact that Brexit was a process which took time and had significant consequences is not the object of our study. Nevertheless, the whole phenomenon cannot be explored as an isolated economic or political event. These considerations are exposed by Byers in his book where such issues as identity, communication and human interrelations are illustrated the way the author himself viewed and understood them during the Referendum. The author does not question the legitimacy of the results, nor does he express his support for one side or another. Byers simply provides a general picture of the crisis the way he viewed it through the lens of media.

The consequence of our living in a highly technologized world was reflected in the way all the internet users, regardless of their being social media users or not, have been running into Brexit-related news and posts while being online. The word and all the issues related to it could be found anywhere.

Brexit was a phenomenon strong enough to inspire a literary movement The *Financial Times* called Brexlit, dealing, directly or indirectly, with the causes and

implications of the Brexit referendum, some of them depicting a hopeless landscape, others, on the contrary, presenting a hopeful perspective. Brexlit is relevant example of how fiction can absorb and reflect contemporary political issues putting down the state of a nation, its emotion, its division, its tumult and its crises generated by an unprecedented phenomenon in UK's history.

Sam Byers' *Perfidious Albion* (2018) focuses on media and internet in the context of the UK referendum and their role in the identity crises generated by Brexit. Other Brexlit authors who explored the same issue providing similar or different perspectives were Ali Smith in her novel *Autumn* (2016), Jonathan, in *Coe Middle England* (2018), Ian McEwan, in *The Coakroach* (2019), Linda Grant, in *A Stranger City* (2019), etc.

## **2.Literature Review and Methodological Approach**

Our study provides a discourse analysis of this literary text, focusing both on the content of the message and on the way the author chose to expose it to the reader, namely the code (the language) employed in the selected novel.

The novel provides reflections on the media's role in a society which had lost its values and principles, and a sample of that society is the field of journalism. Language is a key tool both in journalism and in Byers' novel and our study investigates the way the author employs language to deliver a written message, a novel. Our research is an attempt to answer the following question: how did Sam Byers reflect media's role in the 2016 referendum in UK in the novel *Perfidious Albion*?

What our study aims to understand is the way Byers succeeded in depicting media's significant contribution to the Brexit crisis by being involved in the Brexit campaign, sharing sides and frequently employing impactful and sometimes hyperbolic and apocalyptic lexis with the clear purpose of persuading the reader to share their openly expressed viewpoint.

### 3.Genre. Structure and Grammar Features

The literary text under discussion is labelled as a work of dystopian fiction, a state-of-the-nation-novel, a political prose narrative, modelled on a certain strand of Victorian novels by such writers as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and Anthony Trollope. Such novels generally deal with various characters in an urban setting, typically conveying a modern sense of confusion. This genre was recently revived by authors publishing under the Brexit fiction umbrella such are: Jonathan Coe, Anthony Cartwright, Ali Smith and Sam Byers.

Byers' novel *Perfidious Albion* fits into this category of fiction as it describes the general atmosphere in UK on the background of a complex phenomenon such as Brexit and explores the role of media and internet, as two efficient tools in the Brexit Campaign in the UK referendum in 2016. The novel is considered a dystopia "bearing the markers of lived experience as dystopian writings must foreground the real world, a real society in which specific atrocities are traceable" (Culea, 2016, 63).

Another aspect worth mentioning is the fact that it is structured upon seven chapters bearing no title. Byers chose to number the seven sections of his novel as follows: 0000, 0001, 0010, 0011, 0100, 0101, 0000. The fact that the last chapter of the novel is numbered 0000, as the first chapter of the novel, suggests the hermetically closed circularity of the novel, the fact that there is no way out of the dystopic England depicted across the novel, no future for the country, as there is nothing that matters more than "now, the stuff which is so vital, so now". (Byers S., 2018, 4)

The action takes place in 2020, in a small fictional English town called Edmundsbury, a town which "increasingly existed in the collapsed distinction between creativity and commerce" (Byers S., 2018, 5). The main character is Hugo Bennington, the leader of the England Always Party, Robert, a journalist and his partner, Jess, an old man Darkin, and a black woman named Trina. They all interact mainly through cyberspace. Green is a large tech company which uses the inhabitants of Edmundsbury

as lab rats for data-mining experiments without their consent- allusion to what Cambridge Analytica did in 2016. According to Mark Scott, in Cambridge Analytica helped cheat Brexit vote and US election, The Cambridge Analytical scandal, which implied the analysis of 50 million Facebook users, may have led to the final Brexit outcome. Byers alludes that media's *efficiency* during the pre-referendum period was measured by the way it succeeded in manipulating public opinion and in getting to a narrow pro-Leave victory.

#### 4. The Use of Language

The lexical choice of the author in a literary text plays a crucial role and Byers did not choose his words randomly in *Perfidious Albion*. It is obvious that, as he himself declared, he kept reading, watching and following everyday news to keep him updated on the issue. For instance, many of the words given below had been also employed by media during the Brexit Campaign to incite fear and provoke vehement reactions among UK citizens.

Most of the British worldwide known newspapers depicted the phenomenon of immigration as a national threat<sup>1</sup>, the newspapers were rife with titles talking about the increasing rate of unemployment among British citizens, the economic insecurity, the high taxes the UK had paid as a member of the EU, the vehement titles about taking back control and the idealist articles about nationalism and the greatness of Britain, in or out the EU. Many of the issues the media focused on during the referendum period were also exploited by Byers in his novel. Such issues are also used by Byers' main character, Hugo Bennington, in the articles he published in *The Recorder*. Many of the nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs which can be found in figure 1 are excessively used in the novel, used by the main characters or by Byers' intervention in order to complete the description of the general state of the country. The nouns, such are *threat*, *fear*, *genocide*, *anger*, *insecurity* are used to describe the bleak perspective Byers presents to the reader while the verbs *to threaten*, *to burst*, *to hate*, *to suspect*, *to chase*, come to provide a perfect

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<sup>1</sup> This is not uncommon for other media outlets from Europe, too. See, for example, Amălăncei, B. M., Suci, A.I., *Cultural Diversity Matters – How Discourse Shapes Perspectives on Migrant Populations (CultDivMas). Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media*, Baku International Multicultural Center, Baku, Azerbaijan, 2022, for an exploration of the discursive means of shaping perspectives on migrant populations by the Romanian mass media, between 2017–2021.

description of what journalism is about, according to the author of the novel, reaction. All the articles written by Bennington in *The Recorder*, are chasing reaction from the readers, trying to get something from them, not to provide objective, relevant and true information.

<b>NOUNS</b>	<b>ADJECTIVES</b>	<b>VERBS</b>	<b>ADVERBS</b>
<b>Threat</b>	<b>Alarming</b>	<b>To Threaten</b>	<b>Increasingly</b>
<b>Fear</b>	<b>Sinister</b>	<b>To Erode</b>	<b>Roughly</b>
<b>Genocide</b>	<b>Fearful</b>	<b>To Burst</b>	<b>Superficially</b>
<b>Hatred</b>	<b>Provokative</b>	<b>To Mass</b>	<b>Ostentatiously</b>
<b>Hostility</b>	<b>Dramatic</b>	<b>To Hate</b>	<b>Hugely</b>
<b>Anger</b>	<b>Threatening</b>	<b>To suspect</b>	<b>Depressingly</b>
<b>Insecurity</b>	<b>Toxic</b>	<b>To chase</b>	<b>Shatteringly</b>

**Table 1.** Lexical Items Depicting the Brexit Crisis in “Perfidious Albion”

Some of the adjectives and the adverbs from in Table 1 are employed by Byers as intensifiers across the novel. It is also a strategy the media brilliantly employed during the campaign. All across the newspaper articles, the headlines were very impactful, especially in the articles openly sharing a pro-Brexit view. In *Perfidious Albion*, Byers borrowed this technique, and his novel abounds in such adjectives and adverbs with negative meaning or provoking an alarming and threatening feeling to the reader though he does not express his own point of view on the issue.

Byers chose these powerful words in order to suggest, from the very beginning of his novel, the importance of ideas expressed using words, in written or spoken messages, delivered via media’s means in the novel under discussion. However, the whole declaration made by Subcommandante Marcos is not as pessimistic as Byers’ perspective is as he urges people to be confident and build a new world:

“The world we want to transform has already been worked on by history and is largely hollow. We must nevertheless be inventive enough to change it and build a new world. Take care and do not forget ideas are also weapons”.

Therefore, Marcos suggests that we can build a new world while Byers suggests there is no way out of the dystopic world we are living in. Ideas seen as weapons is a very powerful and suggestive metaphor and Byers develops and enriches it across the novel. The weapons media uses to manipulate and to get profit out of it are ideas and language is a key element in ideas' way towards the reader.

Byers' novel abounds in metaphors depicting the whole phenomenon, its causes and its impact at all levels of life in UK. Trina's tweet "#whitemengenocide. Lol" is considered by Robert's editor, Silas, a "godsend". The author suggests that nowadays journalism has nothing to do with ethics, truth and objectivity. A controversial tweet, like that posted by Trina, is considered to be a strike of luck by Silas as it raises vehement reactions from the readers and thus brings fame to the journalists.

Darkin's house, which is in a precarious state and will soon be demolished, is nothing but a projection of the general state of a nation, UK, in a moment of national crisis, the general atmosphere in a country on the brick of collapse.

An important aspect across the novel is suggested by the use of the black and white contrast. Byers depicts "a world reduced to its starkest black-and-white simplicities". This relevant description of the British society suggests the fact that, in the context of the 2016 referendum, the whole situation of the country which had to make a radical decision was reduced to one simple question that could be found on the ballot paper of the referendum: *Leave or Remain*. The same symbolic contrast can be found in Ali Smith's *Autumn* which emphasizes the same idea. It was a narrow choice. Both authors suggest that people were not allowed to provide other answers, there was no middle way, no shades of grey. It was black or white, leave or remain a member of the European Union.

Byers also uses evocative names to depict the picture of a country which had lost its equilibrium, its sense of identity, and its set of values. The author has chosen Edmondsbury, a small English town, to be the setting of his novel, a micro vision of UK, a slice of the whole picture. It was not a random choice as he wanted to suggest a reversed set of values both in journalism and in UK, as a nation, as Bury St. Edmunds is Byers' native town. He switched the order of the words in order to imply that the society he is depicting is nothing but a small projection of a UK in which people's perceptions about right and wrong, lie and truth are turned upside down.



## 5. Reflecting Media's Role in the Brexit Campaign

### 5. 1. Media and the National Crisis in *Perfidious Albion*

Byers projects the Brexit crisis first at an individual level, focusing on Robert's lost principles when he starts writing articles to provoke reaction-abandons his convictions for the sake of clicks and reaction. *Any reaction is better than no reaction*. He focuses on confirming and validating his readers' understanding of the world. Objectivity in journalism is a virtue which has been entirely lost, according to Byers. Media succeeds in affecting his sense of identity and alters his set of values and principles. Cooperation to provide objective and useful information to the reader is not a goal anymore for Robert as Byers suggests that:

*"There was no way to progress by cooperating. What you needed was a crisis and when that crisis came you needed to withhold the solution from your colleagues for as long as possible in order to, with luck, solve it single-handedly"* (Byers S., 2018, 158).

This suggestion that journalists should not work in teams but keep everything for themselves and even take benefit from a crisis comes to complete the picture of nowadays journalism facing one of the biggest challenges the fact that quality does not sell anymore. Robert has to focus on volume and clicks whether they come out of hatred or out of love makes no difference as what "people are saying is not as interesting and important as the fact that they are saying stuff". (Byers S., 2018, 147)

Eventually, Robert sadly reaches the conclusion that: "Silas was right: hatred, pushback, dissent were all just modified matrices of the only things that meant anything: impact and volume". (Byers S., 2018, 278) Media disregards both people and ethics and Robert is just one of the so many journalists writing fake news or making something out of nothing. The moral and intellectual decay is felt at a national level in all the fields of daily life.

*"The country was overrun, under threat, increasingly incapable. Hordes of immigrants massed at its borders. Its infrastructure frayed at the seams.*

*Basic morality was eroding at an alarming rate, worn down by tolerance, permissiveness and turpitude". (Byers S., 2018, 24)*

There are three important elements which enabled Byers build the picture of the media in the novel: the depiction of a key character very similar to the leader of the pro-Brexit campaign, Bennington, the presentation of the Recorder, a sort of pro-Brexit tabloid example, but also the reflection of media's corruption and lack of objectivity and impartiality, and the alarming comparison between the Griefers' experiment and the Brexit Campaign suggesting that people had always been manipulated, they had always been part of bleak scenario.

They are gradually exposed building a climax by the end of the novel, an efficient way to express the author's pessimistic view on the issue.

Both Byers and media focused on a key figure which in Byers' novel is Hugo Bennington, a controversial character openly sharing his radical political viewpoints, most of them in agreement with Nigel Farage's opinions.

In 2019, Marc D'Arcy, Parliamentary correspondent for BBC News, wrote Nigel "Farage: The Story of Mr. Brexit" insisting on his political force and describing him to be one of the most influential and controversial politicians of our era. "Brexit is his baby, if anyone is the father". (D'Archy M., 2019) In *Perfidious Albion*, one of the main characters is a Farage-like figure. Mr. Brexit's projection in the novel is Hugo Bennington who is a contributor and who writes for "The Recorder". Although never explicitly mentioned in the novel, the similarity between Byers' main character and Nigel Farage is obvious.

They both used media to express their opinions about white English people as being more deserving than their minority counterparts- "an ugly representation of the most xenophobic incarnations of English nationalism", as Everitt described it in 2021. Hugo Bennington's - racial diversity is incompatible with Englishness and he uses his voice as a way of deliberately fanning the flames of racial hatred. (Everitt D., 2021, 161)

Both Bennington and Farage are populist politicians. The British society is depicted as confused. Its values had been warped to defend the incitement of xenophobia and white nationalism for the simple reason of being popular. The obvious similarity

between the two is also present in the way they both delivered their messages. A very relevant aspect regarding Byers' lexical choices is the fact that he employs three key nouns with negative connotation, namely: *hatred*, *fear* and *racism*, which are commonly used by the two similar figures, Bennington and Farage.

*Hatred* is a noun both Bennington, Byers' character, and Farage frequently employ:

*"You are nobody until somebody hates you. Hatred equals hate clicks so, you know, win."* (Byers S., 2018, 9)

In Nigel Farage's speech as well, hatred is depicted as the symbol of power. Moreover, he even bragged about his being considered "the most hated man in Britain" (Hope C., 2021) and about hatred helping him become who he was in an interview.

On the other hand, there is *fear*, another key concept both figures excessively exploited while defending their perspectives. Hugo was old enough to remember the days when politics was about reassuring people and he insists on the fact that those days were over and the best thing a good politician could do was "to keep them fearful". (Byers S., 2018, 78) Nigel Farage himself used fear to get what he wanted while he firstly mocked Remainers for "Project Fear" and afterwards he was accused them of trying to profit from the politics of fear during the Brexit Campaign.

The central concept of the book is by far *racism*. In this regard, Trina's tweet, "#whitemengenocide. Lol" (Byers S., 2018, 149), is very illustrative. After vehemently denying his being racist, Bennington eventually debunks the perfect image of the everyday Englishman he was trying to depict in his column in "The Recorder", by saying that: "this tweet was written by somebody who is basically just a woman, some black woman, she is not a somebody".(Byers S., 2018, 149) These words come to complete the whole portrait of a politician and a journalist who openly exposes a misogynist and racist points of view, being unaware of the revealing nature of his confessions.

Nigel Farage is also well-known for his sexist remarks about women, questioning their intelligence and their positions in business and work and for his controversial poster representing immigrants invading the UK territory. His anti-immigration poster, which was reported to the Police, depicting mostly non-white immigrants and suggesting that breaking free of the European Union and taking back control would stop the immigration

phenomenon, clearly expressed Farage's racist attitude very much similar to Bennington's perspective.

Consequently, the similarity between the two figures cannot be ignored and media was the tool they both efficiently used to deliver their messages. In fact, the idea that media can be so easily used to shape attitudes, opinions and even values and principles is a warning Byers gives us all across the novel suggesting that we all live in this reality, we are all part of it and we all have to cope with it.

### **5.2. The Illusion of Freedom – The Griefer's Experiment vs. the Brexit Campaign**

The illusion of freedom can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, the false idea of free media and, on the other hand, people's perception about their own freedom of thought and expression. Media should provide objective and relevant information, avoiding backing sides and expressing personal views on the related issues. Nevertheless, in Byers' novel, media is nothing but an efficient tool of manipulation in the hands of politicians.

The idea that people could have been manipulated during the Brexit campaign, the dual choice which could be found on the ballot paper, the Leave-vote winning by a narrow margin and the split decision mirroring the general feeling of confusion and disunity were nothing but clues indicating people's perception of freedom. How did the UK citizens feel and how did the media speculate their need for freedom? This is a relevant question that Byers, without mentioning it explicitly in the novel, is trying to answer across *Perfidious Albion*.

In the novel, Green used the population of Edmundsbury in an experiment on the illusion of freedom. Edmundsbury's citizens were threatened by the so-called Griefer's, data terrorists, pretending to reveal private personal data projecting anxiety and fear.

This is an alarming comparison which may suggest that the UK citizens, during the Brexit campaign, had been manipulated and had become the subject of a dystopian experiment on how people behave under threat and fear. The Leave supporters exploited

people's anxiety and fear regarding immigration and unemployment. During the Brexit campaign, the UK's citizens were presented a bleak vision of UK, fighting against Europe's supremacy, paying high taxes to the European Union, not being able to decide for itself, invaded by thousands of immigrants, etc. The way media is used to attack people's most vulnerable aspects of life is very well depicted by Byers and the Griefers' threatening message: "We are the Griefers. We want to ask you: What don't you want to share? Remember, Edmundsbury! We are your face!" (Byers, S., 2018, 59-71) is very revealing. What the author suggests is that the final results of the EU referendum in 2016 in UK were part of an experiment and the worldwide known British newspapers have willingly taken part in it. The question is: How could media influence the results of the referendum in UK?

The first argument Byers brings is the fact that nowadays readers are looking for validation. They need somebody to validate their understanding of the world and media is more than just somebody, it is a huge force and whenever it validates people's thoughts and confirms their expectations it becomes credible, enjoyable, likeable and pleasing. What the author implies is that media has transformed into a sort of industry focusing on pleasing the largest category of population possible. It is an alarming idea Byers projects in the novel as media is supposed to be credible due to its main principles: objectivity and truth or reality. While Byers suggests that during the Brexit referendum period in UK all media did was please and confirm other people's thoughts and opinions. Consequently, he mentions a reversed set of principles in journalism.

*"The truth was, his job as a columnist was not to say what he thought, it was to say what people expected him to think, and ...what people expected him to think was exactly the same as what they themselves thought, meaning that in reality, his job was to say what other people already thought so that they no longer had to feel guilty about thinking it." (Byers S., 2018, 118)*

The fact that newspapers can influence public opinion is not questionable anymore. In order to enhance the same idea and even give it a more dramatic connotation, Byers implies that another way media could have influenced the results of the referendum in UK was by confirming people's fears.

*“Like any long-standing Recorder reader, he reads not to have his fears assuaged, but to have them confirmed.” (Byers S., 2018, 24)*

This suggestion that people read to have their fears and convictions confirmed made Robert abandon his healthy principles about journalism and follow an easier path to build a career: give people what they wanted. Byers also suggests that journalism has the power “to make something out of anything”. This is an allusion to the fake news the Brexit Campaign used to manipulate people into voting pro-Leave. The author uses capital letters to express the alarming content of his message.

*“It’s not really a thing, but it could very easily become a thing if WE WANT IT TO.” (Byers S., 2018, 149)*

The author supports his consideration by bringing arguments suggesting that journalism had lost its path. The reversed set of values in journalism is very well reflected in the dialogue between Robert and his editor, Silas, which very revealing.

“-There’s a big difference between an allegorical bomb and a real one, Silas!

- To us, Robert, the allegorical bomb is the real bomb, and the real bomb is just an allegory. As far as opinion is concerned, this is the real bomb.” (Byers S., 2018, 182)

The general atmosphere which Byers describes in media is projected at a national level. It is a bleak vision of the British society and Byers’ alarming suggestion that we are all part of this reality whether we like it or not, whether we admit it or not, comes to complete the general atmosphere of hopelessness and disillusionment.

*“Somewhere in the midst of this infiltration, England Always, chests puffed with post-exit pride, had begun their transformation from a party concerned with redefining England’s place in the world to a party preoccupied with people’s place in England...Brexit was over, but the energy it had accumulated had to be retained. Fears needed to be redirected. Hatred needed to pivot.” (Byers S., 2018, 119)*

Byers depicts a dystopic society in which media has the power to turn anything into something, politicians govern through fear, people read to confirm their thoughts and fears and journalists write for clicks and volume. Media, as a very important factor in

shaping both the collective opinion and each individual's point of view, uses technology, the ubiquitous and indispensable tool, which helps it manipulate people into thinking in the same way as it happened during the 2016 referendum in UK. Byers' vision is a pessimistic one as he considers that we cannot escape from technology:

*"There was nothing on Earth that was not technology". (Byers S., 2018, 382)*

The language employed in Brexit fiction, and in Byers' novel specifically, can be considered a common and accessible one. Byers does not hide behind poetical language, on the contrary, his way of using language is brilliantly updated. He even uses swearing and bad language in the novel. It is a language his readers perfectly understand, hence the accessibility of the novel. Besides his impressive use of language, there are many other tools that Byers uses to achieve his goal and one of them is the intriguing manner in which he has chosen both to start and to end his novel. From the first pages of the novel, Byers warns us that there is no way out of the situation. "What can be more now than now?" (Byers S., 2018, 21)

The novel ends abruptly: "And then" (Byers S., 2018, 383) Byers intentionally uses no punctuation to enhance the idea that there is no future, we are stuck in this dystopian England.

As a confirmation of the last words of the novel, as the reader turns the page, another intriguing and illustrative message can be found: "Error 404: The page you are looking for does not exist" (Byers S., 2018, 384). In a world dominated by technology, Byers' readers perfectly understand the internet code language. The author implies that there is no way out of this world in which fear and hatred need to pivot. The page does not exist, the future does not exist, the reader is stuck in a no-way-out society, world. The lack of punctuation, the use of capital letters, the use of the internet code, the use of the quotation from Subcommandante Marcos, at the beginning of the novel and the way the author chose to number the chapters of the novel are all meant to complete the bleak message of the literary text.

### **Conclusions and Further Thoughts**

Byers' novel draws our attention on the new paradigm of journalism which seems to be focusing on reaction rather than on objectivity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, on the way media can affect one's sense of identity and can shape one's own conceptions and projections about the reality. (in this case, about UK's withdrawal from the EU). Our analysis underlines the fact that no text producer, we have in view both written and oral texts producers, can be fully objective, there is always a mark of subjectivity, both on Byers's linguistic choices in the novel under discussion and in our way of analysing it as "Our words are never neutral" (Fiske J., 1994, 19), they convey how we see ourselves, our identity, knowledge, values and beliefs. (Todoli J., 2006) Consequently, our interpretation provides insight reflections on the selected literary text by exploring the perception of a complex phenomenon by a sharp observer who insists on the hidden aspects of media's power and its misuse in the context of EU referendum in the UK.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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