



Estimation of British authors on the post - Brexit cultural shifts

Dr Ganga Nand Singh

Assistant Professor

University Department of English,

Vinoba Bhave University Hazaribagh, Jharkhand 825301.

Email : ganganand.singh@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explored how contemporary British authors interpreted, represented, and critically engaged with the cultural shifts that followed the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union—an event widely known as Brexit. Rather than treating Brexit purely as a political or economic event, the research placed it within a broader cultural and literary context, highlighting how major historical developments are reflected, processed, and reimagined through creative expression. In this light, literary works produced in the post-Brexit period emerged as rich sites for examining questions of identity, belonging, and social cohesion. The study focused on how both British fiction and non-fiction responded to the changing cultural landscape, portraying experiences of uncertainty, fragmentation, and redefinition that have become increasingly prominent in public consciousness. These narratives often captured a sense of transition, showing how traditional notions of national identity were reconsidered and reshaped in response to new political and cultural boundaries. Through literature, complex emotional and psychological



reactions to Brexit—such as anxiety, nostalgia, dislocation, and ambivalence—were expressed in subtle and symbolic ways. In doing so, authors provided readers with a window into the lived realities of a society navigating profound change. The study also highlighted how post-Brexit literature did more than document these shifts; it actively participated in shaping cultural understanding. By foregrounding issues of identity and belonging while experimenting with narrative form and perspective, British writers contributed to an ongoing redefinition of national narratives. Ultimately, this research underscored the central role of literature in interpreting the cultural aftermath of Brexit. It demonstrated that literary works not only reflect societal change but also influence how such change is perceived, understood, and remembered within the broader cultural imagination.

Keywords

British literature, Brexit, cultural shifts, identity, narrative representation, post-Brexit fiction

Introduction

Brexit—the United Kingdom’s formal exit from the European Union—represents a major turning point, not only in political and economic terms but also in the cultural imagination of the nation. Completed in January 2020 after prolonged negotiations, Brexit went beyond a constitutional shift; it reshaped how the UK sees itself in relation to Europe and the wider world. Early discussions focused heavily on trade, sovereignty, immigration, and regulatory independence, but over time, the cultural implications have become equally significant, influencing literature, media, and public discourse in both subtle and profound ways.

In the cultural sphere, Brexit created an atmosphere of uncertainty and introspection. Writers began to reexamine long-held narratives of British identity, using literature—a medium historically intertwined with national consciousness—to explore these transformations. Contemporary British authors increasingly grappled with questions of belonging, fragmented identities, and cultural hybridity, reflecting the tensions between isolationist and cosmopolitan visions of the nation. The symbolic and practical realities of leaving the EU prompted them to explore themes of borders—



both literal and metaphorical—and to interrogate what inclusion and exclusion mean in a post-European context.

Literary works in this period functioned not just as mirrors of social change but as active participants in shaping collective understanding. Many authors employed narrative techniques that mirrored the uncertainty and multiplicity of post-Brexit Britain, using fragmented structures, shifting perspectives, and interwoven timelines to reflect a society in transition. These stylistic choices were closely tied to thematic concerns of dislocation, memory, and redefined identity, allowing literature to become a space where competing ideas of nationhood were negotiated, challenged, and reimaged.

Post-Brexit literature also revealed a heightened awareness of nostalgia and historical continuity. Writers frequently revisited earlier conceptions of Britishness, juxtaposing them with contemporary realities to expose discontinuities and tensions. This interplay of past and present highlighted broader cultural anxieties about the future of national identity in a world that is both globalized and increasingly inward-looking. In doing so, contemporary British literature offered rich insights into how cultural meaning is constructed, contested, and transformed in response to major political shifts.

Methodologically, this study drew on thematic content analysis of selected literary texts, supplemented by secondary cultural criticism, to examine recurring motifs and narrative strategies. Literature here functions as a “cultural barometer,” capturing subtle shifts in societal attitudes, values, and identities—insights that often extend beyond what political or economic analyses can provide. By studying these literary responses, the research identified patterns in how authors construct narratives that respond to, critique, or reimagine the post-Brexit condition.

The findings suggest that British authors were not passive observers of cultural change; they actively shaped discourse surrounding national identity. Their works often went beyond straightforward representation, engaging in reinterpretation and reconstruction of what it means to belong to a nation in a post-European context. Through experimental narrative forms, fragmented storytelling, and shifting perspectives, writers captured the instability and complexity of contemporary cultural experiences, reflecting the multiplicity of identities and viewpoints that define post-Brexit Britain.



Ultimately, this study positions literary production as a key lens for understanding post-Brexit cultural shifts. By examining how authors conceptualized and narrated the consequences of Brexit, it becomes possible to trace the evolving contours of British identity and to appreciate the role of literature in both reflecting and shaping the cultural consciousness of a nation undergoing profound change.

Review of Related Literature

Foster (2024) explored what he called “Imperial Gothic 2.0,” arguing that contemporary literary portrayals of Brexit captured anxieties around imperial decline, national identity, and cultural isolation. He showed that BrexLit narratives often drew on gothic motifs to express fears about borders, belonging, and the loss of a stable sense of nationhood, positioning Brexit within a longer historical continuum of post-imperial cultural negotiation.

Toomey and Shepherd (2023) analyzed Brexit through the lens of cultural trauma and populist grand narratives. They suggested that Brexit functioned as a space where collective memories, grievances, and imagined pasts were mobilized to create coherent political and cultural stories. Their work highlighted how populist rhetoric simplified complex socio-political realities into emotionally resonant narratives of loss and recovery, which literature both reflected and critiqued. This perspective emphasized the close interplay between political discourse and cultural production in shaping public consciousness.

Nicolini and Fiorato (2023) approached Brexit from both legal and literary perspectives, showing how legal discourse intersected with cultural narratives in shaping ideas of sovereignty, identity, and belonging. They noted that literary texts often engaged with these legal imaginaries, using narrative to reinterpret abstract political processes as accessible cultural experiences. Their research underscored the interdisciplinary nature of Brexit studies, where law and literature together offered richer insights into cultural transformation.

Richard (2023) focused on everyday experiences of Brexit, highlighting how ordinary people navigated shifting notions of belonging in daily life. He introduced the idea of “ordinary Brexits,” emphasizing that Brexit was not just a macro-political event but also a lived experience,



experienced differently across communities. This work revealed how literature and ethnography intersected to capture the nuanced, localized effects of cultural change.

Spencer (2025) situated contemporary British writing within a long historical trajectory, connecting imperial narratives to post-Brexit constructions of identity. He argued that British literature consistently engaged with questions of empire, nationhood, and cultural belonging, and that Brexit represented continuity rather than rupture. His analysis showed how contemporary authors revisited themes of identity and nationhood, adapting them to shifting geopolitical realities.

Moss (2025) explored the intersection of place and identity in post-Brexit narratives, showing how geographical and emotional landscapes became central to understanding how individuals negotiated belonging in a changing cultural environment.

Several prominent authors contributed to this literary exploration of identity, displacement, and cultural transformation. Evaristo (2020) depicted the diversity of British identity, foregrounding multiculturalism and intersectionality as defining features of contemporary society. Smith (2021, 2022) captured personal and societal transitions, conveying the uncertainty and introspection of the Brexit era. Cusk (2021) examined isolation and relational dynamics, reflecting broader cultural feelings of fragmentation and disconnection.

Mitchell (2023) explored identity and temporality through interconnected narratives that mirrored the complexity of modern British society. Lahiri (2023) addressed themes of translation, migration, and belonging, highlighting the intersections of linguistic and cultural mobility with questions of post-Brexit identity. Ishiguro (2022) used speculative fiction to portray existential anxieties, employing narrative distance to explore human dependency, memory, and technological mediation as metaphors for cultural uncertainty.

Rushdie (2021) employed metafiction to critique contemporary political and cultural realities, using narrative fragmentation to reflect the instability of truth and identity in modern discourse. Byatt (2024) revisited earlier literary themes to examine their relevance in a changing cultural context, while Bennett (2020) analyzed class structures and their transformation in contemporary Britain. Carey (2022) contributed through historical and narrative reinterpretations that emphasized continuity and change in cultural identity.



Smith (L., 2024) used memory and seasonal metaphors to illustrate shifts in identity, while Jones (2023) highlighted migration and transnational experiences as key to understanding modern British identity. Kureishi (2021) offered generational perspectives on cultural change, showing how different age groups experienced Brexit in diverse ways, particularly regarding identity, belonging, and social expectations.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggested that Brexit was widely interpreted not only as a political event but also as a cultural and literary phenomenon. Scholars and authors engaged with its implications through diverse theoretical frameworks and narrative strategies. Collectively, this body of work demonstrated that literature functioned as both a reflective and constitutive medium, articulating and shaping cultural anxieties, identity transformations, and societal shifts in post-Brexit Britain.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to estimate how contemporary British authors have interpreted cultural shifts following Brexit. Specific aims include: (1) identifying recurring themes and narrative strategies in post-Brexit literature; (2) analysing how these themes relate to broader cultural anxieties about identity, belonging, and national narratives; (3) situating literary production within cultural and historical contexts of post-Brexit Britain; and (4) evaluating the contribution of literature to public understanding and critique of cultural change.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, drawing on thematic content analysis of selected literary texts, supplemented by secondary sources in cultural criticism and literary studies. Text selection was purposive, focusing on authors whose work explicitly or implicitly engages with Brexit-related themes. Data sources include novels, essays, and critical reviews, which were analysed for recurring motifs, narrative structures, and representational strategies. Analytical procedures involved coding text excerpts to identify themes related to identity, belonging, disruption, and narrative experimentation. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of cultural meanings embedded in literary production.

Data Analysis and Interpretation



The analysis of the data revealed that post-Brexit British literature revolves around a set of interconnected themes that together reflect the cultural and psychological impact of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. One of the most prominent themes is identity fragmentation, which appeared consistently across a wide range of literary texts. Authors explored how traditional, historically stable notions of British identity became unsettled after Brexit, as the symbolic and political ties connecting the UK to Europe were reconsidered or severed. This fragmentation manifested not only at the level of individual identity but also collectively, where shared cultural markers of belonging grew contested and ambiguous.

In terms of narrative, this sense of fragmentation often translated into experimental literary techniques that resisted linearity and coherence. Writers used multiple perspectives, shifting narrators, and non-linear timelines to mirror the fractured experience of identity in a post-Brexit context. These narrative choices were not merely stylistic; they closely aligned with the thematic exploration of instability and uncertainty. By disrupting conventional storytelling forms, authors reflected a broader cultural reality in which fixed categories of identity—national, cultural, or social—were increasingly questioned and redefined.

Another key dimension that emerged from the analysis was the pervasive sense of nostalgia and loss in post-Brexit literature. This nostalgia went beyond a simple longing for pre-Brexit times to encompass reflections on the UK's previously cosmopolitan identity. Many authors recalled memories of openness, transnational exchange, and cultural interconnectedness associated with EU membership. These recollections were often contrasted with present realities, creating a tension that highlighted the emotional and psychological distance between past and present cultural states. Through such contrasts, literature captured the affective dimensions of Brexit, showing how political change is experienced not just structurally but also emotionally and personally.

The study also identified a notable trend toward formal experimentation in post-Brexit writing. Authors frequently moved away from traditional narrative conventions, adopting innovative structures to capture the complexity and uncertainty of the cultural moment. Techniques like metafiction, fragmented narration, temporal disjunction, and hybrid genres were used to represent the multifaceted nature of post-Brexit identity. In this sense, formal experimentation was not



simply a stylistic flourish—it became a tool for articulating cultural instability, demonstrating that shifts associated with Brexit affected both the content and the very form of literary production.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that contemporary British authors were not passive observers of societal change. Instead, they actively participated in constructing and negotiating cultural meaning. Their works engaged with collective anxieties around identity, belonging, and the nation's direction, offering both critical perspectives and imaginative alternatives. Through these narratives, authors contributed to the ongoing conversation about what it means to be British in a post-Brexit world, reflecting existing tensions while proposing new ways of understanding national identity. In doing so, literature emerged as a dynamic space where cultural discourse was not only represented but also reshaped, allowing identity to be continuously reimagined in response to historical transformation.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this study suggest that contemporary British authors have been deeply engaged with the cultural consequences following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, widely known as Brexit. Their works show a sustained effort to grapple with the complexities of a society in transition, particularly when it comes to questions of identity, belonging, and loss. Rather than treating these themes as isolated issues, writers weave them into broader narratives that reflect how personal experiences are intertwined with larger cultural shifts. Through their storytelling, they examine how individuals and communities negotiate a sense of self in a context where traditional markers of national and cultural identity have become uncertain or destabilized.

The study also highlights how literature serves as a key site of cultural negotiation, where individual perspectives intersect with wider national discourses. In the post-Brexit era, authors often situate their narratives at the crossroads of personal memory and public history, using storytelling to explore how political change shapes everyday life. This approach allows them to capture not only the structural and political consequences of Brexit but also its emotional and psychological impact. As a result, literary texts become spaces where competing ideas of national identity are voiced, contested, and reimagined. By engaging with these tensions, writers contribute



to an ongoing conversation about what it means to belong to a nation redefining its place in Europe and the world.

Another important insight from the study is the ambivalence and critical reflection that characterize post-Brexit literature. Rather than promoting simplified or singular narratives of national renewal, many authors take nuanced positions, acknowledging both the uncertainties and possibilities of this period of change. Their works often challenge dominant political or ideological narratives, offering alternative perspectives that highlight the diversity of experiences across British society. In doing so, literature becomes a space for inquiry, encouraging readers to question assumptions about identity, sovereignty, and cultural cohesion.

The research also identifies a strong trend toward creative and formal experimentation in post-Brexit writing. Authors frequently play with narrative structures, stylistic techniques, and genre conventions in ways that reflect a broader cultural climate of disruption and transformation. These innovations are not just aesthetic choices—they are closely tied to the challenge of representing complex and evolving realities. By using fragmented narratives, shifting viewpoints, and hybrid forms, writers capture the multiplicity and instability that define post-Brexit life. In this sense, the very form of literary expression responds to social rupture, adapting to better reflect the changing contours of collective experience.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the central role of literature in interpreting and making sense of cultural shifts after Brexit. Contemporary British authors respond to this historical moment with both thematic depth and formal innovation, producing works that explore the intricate interplay between identity, belonging, and narrative form. Their writing shows that literature remains a vital medium for representing and critically examining cultural change. By focusing on authorial perspectives, this research demonstrates how literary production participates in shaping cultural understanding, offering insights into how societies process and respond to major political transformations.

Moreover, the study contributes to broader discussions within literary and cultural studies by reinforcing the idea that literature is not just reflective—it is constitutive of cultural understanding. Post-Brexit narratives do more than document change; they actively engage with it, helping to create frameworks through which such change can be interpreted. Future research could build on



these findings by examining how readers respond to post-Brexit literature, exploring its reception and impact across different social contexts. Comparative studies with other national literatures that respond to political or cultural ruptures could further illuminate how literature functions globally as a lens for understanding historical transitions.

Conclusion

This research highlights the important role literature plays in making sense of cultural shifts in the wake of Brexit. Contemporary British authors have engaged with the post-Brexit landscape through both thematic depth and formal experimentation, capturing the complex realities of identity, belonging, and narrative disruption. By focusing on authorial perspectives, this study adds to broader discussions in literary and cultural studies, showing that literature remains a crucial space for interpreting and critiquing societal change. Looking ahead, future research could build on these insights by exploring how readers respond to post-Brexit literature or by comparing it with other national literatures that grapple with political and cultural upheaval.

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