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Call for Papers

Special Issue of the [*Journal for the Study of British Cultures*](#)

Brexit and the Divided Kingdom

Although it is yet too early to draw conclusions about the ongoing public debate on Brexit, Britain's tight vote to leave the European Union has certainly been read as a manifestation of deep divisions across the country. Political scientists Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin claim in "Britain after Brexit: A Nation Divided" (2017) that "for all the country's political parties, articulating and responding to the divisions that were laid bare in the Brexit vote will be the primary electoral challenge of tomorrow." The divisions brought into focus since the referendum are indeed manifold: 52% vs. 48%; England vs. Scotland vs. Wales vs. Northern Ireland; city vs. countryside; liberal vs. conservative; old vs. young; high vs. low level of education; affluent vs. poor; professional vs. manual; migrant vs. non-migrant, 'elite' vs. 'the people', etc. Importantly, these rifts are multi-dimensional, intersectional, and far from neatly binary, as they cut across the political spectrum, uprooting and reorganising traditional allegiances and socio-cultural affinities. The complex motivations behind the Brexit vote thus make visible the need to critically revisit established concepts of social and cultural analysis (such as cosmopolitanism, populism, nationalism, sovereignty, etc.) and to probe their heuristic value for explaining recent social, political, and cultural developments.

This need is also borne out by the multi-faceted and contradictory reactions to the referendum across politics, the media, and culture. Somewhat paradoxically, what seems to unite many of these reactions is a deeply ingrained 'us vs. them' mentality. *The Daily Mail* decried judges who had ruled that parliament as the sovereign must endorse Brexit as "Enemies of the People", while British author Julian Barnes criticised "an over-confident political elite" in his dissection of Tory party rhetoric for the *London Review of Books*. Theresa May sought to counter the social rifts in her speech on triggering Article 50 of the EU Treaty by pleading: "So let us do so together. Let us come together and work together. Let us together choose to believe in Britain with optimism and hope."

Some literary negotiations of the referendum have attempted to represent and give voice to people across the divides. Carol Ann Duffy's play *My Country: A Work in Progress* (2017), which is partly based on responses to interviews conducted by the UK Arts Councils in the British regions, includes the perspectives of Leave and Remain voters. A similar plurality marks the mini-plays *Brexit Shorts: Dramas from a Divided Nation* (2017), created by nine British playwrights and commissioned by *The Guardian*. Brexit novels such as Amanda Craig's *The Lie of the Land* (2017) or Douglas Board's *Time of Lies* (2017), by contrast, are satirical projections of an imagined post-Brexit Britain.

Bearing in mind that Brexit will remain an ongoing and dynamic phenomenon, the aim of the JSBC issue on "Brexit and the Divided Kingdom" is to analyse and critically assess the role of the discursive motif of 'a divided nation' in the context of the referendum. We are looking for contributions exploring British and European perspectives and we hope to see re-examinations of some entrenched debates about popular culture, media culture, and their relations to power. For instance: to what extent do literary/popular/media/academic reactions to Brexit respond to, and to what extent do they perpetuate divisions? Is the current public debate on Brexit conducive to bridging divides or is such a debate per se impossible in a digital world? Who is (in)audible and (in)visible within the Brexit debates? What channels are used and who are the (intended and actual) audiences? How do the postulated divisions call into question established tools of social and cultural analysis?

We invite contributions on the above and related topics, from cultural and literary studies, but also related disciplines such as political science, media studies, European history and human geography, with a view to national and transnational, present and past constellations, and to fictional and non-fictional materials. Individual contributions must address Brexit and relate it to the following or additional aspects:

- the employment, construction, and circulation of the tropes of 'a divided nation' in the context of Brexit,
- redefinitions of class, race, gender, age in political/literary/cultural debates about Brexit,
- Brexit and regionalism,
- Brexit and nationalism/national identity,
- academic, media, and/or cultural sector discourses on Brexit,
- Brexit in literature, drama, and the arts,
- Brexit in party politics and rhetoric,
- reactions to Brexit from outside the UK,
- discourses of populism(s) and elitism(s) in the context of Brexit,
- Brexit and migration,
- Brexit and austerity,
- Brexit and imperial nostalgia,
- ...

Please submit abstracts (300 words) and a short bio note **by April 16, 2018**, to all three guest editors:

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Finished papers (5,000 words) will be due by August 31, 2018.