

Founded in November 2009, The Albanian Society for the Study of English (ASSE) is devoted to the promotion of English and American studies in Albania. **in esse: English Studies in Albania**, a refereed scholarly journal, is part of the Society's activities. Its aim is to bring to the fore original work in linguistics, literary and translation studies and language teaching by scholars working in Albania and abroad.



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*Nation, nationality, nationhood:
What's in a name?*

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Introduction

This issue of *in esse: English Studies in Albania* is a collection of selected papers presented at the Second ASSE International Conference, which was held in Tirana, Albania, 2-4 May 2013. The conference topic “Nation, nationality, nationhood: What’s in a name?” was intended as a call to invite scholars to explore the present-day perceptions of concepts like “nation,” “nationality,” and “nationhood” in a globalized context. Although the concepts, usually associated with commonness of culture, language, history, ethnicity, religion and spirit, seem distant in the twenty-first century context marked by multiculturalism, intercultural and cross-cultural communication, it is intriguing to revisit them and look into the sensitivities and perceptions we can get of them given this context. The conference aimed to explore these concepts in literature, language and culture. The call proved provoking to the point of producing a good number of interesting papers, which dealt with “nation,” “nationality,” and “nationhood” from challenging perspectives and various areas of study.

Given the variety of ideas and perspectives, we decided to produce two volumes with selected papers and group them around common thematic concerns. The first volume contains papers on literature and literary studies, whereas the second, papers on cultural studies and language. The papers making part of the current issue of *in esse* are divided into three sections: *British and Commonwealth Literature*, *American and Native American Literature* and *Comparative Literature/Literary Criticism*. The papers grouped in the first two sections are organized following basically a chronological order in terms of literary development.

The first section contains five contributions, all of them diverse and wide-ranging, but fitting nicely together and focusing primarily on the concepts of “nation,” “nationalism,” and “national identity.”

The section opens with Sutapa Dutta’s paper, which traces the development of the novel back in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a period of expansion with the outside world, which saw the further growth of the British Empire and of the ideologies which kept it up for a long time. In this regard, the author sees the rise of the novel as coinciding with the rise of imperialism and

aiding the ideologies of the time and thus as the best means for the projection of cultural and national identities. In this paper, the author focuses on the early novels of this period in order to discuss their role in constructing 'Englishness' and in conveying a national vision to readers. More particularly, the author looks into how otherness was dealt with in the narratives of this period and how the noble and civilized Englishman came to stand for the national prototype.

Dieter Wessels discusses utopian and dystopian narratives, more precisely the societal patterns projected in these kinds of fiction. Given their futuristic perspective in projecting mankind, these narratives have often been filled with a pessimistic and frightening view of humanity essentially departing from its historic values and experiences. Even more pessimistic is the perspective offered by science fiction narratives, which foresee the complete deconstruction of human society and envision a new reconstruction process. The paper outlines some of these developments and aims to show what possible new, if any, social patterns could be brought about by this "renewal" process.

In his paper, Wojciech Klepuszewski discusses how national identity is shaped in Kingsley Amis's novels. For this purpose, the author has selected two novels, *One Fat Englishman*, as representing the author's viewpoint of what it means to live "there," which stands for abroad, and *I Like it Here*, as providing the opposite viewpoint, that is, what it means to live "here," or at home. The author analyses Amis's attitude to the concept of "abroadness" as reflected in both novels in order to point out Amis's affection for what is nationally familiar or belongs to "here."

Fiona Tomkinson takes up the issue of Irish nationalism in the novels of Iris Murdoch. She deals in particular with Murdoch's 1965 novel, *The Red and the Green*, and some other Irish characters that appear in her fiction. More precisely, the author looks into the connection between nationalism and existential conceptions of self, self-fashioning and freedom, which in *The Red and the Green* develops into an intertextual dialogue between Sartre and Yeats, or between a nationalism of a personified Ireland and a more existential nationalism, enacted in the conflict between Pat Dumay and his Protestant cousin Andrew Chase-White. The paraphrasing of Yeats's poem 'Easter 1916'

at the end of the novel seems to sustain Pat Dumay's ambivalent view of the tragic existentialism of Irish nationalism.

In his paper, Yildiray Cevik forwards a more political view of the nation by focusing on the situation in Cyprus as presented in Lawrence Durrell's travel book *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* (1957). Drawing on Durrell's three-year stay on the island, the book features the attempts and aspirations to unite the ethnicities on the island under 'one nation.' In this paper the author seeks to confront two perspectives, the Western and the orientalist, on this struggle for unification.

The second section, *American and Native American Literature*, contains five contributions which offer a wide-ranging perspective on nation and national identity following a chronological logic in presentation.

It opens with Armela Panajoti's contribution, which explores the concept of nation in Whitman's "Song of Myself." The author tries to argue that it is the various forms of the collective, regardless of age, class, gender, religions and so on, which shape the poem and thus inform Whitman's ideas of democracy, equality, unity and pantheism. At the core of it stands the 'multiplication' of the individual which makes of "Song of Myself" not only one of the most important epic poems in American literature that speaks for America but also one of the most romantic and idealistic poems about nation in world literature.

In her paper, Anna Samborowska discusses the role of tall tales in the creation of national identity and character. By arguing about the dual definition of national character as referring both to collective psychosocial characteristics of a nation and to a literary construct as well as by resorting to the concept of fluid identity, she chooses two American national characters, John Henry and Pecos, in order to highlight the deconstructive 'quality' of Americanness or its ongoing need for self-revision.

Artur Jaupaj discusses American character in the light of the cowboy myth and the American West. The fascination with the West cherished the fantasies of writers, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the 'discovery' and urbanization of the West by the end of the nineteenth century the interest in it waned. Nevertheless, there were attempts by writers to keep up the image of the frontier hero as shown by Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Jack Schaefer's *Shane* (1949). The author discusses both, the novel and

the film, as two important artistic endeavours that contributed to establish and keep alive the modern classic Western hero.

In her paper, Elonora Hodaj makes an overview of the Jewish American writers' attempt to overcome alienation and come to terms with their identity and belongingness. She focuses more closely on leading figures of the Jewish "renaissance" such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Isaak Bashevis Singer and Grace Paley. At the focus of most of their works is the Jewish suffering from the feeling of being social outcasts. Their literary concern with belongingness is justified in view of the Jewish regard of America as a heaven for them. The author seeks to chronologically present how these writers cope with these thematic concerns starting with Cynthia Ozick's conservative devotion to Jewish heredity and holocaust memory to end with Philip Roth's traditional ethics and desire for personal freedom.

In her paper, Marija Krivokapić analyses the work of John Trudell (b. 1946), Native American author, poet, musicians, and an ex-political activist. A veteran of the American Indian Movement, Trudell finds that the indigenous peoples of Americas are losing their sense of nationhood due to the loss of remembrance for their past nations and also to their being seen only as artefacts. His discourse moves beyond the political and acquires a philosophical dimension when he proclaims the idea of developing a new perceptive reality, which would serve not only the fight for native rights, but also the fight against the aggressive civilization as a whole. By considering that everything is energy, Trudell draws an analogy between human beings and the rest of natural world as containing the same elements. He continues the analogy by suggesting that in the same way that the processing of these elements may lead to the creation of toxic materials, programming human beings may bring about men's lack of responsibility towards themselves and the universe.

The last section in this volume contains three papers, which largely fall within the fields of comparative literature and literary criticism.

Olimpia Gargano's contribution draws on the idea of fictional countries and the various forms of their representations, utopian and dystopian, to feature a specific pattern of these countries with their real referent, Albania. By identifying clues and references alluding to various fictional images of Albania from American and European modern and

contemporary literature and by resorting to the tools of Comparative Literature, the author seeks to find out if this narrative genre relies on previous representations of nationhood and national identities, and, if so, how this can contribute to disseminate and consolidate national stereotypes.

The questions of belongingness and Jewish constructions of identity, national and gendered, are again brought to the focus by Viktoria Pötzl. In this paper, the author focuses on the work of Yael Dayan to define among other things the scope of ‘the other’ by looking into three issues or constructions, namely of ‘one people,’ of a woman within the Jewish Community and of a non-Jew. The author’s preferred method for analysis is close reading.

Elena Yakovleva and Ruben Agadzhanian draw on suspense as a fictional condition that besides developing dramatic collision in a literary work also reveals psychological peculiarities about the national, ethnic and professional motivations of the literary characters, as well as those of their settings. In their paper, the authors analyse Agatha Christie’s *The Murderer of Roger Ackroyd* to reveal national and ethnic peculiarities in action prose.

Finally, we would like to thank all our contributors for sharing their views and ideas in this volume. Special thanks also go to our reviewers for their tireless work in selecting and reviewing the contributions for this volume.