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in esse
English Studies
in Albania

in esse English Studies in Albania 8.2

Autumn 2017

in esse
English Studies
in Albania



Autumn 2017

Volume 8 Number 2

in esse:
English Studies in Albania

**Journal of the Albanian Society for the
Study of English (ASSE)**



Albanian Society for the Study of English

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Title: in esse: English Studies in Albania ©

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in esse: English Studies in Albania is a refereed scholarly journal devoted to the promotion of English and American studies in Albania. 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. *in esse: English Studies in Albania* is published twice yearly, in spring and autumn.

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ISSN: 2078-7413

Printed by Studio Sai, Vlorë, Albania, 2018

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Introduction

This volume of *in esse: English Studies in Albania* comprises a selection of papers presented at the fourth ASSE International Conference on British and American Studies “English and I: Literary and Cultural Encounters,” which took place on 8-10 June 2017 in Vlora, Albania. The present issue contains papers from the field of literary studies. The papers included here highlight cultural encounters, analysing them at different levels, the linguistic one being among the most important. Cultural encounters, discussed here mainly from the perspective of the experience of settling in a new country, of understanding and constructing one’s identity(ies), of coming to terms with the host culture, put particularly in terms of post-colonial concepts such as hybrid identity, liminal space or Third Space, or sociolinguistic concepts such as code-mixing or vernacular, concern most of the papers included in this issue, whose primary focus is the outcome of these encounters, namely the identity dilemmas characters go through. The papers collected here are divided into four sections, *Encounters in Travel Literature; Migrant Experience in the Novel; Identity, Language, Nation in Drama* and *Symbols and Images in the Novel*.

The issue opens with Françoise Besson’s paper, included in the first section, *Encounters in Travel Literature*, in order to set the tone of this issue, that is, to underline encounters. Although the focus of this contribution is travel, it points to one particular issue that is at the heart of most of the contributions in this issue, language, and, more particularly, encounters of languages.

Françoise Besson, from the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, France, in her paper examines nineteenth-century British travel texts to offer insights into language encounters, namely between English and the languages spoken in the Pyrenees at the time. Besson observes how these texts display an interest in language and

rather than pointing to differences between them, she emphasises connection—spatial, temporal, linguistic and cultural.

The second section, *Migrant Experience in the Novel*, contains two contributions, which focus on migrant experience at different times in British History—the movement of people from the Commonwealth countries in the 50s to live and work in Britain following the British Nationality Act in 1948, and the settlement of people from other European countries in Britain from the perspective of younger generations of immigrants in the Britain of the 1980s. The section includes two contributions, both set in London but during different periods in the history of Britain.

Blerina Lani from The State University New York at Buffalo State, USA, in her paper, which analyses Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, a novel written in 1956, problematises language encounters by trying to demonstrate how the author, a West-Indian originally, seeks to introduce a new language, a product of the encounter or mixture of Caribbean vernacular English with Standard English. Lani emphasises narration and the role of the narrator in the novel, especially the importance it acquires by the end of the novel.

In her paper, Fanni Feldmann, from the University of Debrecen, Hungary, continues the concern with language in her analysis of Charlotte Mendelson's 2013 novel *Almost English*. Feldmann explores the relationship between language and identity from the perspective of long-settled immigrants of Hungarian descent. By identifying language as a key element for identity construction, the author focuses on language differences between generations of Hungarian immigrants in England to get to the idea of a hybrid identity formed in the representative of the third generation of Hungarian immigrants, an identity that is neither English nor Hungarian, but rather multiethnic, multicultural, partly multilingual.

The third section, *Identity, Language, Nation in Drama*, contains two contributions which approach similar questions from

a more pronounced post-colonial perspective, drawing particularly on Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridisation, Third Space, and mimicry. Both contributions analyse works of drama, coincidentally written at the same time and discussing issues of colonialisation and Englishness, or belongingness to put it more summarily, but from two different perspectives, that of first and second-generation immigrants still facing difficulties in the host country, that is, England, and the attempts for the Anglicisation of Ireland and of Irish culture and language in the nineteenth century.

Yağmur Demir, from Çankaya University, Turkey, in her paper focuses on first and second-generation Pakistani immigrants and their difficulties in finding a sense of belonging in England. Besides underlining issues of identity, of integration, of occupying a cultural space in the host country, of coping with everyday hardships, the author emphasises that the presence of immigrants affects Englishness and hints at the idea of revising the concept of Englishness owing to the inevitable cultural changes their presence has brought to England. For her analysis, the author draws on Hanif Kureishi's 1981 play *Borderline*, written following the 1980 Southall Riots.

Adopting a post-colonial approach, Dilek Ozturk-Yagci, from Middle East Technical University, Turkey, attempts to read Brian Friel's play *Translations* in the light of postcolonial theory and Irish history. Based on the 1825-1841 Ordnance Survey project for the remapping and renaming of Ireland, *Translations* instrumentalises language, English or Irish, not only to highlight issues of (mis)communication between characters in the play and their attitude towards the remapping of Ireland and the English people, but, above all, to examine where they stand with regard to one's language, culture and identity. Ozturk-Yagci analyses the characters in the play in such terms in order to identify the space they occupy or should occupy from a post-colonial perspective.

The last section, *Symbols and Images in the Novel*, contains two contributions which focus instead on symbols and images that

acquire certain meanings and offer insightful readings of the analysed works.

In his paper, Rudolf Sárdi, from Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary, draws on the symbols of trains and the meanings they and other related images have in the work of Vladimir Nabokov. The author examines several works by Nabokov to reveal the meanings and significance, of metaphysical nature, trains convey and acquire in Nabokov's works.

In her paper, Yana Yankova-Georgieva, from South West University "Neofut Rilski", Bulgaria, analyses John Banville's *The Book of Evidence* with the intention to explore how the protagonist suffers depersonalisation and loss of identity due to his inability to differentiate between reality and the fictional world, the ordinary and the extraordinary, art and life following his theft of the painting of a woman and his murder of a young maid. Viewing the picture as an example of ekphrasis, Yankova-Georgieva analyses how ekphrastic descriptions in the novel aid in the creation of a thorough picture of the protagonist and his eventual loss of self and depersonalisation of character.

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