

Relational Forms VI
Imag(in)ing the Nation:
Literature, the Arts and Processes of National Construction
2 - 4 December 2021

an international conference hosted by the
Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto, Portugal

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Jeremy Black

(Professor Emeritus,
University of Exeter)

Roy Foster

(Professor of Irish History
and Literature,
Queen Mary Univ. London)

Uta Staiger

(Associate Professor of European
Studies,
University College London)

According to scholars, criteria for nationhood have typically involved a commonality of ethnicity, language or religion, historically prolonged occupation of a stretch of land, frequently linked to the existence of a state apparatus, collective experience, and shared memories. Literature and the other arts have often been mobilized to support (if not altogether participate in the construction of) this sense of belonging and identity, which they can also challenge and complicate. Nationalism may simply be described as the most extreme form of such engagements and allegiances. In his 1945 essay “Notes on Nationalism”, George Orwell denounces the characteristic aggressiveness and single-mindedness of the nationalist, as well as the peculiar indifference to reality such attitudes entail. Orwell’s essay betrays a sense of urgency derived both from the hazards of the Second World War and from the perceived political and ideological threats of the approaching Cold War – a term he would himself coin. More recently, adopting the more poised stance of the historian, Jeremy Black has observed that nationalism “is a feeling as much as a principle. It manifests powerful emotional elements as well as the interaction of the ‘deep histories’ of particular national, or would-be national, groups with the contexts and expressions of these ‘deep histories’ in specific circumstances” (2018). And a pervasive tension between accounts of the past and versions of an envisaged future often energises the historiographic process; as noted by Roy Foster, “The most illuminating history is often written to show how people acted in the expectation of a future that never happened” (2002).

Such remarks emphasize the intersecting of ideologies and practices of memory, of emotional commitment and institutional constraints. It is at these crossroads that literature and the other arts have often played a role in presenting, critically assessing and reformulating discourses of nationhood that may be seen as either conservative, progressive or subversive. This conference is aimed at addressing this vast problematic. The conference marks the centenary of the partition of Ireland (1921), and, taking place at this time in history, inevitably intends to reflect on the meaning of the circumstances leading to and arising from Brexit. The focus of the conference is however intended to be broad and international, as well as intermedial, in keeping with the rationale that has been guiding the Relational Forms research group.

The organisers will welcome **proposals for 20-minute papers in English** responding to the above. Suggested (merely indicative) topics include:

- literature, the arts, and the ideology/ies of nation

- culture and the nation-state
- nation, nostalgia, trauma, exaltation, utopia
- institutions of national memory: academies, museums, libraries, archives
- genres and practices of nation-building: historical fiction, historical painting, historiography
- rival discourses of patriotism and identity
- nation(alism), aggressiveness, prejudice and intolerance
- identity, peace and conflict
- nation and class, nation and gender
- the nation, the state and the education of the citizen
- remediating the political imagination: from literature to audiovisual to digital media

As indicated by the number in its title, this conference is the sixth in a series of academic events that reflect the ongoing concerns of the eponymous research group (*Relational Forms*), based at CETAPS (the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies).

Submissions should be sent by email to relational@letras.up.pt

Please include **RF6** in the subject line of your email and organise your proposal into **two separate files**:

- a file containing the full title and a 250-300 word description of your paper;
- a file containing the author's data: name, affiliation, contact address, paper title and author's bio-note (150 words).

Please name these two documents as follows:

Surname_Name_Abstract_RF6

Surname_Name_AuthorInfo_RF6

Deadline for proposals: 20 September 2021

Notification of acceptance: 15 October 2021

Deadline for registration: 15 November 2021

Registration Fee: 80 Euros

Student fee: 65 Euros

Registration details will be posted online in October 2021

All delegates are responsible for their own travel arrangements and accommodation.

More information available later at <http://www.cetaps.com/events>

Organised by the Relational Forms research area

<http://www.cetaps.com/research-areas/relational-forms-medial-and-textual-transits-in-ireland-and-britain/>

Executive Committee:

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