



In Memoriam: Anthony D. Smith (1939–2016)

The SEN editorial team was deeply saddened to hear of Anthony D. Smith's death on 19 July 2016. To commemorate his legacy as one of the most influential scholars in nationalism and ethnicity research and his role as former ASEN President, we asked three generations of SEN editors to reflect on the impact he had on them.

Anthony D. Smith (1939–2016) was a unique scholar, an exquisite teacher, and the founder of the ethnosymbolic approach. I fondly remember him as a highly inspiring and meticulously attentive Ph.D. supervisor, whose unforgettable empathy for his students was animated by a most sincere curiosity for the history and fate of distant cultures.

Anthony was warmly supportive and always respected different viewpoints, accepting a plurality of opinions and never imposing his own views. With the recurrent exceptions of Italy and Israel, he rarely travelled abroad. His passion for Italy largely stemmed from his fascination with classic antiquity – unlike his own supervisor, Ernest Gellner, who loved summer retreats in the Ligurian hills, allured by the inspiring beauty of the scenery which greatly contributed to his writings.

Soon after the completion of my Ph.D. in 1994, our paths began to diverge. On an academic level, the more I studied nationalism – with a careful eye to unfolding contemporary events, particularly in Spain, Italy, and the former Yugoslavia, and by looking at the history of elite-driven processes of ethnic and cultural homogenization – the more I distanced myself from Anthony's ethnosymbolic approach. Yet I always recognized, and continue to admire today, the heuristic capacity and erudite elegance of this theoretical perspective.

On a political level, I only became aware of Anthony's commitment to Zionism by chance when talking casually with Eric Hobsbawm, who, perhaps a bit summarily, described Anthony's academic trajectory as a defence of the Israeli nation-state. To scholars, this became clearer with the publication in the United Kingdom of his book *Chosen Peoples*, which was translated into Hebrew in Israel soon afterwards. But Anthony was careful not to publicize his international political stance unless directly pressed, keeping his political commentaries strictly confined to British home politics.

Methodologically, many of Anthony's books, particularly *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, gravitated more within the tradition of historical sociology à la Michael Mann, rather than that of political sociology, given that his focus was not strictly on political power but on *longue durée* socio-political processes.

I will never forget Anthony and will remember him as one of the best possible Ph.D. supervisors and mentors. His help was crucial in encouraging the founding of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN), set up by

myself and a small group of his other Ph.D. students. Anthony was also very supportive of my editorial venture, which timidly began as *The ASEN Bulletin* and then slowly transformed into a rising scholarly journal run by successive generations of graduate students, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* (SEN). Most importantly, we should not forget Anthony's milestone contribution in establishing nationalism studies as a distinct field of scholarly research. No other scholar has perhaps done so much to bring different approaches together into an increasingly coherent field.

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I still remember the very first time I attended Professor Anthony Smith's nationalism seminar at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). It was a typical not-so-cheerful British afternoon in autumn – overcast with a slight rain and dropping temperature. I walked into the stuffy classroom with mismatched and dated furniture to find it packed to the brim with eager students. In his soft spoken, eloquent but meticulous manner, Professor Smith introduced the study of nationalism to the class and kicked-off what was to be a series of very stimulating seminars for the term. Little did I know then that this day would mark the start of my career that would place much emphasis on nationalism and foreign policy over more than a decade. During my latter years at the LSE, I joined ASEN as an editor of *Studies in Ethnicity of Nationalism* (SEN). Professor Smith's influence on me was far from just academic. In working with ASEN, I thought Professor Smith was particularly magnanimous in creating an environment where the students could edit a professional journal and SEN could thrive even though he was the Editor-in-Chief of *Nations and Nationalism*. Whilst providing us with sound advice, he allowed SEN to craft its own identity and direction. He was both challenging and encouraging, and he was instrumental in our growth. I recalled fondly some of the conversations I had with him, in particular his sharing of academic life and academic politics and the lessons he drew from them. After having being an academic for almost a decade, I must say that the advice which he shared with me has proved to be invaluable. From my memory, I cannot recall any scholar that I know of who has been as distinguished and as influential as Professor Smith in the educating and molding of generations of young scholars. If there is one scholar who befits the often heard academia adage of 'we stand on the shoulders of giants', Professor Smith is surely the giant for many of us. He will be fondly remembered.

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Meeting a scholar in person, whose work you have come across in years of studies and who is known to be one of the most influential academics in his field, can be exciting and daunting, as they may or may not live up to the expectations we have created in our heads. Meeting and getting to know Anthony D. Smith (1939–2016) – in his role as President of ASEN, and our role as former ASEN co-chairs and later co-editors of *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* (SEN) – did not disappoint the expectations we had of him.

Anthony was a man who truly embodied the spirit of academia. Even though we arrived at LSE when he was no longer teaching and thus were never his formal students, his intellectual wit, his deep inquisitiveness, and his desire to acquire and spread knowledge shone through in all interactions we had with him. Anthony's reputation as a fierce but fair scholar preceded him, and rightly so. Both in- and outside of the meeting room, he was never afraid to speak his mind and to point out where he saw issues for improvement, which were sometimes difficult to hear at first but ultimately helped us to become more skilful and wiser in our own managerial tasks. In this way, Anthony has had a lasting impact on us that will stay with us throughout our own careers.

Both academically and in terms of his health, Anthony was a real fighter with admirable strength. It was with great sadness that we heard of his death, but have no doubt that his spirit will live on in the people he inspired and the body of knowledge he helped to create.

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ASEN Co-chairs 2007–08; SEN Co-editors 2010–14