

Of man's humanity to man. Let potentates,
Swashbucklers, sea-wolves, and all wannabe
Odysseus-types heed well this allegory
Of pure nostalgia that no *nostos* sates.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Re-Inventing the Postcolonial (in the) Metropolis. The 24th Annual GNEL/ASNEL Conference, Chemnitz University of Technology, 09-11 May, 2013

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This year's annual conference of the ASNEL, the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English, took place at the Chemnitz University of Technology.

Not only did the university provide a suitable venue for the conference, but the rich and diverse history of the city itself made attending the conference worthwhile. Called "Manchester of Saxony" before World War II for its high standard manufacturing industry, the city was officially renamed "Karl-Marx-Stadt" during the cold-war period. The gigantic bust of Karl Marx, situated in the centre of town has now become a trademark of the city.

This year's conference theme, "Re-Inventing the Postcolonial (in the) Metropolis", was explored from a broad range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. With 140 participants from 14 different countries and 59 presentations in 21 panels, three keynote lectures, as well as poster presentations and readings, the ASNEL conference once more provided an unparalleled forum for researchers, students and teachers in the field of postcolonial studies in the German-speaking countries and beyond.

The growing importance of (theories of) spatiality in postcolonial literature and culture was reflected in this year's conference with regard to the contested space of the Postcolonial Metropolis. Against the grain of over-simplifying and problematic conceptions of the Postcolonial Metropolis as either a purely Western concept or an umbrella term for the mega cities of the Global South, the keynote lectures as well as the panel discussions investigated the postcolonial city as a multi-faceted site of literary, but also visual and sonic narratives and performativities.

The bracketing of the theme "Re-Inventing the Postcolonial (in the) Metropolis" thus proved productive in tackling the various and conflicting meanings and implications of the metropolis. Questions which emerged from this included: How can received concepts of the postcolonial city be critically investigated and productively extended? How can concrete literary, but also visual and sonic forms of cultural expression be analysed which explore, interact with, and reconfigure the postcolonial (in the) city? This spectrum was reflected in thought-provoking ways in the keynote lectures as well as the panel sessions.

After the official opening by conference convener Prof. Dr. Cecile Sandten, AbdouMaliq Simone, Professor of Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London, delivered the first keynote lecture on "Black Beach: Just the City", in which he called into question any rigid conceptualisation of the postcolonial city. Instead, he promoted an ethnographic perspective drawing from his own fieldwork in North Jakarta's neighbourhood Black Beach. Sharing his observations of the discontinuous, experimental and trial-and-error based strategies of survival of people living in these neighbourhoods, he emphasised how the everyday struggles of people to find, settle down and maintain a place to live within the city cannot be represented in any given definition. Providing such a thought-provoking keynote right at the beginning of the conference proved productive in setting the tone for a critical stance regarding the conceptions and methodologies that aim at coming to terms with the Postcolonial Metropolis.

The second keynote lecture, given by Rolf Goebel, Professor at the University of Alabama, detected a paradigm shift in the field of postcolonial studies from Bhaba's notion of the subversive inscription of non-Western voices into the dominant discourses of the metropolitan centre to Han's

notion of hyperculture in the digital media society of late consumer capitalism. How this shift is depicted as a complicated relation between affirmation and subversion is demonstrated by Goebel in his analysis of Don DeLillo's novel *Cosmopolis* (2003) set in the transit zones of Manhattan's concert locations, the interior of an expensive car and the world wide web.

In his keynote lecture on "The Artistic Possibility of Comparing World Cities: The 'Third World', The Old and the Modern", musician, writer and professor Amit Chaudhuri posed the question of how to conceive of the modern world city. Instead of following a notion of the modern metropolis which he regards as irretrievably connected with the colonial presence, Chaudhuri emphasises the pre-colonial Indian modernities anticipated in the country's rich literary traditions. Chaudhuri's talk was counterpointed through his reading on the previous evening from his recently published book *Calcutta: Two Years in the City*, a memoir and portrait of urban India.

This broad spectrum of perspectives on the notion of the Postcolonial Metropolis was further specified and deepened in the panel discussions, too many to be mentioned here in detail. Topics ranged from the relation of modernity and market economies in India and narratives of the contested spaces of the North American metropolis, to urban imaginaries in South African literature and the sonic dimension of the postcolonial metropolis in recent Asian-British music videos and Indian fiction.

A particular highlight of the conference was the Brown-Bag Reading, which took place on Saturday at lunch time featuring two young poets from the UK. Sean Bonney (London) read from his *Happiness: Poems After Rimbaud* (2011), a mix of personal daydream and poignant political commentary delivered in a fast and rhythmic spoken performance. Stephen Mooney (Estaphin) delivered his edgy and investigative poetry from his *DCLP* (2008) as well as from new work-in-progress, his reading voice now and again disrupted and/or accentuated by sampled visuals and noises.

Another key component of the conference worth mentioning is the teachers' workshop, which took place on Friday and dealt with methodological and creative approaches to "Teaching the Metropolis in the EFL Classroom".

The last panel session on Sunday afternoon rounded up the conference with two compelling papers by Diana Brydon and Bill Ashcroft. Ashcroft gave a very precise account of how the postcolonial city is reinvented as a utopian site and a site of what may be called the 'transnation', looking at works by writers such as Gopal Baratham, Arthur Yap and Catherine Lim. Brydon's paper asked how Canadian and Australian literature reflects and shapes understandings of settler colonial cities. The analysis of Sheila Heti's "How Should a Person Be" demonstrated the ways in which postcolonial urban imaginaries are challenged and refined

In 2014, the 25th ASNEL conference will take place in cooperation with the Association for Australian Studies (GASt) and will be held at Potsdam University from May 29 – June 01 under the auspices of the conveners Lars Eckstein (Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures) and Anja Schwarz (Professor of Cultural Studies). This promises to be another thought-provoking and inspiring conference which aims at investigating practices and norms of justice in a postcolonial world.

"Bodies on Stage". 21st Annual Conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE). Mülheim/Ruhr, University of Bochum, Germany, 7-10 June 2012

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Bodies on stage are an integral element of theatre, and by extension also of drama, in which their presence – their corpo-reality, as it were – is created on the page. In addition, living bodies help create the fictional world of plays, while their markers signify class, ethnicity, gender, age etc. Beyond a mere revisiting of bodies as a core feature of theatre, contemporary discourses of corporeality as a site of negotiation between nature and culture, materiality, discourses and power (see Judith Butler, Susan Bordo and others), as well as the performative turn in theatre studies are significant recent trends of reviewing the extent to which body matters on stage. Against this backdrop, the 21st annual conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama

in English (CDE) explored contemporary drama and theatrical performances in English with regard to corporeality – from the importance of actors and ensembles for the production and reception of plays to the discursive experiments written on and around bodies. Offering panels and keynotes on topics such as objects as/versus bodies, staging voices, body politics, (post-) corporeality, oscillating bodies and acting styles, the conference addressed a broad spectrum of discourses and practices of corporeality on the contemporary stage.

The conference opened with a haunting keynote speech by Edward Bond, titled “The Third Crisis: The Possibility of Drama in the Future”, in which the renowned playwright assessed the chances and responsibilities of drama to function as a meaningful genre and practice for addressing universal needs of the human species (which to Bond is a “dramatic species”). While he criticised much of contemporary drama for being a “theatre of symptoms” rather than performing a “humanising function”, he called for a future of drama in which it will serve again as a corrective to the corruptions of society, thus offering a “counter-psychosis” to the traumata and psychoses of contemporary culture. The relevance of Bond’s critical talk for the conference theme was that he suggested a general sense of superficial corporeality in today’s theatre. According to Bond, the majority of contemporary drama fails to go any deeper than scratching the surface of contemporary social ills.

Edward Bond’s own dramatic work featured prominently on the next day of the conference, when Kate Katafiasz (Newman University College, Birmingham) opened the first panel on objects as/versus bodies with her talk on “Staging Reality (Beyond Representation): A Perplexing Bondian Body”. In a sophisticated argument utilising concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis, she analysed the unsettling concept of the dualised body on the basis Bond’s 2006 play *The Under Room* (2006), where an illegal immigrant is represented by a dummy and dummy-actor, which radicalises the relationship between time and space and the experience of the body as icon and index. Nils Wilkinson (University of Siegen) looked at programmable bodies on stage in the form of robots in Alan Ayckbourn’s *Henceforward...* (1987) and clones in Caryl Churchill’s *A Number* (2002). Both plays, Wilkinson showed, contest the idea of ultimate control through human mechanisation by having both robot and clone act in opposition to the programmed effect. In her closing paper to the first panel, Beatrix Hesse (University of Würzburg) not only addressed the use, display and dissection of dead bodies on the theatre stage (as in Joe Orton’s *Loot* and Anthony Shaffer’s *Murderer*), but also made a foray into recent TV crime series (such as *Silent Witness* and *Crossing Jordan*) to note both historical and generic shifts of attitudes towards death and the ideal of the integrity of the human body.

The second keynote event of the conference came in the form of a live poetry performance by SuAndi, OBE, whose immense artistic versatility is expressed by her work as a poet, performer of live poetry, opera librettist, producer and director of community-based performances, creator of gallery-based and public artwork, curator of visual arts, freelance cultural producer and ‘activist’ (she has been the Cultural Director of the Black Arts Alliance since 1985). She was introduced and interviewed by Deirdre Osborne (Goldsmiths College, London), who had SuAndi talk about her mixed Nigerian and English background, her experiences as a black artist in Britain, as well as the role of the body in her work, across different genres and modes of artistic production.

The next conference panel highlighted the politics of the body on stage and on the drama page in widely divergent ways. Christopher Innes (University of Toronto) focused primarily on corporeality and the subversive ethics of performance in the comic characterisations offered by celebrated actor Mark Rylance in his roles of Byron in *Jerusalem* (2009) by Jez Butterworth and Valere in *La bête* (1999) by David Hirson. Turning to more overtly political drama, Sarah Heinz (University of Mannheim) talked about “Staging the Body Politic in Irish Contemporary Drama”, specifically Sebastian Barry’s *The Pride of Parnell Street*, and *Kebab* by the Romanian author Gianina Cărbunariu, both from 2007. In her analysis, Heinz concluded that the ways in which bodies are staged in the two plays criticise the ideological metaphors of the nation as homogeneous bodies to be freed from the diseases of the foreigner and the poor. The final paper in this section, Markus Wessendorf’s (University of Hawai’i, Manoa) “Zombie Walks and Zombie Capitalism” illuminated the recent resurgence of the zombie genre and the increasing international popularity of zombie walks within larger political contexts (post-9/11, pandemic viruses, global economic recession and bank crises). Wessendorf also addressed recent plays and theatre productions, such as Tim Bauer’s *Zombie Town* (2009), John Dempsey and Dana P. Rowe’s *Zombie Prom: The Musical* (2009), and John Langan’s *How the Day Runs Down* (2011), while giving a scintillating

preview on his own upcoming production *Uncle Vanya and the Zombies* at UH Manoa's Kennedy Theater (November 2012).

The third day of the conference opened with a keynote speech by Doris Kolesch (Freie Universität Berlin) on the topic of "Staging Voices". Drawing widely on the findings of her ongoing research project on "Voices as Paradigms of the Performative", Kolesch regarded voice as a performative phenomenon *par excellence* and gave a systematic overview of the concept and dimensions of vocality, such as responsiveness, fleetingness, affectivity, spatiality and social dimension. Given that in contemporary drama dialogue is often replaced by a "poly-logue" where communication is no longer the focal point, but a spatialised materiality of voices, her findings not only have numerous implications for contemporary theatre but also served as a fitting expansion of the scope of the spatial body on stage.

The ensuing panel of papers was devoted to performances of the body on stage. Daniel Schulze (University of Würzburg) started out by looking at the entertainment business of wrestling as a very special type of displaying the body in performance. He compared wrestling to performance art and showed that wrestling simulates a fixed identity of signifier and signified in its ritualistic performances, whereas performance art, as exemplified in the works of Marina Abramović, is open for interpretation and evasive of fixed signification. An unconventional performance in itself was Jan Suk's (Charles University, Prague) curiously titled talk "Bodies? On? Stage? Human Play of Forced Entertainment": it came in the form of Suk's reading of a self-reflexive fictional letter addressed to the Forced Entertainment group, accompanied by music by contemporary composers John Avery and Clint Marshall, which provided some critical analysis of anti-theatricality in recent performances of Forced Entertainment. The panel was aptly concluded by Rainer Emig (University of Hanover), who examined the implications of displaying nude bodies on stage in his paper on "Staging the Phallus: *Naked Boys Singing*". The 1998 off-Broadway musical, which was turned into a feature film in 2007, was shown by Emig to remain in a double bind between subverting and exploiting the naked male body for the gratification of gay and female audiences, and between criticising and reaffirming phallogentrism, patriarchy and heteronormativity.

In the next panel, aspects of (post-)corporeality were addressed by two papers on three of the most influential playwrights of English 'in-yer-face' theatre: Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp, and Mark Ravenhill. Maria Elena Capitani (University of Parma) explored differing approaches to corporeality in Kane's *Cleansed* and Crimp's *The Country*. Whereas Kane's play has an irresistible sensory impact on spectators' bodies through its graphic staging of physical violence and abuse, Crimp's *The Country* keeps the deep sexual tensions of the play under the surface of storytelling and mediated representation. In his talk, Michał Lachman (University of Łódź) proceeded from a more general view on Ravenhill's oeuvre, emphasising Ravenhill's ongoing reflection on the possibilities and limits of representing the body, to a specific analysis of Ravenhill's 2006 play *pool (no water)* and its criticism of bodily reification under the influence of a dehumanising artistic sensibility.

The afternoon and evening of the third conference day were devoted to practical theatre experience. First, Scottish writer playwright Rona Munro conducted an invigorating practical workshop on bodily movement in space. In the evening, conference delegates went to the Ringlokschoppen venue in Mülheim for a double production of Michael Yates Crowley's play *Righteous Money / Gerechtes Geld*, first performed in English by Wolf 359, New York, directed by Michael Rau, and afterwards in German by Schlosstheater Moers, directed by Ulrich Greb. These very different productions of the same play were followed by a lively discussion with the playwright, who played the lead in the English-language production, as well as with members of the two casts and production teams.

The last conference day opened with a lively keynote speech by translator, journalist, and lecturer Michael Raab. He specifically addressed the different relationships of author, director and actor with regard to differing theatrical traditions as well as current trends in British and German/Austrian stage productions. Besides mapping current acting styles dominant on the German stage, Raab also reflected on the often conflicting demands of playwrights and directors in German theatre productions. In this context, he mentioned the close working relationship between Simon Stephens and Sebastian Nübling, as a model for a mutually prosperous balance between writer and director.

The final panel of the conference could be considered a continuation of the concerns of the previous panel as it combined three talks on aspects of corporeality and materiality in plays by

Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill. This last round of presentations was begun by Sarah Ablett's (University of Hildesheim) talk, who traced biblical roots and allusions in the representation of bodies in Kane's play *Blasted*. Focussing on the character of Ian, Ablett investigated the specific analogies of the story of creation in Genesis and the ritual of cleansing to Ian's development and behavioural patterns, respectively. Next, Sarah-Anna Wetzlmayr (University of Vienna) shed some more light on Mark Ravenhill's *pool (no water)* by putting the play's theme of collapsing art and life in the context of the *Wiener Aktionisten* of the 1960s (Nitsch, Brus, Mühl, Schwarzkogler). Just as their avantgarde performances were physically concrete, but not aimed at representing an external reality, Ravenhill's play, according to Wetzlmayr, transcends representationality by making the (absent) body of the character Sally the ultimate goal of the three protagonists' artistic proposition. In the conference's closing paper, Elżbieta Baraniecka (University of Augsburg) advanced a reading of the disturbing collapse of all boundaries of character and rationality in Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*, by referring it to Jacques Derrida's concept of *parergon* (in *The Truth in Painting*, 1987). In a similar interpretive move as Wetzlmayr before, Baraniecka maintained that the conventional boundary between the work of art and the external world is confounded in Kane's play – namely by a use of language that, like Derrida's concept of the frame, draws attention to its own materiality and thus emphasises both the arbitrariness of such boundaries and the possibility of their creative transformation.

All in all, the 21st annual conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English gave ample testimony to the persistent emphasis on exploring the body in contemporary Anglophone drama/theatre. The conference's stimulating talks, fruitful discussions, and fitting theatrical events managed to offer numerous insights into the diverse facets of presenting and foregrounding corporeality in contemporary drama and performance.

Selected papers of the conference have been published in *JCDE: Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, vol. 1.1, 2013.

“Theatre and Politics: Theatre as Cultural Intervention”. The 22nd Annual Conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE). Prague (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic), 30 May - 2 June 2013

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The 22nd annual conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) was hosted, for the first time, outside of the borders of a German-speaking country, in Prague - a sure sign of the growing international recognition and relevance of CDE's work. The conference was devoted to the topic of “Theatre and Politics: Theatre as Cultural Intervention”, an aspect of perennial significance for drama and the theatre. As a public and communal art form, theatre has always functioned as a space for the exploration and performance of power, protest, intervention and identity. While debates around theatre and politics may be as old as theatre itself, both terms must be recognized as moving targets. The heritage of Brecht and the history of activist theatres of the 1960s and 1970s meet crucial challenges in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Amelia Howe Kritzer's concluding chapter to *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain* (2008) points to one of the most pervasive of these challenges at the turn of the century: that of postmodern detachment from the political. The post-1989 political arena has featured an alleged “end of history”, followed by an age of terrorist threat to the repercussions of globalized neoliberal policies; it presents a complex and contradictory field of engagement, one in which community has been etiolated, and in which activism or intervention may seem naïve or pointless. A central issue around which the conference revolved was the meaning of political engagement to theatre practitioners in the twenty-first century. This and similar questions proved to be a fruitful focal point for a conference characterised by highly stimulating talks and lively discussions.

An eloquent and thought-provoking conference opening was provided by theatre practitioner-cum-academic Alan Read (King's College London). In his keynote speech on the first night of conference, he sounded out the political dimensions of theatrical performance against the backdrop of contemporary philosophical discourses of community (e.g. Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito), as well as recent practical and conceptual attempts at audience inclusion (partly inspired by Jacques Rancière's concept of emancipation) and dissolving boundaries between theatrical agents and spectators. Highlighting the limits of the Rancièrian concept of the emancipated spectator for performance art, Read pitted his own sceptical version of the "emaciated spectator" against the political fantasy of incremental empowerment through performance. Thus he voiced strong doubts as to the feasibility of any theory of liberating democratic engagement engendered by what he called the "infra-thin glazed veneer" of theatre.

The papers of the next conference day all stressed the undiminished political relevance of 21st-century contemporary theatre, while at the same time giving ample evidence to its multifaceted spectrum, which ranged from the politics of everyday life, social media and community-building to performances of revolutionary discourse, regional identity politics and the representation of military conflict. Trish Reid (Kingston University London) shed light on the politics of sincerity in Cora Bisset and David Greig's recent NTS musical *Glasgow Girls*, which issues a plea for active political engagement in Scottish post-devolutionary drama. The absence of such direct political engagement, despite increasing political and economic inequalities in American society, was diagnosed by Barry Hall (University of Nizwa) for contemporary American drama as a whole; his view was controversially discussed by conference delegates afterwards, in reference to such recent politically conscious drama as Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* (2010). Further facets of the political were reflected in Ariane de Waal's (University of Bochum) talk on contemporary British war drama, in which she scrutinized the them/us dichotomy in dramatic representations of the Iraq war by Colin Teevan (*How Many Miles to Basra?*, 2006), Roy Williams (*Days of Significance*, 2007) and Adam Brace (*Stovepipe*, 2008/09). Harking back to the issue of spectatorship involvement raised by Alan Read in the conference opening, Julia Boll (University of Constance) argued for the power of theatrical performance, as displayed in the experimental Brazilian-British coproduction by Zecora Ura Theatre and Para Active, *Hotel Medea* (2010-12), to enable the audience to form a relationship with the politically and socially excluded, which has the potential of overcoming this exclusion. Like Boll, Marilena Zaroulia (University of Winchester) also drew on Giorgio Agamben's concept of the *homo sacer* in her talk about performances of the displaced European Other in contemporary British theatre (in Transport Theatre/Tena Štivičić's *Invisible* and Simon Stephens' *Three Kingdoms*, both 2011/12), while suggesting, in the context of recent European reforms, that these productions represent continental Europe as the formerly invisible Other of contemporary British theatre.

In another fascinating panel of papers on the role of media, Claudia Georgi (University of Göttingen) rated the chances of Gob Squad's recent production *Revolution Now!* (2010) to challenge the current cultural mood of political disengagement by using a combination of immediate live performance and inescapable mediatisation. In contrast to Gob Squad's video screens, Cyrielle Garson (University of Avignon) looked at another element of media technology in contemporary British theatre that comes in the form of headphone-verbatim drama. Informed by semiotic and poststructuralist theories, she maintained that headphone-conveyed "voiceprints" in Alecky Blythe's *Voices from the Mosque* (2011) and Tamasha Theatre's *The Trouble with Asian Men* (2005) are a productive technique for rethinking the link between verbatim theatre and transnational political culture. Patrick Lonergan (NUI Galway), finally, made a stimulating foray into performance aspects of social media like Facebook and Twitter, specifically concerning the commercialisation of audience response, exploited for marketing by some major Irish theatre companies, which not only renders the border between theatrical and mediated personal performance permeable, but also raises questions concerning the politics of audience reception.

The second conference day was concluded by a keynote event with the celebrated writer/director/actor Tim Crouch, who was interviewed by theatre critic Aleks Sierz. Best known for his experimental play *The Author* (2009), in which Crouch himself plays as writer of and actor in the very play being performed, Crouch's theatre is based on a radical rejection of stage realism and naturalistic sets and props, which invites audiences to immerse themselves fully in fluid performances that break down the dividing line between actors and spectators. As Crouch made it clear, a constant thread in his plays/performances (such as *My Arm*, 2003, *An Oak Tree*, 2005, or

ENGLAND, 2007) is the removal of all colouration as an act of rebellion against long-standing aesthetic conventions, which forces audiences into creating their own worlds during performance.

The third day of the conference started off with three papers on theatrical representations of working-class, minority, and everyday life in contemporary Britain. Katie Beswick (University of Leeds) turned to the ethics of representation of council estates (i.e. British social housing) in the recent production of Bola Agbaje's *Off the Endz* by the Royal Court (2010). Scrutinising the idea of new writing/production programmes targeting the "authentic voices" of economically disadvantaged and minority ethnic communities, Beswick questioned the notion of the authenticity in such attempts at a democratising of culture. In a similar vein, Siân Adishesiah (University of Lincoln) addressed the strategies of performing proletarianism in the current resurgence of political drama in 21st-century Britain, by interrogating three recent plays (Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*, 2009, Gillian Slovo's *The Riots*, 2011, and the 2013 National Theatre revival of Simon Stephens' *The Port*, 2002) as to their depiction of working-class identities as deviant or subhuman in the light of Owen Jones's recent best-selling book *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (2011). Finally, Lucia Krämer (Leibniz University, Hanover) focused on National Theatre's popular production of *London Road* (2011) by dramatist Alecky Blythe and composer Adam Cork and reviewed its ethical efficacy in representing community healing as a reaction to a traumatic event, also in the light of the production's blending of verbatim drama and stage musical.

A critique of community-oriented practices and normative identity concepts was identified by Christina Delgado-García (Aberystwyth University) in her analysis of Quarantine's metatheatrical production *Entitled* (premiered at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester in 2011). Despite the show's seemingly apolitical self-referentiality in presenting the technical preparations for a play that is never staged, Delgado-García stressed the production's potential for disrupting the performers' and spectators' *habitus* during performance, thus effecting an emancipative political intervention by dismantling normative identity discourses and cultural practices. A different strategy of political intervention, in an age when traditional Shavian political drama seems to have lost its efficacy, was presented by Sarah Grochala (Queen Mary, University of London) with reference to David Eldridge's *Incomplete and Random Acts of Kindness* (2005). Drawing on David Harvey's diagnosis of the compressed experience of time and space in late capitalist society, Grochala maintained that Eldridge's play structurally articulates a complete breakdown in temporal succession, which makes it a profoundly political play, by exposing the time-space compression of lived experience. As a counterpoint to popular claims that traditional politically engaged drama has become irrelevant in Britain, Paola Botham (Birmingham City University) reminded us of the rebirth of the Brechtian history play in Howard Brenton's latest plays *In Extremis* (2006), *Anne Boleyn* (2010), *55 Days* (2012) and *#aiww: The Arrest of Ai Weiwei* (2013). Botham analysed how the Brechtian model is transformed in these plays to meet the aesthetic and political demands of the 21st century and continue the Habermasian project of modernity against the postmodernist orthodoxies of today.

After the interview with Tim Crouch on the previous day, the third day provided another keynote highlight with a much-discussed contemporary British dramatist, the controversial writer Gurpreet Bhatti, who was again interviewed by Aleks Sierz in his inimitably elegant way. Born in Watford to Punjabi immigrants, Bhatti views herself as a writer of comedies, despite all the religious and political controversy around her plays. After her first play *Behsharam (Shameless)* premiered in 2001, Bhatti became (in)famous for her next play *Behzti (Dishonour)*, whose production was dropped by the Birmingham Rep Theatre in 2005, after violent public outrage against its depiction of Sikh sexuality, violence, and rape. Ensuing death threats forced her to go into hiding, but did not keep her from writing *Behud (Beyond Belief)*, 2010, a metadramatic comedy about a playwright trying to write a play about a traumatic event, whose characters take over from her in the course of the play.

The fourth and final conference day opened with a keynote speech by Nadine Holdsworth (University of Warwick) on the staging of treatments of riots in the recent British theatre. Following arguments proposed by Slavoj Žižek in his account of the 2011 riots in England and elsewhere, Holdsworth looked at the way dramatists like Gillian Slovo (*The Riots*, 2011) have dealt with the paradox that rioters are highly visible in the media through their actions, but still remain invisible as individuals. By also looking at older plays which staged earlier riots, such as Tervor Griffiths' *Oi for England* (1982), Bryony Lavery's *Goliath* (1997) and Robin Soans' *Mixed Up North* (2009), she showed how playwrights offer a counter-discourse to the dominant media

coverage by individualising the “mob” and thus move beyond the traditional identification of rioters as a disease of the body politic.

In the last conference panel, Ellen Redling (University of Heidelberg) contended that contemporary British theatre has largely moved away from suggesting political activism to emphasising argumentation and reflection, especially concerning complex national or global issues. She examined the ways in which the “viewing place” of the *theatron* becomes a “thinking place” in plays such as David Hare’s *Stuff Happens* (2004) and *The Vertical Hour* (2006) as well as Lucy Pebble’s *Enron* (2009) and Joe Penhall’s *Blue/Orange* (2000). The post-millennial work of Debbie Tucker Green became the focus in a talk by Nicola Abram (University of Reading), in which she interpreted the innovative aesthetic strategies for the handling of characters, language, and stage form in the plays *dirty butterfly* (2003), *born bad* (2003), *stoning mary* (2005), *trade* (2005), *generations* (2007) and *random* (2008), as a positive political intervention for a world of enduring interpersonal connections. Finally, Rebecca Hillman (University of Reading) once more tackled the haunting question of what avenues there are for politically minded theatre today, as the postmodern detachment from practical politics seems to prevail in the arts. By looking at recent performances by Mikron Theatre and Red Ladder, Hillman confronted the lack of a contemporary audience and appropriate critical framework for political theatre.

As for practical theatre experience and live performances, the 22nd annual CDE conference was nicely set during the final days of the international Prague Fringe Festival. This major event provided the perfect ambience for a conference on contemporary theatre and drama in English, as well as plenty of opportunity for conference delegates, after inspiring talks and lively discussion at the conference, to sample some exciting fringe theatre at the end of the day. All in all, Prague proved to be a more than fitting venue for a most fruitful and stimulating conference on the continued relevance of the political for contemporary theatre.

Selected papers of the conference will be published in *JCDE: Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, vol. 2.1, 2014.

REVIEWS

Bernd Kortmann and Johan van der Auwera (eds.) 2011. *The Languages and Linguistics of Europe: A Comprehensive Guide* (The World of Linguistics 1). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

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This bulky volume, the first of a new series that aims to achieve complete coverage of linguistic work, past and present, across the entire world (the second is on the languages of South America), is a major addition to the rich library of handbooks and encyclopaedias available to the contemporary graduate student and linguistics professional. *LLE*, as I shall refer to the object of this review, contains 49 chapters and divides into five sections: (1) Typology of European languages (287 pp.); (2) Areal typology and language contact (255 pp.); (3) Language politics and language policies in Europe (122 pp.); (4) History of European languages (119 pp.); (5) Research traditions in Europe (97 pp.). The emphasis on typology and language contact is one that reflects the areas of excellence of the editors, both of them professors of English Language, who have transcended their home discipline to make strong contributions to the theory and description of diverse languages and varieties. They have succeeded in bringing together a stellar team of experts, almost all of them from European universities; the great majority, it should be observed, hail from the north-west of the continent, where arguably there is a concentration of relatively well-funded universities and research institutes. Despite this bias, the geographical coverage is generally very satisfactory: in Section 1, not only all extant non-Asian branches of Indo-European, including Romani, but also Caucasian, Turkic and Uralic languages are dealt with, thus reaching the shores of the Caspian Sea and the Ural Mountains and beyond; there are also chapters on Basque (isolate), Maltese (Semitic) and a very welcome treatment of the typology of several

signed languages of Europe. In Section 2, which offers an unprecedented conspectus of language contact in various areas of Europe, the coverage is impressive, but does not venture nearly so far east; in Section 3, on politics and policies, the scope corresponds more or less to that of the present European Union in accordance with the 'cultural-anthropological definition' (p. 655) of Europe; in Section 4, on (pre)history, the range is appropriately broader, but, in the final Section 5, the focus is strongly (though not exclusively) on linguistics in central and western Europe. The last chapter, on generative grammar, goes into unusual detail about one country in particular, focusing on the breakthrough of Chomskyan linguistics in the universities of the Netherlands in the sixties and seventies.

A theme that is designed to hold several of the chapters together, particularly those of Sections 1 and 2, is that of Standard Average European (SAE). This expression of course originates with Whorf (1956), who wanted to point out how different the characteristics of Native American languages were from the structures standardly found in Europe: for him, then, SAE was little more than a backdrop. Chapter 15, by co-editor Van der Auwera, explores the extent to which typological work, specifically the EURO-TYP project of 1990-1995, has provided sustenance for a non-trivial, positive characterization of SAE. Van der Auwera presents maps showing that the languages of the geographical core of Europe share structural properties, specifically in the areas of semantics and morphosyntax, which become gradually less prevalent the more one moves to the periphery. The standard – it emerges – is defined by the features of French and German and hypothesized to form a 'Charlemagne Sprachbund' (p. 297), an allusion to the cross-family contacts that came about and were consolidated during the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire; in a later chapter, Paolo Ramat (p. 693) sees SAE as having Latinate roots, with the morphosyntax of Germanic languages being moulded by Holy Scripts. Van der Auwera shows how peripheral Germanic languages (Icelandic, notably, but also English) and peripheral Romance languages (Portuguese, Romanian) manifest fewer SAE features than sister languages spoken nearer the core area. A number of the descriptive chapters in Section 1 refer explicitly to how the language (family) treated relates to SAE, and Chapter 28, by Adriano Murelli and co-editor Kortmann, closing Section 2, makes a plea for enriching SAE studies with variation data from dialects, which could lead to a refinement or even reconsideration of the notion of a European *Sprachbund*.

Most of the chapters are written at a fairly demanding level. Without a thorough prior grounding in linguistics and its terminology, the reader is going to be in difficulties. A fuller, less quirky subject index would have been useful, or perhaps a glossary. But *LLE* is not an encyclopaedia (p. xvii). Rather, the editors have given the authors scope to adopt their own strategies: some contributions are clearly more panoptic in attempting to give a reasonably neutral overview of a particular subject; others take the form of case studies, for example Peter Gilles's chapter on the Germanic-Romance language border, or refer primarily to their own specialist work, as in Walter Brey's chapter on language contact in Central and Southern Europe. Some chapters, most obviously in Sections 1 and 2, are rich in language data, while others adopt a more theoretical stance, offering few concrete examples, as in Antje Lann Hornscheidt's chapter on feminist language politics. Among the most successful and informative chapters are those in Section 4 on the history of European languages. Starting with an overview by Robert Mailhammer of what (little) is known of language in Paleo-, Meso- and Neolithic Europe, this section, chapter by chapter, provides deep understanding of the extent to which all today's Europeans (with the exception of the Basques, at least in recent millennia) have immigrant roots. We see how the Renaissance, the Habsburg Monarchy, the Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and now the European Union have all had a decisive impact on the definition, form and function of languages and on the identities and self-understanding of their speakers in ways that are still relevant today. John Myhill's enlightening chapter on language and the church provides an essential counterpoint to the historical section, covering language use in the Armenian, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches as well as the decline of Church Slavonic and of Latin as liturgical languages.

Although the overwhelming majority of contributors are from the continent of Europe, every chapter is written in English. This need not go without saying: in the same publisher's *Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science*, for example, articles in German stand next to articles in English. But the trend towards hegemony of English is obvious, and no account of the languages and linguistics of Europe would be complete without extensive mention of the impact of

English on Europe's multilingualism. The reader is not disappointed: Chapter 33, by Juliane House, questions whether – as has often been sighed – English is a threat to other languages; Chapter 34, by Päivi Pahta and Irma Taavitsainen, considers the use of English as an intranational (sic) language, i.e. its presence in discourse conducted within the boundaries of European nations. English thus does get special treatment in *LLE*, being dealt with not only as a particularly innovative Germanic language (p. 65) that has been affected by substrate Celtic, adstrate Norse and superstrate Romance (p. 694), but also as an object of 'Anglomania' in South-Eastern Europe, where English has recently replaced Turkish, Greek, German or French as the *lingua franca* of choice, or as an instrument of 'self-colonization' (p. 378) in the North of Europe.

In Chapter 33, House finds that the preeminent position of English in contemporary European transnational communication is unassailable (a position also taken by Guus Extra, p. 467, and by Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyzanowski, p. 623). She observes that both first languages (L1) and English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) are changing as a result of the simultaneous cognitive activation of both languages in discourse. There is corpus evidence of some L1 – ELF convergence, with certain languages (e.g. German) being more prone to influence – opponents would say "contamination" – than others (French or Spanish). Is English a killer language? House feels that the option of using English is a matter of "free will" (p. 595) and finds no evidence that ELF users suffer from a "reduced personality" (p. 596) or are in any way conceptually impoverished. However, she is sensitive to the need for the "intellectual elite of non-Anglophone countries" (p. 602) to supplement their English-language publications with others in their respective native tongues. A more proactive position is taken by Jan-Ola Östman (p. 378): he advocates a "glocal ideology", in which speakers incorporate and appropriate the global and make it their own. He illustrates how this is being achieved in Swedish-speaking Finland, where speakers feel under pressure from the global language English, from the majority language Finnish and from the normative influence of standard Swedish (see Peter Auer, p. 487ff., on such 'exoglossic' standards): regionalization emerges as an answer to hegemony.

Finland provides the framework for the immediately following chapter by Pahta and Taavitsainen, who consider how English is increasingly being used where formerly the domestic language would have served. In the final decades of the previous century, and in Central and Eastern countries from 1990, there was a pan-European effort to inventory the Anglicisms that were flooding into Europe's other languages. In more recent years, attention has turned to painting the "linguistic landscape" (p. 611), identifying the circumstances in which English is used, how and when speakers switch to English, and what functions, meanings, motivations and attitudes that switch responds to. What emerges from this chapter is that, at least in certain countries such as Finland, English offers an additional communicative resource, with its appearance in public spaces connoting street wisdom. English has come to be emblematic of being young, trendy and fashionable, and Pahta and Taavitsainen give copious examples of how English has become an integral part of intranational discourse in Finland. The upbeat tone of this chapter, it should be pointed out – it is an advantage of the book that the editors have not attempted to iron out all such differences of opinion – is contested by Sue Wright in her chapter on language and nation building: she stresses that "the spread of English as a *lingua franca* is not universally welcomed by Europeans" (p. 785) and that Europeans still tend to conceptualize English as the language of the British and the Americans, doubting whether it can ever be fully denationalized. And Jeroen Darquennes, in a chapter on minorities, language politics and language planning, points out that the ubiquity of borrowing from English is complicating the task of codifying and elaborating minority languages such as Frisian, Basque and Sorbian (p. 555). Finally, there are concerns that in a multilingual country such as Belgium, Luxembourg or Switzerland English is displacing the country's other language as the first choice in schools (Peter Gilles, p. 564).

The first four sections of *LLE* are imbued with linguistics, but it is not till the final section that the spotlight falls on the discipline itself. Section 5, the briefest of the five, provides chapters on the research traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and a chapter each on structuralism, functionalism and generative grammar in Europe. It is disappointing that the kind of comprehensive coverage granted to the languages of Europe is not extended to linguistics: for instance, the great names of French 20th-century linguistics, Gustave Guillaume, Antoine Culioli and Lucien Tesnière, are nowhere mentioned; the rich vein of European discourse analysis and text linguistics is not explored; and a chapter on European descriptive and typological work would have been welcome. Nevertheless, the five chapters make for interesting reading. Pierre Swiggers, in exploring the 19th-century origins of linguistics, explains how *Sprachwissenschaft* was

introduced to Germany in 1821 as being ‘scientific’ (*wissenschaftlich*) as opposed to philology, which the self-proclaimed scientist August Schleicher is cited as dismissing as an “entertaining occupation for text-lovers” (p. 811). We see here the seeds of a science-vs-humanities rivalry that has continued to tear language departments across Europe asunder. The chapters on structuralism (Jörn Albrecht) and functionalism (Rosanna Sornicola), neither venturing much beyond 1960, are both excellent: what strikes the reader is how the two chapters largely go over the same ground, emphasizing the continuous interpenetration of structural and functional thinking in Europe. In the ‘structural-functional’ grammars of today’s Europe (Butler 2003), the same nexus is being carried forward.

There is much more in this compendious volume than I have been able to mention here. The regional and minority languages and dialects of the United Kingdom and Ireland are given fair coverage, as are the community languages of immigrants. All in all, there is a lot to learn from *LLE*, which will stand as a reliable reference work for many years to come.

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The older ESSE members will remember the portrait of Seamus Heaney on the cover of the Autumn 1991 issue of *The English Messenger* (I, 1), published in the wake of the inaugural ESSE Conference (Norwich, 4-8 September), at the very time when the USSR was going through the throes of its final collapse and the nations of Eastern Europe were in quick succession recovering their independence and sovereignty. When 10 years later Heaney appeared again on the front cover of our newsletter, the world had changed, and practically all the countries of the former Communist bloc had joined ESSE. For the Nobel laureate, however, the Iron Curtain, when still in place, was porous, and poetry from Eastern Europe had been filtering through, notably thanks to the magazine *Modern Poetry in Translation*, founded in 1965 by Ted Hughes and Daniel Weissbort, the *Penguin Modern European Poets* series, for which Al Alvarez was advisory editor, and Milosz’s *Postwar Polish Poetry* (Penguin, 1970). Though “poetry is what gets lost in translation”, as Robert Frost once famously declared, it is undeniable that Eastern-European poets were important to Seamus Heaney during the years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. He was later to declare that their poetry “was at once and the same time a *viaticum* and a *vade mecum*. It was nurture, but it was also an injunction: it enjoined you to be true to poetry as a solitary calling, not to desert the post, to hold on at the crossroads where truth and beauty intersect.”¹ The inspiration he drew from such exiled poets as Osip Mandelstam, Joseph Brodsky, Czeslaw Milosz, and Zbigniew Herbert helped him to find and define his position as creative artist in relation to history and politics. Thanks to their example and guidance his own poetry succeeded in maintaining a balance between aesthetics and ethics, art and life, and it can be placed in the tradition of the Horatian *ars poetica*, being of the sort that equally “delights and instructs”.

Though many critics have mentioned their influence, Carmen Bugar’s monograph is the first to offer a detailed, in-depth study of Heaney’s relationship with East European poets. The subject, by the way, appears to be gaining importance in Heaney studies with Magdalena Kay’s *In Gratitude for All the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe* (University of Toronto Press), duly given as forthcoming in Bugar’s bibliography and now published. Bugar, however, started her own study of the subject as early as 2000, working at Balliol College, Oxford, on a doctoral

¹ Dennis O’Driscoll, 1997. *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*. London: Faber, 297.

thesis which she completed in 2004. When in late 2010 she set about to prepare it for publication the bibliography she had to take into account had been considerably augmented, and *Stepping Stones* had notably been published — that mammoth 524-page-long book of interviews given by Heaney to Dennis O’Driscoll (Faber, 2008).

The introduction is far from being merely perfunctory. It has plenty of substance. In it Bugan clearly exposes the need there was for the book she has written and highlights the fact that Heaney has come to consider the four exiled poets under study as members of a “poetic family” which, an “*inner émigré*” himself, he claims kinship with. Methodological questions are raised and key concepts, like that of influence, examined. The importance of biography in the working out of a *poetics of exile* is stressed, and a brief and lively account given of Heaney’s personal, historical and literary background. Exile, in his case, was perhaps more metaphorical than physical, but it represents a special “stance towards life” which Bugan interestingly relates to the self-chosen exile of Stephen Dedalus, intent on forging “in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race”.

The first of the four chapters, “Writing ‘for the joy of it’”, is devoted to Osip Mandelstam, by no means a contemporary of Heaney since, arrested and sent by Stalin to the gulag in 1938, he died in a transit camp near Vladivostok some four months before the Irish poet was born. He is, however, a major reference in Heaney’s reflections upon the nature and role of poetry, singularly so in two important of his prose pieces: “Faith, Hope and Poetry” (*Preoccupations*) and “Osip and Nadezhda Mandelstam” (*The Government of the Tongue*). In “Exposure”, the concluding poem of *North* (1975), the poet accounts for his migration from Northern Ireland to Wicklow, in the Republic: now an *inner émigré*, but having regained his “inner freedom”, he can weigh his “responsible *tristia*”, and thus makes an explicit reference to Mandelstam’s *Tristia* (1922) and to Ovid in exile from Rome. Of this poem and of its “complicated palimpsest-like intertextuality”, Bugan gives an excellent and detailed analysis. She also convincingly shows that Sweeney, the exiled king from *Sweeney Astray*, is a sort of “portrait of the artist as an exile” and comments on the “Mandelstam – Sweeney – Heaney triad”. Dante is another meeting ground for the two poets, both concerned with “phonetics and feelings”, and they find in the poet “singing at his work in the dark wood of the larynx” a confirmation of the “diamond absolutes” of poetry. Heaney sees in Mandelstam “a furious devotion to the physical word, the etymological memory bank, the word as its own form and content”, and this corresponds to his own emphasis upon the sensuality of language in lyric poetry, “the energy released by linguistic fission and fusion [...], the buoyancy generated by cadence and tone and rhyme and stanza”, as he puts it in his Nobel lecture, “Crediting Poetry” (1995). Listening to and trying to render “the music of what happens”, Heaney professes “the pleasure and surprise of poetry, its rightness and thereness” in a way which to Bugan echoes Barthes’s formulation of the pleasure of the text, of its orality — “the grain of the voice”. But in Mandelstam, Heaney also finds an example of how a poet can remain free and at the same time “bound to the crowd”, and relate the Keatsian notions of truth and beauty to the violence of tumultuous history. Heaney’s stance as a poet and his *poetics of exile* are confirmed in *Station Island*, when what Bugan calls “the compound ghost of Joyce and Mandelstam” tell him to go on his own: “The main thing is to write / for the joy of it.”

Though Russian like Mandelstam, Joseph Brodsky’s is a totally different case. He was almost the exact contemporary of Heaney and, having run afoul of the Soviet authorities, he spent years of “internal exile” near Archangel in Northern Russia. He was eventually banished from the country in 1972 and soon settled in the United States where, already famous as a dissident and a *cause célèbre* among literary circles, he was to make a very successful career as a poet and academic. In 1987 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and installed in 1991 as United States Poet Laureate. The first coincidence to be noted is that 1972 is also the year of Heaney’s self-chosen migration from Northern Ireland to the Republic and the year both poets met for the first time. They were later to become close personal friends. But why is this second chapter entitled “‘Audenesque’: Seamus Heaney and Joseph Brodsky”? And why is Bugan trying very hard to demonstrate that Auden–Brodsky–Heaney constitutes a significant poetic triad? Of course we know that among the English poets Brodsky read during his exile, Auden, MacNeice and Spender became his “mental family”, and that he was warmly supported by Auden when he arrived in America. But the true answer is to be found in another, more exceptional, coincidence: Brodsky died of a heart attack on 28 January 1996, exactly the same day as W. B. Yeats in January 1939. “Audenesque” (the word was first used by Gavin Ewart in 1930) is the elegy Heaney wrote “in memory of Joseph Brodsky” with explicit reference to Auden’s famous lament “In Memory of

W. B. Yeats”, using in “Quatrain by constrained quatrain” the same trochaic beat as Auden in the third section of his own poem. Bugan implicitly argues that Heaney’s “Brodskyan stance”, keeping poetry and politics strictly apart (Brodsky once declared that all they had in common was the “p” and the “o”), is the same as the one he learned from Auden who, after the “low dishonest decade” of the political Thirties, developed a form of “po-ethics” in America. Brodsky and Auden are to be viewed as kindred spirits, sources of inspiration for Heaney, who have helped Heaney to find for himself his sense of artistic freedom and responsibility to the language. “The proper concern of art”, he writes, “is with the naming of things rather than with the espousal of causes.” What the poem is about is more a matter of “the erotics of language” than the “politics and polemics” of the moment. To be noted - the long and remarkable analysis Bugan gives of Heaney’s work on the medieval Irish of *Buile Suibhne*, and of how he finally freed himself from the “political extensions” related to the matter of Ulster and reached a sort of “verbal asceticism” in the final version of *Sweeney Astray*.

After Mandelstam and Brodsky, both Russian, Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004) is the first of the two Polish poets whose influence is examined next. Heaney’s first contact with Miłosz’ poetry was in 1973, when the latter’s *Selected Poems* were published, translated into English. By that time, the Lithuanian-born Polish poet was already settled in California, teaching Slavic languages at Berkeley. He had known and survived German occupation in Warsaw, served the new Communist regime for some years as Cultural attaché in Paris and Washington, and defected to the West in 1951. Later to become a US citizen and to be awarded the Nobel Prize in 1980, he was for Heaney a formidable example, “the greatest [poet] alive among us today”, “a Giant at [his] Shoulder”. From him he learned “How to be a responsible poet” (the title of Bugan’s third chapter), how to balance the *jouissance* of language and the historical realities of his community, aesthetic and public obligations, the pleasure of poetry and the “[d]urable, obstinate notions” of truth and history. Rejecting Adorno’s dictum that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”, Miłosz showed that a poet could serve both language and the people, and though it would be absurd to compare post-1969 Northern Ireland with pre-1989 Eastern Europe it is certain that Heaney’s *poetics of exile* owes a lot to the man who felt “stretched between contemplation [...] and the command to participate actively in history”, so much so that the sentence is integrated by Heaney into one of his poems of *Station Island*.

The life of Zbigniew Herbert (1924-1998) was marked by the experience of Nazi occupation in Lwów, followed by the imposed Stalinist aesthetics of Socialist Realism. The poet’s response was to remain silent, and silence (no book of his was published before the 1956 thaw), as he puts it in “The Power of Taste”, was his own metaphoric exile: “the princes of our senses proudly chose exile.” He later travelled extensively in the West, but never broke away from his native Poland. To Heaney, Herbert is a “keeper of civilization” in the way the Irish poet declares, in his Preface to *Finders Keepers*, that “poets themselves are finders and keepers [...], discoverers and custodians of the unlooked for”. Herbert is not only a “citizen of the earth” and an inheritor of civilization, but as Heaney writes in “Atlas of Civilization” a man who “shoulders the whole sky and scope of human dignity and responsibility”, and keeps “a trustworthy poetic canopy, if not a perfect heaven, above our vulnerable heads”. From Heaney’s “A Daylight Art”, Bugan draws the second key notion of Socrates’ “examined life”. For Herbert poetry must “salvage out of the catastrophe of history at least two words [...]: justice and truth”, and his work is a “twentieth-century poetic version of the ‘examined life’”. Although by temperament Heaney is first and foremost a lyrical poet, the seriousness of Herbert’s poetics of responsibility has admittedly played a part in the shaping of his “stance towards life”. And so he joins Mandelstam, Brodsky and Miłosz who, along with Auden, Walcott, Kavanagh and Yeats, constitute Heaney’s “poetic family”.

This is a very good book, a massively and precisely documented scholarly study, written by someone who has a consummate knowledge of her subject. Carmen Bugan obviously put her heart and soul into it, and there are at least two reasons for this. She is a poet herself, with a first collection of poems, *Crossing the Carpathians* (Oxford Poets, 2004) and a second, *The House of Straw*, ready to be published. And she knows what she is talking about with the notion of *poetics of exile*: she was born in Romania in 1970, and she and her family emigrated to the USA as political dissidents in 1989, just before the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime. In 2012 she published *Burying the Typewriter*, a memoir about growing up in Romania, which has been widely

reviewed and highly praised. In more ways than one she too deserves to belong to Heaney's "poetic family".

P.S. *At the time when this review of Carmen Bugar's book was written, there was no knowing that Seamus Heaney was going to die. He died in a Dublin hospital on 30 August. In the tribute he paid to his father at the funeral service, in Donnybrook, Dublin, Michael Heaney reported that the poet's last few words were a text message sent to his wife Marie minutes before he died, and they read: "Noli timere", don't be afraid." He is buried in his home village of Bellaghy, in the same graveyard as his parents and other members of his family. (A.H.)*

Michel Remy (ed.). Peter Greenaway. Special issue of *Cycnos*. Vol. 26, No. 1, 2010.

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Cycnos is to be commended for yet another exciting contribution to English Studies. This special issue of the journal is the proceedings of a symposium on Peter Greenaway which took place at the University of Nice in February 2009, and which included an extended lecture by the film director himself. The 186 page book opens with a transcription of this lecture, which is followed by eight scholarly essays on specific films (*Draughtsman, Z & 00, The Falls, Prospero*). The essays discuss different aspects of his work (perception, embodiment, Britishness, representability, multimedia, symbolism).

As a living, working artist, Greenaway almost feels like a myth, a half-imagined, breathtakingly gigantic, monstrous creature. How is it that Greenaway always conjures up excess, ritual, and the unrolling of terms like analepsys, synesthesia, and polysyndeton? What is needed here is another Greek word: antidote. Allow me to call him by his first name, Peter, so that I can get on with the business of reviewing without swooning in the second paragraph.

I will start with Peter's lecture. Watching Peter's films as they came out has been a breathtaking experience. This is a "cinema of attractions" that puts your brain in a food processor – a difficult cinema, you may say. The decision to print Peter's "lecture", a rather conversational speech accompanying what was essentially a multimedia presentation, was at best a dubious decision. It had to do with Greenaway, the god, rather than Peter, the brick. Peter's films often left audiences in delicious bewilderment, and exegesis was required, nay, demanded. And where best to go but to the author himself? (If you thought that Barthes had killed the author in 1977, you were mistaken). Peter is quite happy to oblige in articles, books, interviews, documentaries, lectures, and commentaries – and the rewards are many. We discover, for example, that a diverting tale about windows is in fact a denunciation of apartheid, or that a spiralling plot is in fact an homage to Darwin.

Peter opens his lecture by declaring that the shortcomings of cinema as an interactive tool are a death sentence for the seventh art. Clearly, he has not been reading fan-fiction. He claims that cinema must be liberated from "the four tyrannies of [the] text, the frame, the actor and the camera". This kind of statement tends to be a covert description of an artist's own work. Peter certainly has done his utmost to stupefy dialogue, disentangle writing from meaning, turn away from literary models, paralyse and layer images, and resort to non-mainstream actors and instruct them to represent rather than act.

A discussion of Peter's most recent projects (*Writing on Water, Blue Planet, Tulse Luper Suitcases...*) is the most interesting part of the lecture, but is poorly served by being shoe-horned into the wrong medium, with the result that the text is left limping with inserts such as "[screening of Peter's version of Schönberg's] *The Survivor of Warsaw*, 9' extract" in every other page. The lecture also offers an entertaining display of phobias, phobias, and slips. For example, we learn that Peter is keeping an eye on popular culture, but not appreciatively, an attitude summed up in his references to "Sharon Stone"; in the lecture, she is shorthand for the hordes attacking the glass-palace of cinema.

It is scarcely fair to point to Peter's dirty fingernails when he has had the courage to show himself naked to the world (like so many of his actors) in this verbatim transcript, that is true. But his mention of Picassos, Borgeeses, and Leonardos is predictable, his "I am inspired by death and

sex” is as thrilling as a toothache, and his heartfelt concern for the *wives* of all those soon-redundant workers in the film industry is irritating. Griselda Pollock’s art criticism may seem inadequate for our queer-theory soaked days, but I must invoke her: where is woman in Peter’s lecture and in Peter’s work?

“But the man’s a genius!” I hear you say. Well, if genius means I have to iron his shirts, I’m off. I will grant you this: there is no match today for his creativity and his refusal to compromise, and why this should be so, why we don’t have a thousand Peter Greenaways, each with a unique vision, that I do not know.

As for the essays that follow the lecture, this is a valuable but uneven collection. The length of the essays varies considerably (some are around 6-8 pages, others 17 pages). There are other editorial mysteries: 12-line long sentences should have been trimmed and a list of Peter’s feature films should have been included in the biblio-filmography. There are plenty of books on Peter’s work available, including some intertextual ones by the man himself, as well as many essays scattered throughout journals, and it is rather surprising that this wealth of materials is largely left unmentioned by the contributors.

On the positive side, some of the critics in the collection offer new parameters for the study of Peter’s conceptual film paintings, such as Bergson’s perception as “virtual action” (de Beaugrand), or Alan Roger’s experience as “artialized” event (Gasquet). Somewhat more predictable are the references to Barthes’ photography as “what was” (Combarnous), or Deleuze’s “brain cinema” and “movement/time image” (invoked by Terence Blake, who explains that he taught himself French to read Deleuze). There are also throwaway references to Deleuze and Guattari’s “rhizomatic” (in Remy for example). I am no expert, but I don’t see how the rhizomatic can be effectively applied to someone as obsessed with structural symmetries as Peter, unless we equate his “absurdist” associations - Peter’s term - to automatic writing. But can we do this?

Perhaps because an exhibition entitled “The Moderns” (20 October 2010 – 13 February 2011) at the Irish Museum of Modern Art is still fresh in the mind, I see a kinship between Peter’s work and the abstract paintings of Albert Gleizes and Mainie Jellett’s “translation and rotation” school, with their belaboured harmony of superimposed flat elements. In his lecture, Peter suggests that we could consider Rembrandt as the first filmmaker due to his use of light, a criterion that should extend to much earlier shadow plays. Yet for all Peter’s insistence on placing himself in a tradition of visual art going back to, say, Mantegna, it seems to me that his sequencing, folding, and grating of images, is more closely related to contemporary classical music. This is something that Peter himself has suggested. Michael Nyman’s music, for example, long associated with Peter’s work, may be said to hold a magnifying glass onto the rationale of the films (this is picked up by Louguet in one of the essays).

Those travelling shots (also discussed by Louguet) notwithstanding, Peter does not move the camera or the actors that much, and we see through one pair of eyes, or two - a tough job for an editor. In Peter’s films there is always stasis somewhere, in the bodies, the scene, or the camera. In a sense, this is anti-cinema, because it works towards stillness. It reminds us of Moore and Oteiza working with empty space in their sculptures. It reminds us of Cage (a friend, subject, and “hero” of Peter’s) working with silence in his musical compositions. It is easy to name-drop with Peter, because his work is richly connected.

Many other contexts are fruitful. For example, in the collection we find discussions on the transnationalism of Christian codes (Saleh), the effect of semantic and temporal hybridity (Maheu), or the body’s resistance to categorization (Remy). I would have liked to see Remy challenging rather than accepting Peter’s fictional use of raped women as a metaphor for art. Peter’s approach to the Real may be another interesting angle. There is a curious reticence in his work, a refusal of psychology, a denial of feeling, a mechanization of people. His people are signs and placards. His films are all referencing, remixing. I have suggested that we can see postmodern Peter as a modernist abstract filmmaker... but was abstraction ever modernist? We could argue that literary modernism and visual modernism were the culmination of the realist project, and that postmodernism *and abstraction* are primarily anti-realist. In any case, there is no progression in the method, so postmodernism is likely to stutter itself into exhaustion. The future of postmodernism, I’d say, is more compromised than the future of cinema, but if it rests on this firm base, we may at least hope it will last a little longer.

A couple of years ago I facilitated a discussion on the construction of “the canon” among three groups of undergraduate students of English. When I asked them to name a masterpiece of

cinema, the film with most votes was the Disney film *The Lion King*. It may take a revolution to awaken this generation. I do not think it is a case of either/or, but, clearly, these students are drowning in the mainstream. Clearly, they have never heard of Greenaway.

Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger. 2008. *The Air of Liberty: Narratives of the South Atlantic Past*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

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Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger's *The Air of Liberty* is a valuable contribution to the field of Black Atlantic studies in postcolonial literature, which developed in the wake of Paul Gilroy's groundbreaking work in the early 1990s.¹ Much research in this field has centred on the English-speaking areas of the Black Atlantic – especially in the Caribbean and North America – but Phaf-Rheinberger promotes the study of a transnational black counterculture from a distinct “South Atlantic vantage point” (xvii). The author notes that the slave trade has left an “open wound” in the societies directly affected by it, both in southern West Africa and in South America. A particularly illustrative example of this can be found in contemporary literature. Hence, the book opens with the “assumption that narrative fiction increasingly concentrates on telling history from the global perspective of the (former) slaves” (xvi). Yet Phaf-Rheinberger does not limit her analysis to literary texts. Very much in line with Gilroy's original study, *The Air of Liberty* covers a wide range of fictional and non-fictional texts, paintings and even music from the 17th century to the present, which attest to the enduring impact of slavery. The concrete area covered by Phaf-Rheinberger's study includes a number of port cities of the South Atlantic coast that were subjected to Dutch control in the 17th century. This so-called “Dutch period” is a common feature of countries such as Brazil, Suriname and Curaçao in South America, and Angola in West Africa. By tracing their shared experiences, memories, and cultural and linguistic features, *The Air of Liberty* reconnects these countries, including the Netherlands, stressing the value of a transnational as well as historical approach to contemporary culture.

The book is divided into four parts, entitled “The Dream of Order”, “The Crisis of Enlightenment”, “The Search for Alternatives” and, finally, “Toward a Cultural History of the South Atlantic”. This provides a helpful frame for the analysis of the complex relationships between the great variety of people and cultures that met, clashed and fused within the areas of the South Atlantic controlled by the Dutch. The reader gets a sense of watching the historical and cultural developments through a zoom lens, coming ever closer to the core of the social imaginary of these societies, namely their emanation of an “air of liberty”. The diversity of symbolic expressions of that elusive quality and its relation to modernity constitute the object of this study.

In the first part, Phaf-Rheinberger examines the influence of the Dutch Enlightenment's rationalism on the development of an urban modernity in the South Atlantic. A paradigmatic case is provided by the pictorial representation of Mauritsstad, now part of Recife, in the North East of Brazil. In the 17th century, the Dutch painter Frans Post produced a series of drawings and oil paintings that provide a unique glimpse into the transformation of this port city under the rule of the Dutch. Phaf-Rheinberger highlights two levels of reflection provided by Post's work. Firstly, we can identify the specific genre of art developed in the Netherlands during this period, which revealed a unique penchant for accuracy based on the ideals of scientific and technical expertise. Post's drawings and paintings not only correspond to the age's promotion of an “exact knowledge of the New World via iconographic evidence” (7), but they also attest to the important function of landscape painting as a form of mapping. Secondly, Post provides a documentation of the Dutch construction of a new city in South America. As Phaf-Rheinberger puts it, “Mauritsstad comes

¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Harvard University Press, 1993. See also Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora*, Basic Civitas Books, 2010; Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott, eds., *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, Routledge, 2009; Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio, eds., *Beyond the Black Atlantic: Relocating Modernization and Technology*, Routledge, 2006.

close to being a real ‘Dutchtown’ locked on a *tabula rasa*.” (17) Particularly interesting here is the role of science and technology for urban development. The Dutch made heavy use of hydraulic engineering in order to drain swamps and build dikes and bridges on Mauritsstad – aspects which are captured in Post’s depiction of diverse stages of the city’s construction in the mid-17th century.² Here we can observe the function of landscape transformation as a form of colonisation. Having dealt with the landscape, the focus of this chapter shifts to the people depicted in those same pictures by Post. The realism evident in the artist’s attention to detail also influences his portrayal of society, as is made evident by the representation of social and racial stratification. However, Phaf-Rheinberger identifies a striking paradox, namely that the slaves in one of Post’s canvases clearly adopt a posture of “leisure” and “relaxation”. The author detects in this image the first sign of the “air of liberty” that permeates the study and represents a marked contrast to European domination.

A further example is provided by the famous Dutch scholar of the 17th century, Caspar Barlaeus, the inventor of the ideal figure of the *mercator sapiens*, who combines the activity of trade with in-depth cultural knowledge of and respect for the different peoples with whom he conducts business. Barlaeus himself never actually visited the American continent, but from his Amsterdam-based viewpoint he provided a written parallel to Post’s depiction of Mauritsstad’s “air of liberty” by reflecting on the ambiguous practice of slave trading. The scholar’s opinions on this issue are contradictory. Despite stating that slavery must be judged as an immoral act, he concludes that this judgement does not apply to “heathens” and “barbarians” such as the African slaves transported to the sugar plantations of Northeastern Brazil. Sugar was an important commodity in Europe during this period and it was Brazil’s most important export. Barlaeus, who praised the “sweetness of sugar”, acknowledged that its continued production depended on slavery (40). His ambiguous position underscores the violence underneath the orderly and rational Dutch presence in South America.

In the second part, “The Crisis of Enlightenment”, the analysis zooms into more direct experiences of the “Dutch period” through the testimonies of different groups of South Atlantic inhabitants. The setting is now Suriname, where the Dutch administration established an important plantation colony back in the 17th century. In a chapter dealing with the settlement of a significant Jewish agricultural community, Phaf-Rheinberger follows the figure of David Nassy, one of the chief spokesmen of the so-called Jewish-Portuguese Nation in Suriname. Nassy’s *Essai Historique* (1788) addressed the prevalent anti-Semitism in Suriname, whereby Jewish plantation owners were consistently branded as cruel masters and bad farmers. The text was written at a time of financial crisis, as the Dutch monopoly over sugar prices was overrun by the French colony of St. Dominique. Within Suriname, as well as throughout the West Indian colonies, slave revolts and an increasing number of “maroons” (escaped slaves who established their own independent settlements) threatened the plantation system and exacerbated ethnic conflict. This had a particular impact on Jewish people, whose status as whites was rather ambiguous. If, on the one hand, this situation went back to the prevalent anti-Semitism of the times, which had forced the Jewish-Portuguese Nation out of Europe to begin with, it was exacerbated, on the other hand, by the presence of Jewish mulattos in the colonies. They were manumitted slaves who had converted to Judaism. The marginal status of the Jewish Nation and the practices of intermarriage between white and non-white Jews provide a model of the negotiation of identities in Dutch South America. Both the Jewish diaspora and the freed slaves were in search of that “air of liberty” promised by the allegedly more tolerant Dutch colonial environment. In their fight against each other, but also side by side, these communities reflected the very limits of the Enlightenment that Europe was so vehemently promoting overseas as well.

The analysis of fictional texts only really begins with the third part, “The Search for Alternatives”. Phaf-Rheinberger explores the question of national identity in contemporary fiction from Curaçao and Suriname. The depiction of historical figures such as Manuel Piar, the role of popular music styles such as *Tumba*, and the contested place of the creole languages Papiamentu in Curaçao and Sranan in Suriname provide the basis for an analysis of the phenomenon of

² A selection of these pictures is included in the book, but sadly they are reproduced in such a small format that all the fascinating details mentioned by Phaf-Rheinberger have to be imagined by the reader. This constitutes a major drawback of the book.

'diglossia' in the Dutch Antilles. According to the Uruguayan author Ángel Rama,³ literary diglossia arises from the fact that writers belong to the cultured élites, whereas their characters and ideal readers might not – hence the adoption of transculturation practices in South American literature as a defence of 'native' popular culture against the hegemony of Eurocentric modernity. In the case of the Dutch ex-colonies of Curaçao and Suriname, Phaf-Rheinberger documents an active search for distinctive modes of self-expression and interpretation of history, which put these countries at odds not only with the Dutch "dream of order", but also with many Latin American interpretations of the continent's struggle for independence. The latter point is illustrated by the fictional treatment of Manuel Piar's role in the Bolivarian revolution of the 19th century. Born in Curaçao to a Spanish merchant and a Dutch mulatta, Piar experienced from early on the marginal position of creoles and became a supporter of the slave rebellions and independence movements in Curaçao and beyond. Eventually he joined Simón Bolívar's movement for Venezuela's independence, and although he was promoted to the rank of General-in-Chief, disagreements with other high-ranking officers, including Bolívar himself, eventually led to Piar's execution. His ambiguous position as traitor and scapegoat has become the stuff of famous Latin American historical novels, such as Manuel Trujillo's *El gran dispensador* (1993), Francisco Herrera Luque's *Manuel Piar: Caudillo de dos colores* (1987) and Gabriel García Márquez's *El general en su laberinto* (1989). Paradoxically, Piar's name is absent from contemporary Curaçaoan fiction dealing with Spanish-American independence. Phaf-Rheinberger interprets this as a case of "Antillean Amnesia." The examples of Curaçaoan authors Boeli van Leeuwen and Tip Marugg reveal the melancholic view of their native island as a place in which a "concrete liberation project" is overwhelmed by "a chaotic moment of protest" (111). In their abstract rather than historical treatment of the Bolivarian revolution, these authors actually articulate "the self-evident absurdity of expecting military heroes in the Southern Hemisphere" (111). In other words, heroism often entails a degree of megalomania, as seen in the case of both Bolívar and Piar.

The popular music genre of *Tumba* and the creole languages Papiamentu and Sranan became an important issue for Curaçaoan and Surinamese national writers from the 1950s up to our days. Here we can locate the specific "air of liberty" in popular culture that clearly detached itself from the dominant Dutch language and cultural standards. Accordingly, both the music and the creole languages were forbidden for some time by the authorities. In their move towards transculturation, writers such as Cola Debrot and Frank Martinus Arion from Curaçao, and Albert Helman from Suriname actively promoted the creole languages in their poems, essays and novels, while also providing detailed portraits of the racial and social intermixture and ongoing tensions in these countries. Historical novels are also here a favoured means of portraying the multifaceted relationship between settlers and slaves, rebels and creoles, rulers and ruled. According to Phaf-Rheinberger, suppressed languages and the memory of slavery are used by these authors to "design an alternative landscape to broaden the horizon of their respective local histories" (151).

A particularly interesting aspect of both Papiamentu and Sranan is the strong influence of Portuguese and Bantu languages. This points to their origins in the African slave trade, stressing the connection between the Dutch Antilles and West Africa, in particular Angola. The final part of *The Air of Liberty* therefore reconnects South America with Africa by analysing three contemporary novels in which slave trading during the "Dutch period" features heavily, either as a historical setting or as a haunting memory. The Angola-Brazil nexus is of great relevance here: between 1641 and 1648, the Dutch occupied the port city of Luanda, the Angolan capital, from which the majority of slave ships sailed to Brazil. During this short period, Dutch economic interests played an important role in historical battles between tribal chiefs and Portuguese troops in the interior of Angola. These events permeate the novel *A gloriosa família* (1997) by Pepetela, one of Angola's foremost authors. Set in the Angolan capital in the 17th century and told from the perspective of a slave, the novel features an important Flemish merchant family and a painter named Barlaeus. The historical figures of Barlaeus and Frans Post ironically merge into one, denoting once again the Dutch "dream of order" which Phaf-Rheinberger dealt with in the first part of *The Air of Liberty*. Another noteworthy novel is Brazilian author Alberto Mussa's *O trono da rainha Jinga* (The Throne of Queen Nzinga, 2007), which focuses on the life of a Portuguese slave trader making his way from his homeland to Goa in India, to Angola and finally to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. The protagonist comes in contact with Angola's national heroine Queen Nzinga,

³ Ángel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*. México: Siglo XXI, 1982.

with the Dutch themselves, when they invade the northeastern Brazilian city Salvador da Bahia, and, finally, with revolted slaves who haunt the city of Rio de Janeiro, robbing and killing their oppressors. A similar topic appears in the novel *O ano em que Zumbi tomou o Rio* (The Year Zumbi Took Rio, 2002) by the expatriate Angolan author José Eduardo Agualusa, which depicts an uprising of street children in contemporary Rio de Janeiro and uses as its model the iconic figure of Zumbi, a marooned African slave in Brazil. The novel thus establishes a direct link between the impoverished inhabitants of ‘favelas’ and the African slaves brought to the country in the 17th century. Additionally, these events echo the presence of the Dutch in northeastern Brazil, as the most detailed descriptions of the maroon community of Palmares, where Zumbi lived, were provided by Dutch observers and scholars such as Caspar Barlaeus. Apart from their thematic correspondence, these novels are linked by their depiction of “Luanda and Rio as mythic constructs in which the slavery past is summoned up and its implications extended to address the global extent of enslavement and resistance” (171).

From Frans Post’s pictures of slaves in leisurely postures to the rebellious attitudes of Queen Nzinga and Zumbi, *The Air of Liberty* draws a rich web of interconnections across the South Atlantic, emphasising the profound impact of slavery on disparate countries, cultures and languages forcibly connected by the Dutch colonial system. Phaf-Rheinberger confirms Paul Gilroy’s notion of the transatlantic slave trade as the trigger for the formation of a transnational black counterculture that has been pivotal for the development of modernity, but she significantly widens the scope of Gilroy’s observation by including a large hitherto unexplored area. *The Air of Liberty* exposes many surprising cultural and linguistic entanglements and echoes of the colonial past, suggesting that there is much more to be explored. Hence, this book could and should be regarded as a starting point of a research endeavour that can unite scholars from diverse fields, countries and languages.

Charles Romain Mbele. 2010. *Essai sur le postcolonialisme en tant que code de l'inégalité*. Yaoundé : Éditions CLÉ.

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This book on postcolonialism by Cameroonian philosopher Charles Romain Mbele, completed in 2008, becomes especially remarkable and up-to-date in view of the present situation in North Africa. Though it is concerned with the problems of Black Africa, not Arab Africa, it raises questions and points out problems that seem common for the whole continent, such as its relationships with the Western world and the place of the continent in the present world structure.

The book consists of three parts, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. In the introduction the author develops three concepts which are used to insert Africa in the process of globalisation. These are the concepts of Peace, Rights and Commerce. Africa is faced with an alternative of either “adjust or perish.” Mbele says that the object of his work is to analyse how “the rights of man” concept takes form in public discourse. This discourse can be found in all documents regulating relationships with Africa, and above all, in the treaties concerning partnerships between Europe and Africa (this group of documents becomes the object of the author’s special attention).

The first part of the book, “On the Philosophies that Accompany the Adjustment of Sub-Saharan Africa to the Globalisation of Ultraliberal Capitalism”, discusses a world “frightened” of history: postmodern philosophy advises one to live up to the moment, refusing all planning and all teleology. Mbele also addresses the question of African identity and discusses Fabien Eboussi Boulaga’s view of the illusory nature of the concept of unique identity. Some African philosophers underline the importance of survival and insist on the multiple identities of African people. Such thinkers criticise the dialectics of liberation as defended by Amílcar Cabral and others. Achille Mbembe advocates the conservative modernization of society. Mbele calls such standpoints a philosophy of “discontinuity, dispersion, fragmentation..., inachievement” (26). Postmodern African philosophers pay special attention to the destructive forces inherited by Africa as atavisms. Mbele criticises the popular idea that “Africa does not exist”. By the end of the first part the author

turns to postcolonialism and discusses the opposition of postcolonial thought to dialectics. Philosophers of postcolonialism (e.g., Mbembe) call the fight for freedom a “logic of suicide” (36). Mbele draws the conclusion that culturalisation and biologisation lead to a refusal to understand Africa as an entity, hindering the process of its self-promotion.

The second part of the book, called “Peace, Rights and Commerce. A Triptich in Tune with the New Times of the World”, begins with the discussion of the “New World Order” and the concepts of Peace, Rights and Commerce as essential in formulating African destiny. The “Plan d’Action de Lagos” (1980-2000) was grounded in the dialectic thinking of Cabral and others; it celebrated “self-centration”, education and democracy.

In opposition to this plan, “Plan Berg” promoted an ultraliberal politics of “disindebtment” and focused on structural adjustment. It considered African states as weak and incapable of solving acute social problems. Mbele points out that the structural adjustment of Africa becomes similar to neo-colonialism. He accuses Mbembe, Bayart, Kabou and other postmodern thinkers of vulgarising the Weberian concept of “homo economicus”. Following Ndjana and Fouda, the author calls for the insertion of the values of “Apollonian Africa” into “Dionysian Africa” and pays special attention to the category of “jouissance” (joy, pleasure). For Ndjana, African life is a scene of theatre, festivity and pleasure.

Mbele describes some acute socio-economic problems, such as the destruction of agriculture leading to the impoverishment of young peasants and small merchants, who are forced to emigrate. But African immigrants often become “non-people” in Europe. Mbele criticises the vision of Africa as a community of “disordered people” at war. Africa’s fight for liberty is a fight for liberation from the world of force and inequality.

Special attention is also paid to the geopolitical and economical concept of “Euroafrica” which appeared in 1920. The author emphasizes that this concept, revived by Sarkozy and other modern politicians, is an imperialist one and that aid in fact supports the process of recolonisation. Mbele argues against philosophies of demobilization and calls the vision of a postheroic world without conquest and domination a “fantasma”. He also points out that such a vision has an aversion to conflict.

Finally, Mbele turns to the concept of friendship between Africa and Europe as formulated in the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the acute problem of African immigration. He underlines that in present-day agreements between Europe and African countries there are articles directed at fighting student immigration and supporting their return to the country of origin, as well as fighting hidden immigration. The Kantian ideas of the free circulation of people are discussed, as well as the double standards for immigration found in the work of John Rawls, with a significant title, “The Rights of People”. The rights of people, however, become subordinate to the right of the free circulation of goods.

The third part, which bears the somewhat vague title of “Ultraliberal African Exuberance as an Imperative Demand for Participation in the Economic World Revolution by Stressing the Primitive Accumulation of Capital”, starts with criticism of the importance of the category of “kairos” for some African postmodernists. The author talks about rhizomas and nomadic visions of the world, but does not make any references to contemporary French thinkers such as Deleuze (112). Mbele also criticises Bayart’s idea of “autonomy inside the dependence”. He closes this part with the point that there should be a meeting of civilisations without colonisation.

Mbele starts his conclusion with the statement that no people have ever accepted servitude and inequality as a destiny. But he draws the readers’ attention to the fact that present-day commercial treaties between Europe and Africa affirm this subservience. Mbele calls for new forms of fighting for democracy through the cultural, scientific and political organisation of Africa. He proposes to renegotiate the Plan d’Action de Lagos, which was discussed in the second part of the book, and revives the idea of a United Africa.

Mbele analyses numerous works by modern African philosophers in his book, but he also bases his thoughts on writers like Heraclitus, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel. He seems to deliberately ignore the postmodern philosophy of the West. Though touching acute problems of modern Africa, his book is short on concrete examples and sometimes sounds too general. Mbele’s work is an extensive criticism of his predecessors’ ideas, but does not give a clear vision of what has to be done to change the situation. Nevertheless, Mbele’s book is important, because it is indicative of an intensive debate among African philosophers and offers a critical vision of postmodern concepts, which are considered as ineffective and indeed often harmful for the positive development of the continent.

Chris Hopkins. 2009. *Thinking About Texts. An Introduction to English Studies*. Second edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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The second edition of the 2001 textbook fully lives up to its name. Intended as an introduction to the introduction to literary studies, Hopkins' text starts from the most elementary questions (what is literature?) and successively goes through concepts which, although crucial to the study of literature, are often left without a precise definition (e.g., text, author, critic, genre, history, identity, etc.). This is not to say that the book provides these definitions; rather than functioning as a glossary, it consistently encourages the reader to think about the problems presented. As the author states in the introduction, the goal "was to introduce students not so much to theory as to ways of thinking about English which were new to them, and which would help them with reading English in all its forms, including theory when they came to it. ... [and to do this] in such a way that the thinking around, behind, preceding the reading of texts became clearer to its users" (2). If the reader is not utterly passive in reading the book, Hopkins' goal should be achieved.

Changes in background color and graphic markers in the margins divide each part of the book into different types of... well, text. Though dotted and solid lines may at first seem somewhat childish, they do in fact make the book more accessible. Among the elements distinguished are the author's introductions to or discussions of a subject in general, citations of relevant passages, questions to consider when reading them and sample discussions of the texts quoted in light of the questions posed. The number and variety of quotations is certainly one of the book's strong points. While the analysis of each passage may sometimes seem tedious, the author achieves his important goal of showing how to read texts analytically.

Hopkins repeatedly underlines the subjective and individual nature of his proposed answers to the questions, as well as other hypotheses and ideas presented in the text, encouraging readers to disagree and formulate their own ideas. Each of the book's nineteen sections also ends with questions left for readers to answer on their own, usually accompanied by a relevant quotation. In the last chapter, after the reader has been led through multiple analyses, only some of the passages quoted are dissected by the author, the rest being accompanied by a blank space left for "Your Discussions...". All five chapters are also supplemented with a bibliography/reading list for those who want to read further on the subjects discussed.

The author repeatedly underlines his point that the goal of the book is not to acquaint the readers with various schools of thought and literary theories, but rather to teach them how to read, analyse and reflect on texts. Nevertheless, the sheer number of passages quoted from various sources, including some flagstone texts of critical theory, cannot help but make the reader acquire at least a passing acquaintance with many of the ideas he will come into closer contact with during successive classes on literary theory.

At the same time, many passages from literary texts and subsequent discussions acquaint the reader with the mechanics of close reading and textual analysis. When combined with the theoretical side of the book, which focuses on what aspects of texts one should take into consideration and how they influence their meaning/understanding/interpretation, one will arrive at a sound foundation for further studies. Interesting textual examples justify the need for analysis. The only problem may concern the proper time when to make use of the book, if no corresponding subject is available in the curriculum. As first-year students are already expected to start with analyzing texts and learning about various schools of critical theory, the book could be assigned as home-reading, discussed early on in general and referred to in a more specific manner during later parts of the course. It is sure to make discussions of various approaches to literary theory more fruitful and students' approach thereto less perfunctory. Even in the absence of a subject exactly

corresponding to the subject and level of the book, relevant fragments can also easily come in useful during more advanced courses, for example as homework to be read and thought over before a class.

Regardless of how one comes into contact with the book, the skills taught by Hopkins can prove useful as soon as one finishes reading it. Upon closing the book, the ambiguity of texts manifests itself, with readers having to decide for themselves whether to believe the note on the back cover claiming it was “Printed in Great Britain” or the information on the copyright page, where they learn that it was printed and bound in China.

Caroline Franklin, ed. *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*. Harlow: Longman, 2011.

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The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse is a significant contribution to the field of Gothic literature. This volume is not merely an anthology, but an intervention in the studies of Gothic verse, an area that has occupied an inconspicuous place in the academy vis-à-vis the Romantic canon. Moreover, the anthology not only highlights the importance of poetry in Gothic literature, but also reinstates the formative role it has in Romantic poetry and English poetry in general. The anthology incorporates an array of verse forms from the mid-18th century until the end of the 19th century, including subvariants, such as “graveyard poetry” and “vampire poetry,” verse dramas, fairytales, as well as a number of ballads among which translations of two influential German ballads. Historical and biographical details that situate verses within the context of English literature provide the thematic and formal insights needed to study them. A series of black and white engravings and colour paintings contained in the anthology underlines the Gothic’s pervasive presence in cultural history, as well as the obvious ties between literature and visual culture.

As noted in the “Preface,” the anthology challenges conventional categories of Romantic and Victorian verse and the distinctions between “high” and “low” by including popular verses from the period alongside poetry from canonical authors (xii). Given the recognition of popular culture as a serious object of study in recent scholarship, this inclusion is indeed overdue. In fact, the tension between “high” and “low” is a productive one in understanding Gothic poetry and its critical reception. After all, the common explorations of mental processes, the sublime and nature that high Romantic poetry shares with Gothic poetry forces poets to push their formal and stylistic experiments further in order to make their poetry distinctive. In this sense, *Lyrical Ballads*, the seminal poetry anthology of Wordsworth and Coleridge “was a Romantic response to popular Gothic. Rather than using the supernatural to merely thrill the reader, or recoiling from it into sterile rationalism, they attempted to explore those subjective states which created an alternative reality to that of the quotidian”. (256) Moreover, the volume’s editor, Caroline Franklin, attempts to contextualise the strategies of poets like Wordsworth, who explicitly denounces the popular Gothic, even though in his “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads* he justifies the use of language of common man (146), thereby setting in place the “high” and “low.” In the introduction to the volume, Franklin notes that by the end of the 18th century, the public was already infatuated with the Gothic and poets such as Coleridge and Wordsworth (whose works are also included in the volume) were cautious of the sensationalism of the supernatural (8). Franklin argues that the popularity of Gothic verse among the public might indeed be the reason why it never received the critical attention it deserved.

The introduction to the volume prepares the reader for poetry and concisely discusses the socio-historical conditions that gave rise to the Gothic sensibility, the origins and history of Gothic verse, its relationship to Romantic and Victorian verse, its prevalent themes and concerns, as well

as its critical reception; it also offers instances in which 21st century thought benefits from a study of Gothic verse. The poems contained in the anthology demonstrate the richness of the Gothic endeavour. The birth of nationalist pride (as in the case of Walter Scott), the contemplation of mortality (as in the case of “graveyard poets”, such as Robert Blair), the fascination with folk supernaturalism, primitivism, and paganism, and the inquiry into the nature of love and reality are some of the captivating issues explored, which will undoubtedly resonate with readers today. On the one hand, Gothic poetry weaves a layered sensibility that challenges through its themes the established belief systems of science and religion during a time of scientific discovery of nature and the human psyche; on the other hand, it challenges the formal devices of poetry by combining third and first person narratives and using popular folk tale and ballad forms.

Although the introduction and informative pieces accompanying each selection make clear associations between Gothic verse, Romanticism, and aesthetic theories of the time, this anthology should not be considered a “gateway” into more “serious” poetry. As the introduction strongly argues, Gothic poetry is a field that should be studied further and explored in and of itself and for its productive relations with other genres and movements. The Gothic works of these famed, canonical, forgotten, neglected, or popular poets reveal Gothic verse to be a lucrative field for critical thought. In fact, this collection proves that, in its challenge to high artistic forms and theories, Gothic poetry allowed for the development of subversive psychological and social themes, a feeling of reverential respect and admiration for the grotesque and monstrous, as opposed to a lofty obsession with the sublime, and a substantial presence of women writers.

Paola Loreto. *The Crowning of a Poet's Quest: Derek Walcott's "Tiepolo's Hound"*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009.

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It seems that the outstanding epic poem *Omeros* (1990) has partially obscured Derek Walcott's succeeding collections: *The Bounty* (1997), *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *The Prodigal* (2004) and *White Egrets* (2010). Although in these books Walcott's craft is as fine as ever, none of them seems to have the same capacity for summing up the epic breadth of the Caribbean. Critics focus mainly on *Omeros* or on Walcott's previous poetry and do not delve into his later works. The publication of Paola Loreto's *The Crowning of a Poet's Quest*, the first monographic volume on *Tiepolo's Hound*, is thus a very important step towards a sound critical assessment of Walcott's recent poetry.

Omeros and *Tiepolo's Hound* should be considered complementary books, as, in its own way, each one recapitulates and reworks the development of Walcott's poetics. If, on one hand, *Omeros* explores the growth of a collective Caribbean voice (“the tale of the tribe”, to quote Pound), on the other hand, *Tiepolo's Hound* gives a self-reflective account of the ripening of an individual artist, leading to a moral and aesthetic culmination that is clearly described in Loreto's study. Loreto's main thesis is that *Tiepolo's Hound* is Walcott's definitive *Bildungsroman*, the book in which he has most deeply reflected on what Wordsworth called “the growth of a poet's mind”.

Emerson's theory of organic expression is Loreto's conceptual starting point. By choosing a non-contemporary framework which, nonetheless, has the solidity of a classic, Loreto sets aside all current theoretical conceptualisations on Walcott that oscillate between standardised and partially worn out antitheses such as modernist/postmodernist, traditional/postcolonial, and the like. The first chapter, “The Poetry of Pragmatic Imagination: The Circuitous Influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson”, outlines an original theoretical frame inspired by the American philosopher's thought. As the peak of human and natural sensibility, poetry must be regarded as a special act that, while being self-reflective, concentrating on itself, opens out to humankind and calls for its

collective spiritual growth. If this appears out-of-date to today's self-assured intellectual cynicism, Loreto's exposition of Walcott's Emersonian poetics remains absolutely convincing. Loreto soars above modern and contemporary literary fashions, turning back to the origin and life of poetry itself as an optimistic, idealistic and subjective flow of creation channelled through humanity's universal mind. Emerson's indirect and yet essential influence on Walcott is keenly traced out through an American literary and philosophical tradition, which goes from Dickinson and Whitman to Eliot and Stevens. Loreto finally examines Walcott's quest for the notion of poetry as a perpetual restructuring of one's own perceptions and language in order to begin again, with every word, at every moment, just as nature itself does.

Chapter 2, "Ex-Centric Manners: Walcott and Nabokov's New Paradigm of the Writer of the Twenty-First Century", discusses Walcott's self-reflective poetics through a parallel reading of the narrative techniques in *Tiepolo's Hound* and in Nabokov's last novel, *Invitation to a Beheading* (1974). Both Nabokov and Walcott prove to be paradigms of a conscious use of what Loreto calls the "hermeneutic circle", a creative and cognitive process implying that the proper understanding of a text is possible only through a ceaseless circular movement from each of its parts to its totality, and back, so that meaning changes in time and emerges only through further subsequent and self-reflective readings of a writer's work.

Chapter 3, "The Escher-Effect in the Double Narrative of an Artist's *Bildung*: Walcott's Autobiography in Verse", emphasises how the retrospective light which *Tiepolo's Hound* casts on Walcott's entire career gives us the chance to re-assess his Caribbean "mulatto" aesthetics in terms of unrestricted assimilation and reworking of all the elements that have made up the poet's (and the Archipelago's) composite identity.

Poetry must also answer an inner call that should be called "religious", even if it is not strictly confessional. There is a deeply felt religious strand in Walcott's poetry, but it has not received enough critical attention. Chapter 4, "The Quest of the Poet-Knight: Walcott's Revision of the Arthurian Matter", is a relevant attempt to deal with it through a precise but universal mythical pattern. In addition to finding important references (notably T.S. Eliot) that might have inspired Walcott's Arthurian imagery in *Tiepolo's Hound*, Loreto tracks down the different steps of the spiritual journey beneath the narrative surface of the poem: the calling, the oath, the apprentice's discipline, the trials and the tasks, the rituals, and the final achievement of the quest.

Chapter 5, "The Fulfilment of the Aesthetic Light in the Achievement of the Metaphor of Light", discusses Walcott's primary metaphor of the object of his quest, that is, the ultimate clarity of perception and feeling. Light in *Tiepolo's Hound* – be it physical, spiritual, painted or remembered – finally reveals itself as the most dense metaphor, or the metaphor for metaphor, a partly virtual and partly actual entity that may be understood by analogy with Dante's theorisation of the multiple meanings, layers or facets of poetic language: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical. At this final stage of Loreto's study, Walcott appears to be, like Dante, a poet for whom even the tiniest perceived detail – for instance the stroke of painted light that haunts him throughout *Tiepolo's Hound* – might become a door into a philosophy or a theology of perception. *The Crowning of a Poet's Quest* therefore ends in a paradoxical coincidence of concentration and expansion of meaning and vision, which self-reflectively and retrospectively illuminates the architecture of the book as a whole.

There is also an extraordinary coda, a very large appendix (almost half the book), consisting of transcriptions of talks Walcott gave in Italy between 2000 and 2001. Through these unpublished recordings, which have supported many passages of Loreto's study, we can appreciate Walcott's rigorous theory and praxis of poetry. This is especially true in the "Creative Writing Seminar" held at the University of Milan (Loreto was among its participants). Walcott engages his students with a master's expertise and generosity, leading them into the hard work of translating and writing poetry. His questions, comments and suggestions can teach us how poetry works. Above all we learn why the most strenuous search for the right metaphor or meter or tone is always worth the writer's labour and the reader's attention.