

The Wood and the Trees

Popular Fictions between Literary and Cultural Studies

Sara Martín (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain)

The inclusion of the study of popular culture within Cultural Studies has stranded the study of popular fiction in an uncomfortable position, especially as regards novels, short fiction and cinema. By ‘popular fiction’ I mean all the storytelling found in novels, short stories, radio plays, TV programmes, movies, comics and computer games that we call ‘popular’ even though in many cases it doesn’t actually reach a big audience; the ‘popular’ is paradoxically quite often a minority pursuit and may even be a tiny ‘cult’. What causes this discomfort is that while media such as TV or radio are homogeneously popular – has anyone ever used the phrase ‘artistic TV’ in the same sense we refer to an ‘artistic novel’? – fiction in print and on the big screen is far more heterogeneous, ranging from the brazenly formulaic to the boldly artistic.

Thus, whereas the Emmy awards honour the best in the whole medium of (American) TV, films and printed fiction in English compete for different awards depending on whether they are regarded as artistic or popular. The Oscars, which might seem to be as homogeneous as the Emmys, tend in fact to patronize popular films, especially if they deal with fantasy, awarding them prizes only for technical achievements. The major Oscars inevitably go to films with a realistic subject matter and, it is implied, a higher artistic content, *pace* the Oscars reaped by Peter Jackson’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* in 2005. Any cinema fan knows at any rate that winning an Oscar is significantly different from getting a *Palme d’Or* at the Cannes Film Festival or a Golden Bear at the Berlinale, awards that confer a halo of artistic prestige that the Oscars still lack.

Novelists and short story writers are far more sharply divided into the two fields of the artistic and the popular because the achievements of popular fiction in print are never acknowledged by the literary establishment or only in confusing

ways. Popular film-makers are regularly belittled by film critics of an artistic inclination, which is why Steven Spielberg has fallen into his routine of making a popular summer movie followed by an artistically inclined film: box-office success is the most positive kind of endorsement a film-maker can get in Hollywood but it still rankles him that snobbish critics do not acknowledge his talent. Still, he gained some kind of satisfaction on both accounts when in the year 1993 an artistic film and a popular movie that he had made won Oscars and became huge money makers: *Jurassic Park* and *Schindler’s List*. Stephen King suffers from the same schizophrenic malaise but has so far avoided trying his hand at writing artistic fiction, which wasn’t an obstacle to his being given the National Book Award in 2003 to the scandal of many.

Honouring King in this way would be the equivalent of Spielberg’s getting a *Palm d’Or* for *The War of the Worlds* – a strange faux pas. It is also proof of the same kind of confused thinking that resulted in the entrance of Spanish popular writer Arturo Pérez-Reverte in the elitist Real Academia de la Lengua and in the awarding of the prestige *Príncipe de Asturias* Prize – the Spanish Nobel Prize – to J. K. Rowling in the same year 2003. While King and Reverte at least were granted literary honours, Rowling got the *Príncipe de Asturias* for Concord on the grounds that she has reached a wide, universal readership with her books, praise which is quite ironic considering that she’s narrating the horrifying confrontation between a boy and a bloodthirsty villain bent on killing him. The 2003 corresponding award for Literature went to Fatima Mernissi and Susan Sontag, two feminist, intellectual, literary writers who have certainly worked for concord far more committedly than Rowling.

All this disorientation arises, as I’m arguing, from an inability to acknowledge the merits of

popular fiction per se in a way that can be as satisfactory for its creators and its audiences as artistic prestige. It also arises from the failure to see that some writers and film-makers regarded as popular because of the subject matter they deal with *are* also gifted artists. One thing is *not* incompatible with the other since there's no radical difference between the popular and the artistic but, rather, a continuum. The wrong belief that there is a sharp difference has seriously distorted the academic organization of the study of fiction, arbitrarily split between Literary Studies and Cultural Studies in a way that complicates enormously the task of making sense of the whole map of storytelling in English.

Genre theory is one of the main roots of this mix-up but also the insistence on the idea that popular fiction is a subset of popular culture rather than a sibling of artistic fiction. It is more likely for an essay on Michael Crichton to appear published next to one on Madonna – as icons of popular culture – than for it to appear next to one on any artistic American novelist. While academic publications on film tend to progressively erase the barrier between Hollywood and artistic film-making, perhaps because independent film-makers are themselves pulling it down, the equivalent publications on fiction in print only focus on the literary. If one can only call him- or herself a film specialist by claiming to know all about movies, from Spielberg to Lars von Trier, why should academics interested in fiction be free to ignore popular writers? And the other way round: shouldn't Cultural Studies specialists in detective fiction see that this *is* part of the field of fiction within Literary Studies?

Depending on the topic it deals with, popular fiction is subdivided into genres: westerns, thrillers (legal, political, technological, spy), pseudo-historical fantasy, science fiction, horror, romance (in all its varieties, including sex-and-shopping fiction, chick lit and erotica), historical fiction and crime fiction. Arthur Asa Berger explains that

Before the development of genre theory we were more or less limited to discussing texts, such as a spy novel like *Dr. No* and then relating these texts to the mass media, society and

culture.... There was a gigantic leap we had to make, from a specific text to the mass media. Now, with the recognition of the importance of genres, we have an intermediary stage – one that enlarges and enhances our understanding of the way texts function and of the way that texts relate to one another, the media, and society. (1992: xiii)

The label 'genre fiction' is not, however, an adequate synonym for popular fiction. 'Genre' is a notoriously unstable concept but if we agree for the sake of the argument that stories are categorized into genres on the basis of their main topic, as the list above suggests, it doesn't make sense to suppose particular types of story escape genre labelling.

If we truly want to map the whole territory of storytelling in English we should arrange *all* fiction by subject, regardless of artistic quality and even narrative medium (printed words, live performance, drawings, moving pictures). While in so-called genre fiction this is done constantly so that some consumers (readers, viewers, players) specialize in narrowly defined sub-genres like cyberpunk, feminist crime fiction, lad-lit or military technothrillers, in artistic fiction this categorization is generally ignored on the supposition that what defines the literary is not primarily the subject matter but the stylistic quality of the medium it uses, whether it is prose, the spoken word of drama or the images in film. Thus, on the one hand, most academics in the field of Literary Studies suppose that certain topics can never make good literary fiction and those in Cultural Studies assume that there are no artists among the ranks of the creators of popular fiction: all of them generate trash, even though it's trash worth studying. Both attitudes, I believe, are wrong.

Literary Studies specialists have no doubts about what kind of fiction they prefer studying; quite another matter is whether they're mainly interested in Literature or simply in fiction (how many actually read poetry?). Basically, the subject of Literary Studies is fiction with a strong emphasis on style, by which I mean not only the literary quality of the prose but also all the strategies to enhance the role of how the tale is told over what it is about; it is also preferably

fiction about a realist subject matter outside the range of topics defined by genre theory as exclusive of the so-called popular genres. Instinctively, this tells us that Martin Amis is the kind of author Literary Studies favours and that Danielle Steele is not. Instinct, however, opens up a vast gap when it comes to studying, on the one hand, realist writers with a less elaborate style (ranging from the failures of writers who *do* have artistic ambitions to the plain middlebrow who don't) and, on the other hand, writers with artistic talent as shown in their achievements in style, who write on topics considered only appropriate for popular fiction.

Cultural Studies specialists say little about what kind of Literature they read, giving the wrong impression that we don't read any, which contributes to this artificial separation between the artistic and the popular. We have, besides, so far made quite a poor job of defining popular fictions, trapped as we still are by the primary need to defend the visibility of our subject. Cultural Studies academics too often criticize the elitist position of our Literary Studies peers without realizing that "academic writing about popular culture risks pompousness" (During 2005: 194) – an assertion I quote hoping not to be guilty of the crime myself. The most radical, the cultural populists, also tend to make sweeping statements which hardly help build bridges for a better mutual understanding. Thus, while Literary Studies has Harold Bloom, Cultural Studies has Clive Bloom, claiming that "High culture is now dead. It is dead not because it cannot still fulfil or enlighten its recipient, nor because it died of neglect amid the philistinism of the masses. It is dead because it no longer has the right environmental conditions to sustain its creation." (Bloom 1996: 226) As Tony Bennett wrote, as long as twenty years ago, the problem with the idea that we must study popular culture – including popular fiction – because it is as rich as high culture "is not that the argument is wrong but that the constant making of it merely confirms the existing hierarchy of the arts in accepting the claim that 'high culture' constitutes a pre-given standard to which popular culture must measure up or be found wanting." (1986: xviii) It is therefore

high time to move away from those stale definitions and consider new angles rather than run the risk, as Dominic Strinati warns us, of insisting on a populism that shows its "critical failings" because it's nothing but "a mirror image of elitism." (1996: 259)

The canon wars fought in Literary Studies for the expansion of the range of writers that might be granted canonical status in spite of not being white, European, dead and male, raised no major issues in relation to how to incorporate popular fictions within Literary Studies – which is not at all the same as integrating them into the canon. Certain popular classics like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* were 'rescued' and accepted as proper subjects for research and teaching on the grounds that they were also part of the canon (or should be). There was, however, no intention to take seriously the idea that omnivorous reading habits are the best tool for truly understanding how fiction operates at all levels. Some complained, like Christopher Pawling, who worried that "although there has been a growth of interest in popular fiction over the last few years, one could not claim that it has been established in schools or colleges as a central component of Literary Studies" (1984:1) Others, like Harriet Hawkins, made pointed accusations against the academic tradition that

has erected barriers between 'high art' and popular genres even as it has erected barricades between art and life. The artistic tradition (popular as well as exalted) tends to break all such barriers down, even as in the last analysis it is the artists (popular as well as exalted) who create the extra-generic, extra-curricular, extra-temporal and international canons of art. (1990:113)

It is clear, in any case, that these aberrant barriers have worried Cultural Studies far more than Literary Studies, which hasn't even started a process of self-criticism past the canon wars in relation to the popular. In contrast, John Storey warned a few years ago that "it is never enough to speak of popular culture, we have always to acknowledge that with which it is being contrasted" (2001:17). In a recent introduction to Cultural Studies Nick Couldry

points out, somewhat perplexed, that while Cultural Studies has often congratulated itself on its openness and diversity it has actually focused only on the cultures of youth, resistance, leisure and the working classes while neglecting the cultures of the old, the non-resistant middle-brow, business and, paradoxically, the culture of the elite (2000:3). There are no such pangs of conscience in Literary Studies in relation to the popular.

My proposal is that we bridge the gap between Literary and Cultural Studies for the sake of better understanding fiction in all its rich diversity. Fiction Studies should be able to accommodate in its territory anything and everything about fiction, from Narratology to studies on the contractual conditions under which writers work today. It is time to abandon the hierarchical, vertical axis dominated by the notions of high and low which have split fiction between Literary Studies and Cultural Studies and start thinking in terms of a horizontal continuum along which texts, their creators and their consumers can be placed on a more egalitarian basis. At one end of this line we'll find all storytelling in which the compelling need to enjoy style overwhelms all other concerns – Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* – and on the opposite end all storytelling dominated by tight plotting – J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. There are failures at one end (artistic fiction that is simply pretentious) and at the other (inconsistent storytelling in clichéd, purple prose) but also much overlapping since, clearly, all storytellers want to tell interesting stories as enticingly as they can (under the circumstances, of course, marked by the talent, energy and time in their hands).

Thus, I agree with Ken Gelder when he observes that Literature is identified with concepts such as 'creativity' or 'art' whereas "popular fiction doesn't tend to use the 'autonomous' language of the art world, although this is not to say that it is without artistic merit. It simply means that popular fiction, as a form of literary production, occupies a different position altogether in the literary field, one that is not so dependant, or engaged with, art world discourse." (2000:14) Yet even his egalitarian

position is coloured by hierarchical judgement when he says quite incongruously that, in spite of the counter example set by authors such as Anne Rice, in popular fiction "the term 'writer' is preferred to 'author'" (2000:15). "This," he adds, "is because popular fiction has to do less with discourses of creativity and originality, and more with production and sheer hard work. The key paradigm for identifying popular fiction is not creativity, but industry." (2000:15) Inevitably, this begs the question of how many books a writer needs to publish to be considered popular and, alternatively, whether literary authors lose their status if they publish past a given quantity. What kind of writer/author, besides, is Iain Banks, 'writer' of 11 literary novels and 'author' of 10 science fiction volumes as Iain M. Banks?

Those who know popular fiction as writers or committed fans do not see the field as intrinsically different from artistic fiction: they are also obsessed by building canons and reputations. The insistence of popular fiction in maintaining its own critical circuits with their peculiar closeness to fandom (the seedbed from which most writers spring) has very much to do with how it is ignored by the critical and academic establishment, even by writers. Take the case of William Gibson's masterpiece *Neuromancer* (1984), winner of both a Nebula awarded by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America and a Hugo awarded by the fans gathered at the annual World Science Fiction Convention (WorldCon). Every reader of science fiction knows that this is a seminal, canonical novel as regards the subject of the awakening consciousness of artificial intelligence; millions love it even though it is surprisingly hard to read on account of the neologisms that shape Gibson's invention of the concept of cyberspace – after all technical jargon is essential in science fiction – but also because he is a *literary* author. Gibson, however, does not exist for the literary establishment.

Since the protagonist of David Lodge's *Thinks...* is a scientist specialized in the same field that *Neuromancer* touches upon, I naively asked the author during a presentation at the British Council in Barcelona whether he had read Gibson. I assumed Lodge would have

interesting comments to make on the contrast between Gibson's approach and his own to a similar subject. 'No', Lodge answered, without the smallest flicker of curiosity and, my guess, quite annoyed that I might next label *Thinks...* as science fiction. This is not to condemn Lodge in particular but to give an accurate impression of how deeply ignorance of the popular runs among the literary authors and critics for fear they will be in some way tainted by their contact with it. For all I know, Lodge may well be aware of Gibson's work but his response made it plain he wanted no connection with popular fiction. The reverse, of course, may also happen, though I believe that readers rather than writers of popular fiction are far more resistant to the idea that omnivorous reading habits are the only way out of a needlessly narrow outlook. The list of favourite books Stephen King includes at the end of his essay *On Writing* (2000) supports the same view.

We need to ask ourselves, too, who has brought popular fictions into the academy, and how and why. Simon During notes that "academics are, by virtue of their job, middle class and connected to authority, while a great deal of popular culture emerges from, and is addressed to, those who have no post-compulsory education." (2005: 194) This is inaccurate on two counts: it doesn't consider what social class academics originally come from and it fails to see popular fiction as exceptional within popular culture even though it's read mostly by people with at least a secondary education and is written mainly by authors with university degrees, usually in English. In our functionally illiterate world very few, in relative terms, actually enjoy reading to the point that soon all fiction in print might well be by definition 'high' culture.

It's impossible to be unprejudiced against uneducated people of poor tastes. It is important to remember, though, that they exist in all social classes – some people happen to be willingly ignorant in spite of being educated – and, secondly, that at the end of the day, whether we are academics or supermarket clerks, we're all too overworked to truly appreciate any fiction remotely creative, whether popular or artistic.

In a sense, while most artistic fiction assumes a devoted, alert spectator free from worldly cares who can invest surplus brain energy to engage in difficult texts, popular fiction is more generous, knowing beforehand that its consumer won't be able to afford this luxury – which doesn't necessarily mean it's all pap.

This different approach to the figure of the implied reader explains why, while artistic fictions are keen on sophisticated experimentation, popular fictions tend to use well-established narrative conventions – the writer thus smooths out all the difficulties for the reader. What we are still far from understanding is that one option is not *better* than the other but *different*: the ability to keep the reader turning pages is in dire need of acknowledgement as a literary skill as praiseworthy as the ability to create a singular narrative voice or a poetic text. We need to accept, too, that the same person may enjoy a wide range of fictions depending on the leisure in his or her hands. Whether artistic or popular, readers keep the more demanding texts for the time when they can devote the attention they're due. Interestingly, this might also explain why literary novels are relatively short in comparison to popular novels: in the end, it may be 'easier' to read the last Man Booker prize – John Banville's *The Sea*, only 200 pages long – than Neal Stephenson's astounding Baroque Cycle trilogy *Quicksilver*, *The Confusion* and *The System of the World*, which runs for over densely-packed 1500 pages and is a perfect sample of the best popular fiction published today.

Returning to the question of class, even though Marxist theory has been instrumental in the institutionalization of the study of Popular Culture, paying close attention to the interaction between education and cultural consumption, there is relatively little awareness in the field of how the social origins of academics have shaped it. In *The Long Revolution* Raymond Williams includes a curious study of the social origins of English writers born between 1470 and 1920 with a view to tracing the connections between class, education and literary creation. Although he warns the reader that individuals

are never mere representatives of their class and the institutions that educate them, he explains the emergence of many new English writers “from the families of clerical and industrial workers” (the essay was published in 1961) as a consequence of the social mobility of a whole class. He attributes, besides, the rapid Americanization of most English popular arts to the talent drain from the working to the middle classes via their state-sponsored university education. (1984: 254-270)

This declassing is common, too, among academics active in the fields of popular culture and popular fictions. Henry A. Giroux opens his volume *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture* by declaring that “growing up in a working-class neighbourhood in Providence, Rhode Island, provided me with a particular orientation to the relationship between popular culture and schooling.” (1994: ix) His street culture was simply ignored by his teachers so that he and his friends felt that “something stopped us in school. For me, it was like being sent to a strange planet. Teaching was exclusively centred on obscure books and the culture of print.” (1994: ix) All my academic colleagues working in Spain in the field of popular fictions in English fit that pattern, including myself, despite our having been raised in a very different context.

What I read in 1970s Spain as a child of a working-class couple with primary school certificates was not literature for children – except for a few fairy-tales – but what my parents read. My father was keen on the Spanish equivalent of American pulp fiction (spy thrillers, detective fiction, horror, science-fiction, westerns) and I read many of these plot-driven, thrilling novelettes written by Spanish writers using anglicized pen-names. Today horror and science fiction are still my preferred genres both as a reader and researcher. My mother favoured so-called best-sellers: romances with a historical background, the middlebrow foreign novels by the Lapierre-Collins team or James Clavell (often the origin of TV adaptations she had enjoyed) and also middlebrow Spanish fiction written by women like Mercedes Salisachs. At this stage, between the ages of 7

and 12, I identified reading with enjoyment, not study, and only when my Literature classes in primary school got serious did I realize that I was meant to overcome that attitude and approach reading with a more mature outlook. The teachers, of course, knew better.

Throughout my childhood and adolescence TV and cinema were a constant presence in our working-class home with a heavy emphasis on films and series of the same genres that my father enjoyed as a reader (my mother preferred reading to watching TV and still does, a habit I have inherited from her). Between roughly the ages of 12 to 16, in this second phase of my life as a reader, I learned to combine the popular fictions consumed at home with my own exploration of the local library in search of the kind of texts that my Literature teachers pointed out as an extra-curricular pursuit of literary pleasure. I also made my first forays into cinema with friends of similar backgrounds mainly to see Hollywood films: we all remember as a childhood landmark the first time we saw *Star Wars* (1977). In secondary school, though, and later at university, I found myself surrounded by students with slightly higher class backgrounds, which didn't affect my reading but gave my film preferences a more prejudiced outlook in favour of artistic films. In the 1970s and early 1980s Spain was still, however, a very homogeneous country, which in practice means that everyone saw the same TV channels and saw the same films in cinemas; the tiny minority that read enjoyed more or less the same books so that in practice my parents were not so different from most middle-class people, at least those without university degrees.

Teachers, however, were another matter, especially at university: they were upper middle class, held PhDs often obtained after a stay abroad in Britain or the USA and were unfamiliar with all the popular culture that people like me – the first working-class generation to enter massively Spanish universities – knew about: TV, popular music, Hollywood films, popular novels, comics, computer games... My university teachers simply never mentioned anything that was remotely related to popular

culture as I knew it (medieval ballads, though, were acceptable).

For as long as I was a university student and in my first years as a university teacher, I was both culturally schizophrenic and a snob. Schizophrenic because a good deal of the fiction I enjoyed and that had motivated me in the first place to study English Literature was silenced and excluded from my studies and my teaching – not to mention films, which seemed not to exist. I felt, therefore, second rate, even an interloper, because I couldn't shake those 'disturbing pleasures' off me; at the same time, I felt tongue-tied because I knew there were deep links between what I read for class and what I enjoyed in my leisure time but wasn't being trained to articulate them. I became a snob, too, because I started thinking in terms of cultural hierarchies, despising the texts I had enjoyed as a child and as a teenager. I even believed that as a reader and as a spectator there is a constant progression so that one begins as an immature spectator of *Star Trek* and graduates into becoming a mature reader of James Joyce who watches no TV and only enjoys Ingmar Bergman films in their original version. Now, quite a few crises later, I know better: there is no reason to reject one for the other; actually it is to anyone's advantage to be able to enjoy it all while still being selective.

We should perhaps in the end agree that popular fiction is what educated people mostly of working-class background enjoy in spite of the efforts of a biased education to teach only the literary or, more generally, the artistic. I've been a close witness of the process by which one of my most conservative middle-class colleagues has discovered not only popular fictions but an even more important fact: that there is no contradiction in being a very sophisticated critic and reader – as he is – and appreciating them. In a certain sense, and without any intention to unduly glamorize our task, teaching and doing research on popular fictions is a calling, a vocation with deep personal roots that, of course, mirrors the missionary zeal of those who believe in the ideal of literary excellence. Whereas all the institutions of education aid them in their mission the problem in our case, precisely, is that we seem to be preaching to the converted (colleagues and students of similar backgrounds). Our calls to illuminate all corners of our knowledge about

fiction in English often fall on deaf ears.

Of course, previous calls to consider the importance of gender, race, sexual orientation, theoretical backdrop and other factors in Literary Studies have had mixed results. Soon, teaching and research involving popular fictions will no longer raise eyebrows, and specialists in the area will have the same credibility and deserve the same respect as those doing Post-Colonial Studies, Gender Studies, Queer Studies and/or those applying the latest trends in Theory, as long naturally as the preceptive academic rhetoric and methodology are applied. After all, we all know, don't we, that what should matter in research and teaching is, above all, the quality of the results and not just the choice of subject: producing good or bad academic work on Shakespeare or on Tom Clancy doesn't depend on the qualities of the author under study but on the qualities of the researcher and teacher as such. What is more worrying is that, if the idea of the canon weren't damaging enough for its insistence on exclusion even at its widest range, the high degree of specialization that all the revolutions against it have brought about is resulting in a fragmentation of Literary and Cultural Studies that decreases rather than increases our knowledge of fiction in English.

An academic specialist in black lesbian Caribbean literary fiction is as limited in this sense as a specialist in Paul Auster or a specialist in the comic fantasy of Terry Pratchett if that's the only territory they know. I'm calling, therefore, for a complete regeneration of the way we study fiction because reading, teaching and writing about popular fiction has shown many American and European colleagues, and myself, that we are not seeing the wood for the trees. Useful as Literary Studies and Cultural Studies are to approach, respectively, the literary artistic and the popular, it's time that we saw that the study of fiction needs a far more comprehensive point of view and a new methodology but also, above all, a genuine wish to transcend the idea that literary fiction is the apex of the pyramid formed by all fiction. It is not; it's just a node in a complex network of stories that is not even dominated by print. The wood is far bigger than we imagine, and the trees are of many more different species than we have identified so far. And this is good news.

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Whither Goest Thou? Foreign Language Learning and Teaching from a Finnish Perspective

Paula Kalaja (Jyväskylä, Finland)

1 Introduction

This article is about major developments over time in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, narrowed down in two respects. Firstly, the focus is on one foreign language, that is, English, and secondly, on its learning and teaching in one European country, that is, Finland.

The idea is to review major changes in Finnish society and consequent challenges for learning and teaching English in the country and responses to these by applied linguists working on relevant research projects, set against current practices in teaching within the Finnish school system and some general trends in research on second or foreign language learning. It is hoped that this brings some coherence to the account, making it at the same time a little more concrete and giving the reader a chance to compare the situation in his or her own country.

2 Challenges in teaching English in Finland

Over the past few decades, Finland has undergone social, political and economic *changes*. On the one hand, there is mobility (of Finns and their labour) outwards now that Finland is a member of the EU and markets are becoming global. On the other hand, there is mobility (of citizens of other countries and their labour) inwards, and as a consequence, the country is becoming more and more multicultural and Finnish is used increasingly as a Second Language¹. In addition, Finland has been among the keenest countries to adopt modern information technology with all its applications.

Furthermore, to judge from its uses of English, Finland used to be a clear case of a country with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or a country belonging to the Expanding Circle, to use a Kachruvian term. Nowadays, this is no longer completely true. Not only the uses but also the users of English have increased within the country, the language frequently functioning as a Lingua Franca (ELF), a shared language among interlocutors – possibly with a variety of first languages. On the other hand, most Finns being now bi- or even multilingual (in the modern sense of the term) makes code-switching and -mixing possible in interesting ways in different contexts.

With these developments the learning and teaching (or education, a term preferred by teacher trainers) of foreign languages, and especially of English, are faced with new *challenges* in Finland.

First, let us consider *curricula*. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (CEFR, for short, at <<http://www.culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents/0521803136txt.pdf>>) is a means to harmonize the teaching of foreign languages within the EU, clarifying the overall goals. The goal is to provide learners not only with language skills (or more specifically, with communicative competence) but also with the cultural skills to learn to be tolerant of their Others and with learning to learn languages. The third goal will gain in importance once it is more widely acknowledged that a learner will *not* master a foreign language during his/her school years. Learning a foreign language is in fact a life-long effort (as is learning one's first language, for that matter), as suggested by sociolinguists. This, in turn, means that the learner will have to take responsibility for his or her learning both in school and in out-of-school contexts of learning, or more specifically, in setting goals, finding the means to reach them and being able to evaluate the progress made (instead of counting on the teacher always being around for that purpose for the rest of his or her life). Learning to learn languages

was originally thought to be a matter of providing learners with training in the use of learning strategies, as outlined by Oxford (1990), for example, when practising reading or listening. More recently, it has been suggested that this goal be understood more broadly in terms of making an individual aware of what learning a foreign language actually involves and of what he or she is like as a learner, including motivation, attitudes and beliefs about Second Language Acquisition (SLA)². In addition, the CEFR has launched such ideas as plurilingualism, speaking of a repertoire of the languages that a person possesses and can resort to, depending on the occasion, switching codes or even making use of such features as gestures when communicating with others.

The CEFR now guides the planning and implementation of teaching and evaluating learning (in the form of rating scales) and in recording the progress made by a learner (in the form of a language portfolio). In addition, the ideas launched by the CEFR are reflected in the recently revised national core curricula in Finland (*Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* [The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education] at <http://www.oph.fi/info/ops/pops_web.pdf> and *Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet* [The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools] at <<http://www.oph.fi/SubPage.asp?path=1,17627,5238,5242>>) and in a series of textbooks that have appeared over the past few years or are to be published shortly.

Secondly, we should consider the *learners* of foreign languages in Finland. With the latest major school reform in the late 1980s streaming was abolished in basic education (Grades 6-9). As a consequence, classrooms became heterogeneous, with all children attending the same school, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities (such as dyslexia). However, the majority shared a common language and cultural background, having grown up in Finland. Now, however, the situation is changing. Classrooms are becoming heterogeneous in other respects: many more students are entering them with a variety of language and cultural backgrounds – and with varying competences in Finnish.

Thirdly, we need to consider the *teachers* of foreign languages. The qualifications for foreign language teachers are set by statute and hence teachers enter the profession with a Master's degree, including (advanced-level) university studies in at least one of the languages they are going to provide instruction in and (subject-level) studies in pedagogy. In other words, practising foreign language teachers used to be very homogeneous in their training. However, since the early 1990s Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL), or teaching, for example, History through the medium of English or Chemistry through German, has become fashionable at all levels of education. As a consequence, those providing instruction in English (this is the most widely used language for this purpose) were found to be heterogeneous according to their qualifications and competence in English and in the non-language subject taught. Some were qualified language teachers but possibly with no studies in the school subject being taught, while others may have been general classroom teachers and yet others individuals with Master's degrees, majoring in a variety of school subjects but with very diverse competences in the language or in the subjects taught through the medium of a particular foreign language. Furthermore, CLIL teachers could be non-native or native speakers of English. Becoming aware in the late 1990s of this problem, the Ministry of Education introduced language qualifications for those involved in CLIL instruction: an individual must have completed (subject-level) university studies in English or have passed the advanced level examination of The National Certificates (or Yleinen kielitutkinto, YKI) with its 6-point scale (comparable to those of the CEFR), with a consequent decrease in the number of CLIL courses offered.

Finally, let us consider the *goals* involved in teaching English. As mentioned, Finland used to be an EFL country, with teaching provided for Finns in preparation for interactions (presumably) with native speakers of the language, for example, on business or travel when abroad. For these purposes, it was taken for granted that RP (Received Pronunciation, a prestige accent) and standard British English or American English would serve as effective norms or models in teaching

English in the country. Very recently (not only in Finland but also elsewhere) this has begun to be questioned. With the ever-increasing globalization of English and the consequent diversification of its uses and users, the language has developed localized varieties and is being used more frequently in interactions between non-native speakers than between a native and a non-native speaker, the language functioning as a Lingua Franca and taking on features of its own in these contexts³.

3 Contributions by teachers and learners: major trends⁴

In broad brush strokes, since the 1950s research into second or foreign language learning (rather than teaching) has addressed four major areas (Ellis 1994, see Table 1). One of these consists of the characteristics of the language being learned (and used) by the learner. Originally, the focus was on predicting or explaining errors, shifting then to establishing the order in which certain morphological endings are acquired and the stages it takes a learner to master certain syntactic structures, such as negative or interrogative sentences. Most recently, the focus has been on issues of interest to sociolinguists and pragmaticians, including variation in learner language from one context to another (e.g. *no play* as opposed to *don't play*) and actual uses of the language (for example, making a request or expressing an opinion on a specific occasion of talk). The second area centres on the contexts in which learning a second language takes place: at school or outside school, with those around the learner providing input and negotiating meanings with the learner. The third area considers what goes on in the learner's mind while learning the foreign language (and the role of the learner's first language and universals), and the fourth examines what the learner contributes to his or her learning (see Section 3.2).

Table 1. Key issues in second or foreign language learning (and teaching) (adapted from Ellis 1994: 18)

Focus on learning		Focus on the learner	
Description	Explanation		
<p>Area 1 <i>Characteristics of learner language</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • errors • acquisition orders & developmental sequences • variability • pragmatic features 	<p>Area 2 <i>Learner-external factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social context • input & interaction 	<p>Area 3 <i>Learner-internal mechanisms</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 transfer • learning processes • communication strategies • knowledge of linguistic universals 	<p>Area 4 <i>The language learner</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general factors, e.g. motivation • learner strategies

As is evident, the metaphor of *acquisition* has been a powerful method of conceptualizing the learning of a second or foreign language: the learner is viewed as a processor of input and as a negotiator of meaning with the teacher, for example, leading ultimately to output on his or her part. Importantly, this metaphor seems gradually to be complemented with (if not yet replaced by) another metaphor, that of *participation* (e.g. Block 2003). This assigns the learner a more active role. His or her task is to look for learning opportunities and eventually to become socialized into the practices of a specific group or community and to be accepted as its member. The teacher, in turn, becomes a provider of these learning opportunities, functioning as a guide in the socialisation process.

3.1 Teacher contributions

What then do teachers bring to learning foreign languages, and what does the literature have to tell us about their contributions?

First of all, it is evident that their contributions, or *methods and techniques* used in the foreign language classroom and testing practices, depend on ideas whose origins lie in a number of fields, including Linguistics and Education, and developments in these since the 1950s (Tella 2004, Kohonen 2006, see Table 2).

Table 2. Teacher contributions (adapted from Kohonen 2006: 9. For a more detailed account, see Tella 2004: 80–91).

Linguistics	Education	Foreign Language Teaching	Assessment
Traditional	-	Grammar-translation method	Translation
Structuralism	Behaviourism	Audio-lingual method	Analytical testing
(Transformational grammar), pragmatics, sociolinguistics	Constructivism and humanistic psychology	Communicative language teaching methodology (notions and functions)	Integrative testing, self-evaluation
Discourse/interaction analysis, dialogism	Socio-cultural theories and experiential learning	Foreign language education (cross-cultural competence)	Authentic testing, self-evaluation, CEFR scales and portfolio

Gone are highbrow literary texts and their translation from English into Finnish and grammar being taught deductively, grammar rules recited by heart and applied in translation exercises from Finnish into English. Gone are listening to and memorizing artificial dialogues (filled with the grammatical points of the lesson, played on a tape) and mechanical drills (possibly in the language laboratory), grammar being thus taught inductively. Well, gone is a relative term: traces of these methods can be found in even the most recent English textbooks. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) goes back to the 1980s. Its goal is that language should be used for real communication (the units to be taught being notions and functions, such as probability or apologising, or tasks), with greater flexibility in the means by which this is accomplished in the classroom, compared with the previous two methods. In addition, (de)suggestopedia and drama pedagogy have their proponents, informed by Humanism. Most recently, teacher trainers in Finland, especially, have introduced further goals for foreign language teaching or rather education, stressing the importance of cultural skills or learning to respect Otherness or different ways of thinking and acting, compared with the learner's first language and culture within which he or she has grown up.

3.2 Learner contributions

And what do learners, in turn, contribute to learning second or foreign languages, and what does the literature have to say concerning this?

Going back to the late 1970s, the discussion began by considering what a good language learner (GLL) was like and what he or she was made of – compared with his or her classmate, who might be a poor learner (Breen 2001, with an illuminating diagram on p. 9). Since then, the list of features of the GLL has had a tendency to grow longer and longer, being now grouped into: 1) attributes, conceptualisations and affects, including age, gender, aptitude, cognitive style, personality, (de)motivation, attitudes, beliefs about SLA, learning disabilities, and anxiety; 2) actions, e.g. learning strategies; 3) contexts in which the learning takes place; and 4) identity, or the transitions that a learner passes through, moving from a community of the past, through the present, to the one that he or she eventually wishes to become a member of.

It is, however, one thing to add features to the list and another to show empirically how these relate to one another or to establish their effect on the learning process or outcome (and possibly rate) of learning a foreign language, as pointed out by Ellis (1985: 99–126 and 1994: 467–560).

Furthermore, it has become clear that scholars rarely agree on how to define any of these features or how to go about measuring them or their effects. To illustrate the complexity of research on any learner contribution, let us consider the developments in research into beliefs about SLA (Kalaja 1995, Kalaja and Barcelos 2003), going only back to the late 1980s, with Horwitz and Wenden reporting on their pioneering work. Since then, we have witnessed a rapid expansion in the theoretical starting-points of research into the topic, with a variety of definitions of beliefs, on one extreme of a continuum emphasising their cognitive nature and, on the other, their discursive or social nature. This has had consequences for the methodologies used in individual studies, and consequently there are either direct or only *indirect* ways of measuring these, including questionnaires, interviews, observation, narratives, diaries, and fill-in-the-blank tasks. Furthermore, the analyses carried out have varied from quantitative to qualitative and interpretative.

3.3 Classroom interaction

It is yet another question as to what effect teacher and learner contributions have on what actually occurs in a second or foreign language classroom, what kind of interactions occur there, and what opportunities they provide learners for actually using the language to be learned. Over the past few decades, a number of approaches have been exploited to answer questions of this nature (see Table 3), with consequent divergent choices in methodology (e.g. Chaudron 1988).

Table 3. Research into second or foreign language classrooms (adapted from Chaudron 1988: 28–49; Nunan 1989: 5).

Tradition	Typical issues	Methods
<i>Psychometric</i>	Language gain from different methods	Experimental method: pre- and post-tests with experimental and control groups
<i>Interaction analysis</i>	Extent to which learner behaviour is a function of teacher-determined interaction	Coding classroom interactions in terms of various observation systems and schedules
<i>Discourse analysis</i>	Analysis of classroom discourse in linguistic terms	Studying classroom transcripts and assigning utterances to predetermined categories
<i>Ethnographic</i>	Obtain insights into the classroom as a cultural system	Naturalistic ‘uncontrolled’ observation & description

We can note a shift in focus since the 1960s from teacher contributions (e.g. the effect on learning outcomes of method or technique x used by a teacher) to learner contributions, on the one hand; and on the other, from an outsider (or etic) perspective with a variety of coding schemes to an insider or emic one, the idea being to spell out the rules, or practices, that govern teachers and students alike in classrooms, with complementary roles, or rights and obligations (e.g. the teacher asking most of the questions).

4 Facing the challenges: Ongoing research projects at the University of Jyväskylä on learning and teaching English

Language learning (together with language use, as part of the Centre of Excellence in Research) has recently been acknowledged to be one of the Internationally Significant areas of study pursued at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Its Department of Languages is currently hosting a total

of 21 research projects on language learning and the teaching of foreign languages or of Finnish as a first or second language, with variation in size and in local or national cooperation (see <<http://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/en/research/learnteach>>). Of these, eight focus specifically on learning and teaching English, or its testing (see Table 4).

Table 4. Ongoing research projects at the Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä, often in cooperation with researchers working at the Centre for Applied Language Studies (CALs).

Research projects Scholars	Relation to previous discussion
1 Experiential views on language learning and teaching Hannele Dufva, Paula Kalaja and Maisa Martin	Teacher/learner contributions (sections 3.1 and 3.2)
2 Noviisista ekspertiksi (From Novice to Expert) Paula Kalaja, Hannele Dufva and Riikka Alanen, CALS	Teacher/learner contributions (sections 3.1 and 3.2)
3 Situated metalinguistic awareness and foreign languages Riikka Alanen, CALS, and Hannele Dufva	Learner contributions (section 3.2)
4 Discursive construction of second language learning Paula Kalaja (and Sirpa Leppänen)	Learner contributions (section 3.2)
5 Validation of the English test of the Matriculation Examination Paula Kalaja, Anne Pitkänen-Huhta and Ari Huhta, CALS	Learner contributions (section 3.2)
6 Foreign language use and learning from a discourse-pragmatic perspective Tarja Nikula	Classroom interaction (sections 2 and 3.3)
7 Literacies in and out of school Anne Pitkänen-Huhta	Classroom interaction (3.3)
8 The linguistic basis of the CEFR levels: combining second language acquisition and language testing research Maisa Martin, Riikka Alanen and Ari Huhta, CALS	Assessing language proficiency (section 2)

Five of the projects on learning and teaching English address issues related to learning to learn foreign languages, a goal advocated by the CEFR, and, as noted in Section 2, this is likely to gain in importance. To start with, Projects 1 and 2 consider these from the perspective of (future) teachers, following their growth from being language learners to becoming language experts, thus relating to the earlier discussion of teacher contributions outlined in Section 3.1. Projects 3 and 4 address learning to learn from the perspective of learners, and are thus closely related to the learner contributions discussed in Section 3.2., focusing on issues such as beliefs about SLA, motivation, attitudes and attributions or explanations for success or failure. Project 5 addresses similar issues but in the context of language testing. In addition, two projects examine classroom behaviour, and are thus related to the discussion of classroom interaction (see Section 3.3.). Both have connections with projects pursued within the Centre of Excellence in Research (see Footnote 3). Project 6 compares CLIL classrooms with regular EFL classrooms, and is thus also related to one of the challenges discussed in Section 2 and the characteristics of learner language from the perspective of Pragmatics reviewed in Section 3 (see Table 1). Project 7 also draws comparisons between literacy practices (or reading and writing events) in school and out-of-school contexts. Project 8 has been launched only recently, but it addresses important questions related to the challenges raised by the introduction of CEFR scales (or their adaptations) to assess proficiency in two second or foreign languages, that is, Finnish and English (see Section 2), and is also related to the development of learner language discussed in Section 3 (Table 1).

5 Conclusion

With innovations in the methodologies used, it seems that the projects pursued are timely and relevant in developing the teaching of English in Finland. For example, as teachers, textbook writers, school administrators, etc., our graduates – with Master’s degrees in English – act as *gate-keepers* in their future jobs, passing on to younger generations their ideas about what the learning and teaching of foreign languages involves. This is a major challenge for us as teacher trainers. On the other hand, our graduates should become aware of what they contribute to the classroom, be it EFL or CLIL, and what effect this has on the contributions of their students. To what extent can they actually use English for real purposes in the classroom (and not just for display)? In addition, our graduates need to be made aware of the broadened goals in teaching foreign languages, including learning to learn, as outlined in the CEFR and reflected (to some extent) in our school curricula and text books to motivate their students, making them responsible for their own learning and thus being able to set their own goals and evaluate their own progress now that learning a foreign language is acknowledged to be a life-long venture. There are now tools available for this in the form of the CEFR rating scales and the language portfolio. Nevertheless, the CEFR scales (or its adaptations) need to be tested to discover how well they actually work in the assessment of language proficiency (or communicative competence) across the skill levels (basic, intermediate or advanced), languages, and learners (whether schoolchildren, youngsters or adults), especially if the scales are used in making decisions concerning, for example, a student’s future studies or career.

In the light of the numerous changes in Finnish society discussed in Section 2, many of the consequent challenges faced by us in foreign language learning and teaching are inevitably shared by other European societies, which suggests that there is a need for further cooperation and sharing of research findings.

Notes

1. The University of Jyväskylä was the first to establish a Chair in Finnish as a Second Language, in 1996.
2. The very first textbook that addresses these issues came out in 2005: *Kielten matkassa: opi oppimaan vieraita kieliä* [Languages Underway: Learning to Learn Foreign Languages], by Paula Kalaja and Hannele Dufva, published by Finn Lectura. The book targets young adult learners of foreign languages in Finland.
3. The spread in uses of English in Finland is addressed in a research project English Voices in Finnish Society, part of a Centre of Excellence in Research project, Variation and Change in English, headed by Terttu Nevalainen (University of Helsinki) and Sirpa Leppänen (University of Jyväskylä) and funded by the Finnish Academy for a six-year period, 2006-2011.
4. For a very recent critical review of issues related to teaching English as a second or foreign language, including theories of SLA, teaching methods, testing, the spread of the English language, and teacher training, see the 25th anniversary issue of *TESOL Quarterly* (2006), Volume 40:1.

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The Original Pronunciation *Troilus and Cressida* at Shakespeare's New Globe Theatre

Neil Forsyth (Lausanne, Switzerland)

On six Wednesday nights during the 2005 season, Shakespeare's New Globe company put on an original pronunciation (OP) performance of *Troilus and Cressida* at its theatre on London's Bankside. This production followed from what the company, and many reviewers, regarded as the successful effort to do three OP performances of *Romeo and Juliet* over one June weekend during its run in 2004. For that performance, actors who were well rehearsed in the twentieth-century pronunciation of their lines had suddenly to prepare and put on the same production but in an older form of English. For *Troilus and Cressida*, however, the whole run was in what the company hoped approximates the pronunciation of Shakespeare's English.

There have been several wonderful and illuminating experiments over the past twelve years at the New Globe, but this one, however exciting in its educational aims, was at best a noble failure. For one thing, unlike *Romeo and Juliet*, this is such a difficult play. True, as famous linguist and expert adviser David Crystal, the chief inspiration for these performances, points out in his programme notes, modern English productions tend to pass over the chance for 'a huge laugh among the groundlings' at Ajax's name, which would have sounded like 'a jakes'. And as Crystal explains, with the addition of an oddly schoolgirlish exclamation mark, 'a jakes was the word for a pisshouse!' Well actually, other bodily functions can be performed there as well as pissing. Indeed Thersites' joke about Ajax requires that he be shitting himself with fear: 'Ajax goes up and down the field asking for himself' (3.3.259). But one belly laugh will not last over 'the two hours' traffic of our stage' (or two 'whores traffic', as it almost becomes in OP).

Other instances of Crystal's Shakespeare sounds include the following: the word 'voice' is pronounced the same as 'vice', 'reason' as 'raisin', 'room' as 'Rome', 'one' as 'own'; *h-*

is often dropped, while the *-ing* ending becomes *-in*'; 'r' is sounded after vowels in words like *far* and *harm*. One risk of some of these changes is that all characters will sound rustic to modern ears, what actors know as the 'Mummerset' problem, but Crystal thinks these sounds breathe new life into Shakespeare's rhyming and punning. Giles Block, the 'master of play' (as the Globe calls its directors), makes similar claims. In a BBC interview Block said that the original pronunciation 'helps the audiences enter more into the visceral nature of the text. It brings out the qualities of the text, the richness of sound which is closer to our emotions than the way we speak today'.¹ He says something similar in the Globe programme.

In the same BBC interview, and in the programme notes, David Crystal says he believes the dialect to be 'about 80% accurate... There are three important sources of evidence for this,' he rightly says. The first is the sound of the puns and jokes, not only the jakes-Ajax joke, but many others, such as Hamlet's *mousetrap-tropically* pun, which would work today in most American accents, or perhaps Irish, not in British. 'The second is the spellings in the original texts. The third and most important piece of evidence is that, at the time there was a group of phoneticians [known as 'orthoepists'] who actually wrote in great detail about how the sounds of English were pronounced.' Ben Jonson, for example, says the letter 'r' was pronounced with a growl. 'He tells us there's a doggy sound - think 'grrrr', says Crystal. Ben Jonson's phrase 'dog's letter' is apparently a translation of *littera canina*, since the sound was the same in Latin, not just dog-Latin.

What is the effect of these changes? Colin Hurley, who played the important role of Thersites, said he found that the joy of OP is that it relocates the emotion of the text from the head to somewhere 'between the legs'. That is entirely appropriate for this sardonic

commoner among all these Greek kings — ‘Lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery, nothing else holds fashion’. Unfortunately many of his lines in performance were lost or inaudible. For other Globe actors, it seems, doing Shakespeare can often be an arid, over-textual, intellectualised experience. ‘Speaking in OP, they say, balances head and heart and grounds the performances in a way that some find liberating. Gone is the orotund rhetorical articulation of every tiny syllable in the Gielgud manner’. But we must be able to hear the words to follow the plot. Take what Robert McCrum calls ‘the heartbreaking moment’ when the heroine betrays her love and surrenders herself to Diomedes. ‘My mind is now turned whore’, she says. Or rather: ‘Me moind is now turned hawrr’.² There is a momentary pause while you wrestle to understand, but you have lost the next words, and so it goes on. Similar antitheses recur throughout the text of *Troilus and Cressida*, but their effect is often fatally lost. When Troilus watches his beloved betray him, he cries ‘This is, and is not, Cressid’; and when later he rejects her letter of explanation, he says bitterly, ‘Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart / The effect doth operate another way’. John Lahr aptly cites those lines as a kind of epitaph for the way this production misses the mark.³

Philip Bird, who played the Trojan king Hector (pronounced ‘Ecter), admits in the programme that he felt ‘apprehensive’ at first, but he says within a matter of minutes the material becomes ‘totally understandable’. The ‘earthy, gutsy, grounded’ accent forces the actors to find different ways of portraying power and seniority. ‘When you’re asked to play someone who is powerful or of high status, you act class, you act posh - but with this production it is not available because everyone spoke the same way 400 years ago.’

Does he really imagine this to be the case? Or was it a misunderstanding of something that Crystal has told the naïve Globe cast? RP, as it is generally known (for Received Pronunciation), is certainly an accent of more recent vintage, but it is unlikely that variation of accent in Shakespeare’s time was merely regional. There is in fact considerable evidence to the contrary.⁴⁴ One of the earliest references

to a preferred pronunciation for people of high social status occurs in Sir Thomas Elyot’s well-known *Governour* of 1531, an educational treatise. He writes that women who look after a nobleman’s son in infancy should ‘speak no English but that which is clean, polite, perfectly and articulately pronounced, omitting no letter or syllable, as foolish women oftentimes do of a wantonness, whereby divers noble men and gentlemen’s children (as I do at this day know) have attained corrupt and foul pronunciation’. John Hart’s *A Methode, or Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned* (1570), which is mainly an illustrated alphabet, expresses the view that in London and at the royal court ‘the flower of the English tongue is used’ (although he acknowledges that people living far to the North and West will speak differently, and sees nothing in this to ridicule). Thomas Puttenham, in his widely read *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589), believes the best English to be ‘the usual speech of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within sixty miles and not much above’. Like Hart, Puttenham makes an exception for those in the far North and West, and moreover writes, explaining why he limits his range to about sixty miles from London, ‘In every shire of England there be gentlemen and others that speak, but especially write, as good Southern as we of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people of every shire, to whom the gentlemen, and also their learned clerks, do for the most part condescend.’ And here is one final example, from a certain Owen Price, who announces himself as ‘Master of Arts, and professor of the art of pedagogie’, and who in 1665 published a book with the magnificent title *The vocal organ, or A new art of teaching the English orthographie by observing the instruments of pronunciation, and the difference between words of like sound, whereby any outlandish, or meer English man, woman, or child, may speedily attain to the exact spelling, reading, writing, or pronouncing of any word in the English tongue, without the advantage of its fountains, the Greek, and Latine*. He writes in his preface that ‘I have not been guided by our vulgar pronunciation, but by that of London and our

Universities, where the language is purely spoken.’ These quotations make it fairly clear that there was by the sixteenth century a pronunciation, based on that of London, which was regarded as prestigious and which was linked with power (the court), with education and therefore also with the established church. It was not obligatory. Sir Walter Raleigh notoriously spoke with a broad Devon accent, but it is unlikely this had anything to do with the troubles he had at the Elizabethan-Jacobean court.

David Crystal knows all this very well, and he quotes one or two of these sources in the fascinating book he wrote about the *Romeo and Juliet* experiment last year. There was indeed, as he says there, an emerging notion of the best speech being heard at Court.⁵ Yet he may unknowingly have been responsible for the Globe actors’ misconception. He also writes in the same book that accents of the time were ‘little affected by class distinction’ (p. 41) and that the distinction between educated and uneducated speech did not exist either (p. 63). In the latter case he is talking only about the sounds ‘me lady’ and ‘me love’ in ‘It is my lady. O, it is my love’ (2.2.10). But one can see how the confusion might follow. Crystal’s attention, of course, was elsewhere during these exciting weeks with the Globe company. He was teaching the actors how to change their sounds from what they have learned from others as acceptable modern speech on the Shakespearean stage. He was encouraging them to retain their regional accents wherever possible, and avoid the homogenization to RP that used to be part of an actor’s training. London, after all, would have been a melting-pot of accents, just as it is today.

Shakespeare loved to play with accents and probably spoke plain Warwickshire himself. *Henry V* has its Irishman (‘What ish my nation?’), its Scotsman, its Welshman (Fluellen/Llewellyn, who is comic but whom Shakespeare clearly likes), as well as a standard Englishman, Gower, among the common soldiers. Part of the point was to show how the new king could weld a diverse nation into a fighting unit. He also has fun with French sounds in English and vice versa. Kate, the French princess, gets an

English lesson, and when he woos her Henry tries briefly to speak French. Yet even in its fun, the king’s language is so different from that of the clown and braggart soldier Pistol that we must surely hear different sounds. Pistol needs a boy to interpret his prisoner’s French, and plays on his name, Monsieur le Fer, as ‘Master Fer! I’ll fer him, and firk him, and ferret him’. Both French soldier and Pistol are deliberately and equally ridiculous. The very fact that the king is afraid that if Katherine could hear English properly she would find him ‘such a plain king that thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown’ (5.2) is a sign that he is concerned about difference of pronunciation as well as choice of words. And in *1 Henry IV*, the king and the serving-man in the tavern obviously make different kinds of sounds. The king’s sounds are even made fun of by Falstaff and his errant son.

The *Troilus and Cressida* actors at the Globe did their best to maintain some semblance of what Crystal must have told them to do, but in the end most of them just sound Irish (*Ulyssays*), as one disgruntled friend commented in the interval, explaining he would not bother to go back. Many followed his example, and the theatre was half empty by the end. More tolerant, and professionally interested, I did go back, but the promised familiarization (‘by the end of the first scene’) did not occur. I had no trouble with the shortened forms of ‘little words’, like *mi* for *my*. After all that’s how I grew up saying the word myself. And I didn’t mind the Yorkshire or Wales of the *o* vowel in words like *go* or *know*. I didn’t even mind the recovered *h* in words like *whine* (so not the same as *wine*). Several Americans and some Scots of my acquaintance do that. What I objected to was that, run all these oddities together and the whole play, struggle as I might, became so difficult to follow. Hamlet’s advice to speak ‘trippingly on the tongue’, taken far too seriously, speeded the pace up to a gabble. Many actors spoke their lines as if not expecting to be understood, except by David Crystal. Even with my reasonably scholarly knowledge of earlier forms of English, the play just didn’t work. I asked Mark Rylance, the retiring artistic director of the company, who does not appear in the show but who came to stand among the sparse groundlings

and watch, why they chose this play. It was Giles, he replied, somewhat ruefully—at least he sounded rueful to my practised ear.

A better-known play, one that half the audience is silently reciting to itself, might work. That is what happened with *Romeo and Juliet* last year. But *Troilus and Cressida*! The complex plot is hard enough to follow in its intricate detail. We do not even know if it was acted in Shakespeare's theatre. One quarto advertises the play 'as it was acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe', but another announces it as 'a new play never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar'. The Folio edition may show signs of a theatrical promptbook behind its variations. But there in that large book it is squeezed in, as an apparent afterthought, with the tragedies, even though one quarto calls it a comedy, the other a 'famous history'.

These contradictions may mean that the play was such an embarrassing failure that it never got before the public. Or perhaps it had one performance but received a strong negative reaction from the audience. A long passage between Hamlet and the First Player about a recent play on the story of Troy, unpopular in performance and acted 'not above once,' takes on new significance if it is a somewhat self-conscious allusion to a recent flop. In any case this makes it quite a challenge for an OP production.

And the play is so dark. This too may have made it unpopular with its original audience, for some of whom Britain was still 'New Troy'.

Both love and war, Shakespeare's two principal sources of inspiration, are treated with a rather bleak cynicism. Apart from Troilus himself, almost no-one seems to think anything has intrinsic value. Even Hector, the embodiment of decency and honour in Homer, kills a man on the battlefield for the sake of his shiny armour. Then he lays his own sword and shield aside, and immediately Achilles unheroically assassinates him. George Bernard Shaw was interested in the play as a bridge, more so than *Julius Caesar*, between *Henry V* and *Hamlet*, between the last of the histories and the first of the great tragedies, but he understood that Homer's heroes Achilles and Ajax become for Shakespeare 'a spoilt child and a brawny fool'. And Shaw felt that Shakespeare's verdict was likely to be our own. Giles Block may think so too, since he dressed his actors at the end in World War I costume. And that is perhaps the final mistake of this production. To have it be 'original pronunciation', and yet not 'original practices', as the Globe calls its doublet-and-hose stagings, is rather cowardly: it implies a lack of confidence in this strange language. Something is needed, the directors seem to have decided, to remind the audience that the play is still 'relevant'. Achilles 'wastes the armourless Hector with a six-shooter', as John Lahr put it sarcastically in the *New Yorker* review — but they are still spouting old-fashioned and often incomprehensible English. One of the actors had approvingly likened the OP of the *Romeo and Juliet* production to 'the sound of brown ale'.⁶ A year later the beer has gone very flat.⁷

Notes

1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/4694993.stm> There is a brief audio clip available at this site also, but it makes the difference between modern and 'Elizabethan' pronunciation much less marked than it was in the actual production.
2. Robert McCrum, *The Observer* review for August 21, 2005, from whom I borrow the previous quotations in this paragraph.
3. John Lahr, *New Yorker* review for September 19, 2005: 'These lines, unfortunately, serve as an epitaph more to this lopsided theatrical experience than to the drama of the play'.
4. See <<http://www.litnotes.co.uk/rphist.htm>>, from which I take these references.
5. David Crystal, *Pronouncing Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 26. The book is an excellent place to find out about EME (early modern English) and also about how rehearsal procedures work at the Globe. An audio clip is available at <<http://www.shakespeareswords.com>>
6. Crystal, p. 157.
7. I am grateful to my colleagues Kirsten Stirling and Jurg Schwyter for advice with this essay.