

The LSP Symposium reveals the diversity of approach and subject matter in European LSP studies, the only common thread being an interest in language in use in texts with specific practical purposes. Terminology studies are important in this forum, although they hardly figure in Anglo-American ESP studies. A strong German tradition, represented by many articles in the journal *Fachsprache*, has combined the traditions of *Wörter und Sachen* with those of a century and a half of teaching commercial and technical German to produce schools which use analysis of special-purpose language to illuminate the structure and thinking of specialisms (Baumann 2005). ESP as I describe it here has grown out of the teaching of commercial and technical English, and retains an orientation less to the thought-patterns encoded in language choices than to the purposes and effects of texts, as in the journals *English for Specific Purposes* and *Anglais de Spécialité*. American traditions of study and teaching of business communication have also been influential, as shown in the annual conferences of the European chapter of the Association for Business Communication and ABC's journal *Journal of Business Communication*.

In one dimension 'specific purposes' can be divided by discipline or subject matter: English for Engineering, for Business, for Legal Purposes, for Military Purposes, for Medicine and any number of others. On another they are divided into English for Academic Purposes, described in this issue of the *Messenger* by Ken Hyland, and English for Professional/Vocational Purposes. Clearly English for Legal Purposes could be academic – how to read legal textbooks, how to write answers to Law exams – or professional – how to cross-examine, how to write a contract. A glance at *English for Specific Purposes* and *Anglais de Spécialité* shows that a majority of publication is on activities and texts in educational or research contexts, with various business contexts the next most frequent area.

The distinction between academic and professional communication is not clear-cut, but it can mean that apparently similar commun-

icative acts have radically different functions and conditions of production. There is not necessarily the amount of transfer one would hope for, for example, between the reports engineers write in training and those they write in practice, because the situations are different. The academic report will often be a one-off summative task, while the report will usually be embedded in a project structure and relate to a particular stage of that project, with intertextual connections, both paradigmatically to analogous reports and syntagmatically to other reports in the sequence. Furthermore, writer aims and reader-writer power relations are crucially different. The important audience for the student's reports is someone who has the right to assess them, and even if the writer's aim includes a sense of integrity and ownership which may lead to texts which deliberately deviate from meeting the assessor's known or presumed criteria, this aim is often largely to achieve the audience's approval. In professional writing, however, knowledge, power and skill may be distributed in any number of ways, and the intended action is likely to be complex, in terms both of norms and of purposes. The aims of an engineering report in a company may include leading a less expert but more powerful reader to understand the constraints on the project, securing approval for a particular course of action, or documenting a particular interpretation of the situation to ensure that potential blame is appropriately placed.

LSP is oriented to identifying the choices writers have to make in such contexts and providing learners with the tools to make appropriate choices. One important decision the producer of a text has to make concerns its discourse. I recently received (from Scandinavia) an acceptance for a routine conference paper abstract that referred to my 'outstanding paper'. My reaction was not to be flattered at this welcome recognition of my genius. Instead I seriously doubted the bona fides of the conference. It was obvious that everyone who submitted a successful abstract received this evaluation, and that therefore it was an instance of non-contrastive evaluation of the sort one would expect in estate-agent prose. When an

estate agent describes a house as attractive, it is not to be expected that another house for sale will be described as unattractive, so the word ‘attractive’ is more a feature of the diction than an evaluation. Non-contrastive evaluation is a feature of promotional discourse, and discussion of contributions to conferences is normally carried out a discourse without these features; the wrong choice had been made for the specific purpose. However, of course a specific purpose can come to require a new discourse over time, as Fairclough (1993) found when he applied for promotion within the university and found that this (promotional) purpose no longer required a modest academic discourse but a boastful promotional one.

Another decision that the writer of a text for any specific purpose has to make is about relation between the persona to be presented and the writer of the text. Jacobs (2006) describes teaching the skill of writing press releases, where the first thing to realize is that the release should be pre-formatted so that it can be inserted directly into a newspaper. Hence it must refer to the issuing body in the third person – not *we* but *the ABC company*. Similarly, in overtly promotional texts the persona is unreliable. Thus we read a curriculum vitae with the knowledge that the writer aims to present the best possible story and the writer has to bear in mind that this is the expected reading mode. But in many expert texts, such as consultants’ reports, or government health warnings, we expect a reliable ‘narrator’, and the writer has to bear in mind this expectation and hedge accordingly.

Genre has been a popular category in ESP since the 1980s (Swales 2004), conceptualized as a particular configuration of speech acts conventionally used for a particular purpose, rather than as a particular type of subject matter as in literary studies. A key genre for the professional academic is the research article, and it has a highly standardized opening well-characterised by Dixon’s article in Kingsley Amis’ campus novel *Lucky Jim*:

“In considering this strangely neglected topic,” it began. This what neglected topic? This strangely what topic? This strangely neglected what? His thinking all this without having defiled and set fire to the typescript

only made him appear to himself as more of a hypocrite and fool.

If you want your article accepted, you have to say that the topic is new but yet important, despite the self-hate this may engender. An ESP/EAP researcher will have found out the best way to do it in your discipline and an ESP/EAP teacher will teach you how to carry this out. On the other hand, of course, if you are writing a press release you have to structure it with a summary in the first sentence and progressively less important details as the text goes on, and you have to include some verbatim quotations, so that it conforms to the newspaper ‘hot news’ genre and saves the journalist the trouble of rewriting.

ESP studies also have to take account of the complexity of the notion ‘purpose’, and prepare students for it. You have probably received e-mails that begin something like

Ref. Number: UN/028/756/833

Batch Number: XK-77-59700-75

Sir/Madam

We are pleased to inform you of the result of the Lottery Winners International programs held on the 9th January, 2004. Your e-mail address attached to ticket number 94247656-443 with serial number 6917-477 drew lucky numbers 59-14-08-23-01-28 which consequently won in the 2nd category, you have therefore been approved for a lump sum pay out of US\$ 500,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand United States Dollars).

and others that begin something like

Dear Sir/madam

URGENT BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

I am Dr. Aret Williams, Director, project implementation with Eskom South Africa and a member of the Contract Tenders Board (CTB) of the above corporation. Your esteemed address was reliably introduced to me at the South Africa Chamber of Commerce and Industry in my search for a reliable individual company who can handle a strictly confidential transaction, which involves the transfer of a reasonable sum of money to a foreign account

You know that in fact the two letters have identical purposes – to cheat you out of as much as possible. But they have very different forms. The first follows the conventional formula for a good-news letter (main point first, for example), and is in reasonably idiomatic English sprinkled with confidence-inducing serial numbers. The second follows the formula for a sales letter by

first establishing the source's credentials and only later revealing the main point. It is in oddly non-native English with a mixture of bureaucratic and personal discourses. These forms are adopted because they are appropriate to the *ostensible* purpose of the e-mails: delivering good news from an established organisation and introducing a dubious but incredibly beneficial deal with an exotic partner respectively. So the press release has its form because it is ostensibly delivering hot news, and a dishonest government health warning has the form of an honest one, because its purpose is to elicit the same response. ESP writers have to distinguish between text purpose, which can be varied and private, and genre purpose, which is what determines text form. Genre purpose is institutionalised and has to be learned.

And then yes, oh dear, yes, ESP deals with cultural differences in communicative practices. ESP researchers and teachers have to confront them, perhaps especially in a world of lingua franca English replacing interpreters. Of course the Teutonic academic tradition is a bit different from the Anglo-Saxon. Of course Finns don't negotiate like Greeks, and of course both sides need to be aware of this. But one Finn doesn't negotiate like another Finn, and one Teutonic scholar does not write like another, either. Any attempt to pin down cultural differences starts to sound like crude stereotyping because it cannot take account of the variation within the groups compared, and this is an area in which ESP researchers and teachers have to tread more carefully than they sometimes do

ESP is an area of application, not a method of teaching or research. It uses the methods of other forms of linguistic investigation – ethnographic observation, discourse analysis (critical or otherwise), corpus and concordance techniques, lexical frequency counts, for example. In teaching it aims at providing metaknowledge of rhetoric and phraseology by means of interactive techniques, competence by engaged exposure to texts and interaction, and automaticity by means of contextualised practice, and so forth, like other enlightened communicative approaches (Villez 2001). It also borrows approaches from the teaching of the

relevant subject, and ideally of course flows into it (Almagro Esteban and Pérez Cañado 2004). One thing that is exciting is that the teaching has to be based on research into the communication patterns of the target group, and existing research often has to be supplemented on the spot by the teacher. Another exciting aspect is that the teacher learns from the learners the whole time. They have subject and professional knowledge they want to use, and the ESP teacher's world is constantly enlightened by understanding a little of all these other worlds.

ESP teachers work in technical universities and business schools, in institutes for translators and communication, and of course in conventional English departments. But there are also many expert teachers in private language schools and directly employed by companies, and it is a challenge for academics to make sure that their deep contextualised knowledge of communicative practices and needs can be made available through channels of publication. Others need this expertise, and theorists need richer data for academic discussion from rhetoric to the ethnography of communication.

As mother tongue-teaching comes to understand the importance of manipulating the genres of power as well as expressing oneself, it starts to merge with the aims and materials of ESP. And, in fact maybe ESP as a branch of English studies could be absorbed by subject and professional-skills teaching. ESP instruction depends on a mis-match between the concepts and genre knowledge one has in the language of one's education and those one has in English. If David Graddol (2006) is right, and parallel-language education in English and the national language is becoming the norm, then everyone may acquire the English that goes with concepts and genres at the same time as the genres and concepts themselves and ESP may become a fully integrated part of subject education, and so cease to exist as an area of expertise for English teachers. But even in this rather extreme case, its research findings will not only make the task of teaching disciplinary and professional discourse much easier, but also illuminate text linguistics, pragmatics, and communication studies.

## References

- Almagro Esteban, A. and Pérez Cañado, M.L. (2004). Making the case method work in teaching Business English: a case study. *English for Specific Purposes* 23(2): 137-161.
- Baumann, K-D. (2005). Das komplexe Normensystem der Fachkommunikation. *Fachsprache* 27(1-2): 32-47
- Candlin, C. and Gotti, M. , Eds (2004). *Intercultural Aspects of Specialized Communication*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next*. London: British Council.
- Guido, M. G. (2004). Cross-cultural miscommunication in welfare officers' interrogations. In Candlin and Gotti 2004: 127-147.
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: the universities. *Discourse and Society* 4: 133-68. [republished in Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, Longman: 130-166].
- Jacobs, G. (2006). The Dos and Don'ts of Writing Press Releases (and How Learners Act upon Them). In Gillaerts, P. and Shaw, P. Eds, *The Map and the Landscape: Norms and Practices in Genre*. Bern: Peter Lang: 199-220.
- Mudraya, O. (2006). Engineering English: A lexical frequency instructional model. *English for Specific Purposes* 25(2): 235-256.
- Poncini, G. (2004). Communicating local elements to diverse audiences: promotional materials for wineries. In Candlin and Gotti 2004: 173-196.
- Swales, J. (2004). *Research Genres: exploration and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Villez, B. (2001). Réflexions sur l'enseignant comme agent-médiateur en anglais de spécialité. *Anglais de spécialité*, 31-33: 179-187.
- Vuorela, T. (2005). How does a sales team reach goals in intercultural business negotiations? A case study *English for Specific Purposes* 24(1): 65-92.

---

## Creating a Corpus for the Analysis of Identity Traits in English Specialised Discourse

Maurizio Gotti (Bergamo, Italy)

---

This paper describes the creation of a corpus of texts drawn from academic journals in various disciplinary contexts, carried out by CERLIS (Centro di Ricerca sui linguaggi specialistici), the centre operating at the University of Bergamo to promote research in the area of languages for specific purposes <<http://www.unibg.it/cerlis>>. Our investigation is part of a wider project<sup>1</sup> focusing on the specific textual, semantic and pragmatic features of specialised discourse in settings where local and disciplinary cultural identities are altered, integrated or redefined by international communication, which accordingly is also intercultural. Within such domains, the project seeks to investigate to what extent the cultural allegiance of (native or non-native) Anglophone discourse communities to their (linguistic, professional, social, national) reference group is affected by the use of English as a lingua franca of international communication.

The process of internationalisation of English offers a topical illustration of the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors in the construction of discourse, both within specialised domains and in wider contexts. This process is most evident in domains of use (e.g. academic, technical, scientific and legal communication) where the socialisation/textualisation of knowledge plays a crucial cohesive role. The investigation of specific genres (Swales 1990, 2004; Bhatia 1993, 2004; Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995; Gillaerts & Gotti 2005; Bhatia & Gotti 2006) and of their diachronic development is a source of valuable evidence as to the language-culture interface, which is also addressed in several ethnographic and socio-linguistic studies.

In the last two decades, the tension between globalising forces and local cultures has been analysed in academic (Mauranen 1993; Ventola & Mauranen 1996; Duszak 1997; Hyland 2000; Hyland & Bondi 2006), business (Ulijn & Murray 1995; Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson

1999; Bargiela-Chiappini & Gotti 2005), institutional (Martin & Christie 1997) and legal discourse (Bhatia *et al.* 2003) in inter- or multi-cultural settings. Early results from the research carried out by our group (Candlin & Gotti 2004a, 2004b; Cortese & Duszak 2005, Garzone & Sarangi *forth.*) indicate that the internationalisation which makes English the preferred choice of code is coupled with textual inconsistencies and ambiguities that advise against straightforward, simplified conclusions: the apparent dominance of ‘Anglocentric’ models in the domains and specialised discourses considered reveals specific adaptive attitudes and evidence of cultural resistance in the textual strategies that construct identity-shaping differences. On the basis of such premises, our project aims to improve the understanding of identity-forming features linked to ‘local’ or professional cultures, as communicated by contemporary English in various specialised domains among native and non-native speakers.

### Identity traits in academic discourse

Within this wider research plan, the Bergamo Unit has chosen to investigate the relationship between socioculturally-oriented identity constructing factors and textual variation in academic discourse. The project takes into account the internationalisation of specialised discourse observed in English, not only in Anglophone countries but wherever institutional and professional settings evolve in a way that transcends the linguistic, cultural and conceptual standards of their local communities. In this sense, we can refer to a gradual ‘globalisation’ or ‘hybridisation’ of discursive practices first appearing in English-speaking environments but also affecting smaller languages (cf. Cortese & Riley 2002; Gotti *et al.* 2002), subject to standardising pressures in their semantic, textual, sociopragmatic and even lexicogrammatical construction.

For some scholars (cf. Canagarajah 2002; Kandiah 2005) the considerable success of English in the world of academic research poses a threat not only to the survival and productivity of other languages but also for researchers from non-English-speaking cultures, whose construction/perception of specialised discourse inevitably diverges from dominant Anglo-American model(s). In this sense, Mauranen (1993) claims that weaker academic discourses deserve attention and protection on a par with vanishing ecosystems, while Swales (1997) describes English as a tyrant in the field.

Apart from these value-judgements, relatively few studies are devoted to the impact of globalisation on language, as identities are becoming increasingly fluid and negotiable. Our Unit's contribution to the project moves in this direction, identifying cases of language variation linked to the encounter/collision of different cultural frameworks within English academic discourse. Our approach focuses on the macrostructural elements of linguistic variation, on the lexico-semantic development of disciplinary discourses, on their rhetorical-pragmatic strategies and on such textual phenomena as verbal modality and hedging. The purpose is to better understand how and to what extent language forms/functions correlate to the globalisation of discourse in academic communication.

One of the key factors of verbal behaviour is the affiliation of actors to one or more cultures (whether professional, ideological, or ethnic-geographic), which to a certain extent affect not only the language itself but also the community's thought and internal relationships. For this reason, our project also targets Italian vs. English texts and includes an analysis of interculturality in terms of conflict and the different 'positioning' of participants.

### **CADIS: A Corpus of Academic Discourse**

As corpora constitute a remarkable tool for the study of discourse, a specific corpus (CADIS = Corpus of Academic Discourse) has been designed as the core and foundation of this project. Since this corpus is a vital element of our investigation and is expected to remain a major resource for years to come, in designing

it we have taken into account a number of parameters (e.g. representativeness, sampling methods, balance) so as to make it compliant with international standards and best-practice guidelines.

In view of an in-depth analysis of variation in intercultural communication, our research unit has selected a range of texts produced by scholars and academic institutions in various parts of the world. To identify textual variants arising from the use of English as a first language, second language, or lingua franca of the scientific community, we have devised a corpus formed by English – and in part Italian – texts for academic communication. Besides including two alternative languages, CADIS represents four different disciplinary areas: Legal studies, Economics, Linguistics and Medicine. For each disciplinary area, four different textual genres were considered: abstracts, book reviews, editorials and research articles.

The English texts collected so far were taken from a total of 20 peer-reviewed journals (five per discipline) available by subscription through the University of Bergamo website. Because all of the journals selected have a high impact factor, we are confident that the content of our corpus is highly representative of each specialised community from which it originated. The same principle will be followed in the sampling of Italian academic texts, which will be selected from the most important journals available in each field.

Apart from representativeness, the structure of our corpus follows a criterion of balance, through an accurate proportioning of its parts. More specifically, 50 texts per genre were collected and classified within each disciplinary area, totalling 600 texts per discipline and 600 texts per genre. For each language group – native-speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) of English, and native speakers of Italian (ITA) – a total of 800 texts (200 per disciplinary area) will be included in the corpus. Furthermore, within the NS group, equal representation of different varieties (i.e. UK, US, Canadian, Australian English and New Zealand English) will be emphasised.

In order to be included in the corpus, a text must be homogeneous in size, with an average of 12,000 words. The selection of similar size samples is meant to simplify later contrastive research, although it is now widely believed that also texts of varying length can provide sound linguistic insights (Sinclair 2004). The samples collected in CADIS consist of entire documents rather than parts of texts, as the integrity and representativeness of complete genres is far more important than the difficulty of reconciling texts of different dimensions (Sinclair 2004).

The structural complexity of CADIS reflects its contrastive orientation: it is in fact designed to be internally comparable, so that our researchers will be able to analyse and contrast the chosen texts, not only by disciplinary area, genre, language and culture, but also historically. This is possible because the corpus covers a time frame of at least 25 years, from the early 1980s to the present day. In the first phase of the selection process, priority has been given to English texts published over the last 6 years, but when this phase is completed, earlier academic texts will also be selected and archived. When fully implemented CADIS will comprise 2,400 academic texts, reaching a total of about 2 million tokens (primarily from digital formats but if necessary also from print), selected and classified by disciplinary area, genre, language, author (i.e. NS/NNS), geographical provenance (US, UK, CAN, AUS, NZ), date of publication and source journal.

Relevant information on each text is stored in a separate Excel file, which forms a useful database for the whole corpus. This detailed description will enable researchers in our unit to analyze the most significant macro/

microlinguistic variants in terms of identity, evaluation and interpretation in the light of recent linguistic scholarship. More specifically, the data will allow an in-depth analysis of the following aspects:

- (a) genre and macrostructure, with their resulting lexicogrammatical realisations;
- (b) speech acts expressing positive/negative evaluation, both exophoric and metatextual;
- (c) the pragmatic, interpersonal plane of discourse (stance, hedging, politeness);
- (d) evidence of popularisation and/or promotional discourse;
- (e) the function of verbal and lexical modality;
- (f) the degree of background knowledge required (content schemata);
- (g) the correlation with such authorial variables as gender and academic standing.

## Conclusion

Corpus linguistics offers powerful resources for the investigation of authentic discourse and the impact of this new research tool is deeply felt in many areas of language analysis. The full potential of corpora, however, is available only if material is assembled after careful design and construction: it is therefore important that the corpus should be built on sound methodological foundations and clear choices by the researchers involved. This is the approach taken in the planning and construction phase of CADIS. Of course, some changes may become necessary at a later stage, due to evolving needs and the availability of new data-processing tools, but we are confident that our work so far has laid the basis for a large, consistent corpus of academic discourse which it is hoped will prove a valuable resource for present and future research.

## Note

1. A research project on *Identity and Culture in English Domain-specific Discourse* funded by the Italian Ministry of Research and coordinated by the University of Bergamo in collaboration with the Universities of Milan, Naples, Turin and IUSM Rome (<http://www.unibg.it/cerlis/projects.htm>).

## References

- Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Gotti, M. (eds) 2005. *Asian Business Discourses*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Nickerson, C. (eds) 1999. *Writing Business: Genres, Media and Discourses*. London: Longman.
- Berkenkotter, C. & Huckin, T.N. 1995. *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communities: Cognition, Culture, Power*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Bhatia, V.K. 1993. *Analysing Genre. Language Use in Professional Settings*. London: Longman.
- Bhatia, V.K. 2004. *Worlds of Written Discourse. A Genre-based Approach*. London: Continuum.
- Bhatia, V.K., Candlin, C.N. & Gotti, M. (eds) 2003a. *Legal Discourse in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts: Arbitration Texts in Europe*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Bhatia, V.K. & Gotti, M. (eds) 2006. *Explorations in Specialized Genres*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Canagarajah, A.S. 2002. *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Candlin, C.N. & Gotti, M. (eds.) 2004a. *Intercultural Aspects of Specialized Communication*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Candlin, C.N. & Gotti, M. (eds.) 2004b. *Intercultural Discourse in Domain-Specific English*. Special issue of *Textus* 17/1.
- Cortese, G. & Riley, P. (eds.) 2002. *Domain-Specific English: Textual Practices across Communities and Classrooms*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Cortese, G. & Duszak, A. (eds) 2005. *Identity, Community, Discourse: English in Intercultural Settings*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Duszak, A. (ed.) 1997. *Culture and Styles of Academic Discourse*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Garzone, G. & Sarangi, S. (eds) forthcoming. *Discourse, Ideology and Ethics in Specialized Communication*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Gillaerts, P. & Gotti, M. (eds) 2005. *Genre Variation in Business Letters*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Gotti, M., Heller, D. & Dossena, M. (eds) 2002. *Conflict and Negotiation in Specialized Texts*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Hyland, K. 2000. *Disciplinary Discourses. Social Interaction in Academic Writing*. London: Longman.
- Hyland, K. & Bondi, M. (eds) 2006. *Academic Discourse across Disciplines*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Kandiah, T. 2005. Academic writing and global inequality: resistance, betrayal and responsibility in scholarship. *Language in Society* 34/1, 117-132.
- Martin, J. & Christie, F. (eds) 1997. *Genre and Institutions*. London: Cassell.
- Mauranen, A. 1993. *Cultural Differences in Academic Rhetoric*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Sinclair, J. 2004. *Trust the Text : Language, Corpus and Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Swales, J.M. 1990. *Genre Analysis. English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J.M. 1997. English as tyrannosaurus rex. *World Englishes* 16, 373-382.
- Swales, J.M. 2004. *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ulijn, J. & Murray, D. (eds) 1995. *Intercultural Discourse in Business and Technology*. Special issue of *Text* 15/4.
- Ventola, E. & Mauranen, A. (eds) 1996. *Academic Writing. Intercultural and Textual Issues*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

## Clumsy English

*Michael Hoey (Liverpool, UK)*

---

When I arrived at the University of Liverpool, I was pretty pleased with myself, having just been appointed to the English Language chair there. When, therefore, the son of the woman whose house I was buying wrote to me to ask for help with his English, I was confident I would be able to assist. He was a native speaker in the army whose hopes for promotion were continually being dashed because of the inadequacy of his written English. What he needed from me was advice on how to improve his written style. To this end, he sent me a great deal of his writing, which I examined carefully – and I found I did not know how to help him. His style was undoubtedly awkward in places (though the army may have been being over hard), but I could not, at that stage, identify what it was he was doing wrong. Humbled by the realisation that I did not have the necessary linguistic tools to assist him, I set about working out exactly what does contribute to poor ‘style’ and how it can be helped. The point here is that the practical problem had exposed an area of ignorance which I am still filling. Although my awareness of this particular problem grew out of contact with a native speaker with difficulties, in my subsequent work on this topic I focused my attention primarily on the needs of the non-native.

There is an important stage in the development of a learner when the learner moves from being a user of the language for no other purpose than survival (or examination survival, which is not quite the same thing) to being a user of the language for an important purpose. That purpose might be career centred, e.g. English for tourism or business, or hobby centred, e.g. interacting on the internet, or education centred, i.e. English for Academic Purposes.

This transition is psychologically important, because it marks the point at which the English learnt is unlikely to get unlearnt. It is also linguistically important because for many it is the point when they become aware of the demands of using English in a particular domain.

If they are learning English for tourism, they will learn that their English is not quite specific enough. If they are learning English to use it in chatrooms, they will discover that their English is too formal. If they are learning English for academic purposes, they will discover that their English is too informal. (The same is broadly true for native speakers when they move into a new and unfamiliar domain. The soldier who contacted me no doubt had more than adequate English for most purposes but his English failed to meet the linguistic demands of the army.)

It is at this juncture, this cross-over point from being a purposeless language learner to a learner with a mission, that two important features of English start to loom with greater importance – the organisation of discourses and the choice of appropriate vocabulary. The most common transition point for learners is that from general English to academic English and the texts I shall consider were both written at that particular transition.

What I am going to do is take a short piece of academic writing produced by a non-native Masters student and examine the problems she is having in making the transition from survival English to academic English. Taken from her draft Masters dissertation, it is, in many respects, a good piece of writing. It is clear for the most part and grammatical. But this is not native-speaker English and although the quality of her writing is clearly greatly better than much non-native writing, the dissertation was felt by the examiners (of whom I was not one) to be awkwardly written; the passage quoted below was marked out as an example of its awkwardness in this respect. The analysis that follows is intended to make the non-nativeness perceptible, though I should not be understood to mean that non-native English *has* to be turned into native English.

The dissertation from which the passage is drawn is, somewhat self-reflexively, on the topic of reading and writing skills, and the writer is about to address the reading and writing issues

involved in a particular advertisement (still more self-reflexively) offering help in writing! The writer has just finished describing the strategies involved in writing narratives.

I want to suggest that we can successively make the student's passage more closely approximate native-speaker English by passing it through a number of analytical stages. My claim is that these stages are best handled in the order I shall discuss them and that they can be used by teachers to improve their students' writing and, more importantly, by learners to improve their own writing; I shall offer some tentative evidence in support of the latter claim. I do not however claim that every 'improvement' I have made to the passage is indeed one; I would indeed be surprised if readers do not question some of my judgements.

### Original version

The strategies for writing a narrative are different from the ones for ads. In ads, the reader is looking for specific information, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader about something in an ad, it has to have enough information.

In the ad "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who hesitates and is very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the ad is needed to be written more profoundly to get into the reader's mind – convince the reader and satisfy him from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

### Stage 1: Local text management problems

The first thing to note is that there are a number of flaws in the local management of the flow of the discourse. These are small textual mistakes that have little or no importance with regard to the overall development of the argument of the text. Thus, there is a singular pronominal reference *it* to plural *ads*. A similar problem occurs in the repetition of *in ads* by *in an ad*; the same ad(s) are apparently being talked about, so we would expect both expressions to be plural or else both singular and for the same reason we would expect the second instance to select *the* rather than *an*. These points arise out of a parallelism between the two halves of the

sentence and this would point to a further textual oddity, in that the two prepositional phrases are differently placed in their respective clauses, one at the beginning, one much later in the clause.

Other textual management problems are uncertain command of gender-neutrality – *his/her* – *him* – *his/her*, and another parallelism that is undermarked, namely that between to get and convince, where one expect a further *to*, given the strict parallelism.

If the passage is adjusted to take account of these local text management problems, it reads as in version 2; changes are marked in italics.

### Version 2

The strategies for writing a narrative are different from the ones for ads. The reader is looking for specific information *in an ad*, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader about something in *the ad*, it has to have enough information.

In the ad "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who hesitates and is very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the ad is needed to be written more profoundly to get into the reader's mind – *to* convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

### Stage 2: Local lexical problems

There are a number of local lexical problems that do not in themselves damage the clarity of the passage but which instant reveal it to the work of a non-native in transition from survival to proficiency. The first is *ad*, which is too informal for academic writing. It is entirely appropriate in discussion but inappropriate in this context, where *advertisement* would be expected.

Less obviously, *convince the reader about something* is a rarer expression than the writer probably intended. I consulted a 100 million word corpus made up mainly of Guardian newspaper writing and supplemented by academic writing from the British National Corpus and found 238 instances of *convince [somebody] of [something]* and only 9 of *convince [somebody] about [something]*. So the most

natural expression would appear to be *convince the reader of something*.

Still more subtly, the phrase *have enough information* is not the most natural for use in the circumstances. Firstly, this expression is heavily associated with denial (*don't have enough information*) (11 instances out of 13 occurrences in my data), whereas the student's use is of course positive. Secondly, *have .. information* is biased towards occurring with postmodification (e.g. *have information about x*); 23% instances (57) in my data are not postmodified as opposed to 77% with postmodification (or deferred past participle) (187). The instance in this passage has no postmodification. Finally, there is an implicit receiver of the information in the example before us (*enough information for the reader*); *have information* is not however associated with receivers, *have* being a more static verb. In a sample of 200 instances of *have ... information*, there is an implied interaction in only 20% of cases. On the other hand *provide ... information*, which occurs with some expression of receiver of the message 59% of the time in a sample of 200 instances. It also turns out to be the case that *provide ... information* is less biased towards postmodification. Almost half of the instances (47%) (193) have no postmodification. There are only four instances of *provid\* enough information* in my data but three of these are positive. There are however overall more occurrences of *provide ... information* (411 instances as opposed to 244 instances of *have ... information*, a figure all the more striking because *provide* is an altogether rarer word than *have*). All in all, it looks as if *provide enough information* would be more the more natural expression.

If *have* is too static a verb for the student's purposes, *hesitates* is arguably too active. *Hesitates* is almost always associated with action or speech. It is not used to describe attitudes, but *hesitant* is. It would therefore look as if *hesitant* or even *nervous* would be more appropriate in this passage. If *hesitates* is turned into *is hesitant*, we of course no longer need the *is* before *unsure*.

With the words *unsure about* we have a similar situation to that of *convince about*. Both *unsure about* and *unsure of* are quite common in my corpus; I have 95 instances of the former and 154 of the latter. So it would look on the face of it as if *unsure about* ought to be fine as a choice of wording.

But *unsure about* is associated with clauses, e.g. *unsure about why she left*, *unsure about going to the party*; almost one in three have this use. The proportion is much smaller for *unsure of* (less than one in four). More importantly, 74 of the 154 instances of *unsure of*, close to half, occur in the structure *unsure of his/her/my/your x* or *unsure of himself* etc.

On the other hand, only 10 of the 95 examples of *unsure about* – barely more than one in ten – occur in the structure *unsure about his/her/my/himself/herself* etc. Given the absence of a clause and the presence of a self-reflexive pronoun, it would seem that *unsure of* would be more natural.

My last suggested alteration to the student's local lexical choices is offered more tentatively because it could be thought to change the student's meaning somewhat. In my corpus there are 815 instances of *profoundly* and only one of them occurs with *wrote*. On the other hand *write carefully* occurs 20 times. Given that *profoundly* can mean 'seriously' and to take something seriously is to do it carefully, I suggest this change to make the passage collocationally more normal.

What all this points to (even if the last change is discounted) is that there is more to learning a word than knowing what it means and how to use it grammatically. Knowing a word means knowing its collocations, e.g. *convince* and *of*, and its colligations (the grammatical patterns a word favours), e.g. *unsure of* and possessive pronoun. Without these, a learner will sound subtly non-native and stilted, even though, in terms of grammar and meaning, s/he is doing nothing wrong.

So what can the student do about this? What can the teacher – who is unlikely to have access to a 100 million word corpus, still less have time to consult one every time a student sounds unnatural – do to help the student? I shall return

to these questions at the end of my paper. For the moment, I simply note that local lexical problems represent the second stage or layer of analysis of a student's writing.

Rewritten with the changes I have suggested the passage looks as in version 3; I have highlighted the new changes in bold:

### Version 3

The strategies for writing a narrative are different from the ones for **advertisements**. The reader is looking for specific information *in an advertisement*, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader of something in *the advertisement*, it has to **provide** enough information.

In the **advertisement** "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who **is hesitant** and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the **advertisement** is needed to be written more **carefully** to get into the reader's mind – to convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

### Stage 3: Larger textual problems

Apart from the change of *ads* to *advertisements*, none of the lexical changes described in the previous section are a direct result of the passage being an instance of academic writing. We need now to look at it as a piece of *academic* writing.

The first point that one might make is that the first sentence seems to presuppose that we already know about the strategies for writing advertisements; it also appears to provide *the strategies for writing a narrative* as Theme not just for the sentence but for the whole passage. A reversal of the two 'strategies' produces a thematically more consistent passage.

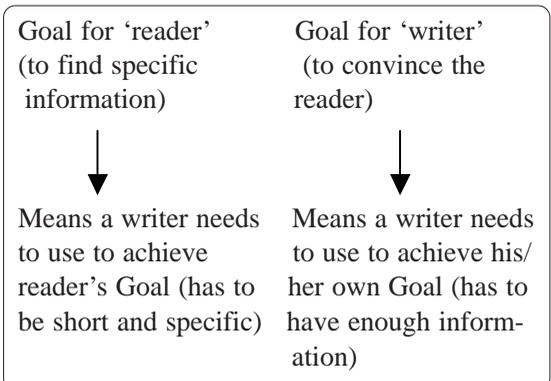
The second point to make is that academic texts typically make use of a range of patterns of organisation (Hoey, 1983, 2001). Perhaps the most common pattern, and certainly the best described, is the Problem-Solution pattern (briefly mentioned in my discussion of Winter's work), where a Problem is articulated, a

Response described or suggested to it, and an Evaluation or Result provided; in the event of the Evaluation or Result being negative (unless it is irretrievably negative, like death), the pattern characteristically recycles until a Positive Evaluation or Result is arrived at. Other common patterns in academic writing are the Goal-Achievement pattern, where in place of a Problem a Goal is articulated, and the Gap in Knowledge-Filling pattern, where a lack of knowledge is identified and means suggested for supplying the lack, such as analysis or experimentation.

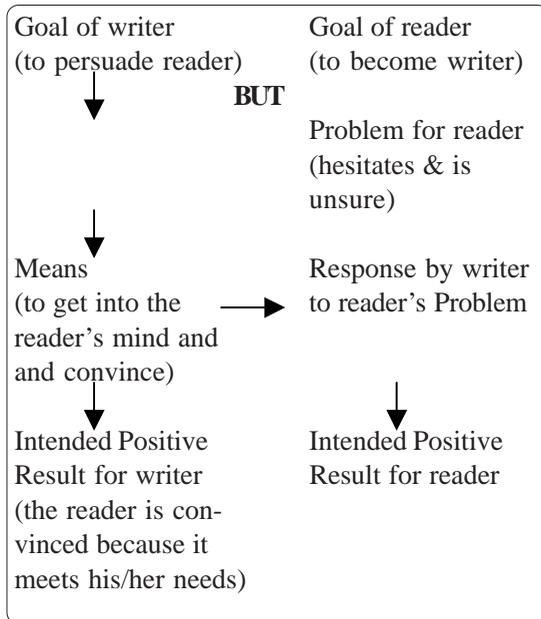
These patterns are a kind of contract between writer and reader, where the reader expects certain questions to be answered and the writer obliges by answering them; because the writer answers them, the reader is encouraged to expect them to be answered in future texts of the same type and therefore the writer obliges by again answering them. And in such a way the structure gets established.

Patterns interlock. So several patterns of questions may be answered at the same time, depending on which perspective you take. Thus in traditional tellings of Red Riding Hood, the wolf has a goal (to eat Red Riding Hood) and means of achieving the goal (impersonating her grandmother). This in turn represents a Problem for Red Riding Hood, unbeknown to her. The woodcutter's timely intervention represents a Response to Red Riding Hood's Problem and an irretrievably Negative Result for the wolf.

There are two sets of patterns in the passage under consideration. Firstly, there are two slightly conflicting Goal-Achievement patterns:



Secondly, there are two interlocking patterns, one partly implicit, the other fully explicit:



So this writer makes use of the appropriate patterns of organisation for academic writing, which is one reason why it feels a reasonably successful piece of writing, despite the observations that I have been making on it. On the other hand, she does not make the patterns she uses as clear or explicit as she could. We can make the 'reader' pattern clearer by adding in front of *is hesitant* the phrase *wants to be a writer but*.

With these changes the passage now reads as in Version 4. Changes are marked by underlining.

#### Version 4

The strategies for writing **an advertisement** are different from the ones for *narratives*. The reader is looking for specific information *in an advertisement*, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader of something in *the advertisement*, it has to **provide** enough information.

In the **advertisement** "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who wants to be a writer but is hesitant and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the **advertise-**

**ment** is needed to be written more **carefully** to get into the reader's mind – to convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

#### Stage 4: Lexical signal problems

So far I have written as if patterns were self-evident, yet I have also talked about one of the student's patterns as being implicit. What is the difference between an implicit pattern and an explicit pattern? How do academic readers and writers know that a particular pattern is being deployed? The answer, in academic writing, is that the patterns are signalled. When a lexical signal is used, the writer is saying 'Don't worry about what questions I am answering – I'll tell you.' Signals can be either local or global. Global signals tell the reader what pattern is being used; local signals tell the reader what local relation is being used, e.g. cause-consequence, contrast, time sequence.

Pang ChingFu (untitled research in progress) has shown that Chinese students tend to rely on a few signals rather than using the full range. Flowerdew (2003), working with Hong Kong students, found that her students used a suitable range but notes that they do not always get the signal right. So is this true of the author of the passage under inspection? Examination of her signals suggests that there is a reasonable range though there is a fairly heavy dependence on verb signals (*has to* (x2), *wants to* and *is needed*). Non-verb signals that the student uses are *strategies*, *purpose* and *needs*. With regard to Flowerdew's point about mishandling of signals, the student uses *has to* and *want to* appropriately but has problems with the other signals.

To begin with *the strategies for*, examination of my corpus suggests that only 1 in 20 cases of *strategies for* is used with *the*. It is usually used for generalisations. On the other hand, if *adopted* is added, the situation radically changes; every single instance of *the strategies adopted for* has the definite article.

Looking now at *is needed*, we find that it is mainly used in the structure *What is needed is*. So we could rewrite the student's sentence

What is needed is for the advertisement to be written more carefully etc. But this is a complex structure even for an advanced student, and it is not clear that the student intends the special focus that this structure brings. A simpler solution is to put the clause into the active voice: *the advertisement needs to be written more carefully...*

Looking now at *purpose*, this, like *strategies*, is almost naturally used but not quite. The meaning is clear but Flowerdew's observation is again borne out on closer examination. Concordance evidence shows that we like to specify whose purpose is being talked about. Out of 273 instances of *purpose is/was to*, 205 (i.e. almost exactly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of cases) start with a possessive:

*Their purpose was to...*

*The Government's purpose is to...*

*His purpose was to...*

Given that the student is talking about two sets of purposes – those of the 'writer' and those of the 'reader' – the most natural strategy to adopt is to add *the advertiser's*:

*The advertiser's purpose is to persuade...*

Finally, in my corpus *fit(s) needs* occurs 12 times but *meet(s)/met needs* occurs 367 times. We can infer that the more common collocation is *meet needs*.

With these changes, we reach version 5. Changes are marked in capitals.

### Version 5

The strategies ADOPTED for writing **advertisements** are different from the ones ADOPTED for a narrative. The reader is looking for specific information *in an advertisement*, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader **of** something in *the advertisement*, it has to **provide** enough information.

In the **advertisement** "Why not be a writer?" THE ADVERTISER'S purpose is to persuade a reader who wants to be a writer but is hesitant and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the **advertisement** NEEDS to be written more **carefully** to get into the reader's mind – *to convince the reader and satisfy him/her from*

different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it MEETS his/her needs.

### Stage 5: Adjusting the cohesion.

One cannot make as many changes as I have here suggested without there being knock-on effects on the cohesion of the text. There were in any case problems in the original version. Here we have a chain of references to advertisements:

*advertisements – an advertisement – it – the advertisement – it – the advertisement – the advertisement – it.*

This would be clumsy enough if they were all co-referential, but in fact there are two additional difficulties. Firstly, the initial *advertisements* does not appear to be (but is) a direct antecedent for *an advertisement* because of the plurality of the former and the indefiniteness of the latter; secondly, the student does not intend (but might be thought by a careless reader to signal) co-reference between the first *it* and *the advertisement* that follows it. The solution to both difficulties, now that the passage has as its macro-Theme *the strategies adopted for writing advertisements*, is to delete *in an advertisement* and *in the advertisement* from the second sentence (because we know that this is the type of writing being discussed) and pluralise both pronouns to link back to the initial *advertisements*, thereby at the same time killing the link between these pronouns and the singular *the advertisement* that begins the next paragraph, i.e.:

*The reader is looking for specific information, so they have to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader of something, they have to provide enough information.*

This leaves us with the final version of the passage, now given without any marks of changes:

### Final Version

The strategies adopted for writing advertisements are different from the ones adopted for a narrative. The reader is looking for

specific information, so they have to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader of something, they have to provide enough information.

In the advertisement “Why not be a writer?” the advertiser’s purpose is to persuade a reader who wants to be a writer but is hesitant and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the advertisement needs to be written more carefully to get into the reader’s mind – to convince the reader and satisfy him/her from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it meets his/her needs.

I would argue that we now have a much improved passage:

- (1) The local textual problems have been sorted out.
- (2) The collocations and colligations of the ordinary vocabulary have been improved.
- (3) The structure has been clarified.
- (4) The special signalling vocabulary has been improved to make the structure explicit.
- (5) The cohesion has been clarified.

But it would be reasonable to think at this stage, if not ‘so what?’, at least ‘so what has this to do with me?’ It is all very well demonstrating that with the help of a large corpus and sophisticated software and the endless patience necessary to count examples of different kinds of use, it is possible to help a student writer. But for the average language learner making that psychologically important transition from survival English to purposeful use of language, this kind of help is not going to be available, and for the normal overworked, under-resourced teacher trying to help learners make that transition successfully, the kind of demonstration I have offered here may seem irrelevant.

There are two respects in which what I have been saying is not in fact irrelevant to the needs of the hard-pressed learner and teacher. In the first place, the lexical observations I have been making do not usually require a corpus to back them – a modern corpus-based advanced learners’ dictionary will do almost as well. Of the lexical points I have made, all but one can be inferred from the relevant dictionary entries

in the Macmillan English Dictionary; I assume a similar success rate would be found with other corpus-based dictionaries. In the second place, the stages I have described can be taught to learners and they can, communally, undertake an analysis of the kind offered here. Let me briefly provide anecdotal support for this claim.

As part of a course on the teaching of reading and writing, I first provided a group of eight students studying on either the University of Liverpool’s MA in Applied Linguistics or its MA in TESOL with a demonstration of the way the stages discussed above might be applied to a piece of student writing, using the passage that I have used in this paper. All but one of the students were themselves non-native speakers. I then gave them another piece of student writing and asked them in two groups of four to carry out the same processes of analysis in the same order. They had access to the MED but not to a corpus. After each stage of analysis was complete, the two groups reported their suggested improvements, which were agreed by the whole group.

The passage I gave them was the following extract from an early draft of a Ph.D. chapter by a non-native English speaker. They were told that they could ask questions about the context and I had the larger typescript available to answer textual questions. They availed themselves of this option several times.

#### **Original version**

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. These are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, irrespective of the grammatical forms which accompany them. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value, or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in the loss of ‘real world’ value, and any use of authentic conversation.

You may agree with me that this is a less clear piece of writing than the previous example; in any case, I felt it provided sufficient opportunities for improvement to give my students something

to work on. The first stage was of course that of local text management problems, and they identified two of these. The first related to the plethora of commas in the final sentence. They recommended removing the first and last of these so as to indicate more effectively which pieces of information belonged together. Secondly, and perhaps more perceptively, they noted that *these* at the beginning of the second sentence could be understood as referring to *the main teaching components* as the last-mentioned plural nominal group. They therefore suggested changing *these* to *they*. I have indicated this change with italics in the revised version that follows.

### Version 2 (after identifying Local Text Management Problems)

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. *They* are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, irrespective of the grammatical forms which accompany them. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in the loss of ‘real world’ value and any use of authentic conversation.

They then considered local lexical problems with the help of the dictionary. In each case, they offered grounds for the change, but I omit these here, because the point I am hoping to make is that they found the different stages of analysis helpful tools in the development of redrafting skills.

The students’ first change was to suggest replacing *boasts* with *boasts of*; their second change was to replace *accompany them* with *they have*. Then they suggested altering *the loss of* to *their having no* and *any use of* to *producing* (adding *no*, because of the disappearance of the noun head *loss*). With these changes incorporated, the passage now reads as in version 3 below; I have marked their changes in bold:

### Version 3 (after identifying Local Lexical Problems)

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts **of** the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. *They* are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, irrespective of the grammatical forms which **they have**. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in **their having no** ‘real world’ value and **providing no** authentic conversation.

The third stage, larger textual problems, proved a fruitful one for the students. They noted that the text required the reader to make some large inferences about the significance of the second sentence. Their view was that the second sentence was intended as a criticism, although its neutral wording made this uncertain. It was uncertainty about this that made what followed hard to interpret. They therefore boldly recommended adding *The problem is that* at the beginning of the sentence and making explicit what they thought was intended, that 1-2 functions per lesson is too fast a rate of introduction in a syllabus. They also felt that the second half of the sentence, which implied another problem, should be given a separate status.

Incorporating these changes gives us version 4; I have indicated their changes by underlining.

### Version 4 (after identifying Larger Textual Problems)

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts **of** the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. The problem is that they are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, which is too fast. Furthermore, this is done in a way irrespective of the grammatical forms which **they have**. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in **their having no** ‘real world’ value and **providing no** authentic conversation.

Finally the students were invited to consider the cohesion of the passage, and they immediately picked on the repetitions of *functions*, which appears four times in four sentences. In all but the first of the cases they chose to replace the nominal groups containing *functions* with pronouns. Two of them become *them*; in one case, the change is slightly more complex in that *and these functions* has become *which*. These changes result in the following 'final' version. As in my account of the first student's passage, I have at this stage removed all indications of changes, so that the passage can be read more normally. The only change of my own is the addition of a comma before *resulting* in the penultimate line:

#### **'Final' version**

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts of the explicit teaching of functions, which present the main teaching components of the course. The problem is that they are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, which is too fast. Furthermore, this is done in a way irrespective of the grammatical forms which they have. The learners are then expected to produce them without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising them, resulting in their having no 'real world' value and providing no authentic conversation.

I do not necessarily agree with all the changes. For example, I am not sure that the original writer necessarily meant that the Emirates course was boastful about the explicit teaching of functions (though that is not incompatible with

her meaning). But I do think that the final version improves upon the original. That this improvement has been achieved in under an hour (with another hour spent outlining the approach) is, I think, a tribute to the students; it also suggests that research can indeed offer ELT something useful. For me, this was an instance where the cycle was the virtuous one shown in Figure 1. Even, however, if my solution to the problem of producing good academic writing is felt to be unattractive, this should not necessarily invalidate my argument, because the solution should always be applied by the ELT practitioner, not the researcher, and I fill the latter role most of the time, not the former.

I have tried to show in this paper that linguistic research benefits from the stimulation that comes from ELT (or other field of application). I have also tried to show, perhaps less convincingly, that ELT can benefit from linguistic research. I would like to conclude by saying that there is a need for an interactive site where ELT professionals can team up with active researchers to propose research topics of direct value to ELT, with a view to always publishing the results twice, once in a descriptive or applied linguistics journal and once in an ELT journal aimed squarely at teachers. The papers should always be co-authored and neither contributor should regard themselves as being, or be seen as, the junior partner. If a true dialogue can be established between ELT and linguistic research, and if real effort is put into sharing discoveries, there is no reason why they should not in twenty years time come to wonder how any linguist could ever formulate questions with such obvious answers as the ones in my title.

#### **Note**

This paper is a shortened and slightly adapted version of 'What has research got to offer ELT (and what has ELT to offer research)?' published in *Research in ELT: Proceedings of the International Conference 9-11 April 2003*, Bangkok: King Mongkut's University of Technology, Thonburi, pp. 48-67.

#### **References**

- Bazell, C E *et al* (1966) *In Memory of J R Firth*. London: Longman.
- Becker, A L (1965) 'A tagmemic approach to paragraph analysis' *College Composition and Communication* 17.1. 67-72.
- Chomsky, N (1957) *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Chomsky, N (1965) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Christensen, F (1965) 'A generative rhetoric of the paragraph' *College Composition and Communication* 16.3. 144-56.

- Christie, F & J R Martin (1997) *Genres and Institutions: Social processes in the workplace and school*. London: Cassell.
- Edge, J (1985) 'Do TEFL articles solve problems?' *ELT Journal* 39.3. 153-7.
- Edge, J (1986) 'Towards a Professional Reading Strategy for EFL Teacher Trainees' Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, UK.
- Edge, J (1989) 'Ablocutionary value: on the application of language teaching to linguistics' *Applied Linguistics* 10.4. 407-417.
- Edge, J & S Wharton (2001) 'Patterns of text in teacher education' in M Scott & G Thompson (eds) *Patterns of Text*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Firth, J R (1957) 'A synopsis of linguistic theory. 1930-1955' *Studies in Linguistic Analysis*. Special Volume, Philological Society, pp 1-32.
- Flowerdew, L (2003) 'A Corpus-Based Lexico-Grammatical Analysis of the Problem-Solution Pattern in an Apprentice and Professional Corpus of Technical Writing' Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool.
- Francis, G, Hunston, S & E Manning (1996) *Collins COBUILD Grammar Patterns 1: Verbs*. London: HarperCollins.
- Francis, G, Hunston, S & E Manning (1998) *Collins COBUILD Grammar Patterns 2: Nouns and Adjectives*. London: HarperCollins.
- Goldberg, A (1995) *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Halliday, M A K (1966) 'Lexis as a linguistic level' in C E Bazell *et al* (eds)(1966), 148-62.
- Hasan, R (1968) *Grammatical Cohesion in Spoken and Written English Part 1*. (Papers of the Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching, Series I.7) London: Longman.
- Hoey, M (1983) *On the Surface of Discourse*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Hoey, M (2001) *Textual Interaction*. London: Routledge.
- Hoey, M (2004) 'Lexical priming and the properties of text'. In Partington, A, Morley, J, and Haarman, L, editors, *Corpora and discourse*, pages 385-412. Peter Lang, Bern.
- Huddleston, R, Hudson, R, Winter E O & A Henrici (1968) *Sentence and Clause in Scientific English*. Report of the Research Project 'The Linguistic Properties of Scientific English'. London: Department of General Linguistics, UCL.
- Hunston, S & G Francis (2000) *Pattern Grammar: A corpus-driven approach to the lexical grammar of English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lewis, M (1993) *The Lexical Approach: The state of ELT and a way forward*. Hove: LTP.
- Longacre, R E (1968) *Discourse, Paragraph and Sentence Structure in Selected Philippine Languages*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics Publications in Linguistics and Related Fields, No 21, Vols 1 & 2.
- Lyons, J (1968) *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Lyons, J (1977) *Semantics*. (2 vols.) Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Mann, W C & S A Thompson (1986) 'Relational propositions in discourse' *Discourse Processes* 9. 57-90.
- Mann, W C & S A Thompson (1988) 'Rhetorical structure theory: toward a functional theory of text organization' *Text* 8.3. 243-81.
- Martin, J R (1985) *Factual Writing: Exploring and challenging social reality*. Geelong: Deakin University Press, republished by Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Pawley, A & F H Syder (1983) 'Two puzzles for linguistic theory: nativelike selection and nativelike fluency' in J C Richards & R W Schmidt (eds) *Language and Communication*. London: Longman, pp 191-227.
- Sinclair, J McH (1966) 'Beginning the study of lexis' in C E Bazell *et al* (eds) (1966) pp 410-30.
- Sinclair, J McH, Jones S & R Daley (1970) *English Lexical Studies*. Department of English, University of Birmingham, UK.
- Swales, J (1981) *Aspects of Article Introductions*. Aston ESP Research Report No 1, Birmingham, UK: Language Studies Unit, University of Aston in Birmingham.
- Wharton, S (1999) 'From Postgraduate Student to Published Writer: Discourse Variation and Development in TESOL' Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aston University.

---

## Beckett and His Biographer: An Interview with James Knowlson

José Francisco Fernández (Almería, Spain)

---

James Knowlson is Emeritus Professor of French at the University of Reading. He is also the founder of the International Beckett Foundation (previously the Beckett Archive) at Reading, and he has written extensively on the great Irish author. He began his monumental biography, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) when Beckett was still alive, and he relied on the Nobel Prize winner's active cooperation in the last months of his life. His book is widely acknowledged as the most accurate source of information on Beckett's life, and can only be compared to Richard Ellmann's magnificent biography of James Joyce.

James Knowlson was interviewed in Tallahassee (Florida) on 11 February 2006, during the International Symposium "Beckett at 100: New Perspectives" held in that city under the sponsorship of Florida State University. I should like to express my gratitude to Professor Knowlson for giving me some of his time when he was most in demand to give interviews in the year of Beckett's centennial celebrations.

José Francisco Fernández

JFF: *Yours was the only biography authorised by Beckett. That must have been a great responsibility. Did it represent at any time a burden? Knowing that what you wrote would be taken as 'the truth'. Did you feel less free because of that?*

JK: Interesting. Two parts to that question, really. First of all, yes, I did feel a sense of responsibility and that responsibility took several forms. Beckett would say to me from time to time 'would you make something clear, please?' because some mistakes had been perpetrated earlier. For instance, I can give you an actual example from the biography. 'Will you make perfectly clear that my revelation, which is commonly thought of as having been like Krapp's revelation on the jetty at Dún Laoghaire, occurred in fact in my mother's room? I want you to make that clear, Jim,' he said. This happened to me several times. I was aware of the fact that, although he told me he had not read the previous biography very carefully, there were times when he said: 'that is not what happened; she got it wrong', meaning the earlier biographer. Now, my biography is not an attack

on or even a reply to the earlier biography of Deirdre Bair. It needs to stand on its own two feet. And I read with great fascination the biography of Deirdre Bair and have never said one word publicly against what she did. But it was a difficult time for her to write the book, while the writer "and a writer who felt very strongly about his privacy" was still around.

So, let me return to this question of responsibility. I indeed felt that there was a responsibility to produce something that would represent a kind of historical record. That I suppose must have been a major part of what I was doing. But don't forget I was writing a commercial biography and this means that you have to write a story that will take the reader from point A to point B: birth, death; and then there is rather a lot in the middle where you have to make it interesting.

*Like writing a narrative?*

The narrative has to be an interesting one, yes, so that all kind of things that, as a Beckett scholar, I would have liked to have developed, I did not have either the time or the space to

explore. Or perhaps the readership that the publishers were aiming at would not have appreciated some of the more sophisticated, more scholarly disquisitions on many of the texts that as scholars we study. There was a responsibility also to Samuel Beckett not to write a scandalous biography. I didn't want to write anything that was shocking. On the other hand, I did want to tell the truth. Of course there are ways of telling the truth; there are ways of telling a story which may have a certain potentially scandalous quality, and you can tell it as very shocking, shocking, not very shocking or not at all shocking. My main criterion in writing this book was that my bigger responsibility was to posterity, to the truth: the critic, Desmond McCarthy once said that the biographer is 'an artist under oath'. Now I don't approve at all of those biographies that treat the writer's life or the life of a famous person as a subject for what is really their own story, a fiction constructed around it; some people do more or less just that. I think that the biographer has an obligation to the truth, or as near to the truth as he can get. Of course you know that there will never be a definitive biography: things change; other facts come to light; there are gaps; etc. In fact all of the biographer's material is potentially misleading.

Now there was another issue in your opening question, that is, did I feel that there was a burden upon me? Yes, I did. I felt it as a burden that I did not want to let Beckett down. But remember that I also wanted to be honest; in English, we say we want to 'call a spade a spade'. So, if he's having a love affair, ok, everybody has love affairs at some time in their life. And if it happens to be a love affair at the same time he was living with Suzanne, well then I was still going to say so. So I was not going to dissimulate; I was not going to hide things. I thought that alongside the notion of responsibility towards Beckett, the great danger of writing an authorised biography is that you write a hagiography, that you write something where you whitewash everything. I'm not saying that my portrait of Beckett is not an affectionate, even quite often, a favourable one, but if you have read it carefully you will know that there are many times when Beckett comes

out of it quite badly. Many people told me that he was a saint. But we have to be very careful when we talk about the sainthood of Samuel Beckett. He was indeed very generous, he was kind, he helped so many people – even now we don't fully appreciate the extent of Beckett's kindness and generosity. On the other hand, he could sometimes be irritating, difficult, and self-centred; as a young man he was very self-absorbed and narcissistic indeed, even though as an older man he behaved in a very saintly way. But if he was a saint, as one of the German actors put it, he was a saint who liked his beer (usually his Guinness) at eleven and his whisky at five and – let us make no bones about it – I almost lost count of the number of women that he was involved with in the course of his life. He was very attractive, magnetic, to women. So you can see that here you have somebody who likes to drink heavily, who goes with women, who is not a saint in that sense, but who behaves in a saintly way in terms of his compassion and understanding and humanity. So there was the notion of a burden; yes, I found it very difficult to live with writing it. It's maybe worth saying this, I haven't said it very often, that part of the difficulty lay in the fact that he died soon after I started. I had my interviews with him, which I've now edited with my wife, as you know, in *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett*, but there are always difficulties when someone has just died because people feel reluctant sometimes to talk. Now I had the advantage that I had letters from Samuel Beckett saying that I was his sole authorised biographer, 'would they let me have free access to their correspondence...', etc. I had a whole lot of letters from him which I would send to people in advance, so that was helpful. You then asked me in your first question, which I have elaborated on rather a lot, about the question of freedom. I think that with those twin responsibilities; responsibility towards Beckett and responsibility towards posterity, that you have to negotiate carefully between the two. So I think there were times when I used that whole scale that I spoke about earlier of how you can tell something, sometimes so as not to tell it in a

scandalous way. In other words I suppose I was performing a certain amount of auto-censorship. Nobody censored me; they tried to, oh, they tried to, but they didn't in the end, because they couldn't and I don't want to talk about that any more, but they tried: not the estate, no, not Edward Beckett – definitely not.

*And you do not want to say who tried to ...*  
No.

*If I may say so, in your book you are extremely tactful when you correct the mistakes of the other biographies.*

That was my intention, yes. I didn't think that it was the place of this book to attack anyone. I had a very good friend, who happened also to be my agent, who said 'if a certain person who wrote a biography appears in your book, in the text of your book, you will have failed because you are writing your own biography, you are not writing it against anyone else'. I knew that someone else was writing a biography too at the same time. So I knew that I had to be focused on my job. I couldn't be concerned about Anthony Cronin, just as I couldn't be concerned about Deirdre Bair's book in the past. I had to try to bring what I had myself to the task. You can only do the best you can. So that was the way I worked and I didn't think it was my job to be nasty. Sometimes, I have learnt over my seventy plus years, these things come back to bite you, and that what in the short term is a situation where you want to be angry or correct somebody or not be tactful, some years later this seems like appalling taste. I didn't want anyone to say 'why did he have to do that?' so I have to balance the setting the record straight that Beckett asked me to do on many occasions with doing it in such a way that I was not indulging in bad taste or polemic or personal attack. All the other people who have written about Samuel Beckett have worked with the best of intentions. Nobody has tried to do an attack. It may happen in the future. But Deirdre Bair, Anthony Cronin, Lois Gordon, and myself, have, I believe, all done the best that we thought we could do at that particular moment in history.

*Would you change anything in the biography as it is now?*

Oh yes, if I were doing this biography again, I would change many things about it. If I ever do a second edition, I may well rewrite whole sections. I may also ask for two volumes. After all, I cut 327 pages of the typescript out. The way I cut it was partly by reducing, but also by putting a lot of the scholarly material in the notes. So in a sense there are two different biographies in one; the biography for the general reader and the biography for the scholars.

I was after all in a slightly difficult position as a biographer because I am supposed to be a Beckett scholar as well. I had also looking over my shoulder as it were, as I was writing, the picture of a very close friend of mine, Ruby Cohn, a friend of Beckett, but also the doyenne of Beckett studies. So I had to bear in mind with every sentence I wrote that that sentence is meant for someone who doesn't know anything about Beckett but at the same time it is going to be read by Ruby Cohn. Now fortunately that was a path that Ruby Cohn tells me I managed to negotiate fairly successfully. One doesn't always do that and there are many things that I would do differently now, but at the time that was 'all I could manage, more than I could', as Samuel Beckett once put it to Alan Schneider.

*In the book there is not much reference to the Easter Rising 1916, the Anglo-Irish War or the Irish Civil war. Of course, Beckett was very young then, but did it not have any influence on his family, his social class?*

No, there isn't a lot in there. I do talk about that when he is with his father over the hills, looking at the fires burning, and of course it did have one particular impact, that is that they were very anxious to get their two boys out of Dublin, so that was probably the main reason for sending them to Portora in Enniskillen, a long way away from the riots and the troubles, but the implications of that are considerable, of course. We've had in the course of the conference we are at [in Tallahassee, Florida]

a lot of discussions about the Irishness of Samuel Beckett and the influence of his Protestant upbringing in a country that is divided on religious grounds. One of the things I've been most impressed by " and I'm learning about this all the time " is how much this is actually part of the subtext in some of Beckett's later work. If I were rewriting my biography now, I would make some of those points that I have been learning from fellow scholars, because I am not an Irish scholar, I am a French scholar. So I have been learning from specialists in Irish censorship, in Irish history, the situation of the two cultures, which were very different cultures as well as different religions...When I'm talking about the later work, there's no question of total deracination in Beckett in the late work. There are images which recur constantly from his childhood. There are not only just images of his childhood but there is a whole world there which is very Irish in its feel. I mean *Waiting for Godot* has the feel of tramps, tinkers from John Millington Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and *The Well of the Saints* and so on. There is always a kind of substratum of the old country present. Of course one of the reasons, I suggest, that we have 150 people here now talking about Beckett, and thousands throughout the world this year celebrating his birthday, is because he universalises those experiences. Consequently he allows us to put on, to attach our own experiences " it's like an affix where you can put on your own emotions. That's really why plays like *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Happy Days* are coming up as fresh as new paint: because they are not limited to the local. The stories in *Texts for Nothing* are full of echoes of Dublin and its surroundings, its sights, the Dublin bay, the mountains of his homeland. The significant thing is not that we can trace these elements. The significant thing is how they are used in the text and how they become universal themes which we can still appreciate, whereas so many of the works from the same period as Beckett's (and I mean I've seen many of the attempted revivals recently) are dated. Now Beckett doesn't date in terms of the things that Theodor

Adorno and many other people were talking about with respect to a post-Hiroshima world. *Endgame* is a remarkable 'after the bomb', as it were, kind of world. But it's not just that. It's full of the most human and at the same time most philosophical aspects of human existence. It's not a local thing but it does deal with human relationships. The nub of *Endgame* is the relationship between Hamm and Clov, dependence, the master-servant situation, if you like. Now you can relate that to philosophy, you can relate it to the Hegelian master/slave relationship, but in fact the text, the play, what we see on stage, the relationship between the characters, is something which is much wider than a purely philosophical concept. That is why Porter Abbott [one of the contributors to the conference speaking about Beckett and philosophy] is right. Beckett says "I am not a philosopher", but the seeds are frequently to be found in philosophy or in his own life. I'm saying that these elements of his childhood are obsessional, they keep coming back, but of course it's the way that these are used so that they don't leave us outside his text, as something which is alien to you will do. They draw us in by the very fact that they share our common experience as human beings. You can put your own emotions on to a particular image. I could quote quite a few examples. But I think of the trembling hand of the mother ill with Parkinson's disease shaking in the mirror in *Texts for Nothing 6*. When I read that I never fail to think of my own mother. I've tried this on my colleagues and students and they say, yes, I always associate such and such an image with my father. So in a sense what's happening with these images is what I like to describe in terms of a distillation. It's like distilling down the essence of human emotion without becoming sentimental because that's the other important thing: Beckett has realised that you can have more of an impact by seeming to be slightly distant.

Let me tell you an anecdote that you will like. My son was in a motorcycle accident and Beckett knew and telephoned every day for a week, to see how he was. Later, about a year

later, I published an article in a national British newspaper about that experience when I had thought our son was dying. He was in intensive care; the doctor was coming in, shaking his head, etc. I published the piece under another name and I received hundreds of letters from readers; more than I've ever had in my life, even with the biography. Then I was talking much later to Beckett about trying to use that in a work of fiction and he said to me, very tellingly, 'ah, but Jim, you've got to let the distance have its effect; you've got to bring W. B. Yeats' "cold eye" to bear on the experience.'

Now think of what happened with *Krapp's Last Tape*. It was seven years after his mother's death before he used the death of his mother in the incident with the dog by the canal when he is waiting for the blind to go down, indicating that his mother had died, or indicating rather that Krapp's mother had died. Only after such a period of time can you distil the essential and by this I mean the emotional essentials of an experience. It requires distance and time. That is Beckett speaking, not me or anyone else, that's what he felt. And I think that his getting away from the purely local is perhaps the reason why we're all here at this conference, because we admire the skill of the greatest prose stylist, with James Joyce, of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but because we can also emotionally attach things in our own lives, our own experiences to what we are reading. Somebody wrote a book called *Beckett the Abstractor*, 'Beckett L' Abstracteur' in French. That seems to me to be far from the truth. It seems to me that Beckett is not an abstractor at all. He is a distiller: he distils; he crystallises the essentials of the search for being, the fact that you are born and inevitably you will die. Those are the only things really in the end, as you get nearer to death, that you realise are the essentials. Or if you escape it as I did ten years ago when I thought I was dying of cancer, you then realise that this boiling down to essentials is part of the magical secret of Samuel Beckett. This happens too with respect to the emotions that are working in the text. They are crystallised into the

essentials of human emotion. And this gives a remarkable power, complexity and density to the text.

*You have mentioned Joyce. Was Joyce a guiding light or an obstacle in Beckett's career as a writer?*

As so often, both. But let me preface my answer, and I won't forget your question, by talking about two writers whose work has been affected by Beckett. Paul Auster and John Coetzee spoke to me privately in letters but also in their brief essays for *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett* about their debt to Beckett. But each of them said that after reading Beckett they could not write for a long time. So Beckett with Joyce was at the same time trying to escape from Joyce, but at the same time he was, you used the phrase yourself, a guiding light for him. I do think that Joyce was indeed the master for Beckett. He recognised that you can't do again what Joyce did in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Beckett realised he had to find his own path. I don't know whether you remember, I quote it somewhere in the biography, as early as 1930 he is writing to Samuel Putman, 'I'll get away from JJ before I die. Yessir.' In other words, he realised as early as 1930 that he had to find his own way. *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, even *Murphy*, is very Joycean; the early poems are full of Joyce. Joyce becomes a presence too in the later writing; in *Ohio Impromptu*, he walks with the protagonist and so on. And you will find a lot of Joyce still in the late prose texts, *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, *Worstward Ho*. But nonetheless the influence has been absorbed or transcended. It has gone underground in these texts. Beckett has found his own way. My way lies in impotence and ignorance, he said, that whole zone of being that writers have set aside as not useable. Joyce worked with all knowing, with putting everything in. He was, in Beckett's words, a 'greedy writer'. Beckett worked on the other hand by taking everything out. You may have a spiritual father but as the spiritual son you have to make your own way in life and find your own direction.

## Works Cited

- Bair, Deirdre. 1978. *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Casanova, Pascale. 1997. *Beckett L'Abstracteur*. Paris: Seuil.
- Cronin, Anthony. 1996. *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist*. London: HarperCollins.
- Gordon, Lois. 1998. *The World of Samuel Beckett 1906-1946*. London: Yale University Press.
- Knowlson, James, and Elizabeth Knowlson, eds. 2006. *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett: Uncollected Interviews with Samuel Beckett and Memories of Those who Knew Him*. London: Bloomsbury.



ESSE TRINITY -15%  
Ruokapöytä 103 x 180 cm  
nyt alk. 904,- [norm. alk. 1.064, ]  
Tuoli nyt alk. 102,-  
[norm. alk. 121,-]

**Editorial note:** this little ad appeared in one of the Finnish local newspapers in May this year – surely suitable furniture for future meetings of the ESSE Executive Board... JAS

## Interviewing Peter Ackroyd

### Part 1: “I certainly don’t subscribe to any modern literary theory”

Lidia Vianu (Bucharest, Romania)

---

I briefly visited Peter Ackroyd when I was in London. When I left his flat, I had the feeling I had been talking to the room – the impressive walls covered in magnificent books – to the history of the building, to the roots of the city. Not many words were said. His shyness touched me deeply, but I could never put it into words, I could not say what it was that had made me fall silent, experience an absence of words I had never felt before.

Peter Ackroyd is a private man (and this is the understatement of the century). When I founded the MA Centre for Contemporary Literature in Translation at the English Department of Bucharest University and I started inviting British poets and novelists (David Lodge, Julian Barnes, Alasdair Gray, Ruth Fainlight, Elaine Feinstein, John Mole, Robert Hampson, Mimi Khalvati, Pascale Petit, Sean O’Brien, George Szirtes) to talk to the students who were attending my course on contemporary British fiction and who were also attempting to translate some of it into Romanian, I tried my luck with Peter, although I was not very hopeful. I knew he worked 14 hours a day. To my surprise, he did accept.

In my own interview with him (via email, since talking in person had been such a failure on my part; see <<http://lidiavianu.scriptmania.com>>). I had barely elicited one-line answers. My expectations were at best grim as far as the videoconference was concerned. I coached my students (one of whom was actually writing a PhD on Peter’s work) to keep asking at all costs. The videoconference began.

It felt as if a magic wand had touched the screen. Peter talked to the students telling them things I had never seen in print, in other interviews. It was certainly not the clever questions that set him going. The questions were as they were. I feel certain it was the youth and inexperience of the students. His answers exhaled tenderness. Was he talking to his own youth, I wonder?

The result was a genuinely affectionate, disarmingly open text. I learnt my lesson. When with Peter Ackroyd, do what Peter Ackroyd does: be tenderly silent and allow only literature itself to talk.

Lidia Vianu

**STUDENT:** *I have noticed that most of your books are full of historical personalities: writers (Dickens, Milton, Chatterton, T.S. Eliot), architects (Hawksmoor) and philosophers (Plato). Is your passion for history the reason why you chose them?*

**PETERACKROYD:** I think it must be in part my passion for history, my interest in history. It has been my abiding interest, ever since I was a student at the university, but it was only in recent years that this interest became quick and enlightened by a specific focus on the people whom you mentioned. The choice of characters,

some of whom you mentioned, was not an arbitrary one. In my opinion it was an instinctive or intuitive one, but not arbitrary. In the case of many of them, for example in the case of Dickens, Blake, Chaucer and Milton, I was trying to help to explore the concept of a ‘London sensibility’. I was interested in the writing that came out from London, that emerged from the cities for many centuries, and which is touched by the same preoccupations and the same themes, images and interests. So, there was a sort of line that worked in many of my choices. In the cases of others, such as

Nicholas Hawksmoor, whom you mentioned, and Dan Leno, I was more interested in discovering, how can I put it, the presence of the past, the way in which the historical presence of London still exists in a variety of forms. So there was a kind of logic to my choices of these people, yes.

*Are there repeatable patterns of experience in The Great Fire of London?*

Yes, I believe that there are patterns, there are rhythms, there are clusters of significant experience, themes connected to time. I'd tried to locate that in some of my books, with what I called the 'topographical imperative', by which I mean there are certain neighbourhoods, certain streets, alleys, houses, which actively influence the lives and characters of people who live there. It is not a subject which is taught at the universities or in schools, but it is one that interested me profoundly. I was asked two or three years ago to write a London biography, which was a study of that aspect, in part a study of that aspect of London's presence, where the forces of the city, the earth, the soil on which the city is based seem to have an indirect effect upon the people who lived there. Whether in a pattern of habitation, whether in a pattern of activity or whether in a pattern of accidents, crimes and so forth. So that aspect of experiential patterns is one of great interest to me.

*In The Great Fire of London the setting for Little Dorrit is set on fire. Would you suggest that actually these patterns and the past which holds them are at some point completely useless and should be destroyed because they become barriers for understanding?*

Yes, I see what you mean. I think that was just the ending of that particular novel, I don't think I would draw any great conclusions from it myself. That was actually the first novel I ever wrote. And in certain aspects it's slightly naïve. I will only say in its defense it carries in it all the seeds of the later novels which I've written. It's a novel preoccupied with the layers of times, you know, preoccupied with the nature of the city, whether invented by Dickens or

whether invented by me. And those ideas, those attitudes, those preoccupations have continued ever since. For the ending of that novel, it was simply a convenient way of concluding the narrative. I wouldn't leap to any metaphysical speculations about its purpose.

*I was wondering, if you were to draw a comparison between traditional, old literature and modernist and postmodernist literature, would you say that history, the past in general, had lost ground, or, on the contrary, that it had gained a certain profounder importance compared to the past?*

OK, if I gather your question correctly, you are asking whether history is losing its importance in a postmodern climate?

*Yes, exactly.*

Well, I don't think it is. I have never used the terms modernism or postmodernism because they mean very little to me as such, but in terms of historical consciousness history seems to be growing all the time. I don't want to speak personally, but when I wrote a book called *Hawksmoor*, in 1986, it was considered rather a joke to write a novel set both in the past and in the present. It was considered a conceit. But over the last twenty years there have been any number of historical fictions with one foot in the past and one foot in the present. It's become actually a genre of its own, and there are some novelists who are specialized in it completely. And in fact that transitional writing, if I can put it that way, between past and present, has also slipped into non-fiction, and some historical narratives and biographical narratives now make use of this device, confronting or transposing past and present. So as for its being a dead issue or a fading issue, I think it's becoming much more prominent in the literature of England.

*How did you start using this technique? Did you rely on theories of intertextuality or did you just start using it to see if it worked?*

I certainly didn't begin with theories in intertextuality because I know nothing about

them. I began writing just because I enjoyed it. And I chose these things because I wanted to explore them, there was no ulterior motive, no theoretical purpose behind my writing. I don't think there is any to this day. It would be very difficult for me to locate or identify any theoretical or literary explanation for what I do. I can only explain it in terms of what I have just tried to explain to you, the idea of 'cognate vision', the idea of London. I indeed legitimate old literature. It may be a way of resurrecting for example Milton, Chaucer but I don't have any apologies for that. I'm only interested in doing that and nothing else.

*All your novels are extremely sensitive. Between the lines I feel some kind of regret, not only for the present but for everything, and this especially in English Music and in The House of Doctor Dee. Does this regret focus on anything in particular or is it just a mood to be conveyed?*

Well, I don't have any deep secrets to reveal, and certainly it was conceived in that spirit. It was written at a time, I suppose you might say, of mental torment in my life, or whatever phrase you want to use for it, so it might be that my state of mind enters the book in a subtle way. I was really interested in trying to draw the strange figure of Doctor Dee. Necromancy has always interested me ever since I was a student. He was one of the figures that always remain in the back of my mind, and sometimes in the front of my mind, as when I was writing it. So I also wanted to try to bring to life that particular London. Whatever the secret meaning, whatever the mood that book caused, of course, I have no control of it. My conscious effort was to recreate 16<sup>th</sup> century London, and 20<sup>th</sup> century London, and see them as mirror images of each other.

*You say that when you try to write your novels you don't have a particular technique, literary technique in mind, you just try to write what you feel. My question is, have you ever been tempted to guide your work and your creation according to some technique used in modern literature?*

No, I never made that attempt. I've never relied upon theories, as I tried to explain before. And I certainly don't subscribe to any modern literary theory. I certainly wouldn't want to feel that my work embodied any modern literary theory. That would be far from my point. In terms of writing it just comes, it emerges from the pen and almost instinctively. I have very little conscious control of what I'm doing and, when I'm re-reading it, it often seems to me to be the work of someone else or something I don't remember doing. And that happens in both biography and fiction. I know the work is going well when that effect occurs, when the words seem to spring unimpeded from the words which came before them. So my role in the process is that of a person who allows reactions to take place. In that sense I don't have any control of what I'm doing, to such an extent that it is quite impossible for me to fulfil any theoretical expectation whatsoever.

*When reading your novels, would you recommend that we should not take into account any literary technique we might identify in your work and just read and try to feel it, or should we look for a more technical side and try to capture some literary technique?*

Well, that's entirely up to you. Any approach is reasonable, there are no laws about this, there are no laws about reading, just as there are no laws about writing. If it's more appropriate to you, and more fulfilling, to discover literary theory within it, that's fine. There's no reason why it should not be there despite the fact I don't have anything to do with it. If the narrative is written in that way, that's absolutely fine with me. Some readers just read them for the story, and that's fine with me too. Other people read them just for the historical consciousness which they evoke, and that's fine again. Any kind of reading is good as long as it's reading.

*Some of your characters, such as Nicholas Dyer, appeal to occultism in order to communicate with the past, with the spirit of the dead. Does it come from any literary influence or is it a passion of yours for*

*knowledge beyond reason, beyond logic?*

Yes, the hidden knowledge seems to be part of many of my novels. In real life, this does not concern me a great deal. But in my fiction it seems to concern me a lot. I don't have any explanation for that. I think it has to do with the sense that... let me put it this way: you can probably divide human kind into two categories, those who are secular and those who are religious. And I prefer to write religious or spiritual fiction rather than secular fiction. The means of doing that are various, of course. My own way is to illuminate the passage of time as it were, to celebrate the sacredness of time and the passage of time. So, in that sense, you are right to divine the presence of a knowledge of the dead within those books.

*Your work seems to be very carefully worked. Does this come easily?*

Do the words come easily?

*You convey messages between the lines, like a cry for beauty. You are trying to express everything in the most beautiful way possible. You use hyperbole a lot.*

That's certainly possible, I wouldn't put it that way myself, but I'm sure you're right to draw those conclusions. I began life really as a poet. My first published volumes were all poetry. There were some three or four of them before I was in my thirties, so I think the aspirations of the poet, the dreams of the poet if you like, the knowledge of the poet, inform the fiction in ways I really can't begin to understand. Certainly I think of prose as a way of representing beauty. So, in a sense I don't think I ever left poetry behind. It sort of migrated into my prose.

*How do you see the future of literature? Is the vision in The Plato Papers your own vision on the future of literature?*

No, not really. I can't remember what the vision was in *The Plato Papers*, but I'm sure it will survive. There were many prophecies, I think, at the end of last century that literature was dead, books were becoming dispensable; in fact the opposite seems to be the case. Now more books are being read; there are more

bookshops in London now than in the past, many more readers of books. So I think, in terms of survival, the future of literature is very good, I can't see any diminished interest or enthusiasm for these pursuits.

*Talking about today's literature, are there any sides of it that you would change in order for it to become more valuable?*

Well, I don't read any contemporary literature, I have to admit. I don't read any fiction. I read occasionally biographies and histories, but I really don't have any judgment about those matters, because I'm completely ill informed about contemporary fiction. I haven't read a novel in ten, fifteen years.

*In the novel The Plato Papers you show how past and present can deconstruct each other. Do you think that cultural epochs can carry out dialogues with one another or they are just deconstructing one another?*

That's a very difficult question to answer. I presume the dialogue is taking place. I can't remember the specific details of *The Plato Papers* now, but in general, in my books I've tried to say that there is a dialogue between past and present; sometimes they communicate with each other, sometimes they understand each other and sometimes they don't. There were times, for example, when history seemed to come to an end in some of the books, but I'd call it dialogue rather than deconstruction, if that is what you meant.

*In historical metafiction, do the books about the past have any claim to truth, even if it is a very limited truth?*

No, they have no claim to truth as such, but they might have in biographies or other studies. The concept of truth in this context is a very elusive one. I wouldn't claim my biographies of Blake, Dickens or More were true any more than the fictions about Hawksmoor and Milton are true. They are all fictive, they are made up of language, a language that lies, a language that is incapable of telling the truth. So, for example, that's why I never see much difference myself between fiction and biography.

Sometimes I'm asked which I prefer or which I think highly of, and in truth I don't see any real distinction between these activities. It is like asking a composer whether he prefers symphony to opus. Music is music, writing is writing, all forms of writing are similar. So for me the act of writing a novel is no different from the act of writing a biography or a historical study. The same principles apply and the same effects are engineered. To answer your question, the truth, whatever it is, doesn't really enter into it.

*In reading The Plato Papers I found the glossary to be absolutely fascinating, and I was wondering if you ever considered turning it into a dictionary or perhaps writing a book for children, in which you could play upon words, something like Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. I found it absolutely fascinating and I wondered why you hadn't continued with it in the novel.*

I see what you mean. I didn't continue with it because I ran out of words I could use. I went to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Concise version, not the twenty volumes, looking for words which could be used in that way, and I came to the end, that's why I didn't do it any more. I don't think I would do a book as such, but it might be quite an interesting enterprise. It will be for children to analyze the matter.

*When you write your novels, what is more important to you: the story, the characters you write about or the language you use and how you write every sentence?*

Well I'm interested in all those things. There's no priority given to plot or character. If there is any priority at all, it has to be given to language itself, the way it is written, the way it comes out. The language creates the characters and the language creates the plots. And that might sound very silly, but, in the case of many novels I written, I didn't know what was going to happen next until the language told me what was going to happen. There are cases of course where you sketch out important details of the plots just as a sort of vision in your head, but the actual chapter-by-chapter work, the narrative,

is almost always decided by the flow of the language, and sometimes characters emerge almost by accident when you don't expect them to. A sudden turn of phrase or a sudden description will bring a character to life, and that character will enter the narrative and change the narrative, so you really do rely upon writing itself. I made that point earlier, that writing is writing, and the act of writing, the experience of writing is absolutely essential to the creation of any book, fiction or non-fiction.

*You said earlier that sometimes you sketched out the plot in your head. Has it ever occurred to you might end up somewhere far away from what you originally hoped for? Does this ever occur?*

Oh, yes, that happens all the time. In fact I would say it happens continually. It wouldn't happen, of course, in biographies as such, where the character is real, so you can't mess around that much with it. But in fiction it continually happens: a change of pen, a change of character, a change in the scene will materially affect the course of the narrative and you can end up with quite a different book.

*Earlier you said that words simply flowed from your pen, and, related to Hawksmoor, I have a question. Was it difficult to write in the language of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?*

No it wasn't difficult after a while, it required a certain amount of practice. What I did was sit down in the reading room of the British Library, which was then housed in the British Museum, and read every book I got my hands on from that period, which was roughly, I think, 1710-1720. It didn't matter what the book was. It could be a treaty of mushrooms, it could be a book about clothes, spells, I just had to soak in, soak out, I should say, the diction, the vocabulary, the rhythm of the words, the tone, and I had to do it to such an extent that I would be able to write 18<sup>th</sup> century English as fluently as I wrote 20<sup>th</sup> century English. And after some months that became possible, and then once again, as in so many other cases, the flow of words created the reality. I found it by far the best

way, for example, to introduce the readers to the historical period, to the historical context, instead of starting, like some historical novels, from clothes, buildings etc. I began just with the language, and I found that, by recreating that language, I was able to recreate the period with which I was concerned so it had more authenticity, it had... Well, the reader was drawn into it in ways which are quite uncommon in historical fiction. So in that sense it was the same process as I've described before, the language coming first and leading everybody forward.

*In the poem entitled "among school children" you speak in the form of a lesson about some of the obsessions of mankind, and I quote: "What do these words mean? (a) love-cries (b) quantum (c) unemployed". My question is: do you think that we are offered, even forced into the main co-ordinates of our experience? Are we subjected to these patterns of experience and these obsessions from an early age? Can they be communicated or should they be transgressed?*

I find it very difficult to answer that question. You're talking about a poem which was written many years ago and which I can hardly remember.

*The poem discusses some of the main obsessions of mankind: love, quantum theory, unemployment, and some aspects of life. Do you think that these coordinates of experience, these obsessions are forced on us from an early age? Can they be communicated or should they be transgressed?*

Well, I just don't know the answer to that. I'm sure that they can be communicated. I don't know whether they should be transgressed or not. I never thought of it.

*Is there a symbol, a particular symbol in your novels which you feel more attached to? I think London appears in all your novels as an incomprehensible symbol. Are there any other symbols?*

I don't know if you could call London a symbol as such. It is the landscape of the fiction. A symbol, no, I don't think there is one symbol, you know, I can't think of any. In any one book there will be a sort of trail of images which are suitable only for that one book. Again, I can't really tell which is which. As for symbols, no, I don't believe so, but of course they may be there. It is for other people, not really for me, to pick them up. I probably wouldn't see them if they were put in front of me.

*How about a message? Is there a particular message that you are trying to send us?*

No, there is no message as such. Only perhaps a mood, an aspiration, a susceptibility to the past, but no message. It would be wrong to impose a message on people. It would probably be misunderstood, and I don't see the point of messages. If you awaken the consciousness of people, if you allow them to feel the presence of other forces around them, if you make them aware of their past, the past of their country, the past of their area, if you convince them of the ethics of the past times, and if you convince them of the persistence of past times, that in itself is probably enough for any writer to do.

The MA Centre for Contemporary Literature in Translation, founded by Prof. Dr. Lidia Vianu at the Bucharest University, facilitated this interview with the British writer Peter Ackroyd, in a videoconference with Lidia Vianu's students (PhD, MA, second year majors), organized at the British Council (Bucharest-London) on May 9, 2006.

Part 2 of this interview will appear in the next issue of the *Messenger*.

---

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

### *Symbolism: An International Journal of Critical Aesthetics, Volume 5.*

Ed. Rüdiger Ahrens. New York: AMS Press, 2005. xxvi + 472pp.

Patrick Parrinder (Reading, UK)

---

The main feature of volume 5 of *Symbolism* is a symposium on Intertextuality, edited by Susana Onega with a distinguished list of American, British and European contributors. The word “intertextuality” was finally added to the online edition of the *OED* in 1997, as we learn from Adolphe Haberer’s essay here; and it is Haberer, fittingly, who both voices and triumphantly dispels the reader’s doubts as to whether intertextuality remains a relevant critical issue. The term was coined by Julia Kristeva in a 1966 article introducing Mikhail Bakhtin’s work to a French readership, giving rise to a suspicion that it may be a misreading of Bakhtin’s “dialogism”. More to the point, however, the concept of intertextuality must be readily distinguishable both from the traditional field of influence studies, and from the postmodern variant by which influence studies is turned on its head—as in the fictional research project on T. S. Eliot’s influence on Shakespeare in David Lodge’s *Small World*. The essays in *Symbolism* tend to bear out José Ángel García Landa’s contention, in an illuminating discussion of Nabokov in this volume, that “intertextual relationships are so varied that they seem to defy systematization” (268). At the same time, Haberer and other contributors suggest that significant intertextuality is, first and foremost, something unexpected, a textual effect that seems beyond the author’s control and is capable of surprising the reader. To adapt a dictum of G. K. Chesterton, the intertextualist should be capable of saying the very things that would make an author jump out of his boots.

The contributors to this volume all subscribe to the genealogy of intertextual theory which is set out by Susana Onega in her Introduction. After Kristeva, the concept was refined by Barthes, Genette, Riffaterre, and others, but it had also been anticipated by the American New Critics and, in particular, by T. S. Eliot in some of his most famous pronouncements. Eliot’s “im-personal” theory of poetic creation looks at the poet as reader as well as writer, and at the poet’s

mind as something quite different from the self-conscious critical mind. Intertextual theorists, however, are likely to be concerned not merely with poets and poetry but with readers and discourse in general, as is suggested by a wonderful quotation of Haberer’s from the great essayist Montaigne: “we are for ever inter-glossing each other” (44).

Haberer’s aim is to define what he calls an “intertextual effect” which has little or nothing to do with knowledge and is not, therefore, confined to scholarly or erudite reading. This is a tall order for a scholarly author, perhaps: I doubt if Haberer has actually succeeded in laying his erudition aside, and some of his essay’s best moments occur when it is conspicuously on display. For example, he observes that the English translation of Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” cannot fail to lose a crucial nuance, since it was originally published as “La Mort de l’Auteur” and not, as would be conventional in French, “La Mort de l’auteur”. Translation is one area in which the unexpectedness of intertextual effects is frequently made manifest. Kristeva, we learn, had second thoughts about the term “intertextuality”, and wanted to call it “transposition” instead.

Another possible replacement term, found in a letter of Gerald Manley Hopkins quoted here by J. Hillis Miller, is “underthought”. In any “lyric passage of the tragic poets”, Hopkins wrote, we can usually find the “overthought”—“that which everybody, [even] editors, see”—and the “underthought”, “conveyed chiefly in the choice of metaphors etc. used and often only half realised by the poet himself” (142). Hopkins’s focus on the choice of metaphors might suggest that, if one pole of intertextuality is the specific citation or echoing of an earlier text, another pole is that of a generalised rhetoric, or the whole shared texture of conscious and unconscious figures of speech which constitute expressive language. This insight is further pursued in Jean Michel Ganteau’s essay on what is, in effect, the

use of a neo-baroque rhetoric by two current novelists, Peter Ackroyd and Jeanette Winterson. It could be objected that the neo-baroque element in such writers is not genuinely (or positively) intertextual, simply because it is so deliberately and artfully constructed. The notion of a bad intertextuality is outlined in a second essay on contemporary fiction, where Christian Gutleben relentlessly exposes the superficiality and opportunism of retro-Victorian novels by Byatt, Waters, A. N. Wilson, and others.

If some kinds of intertextual effect may be undesirable, Jürgen Schlaeger's essay reminds us that eighteenth-century fictional realism was founded on an (at least partial) denial of intertextuality. Novels as opposed to romances appealed to their readers by claiming to tell new stories, just as we would not bother to buy today's newspaper if we thought it merely a rewriting of yesterday's. (It is, of course, not the "overthought" but Hopkins's "underthought" which undermines the freshness to which newspapers and novels lay claim.) Hillis Miller is inspired by Hopkins's term to seek out what he calls "ghost effects" in classic realist novels by George Eliot, Hardy, and Henry James. For example, he focuses on the word "incalculably" in the last paragraph of *Middlemarch*: "the effect of [Dorothea's] being on those around her was incalculably diffusive". "Incalculably" here is more than just a synonym for "subtly" or "infinitely". It negates Eliot's customary air of narrative certainty, opening up the fiction to modes of intertextuality which may be outside the author's control. This might be compared to what Valentine Cunningham finds in a teasing analysis of Ted Hughes's *Tales from Ovid*, though Cunningham's emphasis is explicitly biographical and devoted to what he calls Hughes's "Plathizings of Ovid". Hughes himself, I assume, would have been upset and possibly exasperated by this analysis, just as George Eliot, if she could read Hillis Miller, might wish she had sounded a little less vague about Dorothea's sympathetic influence.

Two substantial essays in this volume, by Catherine Belsey and Patricia Waugh, bring intertextuality to bear on contemporary theoretical discourse. Belsey looks at the curious intermixtures of the Kantian sublime and Lacan's post-Freudian account of sublimation in the post-modern theorising of Jean François Lyotard and

Slavoj Žižek. Her aim is to advocate a return to the Lacanian texts, which set out an idea of sublimation pointing towards the beautiful rather than towards Kant's quasi-theological conception. This is a persuasive argument pressed too far at one point, where Belsey claims that the words "sublime" and "sublimation" have a different etymology. This would be true in German—since Freud's *Sublimierung* bears no obvious relationship to Kant's *Erhabene*—but there is no etymological separation between the two words in English and French, since both derive from the Latin *sub limen*. All we can say is that they come to us by different metaphorical paths: the "sublime" belongs to aesthetics while "sublimation" before Freud was a familiar term in chemistry.

Patricia Waugh's essay sets out to uncover an "unholy alliance" between postmodernism, which denies any special status to scientific language, and current scientific popularisation which is riddled with unexamined fictions and metaphors drawn from fields such as systems analysis. For example, the uncritical repetition of the idea of a "genetic code" undermines our attempts to distinguish between genuine scientific theory and pseudo-theories like "Intelligent Design". Once again, we may say that Waugh's target is bad or uncontrolled intertextuality. Returning to Kristeva, and to Onega's account of her work, the idea of intertextuality was initially meant to introduce an element of play, or creative confusion, into the reductive and deterministic textual models of structuralist poetics. But intertextuality is ultimately circular, imprisoning human agents within a realm which, however capacious, remains textual in character. Doubtless it once seemed liberating for a commentator such as Ihab Hassan to refer to "the intertextuality of all life", but Waugh seems to interpret intertextuality as a literary genie which the critic should always be careful to return to its bottle.

Two other essays remain to be mentioned: Linda Hutcheon's discussion of the longevity of cultural stereotypes, and Daniela Carpi's study of the reflections of Alfred Adler's thought in the neglected novels of Nigel Dennis. For Carpi, quoting Cesare Segre, intertextuality "haloes the second text with the first" (298), an effect close to, though not identical with, the notion of influence-in-two-directions with which this review started. The unexpected enters Carpi's

essay in the form of a fascinating conjunction between a half-forgotten novel (Dennis's *Cards of Identity*) and a heretical and unfashionable psychoanalyst. Taken as a whole, *Symbolism* has some other unexpected and serendipitous aspects, including those produced by the accidents of proofreading. Most memorably, Rüdiger Ahrens on page xvii of his Foreword offers to summarize Valentine Cunningham's essay on Ted Hughes's "*Tales from Oxford*". It is, of course, Cunningham, not Hughes, who belongs with the dreaming spires. But wait: in the section of *Symbolism* devoted to general essays there is an intriguing discussion by Frédéric Regard of Cardinal Newman's autobiography. Newman had been lampooned by Charles Kingsley as a

spiritual fraud and an interloper during his time in Anglican Oxford. The Cardinal's self-defence included a wonderful excursus debating whether or not, as rector of Littlemore two or three miles away, he could be said to have been living in Oxford in 1844: the outer truth, which should be established by a study of parish boundaries, had no relevance to the inner reality about which Kingsley had so crudely pontificated. If this both is and is not a tale from Oxford, it is also true that Ted Hughes (according to Cunningham) both has and has not turned Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into an *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, in other words a tale from Oxford (or not from Oxford). But it is time this intertextual genie was put back in its bottle.

---

**Paul Dawson, *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*,  
London and New York: Routledge, 2005.**

*José Antonio Álvarez Amorós (Alicante, Spain)*

---

Creative Writing has consistently maintained vexed relationships with the university, which have usually ranged from professed incompatibility on grounds of wide disparity of purpose to willing colonisation as a means to inject new life into the languishing field of literary studies. From an academic perspective, Creative Writing has been looked down on as a *soft* option, lacking the scientific and methodological rigour which would otherwise make it worth ranking among tidier disciplines such as literary history or literary theory and criticism. But similar qualms are also felt by many writers, for whom the absorption of Creative Writing by the academy might lead to an excessive institutionalisation of literary culture and result in the imposition of uniform creative standards to the detriment of a *freelance* search for genuine originality. The key issue is, of course, whether the university is the right place for aspiring poets or novelists to develop their craft under the supervision of more experienced fellow practitioners, who are inevitably involved in formal seminar sessions, curricula, syllabuses, assessment, bestowal of degrees, and so on – i.e. in the red tape of an educational system that tends to reproduce itself with little or no variation as to the fundamentals.

In this context, Paul Dawson's book is a well-researched and stimulating attempt to answer the host of questions that suggest themselves when

trying to find the exact location of Creative Writing within the contemporary academy in the specific field of literary studies. As clearly hinted at in the collocation of the title, the main object of this book is to propose a suitable place and a productive role for Creative Writing in the post-Theory university, where the New Humanities rule and conventional literary studies have been relegated to a residual position, if not totally effaced from official curricula. This basic aim is complemented by the treatment of a number of relevant side issues such as the role to be fulfilled by Creative Writing programmes in the formation of the writer as a public intellectual, the advisable conceptualisation of Creative Writing as a discipline made up of "a body of knowledge and a set of educational techniques for imparting this knowledge" (2), the consideration of its origin and historical development as a response to the permanent crisis of English studies, the assessment of how the onset of the enterprise university has affected the teaching of traditional humanities, and, most importantly, the clarification of both the genetic and present correlations between literary theory, literary criticism, and Creative Writing, or, in other words, between the academics and the writers – the respective occupants of the highbrow ivory tower and the bohemian garret, two spatial tropes aptly linked in the subtitle of the introduction to Dawson's

volume and discussed at some length in its closing section.

Consistent with the above set of purposes, *Creative Writing and the New Humanities* exhibits two main emphases, one straddling past and present, and the other pointing to the future. First, it intends to describe Creative Writing as an integrated discipline with intellectual and historical origins, a poetics and methodology of its own, and a definite mission within the academy; second, it makes proposals as to the most satisfactory future configuration for this discipline, which, in the author's view, entails adopting aims and methods of the New Humanities and guiding the production of literary texts along the lines of what we could broadly call an anti-liberal political awareness. This twofold emphasis accounts for the existence in this book of "cold" and "hot" chapters, i.e. chapters predominantly descriptive and informative, and chapters in which the author lays his cards on the table and, in the manner of a white paper, envisages a future for Creative Writing and argues his proposal with reference to the fast-changing landscape of literary studies, steadily sliding towards the domain of Cultural Studies after a protracted experience with Theory. Basically "cold" are chapters 1, 2, and 3, whereas "hot" are chapters 5 and 6, as well as the conclusions tailpiece. Chapter 4 explores the development of Creative Writing in Australia and marks, to my mind, an inflection in the author's personal involvement for two reasons: first, because he was an Australian citizen and poet working in an Australian university at the time his book was published; and second, because, contrary to what happened in the US, the rise and growth of Creative Writing programmes in Australian institutions of tertiary education took place while Theory – rather than New Criticism or Practical Criticism – was the shaping force of literary studies. Of course, the animating principle behind the book as a whole is the same, since what I have termed "cold" chapters are just preparatory steps to justify the author's own proposals and to present them, quite convincingly, as the inevitable sequel of a historical movement.

Apart from raising general issues about the nature, origin, and role of Creative Writing to be dealt with in later chapters, the introduction to this volume revolves around two crucial questions – "*can writing be taught? And ... should it be taught?*" (1) – which, depending on whether they

are answered in the affirmative or in the negative, will draw different profiles for Creative Writing or even make it altogether impracticable as an academic discipline. To avoid a simplistic treatment of these questions and their answers, Dawson engages in a far-ranging research which mainly yields the first three chapters of his book. In chapter 1 "From Imagination to Creativity," he studies the interplay of these two notions and their evolution from the Renaissance to contemporary times through crucial periods such as the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Emphasis is laid on the gradual emergence of the faculty of creativity as a substitute for that of imagination "in the common parlance of literary criticism" (22), a move which would later facilitate the advent of Creative Writing as a typically twentieth-century academic venture. What turns this discipline into a viable project is the idea of the *democratisation* of creative powers and creative genius, that is to say, the conviction that creativity is everyman's gift and can be manifested to the highest degree if correctly stimulated by education and practice.

After clarifying the genesis of the term *creativity* and how *creative* collocated with *writing* to designate a pedagogical enterprise rather than forming a mere synonym for literature, Dawson's discussion becomes more specific in chapter 2 "Disciplinary Origins," which amounts to a veritable history of Creative Writing as an academic discipline, a history unassumingly characterised as the mere "location of various elements of contemporary Creative Writing theory and pedagogy in their original institutional contexts" (50). For Dawson, contemporary Creative Writing is the interactive result of four "institutional trajectories," namely "*creative self-expression, literacy, craft, and reading from the inside*" (49). When the pedagogy of writing is dominated by the idea of self-expression, the focus is not on competent composition, let alone on the publishable quality of the finished product, but rather on the capacity of writing to liberate the creative spirit or serve as a therapeutic tool. This emphasis on a broader educational concern turns self-expressive writing into a high school strategy, though self-expression is also a component of the university teaching of Creative Writing which materialises in persistently inciting the aspirant to find a unique, individual creative voice. Literacy and craft have also been

instrumental in the constitution of Creative Writing through, respectively, classes on the technique of advanced composition in English for the professional writer, though not necessarily of the literary kind, and the promotion of the Modernist figure of the skilled author-craftsman, for whom hard work and cunning count more than quasi-divine inspiration. Dawson's exploration of the literacy component leads him to conclude that, all in all, Creative Writing owes a greater debt to the tradition of literary criticism and poetics deeply ingrained in English studies than to the rhetorical strain of composition workshops. Finally, what Dawson calls "reading from the inside" is closely associated with the development of the pioneering University of Iowa Writing Programme and the effect of Norman Foerster taking charge of it in 1930. His basic endeavour was to use Creative Writing as an ally to dislodge historicism and scholarship from the stronghold of literary studies and substitute critical appreciation for them. Temporally and intellectually his efforts coincided with the rise of New Criticism, and the attending technique of close reading greatly contributed to the modern configuration of the Writers' Workshop, where a small group of readers and/or writers overhaul exemplary texts—whether canonical or produced by themselves—in order to improve their proficiency in the craft. Though Creative Writing was originally an instrument of criticism in its attempt to take over from scholarship, the tables were gradually turned and it soon became an independent discipline leading to a degree of its own.

For this process to be readily understood, in chapter 3 ("Workshop Poetics"), Dawson points out the similarities and alleged differences between the close reading operations performed by critics and writers in their respective seminars only to draw the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that "what enables the writing workshop to function is not a theory of writing, but a theory of reading..." (88). In this connection, three common strategies shaping the poetics of the Writers' Workshop and derived from the reading strategies of literary studies are analysed, viz. *reading as a writer*; *show, don't tell*; and *discovering a voice*. We read as writers when we emphasise the idea of *choice* and, along with it, the idea of the literary text as a constructive process rather than a static, finished product. Yet Dawson seems reluctant to widen

the gap between a critic's reading and a writer's since both seem fairly compatible, especially when the former adopts a formalistic stance. The advice of *show, don't tell*—i.e. use concrete detail in your reporting rather than cover terms that betray your own interpretation—is also a dogma of the poetics of the Writers' Workshop, whose genealogy can be traced back to the criticism of the novel advocated by Henry James and his followers, for whom the Master's injunction "Dramatize, dramatize!" acquired programmatic value. The strategy of *discovering a voice*, for its part, forms the hub of a complex conceptual network. As mentioned above, it is connected with the idea of self-expression as an educational tool, but also with the formalistic-narratological concept of voice and its concomitant of focalization or point of view. From the angle of self-expression, moreover, the notion of a personal voice is associated with that of authorship, and both have sustained criticism as solipsistic fallacies that coax students into believing that writers exist as individual essences in isolation from fellow practitioners or society at large.

Chapter 4 ("Creative Writing in Australia") implies an obvious change of focus and, in my view, a larger personal involvement and a metaphorical rise in the temperature of discussion. After an engaging set of general considerations about the demise of New Criticism, its substitution by Theory in the early 1970s, and the new role of Creative Writing as a refuge against the increasing technical obscurity and anti-humanism of Theory, Dawson reviews the state of English studies in Australia, the emergence of a "New" Australian literature as from the late 1960s, which boosted the development of Creative Writing programmes, and the distribution of such programmes in a binary educational model that must cater for those seeking vocational and academic instruction at Colleges of Advanced Education and universities, respectively. In this context, and owing to an important phase lag, Australian Creative Writing programmes grew against a background of Theory and were responsive to its methods and concerns instead of regarding it as a threat to literary culture.

Having taken several strides backwards to gather momentum, Dawson seems prepared now to outline the contours of a new Creative Writing that will answer the challenges posed by the enterprise university and the consolidation of the New Humanities as an interdisciplinary

replacement of liberal English studies. In this regard, chapter 5 – devoted to “Negotiating Theory” – surveys the cooperative dovetailing of Creative Writing and Theory, after the former has overcome its mistrust of the destructiveness of the latter and seems ready to redefine itself and supersede its “theoretical naivety” (161) by drawing on the instrumental wealth offered by the latest trends in literary studies. According to Dawson, the negotiation of Theory by Creative Writing can follow either the *integration*, the *avant-garde*, or the *political* model. Viewed with some suspicion, the first one assumes the existence of “a fundamental conflict between writers and critics over the nature of literature” (161) and ultimately involves a kind of “domestication of the insights of Theory” (163) by old-fashioned writing strategies, which may lead to the denaturalisation of both components rather than to a successful integration. The *avant-garde* model implies just the contrary, i.e. the colonisation of writing by Theory and the injection of heavy doses of experimentalism into the workshop text as a consequence of the high innovative potential exhibited by contemporary Theory, being the hybrid genre of fictocriticism a case in point. The political model, for its part, emerges to compensate for the accusation of social and political passivity levelled against poststructuralist reading methods, which inexorably lead to intransitive literary experiments. It aims to reform the Writers’ Workshop into “a site of political contestation” (172), eradicating the myth of individual, isolated creativity and collaborating with Cultural Studies to apprise aspiring authors of the complex web of power relations involved in the activities of writing and publishing.

To stimulate the cooperation of Creative Writing and Theory is not, however, the exact aim of Dawson’s book. In chapter 6 “What Is a Literary Intellectual?,” he goes one step further and tries to find a place for Creative Writing within the enterprise university model in the post-Theory age of the New Humanities. To achieve this aim, Dawson takes several moves. First, he characterises the New Humanities as an attempt to go beyond the bounds of Theory, superseding its *speculative* nature, and establishing a practical dialogue between the academy and the external world on the basis of an anti-liberal political activism where group identity overrides individual

selfhood, and social change becomes a specific end; second, he endows literary criticism with the role of political denunciation rather than mere aesthetic description and assessment, with which he begins to shape his own idea of the *public intellectual* as an organic composite of (creative) writer and oppositional critic who will “straddle the academic world and the public sphere” (195) and carry the burden of socially responsible authorship in the context of the New Humanities; and third, he argues his conviction that Creative Writing must play a key role in bridging the gap between the traditional, semi-private university world and the social and political arena of general citizenry. In practical terms, therefore, the paradigm of the New Humanities public intellectual would be a member of the academy who writes *engagé* poems, has a weekly column in a quality paper, publishes research on the relationships between the living conditions of, say, native Americans and their oral literature, appears regularly on TV discussion panels, is a Greenpeace official and, as such, has been arrested several times for demonstrating in the nude against wearing animal fur. This description may sound parodic, but who can vouch for the fact that it does not fit an actual person?

The final part of Dawson’s book “Conclusions: Towards a Sociological Poetics” follows quite naturally from the proposals made in chapter 6 and underlines the basic theses maintained by its author. Apart from reasserting his belief that Creative Writing is a full-blown academic discipline rather than “a formal system of literary patronage and apprenticeship” (205), a component of literary studies developed as a reaction to the ongoing crisis of English, and an institutional site for writers to partake of the authority which had only been accorded to critics in the past, Dawson recommends that the principles of oppositional criticism and Cultural Studies must inform the teaching of writing so as to turn students into responsible public intellectuals, not only alive to the technicalities of craft but also to the socio-political effect of choosing one content or another, an act which – contrary to the liberal tradition of writing apprenticeship – must also be subjected to scrutiny and judgement in the new pedagogical format of the Writers’ Workshop. To my mind, however, Dawson’s most original move in his conclusions is to reformulate the basic strategies of a conventional poetics of writing – *reading as*

a writer; show, don't tell; and discovering a voice – in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's sociology of discourse as spelled out in his classic, mid-1930s essay "Discourse in the Novel," where he articulates a far-reaching pragmatic view of language that sees words and texts not as isolated formal artifacts, but as penetrated rather by social resonances rendering them meaningless outside a concrete context of use.

At the outset, I rated Dawson's book as "well-researched and stimulating." Let me add that it meets all the requisites of academic work in biblio-graphic coverage, docu-mentation, and assessment of previous scholarship – no wonder its origin lies in a doctoral thesis. Materially, moreover, it is an almost spotless piece of work, where misprints are extremely rare – e.g. "heirarchy" (204) – and only minor uncertainties in the handling of Latin terms – e.g. "*tabula rasae*" (132) – reminds one of the harms implicit in scrapping classical languages from secondary and tertiary education. Apart from these infrastructural assets, *Creative Writing and the New Humanities* seems remarkable to me for three general attributes. First, its tactical eclecticism resulting from the author's express will to combine in his proposal principles and methods taken from a variety of intellectual sources and temporal stages which might prima facie seem incompatible; hence his claim that he wishes to develop "a poetics which can be applied to all student work, from confessional poems to discontinuous narratives ... [a] poetics which engages with questions of literary quality and aesthetic power while still remain-ing committed to the oppositional criticism of the New Humanities" (204). Though this is in itself a commendable purpose, one cannot evade the feeling that Dawson is firing in all directions so as to make sure he will hit the target. Second, the virtual status of this book as a primer of twentieth-century literary theory on account of the scope and wealth of its commentary on such issues, consistent with the author's attempt to throw into relief the correlations between literary theory and criticism and the pedagogy of writing. Third, and above all, Dawson's compulsion to exemplify and discuss American, British, and Australian programmes of Creative Writing and Writers' Work-shops in their institutional settings, a compulsion that roots his theoretical surmises and model descriptions in hard reality, thus adding

a useful informative dimension to a basically academic enterprise.

Other points, however, could be regarded less sympathetically. For instance, I miss a more extensive discussion of the crucial concepts of *literature* and, especially, of *literary quality*, which, given the topic of the book, should not be silently circumvented. Consensual assumptions of these concepts are employed all along, probably because the author does not wish to open more fronts to his inquiry, though he acknowledges that all is not well when he places the word *quality* in inverted commas (116) and sketches a non-substantial, merely operative definition of *literature* as "what fiction or poetry editors accept for publication, what gets shelved in those sections in bookshops, what is reviewed in those categories in newspapers and magazines..." (203). A book of this type is not obviously the place to solve such thorny questions, but one misses at least an explicit recognition that to conceive of literature or literary quality one way or another surely has immense repercussions in the teaching of creative writing.

Rather more troubling is the political slant of Dawson's intent. Of late, the word *politics* as used in the field of literary studies has been stripped of its prismatic nature and we have been left with one facet only – that which identifies politics as a whole with an anti-liberal, leftish, or "politically correct" worldview. Thus *politics* – much in the same way as (*literary*) *theory* – has narrowed down its conceptual range and acquired a unilateral meaning. This undercurrent of anti-liberalism in the guise of "politics" is responsible for some of the most damaging statements in the book, e.g. "If Creative Writing is to negotiate a position within the New Humanities, perhaps the idea of complete artistic freedom for individual expression needs to be challenged..." (206). The authoritarian echoes of this declaration are massively qualified in the following paragraphs, but what Dawson's means here remains unequivocal – i.e. at some stage aspiring authors must be told what they should write about. As overt directions may be counter-productive, however, budding writers must be adroitly placed in such a position that encoding in their creative works a paradigm of, say, free individual choice and personal responsibility for it should be felt as a source of shame and moral anguish. In other words, a self-repressive instinct must be

developed as the most effective means to override individuality and act according to a collective ethos. Instating political views in Creative Writing pedagogy is, I think, a praiseworthy, even urgent initiative after many decades of formalistic instruction; but let them be instated in their full complexity and width, lest a crippled version of them should create narrow-minded activists

rather than integral public intellectuals.

But this is just personal comment, and does not directly bear upon the scholarly achievements of *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*. To me, it seems a splendid, innovative, honest book that, squarely placed on solid erudition, makes worthwhile proposals for the future of Creative Writing as an academic discipline.

---

**Pascale Drouet. *Le Vagabond dans l'Angleterre de Shakespeare, ou l'art de contrefaire à la ville et à la scène*. 320pp. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003.**

Gerald Porter (Vaasa, Finland)

Begging, a necessary occupation in any society that does not provide properly for its disadvantaged, has never developed a stable complement of signifiers, perhaps because beggars, like the present-day homeless and unemployed, do not form a cohesive social group. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries their ranks were often swelled by pedlars, ballad singers – and actors. The religious turbulence of the Reformation led to a suspicion of all travelling professions. As mendicant friars were suspected of fomenting revolution, so ballad sellers and pedlars were often charged with acting as transmitters of political messages. In 1597 an Act of Parliament was passed suppressing roving medieval minstrels. Occupations which had formerly been quite distinct became subsumed under the name of vagabond.

Pascale Drouet's book studies the vagabond from Shakespeare's birth until about 1650. She focuses particularly on the way the lives of musicians, mountebanks and travelling players intersected with those of the beggar and the petty thief at this time – and specifically with the way those lives were represented on the stage and in contemporary pamphlets and songs. Vagabonds were associated simultaneously with mutually conflicting qualities, envied for their independence and sexual conquests and at the same time despised for their thieving and for occupying the lowest end of the social scale. Above all, they became the type of the counterfeit, the impersonator and the double. As the truth-telling clown Touchstone says, 'The truest poetrie is the most feigning' (AYLI 3.3.16). Drouet argues that this was not simply a dramatic convention. As those challenging Shakespeare's sole authorship of the plays have constantly reiterated, duplicity was

an almost universal strategy for survival at the time. 'The Art of Cony-catching' asserted in 1592 that 'hee that cannot dissemble cannot live.' This was particularly true of the vast underclass described by Gamini Salgado in *The Elizabethan Underworld* (1977). As early as 1569, John Awdeley, probably influenced by typologies of vagabondage set up in German iconography, listed nineteen kinds of mendicant cheats that he had identified, from the whipjack impersonating a discharged sailor to the curtal and the abram man. The very abundance of terms used to describe the various kinds of cheating (many of them reminiscent of current internet scams) is a striking feature of the book, which includes an extensive glossary of words used of, and in many cases by, those on the margins. The inclusion of many words of thieves' cant is a reminder that the first specialized dictionaries of English varieties, made at this time, were not regional but social.

Drouet's book is concerned with the vagabond in social history, but she also discusses contemporary dramatic and popular representations in ways which owe much to Bakhtin and Foucault: coercion and punishment, doubling, corporal inscription, and of course the displacement of roles: the beggar-turned-king, the hedge-philosopher and the 'roaring girl.' As these themes suggest, her central preoccupation is with counterfeiting, both in the theatre and in the (reported) street practice of the time. Drouet emphasises that the deception practiced by the actor is the double of the 'fin matois' or trickster. This is seen in the double impersonation practised in *The Winter's Tale* (1611): Autolycus is a pedlar and ballad seller, an occupation that was considered in the Middle Ages to be synonymous with deception and falsehood (as Brueghel's is a

petty thief and a vagabond). However, like the actor who is playing the role, he earns his money through his skill at captivating his audience, not by begging: “he sings several tunes, faster than you’ll tell [count] money; he utters them as [if] he had eaten ballads, and all men’s ears grew to his tunes” (IV.iv.185-8). The striking image of eating and then regurgitating the songs emphasises the way such acts of ventriloquism (‘speaking through the stomach’) were associated with other acts of semi-magical skill - including the picking of pockets.

Life on the margins means being constantly in touch with what François Laroque calls the ‘green world’ of metamorphosis and renewal through nature that offers release from the constraints or injustices of society. This is, of course, strongly present in Shakespeare, who makes frequent dramatic use of the move from the court to the heath or greenwood, beyond the jurisdiction of the king. Drouet traces it in reverse through the fate of the rebel Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI*, who, while constantly demanding that ‘all the realm shall be in common’, is forced to seek food and water from a private estate, the significantly-named garden of Iden. In this way the play addresses contemporary issues of enclosure and dissent. Her discussion of the social outcast also includes Falstaff, undoubtedly a vagabond but hardly a beggar, emphasising his almost parodic involvement with the repressions and exclusions of Shakespeare’s time. Foucault’s world, in which ‘order’ is predicated on exile, imprisonment and mutilation, is also the world of the Elizabethan theatre: Drouet quotes Dover Wilson’s words, ‘we shall not fully understand Falstaff if we do

not allow for fear of the gallows as part of his dramatic make up.’

Drouet’s examples are drawn extensively from non-Shakespearean drama too, notably *Bartholomew Fair* and Dekker’s and Middleton’s *Roaring Girl*, where the disguise of the central character, Moll Cutpurse, who is cross-dressed for most of the play, challenges assumptions not only of gender but of class. It is hard to believe that the open claim in Richard Brome’s play *A Jovial Crew* that beggars could live as well as kings can ever have been more than a bitter mockery to homeless men and women hounded from parish to parish. They were so despised that, more than a century later, Adam Smith wrote of them as less than human because they lay outside the system of exchange. Such a representation of the margins inevitably interrogates the positions of the centre, and Drouet documents with Bakhtinian panache the parodic relation between destitution and centres of power at the time. In this inverted world, as Schelling put it, “brains are identified with roguery and innocence with folly.” Drouet concludes that later vagabond drama, like that of Brecht and Beckett, no longer seeks to divert and offer moral warnings. The subversive element remains, of course, but transformed: “it is more a question of enlisting the spectator’s sympathy than their diversion: because the beggars live in destitution and a state of hopelessness, they don’t succeed in warding off either their boredom or their mortality, but rather in revealing the absurdity of a human condition which conceals the threadbare rags of prosperity” (p. 317).

---

**Catherine Belsey, *Culture and the Real: Theorizing Cultural Criticism, New Accents*, Routledge, 2005. xv & 272 pp. ISBN- 0-415-25289-X.**

*Nic Panagopoulos (Athens, Greece)*

---

Following on from her much acclaimed *Critical Practice* (1980, 2002) and the more recent *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (2002), Catherine Belsey’s latest book continues its author’s deconstructive foray into the rapidly merging realms of literary criticism, critical theory, and cultural studies. To a reader unfamiliar with Belsey’s work, the abstract terms in the title of *Culture and the Real* suggest something of a philosophical treatise and, indeed, although the

theoretical approach is primarily Lacanian, it turns out that this is as much a book on ontology as it is on psychoanalysis, cultural theory, and history of art. Thus in proposing a new way of “theorizing cultural criticism”, Belsey draws from the work of a multitude of thinkers besides Lacan, such as Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Freud, Derrida, Barthes, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Judith Butler, Stanley Fish, and Slavoj Žižek, although admittedly most are used to counterpoise or bolster Lacan’s

concept of the “real”. Without doubt, Belsey is one of the most theoretically savvy and groundbreaking cultural critics working in the field today and if I take issue with her very interesting latest book, I only do so over its Lacanian bias. If I have misread her (or Lacan), I hope she will forgive me.

The author of *Culture and the Real* displays remarkable vigour in pursuing that most crucial and thorny of questions: “What is real?” as the title of the first chapter indicates. Belsey is thought-provoking in tracing the history of this concept from Kant to Hegel to Freud in order to pave the way for her reading of Lacan while at the same time disputing the usefulness of philosophy as a source of cultural theory due to what she sees as its prescriptiveness and essentialism. Thus, in the Idealism vs. Materialism debate which this book can be said to fruitfully participate in the postmodern, Belsey wisely refuses to adopt an either/or position, preferring instead a “relational account” of what it means to be human. Moreover, by rejecting the currently fashionable cultural determinism as merely the inverse of the old tyranny that used to go by the name of “human nature”, Belsey indicates how the aporias in the cultural script revealed by psychoanalytic practice point to the existence of something outside culture, thereby allowing for the possibility of resistance through destabilizing desire. This defining Other of culture is identified by Belsey as the Lacanian “real”, which together with the “symbolic” of language and the “imaginary” of spatial representation, make up the psychic structure of the cultural subject. Indeed, although the book does not assume prior knowledge of Lacanian theory, it does depend on the reader’s acquiring an understanding of it during the reading process – a process which is by no means unproblematic for a variety of reasons which I shall try to outline below.

Belsey’s express intention in *Culture and the Real* is to “unfold a single, sustained, narrative” (xiv) of the “pleasure of the text” (xii) as it relates to culture, and she does this most admirably, linking together not only diverse theories but also applying them to numerous cultural products besides writing such as the visual arts, sculpture, architecture, and film. Beginning from the Lacanian premise that the beautiful satisfies “by pointing to the lost real, while at the same time fencing off any possibility that we might come

too close to the Thing” (72), she argues that art, like culture as a whole, “is a place of desire” (86) for it takes place between the subject’s lack and a promised but ungraspable *jouissance*. This basic thesis is well supported by the analysis of the texts and therefore quite convincing overall. Indeed, although the book is intended to be more theoretical than hermeneutic, Belsey is arguably at her best when interpreting such works as John Simon’s memorial, Jan van Eyck’s *The Arnolfini Double Portrait*, and Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* in relation to Lacan’s idea of nature’s magic circle and his concept of the imaginary. And here may lie the secret of Lacanian theory and of psychoanalytic thought in general which, while often presenting itself as a privileged discourse bridging the gap between rational and creative thinking (and Lacan is a case in point), is arguably more useful as a hermeneutic tool for cultural phenomena than a strictly scientific system of thought. Although Belsey is wary of the trap of replacing one form of foundationalism with another, in the course of promoting a mind-body relativism characteristic of psychoanalytic thought, she appears to present Lacan’s theories as more objectively grounded than they arguably are. It is indicative that, whereas Belsey adopts a relativist position in most matters, she claims that, “The unconscious desire that appears in the structural place of that loss [of the real] is not...culturally relative, even though the succession of objects of desire we can *name* as able to make us happy are culturally defined” (32). Thus, in the postmodern interplay of narratives or the vying of different discourses for authority, one feels that Lacan is favoured to the detriment of other equally or potentially more useful theoretical approaches although, to be fair, this is not done haphazardly or without justification.

Certainly, the author of *Culture and the Real* makes no bones about her theoretical leanings, admitting from the start that she “would defend poststructuralism with [her] dying breath against accusations of jargon or obscurantism” (xiv), and this degree of ideological commitment, whether one shares it or not, represents a welcome departure in our wishy-washy critical world of half-truths and half-certainties. The inverse of this, however, is that while analyzing in depth a variety of theories and systems of thought, Belsey doesn’t assume a critical enough position with

regards to Lacan, even to the point of brushing aside (30) the serious charge of phallogocentrism that is most often aimed at him, mostly from feminist quarters. Indeed, a psychoanalyst who claims that the “phallus”, while not being the equivalent of the penis or the possession of any subject male or female, constitutes the signifier of signifiers in the sense that it stabilizes the symbolic order by stopping the chain of signification from endlessly going round in circles, is at least in the etymological sense deeply phallogocentric, and Derrida has argued precisely this. For, if the Lacanian phallus does not correspond to the Freudian penis in the sense of being the determinant of gendered identity through the fear of castration/penis envy syndrome(s), then why is it so “significant” structurally? Lacan’s supporters claim that he is unmasking patriarchy in this way rather than promoting it, but this ultimately boils down to the debate over whether language describes or prescribes. Moreover, Belsey could argue that she is not writing an *apologia pro* Lacan, but merely using his notion of the “real” to build her own theory of culture. Nevertheless, by not interrogating what can hardly be described as a simple, uncontradictory concept at the best of times, *Culture and the Real* runs the risk of being founded on epistemologically shaky ground.

The problem, which is largely stylistic but by no means trivial, springs from the fact that Lacan’s works are often garnered from tape recordings and seminar notes that are composed in such a way as to make comprehension very difficult. This lack of clarity, Belsey explains, is due to the fact that Lacan “assumed the right to digress, follow associations without announcing very clearly when he was resuming his main theme...and generally cover his tracks in just the way an analysand might” (157-8). However, isn’t such a tactic counterproductive in the training of analysts who need to acquire a clear understanding of the complex issues at stake? And in any case, why would Lacan need to play the role of the analysand so consistently (and, I would argue, the role of analyst so inconsistently) when training his younger colleagues? One could argue that in our post-humanist world where the unconscious is king, so to speak, and the conscious a hollow imposter, Freudian-style intellectual coherence is an ego-bolstering illusion anyway (indeed, this is precisely the kind of

circular logic that Lacan resorts to in his oeuvre as a whole to pass as *a-priori* that which is merely prepositional). But this is no excuse when (presumably) the acquisition of knowledge is at stake, for how can one explain that which is unconscious and chaotically irrational if not by trying to consistently rationalize it? In other words, if the explanation is more confusing or incomprehensible than that which is being explained we need an explanation of the explanation etc. Moreover, Lacan often writes as if his theories are either well-established or must be familiar to his audience from previous seminars when he is expounding them for the first time or, worse still, adding a new twist without announcing it. As Belsey observes in relation to Freud, “when the argument doesn’t hold, we feel it must be our fault” (158), but this is arguably more applicable to Lacan who, to forestall resistance, often made his followers feel that they were not paying enough attention or hadn’t done their homework.

The result is a body of theory which is either highly tautological or where the terms are so abstract and fluid that they are often strictly indefinable and sometimes interchangeable. Thus, the realm of language is synonymous with the cultural which corresponds to the symbolic which is also called the signifier. The Thing which is closely connected if not the equivalent of the maternal object evolves into the *objet petit a* which is distinct from something called the “Other” with a (capital “o”, or capital “a” in French) that is nevertheless closely associated with the *Ding* via the impossibility of its being possessed. The symbolic and the imaginary, too, while representing different loci on the subject’s psychic map are nevertheless interdependent and at least partially overlapping since the former is accessed visually during the mirror stage and imaginatively sustained thereafter. The real, on the other hand (as distinct from reality), is associated in its inaccessible centrality both with the maternal object *and* with the paternal Law/Name-of-the-Father, i.e. both with the destructive and life-giving *Ding* and the all-regulating Phallus (as distinct from the penis!). Needless to say, the permutations are endless and Lacan doesn’t help matters by often resorting to abstract mathematical formulas (*mathemes*) to clarify what cannot be done so using words. Certainly, this is post-structuralist psychoanalysis *par excellence*, for the differences and/or similarities

between the signifiers generated appear almost entirely random.

Belsey begins her argument in *Culture and the Real* by claiming that “our postmodern condition has made reality into an issue,” (2), but surely the problem of differentiating between reality and its opposite – variously termed delusion, illusion, mere appearance, etc. – has always preoccupied humankind. What has changed, of course, is how the reality problem has been phrased or approached and, in particular, the postmodern questioning of the distinction between the real and the non-real, as of all other such conceptual oppositions. Belsey justifiably takes issue with the attempt of Idealism to deconstruct the Enlightenment distinction between the objective, material world and our subjective, cerebral impressions which she finds has come back into fashion as a result of the work of such theorists as Baudrillard and Slavoj Žižek. She therefore follows Lacan in conceiving of the real as that which exists but “does not depend on my idea of it” (4). This characteristically Saussurian negative definition, however theoretically viable, begs some questions which the relevant subheading in the book entitled “What exists – and what do we know about it?” does not satisfactorily answer, to my mind. For, if there is something that exists independently of our thought processes (and, as Lacan says, no “sensible man” [62] would deny it), then we still have to overcome the potential solipsism arising from the fact we are entirely dependent on our sensory, epistemological, and linguistic tools in order to apprehend and, more importantly, communicate it. The problem is certainly not confined to the realms of ontology or epistemology since, as Belsey points out, if we accept the idealist attribution of primacy to ideas it may help “to disconnect our lifestyle from the damage it causes”, while supporting “a society ready to ignore the vulnerable organisms that people are” (58). On the other hand, although Belsey doesn’t state it, things are hardly any better if we accept the materialist argument that everything (e.g. cultural phenomena, human beings, consciousness, etc.) is materially produced and determined by specific and unvarying physical laws, for not only does a rigidly deterministic model arise but everything depends on who is defining the physical laws that all things are supposed to obey.

Belsey gets round this problem by claiming that psychoanalysis remains unresolved and open as

regards the real while Poststructuralism is reconciled to the “anxiety of the real” (4). In fact, the author of *Culture and the Real* can be said to positively encourage ambiguity by often resorting to the rhetorical construction “yes and no” (64) while making such claims as “the real is a question, not an answer” (14). However useful this strategy may be in interpreting texts which, as Barthes has pointed out, are inherently ambiguous constructs, it may not be so valuable when developing concepts on which whole cultural theories are to be based. In fact, Belsey like Lacan, or arguably his greatest influence Hegel, often lapses into what can only be described as mysticism when trying to describe the indescribable or name the unnamable real. This is not so surprising when one considers that the influx of Eastern mysticism into European thought was a crucial factor in the emergence of German Idealism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Ironically, Belsey seems to be duped into an unwitting Idealism herself when she writes that “the real might be very grand: the immensity of the cosmos...Or it might be quite small, but mysterious” (xii). Like Lacan, the author of *Culture and the Real* defines the crucial concept in her discussion almost entirely negatively, claiming that the real has “nothing whatever to do with the supernatural”, nor is it a “fact...Still less is it the truth...If we experience it, we do so as a gap, or alternatively as a limit” (14). But at this point the reader might object that, if we don’t know what a concept is, how do we know what it is not? At times the real seems to be equated with the physical organism, the body, but since this is traditionally associated with the concept “nature”, and “the real is not nature” (14), it cannot be that either. Indeed, a concept which cannot be defined or even positively described using language is a concept that is unassailable and, for this very reason, of very little value for critical thought.

At the risk of appearing to police the boundaries between disciplines, I have to say that such an infinitely *lisable* concept, to use Barthes’ term, belongs more to religious discourse than anywhere else, for like God (or his postmodern version, Godot), the real can mean all things to all people. It is not surprising then that Belsey claims at one point that “the gods also belong to the real”, or “God, if he existed...would be part of it” (50). But, one might wonder, don’t divinities also belong to the symbolic realm or, indeed, the supernatural from which the real has

already been excluded? Actually, God and the Lacanian real are not so far apart conceptually, since the nature of both can only be imperfectly deduced from their effects rather than directly apprehended. This would also explain Belsey's repeated claim that at death the real will reclaim us. It is interesting that Belsey, in her criticism of the recently rehabilitated Kantian sublime by such diverse cultural critics as Lyotard and Žižek, claims that this concept "carries too much theology in secular guise, to clarify areas of culture where clarity is most needed" (120). This may be an indirect way of defending her own use of the Lacanian real which, as I have argued, is equally or even more pseudo-religious (i.e. ineffable, unknowable, unrepresentable) than the sublime. Indeed, I find it much easier to cope with the Kantian distinction between the "thing-in-itself" and the "phenomenon" (which Belsey doesn't grant is synonymous with Lacan's conceptual opposition) due to the unambiguously metaphysical connotations of the "thing-in-itself" than I do the distinction between the real and the symbolic. What seems to have happened here is that, in deconstructing the metaphysical, Poststructuralism has essentially renamed it, for the 'real' *qua* actual still needs an opposite term to differentially define it or we fall into the so-called "vertigo" of Idealism again. If this is so, the really strange thing is why Lacan, to fill the gap left by the dismissed metaphysical, would choose a concept which is traditionally associated with its opposite, i.e. the physical? There are two possibilities: he is either following Kant too closely in proposing something more 'real' than the subject can directly apprehend, or is he deliberately turning our conceptual universe on its head just to mystify us all the more. Whatever the case, *Culture and the Real* gets so caught up in the nuances of idealist and/or postmodernist terminology that, in the end, the reader is hard pressed to differentiate between the real, the actual, and reality, but not necessarily pleasurably.

The crucial question in deciding whether *Culture and the Real* is justified in giving so much attention to Lacan's highly ambiguous concept of the real (and this is identified by Belsey as the bone of contention between Lacan and Žižek) is whether the real is knowable in itself and how it might be possible to know it. Kant makes clear that the "thing-in-itself", the predecessor of the real, is inaccessible to reason while Freud does

allow the unconscious to enter consciousness, albeit at a price for the ego which is largely founded on its repression. But in Lacan's poststructuralist universe where we are not talking about physical or even mental objects but psycholinguistic signifiers that are constructed differentially, the real is by definition that which the symbolic is not and the subject's knowledge perforce stops at the symbolic, indeed, is the condition of the split between the real and the symbolic. In other words, we would know of nothing to desire were we not permanently and entirely cut off from the real upon our entry into culture, so language would be quite useless to us. Although I do not profess to be an expert on Lacan, this is how I understand the relationship between these two crucial concepts. But Belsey's reading seems to be somewhat different. Although she affirms that "we have no access to the real" (130) because "language will always come between us and direct contact with the real" (5), she claims that Lacan allows for "the invasion of the signifier into the real" (63) and, more crucially, "knowledge is capable of making inroads into it." (50). Now, I can understand how culture, through art, can allude to the real via the Thing which occupies the structural position where the real would have been (and Belsey's book is a brilliant illustration of precisely this process), but I cannot understand how it is possible to say anything about the real itself at the level of the signifier. What kind of knowledge is able to perform this magical feat when our understanding of the world is entirely circumscribed by language, that very symbolic order which was supposed to cut us off from the real? Towards the end of the book, Belsey relates an interview from 1973 (intended to make psychoanalysis more accessible!) in which Lacan was asked what it was possible to know, replying, "Nothing...that does not have the structure of a language" (50). This is, in effect, reiterating the Idealist position that the world to us will always constitute a reflection of our psychic structure and mental processes and nothing more. Surely the real does not possess the structure of a language, *ergo* we can know nothing about it.

Thus, the Lacanian real does not turn out to be so real after all, for if we invert Plato's dictum that, "what fully *is* is fully knowable, what in no way *is* is entirely unknowable" (*Republic* VII, 5: 477), then something which is entirely

unknowable is also non-existent. This, in turn, would confirm Žižek's argument that the real does not exist "somewhere beyond the symbolic order" in any "non-signified positivity as substance" (54). Indeed, Žižek's striking claim that "the Real Thing is a fantasmatic spectre" (54) seems to encapsulate the whole Lacanian paradox, to my mind, for it implies the very inability of language to break through the prison of representation and actually present something beyond itself. Whether or not there is something beyond language is a moot point because we can never have access to it: for us, there is nothing outside of the text, or to use Lacanian terms, the subject of culture always exists in and through the signifier. This is not the same thing as saying that we are culturally over-determined, for the text has infinite possibilities and, besides, it is we who (re)produce it; if we don't like it, we can (re)write it over again. To conclude, I would like to comment on Belsey's reference to 9/11 as the litmus test for Idealism since, it is claimed, "These planes were

not a repressed fragment of our own psyche but, on the contrary, a violent material intrusion from outside" that "impugned the sovereignty of America's defences and the reliability of Western intelligence" (60). However, as more and more facts emerge about what really happened on the day that essentially changed postmodern history, it appears that this was indeed one big orchestrated media spectacle designed to shock the American people into going to war against an essentially imaginary enemy and in the process acquiesce to the sacrifice of tens of thousands of innocent lives, as well as the surrendering of their constitutional liberties and human rights. These "planes" (and the object that hit the Pentagon does not seem to have even fit this category) actually came from "within" the system: this was the reason why nothing was done to stop them and not faulty intelligence or inadequate civil defence. In hindsight, the only thing real about 9/11 is the cost in human terms of trusting other people about what "real" means.

---

**Geert Lernout and Wim Van Mierlo (eds), *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, Volumes I and II (London & New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004).**

*Wanda Balzano (Wake Forest, USA)*

---

If Ireland is to become a new Ireland she must first become European  
*James Joyce, Exiles*

James Joyce is a landmark in the history of modern literature. Figuratively speaking, he was one of a few legendary literary brutes who made her lose her virginity, re-educated her according to their considerably unconventional ideas and then let her enter the social whirl that was characteristic of the European cultural development in the first decades of our century as a mysterious, unpredictable, often unfaithful and unreliable beauty. Joyce's strong intervention in this development cannot be denied—though it might have been destructive in some respect, it was nevertheless a new departure.

*Miroslav Jindra, 'Joyceův vzlet ke slunci'*

The series editor, Elinor Shaffer, who is also Director of the Research Project on the Reception of British Authors in Europe, writes in her preface to this two-volume edition that 'The reception of British authors in Britain has in good part been studied; indeed, it forms our literary history. By contrast, the reception of British authors in Europe has not been examined in any systematic, long-term or large-scale way'. It is clear that the aim of the series, to which these volumes belong, is

to initiate and extend the study of the reception of British authors in continental Europe. The task of systematically considering the history and culture of Europe as a whole rather than as isolated and national histories with a narrow national perspective is commendable, and this reviewer hopes that such initiative will begin a trend where not only the European reception of British authors such as Virginia Woolf, Laurence Sterne, or Walter Pater, but also that of Slovenian,

Catalan, Icelandic, or Greek authors, for that matter, can widely be studied in the future.

For the time being, this ambitious research project examines the ways in which selected authors—in our case James Joyce—have been translated, published, distributed, read, reviewed and discussed on the continent of Europe. Volume I analyses the reception of Joyce in Germany and in the traditions of Northern and Eastern Central Europe (Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish and Swedish, Dutch, Flemish, Slovenian, Croatian, Czech and Slovak, Romanian, Polish, Bulgarian, Russian), while Volume II concentrates on the reception of Joyce in France, Ireland and Mediterranean Europe (through Italian, French, Spanish, Catalan, Greek, and Gaelic). This encyclopedic collection of 29 essays—the product of an admirable collaboration between international scholars, critics and translators—is framed by two very useful academic tools. At the beginning of Volume I there is a timeline of Joyce's European reception at-a-glance that can be read horizontally as well as vertically, historically as well as geographically, clearly outlining translations, criticism, and other related happenings. At the end of each of the two volumes, a rich bibliography organised by chapter enriches the scholarly scopes of the collection.

As Geert Lernout reminds us in his helpful introduction, the study of Joyce's work has always been divided between the defenders of an essentially Irish Joyce and those who support a view of 'a fundamentally cosmopolitan writer whose intellectual context was not Irish in any meaningful sense but European, whose predecessors were Ibsen, Wagner, Turgenev and Flaubert and who has only become a modernist icon by leaving behind the constrictions of his native tradition'. Of course these two divergent interpretations of the author's significance find their origin in the double nature of Joyce's own self-understanding as a writer, and famously reflect Gabriel Conroy's ambivalent feelings in 'The Dead', when chided by Miss Ivors for wanting to go on holiday to the continent rather than the West of Ireland. Even though some Irish nationalists and writers favoured an isolationist policy, quite a few of them saw their struggle for cultural and political independence as a reclaiming of the important role Ireland had played in Europe before the English invasion. This is certainly true of Joyce as it is of W.B. Yeats, John Synge and

Lady Gregory—who were sophisticated readers of European prose and drama—and it is also true of authors such as George Moore, Oscar Wilde, and Bernard Shaw. Joyce had no respect for the isolationist Irish writers of his generation, whom, in *Finnegans Wake*, he would call the 'cultic twalette'. In 'The Holy Office', where he mercilessly lampooned them, Joyce significantly adopted among other personae that of Dante, a writer of recognised European fame, and certainly one of the most renowned exiles of literary history.

The irony of having a Joyce volume as part of a series called 'The Reception of British Authors in Europe' is not something that can be easily concealed, especially in a cultural and critical climate that is so much concerned with political and national identities, and yet the editors' choice is based on the fact that, although Joyce was born in Dublin, until the end of his life he considered himself a British subject. The readers here are asked to acknowledge Joyce as someone who did not want to be seen as an Irish writer. Embittered by the lack of recognition of his work in his native country, Joyce consistently refused to recognize the existence of the Irish Free State and never acquired an Irish passport, even when that passport would have allowed him to leave occupied France in late 1940. In Richard Ellmann's words, he refused to 'accept in wartime something he did not desire in peacetime'. For this reason, he is included in the series. As Geert Lernout puts it, 'he may well have been the first British writer who was not only very Irish but thoroughly European too'.

The various essays of this collection are typically structured around a pattern that considers the translations of Joyce's work into the target language and the impact on each country's audience; the influence of Joyce's works on the individual writers of the country, taking into account the specific cultural and political context; the impact of the Joycean oeuvre on the country's ongoing literary debate; the critical trends created by the country's detractors or supporters of Joyce; and, to a lesser degree, the established tradition of Joyce-related events, mainly academic symposia.

Much of the first volume is devoted to detailed accounts of Joyce's reception in German-speaking countries, which began with the publication of Georg Goyert's translation of *Ulysses* by the Rhein-Verlag in 1927. While the

German translation helped make *Ulysses* more accessible to a German-language audience, one should not forget that a wide circulation was unattainable, as the first two German editions could be purchased only on a subscription basis, with the conditions for subscription reading as follows: ‘Sale is permissible only to persons over twenty-five years of age who can demonstrate a serious interest in literature; artists, doctors and lawyers without age restriction.’ Curiously, because at the time this phrase was the standard condition for the purchase of erotic literature, Rhein Verlag received a spate of orders from Vienna after the book was offered there as simple pornography. In Vienna the complete edition of 1,000 copies sold out within just three weeks. In publishing this announcement Rhein-Verlag simultaneously shielded itself from law suits while employing the novel’s notoriety to secure a brisker sale of the book.

Over time the impact of *Ulysses* on its German audience was so stunning that Joyce was hailed as someone who had ‘caused a revolution in literature as important as Lenin’s in the political realm’ (Ivan Goll). Many writers, among whom Bertolt Brecht, Johannes R. Becher, and Thomas Mann, were influenced by Joyce’s innovative use of leitmotifs and his virtuoso handling of a variety of stream-of-consciousness techniques. Yet, in spite of such sustained interest, the essay by the Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, commissioned by the Rhein-Verlag in 1930 as a preface to the novel, was so negative—Joyce’s book was made an example of the schizophrenic mind—that it was never published, much to Joyce’s resentment.

With the Nazis’ coming-to-power in Germany in 1933 the cultural dynamics and the literary landscape of the German-speaking countries shifted instantaneously. Within weeks after their takeover, thousands of political opponents, many writers among them, were arrested and put in detention camps. Many fled the country, others went underground, some retreated into so-called inner exile, outwardly adapting to the new system. Black lists were established for Jewish and dissident writers, whose works were banned from libraries and bookstores. And yet, despite its hero being a considerate and compassionate Jew, *Ulysses* was not forbidden in Nazi Germany until 1938. Foreign authors were banned only belatedly, probably so as not to offend the international community.

Following WWII and the demise of Hitler’s regime in 1945, Germany was split into two separate nations, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). A new generation of authors and readers emerged, and in West Germany a famous philosopher, Theodor W. Adorno, championed Joyce as a master of the avant-garde, citing his works as illustrations of his own ‘negative aesthetics’. From Adorno’s perspective *Ulysses* is a prime instance of negative aesthetics in that its literary form, not its content, aesthetically mediates our knowledge of contemporaneity. On the other hand, in East Germany Joyce ranked as the incarnation of evil, and the arch-enemy of socialist realism, only equalled by Proust and Kafka. In their search for a scapegoat to represent the sins of literary degeneration, the defenders of Stalinist cultural dogmatism found their main target in Joyce, dismissing non-realist forms of literary representations, in particular the new styles of modernism and the avant-garde. Joyce was declared the chief culprit who had committed the crimes of violating the decency of realism and of producing a petty-bourgeois travesty of capitalist reality completely inadmissible to a socialist society. This damnation, however, was gradually undermined when Joyce’s texts were published and on the whole favourably reviewed in the daily newspapers. Even Lukács, the apostle of socialist literary criticism, who famously stigmatised Joyce for leading literature into the errors of formalism, subjectivism and irrationalism, was to change his opinion in the mid-fifties, and Joyce, who had been dismissed as an agent of modernist decadence in East Germany, became a driving force that helped to subvert the despotism of realism and to establish a liberal discussion of modernism.

The critical reception of Joyce in many of the other European countries is fairly heterogeneous and therefore mainly marginal, and a linear reading of the chapters (having, as they do, a similar structure) becomes heavy going. In order to make good use of the large-scale critical apparatus contained in these volumes a patient reader should select in a non-linear way the chapters to read, as it is done for encyclopedias, or for anthologies, and access it at different times. Pursuing this sensible method of reading, it is possible to more carefully note the similarity or disparity of

contexts, the literary and critical trends, the individual anecdotes and intellectual encounters, and any other cultural peculiarity. For instance, the reception of Joyce in Flemish literature is interesting when Flanders and Ireland are compared: because they were both mainly Catholic, and because they consider themselves post-colonial regions, the two seem to have a lot in common, even though the predicament of their respective languages and literatures is quite different. The example of Joyce, in fact, proved that small, culturally oppressed Catholic countries could produce great literary talent.

After WWII, when Slovenia became part of Tito's socialist Yugoslavia, Slovenian literary critics faithfully echoed the views of the Soviet critics who condemned the 'decadent epigones of subjective idealism' like Joyce. The first essay that did not denounce Joyce's work was written by Lojze Berce, who had been one of Joyce's students in Trieste. Berce described Joyce as 'a man of broad views, with a great knowledge of the human psyche; in short, a writer, not a professional teacher', who preferred to chat with his students and 'try to enter the mysteries of our romping lives'. In Berce's view the Irish supposedly saw in Joyce 'a true rebel, almost a betrayer of Irish patriotism', but, although he lived abroad during most of his creative life, he could never really tear himself away from his homeland.

Berce's personal encounter with Joyce, of course, is not the only one to be reported in this collection. Among the interesting accounts of Joyce's multicultural encounters there numbers a chance meeting with Romanian-born sculptor Constantin Brâncuși in a Parisian studio in 1926, when Joyce was looking for an artist to draw his portrait. Between the radical innovator of the novel and the reformer of modern sculpture there was an immediate empathy. Both were exiles. Both had fled philistine countries to seek artistic fulfillment elsewhere. Both were never to return but would recreate their homelands in their art through forms that transcend mere topicality. Also, the spiritual kinship between the two artists is visible in their common fascination with fecundity and the idea of *mater genitrix*. Brâncuși drew four portraits of Joyce—he might indeed have been 'the artist who drew [Joyce's] only truly significant portrait in this century's art history' (Grigorescu).

The reception of Joyce in Bulgaria has not been an easy process and is far from complete, but a

curious chapter of this reception was written in 1964 by Yuliya Krăsteva, a very young and promising student of literature who only a few years later was to become Julia Kristeva. In her long essay on some tendencies in the literature of the West, Joyce is accused of being unable to transcend his limited world-view in that he does not realize that the spiritual destitution of humankind depicted in *Ulysses* is not a universal problem of contemporary man but only of bourgeois society. Although Kristeva's recent views of Joyce are more sophisticated, her political orthodoxy at the time reflected the doctrine of socialist realism. The political pressures on a young academic should not be ignored. If her early analyses sound doctrinaire and clichéd it is because, in the context of 1960s Eastern Europe, political correctness meant toeing the 'party line'.

The story of Joyce in the Soviet Union offers a paradigm of Soviet cultural politics. It shows how culture was suppressed, but also how it grew in the interstices, cultivated by courageous individuals, until it was finally allowed to flower and come into full bloom with the publication of *Ulysses* at the very end of Soviet rule. If in 1938 one of the translators of *Ulysses*, Igor Romanovich, was arrested, by the 1970s the translation had disappeared from most libraries, pages torn out by eager admirers. One of the supporters of Joyce during the dark period was Sergei Eisenstein, Russia's great film director. Eisenstein, who had read *Portrait* as well as *Ulysses*, was fascinated by Joyce's use of the internal monologue and believed that only in film could it be exploited to its full potential. He publicly defended Joyce in a lecture to fourth-year students at the State Institute of Cinematography in 1934. Only two months before his lecture, the cold night of Stalinism had begun to fall, with the first Congress of Soviet Writers proclaiming socialist realism as the only permissible method for Soviet literature. Joyce seemingly embodied the putrefaction of Western bourgeois culture and Soviet literature could learn nothing from him. Karl Radek, a prominent former central committee member of the Party, proclaimed that Joyce was nothing but 'a heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope—such is Joyce's work'. Among other cultural and political references, we are told that Boris Pasternak's knowledge of Joyce

certainly extended from *Dubliners* to *Ulysses* and he was known to have been reading Joyce at various periods throughout most of his adult life. Anna Akhmatova, too, read *Ulysses* six times in 1938 and called it ‘an astounding book’ although it contained ‘too much pornography’ for her taste. Eisenstein pronounced *Ulysses* ‘a brilliant work’ that had much to teach Soviet writers about ‘the mastery of the art of writing’.

If the criteria adopted by the contributors in their respective chapters seem to follow too strict a blueprint (translations-literary influence-cultural debate), this is probably done in order to give a more unified sense of the European reception as a ‘whole’, emphasising, with such critical method, identity rather than difference, at least in structure. Nevertheless, it is cultural diversity and not homogeneity that produces the most interesting landscapes. For instance, the volumes deal with many different languages, and the variety of quotations, in original and in translation, add an important dimension to the project. What the project lacks, however, is a ‘cultural studies’ dimension. Multiculturalism should be interpreted not only in the sense of a variety of national literary traditions, but also in the sense of a multiplicity of ‘forms’ of reception. After all, the title of the collection does not specify that the reception discussed between the covers is only literary, and a contemporary reader familiar with modern-day academic developments would be disappointed not to find music or dance or paintings inspired by Joyce, not to mention the proliferation of commercially-inspired Joyceana, from pubs and restaurants to Bloomsday celebrations in many European cities. Only in a few, isolated cases, such as for the Polish reception (i.e. the publication of the musical setting to a small number of Joyce’s poems by composer Karol Szymanowski) and some other oddities (a Belgian stamp with the image of James Joyce), are other forms of reception cited. Analysing the Triestine Joyce, John McCourt is the one who more closely moves towards this methodological choice. He effectively illustrates a nice range of cultural activities in Trieste linked to Joyce: exhibitions of paintings, fashion, documents and period photographs; literary festivals; Joycean cultural associations and summer schools; the mapping of Trieste with plaques on places of Joycean interest throughout the city; and even the establishment of a Joyce museum in this Italian

city. (A similar type of cultural notation is offered by Robert Wenginger in acknowledging the important role of the leading German-language Joycean scholar Fritz Senn, who was instrumental in having his personal library transformed into the Zurich James Joyce Foundation.)

It is well known that during his decade in Trieste, Joyce published *Chamber Music*, finished *Dubliners*, wrote *Exiles*, rewrote *Portrait*, and drafted the first three chapters of *Ulysses*. And yet, because this production was written in English and printed abroad, Joyce remained largely unknown to an Italian reading public. In an effort to keep his name in circulation, Joyce primed his friends with information about his work, and he also proposed himself to the Italian public as Italian-speaking lecturer, orator and journalist. In a separate chapter Serenella Zanotti offers an extensive account of the relationship between Joyce and the Italian writers. While Italo Svevo’s part in the context of the reception of Joyce’s work is relatively minor, other writers are discussed in this regard: Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Massimo Bontempelli, Alberto Moravia, Carlo Cassola, Vitaliano Brancati, Dino Buzzati, Eugenio Montale, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Raffaele La Capria, and Umberto Eco, for instance. Elio Vittorini and Cesare Pavese, however, didn’t immediately take to Joyce, and Italo Calvino partly rejected him because of the use of interior monologue.

The first doctoral dissertation on Joyce in France was Hélène Cixous’s *L’Exil de James Joyce*. Her central thesis was that to Joyce life and art are consubstantial; exile is treated as both a condition of his life and his writing. After her dissertation, Cixous became a professor of English literature at the Université de Paris VIII-Vincennes where she supervised several dissertations on Joyce. The French Joyceans who came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s were all her students. Two more influential authors such as Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida played a fundamental role in the French reception of Joyce: Lacan clearly saw such a strong affinity between his own work and Joyce’s oeuvre that he modified his own theory of the unconscious; Derrida, who famously admitted to being haunted by Joyce’s ghost, saw the Joycean texts as paradigms of equivocity, not necessarily reducible to a singular meaning.

Joyce's critical reception in Spain was a complicated affair. Initially there emerged an interest in the religious impulse of his oeuvre; then, an anti-modernist stance was adopted by the official critical discourse during the early years of the Franco era. Also, the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) blunted the early critical interest in Joyce, and the economic depression, together with the political and cultural isolation that the country had to endure did not facilitate access to the work of Joyce or other foreign writers. The Spanish reception of Joyce came of age in the 1970s, when a large number of Joyce's books were finally translated, causing within Spanish academia an explosion of interest. A blemish in the Spanish reception of Joyce, indisputably, is the poet Antonio Machado's lecture for the Royal Academy in 1931, where he remarked that Joyce's work was incoherent, chaotic, and impossible to comprehend in rational terms. He even pronounced *Ulysses* a piece of satanic work produced by a madman, in short, 'a dead end, a *cul-de-sac* of lyric solipsism'.

The last chapter of the volumes is devoted to Joyce's influence on writers in Irish—an influence that has already been highlighted exceptionally well in Dillon Johnston's *Irish Poetry after Joyce*. The poet in Irish most influenced by Joyce was Seán

Ó Ríordáin (1916-77), who was so profoundly affected that he sometimes had difficulty distinguishing himself from his literary hero. In the poem 'Joyce' he writes: 'Ag triopallacht a fhriotalú táim treascartha,/An fhoirmiúlacht laideanta,/Ní mé le linn dom machnamh air,/Ach é siúd—tá lágú ann' ('Tripping in his wake, I'm wracked./His Latin formalism so exact/that when I think of him, I/am not I—ego subsides'). Frank Sewell points out that 'Like Joyce, writers in Irish have had to master and manipulate *their* language; they have diagnosed what they see as their country's ills; they have "studied" (Ó Searcaigh) and forged on with the "conscience" of their "race" (preferably, nation); and they have dedicated themselves to the lifetime apprenticeship of art, to the craft, if not the religion, of words'.

Considering the length of this publication, and the amount of quotations in a variety of languages, misprints are surprisingly few. What plainly emerges from all these chapters is that, although James Joyce is not very easy to read, he is undoubtedly an important classic of world literature. His work stands, against the challenge of time and that of place, like a lighthouse, a point of reference, of warning; a standing example; a monument of literary achievement in Europe and the rest of the world.

---

**Michael Edwards and Christopher Reid, eds., *Oratory in Action***

(Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004). 216 pp.

*David Dickinson (Independent Scholar, UK)*

By coincidence, I reviewed this collection of eleven essays during the long hours of waiting in the juror's lounge when on jury service at a local Crown Court. Although I am a research student at Oxford Brookes University, my day job is to be minister of a city-centre late-Victorian 'preaching-box'-style church with a tradition of pulpit oratory. So I felt that many of these essays might have been written for me – to help me reflect on my own practice as a preacher exercising the art of 'faithful persuasion' and to caution me against being unduly swayed by a judge or advocate's oratorical flourishes in court! They might also have been written for you, for none of us can escape the influence of rhetoric on our lives and, although the age of oratory is often said to be over, a few moments' thought makes it apparent that we are exposed to more oratory than at first we think: politicians, journalists, broadcasters and advertisers

bombard us with rhetoric on a daily basis and others, such as lawyers, teachers and ministers of religion, employ oratorical techniques when they address us on particular occasions.

Like any collection of essays, this is a mixed bag, although it is not a 'lucky dip' with one or two standing head and shoulders above the rest; the editors have encouraged their contributors to achieve consistency of academic rigour and stimulating thought throughout, whether dealing with ancient Greek and Roman oratory or the contemporary oratory of Britain's current Prime Minister. Those I found most helpful, however, were the essays that established links between the academic study and the *praxis* of being either a rhetor or the member of an audience. In this respect, Edwards and Reid kept the most stimulating till last: Lynette Hunter's 'Video Cicero' is a study of the *ethos* of the oratorical act in which

speakers establish common ground with their audiences. Using Cicero as her foundational model, Hunter admires Bill Clinton as a truly Machiavellian rhetor who successfully established common vice with his audience, and offers an interesting critique of Tony Blair's attempt to establish his reputation as "just another bloke" employing 'estuary English'. Throughout this critique Hunter is tackling a formidable problem for contemporary politicians: establishing common ground, the essential *ethos* for effective suasive speech, is difficult in pluralist societies. Just when we need more dialogical oratory that accounts for different audiences (in the style of Lord Birkenhead's conversational parliamentary manner rather than Churchill's over-rehearsed bombast which Christopher Smith contrasts in an earlier piece), Hunter expresses an irony – speaking at us has replaced speaking for us.

Some of the essays are topical. For instance, Paul Robertshaw's fascinating and careful study of judges' pronouncements of sentence on nineteenth century medical murderers was spurred by the conviction for murder in 2001 of Harold Shipman, a doctor in the north of England who is widely believed to be responsible for the deaths of over two hundred of his patients, but it also raises important questions about audience which all speakers should consider: when addressing the guilty man, these judges were also conscious of wider audiences including the public gallery and contemporaneous print media. I, too, now have the privilege of being counted in the audience of which none of these judges could be aware: is there any way that orators, who often feel that theirs is an ephemeral art form whose only audience is the immediate one, can allow for the potentially limitless external audience for their words?

Arranged chronologically we could be forgiven for expecting the first essay to be the most distanced from current concerns in oratory, but not so, for Alastair Blanshard's study of the Athenian justice system of the fourth and fifth centuries BCE which showed how architecture, pageant and ritual performed courts into being was something I could observe at first hand in the modern law court on whose jury benches I sat: newly-built law courts, like the multipurpose rooms used in ancient Athens and unlike their grand nineteenth-century neo-classical counterparts, do not themselves bespeak tradition and permanence. Rather, forensic authority is constructed ritualistically and rhetorically. Stephen

Usher's essay on *kairos*, showing how important it was for orators to choose the 'right time' for their speech, is timely and topical, too. How pertinent was Qoheleth's comment – the Speaker or Preacher of the Hebrew scriptures – when he said, "For everything there is a season"! I am reminded of the question of comic timing: after the British Deputy Prime Minister had an adulterous office romance in 2006, some of the general public were amused by the satirist who compared the Cabinet with an IKEA cabinet (one screw and it falls apart), but the same joke almost twenty years earlier in other circumstances had fallen flat. Usher's discussion of Gorgias of Leontini might have benefited from going an extra mile to express a view whether there is indeed an ethical dimension to *kairos* for contemporary speakers as I continue to ask whose *kairos* matters most, the speaker's or the audience's? Experience suggests that oratory will be most effective if the speech is timely for the audience.

I was particularly interested in Aideen Hartney's essay on John Chrysostom, a wise choice as the sole representative of Christian preaching in this collection. His were days when listening to a sermon could be just as exciting as a chariot race, and on a regular basis he ran the risk of titillating his audience with the very things he was criticising. This is what I think of as the *Footballers Wives* problem for satirists, of whom contemporary preachers are a type (*Footballers Wives* is a popular British television programme whose missing apostrophe gives it its cultural placing!). Its problem is how do you satirise the empty glamour of the sorority of footballers' partners without entertaining voyeurs? How do preachers and reforming politicians offer a critique of the dominant culture without seeming to glory in the statistics of poverty, violence and disease?

People engaged in forensic, deliberative and epideictic oratory – the three rhetorical types according to the tradition's founding father, Aristotle – know what they are about. They are using rhetoric's tools, namely *logos*, *ethos*, *praxis* and *pathos*, to construct a convincing argument that will carry an audience into the world the speech builds for them to inhabit: we can all think of orators who thus abused their audiences but this collection of essays succeeds in reminding us that, in the noble art of oratory, the integrity of speaker, speech and hearer is also capable of building what the essays' introduction, following Bill Clinton, describes as a place called hope.

**Caroline Patey, *Londra: Henry James e la capitale del moderno*.  
Edizioni Unicopli, Milano, 2004.**

Valentina Pontolillo D'Elia (Milano, Italy)

Caroline Patey's *Londra: Henry James e la capitale del moderno* is the latest in a series of volumes focused on the fecund relationship between the urban landscape and writers. From James Joyce's Dublin to Pepe Carvalho's Barcellona, from Jorge Amado's Bahia to Giorgio Bassani's Ferrara: be it a small provincial town or a great European capital, the city has always impressed and challenged the most famous novelists, in such a profound way that it is almost impossible to draw a clear distinction between the author and his or her urban environment. Caroline Patey engages Henry James as a very special guide to lead the reader through a fascinating late-Nineteenth century London.

Henry James was a promising American writer when he reached London in 1876. He had just left Paris and so was well aware of the features of great European cities. However, it was London that gave inspiration to a young novelist who was to become the exegetist of a society precariously poised between the Victorian Age and Modernism. James's major works reflect London's originality, its double-sided *façade* – Victorian and Modernist – by exploring those recognizable streets which belong to a city that, despite its reputation for being strait-laced and insular, had gradually emerged as responsive to aesthetic novelty. What is more, the American writer looks at London as a curious tourist would do but, at the same time, he is endowed with the sense of perspective of a conscious expatriate, who wishes to portray at its best the place he has come to belong to. Through his masterpieces, we are led from Bloomsbury – as it is described in *The Golden Bowl* – to Kensington Gardens, beside the young protagonist of *What Maisie Knew*, and then again, from the houses between Grosvenor Square and Park Lane we find in *A London Life*, to the Millbank prison of *The Princess Casamassima*.

Following James's steps as well as those of his unforgettable characters through a maze of streets and back-streets, Professor Patey shows how London goes beyond its historical and topographical borders. The British capital's *fin de siècle* boundaries widen to those of contemporary London: "James's London mirrors into ours", as Patey remarks (p. 28).

It is not easy to prove the connections and superimpositions existing between fictional and real London, or to illuminate the continuity between late-Nineteenth century and our contemporary – post-modern, multi-layered, multi-cultural – London. Yet Patey patiently excavates the literary stratifications (Dickens, Poe) and the social and cultural pillars (clubs, theatres and popular satire, the photography of Alvin Coburn, politics, art exhibitions, crime news and social gossip...) that prop up Jamesian London.

*Londra: Henry James e la capitale del moderno* is a sort of meticulous archeological reconstruction, dense but concise, a book so focused on literature that allusions to thousands of works (James's novels as well as those of Thackeray's, Eliot's, Wilde's) are woven into the texture of the narrative. It reminds us of James's words when, in a famous essay on Hawthorne (1879), he asserted that "the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, [that] it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, [that] it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion". Patey remarks, on the one hand, how the soil that produced James's work was permeated by history and, on the other, that it was deep enough to allow the numerous discrepancies of late Victorian and Edwardian society to come to the surface.

Those discrepancies – the mechanisms of the contradictory "social machinery" that set the American novelist in motion – reveal themselves in prostitution and commerce, in the art trade and in the music halls, in the trials for homosexuality and in the union between British nobility and American wealth, in the marriages between upper and lower classes. Accordingly, Patey divides the book into seven chapters, each devoted to the layered detritus of the somehow decayed British metropolis.

There is little doubt, then, that the volume's features prevent us from presenting a mere classification of its content. The book is not a typical critical work focused on Henry James, nor is it one of those bulky historical and geographical *vademeccums* dedicated to the British capital city. It is, on the contrary, a sort of evocative literary Baedeker, a book that – as Professor Mario Maffi suggests in his Preface – James himself would have appreciated. It shares James's concern with the act of seeing. We, in turn, become *flâneurs*, tourists in a foreign city, or *voyeurs*, and come away from the volume enriched with a new appreciation of London and new sympathy for the American novelist.

Patey, in short, paints the London we have come to know – and love – through literature, movies, music and art, and she does so in strikingly good prose. Though her book is more a good read than a work of impeccable scholarship (the reader needs a good acquaintance with James's novels to enjoy it fully), it has the merits of holding a Jamesian point of view – an undefiled viewpoint, or "a viewpoint untouched by parasite idea", as T.S. Eliot suggested in 1918 – from beginning to end. It would have been easier to re-create simply the atmosphere of an age; instead Patey offers her readers the opportunity to walk besides James himself, as if we were James's travelling companions during his roamings, as if we had, for a moment, the chance to visit London through a magical, time-travelling kaleidoscope.

## CALLS FOR ARTICLES AND PAPERS

For closer information about all of the announcements, please turn to the ESSE website and its “Calls for Papers” at <[www.essenglish.org](http://www.essenglish.org)> and to the websites and contacts announced there.

---

### BOOKS & JOURNALS

**music/museum. PLASTIC:** Visual arts and popular Music, France-USA-Great Britain. Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier III, France. Deadline for submission: **31 October 2006.**

**Poetry & Autobiography.** EREA, an e-journal based at Aix-en-Provence, <[www.e-rea.org](http://www.e-rea.org)>. Deadline for proposals: **31 October 2006.**

**Philologia – professional-scientific journal for language, literature and culture (Belgrade, Serbia).** Deadline for submissions: **1<sup>st</sup> February 2007.** Peer-reviewed journal inviting contributions for the following sections: Language Science, Language Teaching Methodology, Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Translation Studies, Book Reviews and Conference/Seminar Reports.

**Old English Studies in the 21st Century: A New Understanding of the Past.** Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses, April 2007.

**MISCELÁNEA: A Journal of English and American Studies vol. 33-34,** published by the Department of English and German Philology of the University of Zaragoza (Spain). Deadline for submissions: **1 December 2006.**

**Polysemy.** 1st issue of *Lexis*, an e-journal of lexicology. Date of publication: **Spring of 2008.** Deadline for proposals: **15 December 2006.**

**Word Structure,** Vol. 1 (2 issues) to appear in **2008.** Deadline for submissions: **31 December 2006.**

**Poetry Matters:** a special issue of *English in Education* to be published in September 2007. Deadline for submissions: **1 June 2007.**

### CONFERENCES

**Rubbish, Waste, and Litter: Culture and Its Refuse/als.** Warsaw School of Social Psychology. 17-18 November 2006. Deadline for proposals: **30 September 2006.**

**Opera Libretti and Rewriting,** Université de Caen, 17-18 November 2006. Deadline for proposals: **30 June 2006.**

**Plural Beckett Pluriel: A Centenary Celebration / Une célébration centenaire,** Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Portugal, 23-24 November 2006, Deadline for proposals: **15 July 2006.**

**Models of Medieval Gender: Paragons, Pariahs and Paradigms.** University of East Anglia, Norwich, 9-11 January 2007. Deadline for submission: **1 September 2006.**

**Hunger on stage in the English-speaking world.** Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 12-13 January 2007. Deadline for proposals: **20 July 2006.**

**Literature, Aesthetics and Philosophies of History, 1860-1940.** The Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham, 18-19 January 2007. Deadline for proposals: **30 November 2006.**

**What Visibility for Wales?** Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, 25-26 January 2007. Deadline for proposals: **31 August 2006.**

**On Mutual (Mis)understanding.** Insitut supérieur des Sciences Humaines de Tunis, 1-3 February 2007, Deadline for proposals: **15 November 2006.**

**Encounter and Experience: Cultures in Process.** University of Bielefeld, Germany, 2-4 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **15 December 2006.**

**Translation and the Philosophy of Language: Appraisal and future perspectives.** Strasbourg, 9-10 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 September 2006.**

**The Impersonal in Literature,** Université du Maine, Le Mans, France, 9-10 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **15 November 2006.**

**Ex-centric Narratives, Identity and Multivocality in Anglo-American Cultures,** Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 15-18 March 2007, Deadline for proposals: **31 October 2006.**

- SAIT (artistic and literary intertextuality) annual conference: Writings on Art/ Ecris sur l'art**, Université de Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle, 16-17 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: 15 December 2006.
- Left/Out: "Texts" and their "Ur-texts"**. University Nancy 2, France, 18-19 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **15 September 2006**.
- Science Fiction and the Canon**, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. 24 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 January 2007**.
- Telling Bodies: Practices, Discourses, Looks**, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, 26-30 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **30 November 2006**.
- Singular/Plural: International D.H. Lawrence Conference**, Université Paris X – Nanterre, 29-31 March 2007. Deadline for proposals: **20 November 2006**.
- Poetry and Public Language: A conference on contemporary poetry**, University of Plymouth, 30 March to 1 April 2007. Deadline for proposals: **30 November 2006**.
- In Medias Res: British-Italian Cultural Transactions: Exiles and Emigrés**, University of Leicester, 13-15 April 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 December 2006**.
- Nationalism in the English-Speaking World**, University of Nancy, France, 20-21 April 2007. Deadline for proposals: **15 December 2006**.
- Performing Identity/Crossing Borders**, 3-6 May 2007, Nicosia, Cyprus. Deadline for proposals: **15 December 2006**.
- Cognitive Linguistics: Typology, Gesture, and Sign**. University of Lille 3, Lille, France, 10-12 May 2007. Abstract submission deadline: **15 November, 2006**.
- 17th Conference on British and American Studies**, Timisoara, Romania, 17-19 May 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 March 2007**.
- Hybridity, Multiculturalism, Post-colonialism**, University of Orléans, 24-25 May 2007. Deadline for proposals: **15 November 2006**.
- Moment to Monument**, Basel University, Switzerland, 31 May-2 June 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 December 2006**.
- Ireland Across Cultures**, University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria, 7-9 June 2007. Deadline for proposals: **18 March 2007**.
- Socially-conditioned language change in a diachronic perspective**, University of Lecce, Italy, 7-9 June 2007. Deadline for proposals: **30 November 2006**.
- Multiculturalism, modernity and citizenship in Canada**, Marc Bloch University, Strasbourg, **8-9 June 2007**. Deadline for proposals: **15 December 2006**.
- Her Na-rra-tion, Women's Narratives of the Canadian Nation**. University of Nantes, France, 21-23 June 2007. Deadline for proposals: **30 September 2006**.
- Gothic n.e.w.s.**, Aix-en-Provence, France, 26-29 June 2007. Deadline for proposals: **31 January 2007**.
- Men and Madness: Representing Male Psychopathology, Mental Disorder and Deviancy in Modern and Contemporary Culture**, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, 28-30 June 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 February 2007**.
- Scott Fitzgerald Conference**, Senate House, London, 8-14 July 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 December 2006**
- Samuel Johnson's Early Reception in Europe**, University of Montpellier, 8-15 July 2007, Deadline for proposals: **6 January 2007**.
- Bodies of Myth – New Perspectives**, Leeds Trinity & All Saints, 13 July 2007. Deadline for proposals: **31 January 2007**.
- Why Translation Studies Matters: 5th Conference of EST**, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, 3-5 September 2007. Deadline for proposals: **1 November 2006**.
- Louis MacNeice: Centenary Conference and Celebration**, Queen's University Belfast, 12-15 September 2007. Deadline for Papers: **31 May 2007**.
- English for Specific Purposes – Terminology and Translation: Law, Economy, Medicine, Natural Sciences, Philosophy, Psychology**, P. J. Safarik University, Kosice, Slovakia, 13-14 September 2007. Deadline for proposals: **31 March 2007**.
- Language and Literature in the Contemporary Paradigm of Scientific Knowledge**, Yerevan, Armenia, 16-19 October 2007. Deadline for proposals: **31 January 2007**.

---

## CONFERENCE REPORT: International *Transcultura* Symposium: “Playing by the Rules of the Game”, 10-14 July 2006, Merzig, Germany

Katrin Berndt (Saarland, Germany)

---

In the immediate aftermath of the Football World Championship, a symposium of the *Transcultura* network concerning the thematic complex of rules and sports took place in Merzig, Saarland. The University of Saarland, coordinator of *Transcultura* Studies (Europe) invited scholars from Brazil, China, Mali, India, and from a number of European countries to explore what “Playing by the Rules of the Game” means in different cultures and in a transcultural context. Academics from a variety of fields, such as anthropology, Romance studies, Anglophone studies, law, linguistics, media studies, and philosophy, discussed whether the idea of game rules and their general validity is a universal axiom, and how this principle is understood and realized in different cultures.

Within this conceptual framework, the presented papers varied from abstract approaches to the game theory to more concrete accounts of the changing rules (or, rather, as we have learned during the conference: the changing laws) of rugby. All of them however, responded to the objective of *Transcultura*, which is to enter into ‘a scholarly exchange of ideas – European with non-European cultures – in order to engage in a non-hierarchical cultural dialogue to gain reciprocal knowledge about cultures, through simultaneously presenting a familiar culture to an observer’s gaze while participating as an observer of other, possibly less-familiar cultures’.

Founded in 1988 by the semiotician and author Umberto Eco and the ethnologist Alain de Pinchon, *Transcultura* unites international researchers in their attempt to focus on the concept of transculturality and its referential context. Conferences on a variety of topics have been held since then, among them “Reciprocal Knowledge – Cultures of Knowledge” in Goa (India) in 2005, “L’empire, la paix” in Paris in 2003, and “Law and Peace” in 2004 – the first symposium which was held in Merzig. The reason why the Saarland had again become the host of the meeting of this international network of outstanding scholars is that Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn (Chair for Transcultural Anglophone Studies) and Maximilian Herberger (Chair of Civil

Law, Legal Theory, and Law and Informatics) of the University of Saarland have been awarded stewardship of the Europe AID–*Transcultura* grant for two years under the EU funding scheme “Cultural Cooperation with Developing Countries”. Among the set aims of their project, which they pursue along with their cooperative partners of the Scientific Council of *Transcultura* and the members of the Saarland University team, is the setting up of a pilot “Observatoire Transculturel Européen” (OTE) at Merzig, which will be housing the International *Transcultura* Library and will provide scholars space to work, and the chance to interact with peers. The organization of scholarly meetings which deal with key concepts in the pursuit of cross-cultural reciprocal knowledge is another pillar of the *Transcultura* engagement in the Saarland.

Both the actual activities and the conceptual framework of *Transcultura* follow the political objective to show that ‘Europe knows how to have a dialogue with the world’ and to demonstrate that it recognizes ‘the process through which the European identity is shaped in its exchanges with non-European cultural areas’. *Transcultura*’s ethical and cultural objective, based on the principle of reciprocity, seeks to ‘confront the different ways of representing universals and to construct new models of society, of knowledge and of communication’. Its scholarly and educational objective however, aims to ‘propose transcultural analysis methodologies applicable to different situations and intercultural contexts’.

Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn cordially welcomed the participants and guests to the conference at the opening on Monday evening at Schloss Fellenberg. In his welcome address, *Transcultura* founder Alain le Pichon introduced the basic ideas of and the processes by which *Transcultura* has evolved during the past years. He was followed by plenary speeches of members of the *Transcultura* network. Huang Ping (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing), Balveer Arora (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), and Maximilian Herberger (Saarland University) highlighted different aspects of transcultural

research and alluded to the main points of interest of former conferences with respect to the focus of this symposium.

The decision to hold the symposium in the aftermath of the Football World Championship considerably enhanced the conference discussions with a number of recently experienced examples of both players' and audience's responses to sport(s) rules, fair play, and the idea of sport being a microcosm of the real world. Be it some referee's decision or Zinedine Zidane's foul play at the end of the finals, sport and its rules proved to be part of, and alternative to, real life struggles and engagements. Consequently Klaus Vieweg, who holds the chair for civil law, economic law and law of technology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, engaged in his paper with the question whether the fairness principle can be applied to sports rules and field of play decisions. He suggested that fairness, although it certainly is a fascinating principle, can hardly be conclusively defined since its use is too versatile. It serves as a yardstick for judging behaviour, as a guideline for comradely behaviour among the players, and it demands that rules and regulations are generally observed. While a universally recognized fairness principle would have to respect more than one legal foundation, it is at least recognized as one of the principles of the 'lex sportiva' in the World Anti Doping Code. Concluding with an allusion to the debate on the pros and cons of an Anti-Doping-Code in Germany's national legislation, Klaus Vieweg paved the way for Carsten Momsen's presentation on "Die Fairness im Sport als Rechtsproblem". Momsen discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a legally prohibited doping, and eventually supported the recognition of doping as a criminal offence – a change of definition without which the prosecution of doping will remain a tricky undertaking.

The application of rules of the game in the political arena was the topic of Balveer Arora's paper. He offered a noteworthy account of the concept of 'dharma' or 'duty', which functions simultaneously as law, rule, and code of conduct. Dharma defines a particular behaviour as duty, which persons, who fulfil certain roles in different contexts, are expected to fulfil. It further guarantees the interiorisation of these rules as obligations, which nevertheless remain conditional and contextual. For example, those who are ruled are

bound by obligation to obey the ruler, but only as long as he – the ruler – also respects his conduct, e.g. to provide 'good governance'. Thus, 'deviation from the path of dharma entitles the ruled to rise in revolt against a tyrannical ruler'. Similar to the principle of fair play, dharma emphasizes 'the right thing to do rather than the outcome' of people's decisions and actions.

Another central point of discussion was the political and philosophical significance of the game theory, as well as its relevance to the media and to computer games. Zhao Tingyang, philosopher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and also a member of the Scientific Council of *Transcultura*, was the first to raise the subject in his paper on "The Original Game", in which he linked the obligation to respect the rules of a game with Wittgenstein's philosophy and demand to accept 'the forms of life'. A different approach to game theory was introduced by Hans Joachim Backe from the University of Saarland. His paper suggested a further refinement of Callois' famous game theory to yield 'a means to detailed description of both games and playing, and to that effect, of rules'. His proposal embarked on a method for the analysis of the narrative structure and content of computer games, which would also serve as a tool 'for adopting game theory to real life situations'. He treated conceptual game worlds as mental frameworks in which so-called 'world rules' define all action that is possible – in contrast to football or chess rules, which determine what is allowed in the game, what is prohibited, and what action is considered particularly valuable. Rules should therefore not be considered as a monolithic concept, but as applicable to different levels of playful behaviour of various kind, offering an aide to a comparative analysis of both (computer) games and, for instance, a movie.

A third focus of the conference consisted of papers dealing with the cultural context of different kinds of sport. They were mainly introduced by scholars from various departments of the University of Saarland, and mirrored fields of research as much as the presenters' private interests and leisure activities. Roland Marti, professor for Slavonic studies, challenged the common belief that rugby is 'a sport where anything goes'. He introduced an overview of the historical development (including the founding myths) of rugby, which includes the legend of

William Webb Ellis who, at least according to his epitaph, ‘with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time first took the ball in his arms and ran with it’. Rugby was, in contrast to football, considered to be a game for gentlemen. Thus, the very idea the players had of themselves and their game resulted in a peculiar set of regulations: they perceived their regulations not as rules, but as laws, founded on and incorporating their philosophical idea of sports and, to a certain extent, their idea of life. Consequently, these ‘laws’ have proved to be more flexible than rules: because they have been reflecting the world outside rugby since their introduction, they have been as open to change as life itself.

Soenke Zehle, from the Chair for Transcultural Anglophone Studies of the University of Saarland, approached a completely different field of research. His fascinating paper on “Border Games: Migrant Media in Transcultural Perspective” linked the motto of the conference with the idea of using digital games as a means of social activism. He outlined that digital games have left the obscure field of media subcultures to move into ‘the heart of debates over the logic of simulation’ and have played their part in the redefinition of communicative processes. The digital game “Border Games” that he introduced was developed by the Spanish activist group *Fiambrera Obrera*, who uses digital simulation to encourage self-organization. In workshops, young migrants are taught to develop innovative games in which they incorporate their own experiences and learn how to use these simulations to regain ‘control over their own lives and environments’.

Social empowerment by means of a game was also the focus of both Tinka Reichmann’s (Department of Law at the University of Saarland) and Sonia Santos’ (Rio de Janeiro) papers on the art of *capoeira*. Tinka Reichmann looked at the sports’ historical development from a transcultural perspective. Introduced to Brazil in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by slaves mainly from the area of today’s Angola, *capoeira* was especially developed in the *maroon* communities, which were founded by escaped slaves who fought against their colonial oppressors. The slaves needed to disguise their martial exercises with ‘simulated movements and dances accompanied by rhythmic music’. *Capoeira* was practised secretly and remained illegal until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, it is a substantial element of Black consciousness, and

has recently been recognized as a discipline by the Brazilian Olympic Committee. Sonia Santos focused on *capoeira* as an ethnic element of Brazilian public education. She connected the histories of *capoeira* and the African chess game *oril*. The latter originated in Ancient Egypt, and was also brought to Brazil in the course of the slave abductions. Both games are part of Brazil’s African heritage and have, through their use in schools, contributed to the emergence of Brazil’s transcultural identity.

One of the central leitmotifs of *Transcultural*, which is to look with a new perspective at things familiar to detect new aspects, was incorporated in all presentations. Whether the discourse on fair play in sports encouraged a deeper contemplation on our society’s general attitude towards fairness, or the interwoven connections of cultural identities with games and their material, linguistic and ethnic expressions and realizations were being presented to the audience, the comments and responses demonstrated how a transcultural dialogue can work.

Fairness and ethical principles in sport hereby functioned as the temporal bracket of the symposium. Klaus Steinbach, the former president of the German Olympic Committee and a former world swimming champion himself, illuminated the adaption of the fairness principle in the olympic sports and the IOC administration. Peter Müller, the final speaker and Minister President of the federal state Saarland, stressed the importance of the fairness principle not only in sports and games, but in the broader context of world politics.

This *Transcultural* symposium has again both celebrated and problematized the variety of cultural expressions. The heterogeneity of concepts and the diverse implementations of a universal phenomenon discussed during the conference was impressive. What struck me as the most significant contribution to the transcultural discourse was that the conference managed to comprise decidedly different approaches and fields of research within an inviting motto that encouraged enthusiastic responses to the presentations as well as lively discussions in the breaks. Finally, one has to gratefully acknowledge the assiduous support of the conference team, who, among other things, organized simultaneous translations in the conference’s three languages German, English and French, which guaranteed a truly trans-cultural exchange of ideas.