

Reports and Reviews

The 34th AEDEAN International Conference

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One of the inspiring figures for the 2010 annual meeting of the Spanish Association of English and North-American Studies, which was held at the University of Almería on 11-13 November, was a writer who was connected briefly with the city of Almería in the first decades of the twentieth Century. Aldous Huxley, the most travel-wise of writers, stopped in the city in a tour around Spain in 1929. It is not known how long he stayed, but enough for him to receive a strong impression from the naked landscape, which he reflected in the poem "Almería", published in 1931, which contains the line: "You have the light for lover. Fortunate Earth!" In the mid-November days of the AEDEAN conference the participants had indeed the opportunity to stroll around the sunny and open campus of the University of Almería and also to listen to some enlightening lectures. As it is traditional in the annual gathering of AEDEAN, contemporary writers have an outstanding role. This year the organizing committee invited American short story writer and novelist Moira Crone, past winner of the William Faulkner-William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition and recipient of the Robert Penn Warren Award in Fiction 2009. Moira Crone revisited Eudora Welty's stories set in the Mississippi Delta having in mind the recent ecological disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The overwhelming feeling of unease before nature in the stories by Welty may bring to readers an uncanny sense of displacement made now stronger by the Summer 2010 oil spill. English author Toby Litt, nominated in 2003 by *Granta* magazine as one of the "20 Best Young British Novelists", was the second writer invited to the conference and his talk dealt with the topic of literature and technology, how writing was altered nowadays by a technologically driven culture. Litt wondered what kind of future literature had in a world where technology begins to alter human subjectivity and even to dictate what humans are.

Moira Crone and Toby Litt were the only writers at the conference but not the only plenary speakers to talk about literature. Prof. Aída Díaz Bild, from the University of La Laguna, expanded on the essayist and novelist Elizabeth Hamilton and her celebration of the "cheerful, pleased, old maid". According to Prof. Bild, this 18th-19th-century woman writer used her works to praise single life and raise the status of the spinster, traditionally subject of scorn. Elizabeth Hamilton was the first one to denounce the harsh reality of women's lack of economic independence and to demystify the image of marriage as the only means of achieving self-respect. Dr. Juana Marín Arrese, Professor of English Linguistics at Complutense University, Madrid, delivered a plenary lecture on stance-taking and subjectivity, exemplified in the communicative strategies of two contemporary politicians, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Prof. Marín Arrese presented a model for the analysis of stance-taking in discourse on the basis of two macro categories, the effective and the epistemic, drawing on an extensive bibliography of scholars who have explored this field of studies. The model Prof. Marín Arrese presented at the conference accounts for the ways in which stancetaking is related with subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Finally Prof. David Britain, from the University of Bern, who kindly accepted to substitute at a very short notice for Prof. Peter Trudgill, unable to come due to a minor accident, spoke about mundane mobilities, innovation diffusion and language change. According to Prof. Britain, demographic developments such as urbanisation and counterurbanisation have left their mark in the language. He presented a number of cases of language change in a number of rural and urban locations in East Anglia in Eastern England, which

enable scholars to tease apart the urban hierarchical influences of working class communities in cities from the counterurbanising influences of more middle class city out-migrants.

As is common in the academic gatherings of AEDEAN the approximately 200 participants divided their time between the plenary sessions and the exposition of their own papers. The different panels (19 in all) covered all the areas related to English studies, from Cultural Studies to Short Story in English, from Phonetics and Phonology to Historical Linguistics. It is not possible to describe here the many interesting debates that took place during the three days of the conference. Some of these sessions, however, deserve a special mention because of their originality: participants at the conference had the opportunity to attend a round table on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* carried out by leading experts on the work of the English visionary writer. The session was chaired by Prof. Bernfried Nügel, Director of the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies at the University of Munster, Germany, and counted among its participants James Sexton, from Camosun College, Canada, and Isaías Gómez López, from the University of Almería, who has recently translated into Spanish the complete poems of Huxley. The round table revisited Huxley's most famous novel and provided an overview of the categories in which Huxley's dystopianism manifests itself. In a completely different field another thought-provoking round table also tackled important issues which affect us all, namely, the role of English Studies in the European Higher Education Area. At the time when many Spanish universities have already implemented their degrees to the Bologna standards, after five years of ECTS piloting, it was considered a right time to take a pause, examine what has been done and address some of the key issues which the language teaching profession is facing. The round table, which was chaired by the author of the highly acclaimed *English Language Teaching in the European Credit Transfer System: Facing the Challenge* (2009), María Luisa Pérez Cañado, from the University of Jaén, paid special attention to the challenges involved in adapting to a competency-based model of language teaching and in making the shift to student-centered methodologies in language education. Other round tables were the venues chosen by members of different research groups to expose the results of their scholarly work. That was the case of the presentation from five lecturers from the University of A Coruña, chaired by Prof. Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos. Their project deals with the interaction of music and literature in Ireland and Galicia; it is firmly grounded in historical facts and in a solid theoretical framework.

As regards individual papers, heterogeneity was the norm. One of the recurrent traits, at least in literature studies, was to examine recently published works in the light of classic writers. Thus, Antonio Ballesteros González, from the Spanish Open University, gave a highly interesting talk on the influence of James Joyce in the autobiographic trilogy of the 2003 Nobel Prize Winner J.M. Coetzee. Christopher Rollason compared the Parisian tales of two non-Parisian writers, Edgar Allan Poe and the Argentinian Julio Cortázar. The panel of Critical Theory offered quite a few revealing papers, including "Poetry and Cultural Memory: the Work of Mourning and Beyond" by Prof. Esther Sánchez-Pardo, from University Complutense. Prof. Sánchez-Pardo reflected wisely on issues on mourning and trauma, engaging with the issue of art and its condition in the world today, always at risk of masking the reality of suffering, either by suffocating or turning it into an object of pleasure for the spectator.

Together with established professors, an academic gathering such as the annual meeting of AEDEAN provides the opportunity for the research of promising scholars to be confronted with the critical comments and questions of their peers, thus validating the very existence of conferences as a meaningful forum for knowledge and a site for debate. This year young researchers occupied relevant spaces in the panels of, among others, Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Language Teaching and Acquisition and Postcolonial Studies. Likewise, the panels related to the general field of Linguistics proved that their discipline was in a constant dialogue with the surrounding reality of modern societies. Antonia Sánchez Macarro and Nicolás Pino James, from the University of Valencia, gave a joint paper on the pragmatic power of the words used in the American TV show

South Park and Carmen Gregori Signes, from the same university, expanded at large on the fast-growing field of digital storytelling, stressing the fact that the emerging genre of socio-political storytelling has the potential of becoming a powerful tool that individuals can use in order to bring up issues that may affect social stability. Other relevant papers in the fields of linguistics had to do with the study of the grammar of British teenagers' language, by Ignacio Palacios Martínez, from the University of Santiago, or with the lessons that can be obtained by comparing new Englishes with the history of English, by Cristina Suárez Gómez, from the University of Illes Balears.

One final comment should be devoted to one of the panels that have consolidated in recent years in the AEDEAN conferences; that of the Short Story in English, efficiently run by Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, from the University of Valladolid. One of the papers of this panel, given by one of the organizers, José R. Ibáñez, from the University of Almería, delved into the mythological images and war metaphors in "The Ice Garden", Moira Crone's acclaimed short story, the 2004 winner of the Faulkner/Wisdom Prize. Among the audience was the author of the story herself, something rather unusual in this kind of conferences, who provided perceptive comments on the genesis of her fiction and even expressed her surprise at the many aspects that she had not paid attention to in her own work. This anecdote, which is illustrative of the friendly atmosphere that reigned at the University of Almería during the three days of the conference, gives an accurate image of the global state of culture nowadays, with a North-American author discussing her narrative with scholars in a Southern Mediterranean city, and it also perhaps transmits the idea that literature is bigger than any personal experience, including that of the writers themselves.

'Burns and Beyond' – A One Day Conference Hosted by the Centre for Robert Burns Studies – University Glasgow, 15 January 2011

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The University of Glasgow has had an unquestionable historical role in the study and development of Scottish Literary Studies since the early 20th century. It was here, in fact, that the first Chair of Scottish History and Literature was founded in 1913, that the first Department of Scottish Literature was opened in 1971, and it is here, in the College of Arts, with the involvement of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies, that the first World Congress of Scottish Literatures will be hosted, from 2-5 July 2014. In many ways, then, it seems extremely appropriate that its Centre for Burns Studies should have established itself as a leading institution in the ongoing critical revision of the work of Scotland's most revered and epicentral modern writer.

The conference, held on 15 January 2011 at the University of Glasgow, provided an excellent opportunity for the Director of the Centre, Dr. Gerry Carruthers, editor of the recently published *Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), to showcase the innovative projects and events the Centre has engaged with (www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/research/researchcentresandnetworks/robertburnsstudies/), among these the forthcoming Oxford University Press complete critical edition of the poet's work, recently funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council with a grant of £1 million. The opening presentation, by Dr. Pauline Mackay (University of Glasgow), provided an overview of the AHRC-funded Beyond Text Project, 'Robert Burns: Inventing Tradition and Securing Memory, 1796 – 1909' led by Professor Murray Pittock of Glasgow University and Professors Christopher Whatley and Murdo Macdonald (University of Dundee: www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/research/burns/). The project, based at the University of Glasgow, incorporates literature, history and history of art, and aims to document the full range of Robert Burns's memorialisation through objects and public monuments. This research will enable the whole range of images and items used in the transmission of Robert Burns'

reputation into the sphere of cultural memory to be openly available for study or consultation in one place. Mackay used a variety of images gathered by the project team to demonstrate some of the key research findings of the project, paying particular attention to the commemoration of Burns's most iconic work, 'Tam o Shanter', in material culture, and demonstrating that scenes and quotations from it were often appropriated from masculine objects such as those associated with cutting (razor hones), smoking (snuff boxes) and drinking (whisky jugs etc). Frank Shaw, editor of the popular website *Robert Burns Lives!* (www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns.htm), led the audience on an intriguing virtual tour of the Burns resources on the Internet, demonstrating the vitality of the Burns myth throughout the centuries and across borders. His talk also alerted the audience to the value of a website which admirably combines academic articles by some among the leading international experts in the field with contributions of more general interest, and is thus easily accessed and enjoyed by an ever-growing number of Burns scholars and 'fans' across the globe. Among the contributors are G. Ross Roy, David Purdie, Gerry Carruthers, Billy Kay, R.D.S. Jack and Kenneth Simpson, while articles cover disparate topics and issues, from bio- and bibliographical information, to metrical, language and genre issues, law and order, gender, slavery, sex and bawdy. Dr. Valentina Bold, of Glasgow University's Dumfries Campus, delivered a paper entitled 'Jean Burns to Mrs Riddell: the discovery and repatriation of a letter from 1804.' The letter, discovered accidentally in a New York junk-shop by Dr Nancy Groce of the American Folklife Center at the of the Library of Congress, was donated to the National Library of Scotland on January 25th 2009. Thought to have been written by or for Jean Armour to Maria Riddell, it reveals interesting details of both the sender (Burns's wife) and the recipient (an author, poet and confidant of Burns as well as one of the patronage circle which had surrounded him) and also tells of some of the enduring bonds within the Burns family. The letter, written at a time when both Jean Armour and Maria Riddell were young widows, conveys a domestic and yet assertive portrait of Jean, who appears as articulate, polite and devoted to her family. Sir Kenneth Calman's lecture on 'Remember Tam o' Shanter's Mare: A Study of Burns and Health' offered a fresh perspective on Burns's work through a fascinating exploration of medical metaphors and references to 18th-century Scotland's problems of health and illnesses in Burns's work. Calman pointed out that Burns was familiar with traditional medicine of the time and had access to contemporary books on health, as shown by his reference to a very popular medical book of the time, *Buchan's Domestic Medicine* (by William Buchan, 1729-1805), in "Death and Doctor Hornbrook". Among his most famous poems that engage with health problems are "The Twa Dogs", dealing with psychosomatic illness, and the "Address to the Tooth Ache", in fact covering, beside dental conditions, a kaleidoscopic range of symptoms ("When fevers burn, or ague freezes, / Rheumatics gnaw, or colic squeezes..."). Calman's lecture closed with an overview of Burns's exploration of the quality of life and happiness, related to that of health and illness, and similarly focused on emotions and values beyond purely material concerns.

Dr. Natalia Kaloh Vid of the University of Maribor, Slovenia, presented a paper on the 'Ideological adaptation of Robert Burns's poetry in the former Soviet Union', examining to what degree and in what way ideology enforced in the Soviet Union as the official standard for art and literature influenced literary translations of Burns and what consequences this influence had. New ideological propaganda established in the Soviet Union after the October revolution dictated harsh restraints on literary production, aiming to purge Soviet society of all expressions regarded as threatening to the new order. It is in this historical period that Burns achieved quite extraordinary a status in the Soviet Union. Vid analysed in particular the ideological choices in Samuil Marshak's versions of Burns's poetry — possibly the most successful and popular translations of Burns in Russian to the present day. Translating Marshak's translations back into English, Vid analysed the differences between Burns's originals and Marshak's versions, thus highlighting the constraints and demands placed on the translator.

Prof. Nigel Leask of the University of Glasgow, author of the ground-breaking study on *Robert Burns and Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Oxford University Press 2010), closed the one-day conference with a memorable keynote address on 'Robert Burns and the Discovery of the People', informed by new archival research, and exploring Burns's relation with a pre-modern concept of popular culture, in the context of the late 18th-century Scottish and English re-vision of the idea of 'people.' Starting from Peter Burke's established study of *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978), investigating the rise of folk studies in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (when traditional popular culture was beginning to disappear and middle-class scholars engaged in a work of collection and 'preservation' of its oral expressions), Leask observed how Burns does not fully conform to the terms of Burke's study, both in his not being 'middle class' and in his articulation of a different social/cultural outlook. Leask effectively highlighted the extent to which Burns's case modifies Burke's scheme, thus proposing an innovative revision of the founding paradigm of this field of studies.

The conference was extremely well-attended by scholars, students and Burns fans who engaged in lively debate at the end of each session and enjoyed a further opportunity for discussion and exchange during the coffee-breaks, enlivened by Rod Paterson's music and by the Exhibition from the Hunter McQueen Collection of Burns memorabilia.

'Burns and Beyond' is one of a series of related events which, in the next five years, will bring the Bard's work to worldwide attention: among these the 'BBC Robert Burns Project', a huge online audio archive of Burns's works, featuring more than 700 poems recorded by some of Scotland's best-known figures, including Scotland's new national poet Liz Lochhead, Robbie Coltrane, Robert Carlyle and Brian Cox. Next year's conference will be held on 14 January 2012, jointly with the Distributed National Burns Collection, and it will feature papers especially on material culture and the afterlife artefacts (memorabilia etc.) of Burns.

***The Joycean Monologue*, by C. George Sandulescu, published online by Contemporary Literature Press, <http://editura.mttlc.ro/joyce.sandulescu.html>, 2010.**

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Literary criticism has always struggled for its share of creation and has usually been sentenced to fall short of it. In *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1864), Matthew Arnold concluded:

That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity.

In *The Function of Criticism*, 1923 (*Selected Essays*, 1932), T.S. Eliot – M. Arnold's direct follower – pushed the ostracism of critics even father when he stated that, as far as he was concerned, the only true critic was the creator himself.

I have chosen to publish C. George Sandulescu's *The Joycean Monologue* at the online publishing house which I have started recently, with the help of Bucharest University, the British Council and the Romanian Cultural Institute: the Contemporary Literature Press, <http://editura.mttlc.ro/>. I have chosen this critic precisely because he makes the reader feel that literary criticism is both judgement of creation and creation proper. Because he proves that criticism – when done properly – is by no means less important than any other branches of literary creation. Because George Sandulescu is a mind consumed by both ideas and words. I have always sided – in

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literary criticism – with those critics, usually a chosen few, who have the intelligence and the stamina to shout in church. I am still looking for those who will one day do so in the cathedral of cultural studies, I must say. It is bound to happen, if we believe Arnold when he describes criticism as

a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of **fresh and true ideas**.

I feel so close to *The Joycean Monologue* precisely because of this attitude, which Eliot defined thus:

The critic, one would suppose, if he is to justify his existence, should **endeavour to discipline his personal prejudices and cranks** – tares to which we are all subject – and compose his differences with as many of his fellows as possible, in the common pursuit of **true judgment**.

I take it to be an essential feature of the transitory human being that nothing comes in this world of ours to stay. Awareness of mutability, uncertainty as to how much we know or for how long what we know will be true, sounds like this in Eliot's view of the Function of Criticism:

There is a large part of critical writing which consists in 'interpreting' an author, a work (...) It is difficult to confirm the 'interpretation' by external evidence. To anyone who is skilled in fact on this level there will be evidence enough. But who is to prove his own skill? And for every success in this type of writing there are thousands of impostures. Instead of insight, you get a fiction. **Your test is to apply it again and again to the original, with your view of the original to guide you**. But there is no one to guarantee your competence, and once again we find ourselves in a dilemma.

When, in Episode Ten of *Ulysses*, Stephen begs to be 'shattered', he voices Joyce's own dislike of *beingless beings*, of creatures who make their own truth, or rather their 'dilemma' into a dogma and will not let it go:

...urged Stephen to be on. Beingless beings. Stop! Throb always without you and the throb always within. Your heart you sing of. I between them. Where? Between two roaring worlds where they swirl, I. **Shatter them**, one and both. But stun myself too in the blow. **Shatter me you who can**. Bawd and butcher were the words. I say! Not yet awhile. A look around.

George Sandulescu's *Joycean Monologue*, a Guide to *Ulysses*, apparently, is in fact a guide to shaking preconceived critical ideas. When Modernism came on stage (with *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, both of them published the very same year, the fatidic 1922), one idea became more 'shattering' than all the rest, and had that quality of shouting in church I find myself so drawn to: it was the implicit assumption that, maybe, the old fairy tales, handed down – written and read – from generation to generation, were no longer true, after all. Aesthetically, I mean.

A parallel could be drawn with the foundation of religion, the Bible. The challenge of religious dogma came much earlier than the Modernists. Martin Luther opened the way for the Bible's translation into all languages, and Gutenberg made publication – which led to fast spreading – possible. Eventually, priests were allowed to get married, confession was taken out of the way, communion became customary. Suddenly the priest was just another man. What else can the Modernists have desired if not to make their heroes more endearingly human to readers? What else can we want today of literary criticism unless it is to teach us the essential humanity of authors? To make us feel how close we are to them? It is my firm belief that what *The Joycean Monologue* does is to prove that the myth called Joyce must be shattered. That we must remember periodically that Joyce was not only an author; that before being an author, Joyce was just a human being. There is more room for understanding Joyce's text if we are aware of its endlessly ambiguous simplicity. In the opening statement of his book of criticism on *Ulysses* ('Briefly about Abbreviations & Episode Titles in this Book'), the author states:

I never follow standard editorial conventions unless I believe in them. Thus, in this edition, neither the Abbreviation System of Joyce's works, nor the naming of the individual Episodes of the novel follows the commonly used conventions. And for good reason.

The decision relies, among many other causes, on a conversation between Nabokov and Joyce, which any reader can easily find in Richard Ellmann's Biography of Joyce, and which G. Sandulescu quotes (p. 4):

Vladimir Nabokov recalled a conversation with James Joyce at dinner in Léon's flat about 1937. Joyce said something disparaging about the use of mythology in modern literature. Nabokov replied in amazement, "But you employed **Homer!**" "A **whim**," was Joyce's comment. "But you collaborated with Gilbert," Nabokov persisted. "A terrible mistake," said Joyce, "an **advertisement** for the book. I regret it very much."

The statement is so very similar to Eliot's (much later) recantation of his *Notes to The Waste Land*, in *To Criticize the Critic* – an essay published posthumously in the volume with the same title, in 1965, but written in 1961. What Eliot did was to deny the importance of all other literary sources – and he did use an impressive arsenal of meaningfully distorted quotes there, among which Homer, too – in the understanding of his TEXT. He stated that he regretted having sent so many readers and critics 'on a wild goose chase'. He meant by it that the text would have profited more by a different approach than stubborn recourse to other texts than itself. He realized it forty years after he had published *The Waste Land*.

What both Joyce and Eliot were doing was not really *rewriting the past*, reconsidering previous literary texts. Critics have taken this kind of decoding for granted, and it has now become the *Paternoster* of literary criticism. What the two major Modernists were aiming at, with more or less theoretical awareness, was to challenge the narrative universals of the Fairy Tale. The fairy-tale tradition in literature includes quite a number of well preserved writings, from Homer to the Bible and many other – now – classical, intangible, dogmatic texts. The Fairy Tale as a category of narrative texts relies on a plot which can be reduced to 'boy-meets-girl', ending in 'they lived (un)happily ever after'. Virginia Woolf called that 'love interest'. It also builds on the conviction that the story/plot cannot do without that order in which the past causes the present and the present causes the future. I have chosen to call that narrative universal 'chronological causality'.

In challenging nineteen centuries of literary tradition, both authors simply needed to be themselves. They rejected a tradition which was hindering them. That tradition was the Fairy Tale. How did they reject it? By changing its main tools, its narrative universals: chronology, character delineation, narrative language. They found out that there was no past which caused a present and then a future, because time either was present, or it became irrelevant. Past and future lost their sacred pedestal and consequently became humble now's. Not only humble, but very lyrically so. When the story lost its universals – that had never been questioned as dogmas in telling a story for centuries – it dangerously succumbed to lyricism. In order to put this into narrative terms (since both Eliot and Joyce were hooked on narrative), they resorted to the *interior monologue*, among other things.

Well, this is what *The Joycean Monologue*, as a Guide to understanding *Ulysses*, is trying to make us see. It begins by desacralizing Joyce's text – by making us aware that it is no more than a text. That the author is no less human, mortal or ignorant of eternal values, of meanings stated once and for all, than we all are. That 'all is fair' in literature, as in life. Or, to quote Joyce himself, as George Sandulescu does (p. 231), quoting Power:

– Then in your opinion, [Arthur Power] said, the critics and the intellectuals have boggled the issue, have not seen your intention clearly, and have put meanings into it which did not exist, which they have invented for themselves.

– Yes and no, replied Joyce shrugging his shoulders evasively, for who knows but it is they who are right. What do we know about what we put into anything? Though people may read more into Ulysses than I ever intended, who is to say that they are wrong: do any of us know what we are creating? Did Shakespeare know what he was creating when he wrote **Hamlet**; or Leonardo when he painted **The Last Supper**? After all, the original genius of a man lies in his scribblings: in his casual actions lies his basic talent. Later he may develop that talent until he produces a Hamlet or a Last Supper, but if the minute scribblings which compose the big work are not significant, the big work goes for nothing no matter how grandly conceived. Which of us can control our scribblings? They are the script of one's personality like your voice or your walk.

It has been seventy years since James Joyce died. This Guide to his *Ulysses* was first published in 1979, but its point is still valid, and will stay so. The parallel with the *Odyssey* may be one way of looking at *Ulysses*. Eliot was the first to claim it, and yet, twenty years after Joyce's death, he adapted his impulse to the true life of the text, rejecting all critical divagations from it.

I think this is what George Sandulescu does in his book. He fights Joycean critical dogma. Must we always refer to the *Odyssey* when we try to make sense of *Ulysses*? Time has passed for us, an even longer time than it took Eliot to recant his too heavy reliance on previous/other texts. The author of *The Joycean Monologue* resorts here to American New Criticism, prolongs its concern with poetry, in the 1940s, to fiction. He makes us see once more that, in literature, what matters is the TEXT. The rest is silence. Or, as he himself so aptly puts it,

The general purpose of Joyce's art of the novel is to present character in the lesser known and more unexpected facets as well as from other angles of observation. Consequently, he resorts to interior monologue to reveal his characters' 'unspoken and unacted thoughts in the way they occur'. And in order to do so, he embarks upon an arduous search for the possibility of saying much by saying little; and, by stating less, of implying everything.

The Joycean Monologue is a plea to the reader/critic to approach Joyce's text without preconceived ideas. If there is anything a good critic should fear in his work, that is a *parti pris*. He who dogmatizes Joyce to suit his own purpose does a great disservice to himself first of all. It is criticism that must adapt to the work examined, and not the other way round.

Along this line, we clearly understand from this Guide to Joyce that it is not Bloom the author identifies with, but Stephen. Bloom is too conventional, too weak in front of dogmas. Stephen is the one who thinks for himself here, who confronts dogmas single-handedly. He is also the mind that thinks in excess, that devours all reality – and here we must make a stop and view George Sandulescu's own website, <http://sandulescu.perso.monaco.mc/>, whose motto is, so close to Joyce's own credo, '*Tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre.*' The fascinating, seductive, irresistible core of Sandulescu's book is the fact that, once written, any book has a life of its own. *Ulysses* is no exception. The critic writes his study in order to set us free from previous bondage, but also to urge us to read afresh *the text*.

At this point we must pause and consider who C. George Sandulescu is. As Director of Princess Grace Library in Monaco, he organized major international conferences on James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett, which materialized in internationally acclaimed volumes. At this point he decides to publish one of his studies entirely online for the first time. The importance of online publication cannot be stressed enough these days. When she received the Press Release of *The Joycean Monologue*, Anne Skea (Ted Hughes specialist) wrote to me:

Dear Lydia,

Thank you for the link to C George Sandulescu's book. I am very interested in the current move towards internet publication and this is an interesting venture. I really think this is the way academic publishing should go, so that it reached the students who need to read the most recent releases and often cannot afford the prices now being put on academic publications. Recent books on Ted Hughes'

work have been published at £50 and £72 – an exorbitant price for anyone. Even many of the libraries can no longer afford that sort of price.

Criticism is indeed becoming an expensive commodity. I have started this publishing house in hopes of helping my students access contemporary critical opinion when they need it, not just when the new books can be afforded financially. The aim of the Contemporary Literature Press is to provide the graduate students of the MA programme I coordinate (Translation of the Contemporary Literary Text) with a critical attitude that I found in *The Joycean Monologue*: the thought-provoking frame of mind.

It is my sad belief that, from generation to generation, education keeps losing, not increasing whatever it is we think we know. My parents could boast with Latin and Greek – which I must admit I have lost. The intellectual loss is constant. We lose the old, we gain the new. Computer skills – this online publishing house included – are not to be neglected, of course. They make up for lost abilities. To some extent. What really makes up for the tragedy of education – it is tragic because it cannot be helped – is the one leading principle I have found in George Sandulescu's study. *The Joycean Monologue* relies on formidable mastery of literary criticism, linguistics, discourse analysis, philosophy. It is also a primer of how to think on your own. It finds a way of placing the Latin and Greek of Joycean interpretation in their rightful place. It focusses on critical survival by personal research, deep-probing independent thought. C. George Sandulescu was my professor once. I know what he means when he says he always see exams as just another exercise. He hates to conform to the Establishment – critical establishment in this case. He has taught me intellectual dissent. It is this dissent that will form the Joycean scholars of tomorrow – unless we imagine them as explorers of a dead text.

To conclude, I have chosen *The Joycean Monologue* for my students and for online publication, because it is as thought-provoking as Joyce himself was when he challenged the Fairy-Tale tradition in its narrative universals. Because it is an exhilarating, fascinating, piercingly human, forever fresh trip of the mind, body, heart and soul. It is a vibrant book in which the author writes himself while X-raying Joyce, and finding unexpected meanings in every word. Because it refuses to conform, and this is an attitude we can hardly do without. Because it is a plea for independent thinking and relentless interpretation of words. Because it tells us that the Function of Criticism is to think, and, by so doing, to steer clear of uninspiring dogmas.

Gregg A. Hecimovich. *Jane Austen's 'Emma.'* Continuum Reader's Guides. London and New York, Continuum, 2008. ISBN 987-0-8264-9848-9.

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Emma's little world of the past, a handkerchief of land sixteen kilometres from London, less than a mile from Randall and a stone's throw from Donwell Abbey, is one of the most complex topographic patches in the maps of western literature. The naïve Harriet Smith, assailed by a rowdy band of gypsies when she dares to venture beyond the claustrophobic shrubbery of Hartfield, will learn that the dangers are many. It is a world forged by tenacious gender constructs, superimposed teleologies of comedy, tiny personal catastrophes, menacing family constrictions, disquieting manifestations of Foucaultian surveillance disguised as benevolent village gossip, and associative thinking conjugated with the most misleading of indirect free speech. It is difficult for a critic to write a concise yet profound guide to this world that captures the infinite perspectives of the Highbury miniature, hallmarks of the perfect Austen novel according to many critics. It is also

sincerely difficult to write an interpretive summary for the table-sheet necessities of today's undergraduates. By remaining on the surface, one risks a sort of York Notes Advanced with a touch of extra ambition, but at double the price; by delving deeper, one exceeds the template of a series that commissions "clear, concise and accessible" studies, no-nonsense Readers with sprinklings of "themes, context, criticism and influence" to key works of the Anglo-American canon.

The text concocted by Gregg A. Hecimovich, it must be added, is launched on the highly competitive market of aggressive 'Austeneid.' Recent additions to this sprawling market are first-rate: Janet Todd's *Jane Austen in Context* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen, 2006) was joined early in 2009 by *A Companion to Jane Austen* (Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture), edited by Claudia Johnson and Claudia Tuite. Extremely useful critical compendia are still in circulation, such as Paula Byrne's *Routledge Library Sourcebook on Jane Austen's "Emma"* (Routledge Guides to Literature, 2004), with an excellent part dedicated to how the novel was received by critics and a detailed chapter-by-chapter reading, and *Jane Austen's Emma: A Casebook* by Fiona Price (OUP USA Casebooks in Criticism, 2007), with interesting reprints of essays that have now become classics. Besides these studies there are ambitious critical editions such as those of Norton (2000), Palgrave Macmillan (2002), and Broadview (2004), all fine packages with the merit of combining a scholarly edition of *Emma* with critical introduction, notes, sources and a substantial critical selection, all in the one volume.

These market considerations lead one to wonder about the target of Hecimovich's text. In the above mentioned editorial note, undergraduate students are specifically mentioned, and indeed this audience is on the author's mind, as shown by the brief series of useful "study questions" following each of the five chapters of the study. After a short introduction on the life, as well as the historical and literary context of Austen, Hecimovich concisely reviews "Language, Style and Form" (six pages) before moving on to "Critical reception and publishing history," likewise concise and dedicated principally to the critical fortune (and otherwise) of Austen in the nineteenth century, with a miscellany from Scott, Brontë, Eliot and Lewes. Only two pages remain for the twentieth century, which in my opinion may not be a happy choice. I wonder what students could acquire from the following list to improve their exam performance: "Prominent examples of the domestic Bildungsroman school of *Emma* include work by: Butler, Gilbert and Gubar, Kohn, Litz, Monaghan, Morgan, Mudrick, Nardin, Schrorer, Tobin, and Todd (see annotations in Chapter 6: "Guide to Further Reading for more about these studies") (83).

Coming now to the part that proves innovative and truly useful to the student, an interesting final chapter – "Adaptation, interpretation and influence" – presents a concise but engaging discussion of adaptations of *Emma* for television and cinema, starting with the first live performances recorded for the BBC in the late 1940s. The book closes with a detailed annotated bibliography in which the author resumes most of the critics cited in this study, organizing them in sections matching the chapters of the Reader. This part also contains interesting suggestions for further reading, which are not at all banal, even to the critical eye of the Austen scholar.

The most substantial part of *Jane Austen's 'Emma'* is the central part ("Reading *Emma*," 25-74), in which Hecimovich endeavours to achieve a difficult synthesis, enriching critical presentation of major interpretations of the novel with his own shards of analysis. A reading of the readings of *Emma* is nevertheless an arduous and ungrateful choice, as the golden list of critics cited by Hecimovich suggests: feminism, Marxism, neo-historicism, cultural studies, textual analysis, gender studies, down to the possibilities of (anagrammatic) deconstructionism. Faced with the greater sea of the critical "Emmapaedia," Hecimovich makes a courageous choice and concentrates on three threads: courtship, conduct and wellbeing. This selection again poses the question delineated above. Who is the true target of the book? If the criteria for compilation and selection behind the Continuum Reader are dictated by the needs of a study guide, will Hecimovich's

"Reading *Emma*" provide undergraduates with the magical "practical introduction" evoked in the editorial note?

This part of *Jane Austen's 'Emma'* is the most successful in critical terms and the least satisfactory in didactic terms. Instead of discussing aspects of the text with which examinees from any country or culture will probably be faced, Hecimovich chooses to dedicate almost ten precious pages of the chapter to discussion of the charade offered by Mr. Elton to Harriet (and Emma) in Chapter 9. It is unclear, for example, why he does not mention the importance of the dance, the epithalamic theme, male and female *Bildung* – whether concluded or *interrupta*, according to the interpretation – including a few predictable yet always useful examples of textual analysis. Hecimovich's discussion of the charade is obviously interesting, as we would expect from the author of *Puzzling the Reader: Riddles in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Peter Lang, 2008), but is it useful for undergraduates seeking a "practical introduction" to the text? The same can be said for the critical choice underlying the sections "Conduct" and the "Wellbeing." In the former, frequent reference is made to Thomas Gisbourne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, 1797, a book that Hecimovich rightly recalls as a "popular conduct book" in Austen's time, but that I doubt is at the fingertips of the average undergraduate of today. In the interesting section "Wellbeing," Hecimovich often refers to John Wiltshire's influential reflections on the discourses of body and health. He adds an unusually satirical reading of the elderly Mr. Woodhouse, depicted as nursing the aftermath of youthful syphilis before the open fire at Hartfield, linked to the analysis of risqué humour as in the classic article of Jill Heydt-Stevenson dedicated to the bawdy and the body in Austen. Again I wonder whether the average undergraduate, the theoretical but constantly evoked Ideal Reader of Continuum Guides, would profit from a critical choice that includes detailed discussion of the notorious pornographic riddle of David Garrick, "Kitty, a fair but frozen maid" but completely neglects even the briefest reference to the role of social performance in the novel or its dramatic intertextuality, especially Shakespearean.

Hecimovich's text is all this: agile without being exhaustive, appealing without being fully satisfying; it takes the undergraduate along a selected but not selective interpretive path that opens onto a critical panorama as wide as the view from Box Hill. The author seems at odds with the didactic imperative of the series and is most convincing when he succeeds in rising above it (and the well-rehearsed narrowness of the Reader) to offer a personal interpretation, where his pearls can shine with an extra spark of ambition, exactly as Mrs. Elton hopes to do when she goes to the dance at the Crown Inn.

An Laffut and Dirk Van Hulle eds., *English Text Construction*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2008.

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The first issue of *English Text Construction* centres around the notion of 'voice' – that of authors, narrators and fictional characters – and aims to describe the role played by the communicating subject(s) in the shaping of texts. It consists of a brief introduction and ten papers, the first five of which are linguistics-oriented studies on research/academic and speech-related writing. The following papers fall instead within the domain of literary studies and focus on the analysis of voice in European, American and Caribbean fiction.

The editors justly observe in the introduction that the traditional approach to the study of texts, based on a set of unambiguous expository principles, has to be complemented by the more dynamic view of meaning construction as a complex process resulting from the interplay of a number of variables. Appropriately, then, the volume opens with an article by Ken Hyland devoted

to a corpus-based analysis of the features of interaction between writer and reader in academic texts ranging from the so-called “soft-knowledge” domains of marketing, philosophy, sociology and linguistics to the “hard sciences” of engineering, physics and biology. In the first part of the study, a definition of the two somewhat overlapping concepts of ‘stance’ (speaker’s voice) and ‘engagement’ (reader involvement) is provided alongside a short but useful account of the terminological differences in the way the notion of voice has been dealt with in the recent literature. Author intrusion and reader involvement strategies – hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self mention, reader mention, directives, questions, knowledge reference and asides – are shown to find different expression in the various academic discourses under consideration.

Gabriela Rundblad’s contribution addresses the rhetorical strategy of impersonalisation in British English medical discourse. She demonstrates that authors make recourse not just to the passive voice in order to obtain generalisation and socialisation effects (as previous studies have mostly shown), but also use other key linguistic tools, e.g. metonymy. The study is restricted to the methods section of nine research articles published in the *British Medical Journal* between 1997 and 2004, but provides ample evidence of different types of metonymic constructions aimed at authorial suppression. However, since Rundblad’s paper is meant to aid “both native and non-native speakers of English in their scientific writing” other strategies to anonymise the author should have been taken into consideration in the methods section as well as in other parts of research articles, for instance the use of existential-*there* constructions, cleft sentences etc.

Gaëtanelle Gilquin and Magali Paquot’s paper is a clearly written, competently documented and insightful study of learner academic writing produced by upper-intermediate to advanced University students of English as a Foreign Language with different L1 backgrounds. The authors demonstrate that EFL learners are not fully aware of the stylistic features of academic discourse, thus producing “too chatty” argumentative essays. There appears to be a preference for an oral tone in writing reflecting the influence of speech on learners as well as L1 transfer, teaching-induced and developmental factors.

The linguistics section of the journal ends with Tine Defour’s interesting account of the text-structuring and expressive interpersonal functions of *well* and *now* from a diachronic perspective. Data obtained from historical corpora show that the propositional meanings of the two adverbs in question undergo a process of semantic bleaching to accommodate pragmatic developments. *Well* and *now* can both work as frame-markers and topic-shifters. However, while the former is backwards looking, the latter points forwards to an upcoming topic.

Barbara Straumann’s study discusses the role played by one of the three main characters’ voices in Henry James’s *The Bostonians*. Verena Tarrant’s voice is portrayed as a complex means through which boundary dissolution is metaphorically represented. Straumann argues that the impersonal nature of Verena’s voice signals, on the one hand, lack of interiority as well as permeability to external suggestions and, on the other hand, “fullness” in its ability to resonate everywhere. As a vehicle of publicity, Verena’s voice is here said to express both “collective embodiment and individual disembodiment”.

Kathie Birat’s account on the effects of orality in Robert Antoni’s *Divina Trace* starts with a useful, concise description of the notion of voice in fiction by considering the various theoretical contributions given in recent studies on textuality, narratology and discourse structure. Birat then examines the use of orality in Caribbean fiction and its capacity to modulate the narrator-narratee relationship. Text excerpts from Robert Antoni’s *Divina Trace* are taken to exemplify how distance and proximity between writer and reader can be created by making recourse, respectively, to complex linguistic devices typical of written language and to different forms of oral storytelling. These latter (e.g. the use of vernacular vocabulary and dialectal syntax) engage the reader directly, thus making him/her feel part of the context of the conversation.

The voice under scrutiny in Annie Ramel's paper is that of Tess in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The main character of the novel appears to have her voice "stuck in her throat", so that her appearance and her "silent cry" more than what she actually vocalises come to play a predominant role in the story. Ramel provides a psychoanalytic interpretation of this silence and compares it to other examples drawn from painting. The two Lacanian concepts of 'object-voice' and 'object-gaze', however, would require a more detailed explanation for a better understanding of the analysis. Ramel concludes by making reference to the question of femininity versus masculinity as emerging in relation to the need of suppressing Tess's voice in favour of "phallic order".

Claudia Desblanches analyses the "hidden voices" that can be heard in the short prose of three American writers, namely Flannery O'Connor, Patricia Eakins and Barry Hannah. These authors make use of different techniques, Desblanches argues, in order to convey meanings going beyond what is explicitly stated or conventionally signified. O'Connor, for instance, achieves effects of irony through the use of syntactic disjunction, phonograms and mispronunciations; gentle rhythm in Eakins's prose seems to mitigate the excesses of her imagination; and music even penetrates language in the case of Hannah's prose.

Pascale Tollance addresses the issue of intertextual voices in Graham Swift's *Waterland* and *Last Orders*. The two works are here described as being characterised by the disappearance of an authoritative voice which seems to mirror one of Swift's dominant motifs, i.e. the absence of a father figure. This latter is reflected in the fragmented nature of Swift's narratives which see a multiplication of voices. Tollance maintains that the lack of a unifying narrating voice symbolises the dissolution or the crisis of representation of the individual, as if to say that one's self were defined through others' voices.

Finally, Josiane Paccaud-Huguet draws upon Lacan's concept of 'extimacy' to show how voice in James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield and Joseph Conrad is not directly involved in the communicative, literary process, but rather emerges 'silently' from textual signifiers ('textimacy'). In other words, voice 'speaks' for itself through the use of peculiar language features which objectively give body to the author's style. Just like in the case of Munch's *The Scream* or Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* the author's voice remains stuck in the throat, but can however be clearly perceived. Through examples taken from the works of the three writers, Paccaud-Huguet shows how signifiers in modernist fiction can take on an acousmatic power capable of either letting the authors' voice speak or of silencing it.

English Text Construction is an international, peer-reviewed journal published by the Belgian Association of Anglicists in Higher Education (BAAHE). This first issue already proves to be a valuable collection of contributions exposing readers to current developments in text analysis and research. As such, it shows great promise for the series. So let us welcome this mature new English Studies journal!

Jonathan Culpeper, Francis Katamba, Paul Kerswill, Ruth Wodak and Tony McEnery (eds.) *English Language. Description, Variation and Context*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

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English Language. Description, Variation and Context is a project launched by a group of scholars who, at the time this book was written, were all based in the Linguistics and English Language Department at Lancaster University. The volume is devised as a textbook for University students of English, and although it is mainly addressed to undergraduates, it is also undoubtedly useful for those who already have some background in the study of the English language and English linguistics. It is a comprehensive survey, covering both core, structural areas in the study of language, such as phonology, morphology and syntax, and also areas which are perhaps seen as more peripheral but which have been gaining presence over the last few decades, such as the use of language in context (e.g. gender, politeness, language and politics). The aim is to provide the basis for the study of English at a University level, from its origins to its present-day position as a global language.

The volume is divided into six parts, preceded by a short introduction by the editors (chapter 1), and closing with a chapter of conclusions plus a bibliography and index. Each of the six parts is coordinated by one of the five editors: *English: Structure* (editor: Francis Katamba); *English: History* (editor: Jonathan Culpeper); *English Speech: Regional and Social Variation* (editor: Paul Kerswill); *English Writing: Style, Genre and Practice* (editor: Jonathan Culpeper); *Communication and Interaction* (editor: Ruth Wodak), and, finally, *Learning and Teaching* (editor: Tony McEnery).

Part 1, devoted to the Structure of English, is organized into ten chapters on the various traditional areas of linguistic research: phonetics and phonology (both at the segmental, chapter 3, and suprasegmental level, chapter 4), word-formation, grammar (chapters 6, 7 and 8), semantics, pragmatics and a chapter on text linguistics. The most immediate aim of this first part is to provide students with a very sound basis in all aspects of language description, with a particular orientation towards the diversity of English (the chapters on phonetics and phonology, for example, avoid any bias towards Standard British English and RP). The chapters on grammar presuppose no previous knowledge of grammar and essentially introduce the student to the basics of traditional grammatical description. They would serve as a good basis for those who want to move on to more sophisticated reference grammars, such as Quirk et al. (1985) and Biber et al. (1999), or the *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002), which students might do during their courses, or when pursuing postgraduate studies. The chapter on semantics likewise focuses on "the traditional view of semantics" (p. 187), although both here and in the chapters on grammar students are made aware of different approaches to the study of these areas and of diverging terminology, something which often causes problems for the beginner.

The second group of chapters is concerned with the history of the English language. It should come as no surprise that a book like this, which takes the study of variation as one of its leitmotifs, should start the diachronic part with the recognition of the diversity in the history of English. There is also a very valuable reflection on standard English and standardization (chapter 12), which will serve as an introduction to Part 3, on regional and social variation.

The diachronic study of English is organized into levels of analysis, showing a parallel structure to Part 1. I particularly liked how the treatment of the history of English touches on

contemporary changes such as the development of Estuary English and the use of the German prefix *uber-* in intensification, which certainly helps to attract students to an area of linguistics which can be difficult for students to engage with. As was the case with the chapters in Part I, no particular current is followed here (despite the cognitive slant of chapters 16 and 17), but the traditional views on change are complemented with perspectives from other approaches, such as grammaticalization theory, the study of regularity in semantic change (cf. the work by Elizabeth Traugott), and the generative approach *à la* Lightfoot.

While in Part 2 the emphasis was on diachronic variation, the book also studies current variation, as both the result and the reason for language change. Part 3, then, focuses on synchronic diversity, with chapters on English dialects, the impact of social class and ethnicity on variation, the development of pidgins and creoles, and English as a global language. Taken as a whole, this part also provides a good introduction to the basics of sociolinguistics, and to approaches such as the Labovian method and the social network method introduced by the Milroys.

Part 4 is mainly concerned with the written language, and pays attention to different genres and text-types, such as journalistic language, the language of advertising, and literary language, as well as to literacy and the impact of the new technologies. In these chapters we also find very detailed analysis of illustrative examples of the different text-types described.

Part 5 is perhaps the most innovative, covering aspects of the study of language which are not so frequently dealt with in university syllabuses. It is concerned with the study of language in context, with chapters devoted to conversational analysis, language and power, politeness, the role of gender or sexuality in language use and the use of language to construct gender, sexual identities, that is, different areas in which discourse analysis can be a valuable tool. The inclusion of Part 5 in a textbook like this shows that the study of language makes sense in a career-oriented world like ours; the study of language and the issues raised are relevant not only to linguists or philologists but are central to a great number of professions, from journalism, publishing and marketing to politics.

Finally, the last three chapters are devoted to the learning and teaching of English, both in educational contexts, paying attention to TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages), and to the role of language in classroom interaction, as well as outside the school. The chapter on the acquisition of English by native children is especially interesting.

The volume overall has two central characteristics which are certainly worth mentioning. One is its coverage: it is a comprehensive survey of the topics pertaining to the study of the English language (despite the caveats conveyed by Alderson and Culpeper in the chapter of conclusions), and of the different methodologies that can be used (both quantitative, corpus-based, and qualitative analyses are presented in the different chapters). The other is the fact that we are dealing with a textbook based on research: it reflects the most salient research of each field, and refers to research by the individual chapter-authors. This makes it suitable for advanced students, who are directly addressed in the 'Advances boxes' found in each chapter, where controversies, debates and new perspectives are presented. Also directed to the advanced student are the references for further reading which close each of the chapters, and which contain the most up-to-date basic bibliography in the field. All this is done with a very accessible style, attaining the difficult balance between simplicity and rigour, which demonstrates the years of teaching and scholarly practice of the contributors.

The focus on English in its diversity makes the book attractive not only to native speakers of English, who will see their own variety reflected and studied, but also to foreign students, who are usually only acquainted with the Standard and RP pronunciation. To conclude, *English Language. Description, Variation and Context* is, to borrow Bernd Kortmann's words on the book's cover, "a most useful companion for any student, undergraduate or graduate, of English and the linguistics

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of English," a book we can certainly recommend to our students, both in universities of the English-speaking world and elsewhere.

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Jürgen Jaspers, Jan-Ola Östman and Jef Verschueren (eds), *Society and Language Use. Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights 7*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010.

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Society and Language Use is one of the ten volumes published in the series *Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights*, which complements the *Handbook of Pragmatics* (HoP) published in 1995 and the *Handbook of Pragmatics Online* (HoP Online). The HoP and HoP Online continue to provide state-of-the-art information in the field of pragmatics for students and researchers, while the aim of the *Highlights* is to pinpoint the most salient issues in a manageable way. This is a worthy endeavour, considering the diversity of the field of pragmatics today. Each book in the series contains an up-to-date overview and 12–20 of the most relevant HoP entries on the topic (p. xi–xii). *Society and Language Use*, the seventh volume in the series, includes an original introduction by Jürgen Jaspers and nineteen entries that can also be found in the HoP Online. The articles portray the interplay of language and society from multiple perspectives including influential theories, research paradigms, particular language practices, and contextualizations of language use. Many of the articles highlight the origins of the type of research or thinking discussed. The introduction offers a concise historical overview of research dealing with language and society. The historical survey is intended as a background to the “intellectual antecedents” of the contributions in the volume (p. 2), although the choice of this particular selection of articles is not explicitly motivated.

The emergence of interest in social aspects of language use discussed in the introduction recounts the familiar story of a counter reaction to Chomskyan formalism in the 1960s and 1970s. This inspired a range of new research topics, including Labov’s correlational sociolinguistics, Fishman’s sociology of language, and Gumperz and Hymes’s ethnography of communication (p. 5). Despite methodological differences, these trends and their later developments share an interest in social meanings of language variation and practices beyond standard languages, the symbolic and indexical dimensions of language, and a critical concern for marginal, non-elite groups (p. 5–6). These themes are covered in the entries, many of which particularly highlight the social relevance of linguistic research in understanding societal power relations (e.g. John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton’s “Authority”, Donna Patrick’s “Language dominance and minorization”, Paul V. Kroskrity’s “Language ideologies – Evolving perspectives”, Tove Skuttnabb-Kangas’s “Language rights”, and Nikolas Coupland’s “‘Other’ representation”).

The introduction also offers a brief historical overview of social theories that have served as a source of inspiration for language scholars and linguistic theories; this seems to be the direction of influence in most cases. Influential social theorists include Goffman, Bourdieu and Giddens, who also feature in many of the entries. In the 1970s Goffman’s focus on face-to-face interaction as a distinct level of social organization influenced linguistic theories like politeness theory,

interactional sociolinguistics and accommodation theory. Interactional sociolinguistics is introduced in the volume by Jef Verschueren and accommodation theory by Nikolas Coupland. Rod Watson's "Symbolic interactionism" discusses the early influence of Mead and Goffman. Later on, Bourdieu and Giddens have inspired integrationist approaches to language and society that recognize the meaning-making potential of communicative events on the micro-level and societal structures on the macro-level. For example, Laura M. Ahern's "Agency and language" and Richard J. Watts's "Social institutions" represent an integrationist understanding of agency. Barry Saferstein's "Cognitive sociology" deals with the influence of Cicourel and connects social processes with cognitive processes. Finally, current trends are singled out in the introduction. These include the focus on small-scale communities of practice like inner-city schools and other institutions where the participants are increasingly multilingual while the institutional discourses are monolingual (p. 13) and practices that cross national, institutional and cultural boundaries defying the notion of regular, largely unconscious and authentic language as they result in inauthentic, self-conscious or stylized language use (p. 14). For example, Monika Heller and Aneta Pavlenko's "Bilingualism and multilingualism" and Peter Auer and Carol M. Eastman's "Code-switching" focus on multilingual interactions. The third trend highlights the notion of discourse as semiotic human activity; according to Jaspers, the basic message of the book is "that language use and variation need to be approached as more than a linguistic issue" (p. 16). This is easy to accept.

The volume offers a selection of "key" articles by prominent authors showing how language and society relate to each other. Nonetheless, a more explicit thematic organization as well as a statement of the intended role of the various contributions would have been helpful and offered some added value in comparison to the HoP Online. Now, the relationship of the entries to the HoP Online is not entirely clear, nor does the reader know which entries are truly up-to-date. Sometimes the book and online versions seem to provide recently updated versions, like Ahern's or Kroskrity's articles, or even a more accurate representation, like the tables and figures in Li Wei's "Contact" that are a mess in the HoP Online. In other cases, both the book and the online versions seem to provide original contributions from the 1990s, like Coupland's "Accommodation theory", Helsloot's "Marxist linguistics", Watts's "Social institutions", Rampton's "Speech community", and Dittmar's "Correlational sociolinguistics". In some cases, the article may still serve as an introduction to the field, but in other cases, like correlational sociolinguistics, new developments have taken place since the mid-1990s and bibliographies are not quite up-to-date.

Manfred Pfister and Ralf Hertel, eds. *Performing National Identity: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008.

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All eighteen essays in this varied and fascinating collection are dedicated in some way to aspects of performance in the artistic and demonstrative senses: from Ralf Hertel's piece on *Cymbeline* to Gisela Ecker's on food, putting on a show of some kind is a central theme. But what comes across from the volume as a whole – and in this sense its whole is greater than the sum of its parts – is the fact that performing national identity is something we all necessarily do, without necessarily being aware of the fact that we are *performing*.

In his introduction Manfred Pfister explains that the book results from the first of a series of four conferences, *In Medias Res: British-Italian Cultural Transactions*, held in Berlin in 2006. The five sections follow a roughly chronological and thematic order. Werner von Koppenfels opens "Early Modern Literary Exchanges" with an essay on Giordano Bruno's English years (1583–1585), during

which his “stylistics of excess” was an integral part of the fruitful contrast between his own *italianità* and the Englishness of his surroundings and its inhabitants. There then follows co-editor Ralf Hertel’s analysis of the presentation of Italian characters in *Cymbeline*, most notably Iachimo, and in this essay we see that the construction, maintenance and reception of national identity is no simple matter of “us and them,” but, rather, a richly complex weave of history and perceived notions of history.

The second section is “Italian and English Art in Dialogue” and begins with John Peacock’s “Inigo Jones and the Reform of Italian Art,” which presents the architect and scenographer as one of the great Anglo-Italian artistic go-betweens. Indeed, Peacock cogently describes the process of “benign infiltration” by which Jones sought to bring Italian Renaissance art and architecture to England. The London International Exhibition of 1862 is the setting for Alison Yarrington’s detailed work on sculpture and national identity in which she concentrates on the British critical view of two Anglo-Italian and two Italian sculptors whose works were on display.

“Travelling Images” contains three essays – two dealing with poetry and poets, one dealing with typologies of feminine beauty. Barbara Schaff in “Italianised Byron–Byronised Italy” illustrates the two-way traffic of myths and conceptions of difference in society that fomented both images of Byron and many images regarding Italy. She writes regarding the famous opening of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*: “these lines invite emulation, and they were in fact easily appropriated by generations of tourists, who, for a moment, could rehearse the pose of the poet and the protagonist in a performative speech act on the spot.” And while our own images of Elizabeth Barrett Browning may tend to make us think of a poet and poetry much less performative and much more reserved, Fabienne Moine’s essay on the poems written in Florence shows us that Browning was very much caught up in the fervour of the Risorgimento. Stephen Gundle’s long and detailed “The ‘Bella Italiana’ and the ‘English Rose’: Reflections on Two National Typologies of Feminine Beauty” traces the development of the well-known stereotypes of feminine beauty and places them in a context in which they clearly, and interestingly, become endowed with political values.

The following four pieces in the volume are gathered under the title “Political Negotiations.” While it is already clear that politics are never far away when considering national identity, in this section political questions become overt. Pamela Neville-Singleton’s “Sex, Lies and Celluloid” tells the fascinating story of the 1941 Hollywood film, *That Hamilton Woman*, commissioned by Churchill and designed to encourage American participation in the Second World War. The perceptions and representations of national identities in and surrounding this film are indeed complex: the story of Emma Hamilton and Lord Nelson, with its Neapolitan setting and its Hollywood production, provide the cultural and political historian with a wealth of material to consider. Peter Vassallo’s “Italian Culture versus British Pragmatics: the Maltese Scenario” looks at what must be the single most interesting meeting point between the two cultures, and the two national identities. Anyone who has visited the island of Malta and who is at least partially aware of the two cultures cannot but be struck by the transactions that take place there on a daily basis. Vassallo’s essay is a useful summary of the history of those transactions at the linguistic, literary and political levels through the twentieth century. David Forgacs in “Gramsci’s Notion of the ‘Popular’ in Italy and Britain: A Tale of Two Cultures” deals with a word that is among the most insidious of false friends between Italian and English. The cognates *popolare* and “popular” are not synonyms and it is fascinating to read of this linguistic hiatus in a historical, cultural and political context, proof of the fact that the fortune of words is very much at the mercy of cultural and political shifts. The political section concludes with Carla Dente’s “Personal Memory / Cultural Memory: Identity and Difference in Scottish–Italian Migrant Theatre” in which the experience of the Italian immigrant community in Scotland and its expression in theatrical works of the 1980s is discussed.

“Contemporary Mediations” is the title of the last section, with its pun on mediation as negotiation and as cultural expressions found in contemporary media forms. Claudio Visentin indeed uses a theatrical metaphor in the title of his discussion of the ways in which tourism has generated and continues to generate cultural transactions: “During our holidays, we have energy and free time [...] and like amateur sociologists we devote much of it to observing and commenting on other tourists.” The core of Judith Munat’s “Bias and Stereotypes in the Media: The Performance of British and Italian National Identities” involves use of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis in illustrating the ways in which the press (British and Italian) reproduces and reinforces stereotypes and concepts of national identity. The cultural transactions inherent to translation are often overlooked in our tendency to concentrate merely on the linguistic matters related to the activity, but Sara Soncini’s “Re-locating Shakespeare: Cultural Negotiations in Italian Dubbed Versions of *Romeo and Juliet*” is a thorough and thoughtful analysis of the cultural strategies behind the Italian dubbing of two film versions, George Cukor’s of 1936 and Franco Zeffirelli’s of 1968. Film also provides the raw material for Mariangela Tempera in her consideration of how the concept of *vendetta* is transacted when it is transferred from Italian to British soil: “Something to Declare: Italian Avengers and British Culture in *La ragazza con la pistola* and *Appuntamento a Liverpool*.” The plot of this last film derives from the repercussions of one of the worst sporting disasters in recent history, 1985’s Heysel Stadium disaster, and the essay that follows deals specifically with one aspect of football. Anthony King’s “English Fans and Italian Football: Towards a Transnational Relationship” shows how the culture of European football supporters has changed since the 1970s, with club rather than national rivalries becoming more significant. And if football is a popular sport (and here the Italian *popolare* can be used as an adjective, though it does not have quite the same meaning), we cannot describe progressive rock music with the same term. Greg Walker’s “Selling England (and Italy) by the Pound” (quite simply the title – without the Italian parenthesis – of a 1973 Genesis album) looks at the transactions made between the British “prog” rock bands Jethro Tull and King Crimson and their Italian counterpart, Premiata Forneria Marconi, better known as PFM. In truth the transactions at work here were almost exclusively one-way with PFM attempting to absorb something of the Englishness of their colleagues’ work and yet failing in their attempts to “sell Italy” and their own musical *italianità* on Anglophone markets. As Manfred Pfister points out in his introduction, in matters culinary the cultural traffic is largely in the other direction: in “*Zuppa Inglese* and *Eating Up Italy: Intercultural Feasts and Fantasies*” Gisela Ecker shows us that food, glorious food is a constant source of cultural transaction. While the average Italian might well recognize the great British trifle as the prototype of his or her own beloved *zuppa inglese*, and the average Brit will certainly be delighted to follow Mathew Fort’s voracious instigation to consume all things Italian – *Eating Up Italy* being the title of his “gastro-travelogue” – food on the table is a cultural product that for obvious reasons we quickly acquire a most intimate familiarity with.

The collection is a large one and its subject matter varied, but ultimately the emphasis on *performing* is enlightening. In English we perform not just displays of skill or prowess, but we also perform even the most mundane of tasks: being Anglo or being Italian is mundane in the sense that we rarely stop to consider our national identity in any great depth while engaged in the many things that we do every day in the world. It is precisely the variety of the material dealt with in the collection – and the quality of the individual contributions – that leads to a realization of this fact.

Nick Bentley. *Contemporary British Fiction*. Edinburgh: EUP, 2008.

David James. *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space: Style, Landscape, Perception*. London and New York: Continuum, 2008.

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As Nick Bentley reminds the reader, only thirty years ago the death of the British novel was widely bruited. The situation of British fiction was never as dire as its most hostile critics saw it, and dismissal of the novel of the 1960s and 1970s always required the wearing of thick blinkers. It is hard to ignore Lawrence Durrell, Doris Lessing, B. S. Johnson, early Angela Carter, and early Eva Figs. But those who were reading contemporary fiction, as it was published in the late 1970s and early 1980s, were excited by early Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan and Graham Swift. It did seem a new generation had arrived, with striking thematic and technical ambitions. The predictions of demise were wrong. The British novel emerged in the 1980s as a lively and innovative kind of writing which both critics, scholars and general readers have taken very seriously. It has generated much good criticism; that criticism has even generated a provisional (one hopes, highly provisional) canon for contemporary British fiction – Rushdie, Martin Amis, Angela Carter, Zadie Smith. Both David James's and Bentley's books are solid contributions to the ongoing discussion of the subject, and both are to be commended for going beyond that limitation. I will devote more space to James's book because it is a traditional scholarly monograph, superficially more ambitious, the arguments of which need to be set out. Bentley's is more in the nature of a handbook for students and general readers. However, as will be evident in my remarks below, this focus on James's book is unfair to Bentley's excellent study; the latter's lack of assumption belies its excellence.

James's concern is with space in contemporary British fiction. In his Introduction, he argues that space has been neglected in analyses of narrative prose and as a focus for analysis of literary texts, and that space is important in narrative fictions, closely related to a range of other elements in the text, and bears meaning. He further suggests that the reader's involvement with depictions of place is complex and interesting, and that the way space is presented in fiction has political and social implications. In the following five chapters, James develops these arguments. Chapter 1 offers an examination of theoretical discussions of space and place in narrative texts, bringing in contributions by Georg Lukács, Mieke Bal, Christine Brooke-Rose, Joseph Frank and Susan Sontag, and observations on the subject by contemporary novelists, such as Maggie Gee, Caryl Phillips, and Rushdie. Place/space emerges as a surprisingly slippery term, but something that is clearly central to novelists' engagement with the technique of fiction, and very useful in critical analyses.

The remaining chapters contain detailed, intelligent and stimulating discussions of the role of space in four thematic groups of contemporary fictions: the regional novel, the London novel, the novel of memory, and post-colonial narratives. In the chapter on the regional novel, James demonstrates how Pat Barker and Adam Thorpe both provide detailed quasi-documentary/mimetic accounts of regional space, but also transform those landscapes into something replete with visionary energy. Thorpe identifies individual and landscape, and allows characters to take possession of their environment, through dialect; Barker transfigures the city through metaphor. The chapter on London novels is particularly fruitful. James demonstrates how contemporary novelists estrange the known city; the detailed actuality of the metropolis is infused with historical and mythic depths (Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair, Michael Moorcock) and with visions of its populations' ethnic hybridity (Monica Ali, Zadie Smith). Subsequent chapters contain complex

discussions of the intricate relationship between place and memory in Swift's *The Light of Day*, and Caryl Phillip's deployment of space and place to express the dislocations and unsettling perspectives of diaspora fiction.

James's is a good book. Its insistence that place and space are important in analysis of fiction is admirable; its discussions of individual texts are thorough and stimulating; his discussion of non-canonical figures like Sinclair, Phillips, and Trezza Azzopardi gives the book even more value. Criticisms of the study are that the language is at times opaque, and are based on one's concern that James implies, but does not substantiate, that contemporary novelists are doing something with space that, for example, Arnold Bennett, Ronald Firbank (even he!), Graham Greene, and Elizabeth Bowen are not. Even more worrying is one's sense that James is pushing against an open theoretical door. For many scholars, it is a given that space is important in literary analyses. After all, Bakhtin writes of the "chronotope," Lotman of the problems of artistic space. Michał Głowiński writes a lengthy entry on space in the standard Polish dictionary of literary terms. Franz K. Stanzel has a section on *Raumbeschreibung* in *Theorie des Erzählens*. In their excellent handbook *Literature* (9th edition), X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia devote a chapter to setting. Neither Bakhtin nor Lotman figure in James's index or bibliography.

Nick Bentley's book on *Contemporary British Fiction* is, on the other hand, to be praised without reservation. It is thorough, lucid, brave, intelligent, up-to-date, and extremely useful. Its discussion of the historical and theoretical contexts of British fiction between 1975 and 2005 is a model of insightful condensation. Its chapters on "Narrative Forms: Postmodernism and Realism," "Writing Contemporary Ethnicities," "Gender and Sexuality," "History, Memory and Writing" and "Narratives of Cultural Space" cover substantial amounts of narrative territory with clarity, tact and perception. The major writers and their novels are all there – Amis, Alasdair Gray, Smith, Rushdie, Carter, A. S. Byatt, Swift, and McEwan. But Bentley finds time and space for the (already? provisionally?) less canonical, for Courtia Newland, Nick Hornby, and Iain Sinclair. The Student Resources section with a list of websites and alternative primary texts is of value, and not just to students. The bibliography of general works and those on particular novelists is thorough and useful. This is an excellent overview of its chosen field, and a fine piece of scholarship.

Stephen Cheeke. *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.

Nic Panagopoulos, Athens, Greece

Stylishly produced and illustrated, as one would expect from a book on ekphrasis, with Frederic Leighton's emblematic and breathtaking *Orpheus and Eurydice* on the front cover, *Writing for Art* is not just a pretty face. The unassuming and very readable style of Stephen Cheeke's latest book is deceptive, considering that it explores not only the difficult relation between images and words, made fashionable by the "pictorial or 'visual' turn in contemporary culture" (2), but the ontological and epistemological assumptions of artistic representation as a whole, rendered topical by the revival of interest in aesthetics. And it is not merely in the fact that all cultural products have become indiscriminately classified as texts by contemporary semiotics that Cheeke finds his justification in analyzing their mutual reflections and refractions. The time-honoured tradition of poetic ekphrasis is used in the book as a springboard for a lively and informed debate about a variety of subjects ranging from the relationship between beauty and truth, to the mimesis of bliss and suffering in art, and from the politics of aesthetic contemplation to the surprising link between photography and elegy. Indeed, in consistently stressing the inseparability between the ethical and

the aesthetic, *Writing for Art* can be said to perform the very difficulty of the subject's assuming a position of power over the object, an unproblematized seeing leading to a secure sense of knowing.

It would be an interesting exercise to try and pick knits with this book given that no nuance in the subject seems to have been overlooked and no easy solution to the various theoretical problems proffered. Take, for example, the following seminal question posed in the Introduction and returned to throughout: "whether the visual may be thought of as a category available to any kind of pre- or non-verbal understanding," and inversely, "whether it is ever possible to encounter artworks meaningfully without words" (4). A similar crucial question relates to the assumption that there is an aesthetic hierarchy of sorts in which "the word is in competition to the image," while "the image has an advantage over the word since it is closer to life" (28). The reason why crucial questions like this finally remain unresolved in *Writing for Art* is not due to a facile postmodern indeterminacy, but that totalizing answers to broad philosophical questions are viewed as insufficiently attuned to specific cases which endlessly complicate the categories and call for an ever increasing sophistication of approach. Cheeke is wary of adopting a reductive approach and begins by asking "not what the term 'ekphrasis' means but how it has been used" (24) in the past. There follows a historical review of the theory of "verbal representation of visual representation" (24), from Platonic *mimesis* to Lessing's theory of *punctum temporis* or the "pregnant moment" found in the *Laocoön*. This paves the ground for the theoretical discussion of writing about art from Keats to the present day which is the author's main concern in the book since it coincides with the period of the museum and gallery and what Benjamin later called the "age of mechanical reproduction" (20).

The chapter on "Beauty and Truth" is indicative of the continuing relevance of aesthetic problems such as those discussed in *Writing for Art* for our understanding of culture and cultural politics (e.g. the gendering of the object as feminine and the subject as masculine). The history of Keats' famous aphorism "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" (47) is traced through its various critical transformations from Kenneth Burke's scatological "body is turd, turd body" to Andy Warhol's absurdist "beauty is shoe, shoe beauty". This has the serious purpose of revealing how seemingly self-evident concepts such as the beautiful are not stable or universally agreed on categories, but "historically determined and culturally mediated" (97). And if neither beauty nor truth are finally innate, as Keats' poetic epiphany would seem to assert (or is it perhaps that both concepts are equally relative?), then what does this say about the value or function of the artifact which is traditionally harnessed to such notions? It requires the deconstructive genius of a Beckett, as *Writing for Art* suggests, to undermine our aesthetic-ethical certainties by revealing that the sphere of art is not a place where natural, universal, a-historical values hold sway, but a site of potential oppression and, by extension, revolt. As Cheeke points out, Clov's alienation in *Endgame*, "his sense of being tyrannized by those who are able to speak of beauty and order and love, is actually or potentially the condition of anyone" (58).

There is a cumulative effect in the progression of the chapters of *Writing for Art* so while each one deals with a separate topic, they build on each other and contribute to an ever more complex picture of the overall subject. Thus, after the chapter on "Bliss" in which we find a wonderfully original reading of Robert Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" in relation to the questions of authorship which the puzzling epigram "*Iste perfecit opus*" raises, we have a chapter on "Suffering" and a nuanced interpretation of Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and the ethics of art appreciation. This is followed by "Illusion" which discusses the kind of faith required for us to suspend our disbelief to the artistic sleight of hand and believe in a poem or a painting and whether this faith is essentially different form that which we need to believe in our fellow human beings or indeed in our own 'reality'. The chapter on "Photography and Elegy" raises some interesting theoretical questions about the power of the photograph to suggest presence and absence, life and death, reality and unreality, simultaneously, as has been argued by Susan Sontag

and Roland Barthes. However, I must say that I agree with Roger Scruton's quibble, referred to in note 4, that photography is not a form of representation comparable to the visual or plastic arts and so writing about photographs is a somewhat different kind of activity from that analyzed so sensitively in Stephen Cheeke's book. *Writing for Art* ends on a high note with the chapter "Prose Ekphrasis" which discusses the very interesting case of Ruskin's criticism of Turner's *Slave Ship* which for some distorted the original and for others upstaged it, stealing the picture's glory. Thus it seems that criticism itself is a type of ekphrasis and, unbeknown to us, we have all been occupied in a rhetorical activity dating back to Aphthonius' Progymnasmata, Homer's description of Achilles' Shield, and Virgil's poetic rendering of the doors of Carthage's Temple of Juno!

In short, this is a stimulating and eloquent book that profitably bridges the gap between cultural theory, literary criticism, and art appreciation. The erudite yet lively style in which it is written means that it can be recommended to both students and experts in the field, while its interdisciplinary focus renders it a useful aid to anyone teaching poetry, art history, or the visual arts.

Jonathan P. A. Sell. *Allusion, Identity and Community in Recent British Writing*. Alcalá: Universidad de Alcalá, 2010.

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The five essays in *Allusion, Identity and Community in Recent British Writing* represent revised and expanded versions of material that Jonathan P. A. Sell has published as journal articles or in other forms between 2000 and 2008. The range of authors whose work is under scrutiny in the volume includes the most important names in recent British writing (Salman Rushdie, Seamus Heaney, Caryl Phillips and Zadie Smith) as well as the less canonical Bridget O'Connor.

The heterogeneity of the authors and works discussed does not prevent the collection from presenting itself as an organic enterprise, whose aim is to explore the role of allusion in the fictional textualisation of characters' identities. Indeed, the novelty of Sell's approach lies in the centrality he attributes to allusion as a means of identity construction in relation to different kinds of communities. The author distinguishes (although not categorically) between intertextuality and allusion by stressing "the subject's autonomy in playing the intertext" (16) in the latter concept. In other words, according to Sell, the use of allusion reveals the active part the subject plays in the process of his or her own discursive identity construction.

An important feature of the book is the synthetic introductory chapter which presents the theoretical framework for the investigation. Here, among major theoretical references, Sell lists Erving Goffman's thinking on identity as a presentation or dramatisation of the self alongside Jacques Derrida and his notion of *écriture* interpreted so as to include the narrative dimension of identity (15). The major components of Sell's thinking on the role of allusion in fictionalised identity construction are thoroughly illustrated throughout the essays that make up the collection. The discursive identities constructed in the works of contemporary British writers are discussed in a rhetorical perspective. By focusing on the effects triggered by the use of allusion, Sell describes and explains specific cognitive and empathetic processes which involve the reader on the one hand and the writer or the character on the other.

The underlying theme, which is the common thread running through the five essays, is the author's conviction that only a degree of contextual disparity makes cross-cultural identity different from other identities (17). Another of Sell's equally strong arguments states that meaningful (cross-cultural) communication is possible and can be viewed as a process of narrowing down a gap that exists "between the experiential and communicative biographies of receiver and

sender", a process that takes place both between subjects from the same culture and from different ones (18).

After the theoretical chapter, Sell embarks on a journey of close readings of some of the most important works in recent British writing. The first essay, "When writing back backfires: the Nabob of Bhanipur in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*" is dedicated to the study of the figure of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, a character created by Frank Richards in his Greyfriars schoolboy series. Applying the theoretical frame of imagology, Sell demonstrates that Salman Rushdie's effort to re-voke Richards's character in the likeness of Inspector Singh in *The Moor's Last Sigh* fails in its subversive intention of "writing-back". In his second essay, "Connotation and community in Seamus Heaney's 'Blackberry-Picking' ", Sell deals with the allusive construction of identity in relation to a national community. By analysing the intertextual references to Keats in Heaney's early lyric, Sell concludes that allusion here is deployed to signal rupture with the poetic tradition, the language of which is not adequate to express the collective identity of the community to which Heaney belongs.

The importance of allusion in narrative identity construction aimed at forming an ethnic community is revealed in the study undertaken in "Intercultural allusion and transcultural tragedy: two Othellos". Here Sell identifies the effects achieved through the use of allusive practice on the example of Caryl Phillips's re-writing of the Othello story in the novel *The Nature of Blood*. By evoking the Shakespearean pre-text but, at the same time, defamiliarising Othello by adding new features to the character, Phillips succeeds in disorienting and estranging the reader, a condition which is "mimetic of alien subjectivity" and which may contribute to the "reader's understanding of otherness by generating in his or her mind a replica of it" (95). As Sell goes on to prove, in this novel Phillips unveils a new ethical dimension of the trope of allusion which gives readers the chance to exercise "intercultural empathy" (97) and thus helps them to face the challenge of living in a multicultural society.

"Commodified identity and materialist allusion in the short stories of Bridget O'Connor" is a case study that illustrates how valuable materialist allusion can be when reflecting on the nature of a given society. O'Connor's stories excellently denounce a society's consumerist drive and tendency to depersonify in favour of material goods. However, Sell highlights the dangers of a community identity construction that is based so extensively on non-fictional elements of the material world: once its extra-fictional points of reference are no longer readily available, the texts may become unintelligible. The last essay, "Identity in the novels of Zadie Smith: the heterocosm writes back", presents Sell's understanding of the complex model of identity which is at the core of the works of the writer in question. Backing his argument with numerous references to the text of Smith's second novel, *The Autograph Man*, Sell warns against (easily) labelling the author as transnational, multicultural or neo-modernist, and rejects the simplistic explanation of Smith's identity construction as "hybrid". Instead, Sell goes back to Smith's literary origins, where he traces the roots of her perspective on the model of identity back "to her modernist mentors assembled around some Fosterian high table in the heterocosm" (144).

The book's main strengths are the richness of the material under discussion (as regards both theoretical references and primary sources) and the novelty of the analytical approach to such a hotly contested issue as the notion of identity. The deliberate choice to assign such a prominent role to a single rhetorical figure, that of allusion, is indeed original and very well supported throughout the essays by the examples found in texts. On the other hand, this exclusive attention to allusion can at times be perceived as reductive and seems unable, on its own, to account for the complexity of the issues at stake. However, the volume will undoubtedly appeal to a broad range of scholars engaged in the field of recent British writing, as it offers new insights into the strategies playing such a significant part in the intricate process of fictional self-expression.