

# The ESSE Messenger



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# The ESSE Messenger

A Publication of ESSE  
(The European Society for  
the Study of English)

Vol. 26-1 Summer 2017  
ISSN 2518-3567

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# Towards Common European English?

## People on the move, English on the move

### Reflections on English in non-native contexts in 21st century Europe

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**Abstract.** English has become a widespread means of communication between people who do not share the same mother tongue. On the one hand, this practice – which has even been claimed to constitute a distinct variety of English - has posed a challenge to the notion of standard in English in general and more specifically for foreign language learners of English. On the other hand, English is not only used for tourist, academic and business purposes, but also serves as a broker of communication for “newcomers” in European countries, which does not necessarily uphold the image of English as the language of opportunity.

**Keywords:** Standard English; Global English; English as a Lingua Franca; English as a Foreign Language; standard language

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades migratory movements in a broad sense have resulted in the firmly and widely acknowledged establishment of English as an almost spontaneous means of communication between people who do not share the same mother tongue. Various labels have been attached to this new form of English (e.g. English as a Lingua Franca, Global English, International English), and it has – rather controversially – been claimed to constitute a distinct variety of English. As such, it challenges existing models that attempt to capture the wide range of varieties of English. What is the impact of this tendency on the notion of standard in English in general and more specifically for foreign language learners of English, and on the role of English as a broker of communication for “newcomers” in European countries?

## 2. A repressed ‘standard’ for English?

For many centuries English has been the language of colonization. In literal terms it was the language of the British and American powers who colonized vast parts of the world, and more subtly it has been the language of sweeping cultural and economic globalisation since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. It is impossible to gauge the extent of speakers of English today. David Crystal has ventured various educated guesses over the past three decades, the last estimate to date being “in the

direction of 2 billion” (2008: 5). Clearly, only a small minority of these speakers can be described as native speakers of English. According to Crystal (2008), almost a decade ago, there are three or four non-native speakers for every native speaker. This makes the non-native speakers, in quantitative terms, a potentially powerful group, although the linguistic power remains with the native speaker population.

Kachru’s (1985) three concentric circles probably form the best known model to represent the different types of varieties of English, and it is also the model that neatly symbolizes this difference in power over language standards. The Inner Circle consists of English as spoken in countries where it counts as the native language of most if not all citizens (e.g. British English, American English, Australian English). The Outer Circle pertains to countries where English has an official status in the community without being the mother tongue of its members (e.g. Singaporean English, Indian English). The Expanding Circle, finally, is found in all countries where English is learnt as a foreign language (e.g. Croatia, Belgium, Peru). The literal centrality of “native” English could be seen as incorporating a hierarchy in which the Inner Circle varieties play a central role. This has led to criticism, and to alternative models that represent varieties on a par with each other (see e.g. McArthur, 1987). Kachru’s (1985) concentric circles have nevertheless remained highly influential until today, probably because on the one hand they succeed in capturing the historical relations between the major types of varieties while on the other hand retaining their validity and relevance amid changing complexities.

One of the most interesting debates in recent years has been the issue of the standard: should Inner Circle varieties still be regarded as the norm for English usage when their share has become so small in the total number of language users? Why would, in other words, a small minority impose strict rules on a majority of speakers that have no need for the full repertoire that Standard English has to offer?

In this light, Modiano’s (1999) description of varieties of English is nothing short of a Copernican revolution. He considers the features of what he calls “English as an International Language” as the common core of English that unites all varieties of the language, including the language as used by “foreign language speakers”. These, he believes, should form the basis of Standard English because they are “used and are comprehensible to a majority of native and competent non-native speakers of the language, and there are far too many obscure features in the speech of many native speakers to allow their usage a place in the designation ‘standard English’” (Modiano, 1999: 12). Apart from awarding certain non-native features a place in this new standard variety, Modiano would also ban native features. This approach is not unproblematic: what does it mean to use or comprehend a feature (in a specific context or in a wide range of contexts?), how can the majority of speakers be determined if we do not even know how many there are, what does it mean to be a “competent” non-native speaker (and...by what standard?), when does a feature become “obscure”, etc.?

In the unlikely event that a proposal like Modiano’s should ever receive wide acceptance, leading to a consensus whereby English as an International Language is awarded the status of a standard variety, the effect on Inner Circle varieties of English might be tremendous. Establishing English as an International Language



as the standard variety of the language would make English the only living language in the world that has no native speakers, apart from Esperanto perhaps. What is more, at its inception the variety would most likely not even have any language users at all possessing most, let alone all, of its features, as it is the result of a mostly theoretical enterprise to map features from many different varieties. More recently, Modiano (2009) has argued the case for a European variety of English similar to “New Englishes” in the Outer Circle. This “must accommodate the mainland European need to establish a sense of identity in the use of the language” (2009: 214), which would have a similar liberating effect as that generated by Outer Circle varieties, yet in this case delivering Europeans not from postcolonial forces but rather from Americanisation. One may wonder, though, whether Europeans do indeed feel a need to forge an identity through English, or rather merely see English as a gateway to information, career development, tourism, intercultural communication, ...?

### 3. What English for European learners?

The debate on standards has influenced the domain of English Language Teaching (ELT) as well. Learners of English in the Expanding Circle are numerous, and most of these are unlikely to use the language exclusively with native speakers of English. On the contrary, the chances are much greater for non-native speakers to engage in conversations in English with other non-native speakers. What kind of English should learners then be taught in the Expanding Circle? Traditionally, this has been the Inner Circle variety that is geographically closest to the learning environment, so in a European context British English has dominated, often with some tolerance for American English features.

A particular challenge to these existing norms and standards has been posed by English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which can be defined broadly as English as it is used as a means of communication between interlocutors who do not share the same mother tongue. As most learners come to use English in a lingua franca setting sooner or later, the relevance of the status of ELF as a variety of English is well worth considering in an ELT context.

Particularly in the early stages of ELF research much attention was paid to picturing ELF discourse as constituting “an endonormative model of lingua franca English which will increasingly derive its norms of correctness and appropriacy from its own usage rather than that of the UK or the US, or any other ‘native speaker’ country” (Jenkins et al., 2001: 15). Compared to Modiano’s EIL model, the driving force here is less political-ideological and is less concerned with identity-building, but rather desires to provide non-native speakers with an alternative yardstick to “passing native speaker judgements as to what is appropriate usage in ELF context” (Seidlhofer, 2001: 137). Before systematic corpus investigations on ELF data could be carried out, Seidlhofer (2001) envisaged the “codification of ELF with a conceivable ultimate objective of making it a feasible, acceptable and respected alternative to ENL [English as a Native Language] in appropriate contexts of use” (2001: 150). Jenkins (2006b: 155) even suggests that there can be native speakers of ELF.

All this may be taken to suggest that ELF is pushed forward as a distinct variety of English, which can be codified and can serve as a standard for non-native speakers to measure their own and other non-native speakers' usage of the language. Seidlhofer (2004) even identifies a few potential "regularities" in ELF discourse, such as dropping the third person present tense, confusing the relative pronouns *who* and *which*, and using prepositions redundantly. These are typically labelled as "errors" in learner language, but "appear to be generally unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success" (Seidlhofer, 2004: 220). It would stand to reason that ELF research would strive to identify a common core of formal features in ELF, similar to Modiano's (1999) concept of a common core for English as an International Language.

Corpus research has, however, not corroborated the hypothesis of a pool of shared features for ELF. Mollin (2006), for example, was unable to identify hardly any common features even though the context was fairly stable (i.e. that of the European institutions). ELF speakers were shown to largely approximate native speaker usage "and make individual 'errors', if one wishes to name them so, depending on mother tongue and English competence generally" (2006: 48). Mollin (2007) also convincingly demonstrates that ELF (at least as it emerges in its European form) cannot uphold the claim for variety status because it does not, as yet, conform to the three traditional criteria to distinguish language varieties: expansion (to a wide range of domains within one and the same community), nativisation (i.e. development of local features that distinguish it from other varieties), and institutionalization (i.e. acceptance of the variety as the norm by its speech community). ELF researchers have equally acknowledged that it indeed does not constitute "a variety in the traditional sense" (Jenkins, 2012). ELF, it is claimed, is used by and in a community of speakers, which should not be likened to a native speaker community but should rather be taken as a "community of practice" (Seidlhofer, 2009).

ELF research has more recently taken a turn away from a focus on formal features, such as those described by Seidlhofer (2004), in the direction of a functional approach (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2009; House, 2013; Sewell, 2013). The reason for this is that it has emerged that one of ELF's main characteristics is precisely that it has tremendous variability: "It is NOT a fixed code, and it cannot be defined by certain formal characteristics; rather it is an open-source phenomenon" (House, 2013: 281; original emphasis). This variability implies that speakers of ELF "negotiate and accommodate their English *in situ*" (Jenkins, 2012: 490) in highly specific communities of practice. Each conversation is different, as speaker constellations change and each speaker carries with them their own resources, contributing to "a situational resource pool" (Hülmbauer, 2009: 325). It follows then that learners (of ELF or EFL) ought to become familiar with pragmatic strategies that make them fully equipped to engage in such linguistic negotiations.

How this should be done remains rather vague. Jenkins (2006a) emphasizes the need to expose learners to a broad range of English varieties, which "is likely to encourage learners' confidence in their own English varieties, and in turn reduce the linguistic capital that many learners still believe native-like English to possess" (2006a: 174). Such awareness-raising practices have been reported on in recent research on how World Englishes can be integrated in ELT in Asia (see

e.g. Ali, 2014; van den Hoven, 2014; Ates et al., 2015), but similar endeavours in a European context appear to be lacking or are in any case scarce. It would also seem that the view that communicative practices are to be negotiated during each communicative process is heavily biased towards oral registers. The delay in feedback from the intended receiver of a message hinders negotiation processes, as a consequence of which one would expect the sender to have the message approximate some established norm straight away.

ELF scholars have indicated that English as a *lingua franca* differs substantially from English as a *foreign language* (EFL). According to Jenkins (2006b), EFL views non-native language use as deficient and prone to fossilization. It is influenced by negative transfer from the user's mother tongue, and code-switching and -mixing are considered interference errors. ELF, on the other hand, takes the perspective that the language produced is different (not deficient) and subject to evolution. It takes shape in contact with other language users, and code-switching and -mixing are signs of convenient bilingual resources. EFL is said to aim at preparing non-native speakers for communication with native speakers, and ELF to equip non-native speakers for communication with other non-native speakers in specific contexts. Does this mean then that there are no norms at all in ELF? Not quite. Jenkins (2012) points out that, contrary to misheld beliefs among ELT practitioners, ELF is not "simply a case of 'anything goes'" and does not "constitute linguistic anarchy" (2012: 491). She even contends that "ELF has its own proficiency clines" (Jenkins, 2006b: 141), including advanced or even expert levels, which is not unlike EFL practice and at least suggests the existence of some sort of norm.

In spite of the attempts of, for example, Jenkins (2006b; 2012) and House (2013) to draw a clear demarcation line between ELF and EFL, the differences appear to be more a matter of form than of substance. The ELF domain takes issue with the often negative appraisal of non-native speakers' language production in SLA research, and this is a justified concern. On the other hand, the basic assumption that ELT on the whole aims for (unrealistic) native-like competence (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2011) is out of touch with reality. The only context in which near-native competence is the desired end target is university-level instruction in English Linguistics programmes. In Flanders (the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium), for example, the official end targets for English in secondary education is at level B1 of the European Framework of Reference for Languages, and those for English in vocational secondary education is at A1/A2 (depending on the skills). Little attention is paid to perfect pupils' pronunciation to full RP status, although this has been a prime example of ELF criticism of ELT practices. The ELF agenda to enhance learners' choices as to which level they wish to attain and which variety/varieties of English they want to acquire may seem valid at first glance, but is rather theoretical upon closer inspection. When would learners reach the point to make a well-informed choice? In other words, when do learners decide that they have no ambition to communicate with native speakers of English on a regular basis? At what point can they establish the link between their language learning process and their prospective choice of study in higher education or their future workplace requirements?

What's more, novice learners need stability and clarity in terms of teaching approaches but particularly in terms of the linguistic concepts they need to acquire. Inevitably, this entails providing them with an unambiguous set of norms. As it stands, ELF appears to be inept at providing one. Seidlhofer (2004) observes that the global role that English plays today has meant that "the teaching of English is going through a truly postmodern phase in which old forms and assumptions are being rejected while no new orthodoxy can be offered in their place" (2004: 228). This comes dangerously close to an "anything goes" perspective, regardless of scholars' best efforts to deny this. The ELF paradigm should demonstrate more elaborately how it can offer a viable and comprehensive alternative to current ELT practices. For the time being, as it surfaces in *inter alia* Jenkins (2006a), Seidlhofer (2011) and Dewey (2012), its relevance for learners seems restricted to, on the one hand, stepping up attention paid to pragmatic and intercultural competences in English language curricula, and on the other hand, providing concrete contexts and materials in English for Specific Purposes courses, where learners can confidently be assumed to be heading for specific communication situations in ELF.

One may also wonder whether the yardstick of Inner Circle varieties is really such a bad practice. There is a world of difference between, on the one hand, demanding that all learners are taught all the ins and outs of the language, and on the other hand taking non-native usage as both the point of departure and the ultimate goal of a learning process while ignoring native speaker usage. Human beings are fallible, and language structures are complex. All native speakers "deviate" from the standard language in certain respects, at least from time to time. And, yes, this too is considered erroneous language use, which may be subject to (suggestions for) correction.

#### 4. English as a means of communication for immigrants in Europe

In Europe English is not only used as a shared code between Europeans of different mother tongues, but is also the means of communication for immigrants and refugees. Apart from fairly mundane day-to-day contexts in which these people need to resort to English, there are also contexts where the stakes are higher. In order to gain access to public services, such as housing, schooling and health care, many immigrants and refugees are expected to speak, read or write English. These contexts can be defined as ELF situations (non-native speakers using English to communicate among themselves). A major difference with typical ELF discourse is, however, that the community of practice in public service settings is asymmetric: the client is less acquainted with common practices and procedures (including linguistic strategies and jargon) typical of the setting than the public service provider.

In legal settings within the European Union (e.g. police interviews and court proceedings) suspects are guaranteed the right to interpretation and translation under Directive 2010/64/EU. Even in these situations, where less optimal communication could have a detrimental impact on people's lives and freedom, language assistance is not guaranteed in the client's mother tongue. Article 22 of the Directive specifies that interpretation and translation can be provided either

in the client's native language "or in any other language that they speak or understand". For so-called languages of lesser diffusion it is often hard to appeal to trained translation or interpreting professionals, and as a result English tends to be resorted to even in the absence of evidence of the client's proficiency in the legal register of English.

In other public services the intervention of interpreters and translators cannot be enforced for want of a legislative initiative that surpasses the legal context. Maryns (2015) examines interviews in asylum-seeking procedures in Belgium. In the administrative phase of the procedure English is often used as a means of communication between either the asylum seeker and the asylum officer or between an interpreter and the asylum officer. In many cases the asylum officer's level of English is more restricted than the interpreter's or asylum seeker's (who, for example, comes from an Outer Circle country such as Nigeria), while the officer maintains the strongest position in the interaction. The interview is documented by the officer in the official procedural language, which is Dutch or French, and it is this document that will appear in the file and that authorities will draw on to make their decision. Needless to say, all elements are in place to generate a great deal of noise in the communication process (as Maryns, 2015 convincingly demonstrates), hampering the rights of individuals in an administrative and even legal process.

English is thus promoted to a semi-official status in countries where it is not the native language of its citizens. Ideally the use of languages, including the position of interpreters and translators, in all public service settings ought to be addressed at the European level, in an effort similar to Directive 2010/64/EU. In recent years some organisations such as the European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (see Rillof and Buysse, 2015) and the European Language Council (SIGTIPS, 2011) have started to prepare the ground for this, but the road to EU policy-making is long and complex. In the meantime English language professionals can take up a role in (i) raising awareness among public service providers about the complexities of ELF discourse; (ii) training public service providers in strategies that are helpful in the ELF community of practice in which they function; and (iii) introducing students of interpreting and translation to a broad range of Outer Circle and Expanding Circle varieties of English (not with the aim of their actively acquiring any such varieties but of functioning effectively in their professional roles).

## 5. Conclusion

Within Europe Inner Circle varieties maintain their firm position as the standard varieties both for native speakers and non-native speakers. Aspiring to live up to the expectations that are raised by such a norm does not mean that everyone always succeeds in doing so nor that every language learner is striving for precisely the same goal. What ELT can learn from ELF is that it should step up its efforts to pay greater attention to pragmatic strategies in conversations as well as to intercultural communication. This does not signify, though, that existing norms should be thrown overboard. Learners need clarity in what it is they are studying, and they have the right to study as much of the language as they can.



This is the best safeguard for them to keep their options open for any kind of use they may need of the language, especially if they are in primary or secondary education. At the same time they should be made aware of the great variety of English, e.g. by exposing them to authentic language use that is not exclusively drawn from Inner Circle varieties. English language professionals also have a duty to point out the pitfalls in sensitive high-stakes ELF communication such as that of legal or public service interpreting and translation. Otherwise English, the language of opportunity, may continue to obscure some potential injustice in the countries of Europe.

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# The English language in Europe: challenge and power

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**Abstract.** The English language has become an essential tool in today's world, affecting all areas of society and fields of knowledge. Historical, socioeconomic and sociolinguistic factors account for the extraordinary spread of English and its development. Important questions have been raised, within and beyond the academic sphere, concerning the legitimacy of the dominance of English, its role as a global language and as a lingua franca, and its place in a multicultural world, where multilingualism has increasingly been supported, namely by the European Union. While all these issues apply to the European context likewise, ascribing a specific identity to the English used in Europe has also gained its opponents and defenders. In this essay, I support the view that the key role of English will not be diminished by current challenges, although it is likely to change while it coexists with multilingualism.

**Key words:** English language – lingua franca – English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – global language – Europe – European Union – multilingualism

## Introduction

In his poem “Languages”, published in *Chicago Poems* in 1916, the American poet Carl Sandburg exposes the ephemeral, changing character of languages, apt to be mixed across boundaries. In his metaphor, a language is like a river, “breaking a new course/changing its way to the ocean/it is mountain effluvia/moving to valleys/and from nation to nation/crossing borders and mixing” (Sandburg, 2003). A century later, Sandburg's words resonate with recent developments in the history of the English language and with the current debate over its dominance worldwide. On the one hand, the spread of English has given rise to its many varieties around the globe and, on the other, its status as a global language seemingly overrides such nation-based distinctions.

The importance of the English language today pervades all areas of society and impacts fields as diverse as education, science, entertainment, tourism and economy, to name but a few. In addition, it has boosted intense scholarly investigation both into the paths that have brought the English language to its present-day status and into the trends that lie ahead of it, most notably in the field of sociolinguists. An array of key, interrelated concepts pertain to the scope of such studies, including those of world language, global language, lingua franca, international language, foreign language, and second language, all of them used to classify the different roles performed by English. While these labels fuel debate on a worldwide scale, considering them in terms of the use of English in Europe inevitably adds that of Euro-English to the list. Also, the importance of the



European Union and its normative role in a diversity of areas, including language policies, is central to such a discussion.

The topic of English in Europe has already deserved substantial attention, namely by linguists such as Ulrich Ammon, Robert Phillipson, Marko Modiano, Sandra Mollin, Barbara Seidlhofer or Angelika Breiteneder. But the recent decision determining the British exit from the European Union (Brexit), in 2016, has brought about new perspectives and concerns about the dominant position of the English language in Europe. This article sets out to discuss the role of English in the changing scenario of present-day Europe.

## 1. Towards a world language

No discussion of the role of the English language in Europe can ignore the status of English as a world language, as this should be considered as actually part of this phenomenon.

The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines "World English" as "the English language, used throughout the world for international communication, including all of its regional varieties, such as Australian, Indian and South African English" (Oxford Learners, n.d.). I will take on this broad sense of the term to refer to the worldwide use of English.

How then has English become a world language? Much has been written about this issue, both in terms of the history and development of the language and of linguistic studies. Most research concurs in identifying the overseas expansion of Britain as the root of the expansion of English itself. According to David Crystal, this is the historical-geographical part of a twofold answer, the other one being the socio-cultural, which he defines as people's dependence on English for their economic and social well-being all over the world (2005: 29). The expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century links these two aspects, for, as Baught and Cable put it, "in this period the foundations were being laid for that wide extension of English in the world which has resulted in its use throughout more than a quarter of the earth's surface" (2002: 272-3). In the twentieth century, the leading role of the United States as an economic power added to this position (Crystal, 2003: 59).

Social, economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological developments throughout the last two centuries contributed significantly to the spread of English and to the establishment of its global importance, while also making it more flexible and adaptable. As relevantly pointed out by Baugh and Cable, such changes comprehend all society activities, be it work or entertainment, and reach people in all walks of life, thus affecting the evolution of language itself (279). Crystal classifies this type of influence as the cultural legacy of English (2003: 86). While English had unquestionably reached the status of dominant language in world politics and economy, already towards the end of the nineteenth century (85), the world history after the First World War reinforced this position in new ways (86). Crystal organises the key areas of this new development as follows: international relations, the media, international travel, international safety, education, and communications (86-120), while David Graddol, in his pivotal study on the future of English, defines twelve major international domains of

English in contemporary society, some of them overlapping with Crystal's : (1) working language of international organisations and conferences; (2) scientific publication; (3) international banking, economic affairs and trade; (4) advertising for global brands; (5) audio-visual cultural products (e.g. film, TV, popular music); (6) international tourism; (7) tertiary education; (8) international safety (e.g. 'airspeak', 'seaspeak'); (9) international law; (10) as a 'relay language' in interpretation and translation; (11) technology transfer; and (12) Internet communication (2000: 8). The wide scope covered by these areas accounts for the statistical evidence of English as a world language, spoken by more than three hundred million native speakers (Graddol 2000: 8) and, most importantly, by around 1.8 billion non-native speakers (Robson 2013: 2), a category that takes in the use of English as a foreign language and as a lingua franca. It is worth mentioning that as well as non-native speakers, first language ones are also geographically spread throughout all the continents, a position that no other language in the world parallels ("Studying Varieties", 2017). This, in turn, corresponds to different varieties of the language – according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, British English, American and Canadian English, Australian and New Zealand English, the English of the Indian subcontinent and African English (Crystal & Potter, 2017), besides dozens of dialects.

Because of this world position, English has been designated extensively as a global language, and the two terms (world and global) might often be used interchangeably. However, the latter clearly surpasses the territorial scope, suggesting the idea of global interconnectedness while resonating with the phenomenon of globalisation itself, of which it is both a cause and an effect. Crystal has proposed a slightly different definition of a global language which is closely linked to the power of the people(s) who speak it:

There is the closest of links between language dominance and economic, technological, and cultural power, too. (...) Without a strong power-base, of whatever kind, no language can make progress as an international medium of communication. Language has no independent existence, living in some sort of mystical space apart from the people who speak it. Language exists only in the mouths and ears and hands and eyes of its users. When they succeed, on the international stage, their language succeeds. When they fail, their language fails (Crystal 2003: 7).

That the English language has succeeded is hardly questionable, due to the aforementioned reasons. That such a success and a powerful status have shaped its role in the European context too, is easily verifiable, because, broadly speaking, English is also used here as a global language. Nonetheless, a fundamental question must be raised: is what unites European countries powerful enough to sustain a common, unitary language for Europe? And if so, does global English fit with this specific position?

## 2. English in Europe

In his report "The Future of English" (2000), Graddol points out that the global spread of English raised linguistic, educational, economic, cultural, political and ethical issues (9). One of the most discussed topics today regarding the future of

English as a global language that spans these issues is the changing expression of multilingualism, both in the USA and in Europe. However, even if Graddol maintains that embracing multiculturalism is part of the modern identity built in Europe at large (2000: 19), the role of the European Union on this particular score is of the utmost importance.

Although the European Union (EU) will be formed, after Brexit, by twenty-seven countries out of the forty-four that belong to the European continent, it plays an undeniably defining role in what we call “Europe” today. When gauging measures taken by the EU, one must keep in mind that it was created in the aftermath of World War II with the main purpose of building and keeping a united, peaceful and prosperous Europe, able to avoid wars between neighbours (“History of the European Union” n.d.), an ambitious aim that has been fulfilled until today and which was acknowledged with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

The language policy in the EU has to be understood as part of this framework, ideologically labelled as “unity in diversity”. The Treaty on the European Union, in its consolidated version (2012), establishes the promotion of peace, values and the well-being of the peoples of the EU as its general aim, under which the respect for linguistic diversity and for Europe’s cultural heritage is also established. Such an aim, together with that of promoting language learning, constitutes the basis of EU’s multilingualism policy, as stated on its official website (“Multilingualism”, n.d.). Linguistic diversity is validated by the definition of twenty-four official languages in the EU. However, it also calls for specific measures in terms of language learning, or else it might become a drawback rather than an asset in the life of the EU and of its citizens. Therefore, in 2002 the EU set the goal of enabling citizens to communicate in *two languages other than their mother tongue* (“Multilingualism”, n.d.), thus stressing the importance of multilingualism as an important skill and as a tool, not only to enable communication and to foster multicultural awareness, but also to make people better equipped for the job market on a more global scale (“Multilingualism”, n.d.).

From this standpoint of democratization, languages are all equally important, which excludes the possibility of officially giving one of them a leading position. Official documents are published in all official languages and any of these can be used for communication, which involves an overwhelming number of translators and interpreters working in the EU.

Even so, internal communications of the institutions in the EU have been using French and English as working languages. English has actually surpassed the leading role played by French from the early beginnings of the EU up to the 1990s, when the growing supremacy of English in economy, technology and science on a world scale boosted its use as a global language (Truchot, 2002: 16). Truchot, in a study commissioned by the Language Policy Division for the Conference on *Languages, diversity, citizenship: policies for plurilingualism in Europe*, calls these working languages “vehicular” languages, relying on a survey of the most used languages in primary texts produced by the European Commission, the main producer of documents of all the EU institutions (15).

Bill Bryson, when explaining the status of English as a world language, also gives the particular example of the European Union to defend the need for an

international language – it would cut the considerable expenses and time allocated to the business of translation and interpreting within the EU, while also reducing the occurrence of misunderstandings (1990: 182-3). This perspective falls short of the EU's defence of multilingualism. David Crystal, in turn, refers to multilingual contexts to defend the need for a global language, a lingua franca that would make up for too diverse a linguistic setting (2003:11-12). In line with Bryson's arguments, he sets out the examples of the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the European Union, whether the pressure to adopt a single lingua franca has become more and more evident (12). The need for a widespread global language, he argues, has become ever more urgent in a globalised world, dependent on constant international communication and interaction and, hence, on people's bilingualism (13-14).

It is obvious that the growing importance of English in the EU mirrors the worldwide phenomenon of the spread and standing of the language, briefly discussed in the first section of this essay. However, Truchot pertinently pinpoints how the two processes are interdependent, and not only equivalent:

... the effects of internationalisation of the economy and of globalisation resulting in the use of English in the chief fields falling within EU competence, the spread of English teaching and the expansion in knowledge of the language, the training of new generations of diplomats and officials in American and British universities or in English-language faculties in Europe and the enlargement of the EU in 1995 to embrace countries where English is in common use (Truchot, 2002: 17-18).

The factors listed by Truchot are not exclusive of the EU, as if it were a niche isolated from the rest of society. Education, learning and training reach society at large, as do both the internationalisation of the economy and globalisation. Therefore, the predominance of English in Europe is not confined to its expression within the EU nor to its originating there, however important these factors may be.

### 3. The importance of English in Europe: divergent perspectives?

The acknowledgement of the key role of English in Europe, both in and beyond the sphere of the EU, together with the call for multilingualism and multiculturalism of present-day western, democratic societies (and, more specifically, of the EU), have raised intense debate on the supremacy of English as opposed to the defence of bi- or multilingualism. This discussion entails its political and sociolinguistic aspects.

Crystal lists and then rebuts the main threats posed by a dominant global language: linguistic power, linguistic complacency and linguistic death (2005: 14-25). In short, he maintains that: a monolingual world would not be more united or peaceful (16); bilingualism is desirable and all the more effective when language learning occurs at an early age (17); lack of language skills has proved a drawback on the economic level for British exporters, for example (19); and finally, a new world order based on global interdependence has come to value multilingualism while undermining an imperialist vision of the English language (24). Although Crystal's arguments are in line with the EU's ideology of multilingualism, he still acknowledges the role of English as a global language.

However, like Graddol (2000, 2006), he supports the coexistence of both perspectives, which implies the acceptance of the flexible, changing character of the English language. Graddol's perspective is very important, as he emphasises the idea of how a world in transition has brought about the rise of global English, on the one hand, but also a shifting trend to give more relevance to other languages such as Mandarin or Spanish. Being a native speaker of English, he argues, is no longer such a big advantage as it used to be, given the multilingual society we live in (2000: 57, 2006: 92).

Likewise, other scholars defend the stance that multilingualism in Europe promotes social cohesion in the European Union, and that the working tools necessary to make it effective, such as translation and interpretation, add to European integration (Gazzola, 2014: 2, 18). A variant form of endorsing multilingualism policies within the EU, which departs a bit from Gazzola's view, would be enlarging the number of working languages (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2005), which is a form of reaching some balance between the EU's idealism and pragmatism in terms of the language issue (285).

On rejecting the supremacy of English in the EU, or any form of multilingualism that does not acknowledge all languages on equal terms (as Ginsburgh and Weber, for example, defend), Gazzola relies primarily on the level of proficiency of speakers of English, rather than on their number. Therefore, he considers that the average proficiency in English of European citizens falls short of the requirements to make it an effective working tool within the EU (Gazzola, 2014: 9). In addition, the socioeconomic and sociolinguistic differences among member states of the EU as regards language skills and policies reinforce the social fairness of multilingualism and of an inclusive consideration of all languages as equally important (14, 16).

Other scholars, however, have placed particular emphasis on the use of English as a world or global language in Europe, both within and beyond the workings of the EU. This trend is more noteworthy among researchers of the dominance of English in Europe and of the possibility of specific forms of English in Europe (Ferguson, 1982; Mollin, 1996; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2011; Breiteneder, 2009; Forche, 2012). These scholars' lines of investigation fundamentally run counter to Gazzola's rejection of the distinction between English and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Gazzola, 2014: 9). On the contrary, this conceptual difference is of the utmost importance and reaches out to specific linguistic analysis.

In her pivotal study of Euro-English, Mollin studies the legitimacy of considering a variety of English labelled as "Euro-English", given the use of English by non-native speakers in Continental Europe and the need to study empirical data on the actual uses of the language in these settings (Mollin: 2006: 1, 2). Kachru's circles, a key framework in the discussion of the international or global roles of the English language, came to be consistently questioned by supporters of a specific form of English in Europe. Initially, as Mollin mentions, English belonged to the Expanding Circle, which comprises learners of English, without a specific variety of their own (4). However, English presently spans a wide range of fields and contexts in Europe, thus assuming different functions, from education, administration (including EU institutions), media and entertainment, to communication purposes (as a contact code in everyday life)



and also to creativity (literature/poetry written in English by non-native speakers). These functions of English define, according to Mollin, its status as a second language (73-79).

The scholars Angelika Breiteneder (2009) and Barbara Seidlhofer (2001) have focussed their attention on the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) both worldwide and in Europe, rather than as a particular variety of the language. Both maintain that it has emerged as a sociolinguistic phenomenon and, as such, consists of an autonomous language moving away from international English. The users of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contribute to the development of the language, out of the need to adapt it to their communicative needs (Seidlhofer, 2001: 19, 64). Because of this, it is possible to identify common linguistic traits in the use of English as a Lingua Franca. Investigation into this particular field led to the creation of the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), of which Seidlhofer is the founding director.

Breiteneder, in her study on the role of English as a Lingua Franca in Europe, asserts the omnipresence of the language in contemporary Europe, much beyond the scope of the EU, for, in addition to its use in institutions and education, it is evident in all areas of daily life (2009: 1). Breiteneder relies on the concept of lingua franca as a contact language, a foreign language of communication for people with diverse mother tongues across the globe (2009: 2). The concept of lingua franca goes beyond that of an international language – which English also is – inasmuch as, according to Seidlhofer (2011), the latter applies to the worldwide use of the language as a result of colonization and also as an imported language, extensively learnt abroad as a foreign language (2011: 3). On the contrary, a lingua franca has no native speakers (2011: 7). Breiteneder (2009) applied this conceptual framework to the European context. In her aforementioned research, she sets out to determine the linguistically specific, unique characteristics of English used as a Lingua Franca in Europe. A relevant aspect that contributes to making ELF in Europe different is the fact that English, in educational settings, is spread through teaching mostly by non-native teachers, in other words, teachers themselves are speakers of English as a Lingua Franca (2009: 10). Equally important, Breiteneder maintains, are the bi- and multilingual skills of these language speakers, since each individual possesses different sets of linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge (2009: 12), which contribute to the identity of this language (ELF).

The study of English as a Lingua Franca raises linguistic issues that call into question the accuracy of the language, its standards in terms of language teaching and the flexibility of its norms according to the different communication contexts where it is used. The common features of ELF studied by Seidlhofer and Breiteneder, for example, cover uses of grammar common among ELF speakers that depart from standard grammar rules. However, the discussion goes beyond the purely linguistic scope and reaches a socio-political dimension. In fact, taken as a lingua franca that can be described in normative terms, English departs from its standard form, as originating in its native-speaking contexts, and therefore, as a few scholars have argued, is no longer the exclusive property of first language speakers, having been appropriated and even developed by non-native European speakers outside the power of the United Kingdom or of the United States

(Seidlhofer, 2011: 68; Breiteneder, 2009: 12-13). Again, the global use of English is reaffirmed, even when given a particular form of identity.

Interestingly, most researchers of Euro-English or of the use of English in Europe have concluded that Euro-English does not exist as an independent, institutionalised form of English, not even as a variety, but is widely accepted as an international language (Forche, 2012: 473); it may not be unquestionably considered a “New English”, either (Breiteneder, 2009: 69); it remains a foreign language in Europe, in other words, the term Euro-English refers to the English spoken by European learners (Mollin, 2006: 196). Hence, the global status of English, even when used as a lingua franca in particular contexts or places, seems to override the importance that the descriptive characteristics of such uses evince.

Considering the different perspectives discussed above, one may conclude that the debate about the nature of English as a Lingua Franca, or its acceptance as a dominant global language, or the status that it should be given within the European Union and beyond, constitute particular aspects of the overall consensus on the widespread presence of English worldwide and in Europe. While the status of lingua franca pervades all fields of society and makes room for its democratic use, open to change, one cannot oversee its important position in terms of education. English is present in most European systems of education and it is the most prominent foreign language taught, from primary to secondary levels. According to the EU Eurydice report from 2012, in lower secondary and general upper secondary education, the percentage of students learning English exceeds 90%, while only a very small percentage of pupils (0-5%, according to the country) learn languages other than English, French, Spanish, German and Russian (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2012).

This reality is of the utmost importance, for in this light it is not plausible to believe that English might lose the status it has today. Even the issues raised by the imminent Brexit are no longer robust, for Brexit does not seem to threaten the embedded use of English as a Lingua Franca in Europe, nor as a foreign language taught and learnt extensively across Europe. In addition, its status as one of the twenty-four official languages of the EU is not at risk, since it is also one of the official languages of other member states, such as Ireland and Malta. Even though Irish Gaelic and Maltese belong to the twenty-four official and working languages of the EU, the fact that English is the other official language of these countries should not be neglected when considering the potential impact of Brexit on the linguistic field. Also, while Breiteneder argues that English is taught mainly by non-native teachers, which contributes to reinforcing its use as a lingua franca, it is no longer possible to overlook the role of private English teaching worldwide by language schools and institutes. Here, English is taught almost exclusively by native speakers, which promotes the spread of the standard features of the language, in addition to the dissemination of the culture of English-speaking countries. This supplementary system of language learning plays a significant role today and adds to the ever expanding industry and business of teaching English, providing certification in terms of the CEFRL where official education fails.

## Conclusion

The spread of English across Europe has made its way through two supplementary paths – the popular and the educational ones. At the crossroads, it performs the role of a second language, a foreign language, a lingua franca, a global language, functions that overlap to a significant degree.

When discussing the role of English in present-day Europe, the conceptual differentiation of these terms does not constitute the most important issue. On the contrary, the different concepts are important exactly because of what they have in common: a global, communicative dimension that brings people, societies and knowledge together.

In contrast, the acknowledgement of a new world order ravaged by radicalism and intolerance calls for the cherishing of inclusive policies, of which that of the EU on multilingualism is a fine example. Promoting multilingualism, as Graddol does for the future of English (2000, 2006), does not detract from the importance of English; equally important, however, is accepting that role with a comprehensive, inclusive approach, a stance that a significant trend of investigation has defended (Phillipson (1992 and 2003), Jenkins (2003), Brutt-Griffler, (2002), Graddol (2000), among others). David Crystal concludes his pivotal study *English as a Global Language* with a remarkable hypothesis: “It may be that English, in some shape or form, will find itself in the service of the world community forever” (2003: 191). These words hint at a few important ideas: that English remains and will remain a global language; that it is both likely to change and open to change, just as Sandburg wrote; and that its power is not autocratic or imperialistic, but rather democratic, egalitarian, useful and cooperative, in Europe and in the world.

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# Tapestry of Euro-English: A Bosnian Perspective

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**Abstract.** The question of recognizing a new variety of English in Europe has been raised as the nations of Europe have become more politically and economically closer in the last 20 years. Such Euro-English variety that non-native speakers of English coming from European countries develop as their own variety of English has been supported by certain authors and scholars who have gone into the description of English as it appears in various European contexts, and, on the other hand it has been rejected by certain authors due to the close devotion towards Inner Circle English norms and due to the fact that many ELT materials should have been changed and adapted to reflect more typical Euro-English communication situations. Having that in mind this paper attempts to open up the discussion on the emergence of Euro-English in a non-EU country, Bosnia and Herzegovina. There have been 120 ESP students at the tertiary educational level examined and tested for the acquisition, tolerance and acceptance of Euro-English typicalities. It has been noticed that Euro-English variety does need a special status as it serves communicative purposes as do all other legitimate varieties of English around the globe.

**Key words:** Euro-English, proficiency, communication, Euro-English typicalities, primary, secondary and tertiary school curricula.

## 1. Status of English and Euro-English

It the past few decades English has gained a position and status in the world that no other language has ever had before. It has become a planetary lingua franca utilized most as a common means of communication among speakers who do not share a common language. Therefore, English has shifted its position from a national language to a true lingua franca of the world. Moreover, it is not only the status of English that shifted but also the ownership of the language that shifted as well. What is more, English has become a personal property of anyone who uses it regardless of belonging to Kachru's Inner, Outer or Expanding Circle (Berns et al., 2009). And it is to be pointed out that the number of speakers of English continues to increase, especially in the Expanding Circle countries. Downright impossible a task is to estimate and keep records of the number of speakers who have actually received instruction in English or, more precisely, to keep records of how many of them can be regarded as knowing English.

The wave of English has hit the European continent as a whole, as English has replaced Russian and German as the most widely taught and learnt language throughout the whole of Europe. To be more precise, as the nations of Europe have moved politically and economically closer together in the last 20 years, English in Europe has also gained a new role, a new function, a new code. Graddol

(2001: 47) argues that 'English is now more widely spoken [in Europe] than in many of the former British colonies'. Indeed, there has been a surge of studies and articles on whether there is a common code, a European English, or Euro-English, that non-native speakers of English coming from European countries develop as their own variety of English. Furthermore, it has been discussed whether this new age of Europe calls for a Euro-English, a potential new variety of non-native speakers of English in Continental Europe. Some authors (Mollin, 2006) strongly pointed out that, if such a variety existed, it would materialize and develop first among academics, as this category is the most likely to converse with other Europeans during conferences, meetings, workshops, staff exchange programs, and so on. In addition, many scholars and ELT practitioners refused to consider Euro-English as a legitimate variety due to its close dependence on Inner Circle English norms.

On the other hand, some authors (Berns et al., 2009) predicted the emergence of a new variety of English that would function as a means of communication among multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual Europe. Euro-English, according to Yano (2001: 126), does exist representing not a single variety, but a range of varieties, from German English, Swedish English, Italian English, and so on. The author continues to describe Euro-English as: 'standardized varieties used and understood by the educated speakers of any variety, native or not, with both locality and intra-regional intelligibility' (as cited in Berns et al., 2009: 380). In order to accommodate the possible changes in the use of English, the author (2009: 379) suggested revising and re-examining of the Kachruvian two-dimensional model of three circles and its transformation into three-dimensional model, which relies on the individuals' proficiency level. Within his three-dimensional model, Yano placed Euro-English, as an Intra-Regional Standard English (intra-RSE) above ESP (English for Specific Purposes) proficiency which, then, presupposes EGP (English for General Purposes) proficiency. At the top of this model there is EIL (English as an International Language) composed of a range of regional standard Englishes and used as a means for wider, international communication.

## 2. Euro-English typicalities

As multilingual, multicultural and multi-ethnic Europe grows and develops, Euro-English appears to be a natural choice and a uniting single code of communication which accelerates the development of European identity and culture as a unique combination of diversity and unity. That new European variety of English has been observed, analysed and described via several linguistic projects, the most eminent of which are: VOICE (the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) by Seidlhofer and colleagues from the University of Vienna, then the English used as a Lingua Franca (by German, Italian, Friulian and Slovenian speakers) in the Alpine-Adriatic region and Pan-Swiss English (the English used as a Lingua Franca by German-, French- and Italian-speaking Swiss). All of these projects deal with samples of intra-European English establishing some typicalities common for European non-native speakers of English. Seidlhofer (2002) noticed that these typicalities of Euro-English

communication are often considered to be errors, such as *countable/uncountable* distinctions (e.g. an information – informations; an advice – advices; a research – researches), dropping the *-s from the third person Present Simple Tense* (e.g. she take; he go), *relative pronoun usage of who and which for persons and objects* (e.g. a boy which; a phone who), omitting *the definite and indefinite articles* where they are supposed to be in native speaker language use. Also, it was noticed that Euro-English speakers prefer *Present Simple* to *Present Perfect* forms. Moreover, word order and lexis are very often influenced by a mother tongue, especially the placement of adverbs and objects. The influence of a mother tongue is enormous in English communication (note the following examples from Bosnian context: He returned to Tuzla to teach in a *Gymnasium* that today bears his name. = He returned to Tuzla to teach in a *high school* that today bears his name.). Still, Euro-English cannot be regarded as a mere violation of rules and norms typical of English as a native language, but simply as an overall synchronic and diachronic overuse and underuse of certain syntactic patterns and vocabulary. Indeed, as Euro-English variety has not been described completely up to this day we can only speculate with a certain degree that the enumerated typicalities are common and shared by Euro-English speakers. To sum up, it is to be pointed out that this variety has certain characteristics atypical for native speaker varieties.

### 3. Language educational policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The demands of communicating in Euro-English have become highly relevant and important in every aspect of EU life. It has become a fundamental pillar of EU communication, creating and fostering the development of its own culture and identity. According to Risse (2010) 43.1% of Europeans (both native and non-native speakers) use English and around 51.9% of EU15<sup>1</sup> citizens use English as a code of communication. It is to be believed that these percentages are volatile and unstable due to the increasing number of EU member states. Namely, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the number of EU states has more than doubled and it is to be even higher as the EU is expecting Albania, Montenegro and Serbia to join the EU very soon, as well as some other remaining Balkan Countries such as FYR Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In these non-EU Balkan countries and Bosnian-Herzegovinian case will be taken into consideration in this paper, language educational policy is such that English has been given a number one status as it has been taught as a foreign language (EFL). Since 2009 it has been completely incorporated into primary, secondary and tertiary school curricula, and it needs to be pointed out that English is even introduced in kindergartens at a starter level (in fact, kindergartens do offer an optional starter course of English for pre-school children). On the other hand, since 2009 EFL has become obligatory in primary school education starting with the first grade (6 year olds) until the ninth grade

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<sup>1</sup> EU15 refers to the 15 countries forming the European Union before the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 (Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Denmark, The United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Austria, Sweden, Finland).

(14 year olds). Primary school kids are exposed to English for one-two classes per week and the focus of the syllabi is General English with the implementation of practices aiming at four integrated skills. As for secondary school, English has been obligatory with the targeted proficiency level of secondary school learners being EGP. However, some vocational and technical secondary schools are already applying a basic level of ESP along with EGP in their curricula (including basic lexis and typical phrases and collocations required for a future technician/mechanic/ceramist/mason, etc.). In other words, the actual proficiency target would be more oriented towards their future needs. Secondary school children are exposed to two classes of English per week, the exception being only grammar schools in which children are to have three classes per week, and English is taught as the first foreign language. Besides English, another foreign language (usually German or French) is offered as a second foreign language with two classes per week. Finally, as far as tertiary educational level is concerned, most universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a department of English language and literature established either as a department within the Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Philology or Humanities and Social Sciences. The main purpose of such English departments is to educate future English language teachers for primary, secondary or even tertiary educational level. Since the beginning of the implementation of the Bologna Agreement from 2009 universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina started adapting and harmonizing their departmental syllabi to the syllabi and practices of EU universities. However, Babic (2016: 166) underlines that such harmonization of practices ‘carried many unanswerable questions, which were promised to be answered during the implementation’. What is more, the author refers that Bosnian-Herzegovinian universities entered the Bologna process without clear and carefully explained steps of what students and teachers are supposed to follow and complete. In addition, the guidelines and expectations of the Bologna Process had been given on paper without a proper and concise instruction in practice. Also, it has not been clarified which variety of English is the most suitable for ESP courses in order to prepare future professionals for current European job markets. So, generally, academics and teachers focused on moulding and adapting syllabi according to their own experiences and notions gained through work practice and according to their understanding of the Bologna Agreement. Needless to say, many questions are still unclear and unanswered, especially those related to the introduction of obligatory ESP courses in the first cycle of studies.

#### 4. Research project on Euro-English in Bosnia and Herzegovina

This paper presents a mini research project on the possible emergence of Euro-English functioning as a means of communication in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a non-EU country within multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual Europe. Indeed, it investigates the usage of Euro-English within ESP courses offered to several departments and faculties at the University of Tuzla. In other words, overall six departments were selected for the research on Euro-English, the first being the Department of Journalism and the Department of Social Work (both belonging to the Faculty of Philosophy), and four departments at the Faculty of

Technology (Environmental Engineering and Safety at Work, Chemical Engineering and Technology, Nutritional Technology, Agronomy - Crop and Animal Production). The research was conducted in the winter semester 2016/2017 and about 120 students of the mentioned departments were examined via written questionnaire. The students were asked to judge whether typical Euro-English sentences (as shown in Table 1 below) were acceptable and understandable as English. After the written questionnaire the students expressed their stance and attitude in a classroom discussion.

Having taken into consideration the discussion on the role and characteristics of Euro-English, the main hypothesis of the research was based on the fact that Euro-English appears as a new variety among younger Europeans nowadays. Although the target language (according to the ESP syllabi layout and according to the attitudes of English language teachers) is still the idealized form of an ENL variety (British or American English), Euro-English really develops as a co-variety among younger learners at a tertiary educational level. Although it is difficult to imagine Euro-English as a possible future classroom target right now, English teachers do notice the appearance and usage of Euro-English.

Indeed, such English used among younger people (data have been collected exclusively from non-native speakers of English who had EFL in the primary and secondary educational system) in reality really looks different from ENL variety. Teaching materials that are used in ESP courses still rely on ENL as the model. Learners are provided with many authentic texts and resources as the basis for linguistic data in order to make non-native learners relaxed and comfortable in their learning process. In other words, this is understood as an essential part of ESP courses at tertiary level as authentic texts are more vivid and interesting fostering further learning. The research results have proven that students' pronunciation of certain words is far away from ENL norms and competences. The examinees openly stated in the discussion that their non-native accent and dialect deserve to be respected in every way, expressing that their motivation is the priority in the learning process. As far as lexis and grammar are concerned, similar data can be detected as certain reoccurring patterns that are considered to be errors in an ENL variety appear as a mutual characteristic in different ESP classrooms. Indeed, those characteristics are Euro-English typicalities that Seidlhofer (2001) noticed and explicitly presented in her works. It is noteworthy that these appear to be common features regardless of their linguistic background and English proficiency. Indeed, the non-use of articles and zero-marking in third person singular are generally the most common features, being followed by a shift in countable/uncountable nouns, the interchangeable use of *who/which* and a word choice being influenced by a mother tongue, as can be seen from examples below. These features appear to be quite numerous and frequent, especially in everyday social interactions.

(1) A young journalist must know all *informations* prior to conducting primary research. (students of Journalism)

(2) Agroecology *integrate* indigenous knowledge and modern technologies. (students of Environmental Engineering and Agronomy)

(3) He returned to Tuzla to teach in a *gymnasium* that today bears his name. (students of Social Work)



At the same time, it has been confirmed (through informal conversations with other English teachers) that English teachers do believe that they should spend more time getting students to communicate in English, fostering communicative competence, rather than eradicating mistakes in pronunciation, lexis and grammar that are typical of Euro-English. In fact, they do not personally believe that they should have a preference of ENL over non-ENL models, as they strongly opine that their job is to back up communication in their classrooms. Therefore, learners are not at all times corrected if they deviate from ENL variety, but rather encouraged to polish up their speaking skills, particularly, in order to get prepared for Euro-English situations and European job markets.

What is more, it was really intriguing and interesting to test ESP students for the level of acceptability of typical Euro-English sentences that are presented in the table below:

<b>Euro-English sentences:</b>	<b>Standard ENL sentences:</b>
1. That big blue Mercedes is the car of my dentist.	1. That big blue Mercedes is my dentist's car.
2. Already in 1999 they introduced 'English for Kids' courses.	2. They introduced 'English for Kids' courses as early as 1999.
3. Last October I had the possibility to attend a workshop on media.	3. Last October I had the opportunity to attend a workshop on media.
4. I had a ski accident and I broke the right arm.	4. I had a ski accident and I broke my right arm.
5. How do you call this?	5. What do you call this?
6. That's my handy ringing – excuse me.	6. That's my mobile ringing – excuse me.
7. I know him for a long time.	7. I've known him for a long time.
8. I'm in a terrible shape. I should go to a fitness.	8. I'm in a terrible shape. I should go to a fitness centre.
9. You should see doctor.	9. You should see a doctor.
10. I'm going by the dentist tomorrow.	10. I'm going to the dentist's tomorrow.
11. That's the film who I saw yesterday.	11. That's the film which/that I saw yesterday.

Table 1. Euro-English typicalities taken from Murray (2003: 157)

Thus, around 120 of surveyed students were asked to judge the level of acceptability of typical Euro-English sentences via a written questionnaire. Most of them (precisely, more than 90%) agreed that Euro-English sentences that are presented in Table 1 sounded understandable if they were to hear them in certain informal contexts. However, when they were asked whether they would correct those Euro-English sentences, the respondents selected only a few sentences for an immediate correction. In fact, their selection turned out to be sentences 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11. In addition, they argued that the word *handy* in sentence 6 should be replaced with the word *mobile* or *mobile phone*, and as for sentence 8 they insisted that the word 'fitness' should appear in a compound noun, such as *fitness*

*club* or *fitness centre*. When they analysed sentence 9, they added that they feel like there is a definite/indefinite article missing, although articles are not a characteristic of the Bosnian language. Therefore, they proposed the introduction of a definite or indefinite article before the word *doctor*. For sentence 11 students opted for correction of *who*, for which they knew was a relative pronoun unacceptable for objects. Finally, sentence 10 was only partially corrected as students are familiar with the *Simple Progressive Tense with to go*, though just a smaller percentage of students (35%) recognized the possessive form of the word *dentist's*. So, generally speaking, the respondents held fairly liberal opinions regarding Euro-English sentences and their acceptability in everyday contexts. It should be noted that this paper did not take into consideration other syntactic, semantic and pragmatic differences between Euro-English and ENL varieties, as well as the attitudes of tertiary education teachers and ELT practitioners and scholars; however, the purpose and aim of the paper was to open the discussion on Euro-English in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context and call for empirical research to prove the existence of Euro-English in both EU and non-EU countries.

## 5. Conclusion

Having discussed different views on English used in Europe and among EU and non-EU countries and the typicalities of Euro-English that have become quite familiar in written and oral Bosnian-Herzegovinian contexts, several conclusions can be drawn in this paper. ESP classes at tertiary educational level turn out to be quite liberal towards other non-native varieties of English, or more precisely, toward Euro-English. Communication has been set as a top priority both for students and teachers of English, and it is vivid that this new age seems to be less conservative than we, as English teachers, expected at first. In addition, ESP students at Tuzla University appear to be more open and tolerant towards Euro-English, as the motivation towards a real-life communication in European contexts appears to be really strong and highly needed as opportunities for employment are nowadays spread all over Europe.

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# Euro-English: What's (not) in a Name?

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**Abstract:** In this review article I discuss some of the common controversies surrounding the idea of Euro-English by weighing out the most frequently upheld positions in the many debates this phenomenon has spurred in recent decades. I leave my own ambivalence fully exposed to the reader as the article is essentially built from a series of notes and reflections that I have developed reporting and deliberating on some of the current research on Euro-English. The text is also interspersed with anecdotal evidence that has inspired and influenced my thinking in this matter.

**Keywords:** Euro-English, New Englishes, history, identity

## Introduction

I am not convinced that it is a good idea to write a paper asking the question whether or not there exists a commonly accepted variety of English spoken in Europe – the already famous and much-talked-about Euro-English. The reason for this reluctance has its origins in little more than common sense: either way the argument goes, one is neither entirely right nor entirely wrong as the optimistic views (e.g. Crystal, 2003) are counterbalanced by an equally profound skepticism (e.g. Görlach, 2002). At the same time, the fact that Euro-English has been receiving so much attention, if only for the sake of rejecting it, gives the idea some substance and credibility. So, instead of siding strongly with either camp, I will assume that this controversial variety remains an open-ended possibility, a more or less remote prospect, a tentative creation whose proportions are yet to be ascertained. Meanwhile, one way around this dilemma would be to shift the focus away from what cannot be so easily resolved to what is supposed to be – both historically and linguistically – a much less disputed matter, thus claiming a safer ground from which to comment on the precarious status of Euro-English as a variety in its own right. Even so, my ambivalence comes through more than I would wish for as I sketchily weigh out the pros and cons based on some of the research undertaken on Euro-English so far. I suppose I have to accept that my position on Euro-English is essentially an ambivalent one.

## For the love of the name

It is hard to contest that Euro-English is an appealing moniker, just like that of Singlish (i.e. Singapore English) and many other outer circle varieties which Crystal (2003, p. 165) writes of as having colourful nicknames. The power of a name should not be underestimated, and it may also account for the fact that none of the alternative names, such as Europe English, European English, or the EU variety (European Court of Auditors, 2013) – provided that the latter is not conflated with the much more restricted notions of Eurojargon and Eurospeak as mere vocabulary lists – never really caught on. Although much less perceptible,

the EU variety as a label may be more fitting in certain contexts, such as when it refers to the EU institutions staffed by a motley crew of member state representatives whose jobs within the institutions, however many and varied, presuppose the use of English as a lingua franca. In these institutions (e.g. the European Parliament, the European Commission, etc.) English is both spoken and written extensively, so it makes sense to think of the EU context as one most likely to bring forth its own variety of English.

However, it seems that consensus on Euro-English is hard to reach even in what is supposed to be the least problematic of contexts. Not even in the EU institutional context is there a general agreement on whether Euro-English can claim common features not found in the standard variety that are appropriated by its community of users. Whatever evidence is found, there is no guarantee that it will be considered representative enough of a common European variety, whatever its name. And many a time it is essentially methodological considerations (e.g. questionnaires, respondents, corpus data, etc.) that are most responsible for the outcome.

Deliberating on whether Euro-English should be assigned endonormative variety status, Mollin (2006, p. 108) compiled her own corpus consisting of both written and spoken EU institutional discourse. Interestingly enough, the existence of such a variety was ultimately rejected by the study, and the element of surprise stems from the fact that the formal EU context is one place where one would expect to bear witness to Euro-English if there ever was such a thing. Or perhaps the outcome is not so unexpected given the linguistic criteria set up in order to study the alleged variety in formal, functional, and normative terms; the same would have been done with the outer circle Englishes of the past, for instance. It is possible that Euro-English as a social phenomenon is so different from the Englishes that have already been assigned variety status that it cannot be treated in the same manner. Despite the results of this research, both the idea and the name of Euro-English are still very much alive.

On the other hand, the right to choose the name of a language and keep it has been well documented in the history of humankind. This strikes a rather personal chord for me as it coincides with the recent history of what used to be my country of origin, former Yugoslavia with all of its six republics and two provinces, landing me in my current country of residence, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Yugoslavia the name of a common language was Serbo-Croatian, but after the country broke up following the civil wars of the early 1990s the common language became three official languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone: Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian, each claimed by its corresponding ethnic community. As a native speaker of Serbian, I can attest to full mutual intelligibility between this and the other two languages. I watch television channels in all of them, and I converse with speakers of Croatian and Bosnian with as little effort as when my interlocutors happen to be speakers of Serbian like myself. The agenda here is political more than anything else, and the issue is one of identity (e.g. Crystal, 2003, p. 22). Those who understand the implications of Bosnia and Herzegovina's socioculturally sensitive context will show enough linguistic prudence when circumstances call for it to at least make use of the more politically correct tripartite label b/h/s, which is an alphabetical reference to the country's three official language labels. To use a single language label that simply accords with

the name of the country may be perceived as an act of wrongdoing against a part of one's identity, one's sense of belonging, more or less significant, to a local community. Respecting differences may be appreciated even by those who do not prioritise their national identity and native language as part of that package, linguistically or in any other way. The following passage takes, in my opinion, a very realistic and practical stance on the issue of identity:

[I]dentity changes throughout one's life through interaction with those around us. Additionally, one person may have several different identities—we all modify our behaviour in response to the characteristics of a situation, we constantly enter and exit different roles, and sometimes a specific context may require us to activate conflicting identities. The language we use and the way we use it plays an important part in the construction, shift and display of our different identities. (Klimczak-Pawlak, 2014, pp. 6-7)

This digression is not entirely unrelated to the topic of Euro-English, to which I now return. Euro-English is an ideological construct as much as it is a linguistic affair – and the case of b/h/s is just another reminder that linguistic criteria are not necessarily on the winning side of the argument in language controversies. On some level, the case of Euro-English could even avoid some of the identity-related pitfalls that so many native languages fall prey to, precisely because the identity involved is of a transnational kind (Motschenbacher, 2013). This concept of a European lingua franca draws its strength from accepting differences instead of looking for similarities where and if they may be hard to find. English as a lingua franca (ELF) is not viewed 'in terms of a stable language system but rather as a matter of on-going change in situated performance' (Motschenbacher, 2013, p. 195), so that describing variation accordingly becomes the focus of research. Motschenbacher (2013) argues that '[d]ue to its heterogeneity, instability and defiance of variety-formation, ELF represents the epitome of language use in the postmodern world' (p. 196), and calls for 'theorisations (and methodologies) that correspond more closely to the current sociolinguistic realities of our increasingly transnational, globalised world' (p. 197). More criticism is directed towards research being limited to language teaching and learning contexts as 'less prototypical for ELF communication, in which participants are generally not teachers or learners' (Motschenbacher, 2013, p. 198).

### A teacher's bias is but one of many

Much as I am in agreement that research of this kind cannot be limited to pedagogical contexts, I have an understanding as a teacher of English that, unless they are self-taught, most users of English will have undergone at least some formal training in English, which has a bearing on how they communicate even outside educational contexts. While thus conceived English as a lingua franca criticises the imperialism and ownership of English (Motschenbacher, 2013, p. 197) and sees clinging to native models as gatekeeping strategies (Motschenbacher, 2013, p. 200), it also seems to promote the idea of English as a necessarily foreign-sounding language when used by non-native speakers in that the accent and idioms, foregrounding most conspicuously their non-native status, will – and indeed should – be non-native. There is ample proof around us that

native-like proficiency is absolutely attainable, which is another – although perhaps more difficult – way to defeat gatekeeping and gatekeepers.

While Euro-English has been rejected by some, others remain open to the possibility of there being not only one but a number of Euro-Englishes ‘with speakers from each country creating their own [...] Euro-English [...] with specific pragmatic behaviours, as well as lexical and grammatical constructions based on the language experience of the speakers’ (Klimczak-Pawlak, 2014, p. ix). This is believed to be possible owing to a core of shared preferences underlying the variability, both of which are documented in the pragmatic behaviour of speakers. It seems that both acceptance and rejection of the idea of Euro-English in many cases resonate with the researcher’s moral standing on the matter.

On other occasions, it may be the choice of data that steers the debate in either direction. Mollin (2006), for instance, designed a questionnaire containing a total of 20 sentences in English, some complying with Standard English and some departing from it, in order to elicit acceptability judgments from her respondents – 435 university lecturers and researchers of diverse European backgrounds. The main argument was that if Euro-English existed, European academics would be the first ones to use and claim it. The academics, however, seemed to have clung too closely to the standard variety, which ultimately led to the rejection of the hypothesis. The result seems understandable in light of the fact that most academics will have undergone extensive and rigorous training in academic English, which is a register not embraced by all native speakers outside academia, to say the least. To a researcher, the mastery of academic English is equivalent to gaining provisional access to an international scholarly arena.

This is a point at which I once again turn to my personal life in search for more anecdotal evidence that got me thinking about the idea of Euro-English in the first place. In this episode I introduce my significant other, a native speaker of Italian, whose knowledge of my native Serbian is so basic that we have no other choice but to rely on the use of English as our own lingua franca. Were we to rely on his Serbian or my equally basic Italian, our exchanges would be reduced to naming objects or, at best, building the simplest of clauses. Since he also happens to have a penchant for stimulating (i.e. intellectual and highbrow) conversation, English seems to be the only way to keep him sufficiently entertained with words.

Going through the sentences from Mollin’s questionnaire, also replicated partly in Forche (2012), I could not help thinking of my partner confidently and nonchalantly using in our conversations in English some of the constructions tentatively described as Euro-English. Several of them bear a striking resemblance to the ones in the questionnaire: *we were three, already in 2008, I know him for a long time*, etc. Now, it is fair to add that my partner’s academic English is superb as he routinely publishes papers in English that hardly need any proofreading. We also have a mutual agreement to correct each other’s English when either says something that is not idiomatically and otherwise in line with the standard – in my case British, in his American. It is evident that we aspire to a native-like idiom, just as it is beyond any doubt that to the native ear an odd-sounding expression will now and then slip into our conversations in English. I very much hope that the English I speak is closer to RP (i.e. Received Pronunciation as a regionally neutral variety of British English) than it is to Euro-English, yet at the same time I am aware that somebody listening in on our

conversations when we are out and about might get a different impression. I am also fully aware of the way we influence each other's English: I will accommodate to his in those cases when I fail to recognise an expression as a by-product of interference from his mother tongue. The accommodation process probably does not stop there: next time I might happily use the expression myself if I do not know any better. It seems that, whatever our own position on Euro-English or whatever we may call it, there is a unique variety of English existing in the personal space of two people whose native languages happen to be Italian and Serbian. One cannot but wonder how many more similar stories are being narrated in English in various corners of the continent at this very moment.

I will also confide that English still has the power to attract a great deal of attention publicly, both in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Rome, Italy. This anecdotal evidence may be just a nod to the exclusiveness, and even exoticism, which continues to surround the use of a non-native language in certain parts of Europe. Eastern Europe is generally regarded as a region where there are still relatively few speakers of English, but Italy does not exactly top the charts with its English usage either (e.g. Special Eurobarometer 386, 2012). This seems to suggest that (Euro-)English is still very much a work in progress, in and out of the European Union.

Sadly, non-EU countries are conspicuously absent from most research on Euro-English, which is something that will need to be addressed sooner or later. Much as mobility is a major factor in research on Euro-English, I am convinced that there are sections of every society, including non-EU countries, that use English as a contact code. Yet, most research on Euro-English is still somewhat underrepresented. For instance, Mollin (2006) focused on university teachers and researchers in her study, while Forche (2012) recruited his respondents from the ranks of students involved in the Erasmus programme. So far, research on Euro-English has targeted mainly professors, students, and employees of the EU institutions, leaving large sections of Europe's population out of the picture. Despite a general outcry against elitism, it is still the upper professional and academic echelons of EU societies that are entitled to have a major say in what may be a common European variety of English. Their mobility is higher, their visibility greater, and their voices are louder. But there must be others, too: both those in non-EU countries and those doing a variety of other jobs in EU countries. Otherwise, there might be too little meaning encoded in the name of Euro-English. Interestingly enough, when asked which variety of English they aspired to, a relative majority of the Erasmus programme respondents (44%) in the study carried out by Forche (2012, p. 461) expressed a preference towards a generic term such as International English as opposed to Euro-English:

[I]t seems that Euro-English does not currently exist as an independent variety, but that – taking into account generally high acceptability rates, the acceptance of an International English and thus the appreciation of English as a decontextualized lingua franca – future institutionalization may be possible under the influence of young mobile Europeans. (Forche, 2012, p. 473)

This, however, may be due to the respondents' uncertainty and insufficient familiarity with a specific label such as Euro-English. They may not exactly know what their English is like, so they are cautious enough not to claim otherwise.



Although the study reveals a bias towards young mobile Europeans as a group carrying forward the idea of a common language variety, the wording similar to 'English as a decontextualized lingua franca' is encountered in some more recent approaches, too.

Keeping a distance from what is perceived as an ideologically loaded concept of Euro-English, Motschenbacher (2013) contextualises a common English more broadly, as a European lingua franca, and reinforces his distance from the name of Euro-English also by choosing a different set of data to analyse. Indeed, language use in Eurovision Song Contest press conferences is different from the contexts analysed so far in more than one way. Although it goes beyond the usual set of professional and bureaucratic contexts most widely explored in studies on Euro-English, the research is located in a comparatively restricted time frame. The press conferences in question are part of an annual event, the Eurovision Song Contest, spanning a fortnight and hosted in the country of the previous year's winner. We are duly informed that most of the journalists attending the press conferences have been covering the event for years on end, but I am not sure the same can be said about the performers. In addition, not all performers have a sufficient command of English to be able to answer questions in English, in which case some *ad hoc* translation may take place. Much as it is by no means inconceivable to document the workings of English as a European lingua franca in a temporally restricted context, it still is somewhat of a unique event – as Crystal (2003, p. 189) qualifies the spread of English as a global language.

### Historical uniqueness of Euro-English

Even if it still may be little more than the hype that surrounds it, Euro-English is historically different, especially in comparison with the usual circumstances that paved the way for the emergence of New Englishes and their status as outer circle varieties. One notable difference is a much wider scope of most 'old' New Englishes in their respective communities, and one notable example is South Asian English, which is a collective reference to a group of varieties spoken in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. By way of illustration, in Indian society English is found in a number of domains: 'the legal system, government administration, secondary and higher education, the armed forces, the media, business, and tourism' (Crystal, 2003, p. 49). The list is a long one and exceeds considerably the domains explored and associated with Euro-English to date. Likewise, New Englishes of this kind are free from many of the temporal restrictions that often plague Euro-English. A relatively short stay in a country for business, tourism, or any other reason is not comparable to actually living in a country and being an active participant in the creation of a New English.

In a different historical context, one can trace down the emergence of an inner circle variety such as American English, which was the result of ethnically diverse settlement and large-scale immigration on the continent:

It was not only England which influenced the directions that the English language was to take in America [...]. The Spanish had occupied large parts of the west and south-west. The French were present in the northern territories [...] and throughout the middle regions [...]. The Dutch were in New York [...] and the

surrounding area. Large numbers of Germans began to arrive at the end of the seventeenth century, settling mainly in Pennsylvania and its hinterland. In addition, there were increasing numbers of Africans entering the south, as a result of the slave trade [...]. The nineteenth century saw a massive increase in American immigration [...]. Germans and Italians came, escaping the consequences of the failed 1848 revolutions. And, as the century wore on, there were increasing numbers of Central European Jews, especially fleeing from the pogroms of the 1880s. (Crystal, 2003, p. 35)

Although the participants in these two historical contexts are different, they have at least one feature in common which ultimately led to the emergence of their own English varieties: they were originally different people speaking different languages but living alongside each other for a long time.

Time and space constraints may consequently be seen as two interrelated factors that have placed Euro-English in a sociocultural category of its own. Namely, apart from the institutions of the European Union, whose employees supposedly live and work in the same country, and despite the fact that the European Parliament alone was reported back in the 1990s to have 636 elected politicians from the then 12 member states (Dollerup, 1996, p. 28), Euro-English still seems to keep the domains of time and space limited to specific contexts and definite stays. Such is the case even with European students entering the Erasmus programme as well as Eurocrats in Brussels, many of whom will not stay indefinitely in their host countries, but will move on when their contract has expired or their exchange programme is completed, possibly even return to their native countries. It is very likely that the experience will affect them linguistically, too, although it is not as easy to predict to what degree. How much time of co-existence in a language is needed for something revolutionary to take place and shape, as was the case with the New Englishes discussed above? Whatever the answer may be, the very idea of Euro-English is a unique event in itself due to a significant change in the circumstances that conspired to give birth to the New Englishes of old some decades and centuries ago.

### Instead of a conclusion

Commenting on the role of the military in the spread of English, Crystal (2003) asked the following question with reference to the presence of international peace-keeping troops in a number of places around the world in the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina included: '[I]s it likely that an English language presence of a few months, or even years, would have a long-term influence on local language awareness? We can only speculate' (p. 106).

As someone who has experienced the 1990s events in Bosnia and Herzegovina firsthand – even worked for years as an interpreter in a couple of high-visibility diplomatic missions, I would like to believe that in this case I can offer a little more than speculation. For one, the officers and soldiers deployed in Banja Luka and its surroundings had been instructed, previous to their deployment, how to conduct themselves around the local population, which basically left them confined to their camps and minimised contact with anyone who was not one of them or, at best, locally and nationally recruited interpreting staff. As the general sentiment amongst the local population was largely the same, the only ones who



may have profited, especially linguistically, from the international presence in their country were the actual interpreters. Otherwise, there were no far-reaching effects to be reported, only the odd romance or friendship that had defied the rules and brought down the walls erected by both parties. There were also various diplomatic offices set up in the country in the 1990s and later, but the fact that they had been given more leeway in their interaction with the local population did not seem to materialise in any significant manner. The international community's presence in post-war Bosnia may have touched a few lives, but no long-term influence, language awareness included, has made itself felt. Perhaps the time was not right, and perhaps it was not the right place either. Euro-English may fare better in its unique journey through time and space. However one may feel about the idea, it is hard to deny its novelty and uniqueness. Whatever name(s) and shape(s) it may take, there is some new presence out there. It is an exciting time to be around, I reluctantly say to my pessimistic self.

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## A Woman “Whom Every Thing Becomes”

### A Defense of Shakespeare’s Cleopatra

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**Abstract.** Cleopatra has always been one of Shakespeare’s most controversial characters. As an ambitious, sexually-aggressive woman from the non-Western world, she seems to embody all of the conflicting and confused attitudes towards gender and race of Elizabethan England. Though some might view her treatment in the play as negative, or even “anti-feminist,” the odd mix of praise and censure that runs throughout seems to belie any definitive reading. Regardless of her author’s intentions, the overall impression that emerges of Cleopatra is a highly-favorable and sympathetic one. She is truly one of his greatest, tragic, and most complicated characters—of either sex.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, feminism, Elizabethan England, gender

Hostile attitudes towards Cleopatra VII Philopator begin with the very first account of her life, written by the Greek and Roman historian, Plutarch, in the 1st century AD. In his chapter on Marc Antony in *Parallel Lives*, he summarily dismisses the Queen of Egypt as “the last and crowning mischief that could befall” the Roman general, arguing that her seduction of him entails nothing less than an attempt “to stifle and finally corrupt any elements that yet made resistance in him of goodness and a sound judgement.” It is quite a charge to lay at the feet of one woman, no matter how beautiful and seductive Plutarch may grudgingly admit her to be. As author of one of the most widely-read and disseminated sources of information on the ancient world in Elizabethan England, Plutarch’s opinion of the last independent ruler of Egypt surely influenced William Shakespeare, who read him in translation, and used his account of the lives of famous Greeks and Romans as the basis for several plays. In his 1607 play about the two doomed lovers, *Antony and Cleopatra*, internalized attitudes of Elizabethan England towards women are presented through the lens of imperial Rome, resulting in a neat dichotomy between austere, masculine West and sensual, feminine East that has long attracted the notice of critics. Just because Shakespeare uses Plutarch as a major source, however, and cannot help but express some of the prejudiced attitudes of his own time period, does not mean that the character must be read as a kind of one-dimensional, *femme fatale*. On the contrary, despite her author’s probable intention to present her as a kind of warning about the dangers of unconventional and immoral women, Cleopatra emerges as something unique: a woman one cannot help but admire for her very aggressiveness and sexuality. She

dies in the end, of course, but her death is by her own hand, and in defiance of the will of both Caesar and the male patriarchy he represents. Despite frequent criticism that it is "anti-feminist," or hostile towards women, *Antony and Cleopatra* offers its heroine an unprecedented opportunity to both revel in and reject traditional notions of female sexuality and power. Far from the stereotypical doomed and powerless heroine of Shakespeare's plays, Cleopatra is a woman "whom every thing becomes," and among his most greatest, tragic, and complicated characters of either sex.

To understand some of the hostility directed towards her by historians, critics, and other characters in the play, it is necessary to begin with a brief explication of attitudes towards women in Elizabethan England. Much work has already been done on the subject, but for a representative text, one can turn to *The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights*, published by the anonymous T. E. in 1632. It is a treatise on legal matters related to English women, largely focusing on property and marriage rights. In Book 1, Section 3, the author summarizes the legal status of women in the country: "They make no laws, they consent to none, they abrogate none. All of them are understood either married or to be married and their desires are subject to their husband. I know no remedy, though some women can shift it well enough." Later, in another section, he adds that "A woman married at twelve cannot disagree afterward. But if she be married younger, she may dissent till she be fourteen" (1.4). Sara Deutch Shotland notes "the hostility" directed to female litigants and the "numerous legal, institutional, and financial barriers" raised to prevent them from seeking relief under the law (39). This legal opinion of women reflects prevailing attitudes of Elizabethan England at large, which considered them inferior to men in most regards and consequently suited to a very limited number of occupations. "They were expected to marry, bear children, and keep house," but could not act on stage or attend school (Riley and McAllister 91). The proper place for a woman, as reflected in the vast majority of the art and historical documents produced during that era, was as a silent and uncomplaining wife who took care of the home and restricted her ambitions to the having and raising of children.

Indeed, this is the fate offered to them in many of the Bard's plays, with their acceptance or refusal to comply often taken as an indication of whether the woman ought to be considered "good" or "bad." Desdemona is an example of the former, the kind of woman who knows her place, which is at her husband's side—loyal and submissive to the end, no matter how wrong and homicidal he may be. Even as Othello rages, denouncing her as a whore and strumpet, she wonders what she has done to earn his reproach: "How have I been behaved, that he might stick / The small'st opinion on my least misuse?" (IV.ii.113-114). He kills her anyway, and somehow has the gall to declare himself "An honorable murderer, if you will, / For naught I did in hate, but all in honor" (V.ii.302-303). In the tragedies, especially, few of Shakespeare's women manage to escape Desdemona's fate, regardless of their relative virtuousness: Cordelia and her sisters, Gertrude, and Portia all end up dead. Those women who do not conform to his traditional notions of femininity, like Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Katherina, all get their comeuppance one way or the other: the first two die, as well, while the last is miraculously converted or "tamed" into seeing the error of her proto-feminist ways. Noting Shakespeare's ambivalence about the central issues related to

women's rights in his day, Angela Pitt nonetheless observes that "he tacitly accepts the conservative idea of a hierarchy in nature with man at the top and woman second" (Pitt 41). In most of his plays, Shakespeare is unwilling or uninterested in challenging the underlying assumptions behind the hierarchical relationship between the sexes, except very mildly or obliquely.

This seems to explain the negative views towards the queen expressed by other characters. As a strong, sexual woman who most definitely does not conform to the wishes of the men around her, she represents a threat to the established "hierarchy in nature" that was no less rigid in Roman times than it was in Shakespeare's day. And indeed, our initial introduction to her, as voiced by Philo in the first lines, is not a positive one: he refers to the "tawny front" of her face, which has distracted Antony's "goodly eyes" from their proper, manly affairs, and blames her for using her "gypsy lust" to cool the general's rage for battle (I.i.2-10). Octavius Caesar, the ultimate example of Roman manhood in the play, echoes the charge: "He hath given his empire / Up to a whore," he complains bitterly of his former fellow triumvir (III.vi.68-69). But it is Antony's bitter castigation of her in Act 4 that proves most damaging to her character. In one breathless passage following his defeat by Caesar's forces, he denounces her as a "foul Egyptian," "Triple-turned whore," and "false soul," who, "Like a right gypsy hath at fast and loose / Beguiled me to the very heart of loss" (IV.xii.10-29). He, too, seems to blame her for his downfall. Perhaps there is something of the Biblical fall from grace in this passage, as Rabindra Kumar Verma points out: "By conflating Cleopatra's role with Eve's, the playwright depicts Cleopatra as a sinner" (Kumar Verma 34). Indeed, references to snakes, worms, or asps, especially in Cleopatra's death scene, strongly suggest that Shakespeare has something like a comparison with Eve in mind.

The Elizabethans viewed attributes such as ambition and aggression as natural in a man, worthy of cultivation and praise. Discussing the considerable influence of Castiglione's *The Courtier* on Shakespeare and his contemporaries, Philip D. Collington observes that "while good breeding, social grace ... and so forth are all desirable qualities, ultimately what distinguishes a courtier is his willingness to fight for a worthy cause" (299). In a woman, however, these same characteristics become inappropriate or even dangerous. Because Cleopatra is so much more ambitious and aggressive than any males in the play, including her lover, other characters like to joke about how she has somehow usurped his manhood. Philo, for instance, bemoans how this one-time "triple pillar of the world" has been "transformed / Into a strumpet's fool" (I.i.13-14). Caesar is more pointed in his criticism of the two lovers, finding Antony "not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" (I.iv.5-7). Even the author himself cannot help but join in on the gender reversal fun. In Act 1, Scene 2, Enobarbus, whose opinion we learn to respect, somehow mistakes his boss for the queen. Later, in a scene filled with bawdy language undoubtedly meant to highlight the sexual perversity and immorality of Cleopatra's Egypt, she crows of having literally assumed his clothing: "I drunk him to bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan" (II.v.21-23). Not only does she dress Antony as a woman in this scene, but, as Frédérique Fouassier points out, she takes on his guise as a male, appropriating his weapon, "the warrior's phallic symbol" (57). Antony does not fail to pick up on this theme

of emasculation: "She has robbed me of my sword!" he howls childishly, before learning of her death (IV.xiv.23). His soldiers also rue the loss of manhood he has suffered, which supposedly taints them as well: "So our leader's led, / And we are women's men" (III.vii.70-71).

If Cleopatra often seems like a "bad" or negative woman, Octavia must represent her opposite. Whereas the queen of Egypt is sexual, self-indulgent, and temperamental, Caesar's sister is the very picture of chastity, modesty, and docility. Though she has few lines and initiates no action of consequence, Octavia nevertheless plays an important role in the play, serving as a benchmark for what a "good" example of femininity might look like, both to the ancient Romans and to Shakespeare's audience. Like Cleopatra, she is first introduced to the reader in a conversation between men: in Act 2, Scene 2, during the tense parley between Antony and Caesar, Agrippa proposes that the latter offer his sister in marriage as a kind of peace offering to the former. "Admired" Octavia, he assures Antony, has a beauty which "claims / No worse a husband than the best of men," whose "Virtue ... and general graces speak / That which none else can utter" (127-39). In the flesh, she easily confirms Agrippa's lofty opinion of her, brushing aside Antony's warning that he will be too busy for them to spend much time together: "All which time," she assures him, "Before the gods my knee shall bow my prayers / To them for you" (II.iii.2-4). Nor does she object when he warns her not to pay heed to the rumors floating around about him: "Read not my blemishes in the world's report. / I have not kept my square, but that to come / Shall all be done by th' rule" (II.iii.5-7). In Octavia, Antony has found the ideal Roman wife, "a woman who accepts her role as a leisure-time activity and offers no resistance to Antony's life in the world of men ... Octavia will have no demands to make of her husband that conflict with his demands on himself" (Bamber 116). Antony's abandonment of his new bride shortly after might expose her to ridicule, except that no one in the play is willing to offer any. The only negative criticism of Octavia is voiced by Cleopatra, who has an obvious reason to denigrate her, and Enobarbus, who thinks she is "of a holy, cold, and still conversation," and therefore unsuitable as a mate for lusty Antony (II.vi.125).

The playwright issues a more subtle, but no less potent, critique of Cleopatra on the basis of her race. Hers is, in Philo's words, the "tawny front" that has led one of the most powerful men in Rome astray and provoked a race war between East and West. The fetishizing of Egypt as mystical, amorous, and non-white Other, as a degenerate land filled with eunuchs, crocodiles, and female rulers, is reflected in Caesar's words to Lepidus at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 4. It is not so much, he says, that Antony "fishes, drinks, and wastes / The lamps of night in revel" in Egypt, or that he is "Amiss to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy" (4-17). Even the humorless would-be stoic cannot fault his foe for taking advantage of Cleopatra's legendary beauty. The problem is that these activities threaten to distract Antony from the more weighty, and manly, matters that beg his attention in Rome: "to confound such time / That drums him from his sport, and speaks as loud / As his own state and ours," is what he finds unforgivable (28-30). The play insists upon an association of Egypt with negative racial and gender attributes, prompting Cleopatra to wonder if Antony can love her despite her blackness: "Think on me, / That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black, / And wrinkled deep in time" (I.v.28-30). Because of her gender, race, and willingness to exert



power, she represents a unique challenge to the white, established patriarchy of ancient Rome and Elizabethan England, as Joyce Green MacDonald argues:

[Her power is] explicitly presented as a challenge to the integrity of the family-based image of Roman society beloved of Renaissance classicists, who tended to reproduce late-republican Rome's concerns with lineage and family in the image of their own era's usage of the family as an instrument of political and sexual control. (MacDonald 65)

As a woman who shows little interest in conforming to the era's traditional gender roles or "usage of the family," Shakespeare cannot help but view her with some hostility. This comes through in the form of the frequent criticism directed at her in the play, in her overall portrayal as capricious, moody, and over-sexed, and in her own ambivalence towards herself, as a desirable woman and powerful queen.

The case against Cleopatra is formidable and systemic. Even her own author seems to have it in for her. But, just as Antony is able to turn a momentary defeat into his greatest victory at Modena, scrounging for "The roughest berry on the rudest hedge" and drinking horse urine in an epic attempt to stave off hunger and exhaustion, so, too, does Cleopatra manage to rise above the taunts and obstacles thrown her way (I.iv.65). For every harsh word or nagging criticism spoken against her, she is offered as many compliments, and often in the most exquisite of terms. To Antony she is "great Egypt," "dearest queen," and, in the flush of his unexpected victory over Caesar late in the play, "My nightingale" and "day o' th' world" (I.v.45, I.iii.17, IV.viii.13-18). Charmian, her servant, calls her the "eastern star" and a "lass unparalleled," even as the queen is steeling herself for her imminent death (V.ii.307-16). But it is not just Cleopatra's friends and associates who speak fondly of her; even her erstwhile opponents cannot help but express admiration for this magnificent woman who dares to defy the will of Rome. Dolabella, loath to admit the fate that awaits her as Caesar's prisoner, calls her "noble empress;" to Maecenas, she is a "most triumphant lady" (V.ii.70, II.ii.194). Unexpectedly, it is Caesar himself who offers the highest praise of Cleopatra following the discovery of her death: "Bravest at the last, / She leveled at our purposes and, being royal, / Took her own way" (V.ii.335-37). Deciding what to make of the queen from the way she is spoken about in the play can be a difficult task, as Anne Barton points out: "One may begin to feel that language used so indiscriminately to describe a single personality becomes meaningless and self-defeating" (Barton 48). But it is telling that the very last impression of Cleopatra, coming from the mouth of the man who stands triumphant at its end, is a positive one.

Enobarbus plays a key role in reconciling these contrasting images of the queen, for, as a detached, ironic observer of events, whom Janet Adelman refers to as an "inveterate judge of others," he can be looked at as the play's moral compass, whose opinion is accurate and trustworthy (qtd. in Read 570). And there can be no mistaking the fact that Enobarbus, for all his male posturing and skepticism, admires, if not outright adores, the queen. Early in the play, when Antony tells him that he has decided to leave her and go back to Rome, Enobarbus attempts to dissuade him from doing so, calling her "a wonderful piece of work," whose "passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love" (I.ii.153-60). His famous set-piece in Act 2, Scene 2, in which he describes the first meeting



between the lovers, is filled with some of the finest verse Shakespeare ever wrote: "she did lie / In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue— / O'erpicturing that Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (208-11). Lacking factual description to impress upon his listeners the effect of the scene, he turns to metaphor, relating how the "air, which, but for vacancy, / Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too / And made a gap in nature" (226-28). His description is enough to move Agrippa to declare her a "Rare Egyptian" and "Royal wench" (228, 236). Rosalie L. Cole notes the discrepancy between the character's usual, plain-talking manner and his poetic description of the queen here: "In that speech, Enobarbus abandons himself to Cleopatra, and thereby gives himself away: from his response to her, apparently so out of character, we feel the force of her enchantment" (Cole 58). The force of that enchantment is enough for most characters in the play, and those watching and reading it, to forget the negative criticism that has already been offered of her. Like Agrippa and Maecenas, and, eventually, like Caesar, one cannot help but admire this woman.

Octavia may be the preferred model of femininity, according to other characters and the standards of the time, but she is a poor match for Cleopatra as a woman, mate for Antony, or in any other sense of the word. The character most fond of her seems to be her brother, who nonetheless does not hesitate to use her as a kind of sacrificial offering to be moved around between men as circumstances warrant. As for Antony, the remarkable impassivity of his words to his new bride leaves little doubt as to where his heart truly lies. Though he has already impressed us with his high poetical language and skill in complimenting his lovers, the best he can muster is a mere "Gentle Octavia" or "lady" (III.iv.20-25). When he suggests that, in his fight with her brother, she let her "best love draw to that point which seeks / Best to preserve it," one senses that he already has one foot out the door (III.iv.21-22). Cleopatra delivers an even more devastating blow, turning a messenger's harmless description of her rival as low-voiced and a little shorter than the queen into one of the play's most famous ripostes: "Dull of tongue, and dwarfish" (III.iii.17). The question of whether she will choose to support Caesar or Antony would seem to be the defining issue of her character, but as Linda Bamber points out, it hardly matters one way or the other: "Octavia, having no identity of her own, cannot be said to have been faithful to either man. Her fidelity simply doesn't matter" (129). The war will go on regardless of whom she chooses to support; unlike Cleopatra, she cannot affect the outcome of events even in a negative manner. Octavia may inspire sympathy and respect as a symbol of the ideal woman, but, as an actual woman, she hardly registers.

One can hardly imagine her bravely inserting herself into the front lines of her army, as the queen insists on doing just before the Battle of Actium. Enobarbus, normally not one to mince words, cannot offer a compelling reason for why she should be excluded from the proceedings, joking instead about the impropriety of mares and horses serving together in battle. The excuse he finally does offer, that Antony might be too distracted by her being there, is a weak one: "Your presence needs must puzzle Antony, / Take from his heart, take from his brain, from's time / What should not then be spared" (III.vii.10-12). Is Antony really such a poor strategist, one wonders, that he really cannot conduct his wars in the presence of a lone female? Perhaps sensing how ridiculous he sounds, Enobarbus quickly switches gears, hinting about unfounded rumors back in Rome "That Photinus,

an eunuch, and your maids / Manage this war” (14-15). Cleopatra’s response makes it clear how much stock she puts into what people say about her, either in Rome or anywhere else:

Sink Rome, and their tongues rot  
That speak against us! A charge we bear i’t’h’ war,  
And as the president of my kingdom will  
Appear there for a man. Speak not against it.  
I will not stay behind. (15-19)

There is an obvious echo here of Antony’s words from the beginning of the play: “Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall!” (I.i.35-36). With Egypt herself now under attack, it is only fitting that Cleopatra should seek to emulate her lover’s defiant stance. What Enobarbus fails to realize is that, having settled on a course of action, she will not be easily dissuaded from pursuing it. Nor, as the “president” and ruler of her kingdom, should she be expected to do so.

The battle goes poorly for Antony, and everyone rushes to lay the blame for it at Cleopatra’s feet. It is almost as if they are relieved by the disastrous outcome, because it validates their objections to letting her tag along in the first place and reconfirms their suspicions about women who dare to overstep their bounds. “Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt,” says Scarus afterward, “i’t’h’ midst o’t’h’ fight ... like a cow in June, / Hoists sails and flies” (III.x.10-15). The theme of Cleopatra as a seductive mistress who leads men astray invariably resurfaces here: Antony is “The noble ruin of her magic,” but, if only he had been “what he knew himself, it had gone well” (III.xi.19-27). All this gnashing of teeth can hardly disguise the fact that Antony really has only himself to blame for losing the battle. It might not have been wise to engage Caesar at sea, but until the moment of his ignoble exit, victory remained within his grasp. When the two lovers meet again, she expresses surprise that he did not stay and fight: “Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought / You would have followed” (III.xi.54-55). “My heart was to thy rudder tied by th’ strings,” he responds meekly, “Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods / Command me” (56-60). Enobarbus, as always, recognizes the truth of the matter. When the queen asks him, “Is Antony or we in fault for this?” he does not hesitate to give her the only sensible response:

Antony only, that would make his will  
Lord of his reason. What though you fled  
From that great face of war, whose several ranges  
Frighted each other? Why should he follow?” (2-6).

Why, indeed? The truth is that Cleopatra’s flight played only a minor role in Antony’s loss, which is not even all that serious in the wider context of the war. Antony is able to recover sufficiently to defeat Caesar in their next encounter. It is the one after that, which he loses entirely on his own, that finally proves fateful.

Nonetheless, he can’t help but try to blame her for it anyway: “All is lost! / This foul Egyptian hath betrayèd me!” (IV.xii.9-10). Throughout the play, Antony reveals how little he truly understands the queen, how ready he is to accept the sexist and racist discourse disseminated about her by other characters. For example, when he catches Thidias kissing her hand in Act 3, Scene 13, he

completely loses it, and makes several nasty remarks about her alleged promiscuity. "Though you can guess what temperance should be, / You know not what it is" (123-24). He expresses a desire to "outroar / The hornèd herd" of bulls upon the hill of Basan as the greatest cuckold who ever lived (129-130). In actuality, Thidias had merely asked for the right to kiss her hand out of respect, as a way to finalize the agreement they had just made. Antony has no more reason to blame her for letting him kiss her hand, than he does for losing his final battle. Whether through lack of context, or a willingness to believe the rumors he has heard about her, he simply cannot see her for who she truly is.

But the audience gets a better sense of her than he or any other character. Nowhere does she demonstrate the kind of wanton and immoral behavior that would justify such a negative characterization of her. In her interactions with Antony and her servants, she is tender, loving, and loyal, not too proud or magisterial to apologize for the unfair beating of a messenger. In response to Antony's unprovoked assault on her character, she can only wonder, "Not know me yet?" (III.xiii.160). "Her question provides a salutary reminder of the gulf that separates Roman (mis)characterizations of her and the 'real' Cleopatra presented to us in, for example, her exchanges with Mardian, Charmian, and Iras" (Harris). There is, clearly, a disconnect between the Cleopatra spoken of by other characters, and the one we actually see onstage; most of the criticism of her touches only the former, though it is the latter who must deal with the consequences. That Antony, who loves and knows her best, often cannot distinguish between the two, indicates how complicated Cleopatra truly is. A. C. Bradley, noted Shakespearean scholar, considers her one of four characters the Bard ever wrote who can be considered "inexhaustible"—the others being Hamlet, Falstaff, and Iago (qtd. in Gaines xi).

One may take it for granted that, as a story about the conflict between East and West, Shakespeare's play comes down in favor of the latter. It is the Roman viewpoint, after all, which seems triumphant in the end, with both of the insurgents dead and Caesar on the cusp of initiating his great *Pax Romana* that will finally bring peace to the empire. But a close reading of the play calls into question which side is truly favored. L. T. Fitz points to the "unsavory character" of most of the Roman activities featured throughout: "from the bride-bartering of Octavius and Antony, to the cut-throat scramble for political ascendancy, to the unctuous hypocrisy of Octavius in the closing scenes" (306). Then there is the simple fact that, despite his initial wavering, Antony finally chooses Egypt—and Cleopatra. "Here is my space," he declares at the start of the play, ending it on a similar note of acceptance: "Here I am Antony" (I.i.36, IV.xiv.13). Having briefly returned to his homeland, and found himself unmoved by its "utter emptiness," its hypocrisy and pretense, Antony realizes that Egypt has a "humanity and a fullness wholly lacking" in Rome (Daiches 153-54). It is with Cleopatra, in Egypt, that he truly belongs. One can hardly criticize the queen for supposedly leading him astray, when in actuality, she has only lead him home.

But the play is not really about Antony, who dies at the end of Act 4. It is about Cleopatra, who outlives him, and their love for each other, which outlives them both. It is no ordinary kind of love, as critics have long recognized, but "a transcendental force which raises them—even and perhaps especially in death—above the petty demands of politics and empire" (Schalkwyk 112). Having

succeeded in calling Antony back to her, in reaffirming the primacy of their love against the military and political drama that threatened to destroy it, Cleopatra must somehow find a way to succeed where he failed, and defeat Caesar once and for all. She recognizes immediately that the only way to do this will be through her death: “And it is great / To do that thing that ends all other deeds, / Which shackles accidents and bolts up change” (V.ii.4-6). She knows exactly the fate that awaits her if she were to fall into Roman hands:

Now, Iras, what think'st thou?  
Thou an Egyptian puppet shall be shown  
In Rome as well as I. Mechanic slaves  
With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers shall  
Uplift us to the view. (207-11)

In denying Caesar his wish to see her paraded through the streets of Rome, she commits a final act of defiance against him and the male patriarchy he represents. “‘Tis paltry to be Caesar,” she says, though the temptation to read the line in a general sense, as in *a Caesar*, or *a man*, is unmistakable (V.ii.2-3). He can have Rome, and Egypt, too—she already has something bigger in mind: “Immortal longings,” the reunion with Antony that awaits her in the next world, and the fame that surely succeeds her in this one (V.ii.281).

Cleopatra must die, but her death is hardly tragic. It is noble, victorious, and, yes, transcendent. “In the end, the lovers die, as befits a tragedy, but Shakespeare puts the emphasis in another key ... The lovers are united to what is beyond time by reason of their love, and this outcome gives their love for each other the character of the love of the eternal” (Alulis 193). Perhaps the author intended to convey a different lesson through her and Antony’s story, one of a great man led astray by passion, and a lascivious woman who does not know her place. It is impossible to know, for certain, what Shakespeare really meant to say about them. What is clear is that, in Cleopatra, he has given us a character for the ages, one who manages to rise above historical opinion by impressing us with her wonderful variety of character and willingness to challenge conventional notions of power and gender. She is, as Antony describes her early, a truly wonderful, various woman, “Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh, / To weep; whose every passion fully strives / To make itself, in thee, fair and admired” (I.i.51-53). More than that, she is one of Shakespeare’s greatest characters, and certainly the most interesting female he ever wrote. Who could ever want a loyal and submissive housewife—an Octavia—after knowing the queen of Egypt?

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## Reviews

Bénédicte Ledent and Daria Tunca (eds.) *Caryl Phillips: Writing in the Key of Life*. Cross Cultures 146 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012). 441 pages. ISBN 978-90-420-3455-6 (hardback)

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*Writing in the Key of Life* is a scholarly contribution to the growing body of criticism on the literature of Caribbean-British writer Caryl Phillips. This monograph is concerned with valorizing the writer's distinguished career after many years of writing. As acknowledged by the editors, this volume is named after Stevie Wonder's 1976 album *Songs in the Key of Life*, since the singer-songwriter always inspired and impressed Phillips. The compilation of essays in this volume is spread over two separate yet overlapping parts: "Caryl Phillips: 25 Years of Writing" and "Critical Essays."

The first part, "Caryl Phillips: 25 Years of Writing," pays tribute to the writer through a series of lectures delivered during an international conference held in honour of Phillips in Liège, Belgium in 2006. This first part comprises four essays including two lectures by Phillips, "Preamble" and "Colour Me English," the latter being the keynote he delivered in Liège and the title of his 2011 collection of essays. The introduction by Peter H. Marsden sheds special focus on the importance of Oxford to Phillips, first when he was a student during the seventies, and then an Honorary Fellow in Queen's College. Kirpal Singh's essay examines the writer's ongoing interest and creative investigation in the question of political identity. Singh analyses Phillips's representation of the diasporic self and his commitment to explore issues related to identity, both in his essays and fiction.

The second part of this volume, "Critical Essays," is divided into five sections with twenty-two critical essays. This second part is introduced by "Autobiography, Fact and Fiction," a section that comprises four essays concentrating on the interface of the fictional and the factual in Phillips's writing. In her "Reflections upon an Intellectual Life," Renée Schatteman, renowned for her *Conversations with Caryl Phillips* (2009), considers the consistency of Phillips's reflections, regarding interviews as an inspiring source to comprehend the writer's philosophy. In fact, Schatteman's fervent optimism towards the reliability of interviews could easily slip into looking for definite answers, i.e. the author commenting on his own writing. Louise Yelin's essay, "Plural Selves," reflects on Phillips's creative representation of the diasporan self, marked by a fluid sense of identity and defined in terms of resistance to the physical anchors of time and space. To support her argument, Yelin takes the example of David Oluwale in *Foreigners: Three English Lives* (2007) as the epitome of displaced subjects. An essay by Bénédicte Ledent, author of the first book on Phillips published in 2002 and co-editor of the present volume, focuses attention on the

tragic demise of Phillips's black male characters through her reading of *Foreigners*. In her investigation, Ledent takes as a starting point the disambiguation of optimist versus pessimist interpretations of Phillips's works. Joan Miller Powell's essay, "Hybrid Inventiveness," provides a meticulous reading of Phillips's travel narratives through a special focus on *The European Tribe* (1987) and *The Atlantic Sound* (2000). Powell's essay concludes the first section arguing that writing across the boundaries of fact and fiction bears witness to Phillips's creative proficiency in interrogating history.

Section two, "Caryl Phillips and the Other Writers," contains three essays that focus sharply on the intertextual connections in Phillips's works. The three essays trace the complex web of source material and intertextual references underpinning Phillips's writing. While John McLeod and Malik Ferdinand's essays establish links with canonized writers of the Caribbean diaspora, namely V.S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott, the third essay is focused on the strategic use of pre-texts in postcolonial writing and takes, for this purpose, the intertextual echoes of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) in the first section of Phillips's *Higher Ground* (1989) as a case study.

The influence of diaspora writers and the experience of migration are equally on the spot in section three "Diasporas." The series of essays populating this section explore, from different angles, Phillips's commitment to diaspora-related issues, such as displacement and identity formation, covering in doing so, a rich selection of his novels, essays and stage plays. In the first two essays titled, "Linking Legacies of Loss" and "Bidirectional Revision," Stef Craps and Fatim Boutros seek to establish the link between the creative representation of historical experiences, notably that of slavery, and present-day diasporic ones. Despite the fact that both critics adopt different analytic frames, they emphasise the uniqueness of diasporic experiences and "the revisionary potential of fictional counter-history" (175). While the first two essays examine Phillips's fictional representation of the diaspora, Abigail Ward and Wendy Knepper's essays are concentrated on his volumes of nonfiction. Through a keen focus on *The Atlantic Sound* (2000) and *A New World Order* (2001), both critics stress that the diaspora constitutes a key concept that links Phillips's early works to his recent ones. In the same frame, Chika Unigwe examines Phillips's play *Strange Fruit* (1981), underlining his ongoing engagement with migratory experiences from the Caribbean to Britain.

The scope of interest in the fourth section, "Britain and its 'Others,'" is broadened to involve, as suggested by the title, the Anglophone world. The five critical essays compiled in this section are concerned with Phillips's novel *A Distant Shore* (2003) and attempt to analyse the complex relationship between the metropolis and descendents of former British colonies. The different essays bring into question a wide range of issues treated in *A Distant Shore* including the impact of civil wars on African countries, illegal immigration to Europe and the race-predicated politics of exclusion and inclusion in Britain.

The last section of this volume, "Race and Masks," comprises five thematically inter-related essays that address the deconstruction of racial hierarchies and gender stereotypes in Phillips's oeuvre. The different essays collected here consider Phillips's portrayal of black male characters in *Cambridge* (1991), *A Distant Shore*, *Dancing in the Dark* (2005) and *In the Falling Snow* (2009),

arguing that the black diaspora serves as an umbrella term that includes all those who have undergone experiences of displacement and are left, therefore, on the margin of societies. This section argues that not only black male characters are vulnerable to racism, but equally, the white female characters sympathizing with them could fall prey to social prejudice and collective forms of antagonism.

Bénédicte Ledent and Daria Tunca (eds.) *Caryl Phillips: Writing in the Key of Life*. Cross Cultures 146 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012). 441 pages. 978-90-420-3455-6 (hardback).

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*Caryl Phillips: Writing in the Key of Life* is a collection of texts presented at the conference “Caryl Phillips: 25 Years of Writing”, organized by Bénédicte Ledent and held on 1-2 December 2006 at the University of Liège in Belgium. The volume does not intend to be an exhaustive study of Phillips’s work but it does offer a wide scope of perspectives and theoretical approaches to the way he addresses issues such as identity, belonging, displacement, gender and race discrimination, violence, and oppression, among others.

The volume opens with a foreword by the editors Bénédicte Ledent and Daria Tunca and is divided into two parts. The first part, “Caryl Phillips: 25 years of Writing”, contains Peter H. Marsden’s introduction to Phillips’s keynote address mentioning the author’s award of an Honorary Fellowship from Queen’s College in Oxford. Phillips’s keynote address, “Colour Me English”, deals with the problem of immigration and criticizes the negative attitude many Europeans have towards Muslims. He believes in the moral capacity of fiction to involve us in the struggle against intolerance and discrimination. Kirpal Singh’s keynote on the writer underlines Phillips’s ethical and artistic commitment to engage with issues such as displacement and belonging, identity and race, history, truth and representation.

Renée Schatteman’s essay, which is a revised version of the introduction to her book *Conversations with Caryl Phillips* (2009), opens “Autobiography, Fact, and Fiction”, the first section of the second part. She considers Phillips’ interviews as a source of insight into the thematic concerns and aesthetic choices revealed in his works. As a part of a project, titled “British Lives”, which explores self-representation in art since the 1960s, Louise Yelin’s article examines Phillips’s plural selves discussing examples of autobiographical features dispersed in works like *The European Tribe* (1987) and *A New World Order* (2001). Bénédicte Ledent’s essay deals with a topic that deserves attention for its relevance to the understanding of his works. By discussing the formal structure and textual strategies employed in *Foreigners: Three English Lives* (2007) Ledent takes part in the debate about the importance of determinism and free will in repeating patterns of oppression through history. Tracing the transgressive narrative practices in Phillips’s works, and in particular in his two travelogues *The*

*European Tribe* (1987) and *The Atlantic Sound* (2000), Joan Miller Powell argues that the author's preference for metafictional narrative modes, intertextuality, fragmentation, repetition, and the insertion of documentary-type material allow for the revision of the representation of black British identities.

The second section, "Caryl Phillips and the Other Writers", contains three articles. The first one, written by John McLeod examines the literary relationship between Caryl Phillips and V. S. Naipaul by tracing connections between themes and representations found in some of the Naipaul's works and Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985) and *A State of Independence* (1986). Malik Ferdinand discusses the meaning of writing the Caribbean in *A New World Order* (2001) and Derek Walcott's *What the Twilight Says* (1998) with a special emphasis on conceptions like race, displacement and hybridity that provide an insight into some aspects of the Caribbean philosophical tradition. In the third essay, Imen Najar establishes intertextual connections between Phillips's "Heartland" (1989) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), pointing to Phillips's choice of narrative voice as an important achievement.

The following section, "Diasporas", begins with Stef Craps's essay "Linking Legacies of Loss. Traumatic Histories and Cross-Cultural Empathy in Caryl Phillips's *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood*". Craps approaches the novels from the perspective of trauma studies and analyzes the narrative techniques, employed by the author to enact an act of empathy as a space of encounters of multiple histories of suffering. Focusing on *Crossing the River* (1994), Fatim Boutros introduces the concept of bidirectional revision to describe the way in which the representation of diasporic history can increase our understanding of contemporary cultural identities. Abigail Ward draws on Edward Said's notion of "crossing over" and examines the role of migration and diaspora in the shaping of the identity of non-white people in Britain as perpetual unbelonging in the historical travelogue *The Atlantic Sound* (2000) and the collection of essays *A New World Order* (2001). In an attempt to explain the representation of transnational historical, cultural, economic, and social flows in Phillips's *The Atlantic Sound* (2000) Wendy Knepper proposes a theory of seascapes and locates the Caribbean experience in the context of a globalizing world. The theme of black diaspora as a personal experience is also the topic of Chika Unigwe's essay, which concentrates on an early work, namely Phillips's first play *Strange Fruit* (1981).

The five essays in the fourth section, "Britain and its 'Others'", provide original insights into Phillips's *A Distant Shore* (2003) from different theoretical perspectives. Alessandra Di Maio investigates migration as one of the most important phenomena in the present-day world and the resulting relation between the two worlds: the African and the British, in what she considers Phillips's first contemporary historical novel. Exclusion, based on ethnicity, and the feelings of frustration and loneliness caused by it are central to Thomas Bonnici, who argues that the concept of territory-based society has become outdated in our globalized world. Petra Tournay-Theodotou links the socially constructed representation of the "other" based on race, gender, class, and religion with a detailed analysis of the construction of places and spaces representing the two nations. Cindy Gabrielle suggests parallels between Phillips's work and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902). She explores not only the

alienated other's reaction to discrimination but also the pretence of English people when they have to deal with immigration. Sandra Courtman reads *A Distant Shore* as a metaphorical reversal of the journey, described in Conrad's novella. She argues that establishing intertextual connections reveals Phillips's idea that identity can be understood by looking into the historical events that shaped it.

The last section, "Race and Masks", begins with Lucie Gillet's examination of the similarities and differences between *Cambridge* (1991) and *A Distant Shore* (2003). She claims that, insofar as we analyse the subordinate position of certain groups within systems of white male dominance, the intersections between sexism and racism seem undeniable. The following three essays focus on *Dancing in the Dark* (2005) and its protagonist Bert Williams. For Itala Vivan his transformation allows him to cross the boundaries of territories culturally and ideologically assigned to the back or the white race. Thus he becomes a metaphor for the complex ways in which identity politics work. Dave Gunning engages with Bert's ambiguous shifting of racial identities using Derrida's concept of "erasure" in a broader sense. To shed more light on the recurring issues of identity and racialization he reads Phillips alongside Percival Everett's *Erasure* (2001). The book ends with Gordon Collier's essay "The Dynamic of Revelation and Concealment. *In the Falling Snow* and the Narrational Architecture of Blighted Existences", in which he examines Phillips's novel through the use of tense as a narrative device. He adopts the concept of time-zones and reveals the role of their sequencing in parallel with the two spatial zones (London and Midlands) to create the disconcerting personality of the protagonist.

I was glad to discover this handsomely produced book which perfectly reflects the success of the conference. The volume is well constructed and elaborated; it is an engaging collection of rich and stimulating essays and deserves attention for its excellent overview of Caryl Phillips's work. The book is to be praised for the quality of the individual contributions and their thoughtful arrangement.

Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julie Hansen and Carmen Zamorano Llena (eds.) *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature* (Rodopi: Amsterdam and New York, 2013).

273 pages. ISBN: 978-90-420-3735-9.

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This collection of essays edited by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julia Hansen and Carmen Zamorano Llena presents the various manifestations of the concept of transculturalism within diverse literary works ranging from contemporary German, American, British, Canadian novels to Francophone and Taiwanese poetry. The theoretical discussions of these articles centering around the debate on multiculturalism and transculturalism and the connections between globalization, cosmopolitanism, migration and transcultural identities aim to



deconstruct the idea of national literature which remains an operative category of classification in grouping and reading literary works. In her essay “Cosmopolitan Perspectives: Globalization and Transnationalism in Contemporary German Literature”, Kristin Rebien identifies the growing number of German novels that “reach beyond the borders-language area” as “(one) of the most noticeable trends in the twenty-first-century German-language literature” (113). These essays show, however, that this trend is not only characteristic of German literature but is an expanding tendency as globalization impacts the production of literature. The stories and the languages weaving the texture of literary works can no longer be contained within a singular national identity and language. The multiplicity of identities and the mixture of cultures become the driving force behind the interpretations and the analyses of the presented literary works.

The contributing authors to this collection demonstrate this multiplicity of identities and cultures by analyzing specific aspects of the selected literary works. The essays in the first three sections – “A New Kind of Migration”, “Transcending the Nation” and “Critiques of Multiculturalism” – mainly focus on the analysis of the novels’ storylines, the identity of the characters and the presentation of the transculturality of the authors. These elements of the literary works become the focal points of transcultural interpretations. For example, Karen L. Ryan considers transcultural identity through the works of the Russian-American writer, Lara Vapnyar. The author’s transculturality marks her work as she depicts characters who try to assimilate, adapt and struggle to forge a new cultural identity. The locality of the author plays a slightly different role in the essay by Pilar Cuder-Domínguez. Examining the novels written by “Canadian writers of South Asian ancestry” (140) such as Michael Ondaatje and Neil Bissoondath, Cuder-Domínguez captures “the process of rethinking local and global visions of place” and how “their mutual imbrications continues to unfold” (155) by analyzing the dislocation and displacement experienced by the protagonist of these novels, and possibly by the authors, when they revisit their countries of origin.

Most of the articles capture the complexity of transcultural identification in a globalized world by exploring the effect of the protagonists’ (dis)location upon their character and existence. Carmen Zamorano Llena analyses the limits of citizenship and national belonging in Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland* through the presentation of the main character Hans’s multi-local affiliations. With strong connections to London, New York and the Netherlands, Hans embodies transnational citizenship defined rather by participatory practices in local communities than national belonging. Locality is also at the centre of Christoph Houswitschka’s essay on Monica Ali’s *In the Kitchen*. The kitchen of a London hotel full of working migrants from all over the world creates a “space of cosmopolitan citizenship” (78). This colourful mixture of nationalities generates ‘transcultural experiences’ that shape Gabriel Lightfoot’s, their British superior’s, concept of belonging. In strong contrast with his father’s “ethno-nationalism” (81), Gabriel embraces the notions of cosmopolitan citizenship at the end of the novel. While Houswitschka presents the critique of British nationalism delivered by Ali’s novel, Katherina Dodou considers the American national myth-making in the aftermath of 9/11 in John Updike’s novel *Terrorist*. Through the analysis of “the transcultural allegiances” and “the complex composition” (197) of the characters’ ethno-cultural identities, Dodou contemplates on Updike’s criticism



of the American patriotic narrative that turns Arab-Americans into objects of discrimination.

The essays in this collection predominantly approach the issue of transculturalism by examining the narratological components of the literary works of art. The (dis)locations of the novels' characters, and in some cases of the authors, create cosmopolitan and multi/transnational spaces that form the colourful identities of the protagonists. These are the main elements through which the concepts of transculturalism are presented and examined. Malin Linström Brock, however, brings a slightly new approach to the analysis of transculturality as she considers its manifestations in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* and Percival Everett's *Erasure*. She observes that "transcultural awareness must be sought on novels' meta-structural level" (174).

Besides location, language is an important component in the formation of complex ethno-cultural identities. Several essays mention the function of language in the creation of transcultural spaces. In a new culture, the unknown language often constitutes barriers for the newcomers, the migrants. Overcoming the language barrier and familiarizing oneself with the local traditions stimulate and advance the creation of transculturality. Ryan in her chapter entitled "The Power of English" shows how the characters of Vapnyar's stories negotiate their assimilation to American culture through linguistic adaptations: for example, the isolated and silent Russian grandfather opens up once he establishes social connections by attending English classes. In her essay "Childhood, Migration, and Identity", Carly McLaughlin explores the ideological implications and the political power of the English language. For Little Bee, a sixteen-year-old Nigerian girl seeking asylum in England, the proper Queen's English is a powerful tool as it helps her to pass as English and also to tell her story, since only the stories told in Queen's English "have the cultural capital to be heard" (59).

The interconnection of language and transculturalism, and the complexity of identities caught up in the web of native and colonialist languages is explored in more depth in the last section of the collection that contains essays on Francophone literature of Maghreb, on the work of the Algerian writer Assia Djebar and on the poetic experimentation of the Taiwanese poet Hsia Yü. These authors write from perspectives characterized by "ongoing migratory movement across diverse languages, disjunctive cultural positions, conflictual political spaces" (203). Transcultural creativity conceives translingual literary works of art. Hence the last chapter of this collection shows a relevant effect of transculturalism upon literature - the way, besides storylines and characters' identities, that transculturalism molds the materiality, the language of the literary works. Thus this chapter is an important addition to an excellent collection of essays that offers not only diverse interpretations of different literary works but also presents a comprehensive overview of the theoretical debates on transculturalism.

Matthew Steggle (ed.) *Volpone: A Critical Guide*. Continuum Renaissance Drama (London and New York: Continuum, 2011).  
214 pages. ISBN 978-0-8264-1153-2

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The Continuum series publishes critical guides in a wide range of subjects such as theology, history, film and media studies, politics, or literary studies. *Volpone. A Critical Guide* came out in the Renaissance Continuum Drama series, in which *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Doctor Faustus*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and *Women Beware Women* had previously been published, and it aims to provide an up-to-date overview of the landscape of recent scholarship in the field. The purpose of this volume is to present *Volpone*'s critical background and to bridge the gap between former and current scholarly findings; it is aimed at a wide spectrum of readership ranging from scholars and tutors to students. The book begins with a timeline including the most significant biographical events in Jonson's life and the dates of his plays' performances during his lifetime and after it. This timeline is followed by the Introduction, which emphasises that Shakespeare's contemporaries are undeservedly ignored and "much of *Volpone*'s significance is bound up by the fact that it is not written by Shakespeare" (1). The introductory chapter attempts to situate Jonson's play in the canon of Renaissance drama with central focus on the characteristics which make *Volpone* more teachable than Jonson's other plays. Matthew Steggle, the editor of the volume, argues against the common view which considers the play anti-theatrical featuring one-sided stock characters, and which establishes its general critical assertions regarding Jonson's dramatic career merely on *Volpone*. These generalisations are misleading as the play is more complex and puzzling than it seems at first, which is justified by the diversity of critical reactions to the drama.

The first three chapters constitute one unit beginning with Sam Thompson's outline of the critical response to the play until the end of the twentieth century. Thompson draws attention to the critical extremes regarding the play by pointing out that some have seen it as a masterpiece and some as a "laborious contrivance of a pedant" (8). His article is followed by Rebecca Yearling's account of the play's stage history from the sixteenth century until the 2004 operatic version of the drama, and Robert C. Evans's study on "The State of the Art" in contemporary *Volpone* criticism. Evans is concerned with how the internet and various online technologies opened up new possibilities for researchers of Jonson's drama, and by presenting innovative research methods his study establishes the context of the consecutive four chapters of "new directions."

The "new directions" chapters display recent critical positions regarding *Volpone*, often at odds with each other thus creating the conditions for debate between scholars of opposing views. The first chapter of this unit is James P. Bednarz's study which presents a novel approach to the general assumption that Jonson considered the printed versions of his dramatic texts superior to their stage productions. Bednarz argues in opposition with those critical views of the 1980s and 1990s that label Jonson as anti-theatrical. In order to strengthen the

literary merits of his dramatic texts, Bednarz adds, Jonson took advantage of their theatrical success. In chapter 5, Rick Bowers discusses a central factor to this theatrical success of *Volpone* by highlighting its comic aspects in relation to the moral issues in the play.

In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, Frances Teague and Stella Achilleos present background information to the text from alternate critical positions. Teague is concerned with the biographical and historical implications of the play. She contextualises it by giving account of Jonson's criminal offences and arrest record in relation to such plays as the *Eastward Ho!* or *The Isle of Dogs*. Additionally, she also explores Jonson's relation to the Gunpowder Plot, hence providing background information about contemporary Renaissance politics. Stella Achilleos's study "Age and Ageing in *Volpone*" reflects upon Teague's chapter and it is similarly concerned with the background of the play, but from a socio-cultural aspect. Achilleos argues that in *Volpone* many of the images related to ageing are adopted from the classical tradition and the drama provides a survey of senescence reflecting on the social and cultural anxieties of Jonson's early modern England.

The last chapter by Matthew C. Hansen offers useful resources for teaching and studying *Volpone*. The essay focuses on various self-study and teaching strategies approaching the play as a dramatic text and as a script for performance. Hansen locates *Volpone* on the syllabus and the course reading list, and offers various aspects for the exploration of the text. He also surveys the editions with regard to their affordability and availability, and this is followed by an enumeration of possible thematic, contextual, and performative discussions prior to the actual analysis of the play. Similarly, Hansen offers various critical/theoretical perspectives to the introductory discussions, and he suggests some projects which the students could undertake in order to explore the text in accordance with their own ideas. This methodological storehouse ends with a list of films, useful for demonstrating how the text might function in performance, which could give grounds for further discussions.

*Volpone. A Critical Guide* is a one-of-a-kind collection of essays with a wide spectrum of critical approaches and with special emphasis on the problems that might occur when teaching the play. The volume is unique primarily because it supplies teachers of *Volpone* with ideas and aspects for planning their classes, and it does so according to the highest academic standards with a firm concept as to how the play could be explored the most efficiently. The book is a well-structured and engaging scholarly edition and the featuring studies are coherent and comprehensive; they also meet the demands of a diverse spectrum of readers by bringing down the ivory tower of Renaissance studies and making recent findings beneficial for the whole of academic readership.

David Fuller. *The Life in the Sonnets* (London: Continuum, 2011).  
xiii, 118 pages. ISBN 978-1-8470-6454-0

Tony Voss  
Retired Scholar, Australia

David Fuller begins his rewarding and enthusiastic essay on the Sonnets with a distinction between literary criticism, “a subject without boundaries” (1), and “institutional literary criticism... characteristically a subject with boundaries” (1). In a pithy “Prologue” he shows up some of the dangers of professional literary studies, often designed to protect the status and material interests of its practitioners and to replace wisdom and intelligence with special knowledge. Here he offers an attempt at a real encounter with the art of Shakespeare’s sonnets, setting out on “an adventure in thinking wherever feeling leads” (2), aiming at “vital actual readings – readings true to the feelings, imagination and ideas of a particular reader” (13).

The book follows two approaches. “Dwelling in the Feelings” is an experiment exploring how the relationship central to the Sonnets has been encountered and comprehended elsewhere: by Plato, in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, by Michelangelo in poems and drawings, by Mann in *Death in Venice* and by Britten in his opera based on that novella, and Derek Jarman in his film *The Angelic Conversations*. Crucial to the argument is the writer’s notion of the congruence between these manifestations and Shakespeare’s poems. In Socrates and Alcibiades, Michelangelo and Tomaso dei Cavalieri, von Aschenbach and Tadzio, Jarman and the protagonists of his movie, the love between an older man and a younger recalls and anticipates the bond between the “I” of the Sonnets and the young man. The social and historical contexts change, but a degree of prohibition is constant, as is the understanding that love is a response to beauty, a way to transcendence, and, a “possessed state [...] congruent with the heroic stance required of the artist” (56) - in this case von Aschenbach.

The biographical and the fictional (poetic) selves of the artists may be in tension here: David Fuller calls the speaker of the sonnets Shakespeare and the addressee W.H., and a strong sense of lived verse informs the second part of the essay: “Dwelling in the Words: Reading the Sonnets Aloud”. The first part of the essay, “tried to convey the flavour of the works...as well as the issues” (20): successfully to my mind, in that it has sent this reader at least back to those texts. The second part imagines a score, and in a sense a choreography for a live reading of the Sonnets. David Fuller cites Yeats, Auden, Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Proust, Valéry and Lawrence on the necessity, the difficulty and the reward of reading verse aloud. The analysis that precedes the synthesis covers sound, structure, stress, rhythm, and metre. David Fuller recognizes, as did Northrop Frye, that the English iambic pentameter is often in delivery a four-beat line. This leads to syntax, intonation and pace and a demonstration that a “fundamentally and finally ambivalent” (84) poem may need more than can be achieved in one “voicing” (85), as the plays in our culture respond to a variety of stagings: “Every aural realization has critical implications” (85). Speaking verse is neither singing nor conversation, although it may invoke both.

David Fuller writes of the speaking of verse always imagining an individual performer. This has important implications for the aims of education, which may be difficult to achieve these days, and informs his critique of a number of published recordings, including Richard Burton, Peggy Ashcroft and John Gielgud, and his powerful conclusion on the purposes of reading poetry. Wallace Stevens wrote of nobility, a quality of intelligence and desire for life which “inheres in the sounds of words in poetry” (85). *The Life in the Sonnets* serves nobility well.

Stephen Longstaffe (ed.) *1 Henry IV: A Critical Guide* (London: Continuum, 2011).

218 pages, ISBN 978-0-8264-4196-6.

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As Longstaffe points out in the introduction to his *Critical Guide*, Shakespeare was a “historian” (1) with respect to his plays *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *1 Henry IV*, which are among the eight sequential plays about the Wars of the Roses produced during the 1590s. The three plays are about civil war. Consequently, at the end of *1 Henry IV* there is a battle scene similar to *Richard II*. The playwright changes the historical past, and presents the defeat of Harry Percy (Hotspur) by making him a coeval to Prince Hal. Prince Hal’s killing of Hotspur makes him rise. Longstaffe calls the play as a “comical history” as it ends with a “resurrection” (2) not with a marriage.

In “The Critical Backstory”, Edel Lamb states that Francis Meres’s criticism for the play in 1598 evokes two aspects: generic categorization and “national identity” (10). On the other hand, in 1765 Samuel Johnson declared that both the first and the second parts of the play were delightful. Other critics focused on the morality and power manifested by the debates of Falstaff and Hal. According to some critics the play could be interpreted either as a part of *2 Henry IV* or the sequential history plays. In early critical contexts, a focus on Falstaff gained ground. Many critics have commented on Falstaff’s famous speech of “What is Honour?” (13). Critics emphasized on Falstaff’s dramatic function in the play as a representation of carnival and a character who balances comic and serious political action (21).

Graham Atkin in his essay “Performance History” states that in the Stratford-upon-Avon 1951 production, Antony Quayle, starring Falstaff, appeared on stage with big eye-brows, white hair on top and sides of his head, a beard and a moustache, looking like a “carnival clown” (41). Moreover, “national consciousness” asserts itself regarding *1 Henry IV* as a history play combined with comedy represented by Falstaff (22).

Jonathan Hart in his essay “Current Critical Research: The State of the Art” claims that the play includes different worlds such as: Wales, court, rebel camp

and tavern. Hotspur, called promising by Henry IV, is a rival to Hal, and as an alternate father figure Falstaff is a “Lord of Misrule” (60).

In terms of the Jacobean court, Alison Findlay in her essay on “Ceremony and Courtly Performance in *1 Henry IV*” suggests being admitted to the royal presence was under strict control. The play gives the common audience an opportunity to observe Prince Hal’s behaviour with Falstaff at the tavern in *1 Henry IV* (88). With respect to the perspective of courtly audience, both Hotspur’s code of honour and Hal’s imagery as the prodigal son evoke Prince Hal as “an honourable hero and potential rebel” (91).

In his essay on “Radical Shakespeare”, Chris Fitter indicates that not only the alehouses where poor people gathered but also the theatres were regarded as gathering places for the idle with riots in their mind (107).

Brian Walsh in his essay “The Time of Day and the Death of Hotspur in *1 Henry IV*” refers to the distortion of time and the distortion of historical events in the play. Time covered in the play expands the duration of the play because history plays cannot represent actual time in the performance. Hal declares time in the following lines: “this present twelve o’clock at midnight” (II.iv.92-93). The Sheriff comes looking for the robber and announces that it is two o’clock in the morning. The two hours length of time is presented as twenty-five minutes in the actual performance (144). The robbery took place in May 1413 and the time in the closing scene is May 1420 as King Henry declares his marriage to the French princess. Therefore, the play covers approximately seven years. Shakespeare as a playwright “manipulates” (150) the past to demonstrate history to Elizabethan audience.

The final chapter “A Survey of Resources” by Martha Tuck Rozett is aimed at educators who are teaching the play to undergraduates.

To conclude, the critical guide enables the reader to learn from the different perspectives of several critics such as the representation of history, performance history, history combined with comedy, economic and political criticism, gender, the representations of Wales, Ireland, as a threat to England and the manipulation of time in a history play. Longstaffe’s critical guide not only broadens the perspective of the reader but also facilitates them to understand what they see while watching *1 Henry IV*.

Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka. *Kate O'Brien and the Fiction of Identity: Sex, Art and Politics in 'Mary Lavelle and Other Writings'* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2011).

283 pages. ISBN 978-0-7864-4873-9.

Madolyn Nichols  
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*Kate O'Brien and the Fiction of Identity* is an extensively-researched yet accessible work of biography and literary analysis. Based on Mentxaka’s doctoral thesis at University College Dublin, the book aims to retrieve *Mary Lavelle*



(1936)—and O'Brien herself—from their scholarly blind spot and to demonstrate not merely the novel's worth among more canonical texts but also its place as a political document (2). Mentxaka achieves this aim by situating O'Brien's work within two specific sociohistorical contexts: that of the newly-independent Irish Republic and the ideological framework of Spain's Generación del Noventaiocho. Employing these twin lenses to view *Mary Lavelle* and, by extension, O'Brien's literary corpus as a whole, Mentxaka demonstrates the ways in which previous analyses of O'Brien have fallen short of recognizing the extent of O'Brien's contribution to the modernist literary canon.

Mentxaka, a scholar of both film and gender studies and author of several articles on O'Brien, has chosen to delve more deeply into O'Brien's third work and its relationship most specifically to politics and sexuality. Mentxaka is quick to point out that O'Brien's oeuvre has been only recently resurrected and that her influence on both literary and queer studies are only now being felt: she notes, for instance, that the first full biography on O'Brien (Eibhear Walshe's *Kate O'Brien: A Writing Life*) was only published in 2006 and that most critics, even while praising her works for their social value, tend to focus on what they perceive as literary flaws rather than glimpsing the more unconventional aspects of her fiction. Mentxaka assigns much of this earlier scholarly dismissal of O'Brien to a frequent misinterpretation of her aims and proceeds to laud O'Brien's ability to transcend facile labels through her use of thematic and stylistic experimentation. Mentxaka's volume frequently focuses on the question of genre with regard to *Mary Lavelle*, and Mentxaka devotes much of her work to exploring O'Brien's subtle and often arcane references, asserting at one point that *Mary Lavelle* is a "documentary-autobiography-romance-anticapitalist novel" (103). The primary difference between Mentxaka's volume and the few other analyses of O'Brien's oeuvre is that this study exceeds the confines of either literary analysis or personal biography—Mentxaka's knowledge of both Basque/Spanish and Irish culture and history uniquely positions her to reinterpret O'Brien against the backdrop of Spain as it underwent a social turbulence not wholly unlike that which occurred almost concurrently in Ireland.

The volume is divided thematically into seven chapters, each one addressing a set of sub-issues that open into a wider interpretation of O'Brien's work and its sociohistorical context. The first section (Chapters 2 and 3, entitled, respectively, Activist Fiction I and II) moves in a number of different directions around a single broad theme of activism, allowing Mentxaka to focus on a variety of historic, social, and political issues that contextualize O'Brien's oeuvre in general and *Mary Lavelle* in particular. Chapter 4 places O'Brien and *Mary Lavelle* within the context of modernism and other modernist authors, pinpointing in sedulous detail the ways in which O'Brien employed characteristically modernist themes, styles, and references in a variety of works. Centrally, Mentxaka addresses the commonly-held perception of O'Brien as a popular novelist, demonstrating the ways in which she effectively straddled the worlds of canonical and popular literature. She maintains, convincingly, that O'Brien's cross-genre status and her willingness to experiment with narrative space are what confirm her role as a modernist writer. Chapter 5 looks closely into the history of Spain and the Basque Country as employed by O'Brien, specifically examining the ways in which O'Brien's chosen cultural sites for *Mary Lavelle* mirror a specific socio-political

context within a centralized quotidian existence of Bilbao. Finally, that which could be considered the volume's final section (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) is devoted to biographical studies of Enrique Areilza (the historical figure upon whom *Mary Lavelle's* Don Pablo Areavaga is based, and the man, Mentxaka contends, who helped to shape the framework of O'Brien's political thought) and O'Brien herself. In addition to contextualizing *Mary Lavelle's* narrative specifically, these biographical examinations demonstrate the way in which the autobiographical layer to O'Brien's work in general complicates yet more fully what have frequently been perceived as simplistic narratives.

One of the many aspects of this volume that sets it apart from other studies on O'Brien and her work is the depth into which Mentxaka establishes Spain (and particularly Basque Spain) politically, historically, and ideologically as a driving influence behind much of O'Brien's work. Certainly, earlier studies have touched on aspects of O'Brien's well-established love for Spain and Spanish culture (Mary Lavelle's personal epiphany while attending her first bull fight has served as well-documented proof of this), but Mentxaka's study explores uncharted territory in terms of influences on O'Brien which continually reveal themselves in her fictional creations. While portions of the book, like the sections devoted to a detailed examination of *Mary Lavelle's* Don Pedro/Areilza or the town of Altorno/Bilbao, might seem to purists to deviate from a study dedicated more strictly to a closer reading of the novel or to O'Brien herself, Mentxaka's extended analysis provides a welcome depth and perspective into an author whose works have in many cases been read reductively as romance narrative or governess bildungsroman without regard toward O'Brien's broader ideological premise.

Mentxaka asserts that Kate O'Brien "made a career of speaking the unspeakable", a claim readily substantiated by O'Brien's struggles with censorship in an era of tightening social mores, particularly with regard to Irish women (230). While scholars before Mentxaka have proven the same assertion through varying analyses of O'Brien's oeuvre (particularly with regard to queer studies), what sets Mentxaka's work apart is the wealth of new information suggesting a far wider variety of cultural and philosophical influences. Equal measure of literary criticism, biography, and historio-political reading, Mentxaka's study is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship surrounding Kate O'Brien and her work.

Christine Huguet (ed.) *Charles Dickens: L'Inimitable-the Inimitable* (Paris: Democratic Books, 2011).

188 pages. ISBN: 9782361040468.

Zennure Köseman

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*Charles Dickens: L'Inimitable-The Inimitable* is a bilingual catalogue of an exhibition held to honour Charles Dickens's literary superiority in Paris. Marking the occasion, a variety of specialists in the Victorian Period write on the

bicentenary of Dickens' birth in 2012. With its fine illustrations, the catalogue shows the manuscripts of some of his novels such as *David Copperfield*, Dickens' famous semi-autobiographical masterpiece. This highly illustrated catalogue demonstrates Dickens' superiority in the fictional world and challenges any more optimistic Victorian worldview through Dickens's perspective of social realism. *Charles Dickens: L'Inimitable-The Inimitable* portrays Dickens as the other voice of London via the various perspectives of Michael Hollington, John Bowen, Robert L. Patten, David Paroissen, and Christine Huguet, professors specialising in literature and Dickens. As Dominique Dupilet notes in the "Foreword," Dickens presents the injustices of the world in his fictional masterpieces.

In "Crossing the Channel," Michael Hollington focuses on a serial novel, *Little Dorrit* (1855-1857), reflecting on the shortcomings of the government and the society of that period. The novel has the "master theme of a longing for personal and political change." (17). Hollington also indicates the lack of interaction between middle class bureaucrats and the working class of the time.

John Bowen, in "Dickens's Hospitality," notes that Dickens mirrors the process of psychological changes or reforms through the scenes of hospitality in many of his novels. Bowen shows that hospitality in the *Pickwick Papers* reflects ethics as well as politics.

In the following chapters of Robert L. Patten's "Dickens Goes Global: First Phase," David Paroissen's "Dedlocked": the Case Against the Past in *Bleak House* and *A Child's History of England*," and Christine Huguet's "*David Copperfield*, or the Literary Infinite," Patten presents Charles Dickens in the global perspective. Paroissen shows Dickens becoming a universal writer in his case against the past in *Bleak House* "to move beyond all that is false and destructive and to recognize that social usage has the power for both good and bad." (151). The last chapter focuses on *David Copperfield* and remarks on its experimental and autobiographical orientation while becoming a universal text explaining the injustices of the social world in the Victorian Period.

All the contributors to this book portray Dickens as the other voice of London urban society from valuable perspectives.

Jeffrey Herlihy. *In Paris or Paname: Hemingway's Expatriate Nationalism* (New York: Rodopi, 2011).  
197 pages. ISBN: 978-9042034099.

Zennure Köseman  
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In his book *In Paris or Paname*, Jeffrey Herlihy appraises Ernest Hemingway, an expatriate nationalist expressing the sentiments of many members of the post-World War I generation in his short stories and fictional masterpieces. As an expatriate handling multicultural subject matters, most of Hemingway's literary works earned him an international acclaim of searching for sensations to forget

the pain and the disillusionment of the modern era. A spokesman of the disillusioned Lost Generation that followed the First World War, Hemingway manifests a growing sense of uncertainty, bewilderment, meaninglessness and disillusionment.

An enormous amount of scholarship on Ernest Hemingway exists. Herlihy focuses on a specific thematic basis in his *In Paris or Paname*: the foreign identity of the protagonists in new settings. As reflected in the "Introduction" of Herlihy's work, the literary thematic scope is to look at the significance of displacement in Hemingway's writings. Herlihy majors on Hemingway's expatriate nationalism in two parts. The first part revolves around the chapters of "Perspectives of Place, Exile, and Identity," "The Role of Place in Literature," and "Hemingway Abroad." This part basically considers Hemingway's transnational archetype and analyses socio-cultural effects of displacement. Herlihy underlines that in Hemingway novels, the main characters are abroad and become confused, unhappy and disillusioned in new settings. *In Paris or Paname* has a principal difference from other studies: the book interprets Hemingway and most of his fictional characters as immigrants not as expatriates due to Herlihy's interpretation that neither Hemingway nor his characters had a circular intention to return their original countries. This happens to be a fresh and innovative approach to understand Hemingway's writings as well as his life experiences.

The Second Part centers on the main characters' interaction with their foreign settings in Ernest Hemingway's famous literary works. In this part, in four chapters, "Patterns of Foreign Behavior," "Final Irony," "The Intercultural Action of Hemingway's Women," and "Hemingway's Epilogue: The Old Man and the Sea", Herlihy deals with Hemingway's main characters' behaviour in their new environment. We see:

"First, a rejection of the society of origin; second, an escape to another cultural context; third, a quest for new values through the adoption of foreign behavior; fourth and a final irony that in spite of the intentions to merge with the new society, the pursuit is fleeting due to factors beyond the control of the protagonist." (8-9)

Within his research on Ernest Hemingway's personal foreign experiences, Jeffrey Herlihy supplies an in-depth analysis of Hemingway's literary masterpieces in respect to his expatriate nationalism. In *In Paris or Paname*, the reader is taken on a journey through the world of Hemingway's works set abroad. It is worth noting that *In Paris or Paname* has a very extensive and useful Bibliography, that many students and scholars will be glad to discover.

Eddie Chambers. *Things Done Change: The Cultural Politics of Recent Black Artists in Britain* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012).

299 pages. ISBN: 978-90-420-3443-3.

Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History Since the 1950s* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014.)

ISBN: 978-1-78076-271-5 (hardback), 978-1-78076-272-2 (paperback).

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This review requires a definition first: what exactly is meant by “Black Artists” in the titles of both books? “Black” does not denote race or skin colour, but means a historically, culturally and politically constructed position in the context of black and Asian British citizens’ (and before them black Americans’) political struggle for recognition and equality. Chambers, who helped to develop the concept of “Black” (or “black”) art in the UK, uses the word as an umbrella term, denoting both people of African, Caribbean or Asian origin, although from the 1990s on it has become more common to differentiate between the various cultures.

While the history of literature created by black and Asian British writers in post-war Britain has become a real success story, with a number of works now celebrated as milestones in the British literary canon, black visual art has not fared so well. It is true that since the 1990s a few artists like Anish Kapoor, Chris Ofili, Yinka Shonibare, Isaac Julien or Steve McQueen have won national and international fame, enjoying big exhibitions, winning prestigious prizes like the Turner and representing British art abroad, but only slightly older artists, who worked with a more pointed political agenda from the 1970s on have had great difficulty in bringing their work to public knowledge. Their struggle for exhibition space is mirrored in the scarcity of academic research on their work. While exhibition reviews and some critical articles in newspapers and art magazines exist, there are few longer studies attempting an overview of the field. An interesting exception is Gen Doy’s book *Black Visual Culture. Modernity and Postmodernity* (2000), a theoretical analysis of black art’s position at the juncture of modernity and postmodernity, including detailed interpretations of artworks. Richard Hylton’s book *The Nature of the Beast. Cultural Diversity and the Arts Sector* (2007) investigates the policies behind exhibition decisions and practices, while *Different*, edited by Stuart Hall and Mark Sealy in 2001, demonstrates the development of black photography from its beginning to the present, accompanied by an illuminating essay by Hall. Hall also convincingly wrote on the generational differences in the work of black artists working in Britain since World War II, the most important text being “Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three ‘Moments’ in Post-War History” (2006). Eddie Chambers’s two books come as a very welcome expansion of research on the field, especially as they are the first produced by an artist himself with first-hand experience of the art scene.

Chambers, born in Wolverhampton in 1960, studied Fine Art at Sunderland Polytechnic and later obtained a PhD in Art History from Goldsmith College,



London. He began his career as legendary BLK art group, four very young conceptual artists from the Midlands, determined to promote art with a distinct political trajectory. Later Chambers concentrated on curating only, staging over 40 shows, group and solo exhibitions of black artist in various British towns. His interest in art history eventually led to an academic career, pursued in universities in the Caribbean, Atlanta and finally Austin, Texas, where he now teaches as a professor for Diaspora Art History.

Chambers' two books are the natural climax of a long practice of writing for catalogues, newspapers, academic journals and art magazines. His varied activities and experiences within the art scene explain two characteristic features of both books. First, they offer enlightening insights into a rich wealth of sources (now hard to come by) out of Chambers's private archive, from which he generously quotes. Secondly, the books differ in their approach from the usually assumed objective stance of an academic analysis. Chambers rarely refers to theoretical categories and hardly ever uses academic jargon, but writes an easy, almost colloquial style, accessible also to readers with little knowledge of – but curiosity for – the field. Furthermore, the books do not aim at a full and/or balanced account of black art in the UK, but are political texts, and passionately so. As a combatant for political art, the author selects and judges his material according to personal preferences, highlighting the work of artists with a critical message and giving special attention to neglected or forgotten ones, while being short on – and sometimes dismissive of – some celebrities. The overall aim of his books is to explore the cultural politics behind the development of black art in Britain by analysing the supportive as well as the restricting forces (above all the art institutions' habitual Euro-centered perceptions) (*Things Done Change*, xxxix).

The first study *Things Done Change* focuses on a conjuncture in recent times, the change from straightforwardly political art practised in the 1980s to a more indirect, ironic approach in the 1990s, which Chambers ascribes partly to the influences of the political climate under New Labour and the increasing globalisation of the art scene. That Chambers sees the development negatively is obvious from the headline of the last chapter: "Everything Crash". His narrative is set in the 1980s, which has appeared to be the high-tide of black British art. Chambers partly agrees: "Thus far, no moment in recent history has come close to replicating anything like the broad range of exhibition activity involving Black artists in the 1980s." (219). Yet he also warns of overestimating the progress as compared to the work produced before. After a long introduction, the book is divided into five chapters. The first tells the story of important exhibitions of black art through the 1980s, leading up to the highlights in two mainstream galleries, *From Two Worlds* in the Whitechapel Gallery 1986 and *The Other Story* in the Hayward Gallery 1989 which brought public recognition to a large number of practitioners for the first time, with due praise given to the activists and curators making them possible. The second chapter turns to the 1990s, focusing on Labour's policy of embracing – and de-politicising – black artists with the help of the Honours System and honorary doctorates. Chapter 3, bitterly titled "Chris, Steve and Yinka: We Run Tings", focuses on three artists, who – to Chambers' dismay – by distancing themselves from "political correctness", have reached "stratospheric success" (121) in the 1990s, ignoring both their forerunners and



sidelined colleagues: painter Chris Ofili, painter and installation artist Yinka Shonibare and video artist Steve McQueen. This chapter ought to be read with caution, as Chambers' partiality is over-obvious. While Shonibare is at least praised for his early "irreverent, brassy" (117) painterly work, and McQueen for "seriousness", Ofili fares worst. "Technical mastery" is granted him (147), yet he is blamed for superficiality (ibid.), for only playing with the black image. The negative judgements are based on the analysis of only very few works, in Ofili's case the painting *No Woman No Cry*, which won him the Turner Prize in 1998. (For a positive judgement of Ofili's art see e.g. Fusco 1999, for another critical view see Stallabrass 2006). Chapter 4 traces the changing attitudes of public institutions to black art. The Tate Gallery as well as the British Art Show are shown to have long-ignored black artists, but from the late 1980s on have corrected their course. Chambers laments, however, that some excellent artists were only posthumously honoured with retrospective shows, e.g. the Caribbean modernists Aubrey Williams and Ronald Moody as well as Donald Rodney, a particularly talented member of the BLK group, who died prematurely. The last chapter sums up the course of exhibition possibilities from the 1960s to the present, when the prospects for black artists - with the exception of the happy few - have dwindled for various reasons: exclusion from mixed shows, competition through increasing internationalism and the closing of a number of exhibition spaces, which once particularly promoted black art.

Chambers' second book, shorter and less polemical in tone than the first, aims at a historical overview of black British art since the 1950s. In his introduction, the author dampens too high expectations: his intention is not to offer a full account, but "to point to a number of significant personalities, exhibitions, and other initiatives that have benchmarked the postwar history of Black artists in Britain" (9). The selection, again determined by his personal preferences, is chronological. Some chapters focus on important exhibitions: two shows attempting to compile a history of black British art, *The Other Story* in London 1989 and *Transforming the Crown* in New York 1997 (introduction), exhibitions of African art in Britain (Chapter 4) and the work of the Black Art Gallery, an influential private enterprise operating in the early 1990s (Chapter 8). Yet the larger part of the text deals with various generational and ethnic groups of artists, referring to the respective political situations in their countries of origin and the UK and, as a rule, analysing in detail one or two characteristic works of individuals. Separate chapters deal with the work and fate of artists who moved to the UK from various corners of the Commonwealth: modernists painters and sculptors from the Caribbean in the 1940s and 50s, four lesser known Asians from India and Sri Lanka in the 1950s and 1960s, East African Indians, who fled after black independence in the 1970s. In Chapter 3 the 1970s are characterised as a critical period of change: increasing marginalisation as "ethnic artists" led to group-building and self-curating and the use of "Black" as an umbrella term. In the following part Chambers highlights the work of lesser known artists, who seem to him unfairly neglected, e.g. six "Earliest Black British Practitioners", who were not born in the UK but studied there, among them Tam Joseph and Denzil Forrester whom Chambers particularly praises. While homosexual artists, including the internationally successful Isaac Julien, are given only half a page (138), full three chapters are dedicated to the work of women, who have had to

fight for recognition even harder than their male colleagues. Chambers points out that many of them have not only produced highly original work, but have also engaged in important curating activities, above all Sonia Boyce and Lubaina Himid. Surprisingly, the famous 1980s generation is treated very briefly (105-113): Chambers' own artistic, political and curatorial involvement is modestly not mentioned and instead the work of Keith Piper and Donald Rodney is foregrounded. Among the artists appearing on the scene in the 1990s, again some lesser known ones like the painters Barbara Walker, Timothy Donkor and Godfried Donkor (no relation) are lovingly characterised, while the importance of "The Triumphant Triumvirate" is again played down and treated on mere 10 pages in a similar vein as in the first book, though less sharply. In the final chapter, the author throws a glance at a new, upcoming generation, among whom painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, focusing on enigmatic fantasy portraits of dark-skinned characters, is probably the most promising talent. She was shortlisted for the Turner in 2013 and some of her work was presented in the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 2016.

On the whole Eddie Chambers' two books make an inspiring and very informative read, which offers discoveries of many lesser known, though highly gifted and original artists. Yet to get a more rounded picture of the work of the more prominent black British artists it seems advisable to turn to some additional sources.

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## Guest Writers

### Paul Stewart



Paul Stewart is Professor of Literature at the University of Nicosia, and former board member of ESSE. He is the author of two books on Beckett – *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Works* (Palgrave, 2011) and *Zone of Evaporation: Samuel Beckett's Disjunctions* (Rodopi, 2006) – and the series editor for 'Samuel Beckett in Company', published by Ibidem Press. He has published widely on Beckett and J.M. Coetzee. His first work of fiction, *Now Then*, was published by Armida in 2015.

### Fragment from the novel *Of People and Things*

*Of People and Things* is set for publication in April 2018.

Please visit [www.armadabooks.com](http://www.armadabooks.com) or the author's Amazon page at

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Paul-Stewart/e/Boo4NA9KAO/ref=ntt\\_athr\\_dp\\_pel\\_pop\\_1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Paul-Stewart/e/Boo4NA9KAO/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1)

*In a ramshackle house in the old part of town, Paul lives a basic life focusing on just getting by from moment to moment, day to day. The man who pays for his up-keep makes sure he has the basics, but only the basics, on which to live. Paul is unsure why this patron keeps him at all.*

*Paul's backer is having an affair, but what does his wife know about it? Paul is given a mission to find out and is forced to become an unwilling private detective. After a first failed sortie, and a beating, Paul is visited by Cassandra, the wife of Paul's benefactor, who seems trapped in a bad 1930's novel.*

### Four

"What has happened to you, old thing?"

It was a question worth asking, after all, but I didn't ask it. It was Cass's voice which mixed so perfectly the bass and contralto as to have an effect so pleasing to my ear that it was all I could do, on hearing even so few words, to stop myself from sliding from my doze into a swoon and down the sound into a quiet torpor. I've been told to beware of such swoons and such torpors – by whom it does not greatly matter – and so I was on my guard against them, yet I managed to savour the possibility at least. The same is true of ex-smokers who inhale the stale fumes of others and then congratulate themselves on their moral rigour. From a doze to a swoon to a torpor, there are so many levels to the barely conscious that I realise now, too late, that I never explored them as perhaps I should have, never found those little crevices and cracks into which I could crawl when the need arose.

I felt her cool white hand upon my brow. I thought of it as white, but it was probably brown, like the rest of her now. It wasn't that cool either. A touch clammy, to be frank. I felt my own skin crawling beneath hers and her skin crawling too, in its own way, so different from mine. No doubt the hand on the brow was meant kindly – Cass meant much kindly – and I took it well, on the whole, but to have skin on skin, well, I would have preferred that one of us had been of purest marble, carved by an expert hand long dead.

“You have been in the wars old chap.”

I kept my eyes closed. Before going any further it has to be pointed out that whilst I am a thing, of sorts, I am not that old a thing, nor that old a chap. I may not be in my first prime, or my second – although how you can have two primes I don't know – but I'm in the way of being middling. That lacks definition, but I cannot be more definite, for if I knew what age I was then I have now forgotten. And before anyone objects to the use of the word chap other than to apply to a form of cowboy over-trousers or a slight chaffing of the skin, it must be pointed out that Cass was rather taken with the literature of the 1920s and '30s, or thereabouts, in which people called other people a chap or an old thing all the time, or so I'm told, for I don't read. That is, I do read, but I don't read that, or those. I read the weather reports, for example, on the scraps of newspaper I pick up from the street, although I don't so much read them as look at the symbols, more often than not a big orange sun, which is a sort of reading after all. Three day old weather reports are particularly fine reading, I find.

“Looks like you have had a bit of a run-in with a boxer type to me. Or did you fall down a convenient set of stairs again?”

All this was so reasonable and so reasonably asked – the voice in soft, moderated tones – that I shouldn't really have objected. But deep inside me I did object, for had I not settled before sleeping on a number of truths, prime amongst them was that which stipulated I could not see Cass if I wanted to keep my nose intact? The benefits of rhinokopia are well documented, particularly in the annals of Byzantium, but those benefits are not enjoyed by the recipient. My nose aside, I objected too to being roused from rest, or what passed for rest, to be hustled into consciousness and, what is more, painful consciousness at that. And when people say let sleeping dogs lie, whereas they might think they are saying something true for them, they are perhaps saying something which is much more true for the dog. Dozy species, at the best of times. And filthy. And lustful; fucking the legs of a stray visitor; licking their balls, if they have them, or their memories of balls if they do not; whipping out their wispy, sharp, carrot penises at the drop of a hat. If dog is man's best friend, then man is a hopeless case. Which he is. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against dogs, apart from their existence. Cats may be more subtle, I'll give them that, but no less loathsome in their arched back, cuddle on the lap, get their fur all over your face, spray every nook and cranny of your house kind of way.

I caught one once; a cat, I mean. My neighbourhood might be populated solely by the dying when it comes to humans, but cats fair much better. They are legion. Cute kittens abound. Some fall prey to the odd car which flattens them to the tarmac, but somehow most of them muddle through. Given that there are so many kittens, it stands to reason that there are a fair few Tom-cats with intact testicles to engender them. Unless it is just one very fertile Tom-cat, exhausted by his

harem at the end of the day, or night more probably. It further stands to reason that a Tom-cat in full possession of his balls has the need to constantly spray his territory, to mark it as his and to advertise his sexual availability. It so happened that my house fell within the territory of a beast particularly partial to spraying. He was grey and white, bulky with thick fur, and with balls the size of chestnuts, it seemed. He could spray a wall to a height of six feet. His spray was of such a stench that soon I couldn't smell my own, and this I did not like at all, for I liked to know where I was at all times, to the best of my abilities. So he had to be spayed. Or hit on the head with shovel. Or strangled. Yes, those were the options – to be neutered or to die.

Not great options, it has to be said.

Perhaps mindful of this I did consider catching him and merely taking him far away and dumping him, hale and hearty, to start life afresh, but I hadn't the transport.

I admit I was tempted to kill him – and who wouldn't be? – for all those hours I had spent trying to scrub away the smell from every conceivable corner of the house. But in the end I knew I wouldn't be able to do it. More for me than for him, it has to be said.

So neutering was the only option left. If you want to neuter a cat, you first have to catch him. I studied his movements for weeks to see when he deigned to enter my home and piss all over it. He was a regular pisser, fortunately. I chose an almost moonless night and stood stock still on the threshold of the door from the garden armed with my most worn and filthy bedspread. He strode up with a cocksure confidence, not even registering my presence, even cats ignore me, and when he was in range I let the bedspread fly. It smothered him in an instant, but then in the second instant the cat and bedspread scurried across the floor, dodging wildly from side to side. I careered after it, jinking and ducking to time my leap and to catch the bundle in one go. I leapt. I mistimed. Rather than catching the bedspread with the cat inside I managed merely to land square on top of the cat. It yowled and hissed beneath the cover, claws slashed through the threadbare fabric embedding themselves in my arm and elsewhere and we struggled there together for some time, now one gaining the upper hand, now the other, and me torn between getting myself away from this scratching dervish and fulfilling my mission. Yes, I must have flapped and flailed as much as the cat under the cover, throwing what bulk I had this way and that. It was a titanic struggle, in its way, and finished only with the exhaustion of both parties. We lay on the floor, he now wrapped and bundled safely, me panting and cataloguing my wounds.

It was then that I realised that I had not thought through my plan as thoroughly as I should have. I had caught the cat without thinking how to neuter it. Oh, I must have had some vague idea at the start, such as smartly clapping his balls smartly between two bricks, but all ideas now seemed impractical. I had failed to consider two things: the liveliness of the cat, and that I was the sole operator. Perhaps I should have let him go then and admitted defeat, allowed him the run of the house, tolerated his spray; in a word, accommodated him. But it seemed to me important that when you have set yourself the task of catching and neutering a cat it is folly to leave the job half done.

The first problem was how to anaesthetise the cat sufficiently well to operate, if not to dull the pain. I thought a sharp dint to the head might do it, but feared



the dint might be too smart and kill him, which had never been my intention. I would then just have to immobilise the cat somehow. Now fate is a wonderful thing, sometimes, for on one evening the previous week I had come across a length of rope in the street. Twine might be more accurate. And I had said to myself, that will come in handy, and picked it up and put it in the pocket of my trousers. How prophetic my words had been and how conveniently the world was arranged that just at the moment that I was in dire need of a length of twine I happened to have a length of twine in the self same trousers I was wearing. Remarkable, really. Particularly as my world is usually arranged so that I am wearing the wrong trousers at the wrong time and very rarely the right trousers at the right time, and I only have two pairs of trousers.

It is one thing, however, to have a length of twine conveniently arranged and quite another to attach it to a cat. In order for me to perform the operation, I knew, how I don't know, that I would have to secure all four legs, to minimise the inevitable scratching, and I now regretted using my worst bedspread, for it was so threadbare as to be hardly fit for purpose. That is the way of things; some things are well arranged and some things badly. I kept one hand on what I took to be the cat's head, and thankfully the cat was still in a state of some exhaustion, took the twine from my pocket – which was not as easy as it sounds – and then reached another hiatus. I had imagined myself tying him up as a cowboy ties up a heifer. There's cowboys again. I uncovered one rear leg, but its flailing defeated my attempts at lassoing it. I needed two hands, and only had one, free that is. I therefore swung myself around to straddle the cat, still beneath the bedspread, and clamped it between my knees and it was then that I had further cause to regret my choice of bedspread as claws sank into my arse. I was not dissuaded. There are fundamentally worse things in the world than cat's claws in the arse. Thus clamped, I was able to tie the twine around the hind legs with relative ease. I don't say it was easy, but it was relatively easy, all things considered.

Now some might have thought that to castrate a cat only the hind legs need to be bound, and I admit I flirted with this half-measure for an instant. But if you know cats then you will now they can double on themselves and bring their faces to their arses, even when suspended, and if they can do that, I reasoned, then they can bring the front claws and teeth into play when held by a twine tying their hind legs. So, I took the longer length of twine remaining, manoeuvred my left leg to lie across the throat of the beast, and, so pinned, applied the twine in similar fashion. I now had my cat trussed and ready for the chop. I should mention that the cat was not best pleased. He squirmed, but that was all he could do, given the superior ingenuity of his opponent and his recourse to tools. I picked him up like a bag, holding the length of twine that joined his front and hind legs, and took him into the kitchen. I had not had the foresight to bring the knife with me. There you go; twine I unexpectedly had, but a knife, which one would expect me to have, I did not. I kept one hand upon him on the Formica counter whilst I rummaged for my best knife in the knife-drawer. It wasn't a great knife, but it was as good as I had and as good as he would get. I was on the verge of applying the blade when I realised that I couldn't leave the thing with a gaping wound, for all along the purpose had been to neuter and not kill the cat. After all my efforts it would have been intolerable to kill the cat by neutering him. Some ironies are bitter indeed, and this would have been one of them. So, hand still pinning the trussed cat, I



turned on a ring of my two ring gas hob and heated a second knife, which was far inferior to the first, but would do the job of cauterising the wound well enough. There was now no putting off the moment of truth, as I believe it is called in bullfighting circles. I lay my left arm along the cat's body and with my left hand lifted the hind legs.

The mechanics of the thing! Endless.

The balls were exposed but I knew that I wouldn't be able to cut them off without having something to pull as I cut, so I hooked my left arm under the twine binding the hind legs, whilst still using the weight of the arm to keep the cat relatively still, and grabbed the balls by this hand. Now the meagre cord connecting the balls to the body proper was exposed and I knew I was in business. I don't like to shilly-shally on times such as these, so I whipped out the knife and whipped of the balls in one smooth motion. I had no idea my knife was so good, but it was. This left the balls in my left hand, thin sprays of blood shooting from the cat, the cat making an extraordinary noise like a stuck pig or a baby, and my right hand free to drop the knife, grab the second knife and cauterise the remains of his Tom-hood. Singed cat hair is not a pleasant thing. I can't be sure, but I think the cat then passed out, for it went remarkably still and silent, but perhaps I was just anthropomorphising the dumb brute and it was in fact dead or momentarily overcome by shock. Whatever the case, I took his moribund state as an opportunity to carry him, still as a bag, out of the kitchen and to the front door. I peeked out to make sure there was no one around, because I imagined that explanation might have been tricky for a man discovered roaming the streets with a cat-bag. The street being quiet, I went to the end of the dead-end street and cut the cat loose. He lay underneath the canopy of a clump of trees amidst scrub and rubbish, still not moving. I tenderly lay two fingers upon its chest cavity and felt, I thought, the slightest of rise and falls. I went back the following night and he was gone. This made me happy, for a moment, because, at bottom, I'm a sentimental sort of a man.

"I just sauntered in for a chinwag and find you laid out like Tutankhamen."

The analogy was not apt on a number of counts.

"You need a bracer, your poor thing. Tell you what, I'll join you. Sun might not be over the yard-arm, but who ever counted on the sun, eh? That's what I say."

I heard her soft footsteps leave my room, presumably for the kitchen. She knew where Paul's whiskey bottle would be, but she seemed to have forgotten that I didn't drink. People who are bright and breezy are a great incentive to stay in bed, but I slowly prised my eyes open, which seemed swollen to me, and grew accustomed to what light there was. She was right; the sun was not yet over the yard arm, and I wouldn't be safe for sometime. The colours had gone and I wasn't sure that I didn't regret them. I drew myself up on my elbows, the better to assess my injuries. There were aches and pains, but when were there not? That's is what I told myself; when are there not aches and pains?

Cass came back through the door bearing two glasses of whiskey, or it might have been whisky, I'm not a connoisseur. Whereas last night she had been in white, this morning, if it was still morning, she was in black, with a slim white belt around the waist of her short dress. The black made her skin look, if anything, more tanned and her close-cropped hair even more white. Again the effect of there seeming to be more of her. Her legs had definitely lengthened, particularly as she

sat on the side of my cot and crossed them, placing her left knee in the cup at the rear of her right knee and straightening her ankle to further lengthen her foot. There is probably a word for the cup at the rear of the knee, but I don't know it. She might have been a dancer, once. But she had never been a dancer. Too much energy exerted for too little gain. If I had looked her in the eye I wouldn't have been surprised to find them changed from dark brown to blue, but I didn't look her in the eye. She placed my glass on the floor by the cot and drank a fair draft from her own. She did not gulp nor gasp, but just let the drink slip down the full length of her throat which she tilted back to ease the passage. Yes, even her neck was longer too. She pulled a thin smile in appreciation, I think.

"Take your time, old thing, but I really must know what on earth has happened to you. You look like a battlefield."

I think she may have stroked my cheek at this point. She was nothing if not brave. And tactile.

I took her advice and took my time. I noticed, where one ill-plastered wall met another, a crack. It was just under the damp of the ceiling. When would I get around to fixing that? If it was fixable, of course. For some cracks, no matter how much you fill them, keep coming back as cracks.

She too looked elsewhere, but I don't know where. She took another drink and this time sighed, faintly. I felt her shoulders shrink. Perhaps having become larger she was now to become smaller, according to some principle.

We waited for time to be taken, she sitting on the bed and I lying on the bed. Fully clothed.

"Thing is old thing," she said after another drink, "the thing is..."

And here she seemed to be stuck.

"I say, you're not going to let a chap drink alone are you?" I hadn't touched my drink. "You'll make an alcoholic of me yet."

She then tapped me on the nose with her forefinger. It was meant playfully – as Cass often meant things – but it wasn't received playfully, for even her carefully manicured finger was enough to make me wince and tears start to my eyes. Although I didn't bite them, my own nails never failed to disgrace themselves. Their constant need of attention, for dirt to be gouged out from under them, for scissors to be applied to them endlessly. Perhaps it would have been better just to let them grow and curl under themselves, like some ancient sage, or better still to attack them with my teeth at every opportunity and rip them to the quick. I slipped my hands in the pockets of my trousers.

"Not quite up to it?" She raised her eyebrows and voice. "Then I'll jolly it along enough for the both of us, eh?"

She put down her own empty glass and picked up my full one, then rolled her head to take in the room as she took another drink. Her face came to rest on mine, by which I mean that her arc came to stop with her looking at my face and my face looking at the crack. It too seemed to have grown larger.

"Paul popped in at all?"

I could see I was entering into dark waters.

"Paul?"

"Yes, Paul. Has he popped in at all?" she said, blandly, or perhaps blithely, but more likely somewhere between bland and blithe.

"When?"

"Oh, you know, recently."

"Yes," I said.

"Alright was he?"

"Alright?" I generally have little idea what this word means.

"Yes, you know: top form, tickety-boo, full of beans, that sort of thing."

"He seemed to have his strength," I ventured.

She tilted my head to look her square in the face. Her eyes were still brown. I noticed faint wrinkles at the corners. She patted my cheek and the tears came to my eyes again. She smiled, and again I noticed a wrinkle creeping from the cracks at the edge of her mouth. With that, she took a draught and strode from the room. I know when I'm meant to follow someone, I don't know how, but sometimes people flounce off, or just leave, in such a way as to say I am leaving so you can follow me and, on the whole, I follow them, unless there are good reasons not to. Following Cass took some little time, for the aches and pains meant leaving the bed a difficult manoeuvre, placing my weight this way and that, then back again, to assuage the worst. The throbbing in my head I could do nothing about, so I tried to ignore it. When I finally got to the front room I found that Cass had arranged herself in silhouette against the door to the garden. Now there seemed to be less of her, with the sun slimming her figure which was already very slim and making a halo of her platinum hair. She didn't turn; she just waited until she knew by my shuffling that I was in ear shot and at attention, or thereabouts.

"Been acting odd, has he?"

"Who?"

"Paul."

This was a tricky one.

"No," I said.

"Distracted a little, perhaps?"

"Au contraire," I somewhat surprisingly said.

"Au contraire, darling?"

"Yes."

"Sorry for being a bit ditzzy, old chap, but what is the contrary of distracted?"

She really shouldn't have been asking me, I know, but often we ask where no answer should be forthcoming and an answer does come forth; an answer of sorts. Besides, she was an optimistic sort of a woman, in her way, so why not ask me what the contrary of distracted was? I wasn't sure, of course, but thought focused might do.

"Focused," I said

"But focused on what, that's what I want to know, focused on what?" She turned her head towards me but I couldn't see her face for the sun behind her. I flapped my arms up and down and puffed out my cheeks.

"On the job in hand?" I offered.

"But what's the job in hand, old thing, what job is bloody well in hand?"

The way she dived into her glass at the end of the question let me know that she was not waiting for an answer.

"You wouldn't know of course. 'Course you wouldn't know." She smiled and then dangled an outstretched arm towards me. "Get a chap a drink won't you? I've got a simply raging thirst today. Don't know what has bally-well come over me."

I shuffled to the kitchen with her glass and remembering her advice of earlier, took my time. The time was further lengthened by the fact that I couldn't walk very well. I am not the best of walkers at the best of times, and this was not the best of times, for whereas Paul had omitted blows to my legs *per se* the blows he did commit had somehow put my entire system off-kilter. Perhaps it was merely the throbbing in my head which stopped the necessary signals from reaching my lower portion, as if they and I were interrupted. But I took my time for another reason too, for my head was not throbbing quite enough to prevent me from entertaining the idea that my mission had already come to an end. I mulled. The first point was a technicality, perhaps, but an important one: was anything gleaned in Cass coming to me, and talking to me, admissible? Should I not, rather, disregard it out of hand? It would be an easy thing, for me, to forget what she had said, so the question came down to whether or not I should write-up her words in my notebook. But what would be the point? None that I could fathom. I had been instructed, and Paul was quite clear on this point, not to see Cass, so how could I use what Cass had said safely? I couldn't. I further rallied to this answer when I considered the second point: what had Cass said? It seemed to me that she had said that she didn't know what job Paul had in hand, nor did she know what he was focused upon, but that she was disquieted. She had not said disquieted, but it was the word I used to myself as I mulled, for I too was disquieted – the word was not too strong – by all that had occurred not only during the interview with Cass, but all that had occurred since accepting the mission. Accepting is not the word. Perhaps too I was disquieted by Cass, I mean the dark-skinned, blonde-haired Cass who bore so little resemblance to the dark-haired, fair-skinned Cass I was used to. And was I not disquieted too by dint of the blows I had received? No, all in all, the information gained was inadmissible and unreliable, for a whole host of reasons which I didn't care to thrash out as I poured her whiskey. At bottom, all she had said was that Paul was up to something, and, as he was never not up to something, this fell well short of the necessary. For me to be quieted again she would have had to look me in the eye and say: Paul is having sexual liaisons with some woman called Violet. Those would not have been the words, but that would have had to be the meaning for me to be satisfied, and so leaving me only to find a way around the technical problem of point one. Only! So I resolved to remain disquieted, and this quieted me, a bit.

She took a sip.

"So?" she said.

"So?" I said.

"The bruising?"

"I forget," I said.

"Blind drunk were you, came to passed out in some gutter, eh?"

I allowed her this with a second puff of the cheeks and flap of the arms. It really was most puzzling how she always forgot that I didn't drink. She'd known me long enough, after all.

"So?" She said. The topic had changed, but her beginning was the same.

"So?" I said, not wanting to introduce anything new to the formula.

"What do you think?"

She passed her long left hand through her peroxide hair.

"It is very white, isn't it?"

Now I have not had much experience of commenting on a woman's hair, but what little experience I have had has told me that there is nothing one can say that will satisfy. This is actually a relief, for rather than spending an eternity casting about for the never-to-come perfect answer, one can just say the first thing that pops into one's head knowing full well that it would be as unsatisfactory as any other answer, no matter how well considered. It was very white, anyway, so truth was on my side.

"It's ivory, you oaf."

Apparently truth didn't matter.

"It becomes you," I said.

"Becomes me, indeed!" She stroked her hair again, her wedding ring glinting a moment. "And the rest of me?"

She angled a long leg toward me and stretched out an arm, the better, I assume, for me to admire her dark skin.

"Quite the dusky maiden, don't you think?"

"I do."

"But do you really?"

"I do."

"Oh, do say you do."

"I did say I do."

"You are a perfect darling, darling," she said, to bring the dos to a close, which was a relief all round. "It's my Lee Miller," once again pushing at her hair.

"Is it?" I said. Perhaps he was her new hairdresser.

"And we have discovered the Riviera in Summer. Heavenly, simply heavenly."

She downed her drink, crossed toward me and kissed me on the cheek. She left her hand upon my shoulder a moment and presumably took one last look at my face.

"I'm dark all over," she whispered, and left.

I took to my bed and tossed for some time, painfully.

## Notes on Contributors

**Lieven Buysse** holds a PhD in Linguistics, and is currently associate professor of English Linguistics at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven, Belgium), where he teaches English Linguistics, British culture, translation and interpreting. His research interests are largely situated in the fields of interlanguage pragmatics and discourse analysis.

**Jelena Ilic Plauc** graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy, the University of Tuzla in 2003. As a teaching assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla (Department of the English language and literature) she taught various courses such as Language Practice, Syntax, Sociolinguistics, and Pragmatics. She obtained her master degree in September 2007 and was, as a senior teaching assistant, engaged in teaching master courses as well, such as Contemporary Linguistic Theories and Methodology of Linguistic Research. In April 2013, she achieved her doctorate degree. Since then she has been involved in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses, such as Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics, Contemporary English Language, English for Specific Purposes, Applied Linguistics and Language Practice.

**Fernanda Luísa Feneja** holds a PhD in American Literature (2007) and is a permanent teacher of English and German in Portugal's secondary education system. She is a researcher at the *University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies* (ULICES – RG 3 – American Studies) and a member of the Portuguese Association for Anglo-American Studies. Her research interests focus mainly on twentieth-century American Literature (narrative fiction, science-fiction, fantasy narrative, modernism studies), literary theory, and American culture. She has presented papers and published essays in these areas.

**Tatjana Marjanović** is an associate professor in the English Department at the University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She read for her MPhil at the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics, University of Cambridge, UK. Her doctoral thesis was an attempt to shed light on a correlation between thematic structure and coherence in English news texts. She takes a close interest in functional approaches to language.

**Camilo Peralta** was born and raised in Chicago to hard-working immigrants from Central and South America. After receiving his BA in English in 2003, he spent several years teaching in Europe and Asia. While in China, he met and married the love of his life, Li. They came back to the US in 2007, and in 2014 he finished work on a Master's degree. In the Fall of 2017, he will take up a new position at Independence Community College, teaching English Literature & Composition. In the meantime, he continues to pursue a PhD in the Humanities from Faulkner University. In what little free time he has, he likes to read, ride his bicycle, and play with their 8-year-old cat, Cho.