



**HAL**  
open science

**Dawe, Gerald & Maria Johnston, Clare Wallace (dirs.),  
"Stewart Parker, Dramatis Personae & Other Writings",  
Litteraria Pragensia, Prague: 2008 Wallace, Clare (dir).  
"Stewart Parker, Television Plays". Litteraria Pragensia,  
Prague: 2008**

Virginie Privas-Bréauté

► **To cite this version:**

Virginie Privas-Bréauté. Dawe, Gerald & Maria Johnston, Clare Wallace (dirs.), "Stewart Parker, Dramatis Personae & Other Writings", Litteraria Pragensia, Prague: 2008 Wallace, Clare (dir). "Stewart Parker, Television Plays". Litteraria Pragensia, Prague: 2008. The European English Messenger, 2012, XXI (1), pp.85-89. halshs-03851127

**HAL Id: halshs-03851127**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03851127v1>**

Submitted on 14 Nov 2022

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## Reports and Reviews

---

*Postcolonial Studies Across the Disciplines:*  
**the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of New Literatures  
in English (ASNEL/GNEL), Leibniz University, Hanover, June 2-4, 2011**

*Timo Müller*  
*University of Augsburg, Germany*

---

Its transnational and interdisciplinary approach has confronted postcolonial studies with the task of defining boundaries from the very beginning—a task that has shaped the discipline’s self-conception and its methodological foundations to a remarkable extent. The boundaries in question were not just national and geographical ones: when postcoloniality began and whether it has ended are matters of ongoing debate, as is the relation of postcolonial studies to neighboring disciplines such as literary studies, cultural studies, history, and sociology. This last aspect can hardly be dissociated from the others: any reflection on disciplinary boundaries will carry implicit or explicit assumptions about the time and space of the postcolonial. In recent years many have suggested to extend that time and space as far as possible—that is, to think of postcolonial studies as a set of methods for studying any society of any period, rather than as a delimited field of studies. If time and space lose their definitory value, the question of disciplinary boundaries (and transgressions) is bound to take center stage in the self-definition and self-reflection of postcolonial studies.

The 2011 ASNEL/GNEL conference took its thematic cue from these developments. “Postcolonial Studies Across the Disciplines” was an occasion for methodological reflection but also for questioning, extending, and redrawing the boundaries of the organization’s pursuits. Three keynote speakers from three different countries and disciplines addressed postcolonial concerns from various angles: Sabine Broeck, an Americanist, demanded that postcolonial studies posit enslavement as a central (if unacknowledged) aspect of modern Western sociality; Tim Watson charted the emerging discipline of Atlantic Studies through the lens of the historiography of slave revolts; and Jessica Hemmings, from the Edinburgh College of Art, offered reflections on textile and textual interweavings in the postcolonial realm. The panel speakers, too, came from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Beside the ‘core’ program of the New English Literatures, there were papers on British and American literature, on the history, geography, and linguistics of postcolonial countries and regions, on religion, music, politics, and translation. Following the very postcolonial assumption that the margins often reveal more about a society (or, in this case, about an association) than the center, and for the very practical reason that other reports from this conference are likely to focus on the keynotes and readings, in the remainder of this report I will summarize not the keynotes but a selection of panel papers. I am not implying that these were the ‘best’

papers—a humanly impossible claim given that there were parallel panels—but I do think the summaries give a sense of the many-faceted, necessarily arbitrary but always enlightening experience that the conference offered for the individual participant.

The very first panel focused on postcolonial readings of British and American literature. Characteristic for the self-reflexive rigor of the conference, it opened with a problematization of such readings: Jochen Petzold made a convincing and timely case against anachronistic interpretations of John Gay's *Polly* as an anti-slavery piece. Postcolonial critics, he argued, are too eager to read Macheath as an anti-colonial hero, as one who "chooses the politically marginal position", merely because he becomes a pirate and appears in blackface. He pointed out that the blackface scene is a joke—a disguise to escape the ladies' attentions—and that the play in general is much less about colonialism than it is about metropolitan politics and society. Rather than a fighter against colonialism, Macheath emerged from Petzold's reading as a postcolonial antihero: instead of confronting the system outright he (mis)functions as a rogue within it and unwittingly exposes some of its internal contradictions. (I was reminded of the protagonist of Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish*.) In the next paper, Barbara Buchenau examined early American captivity narratives through a postcolonial lens. It soon became clear that the unusual subject matter necessitated a widening of that lens. For one thing, American slavery existed in forms other than the classic middle-passage variant: indentured and forced labor from India was in many ways comparable to African slavery, and Native American captivity and enslavement, the focus of the paper, was a considerable factor in early American history as well. The second extension suggested by the paper was methodological: it demonstrated that strategies like mimicry could also be found among European captives, for example when Catholic missionaries who had undergone torture by natives cast themselves in the role of the martyr or saint.

The (trans)disciplinary implications of such extensions were addressed by Claudia Perner in an Americanists' panel later that day. Pointedly titled "Hijacking the Postcolonial?" her paper discussed the recent transnational turn in American studies (incidentally, the topic of the annual German Association of American Studies conference two weeks later) and the opportunities and risks it entails for postcolonial studies. On the one hand, this turn has been centrally motivated by concerns and methods introduced by postcolonial studies, and thus promises opportunities for cooperation and convergence between the two fields. On the other hand, many postcolonial theorists have warned that the specific concerns of economically and geographically disadvantaged peoples in the global South might lose scholarly attention and political edge if they are equated with and dissolved into the American situation. That such a cross-disciplinary approach can be made productive in American studies, at least, became clear in Carl Plasa's paper the following morning. Plasa identified a broad range of intertexts of various cultural and geographical origins in Robert Hayden's poem "The Middle Passage" and used postcolonial concepts and topics to reflect on the links between the poem's "hybridized textuality" and its political impact both in the United States and on the slavery debate in general.

The theoretical potential of such integrative approaches for postcolonial studies was demonstrated by Katja Sarkowsky's paper in one of the concluding panels of the

conference. Titled “Reconceptualizing Participation: Postcolonialism and Cultural Citizenship”, it interrogated the question of a politically and culturally committed literature from a postcolonial perspective. Rather than measure literature by a fixed political agenda, it suggested, we should think of the fictional text as a medium for participation in and reflection on forms of cultural belonging. In its attempt to conceptualize a postcolonial *littérature engagée* without neglecting the specificity and autonomy of literary expression, it addressed a concern palpable in many other papers and discussions during the three days at Hanover. Indeed, as a first-time attendant of the annual conference it seemed to me that this continual attention to questions of literary form—an aspect often shoved aside in politically motivated criticism—is one of ASNEL/GNEL’s distinctive contributions to contemporary postcolonial debate.

---

**International Interdisciplinary Conference *Literature and the Long Modernity*,  
Bucharest, November 10-12, 2011**

*Sorana Corneanu*  
*University of Bucharest, Romania*

---

What does it mean to be modern, how many times has the definition of the term changed through the last four hundred years or so of European history, and how are the production and the study of literature intertwined with the shifting definitions of modernity? What does the periodization we choose to work with, and the labels we use to signpost the big chunks of the literary, intellectual and cultural history of modernity, tell us about our own values and agendas, and how do these values and agendas stand in relation to those of the historical agents? What are the ingredients, the scopes and the speeds of the various moments in European history that have been understood as moments of modernization? How do these moments reflect the concern of the various periods with the fate of national literatures, of world literature, or of the role of literature in the construction of cultural identity? How is a history of literature built and for what purposes, and what is the disciplinary identity and, perhaps, the interdisciplinary promise, of the field of literary studies today? What is the very scope of ‘literature’ throughout this modern European history, and what kinds of questions do we need to ask about it nowadays, in an age that we are starting to call digital, or posthumanist?

Such were the main issues debated in mid-November 2011 in Bucharest, during the three days of the International Conference *Literature and the Long Modernity*, organized by Prof. Mihaela Irimia and her research team of the Center of Excellence for the Study of Cultural Identity, University of Bucharest. This was the third and last in a series of conferences associated with Research Grant 1980 awarded by the Romanian Research Council to Prof. Irimia and her team for the project *The Cultural Institution of Literature from Early to Late Modernity in British Culture* (2009-2011). Previous editions addressed the historical vagaries of literature understood as a cultural institution during early and classic modernity (*Imitatio-Inventio: The Rise of ‘Literature’ from Early to Classic Modernity*, Bucharest, November 13-14, 2009) and during high and late modernity (*Author(ity) and*

*the Canon between Institutionalization and Questioning: Literature from High to Late Modernity*, Bucharest, December 2-4, 2010). The 2011 Conference was meant as a culmination of those two highly successful events and as a renewed interrogation of the major issues raised during the debates occasioned by them, now placed within the comprehensive and dynamic perspective of the 'long modernity'.

Anyone interested in such matters had the opportunity, during those three November days, to learn from the best. The conference was graced by the presence of its two main invited speakers, Linda Hutcheon (University of Toronto) and Pat Rogers (University of South California), upon whom the University of Bucharest conferred the title of *doctor honoris causa*, in continuation of the train of distinguished professors whom the previous conferences of the *Cultural Institution of Literature* project brought to Bucharest and upon whom the University conferred the same title, Carlo Ginzburg (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa and University of California, LA) in 2009 and Hayden White (University of California, Santa Cruz) in 2010. A number of reputed scholars gave keynote talks: Thomas Docherty (Warwick University), Herbert Grabes (Universität Giessen), Michael McKeon (Rutgers University), Laurent Milesi (Cardiff University), Charles Moseley (Cambridge), Francis O'Gorman (University of Manchester), Eve Patten (Trinity College, Dublin), Jürgen Pieters (Universiteit Gent), Alan Riach (University of Glasgow), Andrew Sanders (Durham University), Clifford Siskin (NYU) and Hans-Peter Söder (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München). Papers were given by Shobhana Bhattacharji (Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi), Ivan Callus (L-Università ta' Malta), Sorana Corneanu (Universitatea din București), Christoph Ehland (Universität Paderborn), Flavio Gregori (Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia), Małgorzata Grzegorzewska (Uniwersytet Warszawski), Stefan Herbrechter (Coventry University), Michael Hutcheon (University of Toronto), Arleen Ionescu (Universitatea Petrol și Gaze, Ploiești), Petruța Năiduț (Universitatea din București), Mădălina Nicolaescu (Universitatea din București), Isabel Oliveira Martins (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Adrian Oțoiu (Universitatea de Nord, Baia Mare) and Ludmila Volná (Univerzita Karlova Praha, IMAGER Université Paris XII).

The success of a conference is also measured by the degree to which the organizing institutions succeed in making it look like a smooth, effortless, almost natural process. The institutions which fully accomplished this for the Bucharest Conference include the University of Bucharest, the Romanian Cultural Institute and the 'Carol I' Central University Library (the latter also the host of the event) – all of them with a long record now of contribution to the success of high-value academic events in Bucharest, of which the November Conference was undoubtedly one.

---

***Literature, Culture and the Fantastic: Challenges of the Fin de Siècle(s)***  
**Rijeka, Croatia, 17-18 February 2012**

***Aoife Leahy***  
*Dublin, Ireland*

---

“Literature, Culture and the Fantastic: Challenges of the Fin de Siècle(s)” was organised by Irena Grubica (University of Rijeka) and hosted by the English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Rijeka. The conference had its origins in a successful ESSE seminar at the 2010 conference in Torino, organised by Irena Grubica and Zdeněk Beran. A volume of essays *The Fantastic in the Fin de Siècle* is forthcoming with Cambridge Scholars Publishing. There are also plans for a special journal issue of *Literaria Pragensia*.

After a welcome address by the Mayor of Rijeka, the conference began with the presentation of prizes in the “Fantastic Short Story Competition” among the students of the University of Rijeka. First prize was awarded to Dafne Flego, a student from the English Department in Rijeka. Prof Tom Hubbard, who was one of the judges of the competition, said that the winning story combined humour and horror.

There were four plenary speakers who spoke on diverse but equally fascinating subjects. Prof Stefano-Maria Evangelista (University of Oxford) gave a lecture entitled “Ghostly Returns: Spectral Classicism in the English Fin de Siècle.” Prof Tom Hubbard (Université Stendhal-Grenoble, University of Edinburgh and University of Aberdeen) discussed “The Scottish Fin de Siècle: A Case Study in Comparative Aesthetics.” Prof Tatjana Jukić (University of Zagreb) spoke on “Sherlock Holmes and the Biopolitics of the Fantastic.” Philip Healy (University of Oxford) gave a lecture entitled “Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*: A Host of Reservations.”

On the Friday panel sessions, Aoife Leahy (NAES Ireland) spoke on “Dorothy L Sayers: Anthologer of Fantastic Literature” and Anda Bukvić (University of Zagreb) discussed “Women’s Brand of Fairytales around 1800: Benedikte Naubert’s *New German Tales*.” Tamás Bényei (University of Debrecen) gave a paper entitled “Ghosts in the Age of Spectrality: The Irrelevance of Ghosts and Late Victorian Stories”, Maria Beville (University of Aarhus) discussed “The Thing in the Mist: An Analysis of Fantastic Form in the Cinematic Representation of The Unnameable” and Sophie Mantrant (University of Strasbourg) spoke on “Sacrament of Evil: Arthur Machen’s Supernatural Tales of the Nineties.” Anne Holden Rønning (University of Bergen) had a paper on “Searching for the Fantastic in Australia”, on a session with Iva Polak (University of Zagreb) who spoke about “Nineteenth Century Lemurian Fantasies in the Australian Outback”, and Nina Muždeka, Arijana Luburić-Cvjanović and Nataša Karanfilović (University of Novi Sad) who gave a co-authored paper on “Magic Realism in Postcolonial Fiction: Examples of David Dabydeen, Salman Rushdie and Peter Carey.” Elisa Bizzotto (University of Venice) spoke on “The Fantastic as a Means of Fin-de-Siècle Aesthetic Expression and Inquiry: Theorizing the Aesthetic Fantastic”, Elena Pinyaeva (Moscow State University) discussed

“Faustian Motifs and Transformations of the Modern Myths in the Fictions of Oscar Wilde and Vernon Lee”, and Petra Mrdulljaš (University of Zagreb) gave a paper on “The Sublimity of Terror, the Terror of the Sublime: J.R.R. Tolkien and H.P. Lovecraft as Two Poles of the Twentieth Century Fantasy.”

On Saturday, Natalia Kaloh Vid (University of Maribor) spoke on “Fantastic Realism in Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita*: a Method of Struggle Against the Totalitarian State”, Vladislava Gordić Petković and Ivana Đurić Paunović (University of Nova Sad) had a joint paper on “The Wordscape of the Devil and the Vampire: The Fantastic, Cultural Memory and Identity in *Fear and Servant* by Mirjana Novaković and *Constantine’s Crossing* by Dejan Stojiljković”, and Francesca Vitali (University of Verona) discussed “The Fantastic Novel as a Mirror of Scientific Thought: Bram Stoker’s *The Jewel of Seven Stars*.” Stipe Grgas (University of Zagreb) gave a paper on economic theories in “Financial Capital and the Fantastic: An Americanist Perspective”, Sanja Runtić (University of Osijek) spoke on “Native American *Tracks* of the Fantastic”, and Željka Švrlljuga (University of Bergen) talked about “Gilman’s Fantastic Cryptonymy: The Case of ‘The Giant Wisteria’.” Aleksandar Mijatović (University of Rijeka) gave a paper on “Incident of the Letter: The Double in Maupassant’s *Horla* and Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*”, Michal Peprník (Palacky University) spoke on “R.L. Stevenson and the Fin de Siècle Narrative Mosaic” and Ljubica Matek (University of Osijek) had a paper on late twentieth century cinema in “The City and the Highway: The Spatialization of the Double in the Fin de siècle(s).” Iris Vidmar (University of Rijeka) spoke on “Beautiful and Sublime in Gothic and Fantastic Literature: A Kantian Perspective”, Boran Berčić (University of Rijeka) gave a paper on “Personal Identity: *Star Trek* and *Solaris*” and Tatjana Peruško (University of Zagreb) considered “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About the Fantastic? Reconsidering Genealogical Distinctions.” Nóra Séllei (University of Debrecen) discussed “(Mis)match-Making: Gothic Horror, Science Fiction, Fantasy and Family Romance in Violet Hunt’s ‘The Prayer’”, Anna Enrichetta Soccio (University G. D’Annunzio) had a paper on “Houses, Hauntings and the Supernatural in Charlotte Riddell’s Short Stories”, while Emma Domínguez-Rué (University of Lleida) spoke on “My Angry Selves: Ellen Glasgow’s *The Past*, Gothic Doublings and Women’s Sense of Otherness.” Zděnek Beran (Charles University, Prague) discussed “To the Genesis of Late Nineteenth Century Vampire Stories as a Specific Form of the Fantastic”, Bojana Vujin (University of Novi Sad) gave a paper entitled “From Fiendish Bloodsuckers to Sparkling Heart-Throbs: Vampires Then to Now” and Marko Lukić and Karla Lebhaft (University of Zadar) delivered a joint paper on “Faces of Fear – Aesthetics of Horror and the Representation of the Monstrous.” Eva Antal (Eszterhazy Karoly College) had a paper on “The Spectral Presence of the Fantastic in Wells’s and Bellamy’s Fugitive Science Fiction”, Maria Antonietta Struzziero (Independent Scholar, Italy) spoke on “Subjective Abjection and Sublimity in Jeanette Winterson’s Representation of the Fantastic: A Study of *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*” and conference organiser Irena Grubica (University of Rijeka) gave the final paper on “Contested Pasts and the Politics of Memory: Irish Gothic Fiction Revisited.”

There were many social events in the programme, including a reception that was kindly hosted by the British Embassy and the gathering of the Chevening Alumni.

Participants in the conference also enjoyed guided tours of Rijeka and Opatija during breaks and appreciated the attractive locations. There was an interpretative dance performance by art student Vladimir Ježić on Friday, which marked the opening of the exhibition *The Fantastic of the Reality* staged by "Kreatura", a society that gathers present and former students from the Academy of the Applied Art in Rijeka. Music students Domagoj Pauković and Jurica Goia from a regional department of the Zagreb Music Academy in Rijeka performed on the guitar and flute on Saturday evening, before participants left the university for the conference dinner.

It was a very enjoyable weekend and many congratulations are due to Irena Grubica and the English Department of the University of Rijeka. Some of the conference participants were also delighted to stay on in Rijeka for the annual carnival.

The conference was supported by The Open Society Foundations, The Foundation of the University of Rijeka, the British Council, the British Embassy in Zagreb, the City of Rijeka, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Rijeka.

---

**Thomas Hoffmann and Lucia Siebers (eds), *World Englishes – Problems, Properties and Prospects. Selected papers from the 13<sup>th</sup> IAWE conference. Varieties of English Around the World G40*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2009. €99 (hardback), ISBN 978 90 272 4900 5.**

*Gunnel Melchers*  
*Stockholm University, Sweden*

---

This publication, as indicated in its subtitle, is based on a conference held by the International Association of World Englishes (IAWE), an organization which is "committed to the study of forms and functions of varieties of Englishes in diverse cultural and sociolinguistic contexts" (<http://www.iaweworks.org/>) and, among other things, arranges annual conferences. This particular conference, the first to be held in Europe, took place in Regensburg in 2007 under the leadership of Edgar Schneider, who is also editor of the VEAWS series publishing the book under review.

This substantial volume, comprising nearly 400 pages, contains 22 papers selected from the well over 100 presented at the conference. They reflect, above all, the first of the three IAWE focus areas – language, literature, and pedagogy – although quite a few obviously have pedagogical implications. The volume is clearly and logically organized into two main sections: 'Focus on', containing a variety of linguistic issues representing specific regions, and 'The global perspective', including typological studies as well as other more general and methodological issues, referred to as 'new approaches'. Since it is impossible to do justice to all these interesting and important papers within the scope of this review, I have chosen to comment on a limited number representing different areas, linguistic levels and types of data.

The thirteen topics in the 'Focus on' section range from instrumental analyses of realizations of a single lexical set in a variety to problems in classifying as well as



codifying 'outer-circle' Englishes and the roles of English in special domains. As for the regional range, however, it is noteworthy that neither Europe nor North America is represented.

In his informative and thought-provoking socio-phonetic study 'Deracialising the GOOSE vowel in South African English' Rajend Mesthrie describes, 'through the lens of accent', how new norms of speech are emerging in post-apartheid South Africa. The study reports on tokens of GOOSE as realized by 28 female middle-class students representing the four major ethnic groups White, Black, Coloured and Indian. Whereas fronted realizations of this lexical set were, as recently as a decade ago, connected with 'whiteness', the results for all the ethnic groups signal a general cross-over into the 'White' space.

Christian Mair's contribution 'Corpus linguistics meets sociolinguistics' focuses on spoken usage in Jamaica and is introduced as 'a plea for closer co-operation between sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics in the study of World Englishes'. His data is taken from the recently completed Jamaican component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-JA), exclusively representing the acrolect used by educated speakers. The study is based on five selected variables: morphosyntactic (e.g. subject-verb inversion in questions) as well as lexical (the use of *person(s)* as a synonym for *people*) and discourse-oriented (the quotative *be like*). The results support the notion of an emerging Jamaican standard, distancing itself from traditional British norms but with growing influence from American English as well as the creole substrate.

World Englishes as a treasury of data for the exponential research on discourse particles/markers is further demonstrated in Claudia Lange's "'Where's the party *yaar!*". Discourse particles in Indian English', another corpus-based paper (ICE-IND). Before turning to the variety under investigation, Lange supplies an evaluative presentation of earlier research in the field, with particular reference to Singapore English, "the paradigm case within the field of World Englishes". The lexical meaning of the discourse particle *yaar* (a borrowing from Hindi), interestingly, is 'mate' or 'guy', but in Lange's extensive corpus data the word only occurs once in its original meaning. Instead, as convincingly demonstrated with illustrative examples, it has been bleached and developed into a discourse marker, signalling statements, questions, imperatives and exclamations. The use of *yaar* is characteristically gender-related, women being 'the most prolific promoters', age-related (particularly favoured by Lange's 18-25 group) and unevenly distributed with respect to mother tongue. A general issue, also highlighted in Lisa Lim's paper on Singapore English in this volume, is the striking borrowability of discourse markers.

In her contribution 'Australian English as a regional epicenter' Pam Peters addresses the interesting issue whether AusE, itself an evolving regional standard of English, is influencing neighbouring varieties (with special reference to New Zealand). The paper is of general theoretical interest with respect to the evolutionary model for pluricentric languages. Another paper with implications for models and classifications of World Englishes is John Webster's 'Language in Hong Kong', exploring the development after the return to Chinese sovereignty.

The volume's second section opens with 'World Englishes between simplification and complexification' (Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi). Drawing on substantial data from the *Mouton Handbook of Varieties of English* (2004), ICE and some other regional corpora the authors contribute significantly to a topical debate, addressing in particular the different views put forward by Trudgill and McWhorter. Thomas Biermeier's 'Word-formation in New Englishes', a typological study of seven new varieties with regard to a hitherto sadly neglected topic, gives further proof of the usefulness of ICE.

The rising interest in English as a lingua franca (ELF) is reflected in a joint article by participants in a workshop on the topic. Without exceptions, the contributions are – not unexpectedly yet somewhat disappointingly – concerned with definitions and classifications rather than data-based research on actual usage. Stephanie Hackert's 'A discourse-historical approach to the English native-speaker', by contrast, provides a new perspective on the thorny issue of 'the native speaker' supported by substantial data from a close reading of 19<sup>th</sup>-century texts.

This immaculately produced book is an outstanding example of the significance conference proceedings can have if edited with insight, focussing on the state of the art on different levels, methods and viewpoints within a discipline. As I hinted in presenting the 'Focus on' section, I find it odd that neither Europe nor North America feature as World Englishes regions, but this shortcoming is beautifully redressed in the second section through Salikoko Mufwene's seminal paper 'The indigenization of English in North America'.

---

**Nadine Holdsworth and Mary Luckhurst.** *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. 295 pp. ISBN 978-1-4051-3053-0.

*Diana Popa*  
*Budapest, Hungary*

---

One of the challenges that this volume poses for a reader without access to the theatrical scene of Britain and Ireland is the impossibility of personally experiencing many of the exciting productions described.

This Companion reflects upon theatre productions understood as "formal diversifications", thus representing a break with the more traditional text-based approach that dominates the historical scope of the Blackwell *Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama 1880-2005* (2006). Moreover, the editors have sought to shift the focus away from the "metropolitan centre" represented by London, to theatre productions emerging from urban and rural sites. Without falling into the trap of binarism, this collection thrives on tensions between "text" and "performance", between traditional theatrical spaces and local, urban, and rural geographical sites.

The scope of this collection is ambitious. It stems from the premise that "British and Irish playwrights and theatre-makers have an important role to play as ethical witnesses and cultural commentators" (p. 2). As a consequence, the work of the playwrights

in the Companion is explored through the lens of different aspects of the world we inhabit. At the same time, the 'ethical' principle functions as a point around which the writings included here revolve.

The complexity of the issues raised and the detailed treatment they receive in the book make it impossible to refer to all of the chapters. To me, a woman brought up and living in Eastern Europe / the Balkans the preoccupation of contemporary British playwrights with recent events in the region stand out. Geoff Willcocks's "Europe in Flux: Exploring Revolution and Migration in British Plays of the 1990s" gives a fair depiction of the challenges faced by the region, one that is dominated by socio-economical and political instability. The plays discussed successfully avoid reiterating stereotypical views of Eastern Europe and the Balkans through an approach that effectively translates regional preoccupations into contemporary British reality. Sarah Kane's *Blasted* emerges as a play that "interrogate[s] social relations across Europe" (p. 20) and implies a "direct link between domestic violence in Britain and civil war in former Yugoslavia" (p. 19). Other plays examined here are also examples of the different practices that have emerged in the dramatic scene in Britain and Ireland in recent years. For example, Nicolas Kent's *Sebrenica* (1996) forms part of the Tricycle theatre's tradition of 'tribunal' plays briefly explained here as "a verbatim re-enactment [...] an edited and theatricalized version of the original trial" (p. 21), namely the Rule 61 hearings. Elsewhere in this collection, Mary Luckhurst's "Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations and Ethics" examines the origins of verbatim theatre, its working methods, as well as its relation to the media, and profitably reflects on some ethical issues implicated in its practice (p. 200).

The ways in which the separate parts of this collection interconnect, add meaning and enhance our appreciation of the texts, performances, sites, forms and practices that are examined within specific social, political, cultural and institutional contexts (e.g. globalization, genocide, national identity, migration, the use of new technologies). This is one of the characteristic traits of the Companion, and one of its great merits too.

However, at the heart of this project lies a discrepancy that I find both frustrating and illustrative of the kinds of dilemmas that dominate received ideas about the canon on the one hand and national identity on the other. The nuanced interpretations that emerge from the chapters do not match the title of the collection which can be perceived as an attempt at establishing a sort of canon of *contemporary British and Irish theatre*. The chapters that make up this collection question precisely the role and the place of the centralized institutionalizing practices of national theatres, and discuss the vibrant contemporary theatre productions from multiple perspectives that examine the different directions, concerns and forms of contemporary experimental theatre in their complexity. The title of this collection fails to do justice to the richness and diversity of its contents.

In the second part of this collection, what emerges at its most powerful is the problematic relationship between what experimental companies strive to accomplish and their uncritical adoption as "another genre category by mainstream art institutions and discourses" (p. 88). It is the tension surrounding the ways in which the National Theatres of Scotland and Wales were established, and wanted to be associated with ideas of experiment, accessibility, and the connection between art and everyday life, that illustrates most markedly the collection's flawed title.

The second part, entitled "Sites, Cities and Landscapes", discusses the role and the place of site-specific theatres from within the context of emerging Scottish and Welsh National Theatres after devolution. Site-specific theatre and plays in which location is seen in relation to contemporary conceptions of personal, gender, and national identity (see Nadine Holdsworth's "The Landscape of Contemporary Scottish Drama: Place, Politics and Identity") occupy a prominent position both as part of mainstream and alternative theatrical productions.

The focus shifts from the eclectic diversity of theatre companies that were a characteristic of the regions before devolution towards the need to establish an institutional base for various productions. Heike Roms shows how national narratives have dominated the Welsh theatre in the 1980s and 1990s and that as a result of the increased debate on national identity and its theatrical representations after devolution made some turn away from such interests. But the debates surrounding the form, the location, and the site-specificity of the contemporary theatre productions, re-emerged when they were seen as co-opted, institutionalized, and mainstreamed. This resulted not in dismissing the form, but in rethinking site and site-specific theatre, which includes rethinking the local and the global, Britain's relation to a changing Europe, cyberspaces, "contemporary versions of dislocation." It equally resulted in a display of how the sites that are conceived both enact and disrupt, how they are in flux, ever under negotiation.

Instead of judging the book by its title, let us savour the contradictions and revel in the richness and complexity of the multiple chapters written by leading scholars in the field. This is a challenging and engaging collection of essays, inviting students to discuss plays and playwrights without undue reverence for the canon.

---

**Barbara Straumann.** *Figurations of Exile in Hitchcock and Nabokov.* Edinburgh University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780748636464.

*Sostene Massimo Zangari*  
*Milan, Italy*

---

With the increased tendency towards specialisation in academe, it is rare to encounter scholarly work that transcends the boundaries of accepted categories and practices. *Figurations of Exile* by the University of Zurich scholar Barbara Straumann, is a welcomed exception. This study builds bridges across the media – literature and cinema – while avoiding the usual practice of dealing with cinematic adaptation of literary works in favour of a comparative analysis of books by Vladimir Nabokov and movies by Alfred Hitchcock.

The occasion for this joint study of Nabokov and Hitchcock is to be found in the exchange of letters between these two European exiles in 1964, where the possibility is discussed of their collaboration on a movie project. Nothing came of the idea, but the dialogue that took place inspired Straumann to explore its implications and possibilities – not least because of the many points that their lives and careers have in common.

Although from different backgrounds (the cosmopolitan Russian aristocracy *vs.* the British middle-class) and experiences (the author stresses the director's voluntary move from his native country as opposed to the writer's forced flight due to political and safety concerns), Nabokov and Hitchcock in the 1950s made successful breakthroughs in the US cultural panorama and became identified as representatives of European artistry and craft. These two figures shared a willingness (a compulsion at times) to envelop their artistic efforts in a language that bespoke a personal style and manner.

In order to create a common interpretative ground between them, Straumann chooses to take their condition as exiles as the salient trait of their artistic careers, a condition that made them keen on dealing with questions of home and language. The exilic versions of home created by Nabokov and Hitchcock are put into dialogue and woven into a critical narrative that yields many insightful perspectives into the artists' approach to literary and cinematic creation.

For her critical framework Straumann focus on psychoanalysis and its concept of 'home' as developed by Freud in "The Uncanny", which establishes a close relationship between the intimate familiar and the repression of secrets upon which the former is based. Psychoanalysis provides a critical tool, but it is also used more like a connecting device (which frames the works by Nabokov and Hitchcock into a critical narrative with the concept of 'home' at its centre) than as a full-fledged analytical model. The counterpoint analyses of writer and director are thus developed through the different levels (and moments) of reconstruction of a home remembered and the adaptation to a new one, which in turn poses the question of the relationship between linguistic choices and the meaning with which Nabokov and Hitchcock invested them.

The first moment – the recreation of "imaginary homelands" – is articulated through a comparative analysis of *Speak, Memory* (Nabokov's 1967 memoir of his childhood in pre-Revolutionary Russia and his later exiled life in Germany and France until his final departure for the United States in 1944), and *Suspicion* (the 1941 Hitchcock movie adapted from Francis Illes's novel *Before the Fact*, and starring Joan Fontaine and Cary Grant).

In *Speak, Memory*, Straumann argues, Nabokov uses memory to claim command of his past and its disturbing ruptures – a reestablishment of mastery and order over his own dislocated life, achieved through the recollection of happy idyllic scenes, like summer holidays spent in the family *dacha*, and a parallel attempt to avoid confrontations with traumatic events, such as the tragic death of his father, who was mortally shot at a political meeting. The elaborate, literary language that recreates Nabokov's world is characterised by games of "hide-and-see" with the reader, that help the author to create a coherence that was missing throughout his nomadic European life.

Hitchcock's reconstruction of home in *Suspicion* is conceived through a position of otherness, the female viewpoint of the protagonist Lina McLaidlaw. This approach allows for the recreation of a home that is inherently unstable – an effect that results from the tension produced by Hitchcock's exploitation of the female's fantasies of domesticity and the recurring emphasis on the male's unfathomable behaviour.

The second movement of Straumann's critical narrative focuses on those works that signal the effort of making a new home in the United States. Taking her cue from a

well-known quotation by Nabokov about *Lolita*, Strauman suggests that both the novel and *North By Northwest* are to be seen as love affairs with the chosen medium of expression, the English language for Nabokov, and the Hollywood idiom for Hitchcock. Straumann's critical narrative again finds affinities in the ways both bring about home-making projects through playful appropriation of language, meant both as the technical medium and the cultural idiom of the 1950s. Again, although the artists share the same starting point, their intent is rather different. For as Nabokov in *Lolita* invents his own America through an appropriation of American pop culture, thus confining the traumas of history to the background, the parallel appropriation of Hollywood idioms and clichés by Hitchcock instead explores anxieties that haunted many US cultural products: the Oedipal complex and the Cold War.

The exilic figurations of home by Nabokov and Hitchcock are read against the backdrop of their divergent personal histories, and to make the point even more compelling, in the Epilogue Straumann proceeds to extend her analysis to several other works: *The Life of Sebastian Knight* (the first novel Nabokov wrote in English) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (a 1943 movie co-written by Hitchcock and Thornton Wilder).

Straumann's narrative is well-framed and developed. She makes a number of very clear points, as the entire book suggests a fertile approach that combines the formal and thematic levels in the analyses of works of art. Still, if one reservation is allowed, the book might have benefited from a side discussion of home-related themes in other American writers and directors working during the 1940s and 1950s. This would have created an even clearer view of how in Nabokov and Hitchcock exile generated an artistic sensibility that set them apart in the post-war US cultural arena.

---

Lawrence Phillips, ed. *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke. Victorian and Edwardian Representations of London*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.

Marco de Waard  
Amsterdam University College, The Netherlands

---

Was it Dickens himself who, referring to the darker fascinations of Victorian London, first used the phrase "the attraction of repulsion"? Or was it Dickens's friend and biographer, John Forster? Readers who consult *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke* would not know, for the collection attributes the phrase in turns to the former (p. 77) and to the latter (p. 54), and its editor did not send his contributors back to their sources. Yet, whoever the coiner of the phrase really was, as a shorthand explanation for the central place which London holds in the urban imagination it is apposite indeed. If the city's "attraction" resides in its extremes – its poverty, its dirt and pollution, its ambiguous role as the world's first "megalopolis" and as the hub of Britain's Empire – we can be sure that a whiff of repulsiveness belongs to it as well. And its repulsiveness, perversely, cannot but attract: all the more so for constituting London as a privileged site of representation, one that defines how we imagine and experience the urban in the first place. Whether we consider

death and dying, hygiene and health, or the alien and “otherness” in relation to modern city life, London stands as the epitome of the modern urban condition. Paradoxically, the richness of fantasies, projections, and horror stories which it invites seem to increase rather than diminish the “reality effect” of its representations. Indeed, the most incisive attempts to submit London to the conventions of urban realism appeal nonetheless to us on the level of symbolism and myth.

*A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke* discusses Victorian and, to a lesser extent, Edwardian London through a 5-page introduction and twelve case-oriented essays. Between them, they give London’s “repulsive attractions” and “attractive repulsiveness” ample time and space. Special attention goes to the themes of death and urban exploration (from London suicides to London’s cemeteries, from explorers’ subjectivities to their sociologically inflected works), and to the literary tropes and strategies by which threateningly strange or “alien” elements would simultaneously be included in the city and symbolically contained (from Henry Mayhew’s invention of the “vagabond savage” in the 1850s to Richard Marsh’s transmutation of an oriental Egyptian figure into a human-scarab hybrid in the spectacular mystery novel *The Beetle* of 1897). The collection’s strength lies in the originality of some of the case studies which it identifies and opens up for further discussion and research. The collection’s weakness lies in its failure to effectively foreground, tell apart, and conceptualise the different thematic strands that run through it, and to connect them to recent and current trends, insights, and discussions in the fields of cultural urban studies and Victorian studies more generally.

To begin with death: the collection is framed by a richly documented chapter on the “morbid topographies” of suicide in London on the one hand, and by a deft exploration of London’s “necropolitan imaginary” on the other. Both chapters are studies in the moral and cultural geography of the city, demonstrating the extent to which urban spaces are always, as Henri Lefebvre has taught us, “socially produced.” What emerges very well from both chapters is how representations of death had a regulating and disciplining impact in Victorian urban culture. From the “feminisation of self-destruction” that was emphasised in many popular publications of the 1830s and beyond, to the growing concern – and fascination – with the (sub-)urban “Cities for the Dead” which from the 1850s onwards came to compete for space with the living, death’s obtrusive presence in Victorian London stimulated a range of symbolic negotiations through which issues of gender, class, and morality were articulated and redefined. Very often, as L. J. Nicoletti’s chapter on cultural constructions of metropolitan suicides shows, these negotiations would play upon readers’ fears and anxieties to shore up the authority of established bulwarks of law and order.

In regard to the theme of urban exploration, chapters on George R. Sims, the English writings of Californian author Jack London, and the slum stories and Chinatown tales of Thomas Burke in collections like *Nights in Town* (1915) and *Limehouse Nights* (1916) add valuably to the stock of better known cases such as W. T. Stead’s or Charles Booth’s. Given the internal contradictions and paternalistic thrust of so much of Victorian thinking about reform and poverty relief, it is not surprising that the collection emphasises the highly conflicted and tension-ridden approach which George Sims, Jack London, and Thomas Burke all shared in relation to London’s poor. Keith Wilson finds

that Sims's compendium survey *Living London* (1901-1903) is full of "attitudinal contradictions" as, situated "at the meeting point of sociological analysis and social crusade", and addressing the plight of the destitute and dispossessed for an audience of middle-class readers, it offers "a journalistic equivalent to the classed voyeurism of slum tourism." Likewise, Anne Witchard finds that Burke's attempts to represent the authentic "community spirit" of London's East End Chinatown do not prevent him from continuing the tradition of the "travel guide for the armchair tourist." In the same vein, Jack London's efforts to get to the heart of London's East End entailed an intensification of colonial analogies and racial tropes in his work, "darkest England" merging with "darkest Africa."

Yet, to identify such ambiguities and contradictions is one thing, to place them in historical perspective is another. Indeed, it is distinctly odd to see some of this collection's chapters on the literature of urban exploration relapse into an outworn form of ideology critique, as when the chapter on Thomas Burke ends by postulating very crudely – and a-historically – that Burke's "proletarian identification with the human melting pot of London and its traditional freedoms and pleasures preserves him from the knee-jerk racisms and fascist inclinations of high-cultural writers of the period (Lewis, Woolf, Pound, Lawrence, Yeats)." The main problem with this sort of assertion is that they only make more absolute the very division between "high" and "low" culture which they purport to cut across. The volume errs more often by making undertheorised political claims for authors commonly placed outside the "high-cultural" camp. Philip Tew's chapter on the working-class poet James Thomson, for example, promises to take us "beyond" the apocalyptic visions of London which have long been the locus of scholarship on Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874). It remains unclear however what Thomson's "radicalism" entailed, to what extent it was viable as a social and political programme, and how it infused the larger discourse of Victorian radicalism. Tew would have done better to engage with Stephanie Kuduk Weiner's discussion of Thomson in her excellent study *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874* (2005); it could have helped him avoid depicting Thomson as an attitudiniser. What is certainly required to tackle the more politicised urban texts of this period is a firmer grounding in the social, political, and intellectual history of the period, and a concomitant recognition of the deeply interdiscursive nature of much (late-)Victorian and Edwardian literary writing. This also involves taking seriously the interactions between "high" and "low" culture, and not re-erecting boundaries between them which are in any case contingent.

The collection is more satisfactory in regard to literary texts traditionally studied under the rubric of urban realism. Especially the chapters on Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) and James's *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) are worthwhile: as they take up the theme of the "illegibility" of the metropolis which the collection also touches on in reference to Charles Dickens and Richard Jefferies, these chapters enhance our understanding of how the experience of London city life worked as a catalyst for the complex transition from Victorian realism to literary modernism. Exploring *New Grub Street's* sustained polemic with Dickens, Ruskin, and George Eliot, Dehn Gilmore throws into relief Gissing's notorious unwillingness (or incapacity) to commit his art both to social and political optimism and to a stable mode of urban representation. Gilmore finds in Gissing's novel



an inquiry into “the rules by which representation, and specifically urban representation, should proceed” – a metafictional enterprise which refuses to accept the constraints of any mode of realistic representation, and prefers to enter what we can now see as a proto-modernist mode of (self-)deconstruction as the only viable alternative to urban realism’s inescapable *echec*. One could only wish that this line of inquiry had been pursued more rigorously in the collection. A continuation beyond the Edwardian period into the high modernism of Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and T. S. Eliot (who is often proleptically referred to in this volume) would have strengthened it considerably. It would certainly have substantiated the collection’s reiterated suggestion that English literary modernism effectuated what was simultaneously a reification and a suppression of many of the social divisions and faultlines which earlier, popular Victorian texts registered quite openly, if no less ambiguously.

All things considered, *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke* is a volume that holds considerable promise in terms of the thematic coverage achieved by the twelve chapters and the potential for resonance and dialogue between them. But the collection disappoints in that it fails to bring the thematic strands together in a unified vision that would allow the chapters to really speak to each other. As it is, a whole range of issues that are the stuff of debate among Victorianists and urban scholars today – the ambiguous quality of city observers’ detachment, the transformative agency of nineteenth-century “radicalism” at the intersection of politics and art, and the evolution of the literary strategies that have shaped London into a representational field in the first place – are left both underdeveloped and underexplored.

It does not soften one’s judgment that the index, finally, is inconsistent to the point of indifference in regard to the spelling of foreign and uncommon names. Granted, to leave out the honorific particle in Honoré *de* Balzac could be a defensible choice. But Dutch-born novelist Michel Faber should not be called Michael. The first name of Fuseli, the painter, is commonly spelled Henry and not Henri (unless one decides to restore the original Swiss name, Johann Heinrich Füssli, and thus to undo its anglicisation altogether). Likewise, it is Hilaire and not Hillaire Belloc, and the author of *The Fortress* (1932) can only be Hugh Walpole and not, one should wish would go without saying, eighteenth-century writer Horace Walpole.

---

**Stephen Donovan, Danuta Fjellestad, and Rolf Lundén, eds. *Authority Matters: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Authorship*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 302pp. ISBN: 978-90-420-2483-0.**

*Patrick Hart*  
*Istanbul Kultur University, Turkey*

---

Like much of its contents, this book’s full title both raises and elides the question of the relation between authority and authorship. Each is a potentially unwieldy theme, and

their harnessing together here has produced a conceptually ragged volume that nevertheless contains much good scholarship and some moments of real delight.

The central problem of this collection *qua* collection is its uncertain grasp of its own scope. The vague comprehensiveness of the title to the editors' introduction, "Author, Authorship, Authority, and Other Matters", is suggestive of the problem. The volume's contents are clumped, for no clearly articulated reason, about an Anglophone modernist core: making this the explicit focus would have sharpened its sense of purpose. Alternatively, a more radically eclectic approach embracing a wider geographical and temporal reach might have lent a fresher, more adventurous air. As it is, the predictable combination of canonical literary texts in English and French theory feels strangely dated and parochial.

That said, there is much of value here. Section one, 'Theoretical Considerations', opens with Stephen Dobranski's "The Birth of the Author: The Origins of Early Modern Printed Authority", the volume's only contribution not to focus exclusively on modernist and/or postmodernist writing. Its explicit presentation of the apparent paradox that "the birth of the 'Author' [...] grew out of a social process encompassing various forms of co-authorship" (p. 24) offers a useful, articulate and wide-ranging synthesis of recent work in this field, as well as new readings of individual texts. James Chandler's "Foucault and Disciplinary Authority", meanwhile, offers a lucid introduction to *The Order of Discourse*, arguing that it presents a "more fully systematized account" (p. 61) of the problematic authority of the author than that found in Foucault's later, more widely-known essay, "What is an Author?". Jeremy Hawthorn considers cases involving literal authorial deaths in order to re-evaluate the theoretical 'death of the author'. In their very uncontentiousness, his seven tentative conclusions suggest that 'the author' is perhaps no longer a pressing *theoretical* problem for literary critics: rather, as his engaging ramble via *Annie Hall*, Austen's *The Watsons*, Sartre, *Edwin Drood*, and Tony Hancock hints, the interesting work is to be done in testing recent theoretical insights against particular works. Bo Ekelund's exploration of "Authority and the Social Logic of Recognition" in poetics (Aristotle), group-based politics (Fukuyama, Düttman), and social theory (Althusser, Lacan, Bourdieu) is a rigorous, closely-argued, wide-ranging highlight. However, its case-study of Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* attacks "psychoanalytically inclined readings" which "all insist that Fergus did know all along" of Dil's sexual identity (p. 114): it thus ignores the most sophisticated of all such readings, Slavoj Žižek's explicitly Lacanian interpretation in *The Metastases of Enjoyment* (Verso, 1994), which argues exactly the opposite.

The book's second section, 'Practising Authorship', focuses upon High Modernism and its discontents. Only a critic as stimulating as Jerome McGann could claim that Laura Riding's *The Life of the Dead* (1933) should be "required reading in all courses on Modernism" and be partially, momentarily, convincing (p. 130). McGann's contribution on "Laura Riding and the History of Twentieth-Century Poetry" is the most engagingly written essay in the collection and the most charged with ideas. Its essentially prefatory delineation of five distinctive postmodern strands within Anglo-American twentieth-century poetry offers a useful conceptual tool for those whose dialect "is writing rather than theory, and the art of writing rather than the writing of culture" (p. 129). Whether

Riding's "parable on the Modernist scene" really stands at the head of a line of writings culminating in Kathy Acker's recognition that "the demand for an adequate mode of expression is senseless", however, seems questionable. McGann's argument in favour of Riding's repudiations of both the "absolutism of dissatisfaction" and the fetishization by the Modernist *fabbro* of poetry as an art of making is more convincing: her simultaneous insistence on the truth-function of writing and refusal of the idea of poetic adequacy does perhaps open up some sort of space within which "the truth of writing is measured in the opportunities offered by the language, rather than by an art that would come to the rescue of language" (p. 137). The suspicion remains, however, that this space ultimately resembles Tarkovsky's Zone rather than anywhere genuinely inhabitable. Whether Riding's texts, as "writing rather than theory", ultimately sustain the weight McGann would place on them is for the reader to decide. However, this is one study that sent this reader, at least, back to those texts, and to the even more rewarding rediscovery of the poems of Alan Dugan, virtuoso readings of which bookend McGann's contribution.

Elsewhere in section two, Anna Linzie argues in "'Between Two Covers with Somebody Else'" that Alice B. Toklas' "authority (or authorship) is present precisely to the extent that she herself appears to be missing from her own autobiography" (p. 160), while Susan Jones explores the tension in dance and literary Modernism between the "rather refined aesthetics" associated with Pater and Mallarmé, and a "tougher, more dramatic, masculinist aesthetics" derived from Nietzsche (p. 194). Stephen Donovan's "In the Papers", meanwhile, uses a persuasive reading of the reproduction of newspaper texts in Hardy's "An Imaginative Woman" to frame a discussion of *Ulysses*' reconciliation between Stephen's "immature resentment at the vulgar register of newspapers and their contamination by various interests" and Bloom's "easygoing tolerance of the press as a forum for the legitimate desires and needs of others" (p. 189).

Exploring the heterogeneous approaches to allegory in three South African novels of the 1970s – Sheila Fugard's *The Castaways*, André Brink's *An Instant in the Wind*, and J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* – Michael Titlestad's "Unsettled Whiteness", while insightful, floats strangely adrift – temporally, geographically, and thematically – from its companion pieces. Indeed, the editors' introduction associates Titlestad's study with section three, 'Authors on Authority', which contains musings by hypertext fiction writer Michael Joyce and poet Ann Fisher-Wirth. In "Authority as Re-Placement", Joyce elucidates – not always clearly, if often suggestively – his claim that "authorship has become modular" (p. 259). Fisher-Wirth in "The Authority of Poetry" acknowledges that her way of talking about the authority of the poem "may sound woolly, dated, hopelessly Romantic to a postmodern academic audience" (p. 277). It does, but most of all it sounds complacent, in its vague moralistic formalism and its even vaguer spiritualism, founded on an often platitudinous soup of deep ecology, Heidegger, and an egocentric desire 'to testify'. In fact, "The Authority of Poetry" provides an interesting conclusion to the collection, although probably for reasons that neither Fisher-Wirth nor the editors intended. After reading what has gone before, in particular McGann's passionately engaged defence of Riding's revolt against a fetishized Modernist notion of the poem as a free-standing linguistic form, our sensitivity to all that is stalest here is heightened, and it thus serves as a kind of gauge of what we have learned.

In conclusion, while many of these essays are incisive and articulate, the collection as a whole does little to advance our thinking on questions of authority and authorship in any one direction: if anything, it suggests that theoretical exploration of these interrelated issues has exhausted itself, or at least that further insights will emerge only through close reading of individual works, genres and schools.

---

**Anita Naciscione, *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010.**

*Daniele Franceschi*  
*Pisa, Italy*

---

The book opens with a laudatory and affectionate preface by Wolfgang Mieder who recognises the innovative character of the monograph and introduces the reader to the contents of this expanded version of the author's previous study, *Phraseological Units in Discourse: Towards Applied Stylistics* (2001). Mieder stresses the importance of research in this area of linguistics thus welcoming and praising Anita Naciscione's analysis of phraseological communication in English.

In the introduction Naciscione provides the key terminology and concepts which will appear throughout the whole work, consisting of a longer first part with 6 chapters presenting the theoretical basis for the analysis and a second part addressing applicative issues in a final chapter. A definition of PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT (PU) is given and then an initial distinction is made between the different instantiations of PUs in context with a list of features and functions which are described in greater detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 1 starts with an illustration of how discourse analysis has come about and developed over the past decades and shows that the observation of wide language chunks is also central to the study of discourse and cognitive stylistics, the broad area of research within which Naciscione's analysis is situated. The author warns the reader of the confusing variety of terminology used in the literature to refer to the concept of PU which she defines as a 'stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning' (p. 8). The main tenet of Naciscione's argument is that stylistic variations of PUs in discourse should not be viewed as violations or deviations from the norm, but as deliberate choices made to achieve specific effects. Most dictionaries of English, however, only tend to give examples of base/core use with just a few exceptions in which compilers also register PU manipulation.

In Chapter 2 Naciscione shows that PUs in fact appear not just in their base and core forms but also in a number of creative instantiations. The base form of a PU is generic, e.g. *to have a finger in every pie*, a sort of default expression on the basis of which other more elaborate formations can be constructed. While with core use changes to the base form remain insignificant, as in *He has a finger in every pie*, since they are mainly due to morphosyntactic constraints, in more "peripheral" instantiations a great deal of additions can be made, e.g. *non-governmental organisations with fingers in the environmental pie*. The shift from base/core forms to novel expressions gives rise to semantic, stylistic

and cognitive complexity which can be handled through a process of identification consisting of four interrelated phases, i.e. recognition, verification, comprehension and interpretation.

Chapter 3 presents the innovative concept of 'stylist cohesion' which, alongside the two fundamental notions of stability and figurativeness, is a characterising element of PUs. Naciscione rightly maintains that cohesion is to be observed not just between the constituents of PUs at sentence level, but also between instantial elements over larger text sequences. This makes for a complex web of coherent interconnections between the base form of a PU and its extensions that is regulated by a series of patterns responsible for meaning construction and continuity (Chapter 4). While core use is predictable, instantial use is highly dynamic as it creatively stretches the image portrayed by the PU in discourse by means of extended metaphors, puns, cleft use and allusion. Naciscione provides an amazingly rich array of examples documenting the existence of these patterns not just in contemporary English, but already in Old, Middle, Early New and Modern English. Extended metaphors (*The course of true love is said never to run true. But never did the course of any love run so jagged as that of [...]*) consist of ramified and cohesive structures of associations linked to the image provided by the base PU (*the course of true love never did run smooth*). Punning, which is based on the juxtaposition between a double level of meaning, also leads to instantial uses of PUs (e.g. "*Birds in their little nest agree*", *she said, smiling.../She knew nothing at all about birds*). But PUs are also subject to clefting (e.g. *He was a darling to have kept that list! A new leaf! She would go to [...] and get him to turn it over for her!*) or they can be retrieved only by means of allusion (e.g. *It's a choice of evils. Which do you choose? < to choose the lesser of two evils*).

Chapter 5 illustrates how PUs contribute to the text-forming process through their repetition and cumulation (i.e. reiteration of both base/core forms and instantial realisations), concurrent use ("simultaneous occurrence of several instantial changes within the framework of one PU", p.146), saturation (i.e. "interfusion of several PUs [...] in one stretch of text", p. 151) and comprehensive use (i.e. a PU encompasses a whole text) which all have a highly cohesive force. Naciscione amply demonstrates that these stylistic techniques can also be combined with any of the patterns described in Chapter 4, such as metaphors, puns, cleft use and allusion. In addition, PUs may be characterised by diminution (*an ugly duckling, a sugar daddy, a little bird told me*) producing a change in phraseological meaning by means of euphemism, meiosis, litote, hyperbole and irony.

In Chapter 6 the author analyses the aspect of visual representation of PUs in discourse which has received little attention in the literature, thus paving the way to cognitive-linguistic research studies on phraseology in multimodal texts. She provides numerous examples of illustrations taken from book covers, newspaper articles, magazines, fiction and non-fiction works as well as advertisements to show how pictures support and even extend figurative meaning construction in addition to conveying perceptual immediacy to texts. Images typically exploit the literal and metaphorical components of PUs to create visual puns which can be very effective tools of non-verbal communication.

The second part of the monograph (Chapter 7) is devoted to the discussion of the practical implications arising from the theoretical model described in the previous

chapters. Naciscione calls for a stronger attention to the stylistic aspects involved in the use of PUs in actual contexts for more effective teaching, learning, translating, lexicographic and glossographic work as well as in other applied areas such as advertising.

Wolfgang Mieder is right in emphasising the significance, originality and value of Anita Naciscione's study since it provides an extremely comprehensive and competent analysis of PUs in use, both synchronically and diachronically, which is the result of almost forty years of research in the field. What strikes the reader is the enormous amount of empirical data used, taken from the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Mark Twain, G. Bernard Shaw, D.H. Lawrence, Lewis Carroll, James Thurber, to cite just a few, in addition to examples from non-fiction texts, which adds depth and validity to what must certainly be viewed as an important study of phraseological communication in English from a cognitive perspective.

#### *References*

A. Naciscione (2001), *Phraseological Units in Discourse: Towards Applied Stylistics*. Riga: Latvian Academy of Culture.

---

**Corrie, Marilyn (ed.). 2009. *A Concise Companion to Middle English Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. i-xii; 1-268. ISBN 978-1-4051-2004-3.**

*Stefania M. Maci*  
*University of Bergamo, Italy*

---

As stated in the *Introduction* (p. 2), despite the fact that contemporary literature on Middle English (ME) continues to blur the borderlines of ME literature, i.e. ante 14<sup>th</sup> century and post 14<sup>th</sup> century, the volume is a contribution towards the preservation of the ME period as a whole. Indeed, it investigates ME literature through a different, if not unfamiliar, approach, while offering new insights and perspectives. The prominent figure of the book is, of course, Chaucer, whose writings are discussed in detail also within the ME context and other writings on this subject. Thus readers can appreciate Chaucer's stylistic features and the way in which they were accomplished via ME conventions, but also, and above all, the way in which Chaucer deviated from those conventions.

Other issues, however, are dealt with in the volume, such as the response to religious beliefs and teachings, the role of the past seen as something inseparable from the present, the way in which ME literature was both orally and verbally produced and disseminated in/from religious (monasteries) and secular (the royal court) milieux. Attention is also paid to the language of ME, its characteristics and functions, and to the way in which it was used to translate Latin and French, as well as to how ME has been perceived in present-day academic contexts, and in what direction it may be predicted to be moving.

All contributions are grouped in four sections: *Key Contents*; *The Production of Middle English Literature*; *Writing in England*; *Middle English Literature in the Post-Medieval World*, which will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

#### *Key Context*

The first contribution, "Signs and Symbols" by Barry Windeatt, investigates the belief of the existence of a correspondence between a perfect heavenly macro-cosmos and the distorted version of an earthly micro-cosmos, which determined the conviction that man's world is full of signs and symbols to be interpreted at all levels of education and literacy, prompting devout memorization and organizing (religious) knowledge. The Church elaborated a system of signs centered around the signs par excellence, i.e. Christ's body and wounds. These systems could be interpreted at different levels and by different observers. Signs of devotion, which are best exemplified in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, were not only interpreted, but also reproduced in literature, as examples can be found in the *Corpus Christi Carol*, *Piers Plowman*, and in Henryson's *The Bludy Serk*, where the image of the Knight is the sign representing Christ. Even Malory's *La Morte D'Arture* is full of symbolism and signs of "Christ-like self-sacrifice" (p. 22). The author then states how Julian of Norwich presents extraordinary signs and symbols in which commonplace notions of religious culture are re-evaluated and de-constructed by investigating the implications resulting from the interrelationship between humankind and the Incarnation.

The second chapter, "Religious Belief" by Marilyn Corrie, explores how the presence of an institutionalized Church contributed to the spread of an institutionalized faith, the only source of religious truth Christians were exposed to. In this context, medieval literature engages with Christian teachings in an attempt to represent and dramatize people's efforts to understand religious teachings both intellectually and emotionally. While texts produced by the clergy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century transmit the Church's doctrine to laymen, texts produced by laymen themselves endorse that same doctrine. Such a change is not only evident in Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, but also, from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in translations of the Bible – a practice highly opposed by the Church, which did not wish to lose its monopoly on the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Wycliff's motivation at the basis of his translation of the Bible, i.e. granting all Christians access to God's word, was influenced by *Ancrene Wisse*, *Ormulum*, and *Cursor Mundi*, as well as by such iconographic teaching means as wood carvings, stained glass windows in churches, illustrations in manuscripts, books, and what was found in the *Biblia Pauperum*. The spread of religion through the Scriptures was aided by the readings of *Patience*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, *Cursor Mundi*, *Cleanness*, the *Meditation Vitae Christi* and *Mirror*, *Piers Plowman*, *La Morte D'Arture* as well as by *Everyman*, and *The Vision* by Julian of Norwich. The basics of the faith were diffused by means of treatises, the most extraordinary of these being *Dives and Pauper* in which the Ten Commandments are discussed in a conversation between a rich and a poor man. Yet Langland's concerns about Church doctrine, which are evident in the prologue to *Piers*, are indicative of a wider critique concerning the nature of the Church's teaching, which resulted in repressive measures by the Church against the *Lollards*.

Catherine Sanok's paper, "Women and Literature", investigates the double role women played in ME literature: on the one hand, they are represented as *Mary*, on the other, as *Eve*. Women are seen, from a misogynistic perspective, as insubordinate, talkative, over-sexed, manipulative, greedy, proud, and cunning. Yet they are idealized and praised for their chastity, obedience and reserve. The misogynistic view of woman's chastity, obedience and constancy in Middle English literature reflects that of social and political stability: such works as *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Confessio Amantis*, and *Patience* all tell the same story. Indeed women's constancy, their devotion to God and to their husbands are frequently described as being "against intemperate male behavior and corrupt masculine institutions" (p. 59). If female figures are important in late medieval prose, so are female writers, most notably Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich, who brought about changes regarding the conventional representation of women.

The issue of past times is analyzed in "The Past" by Andrew Galloway. According to the author, ME literature seems obsessed with past: religion and all principles of authority and order turned to history and tradition even during periods of major change. The way the past is dealt with is not familiar if compared with today's standards; for instance, Geoffrey of Monmouth creates his pre-Saxon history of England by filling the gaps in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, thus re-cycling narrative elements from stories available in other genres. Past and present (biblical, classical and literary) were thus intermingled: *Roman de Thebes*, *Roman d'Enéas*, *Roman de Troie*, *Aeneid*, *Lazaman's Brut*, *Havelock the Dane* and *Sir Gawain* present realms of the past which were meant to give historical legitimacy to English imperial ambitions. Anglo-Saxon England is represented in such a way as to give the idea that it was an alien land.

#### *The Production of Middle English Literature*

The second section of this volume opens with a chapter entitled "Production and dissemination", where Alexandra Gillespie explains how the ME period testifies to the changes affecting the production and dissemination of literature. Oral texts were retold to such an extent that it is now difficult to distinguish them from those that were performances based on written texts.

During the ME period, reading and writing skills were separate. Only members of religious communities were taught the skill of writing because their mission was to spread God's words and administer their monastic estates or local churches. At the same time, by the late Middle-Ages, the business dealings of the emerging middle-classes in England and those of the government began to involve written records. The resulting changes affected the centralization of those activities concerning writing, and gradually influenced text production and dissemination, which moved away from the tradition of monastery, church and household.

The issue of authorship is dealt with by Jane Griffiths in "Author". The modern attitude towards authorship during the ME period is the one we currently apply to modern literary production: the importance of the author of a text is recognized in the inclusion of the author's name along with the title of the work. During the ME period, however, authorship was awarded less appreciation: authority did not reside within the



person who gave a work its textual form, but rather in some factors external to him/her. One of the most prominent expressions of this idea is the claim made by many ME authors that they were merely vessels of the word of God. Authorship also appeared in the writings of previous classical or scriptural authors: the authority of a new writer was only transferable from such sources.

#### *Writing in England*

The third part of the book is devoted to the linguistic aspects of ME and opens with a contribution by Jeremy Smith, "Language". It is an extraordinary summary of the developments of the English language by means of which readers become aware of the fact that the labels *OLD*, *MIDDLE* and *MODERN* with reference to English were established by scholars in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though they had not recognised the differences between them and though the correspondence between language-state and language-date they established is actually only approximate.

In "Translation and Adaptation", Helen Cooper explores the differences in culture and status between Latin, French and English during the ME period. These differences determined a process of adaptation in the routine translation of ME literature from one language into another so as to match the interests and capacities of the various targeted audiences. The problem of translation was basically (a) at a lexical level, as there were no bilingual dictionaries and few wordlists, and (b) at an interpretation level of both religious and romance texts, whose greatest translator remains Chaucer.

The relationship between text and event is offered by Helen Barr in "Contemporary Events", based on the assumption that our knowledge of an event is inseparable from the language describing it. In some cases (cf. Chaucer and Gower) the literary response to the event is very much in keeping with the dominant perspective of writers by means of which the rhetorical basis of events appears in formed schemes and tropes. In other cases, ME writers were commissioned to comment on contemporary events (cf. Minot and Hoccleve). Other authors (as in the case of Gower once again, and *Richard the Redeless's* anonymous author) wrote to support a cause and depicted the king as a tyrant – a clear example of the interdependence of political beliefs and the way in which human subjects and agency were produced in texts.

#### *Middle English Literature in the Post-Medieval World*

The last section of the volume comprises two chapters: "Manuscript and Modern Editions" by Daniel Wakelin, and "The Afterlife of Middle-English literature", by David Matthews.

The first contribution evidences the difficulty deriving from the impossibility of reading the original ME manuscripts: modern readers have to turn to *modern* editions of ME texts. Although such editions offer precise transcriptions, the decision to preserve the unfamiliar ME of the manuscript in every detail creates difficulties. Therefore, most editors deliberately change the texts in some way. The first manipulation is the selection of texts, then the texts themselves are changed: for instance, ME spelling is replaced by the modern equivalent spelling, errors are edited, and the same occurs for the text layout. As texts exist in more than one manuscript, editors reproduce one of the various existing

forms of these texts. Variation within the text is often removed both in critical editions and in edition reconstruction. Editors, however, do present introductions which provide sources, footnotes, summaries and other guides to aid interpretation of the text. It is, however, vital that the reader be informed of the changes made by modern editors of ME manuscripts, changes which may prevent perfect reproduction.

The last paper of the volume discusses the way in which ME literature was understood and reconceived starting from 1500, thus a problematic issue, since ME is an idea which was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Soon after 1500, ME literature was still read but was markedly declining at the end of the century. In 1600, the medieval period was regarded as a time of obscurity and superstition; for this reason, ME literature was positioned as sub-literature. During the Industrial Revolution, which established the UK as a world power, literary education was dominated by classical models. The Middle Ages and medieval literature were still regarded as primitive, but, as scholars wanted to trace back to the nation's origins, ME suited the narrative of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a process which then accelerated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ME studies in their current form were established in the period 1870-1918. The idea that the study of ME language was embraced by philology, which gave it a somewhat dry, scientific, or in other words conservative nature, a trait not open to progress, was counterclaimed with the appearance, in the 1990s, of the methodological approaches proper to gender studies, historical materialism, psychoanalytic criticism and deconstructionism applied to ME texts. How ME literature will be perceived in the future is difficult to predict. Nevertheless, ME literature will always attract scholars by its "pastness" (p. 250), difference and capacity to surprise.

Overall, the volume is extremely well constructed and elaborated. It covers all topics ranging from history to society, religion to literature, language and translation. Although I would have probably inserted the contents now in Part III before those in Part II as a background for both Parts I and IV, the volume, nevertheless, is an excellent contribution to a better understanding of ME language and literature, and provides the novice scholar with a clear indication of its historical and social context, while acting as a valid reference text for the expert researcher.

---

**Frank Schulze-Engler and Sissy Helff, eds., *Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009.**

*Konstantina Georganta*  
*University of Glasgow, Scotland*

---

*Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities* explores "transcultural" connections and trajectories joining the local and the global within four sections addressing the complexity of globalization, the realities of individual and collective lifeworlds blurring cultural boundaries, fictions that explore these realities and the pedagogical challenges stemming from the above. With "cultural artefacts", as Gisela Welz notes, travelling "further and more swiftly than ever before", the book considers the

questions that transcultural debates pose, such as the multilinguality of an “English-speaking world” and the seeming “peripherality” of transcultural phenomena. Most articles engage critically with transcultural theories and seek their limitations and the last section is very helpful for teachers of English as it provides concrete examples of transcultural potentials in the classroom.

Wolfgang Welsch’s introductory article unravels his theory of “transculturality” – a concept revisited in various contributions of the volume together with Fernando Ortiz’s “transculturation” – presenting the foreignness of a culture’s internal design and the complexity of identity configurations. Gisela Welz evaluates the challenges that a destabilizing of a culture’s containment within a nation state pose for anthropology, Virginia Richter reconsiders the contrary impulses that give rise to the “paradox of authenticity”, commodifying the exotic while excluding the represented object, and Sissy Helff presents the tension created by the clash of voices in the transcultural novel as challenging the “essentialist modes of identity construction.” Ruth Mayer focuses on the heterogeneity of different groups of “Africans” worldwide and the illusory nature of transnational alliances and Dirk Wiemann explores the blurred demarcation lines between different temporal units to show “a fusion that articulates a complex and transcultural heterogeneous time.” Peter Stummer concludes “Theoretical Perspectives” with a discussion on Indian expatriate political discourse within the USA before 9/11 and the public image of Hinduism.

The next section, “Transcultural Realities”, begins with a piece by Mike Phillips on the transgressive behaviours of writers of migration; from “multiracialism” to “multiculturalism” Phillips maps the complex concept of “black British” and highlights the need for a reconfiguration of selfhood. This is followed by discussions on the “double diaspora” of Jewish writers in English in Israel by Axel Stähler, who explores the “polydirectional processes of transculturation in a sustained encounter with cultural differences while still retaining the diasporic language”, and on the relation of the linguistic dimension of Jewish-American narrative literature with the multiformity of Jewish culture and identity by Pascal Fischer, who finds in the transcultural status of immigrant language “not *the* immigrant experience but as many immigrant experiences as there are individuals.” Edith Shillue investigates the ways in which Ireland’s largely oral, mythico-historical toponymy was represented in the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey of Ireland and Kerstin Knopf discusses how universality is coupled with an autonomous presentation of Inuit culture in the feature film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* demystifying and de-exoticizing the material portrayed. Michaela Moura-Koçoğlu presents the current identity discourse of the Māori people in Aotearoa/New Zealand as shaped by transcultural processes and subject to renegotiation and Sabrina Brancato defines Caribbean poetry as a “transcultural literary genre” springing from a combination of different cultural traditions and emerging in the work of women poets.

Mark Stein’s article “The Location of Transculture”, the first of the volume’s third section “Transcultural Fictions”, interrogates the limitations of Welsch’s concept when relating the individual’s “alleged hybridity” to culture’s transculturality. Not taking any term for granted, Stein depicts how the constant evolution of transcultural potentials denaturalizes cultural authenticity and authority in Jackie Kay’s *Trumpet* (1998). The body

as a reminder of one's origins and as persistent as the burden of a collective past and history are also themes discussed by Barbara Schaff in her article about the debut novels by two young British novelists, namely Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) and Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist* (2002), while Eva Ulrike Pirker presents the "voicelessness" of a whole generation of Black Britons as presented in Cary Phillips's novel *The Final Passage* (1985) and its later film adaptation. Nadia Butt describes the world-within-a-world in a continuous process of translation of the self in Zulfikar Ghose's semi-autobiographical novel *The Triple Mirror of the Self* (1992) and Christine Vogt-William the tension between perceptions of modernity and tradition in the ways a film and novel of the same title, *Bombay Talkie* (1970, 1994), both address the idea of a return to India "as a transcultural strategy in effecting identity negotiations." "Space as a social, economical, political, cultural and aesthetic construct and spatiality as a dynamic process of simultaneity" are discussed by Katja Sarkowsky in her article on the narrative spaces of Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) and Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* (2000), while Silke Stroh moves to intra-British margins, with an emphasis on the concept of "Celticity" and the Scottish Highlands, to find the transcultural links between ancient and modern forms of colonialism, "domestic" and overseas imperialism.

Applying the concept of transculturality to the teaching of English as a foreign language, Sabine Doff suggests a change of perspective, namely a teaching that stresses culture-general rather than culture-specific features, and investigates the roles of stereotypes in interaction between members of different cultures. Bringing the heterogeneous modern classroom into focus, Michael C. Prusse addresses the need for teachers to introduce literary texts focusing on cultural diversity, such as narratives by authors who have themselves experienced migration and resettlement, so that the pupils can in turn develop a certain sensibility in understanding otherness. Building on the emergence of a greater cultural sensitivity in the students' minds, Laurenz Volkmann suggests that teaching Hanif Kureishi's work could provide students with an up-to-date image of multicultural Britain while furthering their analytical and emotional skills. With the Indian cultural heterogeneity of caste affiliation in mind, Kanaka Bashyam Sankaran narrates how the cultural specificity of texts taught in undergraduates aged 17-20 is changing to address common issues of relevance to all societies in a globalized world. Finally, Detlev Gohrbandt argues for the transcultural potential of the cultural study of photographs – "[by] a subtle interplay of looking at and looking through, seeing and naming what I see and finding words for what I do not see, recognizing the familiar and being startled by difference and absence, the photograph leads me to a certain knowledge of Africa that I could not have discovered any other way" – and Gisela Feurle further unravels the potential of photographs for teaching and learning English in a cultural perspective by pointing out the ways in which they "undermine essentialist and static concepts of culture, which are a basis for stereotypes."

From the fiction of monolithic identities and the pseudo-representation of sustained immobile communities, the "silent subtext" function of authenticity and "eurocentric chronopolitics", to globalization's corporatism and the problem of "authenticating" one's identificatory processes, *Transcultural English Studies* poses a lot of questions and offers a valuable read to literary and cultural theorists and English

language teachers alike. Covering a wide span of cultures and presenting the challenges faced by most, the volume attests to the importance of the need to belong. As Brancato reminds us, “transculturality does not necessarily mean having mixed ancestry and carrying in oneself different cultural traditions. A transcultural subject is also a person strongly connected with a culture other than the one dominant in his/her place of birth or residence, a person, in other words, with multiple belongings.”

---

**Glennis Byron and Andrew J. Sneddon, eds. *The Body and the Book: Writings on Poetry and Sexuality*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008.**

*Claire Hélié*

*Université Paris 1, Panthéon Sorbonne, France*

---

*The Body and the Book* is a collection of seventeen academic articles selected from papers presented at the Poetry and Sexuality Conference that took place at the University of Stirling, Scotland, in July 2004. The book does not intend to be an exhaustive study, but it does aim at showing different theoretical approaches to analyse poems dealing with sexuality – be this key concept coterminous with eroticism, reproduction or gender. The collection addresses various aspects of world poetry about sexuality, including the poet’s interest in the body and its biological functions, intercourse as a language to interact with others and with tradition, and the embodiment of discursive practices. As outlined on the back cover, the essays are not “limited to a specific genre, tradition, time and place” and tackle many different topics, including Hebraic readings of *The Song of Songs*, the construction of gender in Urdu poetry written by female poets or the performance of masculinities in James Tate, John Ashbery and Judy Grahn.

Because it is so wide-ranging, the book provides an overview of ways in which we can interpret the concept of sexuality in poetry, but that is also its weakness. Indeed, it suffers from a certain disjointedness. Yet, this is counterpointed by the careful work of edition that Glennis Byron and Andrew J. Sneddon have done. Firstly the introduction they have written provides important signalling as to how to read the book: “The essays collectively argue that poetry dealing with the subject of sexuality is already about the way we look at our bodies, the world and poetic language itself.” Moreover the editors suggest that such apparent diversity is one of the strengths of the collection, allowing what they punningly call “cross-fertilization.” It is up to the reader to decide if it is enlightening to move from Ted Berrigan’s sonnets to queer pan-Indian postcolonial poetry.

The introduction should not be overlooked for another reason: Glennis Byron and Andrew J. Sneddon give an insightful overview of individual contributions to the book, which are grouped into five sections, respectively entitled “Dichotomies”, “Tradition and Revisions”, “From Virus to Vista”, “Women and Embodiment”, and “Play and Performance”. Such headings hint at the variety of critical tools that are used throughout the collection, from structuralism to gender studies to performance studies. Since the individual papers are summarised in the introduction to the book, I will focus on a few articles that I found representative of the diversity of the collection.

The first section on “Dichotomies” is rich in discussions of such poetic images as water and music and their relation with the construction of a poetic body. Richard Gwyn’s opening article, “Sexual Water: Poetry, Dionysus and the Aquatic Ape”, investigates the classical opposition between Apollo and Dionysus in terms of an opposition between the masculine and the feminine, which is deemed lethal to our Western culture. He suggests a possible solution to such dichotomy through the redemptive powers of liquids as they appear in the Dionysian myth and uses Hélène Cixous’s *écriture féminine* to build a bridge between writing and water imagery. Thus he demonstrates that the breath of “the god of fluid” “is an enlivening breath, and a call to poetry, to the erotic, and a call back to water.”

The second section on “Tradition and Revisions” delves into rituals, myths, folklore and religion to illustrate how new understandings of sexuality are achieved in their rewritings. In “The Tinker as an Erotic Icon”, C. C. Barfoot, who has edited *And Never Know the Joy: Sex and the Erotic in English Poetry* (New York: Rodopi, 2006), presents a detailed account of ballad poetry that features the figure of the tinker, a mender of metal households utensils who travelled from place to place. He quotes large chunks of poetry and invites the reader to meet this folkloric figure who found his way into women’s beds and into bawdy lines. The main interest of this article is that it gives access to juicy texts that we don’t come across very often.

The third section is entitled “From Virus to Vista” not only for the sake of a beautiful alliteration but also because it starts with the microcosm of human cells to end on the macrocosm of landscapes. All four articles try to bridge the gap between text and nature, and share an eco-conscious way to read contemporary poetry. Franca Bellarsi’s “Sex and the Body in Michael McClure’s Quest ‘For the Mammal Self’” analyses the eco-critical poetry of a Beat Generation poet, who might well be an heir to D.H. Lawrence and Arthur Miller in his refusal to evacuate sexuality from literature and in his attempt to re-sacralize the act of love.

The title of Section 3 might also hint at Walt Whitman’s “Democratic Vista” in that sexuality becomes openly politicized. The fourth section, “Women and Embodiment”, gives a more feminist view of women’s sexuality. Helen Farish’s “The ‘Interfering Flesh’ and the Search for the ‘Full Life’ in the Poetry of Louise Gluck and Sharon Olds” shows how Gluck, because she “perpetuates the tradition of an adversarial relationship to the body”, writes a poetry that doubts its own power to express the female body, whereas Olds’s poetry celebrates that power, while acknowledging the difficulty of holding such a stance.

The book ends with a section entitled “Play and Performance” which turns to performance theory and the male body. Honni van Rijswijk’s concluding article, “Judy Grahn’s Violent Feminist Camp”, stresses the role of camp humour in lesbian writing and highlights the fact that not only are gender and sexuality constructions, but they are also sites of political subversion.

What the solid research presented in this collection suffers from is the absence of a comprehensive bibliography or even individual references, forcing the reader to comb through the footnotes. Most of the index is devoted to proper names and the words that

do relate to sexuality lead us to only one article. However, the biographies of the contributors at the end of the book can be used as a recommended reading list.

Yet, a point of cohesion in the collection, and one of its main successes, is the attention given to poetic texts. Indeed poems and extracts are not only to be found in the essays but also on the title page of each section and between the articles. This serves the editors' attempt at "integrat[ing] critical and creative practice" very well. The epigraphic poetic extracts (from Donne, Dowson, *The Song of Songs*, Herrick, Field and Marlowe) not only introduce the new section but also establish connections with the other sections. Additionally, there are some twenty-five poems interspersed between the articles and sections. No less than four of them were written by Vicki Feaver, including "Judith" (Forward Poetry Prize for Best Single Poem). This is a testimony to the poetic quality of the texts chosen. There again the reader is invited to make the connections for himself, and I found it quite exhilarating to test the theories that had been exposed on the reading or, on the contrary, simply to enjoy a piece of poetry as a respite from the theoretical frames.

*The Body and the Book* deserves attention because it has shed a new light on poetry while putting to the fore little known poetries. It is also of interest because it has applied various critical approaches to a topic that is hardly ever tackled in such a direct way – that of sexuality in its many poetic forms.

---

**Julia M. Wright, *Irish Literature 1750-1900: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.**

*Frank Molloy*  
*Charles Sturt University, Australia*

---

Courses in Irish Literature have been introduced in various universities and colleges in recent decades. And not just in Ireland and Anglophone countries such as Britain, USA, Canada and Australia. Many European universities are also likely to have Irish literature as part of ever-expanding English offerings. Given the prominence more generally of W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney, such courses are usually concentrated on a study of the twentieth century. Much of the literature of the past century also engages with broader political and social issues in Ireland, thus making the Irishness of texts distinctive as well as enticing to students who might be interested in Ireland but know little about it.

Fewer institutions are likely to offer Irish literature from earlier centuries. One of the difficulties is the availability of texts. While the work of Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith and R.B. Sheridan from the eighteenth century and Oscar Wilde from the nineteenth are readily available, that would hardly be sufficient for a semester-length survey course. Julia Wright, who has compiled this comprehensive anthology, *Irish Literature 1750-1900*, clearly believes there is a demand for a text with selections from the work of over forty Irish writers. Published by Blackwell as part of a series committed to the "coverage of hitherto marginalised texts", the anthology might have been issued to meet an anticipated, or hoped-for, need rather than an actual one. It has certainly been

arranged for the student or general reader who knows little or nothing about Ireland or the writers included. A major section of the editor's introduction is a concise (yet accurate) history of Ireland from Strongbow in the twelfth century to the Home Rule movement at the end of the nineteenth, an important backdrop for the literature. In addition, she clearly situates Irish writers from this century and a half in the literary contexts of the time: the rise of satire and Gothic literature, for instance. She makes the point that many Irish writers were international in disposition, although ethnographic issues like the crisis in rural society and folklore found their way into fiction and poetry in the nineteenth century. Also to assist readers, each writer's selection is introduced by a biography of several hundred words, with a commentary on the works selected plus suggestions for further reading.

Compilers of anthologies often face two problems: who/what to include and exclude and what to do about genres such as the novel and full-length plays. On the latter point, the editor explains that novels by Maria Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, William Carleton and others have been republished in recent times. Similarly, the plays of Sheridan, Goldsmith and Wilde are very much part of the theatrical repertoire and always kept in print. Rather than providing extracts from such works, she omits them altogether - a good decision. She does make an exception for the Victorian dramatist, Dion Boucicault. Three of his once-popular Irish plays were re-issued by Dolman Press in the 1960s but are now difficult to get, so one, *Arrah-na-Pogue* (1864) is reprinted here in full.

Other writers mentioned above are not ignored. For Wilde and Goldsmith, poetry is easier to anthologise. It is also perfectly acceptable since "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1898) and "The Deserted Village" (1770), for example, are important for an understanding of the authors' work. Sheridan is represented by a short comic opera, *St Patrick's Day* (1799), a play unlikely to be revived on stage nowadays, so just of scholarly interest. As for the novelists, there are options other than three-volume works. William Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1833) is one of his most significant fictions, and "Wildgoose Lodge" is a good choice from this collection. Melodramatic it may be, but this tale of a terrorist organisation hell-bent on revenge would have resonance for readers all too aware of organised cruelty and violence in many countries today. Regrettably, the editor could not find room for Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), a seminal work in Irish fiction and indeed in English fiction more generally, due to its regional setting. With fewer than fifty pages, it could not be categorised as lengthy. While it is available elsewhere, its inclusion here would be justified on its seminal status and as a "must-read" text for any student of this period. Instead, Edgeworth is represented by a tale from a collection and two extracts from *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802).

As for the first point above - excluded writers - there is little for a reviewer to quibble about. A number of translations from eighteenth century poets who composed in Irish are included, and they add to the richness of the anthology. Regrettably, Brian Merriman's "Cúirt an Mheán-Oíche" (The Midnight Court), a celebrated Irish language poem, is not. Also surprising is the omission of any stories from Somerville and Ross's popular collection, *The Irish RM*, and of something from Bram Stoker. There was hardly room for the renowned *Dracula* (1897), but a short story, even one for children from his



1881 collection might have found a space. Also regrettable is the omission of popular ballads such as John Kells Ingram's "The Memory of the Dead", J.K. Casey's "The Rising of the Moon", P.J. McCall's "Boo-lavogue" and Ethna Carbery's "Roddy McCorley", to take the most obvious examples.

Wright's research was partly funded by Canadian research bodies, and she is based at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. So, it is perhaps no surprise that an Irish-Canadian poet is included, Thomas D'Arcy McGee. However, there appears to be no policy on diaspora writers: if one were selected, others should have been considered. This reviewer (from Australia) notes the absence of John Mitchel, John Boyle O'Reilly, Victor Daley and well-known Irish-Australian ballads ("The Wild Colonial Boy", for instance).

On the other hand, breadth in terms of genre is achieved. Rather than restricting the anthology to canonical genres - fiction, poetry, drama - Wright includes other forms. For example, a 1758 proposal on the future of the Dublin stage from Thomas Sheridan, selections from a book of letters by Oliver Goldsmith, essays by Maria Edgeworth, prefaces to works by various authors. These add to the reader's awareness of the social, political and cultural contexts, as well as providing material for possible thematic studies. To assist with this, a table of contents by theme and genre is provided.

In summary, *Irish Literature 1750-1900* would be a usable textbook for anyone taking a course in Irish Literature focused on the periods before the Celtic Revival of the late nineteenth century. Together with the introduction and commentaries on each author already referred to, the editor has prepared footnotes to assist with classical and historical allusions in particular, and a general bibliography at the conclusion. The book is handsomely produced and, a boon for any student, is available in paperback.

---

**Dawe, Gerald, Maria Johnston and Clare Wallace, eds., *Stewart Parker, Dramatis Personae & Other Writings*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2008. 121 pp.**

**Wallace, Clare (ed.), *Stewart Parker: Television Plays*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2008, 579 pp.**

*Virginie Privas-Bréauté*  
*Université Jean Moulin, Lyon 3, France*

---

As a great admirer of Stewart Parker, I was delighted to discover that part of his unpublished work has finally appeared in print. It sheds new light on the playwright, and enables more than a happy few to have access to his visionary experience at a time when Northern Ireland is finally holding its head up to the world.

*Dramatis Personae & Other Writings* is a collection of Parker's writings and thoughts about the themes that made up his own world starting from memories of his childhood to deep reflections on drama in general and Northern Irish theatre in particular. His favourite themes were Northern Ireland, drama, music and the twentieth century. Indeed, Parker was "plugged into the twentieth century" to borrow an expression from

one of his dearest friends, the Northern Irish playwright Bill Morrison.<sup>6</sup> Even though Parker was a man from Belfast, with all its historical and political resonance, Gerald Dawe, in his preface, reminds the reader that he definitely was a “man of the world.” Parker often referred to the past, his past, in his writings because he had to – given the place where he had been brought up – but it served first and foremost to shed light on the need to break down the walls imprisoning Northern Ireland and its inhabitants. When Parker developed myths – be they religious or Irish (like Deirdre in *Lost Belongings*) – he also transposed them to the twentieth century in order to show how much he refused to be confined.

Parker’s papers are not presented in a chronological order. The editors begin with, what to me, is his major work, *Dramatis Personae*. It is a memorial lecture in tribute to John Malone (the school teacher who led Parker to like drama) given at Queen’s University Belfast in 1986, a short time before the playwright died of cancer. It offers a deep reflection on the art of drama. The second part of this essay collection gathers all the other analytical prose that Parker wrote between 1970 and 1988, and which appeared either in newspapers like the *Evening Standard* and the *Irish Times*, in journals (*Fortnight*, *Theatre Ireland* and *Irish University Review*), or as introductions to other works (his own and other playwrights’ like Sam Thompson’s *Over the Bridge*, in the 1970 Dublin Gill &McMillan edition).

All of Parker’s writings are witty, a scientific mixture of serious topics tackled with humour. We often smile when we read them, but we are also seriously taught and offered new perspectives on the Northern Irish troubles, and on the world of drama. Parker must have carried out much research on theatre to produce these thoughts on Brecht, Beckett, Wilde, and Joyce. This research enabled him to set up his own theory, his own dramatic criticism from what he knew of the famous playwrights’ artistic ideologies.

Throughout these essays, we get a sense that the artist knew who he was but also that he did not seem to fit the landscape. He was born a Protestant in a Loyalist family in East Belfast, but he deeply felt Irish. He even learnt Gaelic, no matter how dangerous it was in the 1970s. He felt like a member of a lost tribe, as he admitted readily. He also freely talked about the difficulties in having a play performed in Ireland, and mainly in Northern Ireland, during the Troubles. Yet, he remained optimistic about the future of his Province, about Belfast, a place he ambivalently loved and resented at the same time. In fact, he always sought how to find wholeness in art, and more specifically how he could create a model of wholeness through his plays. For all these reasons we may say, as Parker himself said of Sam Thompson, whom he admired, that he still lives in his work. Clare Wallace would agree with this in her post-script to this volume, which she qualifies as an “act of restoration and celebration.”

To celebrate the playwright further, Clare Wallace offers another collection of Parker’s unpublished work: 6 of his 8 television plays, the remaining two – *Catchpenny Twist*, (1977) and *The Kamikaze Ground Staff Reunion Dinner* (1981) – being published

---

<sup>6</sup> Georgia McBeth, *A Plurality of Identities: Ulster Protestantism in Contemporary Northern Irish Drama*. Unpublished PhD thesis, School of Theatre, Music and Dance, University of New South Wales, August 1999, p.199.

elsewhere. In her introduction, Wallace warns the reader that these six plays – *I'm a Dreamer Montreal* (1979), *Iris in the Traffic*, *Ruby in the Rain* (1981), *Joyce in June* (1982), *Blue Money* (1984), *Radio Pictures* (1985) and *Lost Belongings* (1987) – were all televised in and for Great Britain, even though they stage Northern Irish characters and deal with Northern Irish issues. Along these lines, we may expect to find either a stereotypical or a naturalistic depiction of the Northern Irish question. Parker explains that he wrote for television because television does not substitute for theatre, but rather completes it in so far as, in his own words, television “is surely another version of the alienation effect.” It is a form of “home theatre.”

Wallace's study of Parker's TV plays enables us to grasp the impact of the Northern Irish troubles on the playwright, the effect of his background on his daily life, and on his intellectual, literary production. Each of the elements mentioned in the essay collection is here exemplified. It appears, for example, that music is a thread, and even becomes a structuring device, especially in *Lost Belongings*. Also, the influence of other playwrights becomes apparent, like that of James Joyce in *Joyce in June*, which is the most complex play in terms of contents, style, and structure. If Wallace talks of “multi-layered plots” for many of these TV plays, for *Joyce in June* it would be better to use the expression “play within the play” or meta-theatre since it offers a criticism of the creation of the Irish National Theatre by William B. Yeats and Lady Gregory filtered through the eyes of Joyce and his friends. The influence of Joyce can also be found in *Iris in the Traffic*, *Ruby in the Rain*, in so far as Parker described this play as “a condensed female variant on the Dedalus-Bloom odyssey” in Belfast.

Another great Irish dramatist and poet, William B. Yeats, is subtly mentioned in *I'm a Dreamer Montreal*. This play is set in sectarian Belfast, and its main character, Nelson Glover, is “one of Parker's beloved figures of hope and humanity.” This love story set at the back of the Troubles relates the life of a musician librarian who lives in another world, that of books and music, to resist reality. Yet, the Northern Irish Troubles are seen as having become a habit; people have got used to them. An alarm bell can ring; the bomb scare does not frighten people. An explosion is also simply announced. We get the same feeling in *Radio Pictures* when the actors are not at all surprised by cars being booby-trapped. Some people even enhance the problems voluntarily to blacken the picture.

When we read Parker's plays, more particularly *I'm a Dreamer Montreal* and *Lost Belongings*, we can hear the Northern Irish accents of the characters. This is a technique Parker handles really well, language being a key element in Parker's plays. At the end of *I'm a Dreamer Montreal*, we understand the title, which is in fact a line from a song, “I'm a Dreamer, aren't we all?” mispronounced by a bus driver, probably to give us the possible different perceptions and interpretations of the Northern Irish Troubles. Throughout *Radio Pictures*, Parker also plays a lot with words, starting with the names of the characters: “Mrs Goodbody”, “Mr Deadman”, which are humorous allusions to their personalities. We can feel here the influence of *Everyman*, the play that gave Parker a taste for drama. There are also three assistant managers called Jim, which triggers off some confusion within the play. This is highly humorous for the spectator.

*Radio Pictures* is indeed a movie about the recording of a radio play. Knowing that Parker wrote many radio plays, this illustrates his interest in commenting, giving his own viewpoint and criticism on drama, as he wrote in *Dramatis Personae*. The spectators are also informed about the inner feelings of the characters in turn, they become their *confidantes*. Parker underlines the necessity of sound and light effects on the radio, especially for radio drama, he mentions a “green light”, which was in fact the title of a radio autobiography – “self-portrait” – he recorded for the BBC in 1971. Plays for the radio facilitate imagination on the spectator’s part; they seem to act as moments to escape from reality, from the Troubles, since the play-within-the-play’s plot has nothing to do with Northern Ireland and the Troubles. It is about a man who secretly takes pictures of his female neighbour and then she discovers it. The same device was used in *Joyce in June*. Moreover, given that many of his characters are performers – especially musicians – in this play, we can definitely say that it conveys reflections on the art of theatre itself and of the role of the artist. It requires a careful attention on the reader’s/ spectator’s part, though it might be easier for the spectator than for the reader to follow the stories. Stewart Parker must have been aware of this difficulty since he gives here many stage directions on how the scenes should be acted.

The play that stands out in this volume is *Blue Money* since it does not take place in Belfast; and its plot, which is linear and addresses all kinds of people, is not about Northern Ireland either. Ireland is simply mentioned, and the (Irish) main character also goes back to Ireland at the end to escape death. If we do not acknowledge that the place is part of Parker, the link is not obvious at all. This play is highly entertaining in so far as it is about the theft of a large amount of money left in the taxi of the main character. He leaves his life behind, and in his flight, he takes the spectator/ reader with him. The story is “epic” since many adventures happen to the protagonist. This ultimately points out the impact of money on people and how it can drive them mad.

*Lost Belongings* is the longest television play subdivided in six episodes whose titles focus on one character in turn, for all the characters have operative roles. The introduction by the author – which is also published in *Stewart Parker, Dramatis Personae & Other Writings* – underlines a modern treatment of the Irish legend of Deirdre of the Sorrows. The themes Parker tackles in *Lost Belongings* are inherent to Northern Ireland, yet the Troubles are denounced, and people are encouraged to flee Ulster. As a matter of fact, the environment is not depicted as appealing at all even though Irish landscapes, outside the city, are depicted poetically and beautifully. The play is naturalistic; there is no oversimplified representation of Northern Ireland and her inhabitants. Through this play, Parker seems to aim at highlighting the social, economic and political problems of the Province. *Lost Belongings* finally relies on many parallels, the most telling being at the end of the play when we get a picture of two antipodal lives: for some people, like Deirdre, it all ends up in sadness and death, for others, with glory and life. Deirdre’s death can surely be depicted as “carnavalesque”, a genre very much talked about nowadays and which exemplifies Parker’s visionary experience. *Lost Belongings* could have been subtitled “An Irish Tragedy” for there is a curse on Deirdre’s family: everyone dies, even the baby she was carrying. All these deaths are meant to end the cycle of violence and repetition, and ultimately the conflict. Another parallel can be established

with *Pentecost*, Parker's last play, especially through the character of Lenny Harrigan and the songs he plays on his trombone in both plays as if there was a continuation between them two. Yet, while *Pentecost* ends with a highly positive note, in 1987 (coincidentally as Parker was dying), the end in *Lost Belongings* is more mitigated.

Ultimately, the recurring message in all these TV plays is compassion and trust over fear and sectarianism.

---

**Mark Rawlinson, *Pat Barker*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. ISBN 978-0230-00180-0, \$14.95**

*Mine Özyurt Kılıç*  
*Doğuş University, Turkey*

---

As a title in the *New British Fiction Series*, Rawlinson's stimulating investigation clearly situates Pat Barker in the wide landscape of contemporary British fiction. Read against the series' carefully studied "Timeline", Rawlinson's contextualisation of Barker's work as a response to certain historical experiences becomes even more visible. While offering blueprints for the political and cultural life of Britain with an account of events in about half a century – namely from Harold MacMillan's 'Winds of Change' speech in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1960 to the deaths of Henry Allingham and Harry Patch the last surviving British veterans of the Great War in 2009 – this chronology also traces the literary development of Pat Barker as one of the leading British social and cultural novelists of her generation from her debut in 1982 with *Union Street* to her latest novel *Life Class* (2007).

Like similar monographs, the book addresses Barker's works in chronological order and studies the development of key motifs and themes in her writing. Assessing Barker's influence and exploring her relationship to the times in which she lives, the introductory chapter of Part I, "Why Should We Read Pat Barker's Fiction?", provides an excellent initiation into her writing. While drawing on the opening lines of George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, Rawlinson positions Barker both as an author responding to social change and speaking to her fellow people, thus addressing the contemporary audience, and as a writer of historical fiction with a power of "far-reaching visions of the past" (p. 12). The book's initial record of Barker's historical consciousness featuring as a "striking" thread in her work is finely brought in tune with Barker's own ideas on fiction in the invigorating author interview which concludes this study. In her responses to Rawlinson's insightful queries, Barker, a novelist who studied and taught history, explains her choice of writing historical novels and maintains that: "it enables you to focus on the biological constants of human nature in a way that the contemporary novel never can. If you are going to keep the reader awake, they have to identify with the character, but if it is a historical character all kinds of things will be different and alien so you have to go for the basic biological drives of human nature" (p. 174). The opening chapter, with its sharp focus, also has a brilliant grasp of Barker's contribution to the historical novel tradition in contemporary fiction. Rawlinson sees Barker's interest in historical fiction as an "engagement with the doubly contingent status of our historical

consciousness” rather than just “a matter of metafictional narrative experiment”, and contextualises Barker’s work answering the question in his title:

We understand and re-present the past in terms of concepts which are themselves historically contingent, shaped by our historical situation. We should read Barker’s fiction because, whether it is dramatising the twentieth century past or present, it embraces us in an examination of the meanings and values by which we live. (p. 15)

This short chapter discusses the main signposts in Barker’s writing in a clear way; for instance, it holds that “her novels denote small worlds – a street, a hospital – but they connote or imply larger worlds” (p. 13). Rawlinson’s point here can be read in line with Elaine Showalter’s comment about a group of contemporary women novelists; she identifies Pat Barker, along with Maggie Gee, Hilary Mantel and Rose Tremain, as ‘Sceptical Realists’ – writers who use the realist form but raise questions about its mimetic accuracy ([www.shewrites.com/profiles/blogs/five-questions-for-5](http://www.shewrites.com/profiles/blogs/five-questions-for-5)). In other words, Rawlinson underscores the idea that Barker concentrates on small worlds to give a realistic portrayal of society on a larger scale. His important diagnosis about this attitude in Barker’s writing, that the specific becomes the vehicle of the general, follows a similar suggestion about technique as he deems the interaction between acceleration and complexity, action and introspection, a characteristic feature, a “signature”, of Barker’s fiction (p. 13). Identifying Barker’s writing as a stimulus for thought and feeling, Rawlinson highlights another important marker in her works: Barker “dissociates from feminist conceptions of both authorship and readership”, which is perceived as a sort of an immunity from “contemporary fiction’s internal ideological divisions” (p. 14). This statement evidently informs Rawlinson’s reading of Barker’s first two novels in Part II. In addition to its methodical presentation of thematic and structural components in Barker’s work, the lucid language of the monograph indicates a genuine interest in her writing, which Rawlinson poses as another reason why we should read Barker: “It reminds us of the difference between the abstractions which compose our knowledge of ourselves in the world, and the intransigent particularity of experience” (p. 17).

With this in mind, Rawlinson investigates Barker’s house of fiction built by “coherent and fully expressive” novels all scrutinizing intricate problems and values within a unique fictional world (p. 63). Accordingly, Part II engages Barker’s eleven novels in five separate chapters examining and questioning their role as works in their own right; however, careful cross-referencing to the works under discussion, as well as introductory and concluding review passages, helps the reader acquire a broad understanding of Barker’s fiction in a wider context. Along the lines of Barker’s overarching perspective, Rawlinson’s careful study explores a wide range of issues such as the First World War, violence, trauma, memory, repression, sexuality, masculinity, class, gender, art and spiritualism, to name but a few. Analysis chapters in Part II achieve a meticulous examination of images and motifs as well as narrative devices through a rich web of connections evoked by myriad references to a huge list of works from different fields and periods. With a short paragraph that cites Dante, Blake, Kafka and Samuel Hynes to elaborate on a single image (p. 140), and illustrations punctuated by allusions to numerous films, essays, novels, plays and poems, Rawlinson’s book not only

provides an impeccable analysis of Barker's work but also an inspiring reading on contemporary fiction in its own right. His impartiality punctuating the sympathetic reading of Barker's novels is made observable both in the scrupulous means of analysis and in the analysis itself. Establishing his credibility, he objectively asserts that "Barker's own representations of violence and war are immune neither from the charge that there are aspects of war she does not succeed in showing, nor from the claim that there are things she shows which she should not" (p. 153). Therefore, Rawlinson's notes on the critical reception of Barker's work – an insightful survey of scholarly works and reviews, and a brief evaluation of films based on her novels – also serve as a satisfying answer to the question, this time, 'Why should we read Rawlinson's monograph?' In brief, written by a scholar whose research focuses particularly on war literature, this monograph proves an insightful analysis of Pat Barker's work.

---

**González Moreno, Beatriz & Rigal Aragón, Margarita: *A Descent into Edgar Allan Poe and His Works: The Bicentennial*. (Bern: Peter Lang), 2010.**

*Silvia Molina Plaza*  
*Universidad Politécnica Madrid*

---

This publication brings together a group of scholars who are Poe-conscious, who are aware of the many Poe-related mysteries which are still to be unveiled. The book is organized into three principal sections. The first part, *Parallel Lives: Reading Poe*, includes three essays which analyse the similarities and differences between the lives and works of three major European writers who were, in a variety of ways, deeply linked to Poe: the British Dickens, the French Baudelaire and the Spanish Bécquer. In "Poe versus Dickens: An Ambiguous Relationship", Fernando Galván presents both writers in their historical and literary contexts within their respective national traditions, exploring their mutual influences and parallelisms, in spite of the differences in their conceptions and styles of writing; through the pages of "Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Baudelaire: The Artist as the Elite Victim", Sonya Isaak deals with Baudelaire's discovery of Edgar Allan Poe, examining the affinity between the two of them, while centring on analogies in their biographies and works; and, Ricardo Marín highlights the ties binding the works of Poe and Bécquer, shedding light upon the similarities observed concerning narrative patterns and the construction of characters and atmospheres in the works of both Romantic writers, in his article "Two Romanticisms but the Same Feeling: The Presence of Poe in Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's *Leyendas*".

In the second part, *Poe's Legacies: Detectives, the Gothic, and Science Fiction*, some of Poe's main legacies are revisited: detection, the Gothic, and Science Fiction. Here, Margarita Rigal, in "The Thousand-and-Second Dupins Created by the Father of Modern Detective Fiction", demonstrates that although, traditionally, only a few of Poe's tales are regarded as belonging to the detection genre, if his complete production is studied closely, it can be discovered that Poe's rationalization is at work in many of his stories, and that Dupin is just but one of the several "detectives" invented by him; with "Approaching the Dupin-Holmes (or Poe-Doyle) Controversy" Beatriz González explores

Poe's influence on Conan Doyle, analysing recurrent themes created by Poe and then used by Doyle, while focusing on how Doyle was accused of being a plagiarist and how he dealt with the situation; and, Ángel Mateos's "'The horrors are not to be denied': The influence of Edgar A. Poe on Ray Bradbury" presents a close reading of two short stories by Bradbury where the references to Poe are intentional with a comparative analysis of Bradbury's treatment of elements coming from Poe, providing a new insight into Bradbury's literary dialogue with one of his major influences.

The third part, Poe, Aesthetics and the Use of Language, deals with the aesthetic quality of his narratives and also offers an analysis of his work integrating Text Linguistics within the broader study of social discourses. "Poe's Poetry: Melancholy and the Picturesque", by Santiago Rodríguez, analyses the relation between the aesthetic concept of the picturesque and melancholy in Poe's poetry, investigates the shift in the idea of melancholy that took place in the late eighteenth century and demonstrates that it is a "common illness" in high-class society in Britain and pays attention to the rise of the picturesque, as opposed to the sublime, in Poe's poetry; Eduardo de Gregorio, with "Functions and values of description, metaphorical image and comparison in *Ligeia* a discursive-rhetorical study", explores the discursive-rhetorical functions of these in Edgar Alan Poe's "*Ligeia*". Finally, by way of epilogue, in "John Allan vs. Edgar Allan, or Poe Early Years", José Antonio Gurpegui inspiringly re-reads Poe's life by his tomb. In addition, an illustrated chronology, prepared by Ángel Galdón, has been included at the end of the book.

To sum up, the studies contained in this collection provide new and original insights for those interested in Poe's works covering a wide variety of topics: the reception of Poe in Great Britain, France and Spain; Poe's histories of detection, the Gothic and Science Fiction; and the aesthetic quality of his narratives from social discourses and Text Linguistic perspectives.

---

**Susana Onega, Jean Michel Ganteau.** *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary British Fiction*. Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2011.

*Marica Locatelli Preda*  
*University of Bergamo, Italy*

---

The wide selection of essays included in *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary British Fiction* represents a rich and illuminating development of Ganteau and Onega's earlier study, *The Ethical Component in Experimental British Fiction since the 1960's*. The former book, dated 2007, deals with the evolution of the ethical component in Literary Theory and its branching out into two main antagonist trends: a neohumanist ethics and a newer, Levinasian and post-Levinasian ethics. Ganteau and Onega's new volume provides a revised and expanded analysis of these trends and of the emergence of "Trauma Theory", and includes several readings of some of the best known novels in recent British literature.



An important feature of the book is the introductory chapter, which is a helpful guide into the topic, and gives a solid theoretical framework for "Trauma Studies". Among the early theoretical references, Ganteau and Onega refer to Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot and especially Freud, whose *Thoughts on War and Death*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* are seen as playing an essential role in the definition of physical and psychic trauma. Trauma Studies did not emerge as a distinct area of study until 1980's; its origin is traced back to the Yale School of Deconstruction when pupils and colleagues of Paul de Man, like Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman moved from deconstruction to trauma studies, in the aftermath of the de Man "affair".

The twelve essays collected in this volume define "trauma" according to different perspectives (memory studies, postcolonial studies, Holocaust studies) and themes (war, sexual, social traumas) and they do so in relation to important contemporary British novels. They provide close readings and in-depth scrutiny into the literary representation of trauma in novels by Martin Amis, J. G. Ballard, Pat Barker, John Boyne, Angela Carter, Eva Figes, Alan Hollinghurst, Delia Jarrett-Macauley, A.L. Kennedy, Ian McEwan, Michael Moorcock, Fay Weldon and Jeanette Winterson.

In his "Mixing Memory and Desire: Psychoanalysis, Psychology and Trauma Theory", Roger Luckhurst notes a shift in the meaning of "trauma" and its related terms ("traumatic", "traumatism", "traumatise", etc) from the early to the late nineteenth century, when these terms underwent an important transfer from the physical to the psychical sphere. An emblematic case of how trauma victims could escape physical injury, but not mental distress, was trauma caused by war experiences. Gerd Bayer's "World War II Fiction and Ethics of Trauma" reads Stephen Fry's *Making History*, John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pijama* and A.L.Kennedy's *Day* as representative of what Marianne Hirsch has called "postmemory" and shows how the literature of trauma takes ethical directions through the power of memory. Another essay, "Reading Trauma in Pat Barker's *Regeneration Trilogy*", discusses the trauma of war and memory: Lena Steveker, focusses on Paul Fussel's *The Great War and Modern Memory* and on Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady*, and explains how notions of masculinity that celebrate repression and self-control as the epitome of manly behaviour are challenged by British soldiers exposed to the intolerable horror and grief of the trenches. Relying on Hartman, Caruth and La Capra, Stef Craps sees history as a significant key element in the analysis of collective trauma: at the end of the twentieth century, after two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the process of decolonisation, moral philosophy and criticism along with literature began to give voice to the victims' history. Anne Whitehead's "Representing the Child Soldier: Trauma, Postcolonialism and Ethics in Delia Jarrett-Macauley's *Moses, Citizen and Me*" provides a close reading of the debut novel by a female British writer concerned with the recent history of the civil war in her homeland Sierra Leone. Whitehead's analysis addresses Craps and Beulens' central question about the relation between trauma and the post-colonial.

Sex trauma is analysed in at least two essays: in José M. Yebra's "A Terrible Beauty: Ethics, Aesthetics and the Trauma of Gayness in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*", and Charlie Baker's "Nobody's Meat": Revisiting Rape and Sexual Trauma through

Angela Carter". Hollinghurst's novel invites an ethical reading. Charlie Baker analyses the repeated presence of rape and sexual assault in the majority of Carter's novels. "Traumatic Realism", as defined by Luckhurst and Whitehead, is further discussed in Jacob Winnberg's "'A New Algebra': The Poetics and Ethics of Trauma in J.G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*". Ballard's novel is concerned with the traumatic impact of the society of the spectacle in which the limit of the ethical is problematic due to a fragmented representation of trauma. The trauma of doubling is the main motif in Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* as analysed by María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro: here affective doubling and the creation of anxiety are means of anticipating and attempts at pre-emptying or even displacing traumatic memories and events.

The representation and the performance of trauma effects is discussed in Susana Onega's original evocation of an "ethics of extreme troping" in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*. Winterson's description of the 'paradigm of human life' in terms of loss, lack, trauma and a tragic sense of doom reinforces the idea of dehumanisation in the postmodern condition. Winterson's protagonists are driven by a force of lack, incompleteness and sense of loss that informs her "new baroque aesthetics" of repetition and excess. The ethics of the limits, defined in relation to the work of Drucilla Cornell, is George Letissier's concern in "The Eternal Loop of Self-Torture: Ethics and Trauma in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*". McEwan's novel can be said to narrate what Shoshana Felman describes as an "unresolved experience". *Atonement* is about a survivor's lifelong guilt where the effects of culpability are given some means of expression through writing. Trauma literature thus becomes a genre in its own right, situated at the crossroads of the poetical, the historical, the clinical and the ethical.

Several essays address the crucial question of the historicity of trauma from various perspectives. As Geoffrey H. Hartman notes in "Trauma within the Limits of Literature" the symptoms of trauma can be extended to the whole of contemporary society: people are traumatised by collective shocks, anaesthetised by the media, incapable of assimilating, bearing and expressing pain. Jean Michel Ganteau's brilliant essay deals with the evocation of London as a traumatic space through a close reading of Michael Moorcock's *Mother London*. The immanence of the crisis suffocating a tentacular metropolis - where the citizens are called 'the Patients' - provides a pathological "map" of the British capital. The historicity of trauma is articulated in Angela Locatelli's "Conjunctures of Uneasiness: Trauma in Fay Weldon's *The Heart of Country* and in Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach*". Weldon's novel provides an explicit frame on the personal and social traumas caused by the gendered division of labour and the unequal distribution of wealth in Margaret Thatcher's England: uneasiness, dissolution of the subject, madness and death spell a cultural and time-specific traumatic condition. On the other hand, McEwan's fresco of the late years of the Macmillan government paints a domestic tragedy caused by reticence as a lethal social imperative. "The Ethical Clock of Trauma in Eva Figes' *Winter Journey*" by Silvia Pellicier-Ortin starts by drawing an interesting theoretical frame for Trauma Studies and refers to Stef Craps's book *Trauma and Ethics in the Novel of Graham Swift: No Short-Cuts to Salvation*. According to Freudian psychoanalysis, one of the first symptoms of trauma is the distorted perception of time: Eva Figes' novel develops in one single day and shares striking traits with Modernist

fiction and also with Henry Bergson's ideas on time and memory. Pellicier-Ortin argues that Figes gives the concept of *durée* a further turn by presenting it as disrupted by the process of trauma.

Ganteau and Onega's fruitful choice to edit a new volume on Trauma Studies shows how urgent and prominent is the need to explore the topic and its literary versions according to perspectives that take into account the "ethical turn" in the fields of literary theory and moral philosophy. This volume offers a rich and systematic analysis of a corpus of emblematic contemporary British texts from the combined perspective of trauma theory and ethics. The book, characterised by a special focus on the ethics of alterity and deconstructive ethics is of special relevance to academics and university students of contemporary British literature and culture, as well as of ethics.

---

## Announcements from the Associations

---

### Announcement from NAES

NJES is inviting scholars in the field of English Studies to submit articles for an upcoming general issue. *The Nordic Journal of English Studies* (NJES) is associated with the Nordic Association of English Studies and is published twice or three times a year. All scholars working within the field of English literature and linguistics are welcome to make submissions. New PhDs and PhD candidates are particularly encouraged to submit their work. The journal has a review section where we draw special attention to works published in the Nordic countries. The journal is peer-reviewed and listed in the MLA, EBSCO and ERIH databases. To submit your article or for more information please contact us by email at [nordic.journal@sprak.gu.se](mailto:nordic.journal@sprak.gu.se).  
Deadline for submissions: September 2012.

---

### Announcement from AIA

The Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (AIA) is now on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/AIA-Associazione-italiana-di-anglistica/339050846138652#>.

Please post any calls for papers or interesting events and links which might be of interest to our Italian members.

---