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REVIEW

Text — Culture — Reception: Cross Cultural Aspects of English Studies. Ed. Rüdiger Ahrens and Heinz Antor. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universität Verlag, 1992.

Breaking with a tradition of "Anglistik" publications in German, the present volume offers the philologist a most interesting collection of essays in English on a topic of increasing momentum, described by the editors as "the implications of the international status and the cross-cultural functions of the English language and the literature it has produced." That is, the essays analyse from various pespectives the genesis and evolution of an interesting contemporary phenomenon, the reception, "assimilation and accommodation" (Bredella, pp. 475-522) of English language, literature and culture by the rest of the world.

The volume consists of a Preface, a Postscript and twenty-eight essays, covering four main areas: 1) the theoretical foundations of international linguistic and literary comprehension; 2) the relationship of cultural studies and the teaching of English; 3) the geographical stratification of English both in the British Isles and in the rest of the world; and 4) a number of monographic British and American literary case studies undertaken from a cross-cultural perspective.

The width of the subject-matter under discussion, as well as the variety of approaches advanced by the different contributors at first sight seem rather overwhelming to the reader. However, the major claim of the book is that it manages to hold the reader's attention from beginning to end, not only because the essays are interesting, tackling, as they do, questions that are in the mind of every contemporary philologist, but also precisely because, set against each other, they offer that plural perspective that Vernon W. Gras considers to be the basic tenet of our postmodernist era: "the loss of all centered discourse with the corollaries that standpoints are inescapably historical and they must remain dialogical and open-ended" (p. 555).

Thus, for instance, Henry G. Widdowson defends the teaching of English from what can be described as a typically "linguistic" perspective, insisting that "one can

learn and use a language in dissociation from its past or present cultural affinities" (p. 154), and that "a language can be symbolically and indexically dissociated from any particular cultural affiliation" (p. 160), while Mark Roberts takes up a "philologic" position, rejecting what he considers to be two widespread and damaging view-points, namely, that "English can be appropriately taught to non-native speakers without the study of literature" and that, "the spoken language has a superiority over the written" (p. 135). In his turn, Jürgen Klein forcefully puts forward what can be described as a "continental" —as opposed to a "British"—position when he defends the integration of ""Landeskunde" into the curriculum" (p. 58) of the foreign learner of English, while David Pickett advocates the study of literature for its own sake, rejecting two widespread myths that condition its teaching. The first one, is mostly entertained by linguists, and stems from the belief that literature should be taught in order to improve the linguistic proficiency of the foreign student because literature offers the "best" possible kind of language. However, as David Pickett points out,"[l]anguage is constantly changing. So are our attributions of goodness or badness to writing and they derive from non-linguistic criteria"(p. 117)

The second myth, defended by Bateson, Leavis and the New Critics in general, confuses "moral worth" and "literary worth" and justifies the teaching of literature primarily as a way of improving the moral status of the reader. Value, however, "is not something which inheres in objects, be they literary or material; it is not an inalienable property of things. On the contrary, it is something which human beings attribute to things; it is ultimately arbitrary (p. 111). Pickett, therefore, concludes that the value of teaching literature for language acquisition "is much less than it is often claimed [...] Unless it is worth teaching for its own sake, it will not be worth teaching for its side-effects " (p. 133).

The proposal of another essayist, Christoph Bode, consists in specifying "what literature, and poetry in particular, can contribute to the teaching of English as a foreign language" (p. 166). He subsequently rejects the mere "handmaid" function (p. 169) often allotted to literature in the teaching of language, and denounces the kind of "positivistic explanation" (p. 177) that often passes for literary criticism. Bode chooses as example of poor critical practice Hans-Joachim Zimmermann's "explicating prose paraphrase" of John Betjeman's "Devonshire Street W. 1" which he criticizes heavily, offering for comparison his own hermeneutic reading of the poem, drawn on the basic assumption that "[t]o read a text as a literary one is to be aware of its symbolic dimension, of its surplus of meaning" (p. 179). Consequently, in Bode's opinion, *"Literature contributes best to foreign language teaching when it is taught as literature"* (emphasis in the original, p. 181).

Pickett's and Bode's view-points stand in sharp opposition to the proposals forwarded by Werner Delanoy (pp. 211-231), John Fletcher (pp. 233-243), R. K Gupta (pp. 391-397), and Norman F. Blake (431-445) who have no qualms in

advocating the use of literary texts — and even of simplified and specially adapted versions of them, in the case of Delanoy — for the purpose of teaching English to foreign students.

The remaining "Literary Case Studies" are practical attempts at examining specific literary texts from a cross-cultural perspective. In the English section, for instance, Nigel Alexander and Rosalind King (pp. 401-409) propose the improvement of the performance of Shakespearian plays through the "knowledge of the plays and published dramatic opinions and theories of Bertold Brecht [...] and the treatises on acting by Zeami — [the Japanese] actor, dancer, playwright and producer (p. 401), while Heinz Antor (411- 429) offers a hermeneutic reading of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, and Franz M. Kuna (pp. 447-472) describes the problems of reception and transformation in film versions of English literary works of the fifties.

The American "Literary Case Studies" section opens up with Lothar Bredella's analysis (pp. 475-521) of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, in the context of a most interesting theoretical speculation on what he takes to be the two basic stages of intercultural understanding: assimilation and accommodation. This section also includes an analysis by Vernon Gras (555-569) of Faulkner's *Light in August* from the perspective of reception theory, Monika Hoffarth-Zelloe's (570-598) study of the subversive use of white stereotypes in black American literature in general and in the writings of Tony Morrison in particular, and an illuminating essay by Peter Freese (523-553) on the translation into German and reception in Germany of novels like Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*, belonging to that new American literary trend, the "MTV novels," celebrated by the critics as "highly accomplished expressions of a changed *Zeitgeist* ." (p. 523).

The two "Geographical Stratification" sections are much more descriptive than ideological or polemical. They include interesting information about the state of minority languages in the United Kingdom and Ireland and about the linguistic and cultural phenomena deriving from the overlapping of the British and the national cultural identities of Australia, Canada and Asia in general and of Japan in particular. Especially informative are the essays written by Larry Smith and Sandra Tawake (pp. 351-364) describing the development of "a large body of literature written in English by non-native speakers [in] the last five or six decades" (p. 352), and by Wimal Dissanayake (365-389) explaining the profound changes witnessed during the last twenty-five years in Indonesian intellectual and artistic life "closely paralleling the changes taking place in the wider political and social environment" (p. 366).

The volume closes with a Postcript reproducing Peter Strevens' paper delivered at the *États Généraux des Langues* in Paris (28 April 1989). This is a most interesting essay which outlines the evolution in Europe from virtual overall monolingualism in the preceding centuries to the present-day multilingualism, itself the consequence of increasing social mobility and the improvement in the effectiveness of teaching.

Strevens foresees the continuation of this trend towards multilingualism: "in 200 years not only will vastly more people speak English than today, but many more will speak Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish, too [...] The future citizen of multilingual Europe will regard it as normal, by the time of reaching middle age, to have a reasonable practical command of at least one foreign language, and commonly of two or three" (pp. 605 and 607). Strevens bases this optimistic prediction on "the *professionalization* of language teaching [for] when language teaching is truly *professional* it is consistently *successful* " (emphasis in the original, pp. 608-9). This desired professionalization will be the result of the combined efforts of both the different national Ministeries of Education and the teachers themselves:

> Ministers of Education and other employers will treat language teachers as members of a profession, not just as people in an occupation, by providing a proper career structure, by paying salaries appropriate to a profession, by rewarding excellence, encouraging research and development and giving allowances of time and money to enable teachers to upgrade their ideas. On their side, teachers will accept that initial and in-service training —career long— are essential marks of a profession, and that the privilege of membership of a profession entail continuing to develop their skills and knowledge, for example through active participation in their professional teachers' association. And when they have attained the dignity of being part of a profession, then and only then can teachers hope to influence government policy and administration in their field. (p. 609)

The undeniable quality and interest of the essays compiled in the volume under discussion is good proof that this degree of desired professionalization is not just —as Peter Strevens ironically presents it— a "Nostradamus Philogiossius Strevens" prediction (p. 605), but rather a most encouraging fact for present-day English philologists.

Review by Susana ONEGA

ABSTRACTS

CICLOS CREATIVOS EN LA POESÍA DE JAMES JOYCE

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This essay attempts to distinguish between two considerably different creative impulses within Joyce's poetry that give rise to his book *Chamber Music* (1907) and *Pomes Penyeach* (1927). We analyse the former as a conscious and youthful effort on Joyce's part to make his name as a poet. Hence, his care for style, contrived versification, purity of diction, and impersonality under the welcome influence of the Elizabethan collections of lyrical verse, Shakespeare's dramatic work, and the biblical Song of Songs. After twenty years of struggle and some bitter disappointments, Joyce's poetical mood altered noticeably. *Pomes Penyeach* is not the result of an intent purpose to compose a systematic book, but rather a collection of occasional poems directly derived from his experience. His formal rigour also relaxed, and personal confession replaced stylistic aloofness. In conclusion, both books seem to be poles apart, save for a common denominator: the stubborn intensity with which they incorporate material borrowed from Shakespeare, the Bible, Dante, Nashe, and others.

THE ROLE OF EPISTEMIC MODALITY IN ENGLISH POLITENESS STRATEGIES

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The number of recent linguistics works on politeness has given evidence that this feature accounts for the way language is used to a greater extent than it would seem at first sight. This paper will prove the pervasive influence of politeness on epistemic