

Foreword

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The relationship between Literature, Language and Politics has always been and continues to be at the very heart of Ronald Paul's long and prolific career as a researcher. His PhD dissertation, *'Fire in Our Hearts': A Study of the Portrayal of Youth in a Selection of Post-war British Working-class Fiction* (1982), already provides evidence of this through bringing scholarly attention to working-class writers who had not been the focus of much academic study at that time and showing how the marginalized characters that populate their stories attempted to not only survive but also find ways to empower themselves in a world where they were at best overlooked and at worst demonized. Ron's scholarly practice can therefore be characterized as a form of 'recherche engagée,' in which he aims to show the emancipatory potential of literature to transform consciousness not least by providing readers with alternative perspectives from the ones they are accustomed to. While still very much focused on working-class literature, Ron's more recent publications have increasingly explored issues of intersectionality, looking at how race, gender, and sexuality interact with class to both form, enable and constrain the life and choices of individuals as well as the way these are represented in fiction. This concern was already evident in his early work on the novels of Pat Barker—about which he co-edited a collection of essays, *Critical Perspectives on Pat Barker*, in 2005—and can also be seen in articles on, for example, Olaudah Equiano, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Agnes Owens, or Buchi Emecheta. Other areas of special interest to Ron include the Romantic poets, Shelley especially, Russian literature, and the work—both fictional and philosophical—of two of the most famous French existentialist philosophers, namely, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Besides focusing on his own research, Ron also acted as editor for the English literature section of *Moderna Språk* for 20 years. His association with what is (one of) the oldest journal in the world is something Ron took pride in. He was in the editorial team, together with Mats Mobärg for English linguistics, when the journal celebrated its

100th anniversary in 2006. For that occasion, they, as well as their co-editors in other languages, managed to attract a number of illustrious scholars and writers for the two anniversary issues. Terry Eagleton, for instance, contributed an article on Jacques Derrida, who had then recently passed away. Other distinguished contributors to these special anniversary issues included Sheila Rowbotham, Janice Kulyk Keefer, Dennis Brutus and Marshall Berman for literature and cultural studies and David Crystal, Howard Giles, as well as Jean Aitchison for linguistics. One thing Ron especially liked in working with *Moderna Språk* was the fact that the journal fulfilled a democratic function in so far as its readership originally mainly consisted of teachers of modern languages across the whole of Sweden. The journal, published by Språklärarnas riksförbund, used to be distributed to all the teachers who were members of the association.

On being promoted as Professor, Ron also joined the editorial committee for *Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis*, a publication series specializing in publishing PhD dissertations. A few Festschriften have also been published by *Acta* over the years. While our first thought was to carry on with this tradition, the fact that Ron is still one of the editors meant that we had to think of another way of getting this collection published so as not to put Ron in the situation of having to approve the publication of his own Festschrift. This, however, turned out to be a blessing in disguise as we are so proud and happy for the collection to be published as a special issue of the *Nordic Journal English Studies*, thereby allowing these rich, stimulating and original contributions to reach a greater number of readers.

This brief introduction to Ron's career in academia would not be complete without also mentioning what he has meant for the people he has worked closely with all these years. Some of the traits that have characterized his presence in the Departments of English and of Languages and Literatures are his (sometimes cheeky) sense of humour, as well as his ability to create a sense of collective identity and community at work. The latter can be exemplified by the annual raffle he organized (until 2017) ahead of the announcement of the Nobel Prize for Literature with the winner charged to buy cake for the rest of us, as well as the central part he played in organizing the English Christmas Party every year. Ron has been and continues to be a respected and greatly appreciated colleague, not least for his keenness to engage anyone—staff

and students alike—in lively conversations on topics high or low. He is also always eager to share his knowledge with anyone ready to listen. Ron is also a careful listener, not least of his undergraduate students, a number of whom (myself included) he has encouraged over the years to reach for, if not the sky, at least a career in academia, showing us not only that it was within reach but also that it was what we were meant to do. It is therefore our hope that this collection can be a way for us to show how much he means to all of us.

The articles collected in this special issue in honour of Ron span different fields, in particular literary studies, linguistics and cultural studies, but they all share a commitment to exploring and understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the power relations involved in them. The contributions can be divided into three broad sections. The first one, 'Aesthetics and Politics,' include five articles. The first two, one by John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson and the other by Gerald Porter, very directly connect to the core interest in Ron's research, namely, working-class literature and culture. In 'Reexamining the Proletarian Fictional Autobiography: Class, Gender and Aesthetics in Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth*,' Lennon and Nilsson revisit Agnes Smedley's novel through an exploration of its treatment of generic conventions and the consequences that focusing on a female character has for the male-dominated tradition from which it emerges. In analyzing the novel, Lennon and Nilsson also problematize some of the critical blind spots of previous scholars of the genre, which include an often-unexamined nationalism and ethnocentrism—something they also claim Smedley herself was guilty of. In comparing Smedley's *Daughter of Earth* and Moa Martinson's own take on the genre, *Mor gifter sig*, they show a way out of this critical impasse.

Gerald Porter's contribution, 'Resistance Through Song,' focuses on a genre that is difficult to explore because of the lack of records available, namely, the songs created and sung by workers while at work. Porter looks in particular at the songs of the 'Navvies,' who came to Britain from Ireland in the nineteenth century. A few of these songs are analysed in relation, not least, to their subversive potential and their articulations of 'counter-values.' The article ends on a discussion of how songs performed by workers on a demonstration in Glasgow in the 1980s echoed the tradition developed by Navvies in the previous century.

The third article in this first section is Wade Bell's "The new messiah of the battlefields": The Body as Discursive Strategy in Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*.' In it, Bell investigates the different functions the body plays in Trumbo's famous anti-war novel in which a soldier learns to communicate and express himself again after he has lost all his limbs, as well as almost all of his senses, in the war. Bell uses the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to show how the novel connects experience and consciousness with embodiment as well as that of Mikhail Bakhtin to investigate the radical potential of the protagonist's mutilated body to be turned into a political weapon. It is especially fitting that Bell's article should be published as part of this tribute to Ron since he started working on this project as an MA student under Ron's supervision. Ron was the one pointing Bell in the direction of Merleau-Ponty, something which helped open up Trumbo's text to new interpretative possibilities and which started Wade's long-lasting interest in the work of the French phenomenologist who figures also prominently in his PhD dissertation.

My own contribution to Ron's Festschrift examines four autobiographies by activists associated with the Black Panther Party through the prism of the conventions of crime fiction which I show these texts sometimes heavily rely on. A central question I investigate is whether the often-conservative values of the genre impede the radical political message of these activists or whether they are able to turn it to their advantage in putting forward a devastating critique of the U.S. justice system. In writing this essay I have benefitted greatly from Ron's feedback. I hope, however, that he will be surprised to find that my avidity in getting it finished by October this year was so it could be included in this collection in his honour.

The final article in the section on 'Aesthetics and Politics' is Laura Routledge's "Happeners...don't merely dig the scene, they make it": The Social Meaning of the Work of Art in Allan Kaprow's Happenings.' Routledge's study considers a number of Kaprow's works in light of Peter Bürger's theories about the avant-garde. A question of particular interest to Routledge is the changing understanding of the function of art at the time when Kaprow created and performed his happenings. One notion that was especially being critiqued through Kaprow's specific brand of pop art, Routledge shows, is that of the autonomy of the artist

and of the work of art, leading to a complete reconfiguration of the role of the spectator and a 'reintegrat[ion of] art into the praxis of life.'

Part II, 'Gender and Sexual Politics,' opens with Anna Fåhraeus' 'Cultural Materialism in the Production and Distribution of Exploitative Lesbian Film: An Historical Case Study of *Children of Loneliness* (1935),' in which she relies on the theories and methods developed by Raymond Williams to study this little-known movie from the 1930s. While the movie itself is lost, Fåhraeus shows how the traces it left behind—such as reviews and adverts—can be interrogated in terms of the ideological messages they promoted about homosexuality. By comparing adverts used in the promotion of the film in the 30s to the ones announcing new screenings of it in the 50s, Fåhraeus shows, in particular, the shift that discourses on homosexuality underwent in that period and looks at how residual and emergent discourses coexist and sometimes contradict one another in these texts.

The next two contributions both deal with the work of D. H. Lawrence. In the first one, Margrét Gunnarsdóttir Champion reads *Lady Chatterley's Lover* through the lens of affect theory and in particular Brian Massumi's notion of 'pre-signifying affect.' She explores the ways in which the novel not only provides a radical critique of 'the post-war capitalist nation and hegemonic machine culture' but also sketches an alternative to it. Through a positive re-valuation of the body and of nature, Gunnarsdóttir Champion argues, Lawrence reignites the 'vital principles of life' and promotes more humane and 'life-sustaining' affects such as 'tenderness, pleasure, sorrow, courage and passion.'

In her own critical engagement with Lawrence's work, Fereshteh Zangenehpour examines the gender politics at the heart of two of his novels, *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow*. The way in which some feminists have connected gender equality to the idea of sameness between the sexes has, according to Zangenehpour, led to an unjust treatment of Lawrence which this article wishes to rectify. Reading these novels alongside the work of key 'French Feminists' such as Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous allows Zangenehpour to show the radical potential these works contain for imagining relationships between women and men based on values of mutual love and respect.

Irish literature is the focus of the next two articles in this section. In 'Women writers of The Troubles,' Britta Olinder delves into the work of a number of female novelists, short story writers, playwrights and poets

to see how they have dealt with the violent conflicts that have characterized modern Northern-Irish politics. War and conflicts have often been considered a specifically masculine domain but Olinder shows that just as women are not spared in these conflicts and have their own experiences of them, they also bring these experiences to bear in their literary work. Answering Robert Graecen's question 'Does violence stimulate creativity?' in the positive when it comes to women writers, Olinder nonetheless shows that the concerns and issues at the heart of their work differ at times from the ones in their male counterparts.

The following article by Åke Persson examines Sebastian Barry's 2008 novel *The Secret Scripture*. In this novel, Barry relates the life of Roseanne Clear/McNulty, who has spent the better part of her life locked up in a mental asylum. Persson contextualizes this novel in relation to the growing public scandal about how mental institutions have historically been used in Ireland as a means 'to excise [] individual[s] perceived to be a threat to the social order.' Relying on Michel Foucault *Madness and Civilization* (1989), Persson points to the ways in which the main protagonist is effectively neutralized by the political and religious forces that dominated Irish society at the time, and how Barry uses her story to put forward a critique of the conditions in which the Republic of Ireland took form as a new independent nation.

The last article in this section on 'Gender and Sexual Politics' is Helena Bergmann's 'Aiming for a Middle Ground: Mary Hays's *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* and the Challenge of Perspective.' Written around the same time as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Hays's manifesto does not hold the same canonical status and is also thus lesser-known. As Bergmann shows, it also uses rather different strategies in order to put its gender egalitarian arguments across. These strategies are the focus of Bergmann's study in which she shows that Hays 'assume[d] a posture of humility' in order to persuade the male readers that were the target of her manifesto.

The third and final section of this special issue focuses on the theme of 'Nations, Borders, and Beyond.' In the first contribution in this section, Mats Mobärg investigates the uses of the word 'land'—compared to that of the words 'nation' and 'country'—in the work of several English authors including William Shakespeare, Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf. As Mobärg points out, much insight can be gained by looking closely at the occurrences of such 'contentious political-cultural

concepts' as well as the context in which they appear. Such a historical survey of a word often used as a synonym for 'nation' also makes visible the social and political changes England has undergone in the period under study.

In the next article, 'Names on Alsatian Gravestones as Mirrors of Politics and Identities,' Katharina Vajta is also interested in the relationship between language and politics and in particular the effects of fluctuating language policies in Alsace, a region that 'changed hands'—between France and Germany—multiple times in recent history. Vajta is especially interested in how this situation affected naming practices in the area and the place she investigates for evidence of these practices is the cemetery. While successive and contradictory official language policies significantly affected how parents chose to name their children, Vajta shows that a number of transgressions were also visible from the engravings on tombstones. Looking at the names on more recent graves, Vajta also points out how Alsatian society is changing in other ways, showing signs of 'increasing mobility' among its inhabitants.

The idea of the nation is also in focus in Joe Kennedy's article, "'Of course, it didn't work—that kind of scheme never does": Scotland, the Nordic Imaginary, and the Mid-Twentieth-Century Thriller.' Through an analysis of two crime novels, namely, John Buchan's *The Island of Sheep* (1936) and Eric Linklater's *The Dark of Summer* (1956), Kennedy explores the kind of political work these literary texts perform when using Nordic imaginary in their conception of Scotland as a nation. As Kennedy points out, such an investigation is especially relevant in the current political context when the Scottish Nationalist Party is redoubling its effort to make a case for Scotland's independence from England, attempting to redefine the nation in the process. Kennedy, however, shows the dangers lurking in the project of constructing a Nordicised cultural identity for Scotland.

Ingmar Söhrman's contribution, 'Scandinavian Transformations of *Dracula*,' raises a number of intriguing questions about the mysterious versions of *Dracula* that appeared in Icelandic and Swedish newspapers very soon after the publication of Stoker's famous Gothic novel. While resembling Stoker's story in many ways, the Scandinavian versions also diverge on a number of points and their origins remain largely unknown. Söhrman takes a closer look at these texts to attempt to solve the mystery, comparing them, for instance, to earlier drafts Stoker left

behind and looking into other known sources in order to see if authorship can be ascertained. One curious aspect Söhrman points to in these versions is the fact that the count is ascribed ‘fascistic ambitions,’ something that does not figure at all in Stoker’s text. In the final part of his article, Söhrman also looks at how new sources on Stoker and *Dracula* keep appearing, which both further as well as complicate our understanding of this classic of English literature.

The final article in this collection, Gunnar Bergh and Sölve Ohlander’s ‘From National to Global Obsession: Football and Football English in the Superdiverse 21st Century,’ takes us beyond the boundaries of nation-states and looks at the power of football to break down barriers between different kinds of social groups. Bergh and Ohlander start by looking at the history of football in order to explain the global success it enjoys today as well as the reasons why football English can be considered a special ‘register of Global English.’ Football language, they argue, is key in the construction of an (“imagined”) global community’ and has the potential to ‘serve as a communicative link across barriers related to nationality, culture and language.’