# Reviews and Notices

*Carter, Ronald and McCarthy, Michael*, **Exploring Spoken English.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997. ISBN 0 521 56860 9 (paperback). Price: £10.50.

*Exploring Spoken English* makes it possible for a wide audience to get better acquainted with different aspects of spoken English, especially its grammar and vocabulary. The data come from an applied linguistics project named CANCODE (Cambridge-Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English) which was initiated with the view of obtaining data of conversational English and learning more about the differences and distinctions between spoken and written English.

Research on discourse and on spoken English has generally been late in reaching the classroom. Many teachers who have used Crystal and Davy's excellent little book *Advanced Conversational English* (1975) in the classroom have wished for an up-to-date guide to natural spoken English representing a fuller range of genres of speech.

The data are drawn from a wide variety of settings and contexts in order to give a full picture of how people use language for spoken communication. The book covers a broad range of 'speech genres' and their characteristic linguistic features. Deixis (the use of *this* and *that*) is, for example, frequent in language-in-action genres (language generated by actions such as cooking, packing, etc) and the frequency of discourse markers in service encounters (buying and selling) reflects the need to mark different stages of the transaction.

There is a spread of age among speakers (the youngest informant is aged 2); speakers have different professions, and interests. A balance of gender makes it possible to compare male and female stylistic differences (although no such differences were found).We can listen to small talk between familiars and more structured discourse between teacher and pupils in the classroom.

We can listen to the recordings as well as look at the transcriptions since each of the twenty texts is available on an accompanying cassette. The conversations have been recorded naturally rather than in a studio setting. When the recorded text was difficult to understand, a reenacted version has been added onto the tape. The transcription marks overlaps, speaker turns and backchannel responses, restarts, long pauses and various spoken 'noises' (mm, etc) but not for instance the segmentation into tone units ('chunks'). The absence of prosodic marking, and the use of capitals to mark utterance beginnings gives the rendering of spoken English a somewhat written flavour. The authors might have succeeded even better in bringing home the distinctions between speech and writing if they had given both an orthographic and a prosodic transcription of the texts.

The book is classrooom-ready. Each chapter starts with an 'activity-based exploration of some feature' from the text followed by a short introduction describing the setting and the participants. There is a line-by-line commentary after the transcription providing the cultural and linguistic notes on the text.

An additional bonus is a glossary which defines key notions from discourse analysis and ethnomethodological conversation analysis and adds a spoken perspective to the description of grammatical phenomena. Ellipsis, fixed expressions ('prefabs'), tag questions, modality, tails ('She's a really good actress, Clare') are grammatical phenomena in spoken language which are best understood in a discoursal perspective. The list could no doubt have included more terms (and entries such as 'adverb' have been left out). Moreover, discourse analytic notions such as 'speech act', 'turn', 'turntaking', 'exchange', etc seem to be too important to be relegated to the line-by-line notes.

The book provides a rich source of material for the study of spoken English. It can be recommended for the non-native undergraduate student who needs to gain a better understanding of the grammatical and lexical differences between spoken and written English. The advanced native and non-native student can also profit from the references to the growing literature on spoken English and discourse. However some of the ground-breaking works in the field of English discourse analysis are missing from this list such as Coulthard (1977) and Crystal and Davy (1969) and no doubt students and teachers alike may profit from Leech and Svartvik's *A Communicative Grammar of English* (1994).

*Karin Aijmer*

**References**
Coulthard, M. 1977. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis.* London: Longman
Crystal, D. & D. Davy. 1969. *Investigating English Style.* London: Longman
Crystal, D. & D. Davy. 1975. *Advanced Conversational English.* London: Longman
Leech, G. & J. Svartvik. 1994 *A Communicative Grammar of English.* London: Longman. 2nd edition.

*Knowles, Gerry, Wichmann, Anne and Alderson, Peter (eds.).* **Working with speech**. London and New York: Longman. 1996. ISBN 0 582 04537 9. Price (paperback): £35.

In recent years there has been a rapid increase in the number of new corpora. The fashionable slogan 'Big is beautiful' is reflected in the production of very large corpora such as the dynamic monitor corpus 'Bank of English' or the 100-million-word British National Corpus. However the Spoken English Corpus (SEC) does not try to outsize other corpora on the market. With its 50,000 words it is small even in comparison with other spoken corpora such as the London-Lund Corpus. Like the London-Lund Corpus it contains a prosodic transcription of speech matched by a grammatically tagged version. However, in addition, the original audio version is provided, which makes it possible to go back to the recordings from which the transcriptions have been derived. The corpus project and the different versions of the corpus are described in more detail in Chapter 2 (Lita Taylor).

The SEC was compiled at Lancaster University in collaboration with IBM UK Scientific Research at Winchester. The cooperation reflects the current interest in improving the output of synthesis systems by analysing speech corpora. The corpus material consists of public prepared speech which was thought to be the genre most suited for the investigation of prosodic features and their correlation with syntactic features in the context of speech-to-text systems. The texts included represent, for instance, news broadcasts, lectures for the public, religious broadcasts and poetry readings.

The contributors to the volume who all took an active part in the corpus compilation discuss various aspects of working with spoken language, in particular the prosodic analysis. There are both general articles presenting research on the basis of corpus analysis and more technical ones concerned with the applications of spoken corpus data in speech synthesis.

In Chapter 1, Briony Williams discusses grammatical annotation, categories of spoken text to be collected and the presentation of the data. There are several different ways of transcribing spoken language. The prosodic system in the SEC was chosen because it was simple and and practical for transcribing large amounts of data. In Chapter 3 Briony Williams discusses the general nature of a prosodic transcription. The chapter is a useful chronological overview of different transcription systems mirroring the development from iconic formulations of the speech chain to the pitch accent transcription system used by Pierrehumbert.

In Chapter 4, the transcriptions of two trained phoneticians (Briony Williams and Gerry Knowles) were compared. There were some areas of fuzziness or disagreement which are analysed in more detail in Chapter 5 from one of the transcribers' point of view (Gerry Knowles).

Of the publicly available spoken corpora, only the London-Lund Corpus and the SEC have been transcribed prosodically. The transcription system in the SEC is similar to the system introduced by Crystal (1969) which is used in the LLC, since it concentrates on accented syllables rather than on contours. This makes it possible to compare tonal patterns. For example, tone group length was similar in the two corpora but rise and level tones were distributed differently (Pickering in Chapter 6).

The analysis of the prosodic transcription is approached from different points of view. The relation between punctuation in writing and prosody, which is an important component of a speech synthesis system, is investigated by Lita Taylor (Chapter 7). There was no one-to-one link between punctuation marks and the use of intonation, which was not surprising since writers are notoriously inconsistent in their use of punctuation.

Gerry Knowles (Chapter 8) describes a technique for how the tone groups can be generated from a merger of pre-assembled blocks. An understanding of how this is done is, for instance, important when one reads aloud.

A prosodically transcribed corpus can also be used for the analysis of 'prosodic styles'. Anne Wichmann (Chapter 9) shows that a liturgical text and a poetry reading have different prosodic features which can be related to the roles of the participants in the interaction and the relationship between them.

The last three chapters develop and test a prosodic component based on the SEC as a part of a text-to-speech system. As is well-known, synthesised speech sounds unnatural and machine-like. However the quality could be improved if we use the SEC to produce rules predicting the appropriate stress patterns and intonation (Chapter 10, Williams and Alderson). The experimental reseach carried out on the basis of the SEC also involves native reactions to prosodic modifications of what is said and temporal or rhythmic aspects of speech in the SEC (Chapters 11 and 12).

The SEC has also been used by researchers for other purposes than speech technology. In 1991, the project 'Public speaking' was started by Jan Svartvik in Lund to investigate prosodic and rhetorical features characterising good professional speaking using the Spoken English Corpus as primary material. There is, for example, a long-standing need among language teachers to find out more about rhythm and about intonantion patterns in order to teach students to communicate more efficiently.

The prosodic analysis in *Working with Speech* and Altenberg's study of prosodic patterns in the London-Lund Corpus (1987) provide useful knowledge about prosodic regularities in spoken English and have a number of practical applications both in speech synthesis and in language teaching. The London-Lund Corpus is a viable alternative for a researcher who is interested in studying intonation patterns in dialogue or the use of special prosodic signals to regulate turn-taking. The SEC is more up-to-date and provides a high quality audio version to go with the transcriptions. However both corpora are an indispensable research tool for linguists interested in spoken data.

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### References

Altenberg, B. 1987. *Prosodic patterns in spoken English. Studies in the correlation between prosody and grammar for text-to-speech conversion.* Lund: Lund University Press.

Crystal, D. 1969. *Prosodic systems and intonation in English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Barlach, Else,* **CALL English. An English Grammar for Danish Students.** Århus: Forlaget Systime A/S, 1998. 247 pp. + one CD-ROM. ISBN 87-7783-957-9. Paperback. Price DKK 300 + VAT.

Scandinavia tends to be – and should be – a kind of common market for English grammars written in English with a Scandinavian contrastive angle. English departments in Sweden are watching this market, particularly for works with some theoretical aims combined with the practical-handbook ones. In the last few years there have been several newcomers, one of which is under review here.

Else Barlach's work consists of a grammar textbook and a CD-ROM (hence CALL in the title – Computer Aided Language Learning). The CD-ROM contains a variety of interactive exercises and includes the whole text of the book as reference material for these tasks. According to the preface, the package is intended for "Danish students at B.A. level, e.g. in business schools and teacher training colleges" and tries to meet "a pronounced demand for an English grammar of manageable size and scope, written in English and catering for the specific needs of Danish students". The author stresses "its focus on contrastive aspects of English and Danish grammar and its translation orientation". Among the aims is included the laudable one of enabling students to communicate in English about various grammatical problems.

Mainly organized on the basis of word classes and phrase types the textbook covers the main areas of English morphology and syntax: sentence structure and sentence types, noun phrases, pronouns, adjective phrases, adverb phrases, verb phrases, and complex sentences. (Surprisingly, there is next to nothing about prepositions and prepositional phrases.) There is also a chapter on "theme, focus and information structure" followed by two purely practical ones, viz. one on spelling and one on punctuation. The chapters are numbered 1-11 and within the chapters sections are numbered consecutively without any attempt at hierarchy (for instance, 3.3 is Classes of pronouns, 3.4 Personal pronouns, 3.5 Person, 3.6 Number, 3.7 Case). The book is provided with an index and a short bibliography.

The number of CD exercises is modestly given as 120, but there are considerably more actual exercises, grouped under about 120 themes. The instructions for each set of exercises are both shown on the screen and read out by a male native speaker of English (Philip Shaw), which should be a great help towards the above-mentioned goal of enabling students to communicate in English about various grammatical problems.

The CD-ROM exercises cover the same areas as the book and are in general useful and adequately worded, though not very sophisticated. Within each theme, the programme is strictly linear, in the sense that you can only move forwards, and one task at a time; you cannot skip exercises or return to one that you may want to try again. The "attraction of a new computer game" (Introduction) will probably remain wishful thinking on the part of the author.

The very format of automatic feedback inevitably leads to some frustration (at least for a university teacher of grammar) in that only one response is normally accepted as correct and there is no room for arguing. Also, the reactions are pre-programmed for the most predictable mistakes only. I am going to give some examples.

In one exercise, of a kind dear to this reviewer's heart, you are asked to identify in given sentences the antecedents of relative pronouns and to insert commas where necessary, i.e. judge whether the clauses are restrictive or non-restrictive. However, when, following the consensus of current theories, you mark only *reservation* in "I had to cancel the reservation that I had made", and correctly refrain from inserting a comma, you are given the nonsensical message "Not correct! Restrictive rel. cl; no comma". Only when you fight down your own convictions and include the determiner *the* in the antecedent are you rewarded with a cheerful "That's it!". In a different exercise you are asked to identify the antecedents in "This is the cat that ate the rat that lived in the house that Jack built". If you mark *cat, rat* and *house,* the key (which appears after any kind of "mistake") gives you the exasperating reaction "No luck: *that* refers to *cat, rat* and *house*". If you try to obey the key for your subsequent attempts, you will be trapped in a circle, for in order to be awarded a "That's just it" you have to disregard the wording of the key and answer *the cat, the rat* and *the house.* This vacillation as to how much the relative pronoun is coreferential with is to be found in the textbook as well, for instance on pp. 97-98, where two full noun phrases marked as antecedents are followed by the statement that the relative pronoun "points back" to the *head* of the noun phrase (emphasis mine).

Sometimes exercises do not really test what the heading promises. In one you are asked to assign word class membership to words in a list, which means that in

the absence of context the whole exercise turns into a parlour game: "Find as many meanings and uses as possible of a given string of letters and assign potential word class to each of them". There are at least two particularly frustrating ways you can be penalized with a "No luck!", one where your list is impressive but shorter than that of the key by one item (for instance if you mark *like* as noun, verb, adjective, preposition and even conjunction but, understandably, miss the adverb), and one where your list is justifiably longer than that of the key (for instance if you signal that you know that in addition to other classes *gross* can be used as a verb, which the key denies).

As for the textbook, although it has reasonable coverage and a suitable level of abstraction for the intended readership, it does not seem quite ready for the market. This is surprising in view of the fact (reported in the preface) that in a preliminary version it has been used by the author over "the last couple of years" and commented on by undergraduates. My objections are spread over a wide range of areas, from the English of the text to theoretical issues. I will give some examples.

Faulty English (including Danisms): *weekdays* for *days of the week* as an example of referents of proper nouns (*Sunday* is not a weekday, but still a proper noun); English/Italian *pasta* interpreted as meaning "toothpaste"; the outdated form *'flu* used to illustrate how the apostrophe is used to indicate an omitted element (as in '87); *most well-known* for *best-known* (inappropriate in a pedagogical grammar); "the Baltic (Ocean)" (in *the Baltic* the understood noun is *Sea,* not *Ocean*); "These nouns... are constructed with a singular verb".

Idiosyncratic (or at least non-mainstream) terms: "the do-trick"; "straight forward word order" (=SV).

Strong British bias (without this ever being stated): *go to hospital/university* without comment; varying concord with collective nouns presented without reservations; the sentence "Have you a light?" presented without comment as an illustration of inversion (true, a better version of the rule is presented 125 pages later).

Incomplete listings: *it* and plural *you* missing from personal pronouns; *itself* missing from reflexive pronouns; subject and object complements missing from the first listing of potential functions of relative *which*; adverbial and preposition complement missing from potential functions of relative *that*; adverbial (but not preposition complement) missing from potential functions of relative zero.

Vague definitions: "A complement tells us something about another element in the clause".

Too sweeping rules: "French loanwords often have the plural ending -*x*"; "Latin loanwords in -*um* retain their Latin -*a* ending in the plural"; "Some nouns only exist in the plural, e.g. *lodgings, riches, wages*"; "If the subject consists of two NPs linked by (*together*) *with,* the verb is in the singular" (What if the first one is a plural?); "*Somebody go and open the door!* This form of the imperative [with a subject pronoun] has a condescending ring." (What about *Somebody help me, please!*?).

Too restrictive rules: "The superlative is used to compare one member of a group with the rest of the members" (Cannot superlatives modify plurals?); The passive voice is formed by combining a finite form of *be* with the past participle" (What about *I want to be kissed* or *The door has already been locked*?); "A cleft sentence always starts with *It is/was*" (What about *It will be in Paris that the meeting will take place or It must have been with great pleasure that she received her degree*?).

Unexpected classifications: antecedentless *what* is treated among adjectival relative clauses and the only relative words associated with nominal relative clauses are the -*ever* compounds; in a CD exercise the phrase "in countries where the poor's only equity is their sweat" is said (by the key) to contain an adverbial relative clause, whereas the (correct) solution offered in case of failure is that the clause is a postmodifier in an NP; "A child can do this as well as a grown-up person" is used as an example of countable nouns used with specific reference; *Shall I help you weed the garden?* is given as an example of the future tense, and *He will do his best to help you* as an example of willingness; *today's paper* is presented under the heading

"Genitive of measure", grouped with *an hour's delay* and *ten minutes' walk*; in addition to its established function as a predeterminer, *such* is said to be a central determiner in *such colours* and the postdeterminer *other* to be central in *other people* (the solution to this "problem" is of course that there is a zero central determiner in both cases, and thus *such* and *other* retain their basic pre- and post- functions); "Here is the answer to the question" is classified differently from "Here comes the bride" in terms of word order (as partial and full inversion, respectively, with the distinction between the two word orders based on whether the verb of the clause needs *do* or not in questions).

Theoretical frameworks mixed: "... close similarity between a noun in the -'*s*-genitive and the same noun as head of a prepositional phrase with *of...*" (elsewhere in the book the noun of a prepositional phrase is regarded as a complement of the preposition, not as the head of the phrase).

Puzzling statements: "When nouns are used as classifying adjectives they can usually only be used attributively" (which is probably intended to refer to the fact that in noun + noun compounds the first noun cannot be moved to the predicative position); "The comparative is used to compare two things or persons that are separate from each other"; "A passive sentence in English cannot be constructed with *there,* since *there* cannot act as the subject" (What about *There was no money given to the poor that Christmas* or *There were three people killed in the accident*?); "When the English want to talk about *man* and *woman* as *species* [reviewer's emphasis], they most often use *zero* article + the plural"; "Determiners are words that are used to introduce NPs and to indicate... what noun classes they can combine with (countables or uncountables)".

As mentioned above, there is an index at the end of the book, but several technical terms used in the text are missing from it. Without having been very systematic I can list *absolute, antecedent, anticipatory, conjunction, coordination, deictic, discontinuous, epithet, historic present, operator, preposition, preposition complement, superordinate.* Also, neither in the index nor in the bibliography is there any information to students about those learners' dictionaries which are referred to in the text only by acronymic abbreviations (ALD and LDOCE; there is no mention of CIDE or COBUILD).

Technical shortcomings include lack of indentation to mark a new paragraph (a new line is used, but in the absence of right-hand alignment this system is far from clear). Both the textbook and the CD have some misprints but it is only one of them that I find really embarrassing. In the whole of the material there is no occurrence of the term *epithet* but at least eight of *epiphet,* which means that somebody with a key role in the production of the work is unfamiliar with the name of the concept in question, including its pronunciation in Standard English.

In conclusion, although the material may work for some categories of undergraduates, my advice to the author is that she rejoice in having been in time to stake a claim in this important and expanding area but also that she set about preparing an improved version, at a leisurely pace and with the aim of incorporating the suggestions she will be getting, over the next year or so, from reviewers and colleagues, hopefully including native speakers versed in grammatical discourse.

*Arne Olofsson*

*Honey, John,* **Language is Power: The Story of Standard English and its Enemies.** London: Faber and Faber, 1997. X + 298 pp. Price (paper) £8.99. ISBN 0-571-19047-2.

In *Does Accent Matter?* (1989), John Honey's study of the social functions of accent in the UK, the author presents a balanced, sober account of attitudes prevalent in Britain on Standard British English, RP, and a long list of regional accents. In contrast, his latest book, *Language is Power,* while also worthwhile reading, is shockingly opinionated and argumentative.

*Language is Power* is divided into ten chapters, beginning with "The Language Myth" and ending with a discussion entitled "A National and International Language." Without running the risk of generalizing it is safe to say that all the chapters address Honey's "holy cow" issue, namely what he perceives to be a concerted effort on the part of sociolinguists to support the claim that educational standards need not be rigidly tied to a prescriptive model of standard English, something the author finds deplorable for a number of reasons. Instead, Honey feels that there are indeed many reasons why a prestige variety such as standard English is superior to other forms of the language. Shouting from the rooftops that "Standard English is now a battlefield," Honey seems deeply troubled by "those who today question the appropriateness of teaching standard English in schools" (p. 3-4). He confronts this position, focusing his attack on "the notion that all languages, and all dialects of any language, are equally good" (p. 5). This hypothesis, the author argues, while widespread and firmly anchored in contemporary sociolinguistic thought, is inherently incorrect.

Taking on a host of scholars, from Chomsky to Quirk, Honey does not pull any punches in his battle to save standard English from its proposed "enemies." Yet, despite the fact that the author appears to be blinded by a political agenda, the book, nevertheless, works. It is informative reading. Honey presents his readership with a grand tour of the major events which have taken place in sociolinguistics in the last three decades. Critiquing Labov, Pinker, Crowley, Trudgill, the list goes on and on, Honey finds fault with virtually everyone, people he claims are responsible for publicizing any number of misconceptions about the English language. Along the way Honey introduces his reader to five centuries of English language history (starting with, he claims, the establishment of standard English in the fifteenth century), in his efforts to convince us that standard English *is* the superior variety of the language, and that other varieties are not as well suited for any number of pursuits, especially intellectual endeavors of all sizes and shapes. Unfortunately for the author, he is all too often simply wrong, like when he claims that racist language, for example, is less likely to occur in standard English (he ignores the functions of *implied* racism operative in polite speech), or when he insists that RP is not a class accent. What Honey has misunderstood is the simple fact that taking such positions simply reflects his own sensibility, and, because of the subjective nature of the observations, say more about linguistic politics, about the "old boys' club," and the efforts to continue perpetrating the myth that "proper English" is something necessary to get on in the world. Moreover, Honey's blind belief in standard English and the ensuing prescriptive grammar leads him to conclusions which smack of intolerance. For example, he claims that the English-speaking world will, in due time, be dominated by the two bulwarks of standard English, American English and British English (one is convinced that his decision to include the variety spoken by 70% of all native speakers was made reluctantly). Here, Honey, much like Churchill and Stalin after the War, carves up a map of the world into linguistic spheres of influence. Considering the EU to be a part of the BrE circle, Honey goes on to assume that as the Union spreads eastward, in time Eastern Europe and Russia will all adhere to the British English standard, and like India, and why not all of Africa, will make up more than 1,450 million speakers of BrE. American English, claiming North and South America and places like Japan and the Philippines (as well as Hawaii, which Honey incorrectly calls a country, [p. 243]), will have to make do with a mere 900 million. One must assume that Honey has spent precious little time in Europe, seeing as he appears to have completely missed the processes of Americanization which are radically changing the linguistic behavior of English-speaking Europeans. Some of them, surely a good number, speak Mid-Atlantic or something resembling AmE, a phenomenon which renders Honey's projections ludicrous. Attempting even greater feats of ethnocentrism, Honey, while admitting that AmE may make further gains in the international arena because of US "strength in technology," and "the worldwide popularity of American English as mediated by films and pop music," interjects a projection by Yale Professor Paul Kennedy that "America's economic

and political power will decline over the next fifty years" (assuming that no such decline is in store for Britain). He goes on to claim that "the choice of British English as model has long been motivated by traditionalism, by its association with an historic culture and perceptions of its being the authentic vehicle of great literature and the exponent of admired values" (p. 246). The only logical assumption to be made here is that Honey is convinced that these attributes are more valid for the British as compared to the American variety of the language, a position which casts a dark shadow over Honey's ability to think clearly.

But as stated above, the book, despite its extremes in argumentation and its many flaws, is, nevertheless, a brilliant study. Few scholars working in the field have Honey's impressive ability to guide a reader through the intrigues of the post-war linguistic debates, nor are they able to draw the reader into the discussions with such passion. It is a truly politically incorrect study, (Honey's quoting of Professor Harris, where Hong Kong English is cited as "the worst English in the world" is a most despicable display of linguistic chauvinism). Honey marginalizes just about all of us, if not for our belief in the equality and integrity of all languages and varieties, then for the very way in which we speak the language. Not surprisingly, he has been lambasted by the British press, where this book is creating quite a stir. Yet despite the adverse reaction this study can elicit from a general readership as well as at the academy, there are any number of fascinating things to be discovered among these pages. This book places Honey at the center of things – a good place to be – because the debate as to what varieties of the language are to be models for the new global Englishes is only just beginning.

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*Freeborn, Dennis.* **From Old English to Standard English.** 2ⁿᵈ edition. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. 479 pp. ISBN 0-333-69155-5 (paperback). Price GBP 17.50.

The Germanic dialects spoken by the first Anglo-Saxon invaders in England in the 5th century were very different from the English language of today. In his exhaustive book subtitled 'A Course Book in Language Variation across Time' Dennis Freeborn shows how these dialects gradually developed into present-day English.

The starting-point is Roman Britain and the Anglo-Saxon invasion and settlement and the descriptions of these violent events as recorded in the Old English texts of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The core of the book is a series of historical texts that the author uses to illustrate the state of the language in the different periods. As changes in English are often closely linked to historical events, e.g. Viking invasions and the Norman Conquest, these texts serve dual purposes, to give the historical background as seen by contemporary writers and to show linguistic changes. The texts are analyzed as regards characteristics of vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation that are typical of the periods in question, and clear and easily read tables and diagrams show the changes in these fields. Dialectal variations and foreign loan words are also examined and commented on. The Old and Middle English texts are supplied with translations into modern English. Many of the old texts are also reproduced in facsimile so that the development of handwriting over the centuries can be seen. In addition there are a large number of exercises that encourage students to further study and analysis of the texts.

The majority of the texts deal with historical events, but there are also interesting and amusing texts about the language itself, for instance an article by John of Trevisa written in the late 14th century about the deterioration of the language due to French influence and an article by Jonathan Swift published in *The Tatler* in 1710 about the corruption of the English language, thoughts similar to those we often hear about today's English.

In short, *From Old English to Standard English* is a comprehensive and stimulating course book in the fascinating field of English historical linguistics.

*Ann-Marie Svensson*

*Homer, Sean*. **Fredric Jameson: Marxism, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism**. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998. 216 pp. ISBN 0-7456-1686-0 (paperback).

"Fredric Jameson has been described as 'probably the most important cultural critic writing in English today'" (1), Sean Homer writes in his ambitious and lucid study of the American theoretician, *Fredric Jameson: Marxism, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism*. Since no comprehensive work on this major contemporary theoretician has yet been published, Homer's book is very welcome indeed. Dr. Homer, a lecturer at the Centre for Psychotherapeutic Studies at the University of Sheffield, defines his purpose of the book as to provide an introduction to Jameson's work and "to situate Jameson's theoretical and political project in relation to the philosophical traditions from which his work emerges and within which he continues to operate and develop" (6). In line with this purpose Homer's book works very well, and fills a gap in present intellectual and academic life.

According to Homer, Jameson provides the only fully operative programme in a turbulent world of hyperreality and late capitalism. Jameson's programme is a non-dogmatic, humanistic and humble, but simultaneously forceful hybrid of theoretically poignant and politically active Marxism. To many people this seems to be the only agenda to produce both a functional theory for the academy and a radical political alternative that can challenge the reified consumer ideals of the current capitalistic world order.

As we rapidly head towards the new millennium, Jameson's utopian way of thinking is perhaps needed more than ever. "Jameson's work," argues Homer, "remains exemplary in its integrity and commitment to formulate a radical, pluralistic and non-dogmatic Marxist cultural practice and politics appropriate to advanced capitalism in the closing years of the twentieth century" (7). In his later writing Jameson has moved more and more towards Utopia and the postmodern expression of utopian desire through various forms of architecture, science-fiction literature and cyberpunk, for instance in his 1994 essay "The Antinomies of Postmodernity," published in *The Seeds of Time*.

Jameson's theoretical basis is a wide spectrum, ranging from the politics of Marx, Althusser and Adorno, the philosophy of Hegel and Sartre, the psychoanalysis of Lacan, via sociology to the literature of realism, modernism and postmodernism – a spectrum Homer convincingly outlines in his book. Jameson's recent work on postmodernism has provided an important contribution to the current postmodern debate within academia and in media. He sees postmodernism as "a modification of our sense of time and space" (101), a position particularly advocated in his seminal 1991 essay "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism."

All these different sources of influence have helped to create Jameson's unique theoretical blend, unified in a position encompassing both a militant Marxism and a deep humanism. It is a dual critical achievement in which Jameson proposes Marxism as a corrective, and by appropriating the insights of non-Marxist theory he is also able to posit a non-reductionist Marxism as a plausible and discernible goal for contemporary society. It must also be said, however, that this double edged critical strategy is, somewhat paradoxically, also the weakest spot of Jameson's programme. His method of "immanent critique" has, according to Homer, been criticized for creating a confusion between the object of analysis and the critic/critique and a concomitant, non-valid, identification of Jameson with the positions he seeks to explicate.

It is the greatest achievement of Homer's study that at the same time as it sympathizes with Jameson's basic ideas, it succeeds in being critical at various intriguing points to dubious details in the Jamesonian agenda in a most elucidating and constructive manner. Homer of course recognizes the great importance of Jameson's laying bare of the dangerous negations of our postmodern society, but it is also Homer's view that Jameson is a more committed writer on modernism than on postmodernism. Sensing some ambivalence in Jameson's attitude towards postmodernism, Homer suggests that "one does not sense that enthusiasm when reading Jameson's

analyses of postmodern culture... and certainly not the sheer joy of the language that one feels when reading a Jamesonian analysis of Balzac, or Flaubert, or indeed of any modernist writer" (116–17).

Jameson's programme, however, skilfully succeeds to oppose and interrogate other fashionable postmodern/post-structuralist models of interpretation, such as deconstruction, semiotics and psychoanalysis, something which Homer also points out. One of the main impressions when reading Jameson is that it is refreshing with a major non-French theorist who is on equal level of competence and brilliance with those trendy and politically correct post-structuralist prominent figures.

Homer's competent mapping of the Jamesonian oevre follows a chronological and logical trajectory through Jameson's writing career, which makes it easy to follow. To begin with, Homer in the introductory chapter traces the big influence of the existential ideas of Sartre on Jameson's early work. Homer goes on in the first chapter to outline the basic concepts of Jameson through an examination of *Marxism and Form*, an important book in that it played a central role in bringing Marxist ideas to academic life in the US.

The gist of Homer's book, however, lies in his exegesis of *The Political Unconscious* in chapters two and three. By discussing such key Jamesonian concepts as "structural historicism," "cultural revolution," "semantic horizons" and "reification" Homer gives the reader valuable insight into Marxist and Jamesonian terminology. True to his Marxist ideology Jameson's agenda has a firm grounding in history, which Homer emphatically and thoroughly outlines in the second chapter. Also underscored is the importance of the "collective" for the political unconscious. In the third chapter Homer puts Jameson's political unconscious in the context of the psychoanalytically oriented theorists Deleuze and Guattari. Jameson considers their *Anti-Oedipus* to be a major work, and Homer devotes the chapter to an examination of that text with Jamesonian eyes.

In the following chapters Homer scrutinizes Jameson's position vis-á-vis contemporary postmodernism, with "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" as the main focus. Jameson's general attitude towards postmodernism is somewhat ambiguous, as he is both a defender of postmodern culture and also manages to distance himself from it. As we know, the postmodern debate has been going on for some years now and therefore these chapters are important in shedding light on a number of crucial current intellectual issues.

A major reason for the importance of these chapters is the need for another intellectual alternative than postmodernism with the new millennium approaching. It is Homer's view that Jameson's kind of Western Marxism provides us with that alternative. However, Homer's attitude to Jameson throughout the book is not only sympathetic but also sceptical. It is therefore something of the central question of the book when Homer asks: "Can Jameson subsume such a range of diverse theoretical positions within the horizon of Marxism and retain a coherent theoretical and political position himself?" (174) Thus, Homer does not refrain from criticizing Jameson. Here his main strategy lies in posing a number of intriguing questions throughout the book. In the third chapter Homer links Jameson's idea of the "Utopian Impulse" with the *Communist Manifesto*, and correspondingly asks: "For Jameson, ideological manipulation and utopian gratification are inseparable aspects of *all* cultural texts. The question inevitably arises: all texts? Even the most overtly reactionary?" (96) Homer also spots Jameson's vacillating postmodern position, which he seriously interrogates further on in the book.

Homer at length comments and questions Jameson's central theory of reification. Through a series of questions Homer attacks the soft spot and double bind of postmodern and post-structuralist theories. However much these theories seek a position outside of all kinds of foundation, they are always already on the inside of the system that they try to break out of. This problem, Homer believes, is also relevantly connected to Jameson's relation to the academic discourse as such: "is not . . . Jameson's 'hermetic' approach, or what we might see as his oeuvrism, caught within the very reifying logic of academic discourse that he so strenuously tries to break

out of? Does not, in other words, the very difficulty and complexity of his style legitimate the specialization and separation of the academy rather than present a challenge to it?" (184)

Jameson's style certainly is demanding and he has often been criticized for using a too difficult and esoteric language. If anything is to be criticized in Homer's useful monograph it is, probably due to his subject matter, that his prose at times becomes a little heavy to digest. It is a book that needs total concentration, much because of its theoretizing character. It is a must while reading to keep a great number of theories, philosophies and important thinkers in mind. Once you manage to do that, Homer's book proves to be energy well spent.

In his conclusion Homer questions the degree of urgency of Jameson's doxy. Considering the sometimes populistic items of Jameson's postmodern analysis, Homer asks "is this really the most pressing political, theoretical and cultural dilemma for the left today? Or does it not rather tell us something about Jameson's own social and historical position as a global theorist with a specifically North American perspective on the world?" (186) My view is that it is a mistake to reduce Jameson's crucial agenda, much needed in a turbulent and lost society of information hysteria and artificial communication through the internet, and delimit it geographically. After all, we can all watch the American religion of capitalism completely taking over the world today. Here Homer also agrees, as he concludes: "postmodernism must be contested on a political terrain which is at once local, institutional and national as well as multinational and global" (187).

*Fredric Jameson* is a highly competent study that is a pleasure to read. I strongly recommend Sean Homer's book. It should be considered as an important coursebook, possible to use for all kinds of academic textual studies, ranging from literature to politics, sociology and cultural studies. One can only agree with Douglas Kellner: "The text is extremely well researched, written and organized, covering the entirety of Jameson's corpus... There is no comparable book on the market which provides such a comprehensive and engaging study." In sum then, *Fredric Jameson* is a much needed book.

*Magnus Ankarsjö*

*Cixous, Hélène.* **Stigmata: Escaping Texts.** London & New York: Routledge, 1998. 198 pp. IBSN 0-415-17979-3.

These personal, relevant, witty, artistic and inspiring essays contain some of the most beautiful philosophy I have ever read. By exploring her own memories, background, and family history, Cixous creates something as unique as a "liveable philosophy" – a philosophy which escapes the hypothetical reasoning and strict formalities of traditional (i e male) teachings. Her ability to make use of literary texts as well as personal experiences in intellectual discussions, makes *Stigmata* both interesting and accessible. Although Cixous belongs to a group of thinkers often labelled "French feminists", her writing would appeal to anyone who finds conventional philosophy a bit formal and lifeless but who has an interest in existential questions. In essays like "Mamãe disse ele" and "Unmasked!" she questions the traditional split between man and woman, mother and father, parent and child, and the limitations of these dichotomies. As biological beings, 'man' and 'woman' are of little interest to Cixous; what is really important is the division of 'power' ("I do not say that 'women' are 'better.' Simply that they do not have 'the' *Power*" (45)) as well as the relationships between the 'victims' and their 'executioners' ("I was thinking about the tragic truth that the victim is guilty of being victim. About the danger incurred by the cause of a feeling of executioner, of guilt, in you, in the other" (38)).

A recurring theme in *Stigmata* is death; or rather, death as an energising threat in our lives. Cixous describes how we avoid it, how we try to avoid having to witness it whenever it approaches: "never, by chance or by will, was I present at the

departure of my father nor of my son nor of my grandmother nor of any being of my flesh" (193). Death, when it appears in the form of a lifeless bird on the balcony, can be more frightening than the bereavement of a parent; we can only manage death at a distance "we are just big enough to cry for our dog, but never big enough to cry for our mother" (71).

One of the most well-written studies in this volume is "Love of the wolf" in which Cixous takes a closer look at our fascination for, and love of, fear. Again, we come across the victim and its executioner, and we are shown how the roles of the lamb and the wolf become inverted when the threatened is miraculously reprieved by the executioner himself. "The lamb loves its wolf. The wolf turns all white and starts quivering out of love for the lamb. The lamb loves the wolf's fragility, and the wolf loves the frail one's force. The wolf is now the lamb's lamb and the lamb has tamed the wolf. Love blackens the lamb" (99).

*Stigmata* has neither editor nor preface, with the result that the individual texts stay quite separate. This individuality is also accentuated by the different translators' approaches to Cixous's lexical creativity. Making up her own rules for punctuation, word formation and paragraphing, Cixous supplies her thoughts with a visual commentary within the text itself. Writing, to Cixous, seems to be a method of contemplating, of thinking and of meditating; the manuscript is written "by distraction" (139) and "in each book words with roots hidden beneath the text come and go and carry out some other book between the lines. Suddenly I notice strange fruits in my garden. It is these verbal dwarfs who have made them grow" (147).

*Monica Armini*

*Browning, Barbara.* **Infectious Rhythm: Metaphors of Contagion and the Spread of African Culture.** New York and London: Routledge, 1998. 234 pp. ISBN 0-415-91981-9 (paperback).

*Kanneh, Kadiatu.* **African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures.** London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 204 pp. ISBN 0-415-16445-1 (paperback).

In Barbara Browning's *Infectious Rhythm*, a variety of metaphors of virus and transfusion are linked with the extension of African culture. As the author writes in her introduction: "The aim of this book is to consider a model with a lengthy and complex history: the Western account of African diasporic culture that relies on the figure of disease and contagion" (p 6). By using the spread of infection as theme, more fundamental issues regarding culture and politics are raised. This is shown by Browning's examination of for example: AIDS activism, black religious practices, "World Music", African art and literature, the LA riots, Benetton's advertising campaign, the Harlem gay balls and cyberspace. *Infectious Rhythm* explores different meanings of African diasporan cultural and political practices and includes strands of anthropology, black studies, cultural studies, ethnography, feminist theory, history and performance theory. Browning's book is indirectly a study of such profound problems in society as racism, xenophobia, homophobia, the manipulation of the media, economic exploitation and sexism. The causes of these and similar problems are to be seen as deeply embedded in cultural, economic and political structures formed in time. By bringing different elements together, connections are made which help to explain modern conflicts. It is important to note that the environment of today, including multiculturalism and sexual exchange, seems to enhance the negative portrayal of diasporic cultures. However, this does not necessarily mean that there are no alternative approaches to the image of contagion. *Infectious Rhythm* is a brilliant piece of work which is both absorbing and thought-provoking. It is a discerning study of, above all, cultural and racial segregation.

For anyone with an interest in anthropology, black literature, cultural studies, ethnography, feminist analysis, history or postmodernism, Kadiatu Kanneh's *African*

*Identities* should open up new spaces of research across disciplines. In this respect, it is essential to focus on how meaning is and has been created, as Kanneh states: "Making new connections between habitually separated disciplines, geographies and times, the argument of the thesis foregrounds how meaning is and has been constructed *across*, between and in (conscious or unconscious) reference to other, related, times, spaces and texts" (p viii). The book moves within a broad time spectrum, from mid-eighteenth century to modern times, and shows how different periods in history, politics and texts have interacted in the making of African identities. Kanneh argues that the forces which have created knowledge and meanings of Africa also have contributed to forming modern discourses which raise questions concerning race, politics, sexuality, time and culture. In *African Identities*, a number of various historical moments, continents and disciplines are linked with each other as the author seeks to expand the understanding of racial and national identities. Apart from this the book also contains extracts from and analyses of novels by Toni Morrison, Joyce Cary, Alice Walker, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Gloria Naylor, Chinua Achebe and V.S. Naipaul among others. *African Identities* is an interdisciplinary study of the connections between Africa and other parts of the world. The bottom line is that the African Diaspora and black identities become important for the perception of other areas and identities. Kanneh's book has a wide scope of research, just as *Infectious Rhythm*, and highlights the relationship between contexts and the construction of meaning. *African Identities* is, in short, a powerful and inspiring book.

*Sabina Kielow*

*Fredric Jameson,* **The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern,** 1983-1998. London: Verso, 1998. ISBN 1-85984-182-1.

The work of Fredric Jameson continues to undermine the claims of those who would have us believe that the collapse of Stalinism has also meant the end of Marxism itself as an intellectual source of human liberation. Not only does Jameson remain one of the most astute and committed Marxist critics within academia. His writings have been consistently devoted to exploring and explaining the cultural trends within modern society from a dialectical materialist standpoint. This has been particularly the case in relation to the whole range of aesthetic phenomena called Postmodernism, of which Jameson has developed a profound and radical critique as part of a broader exposure of the cultural crisis of global capitalism.

However, if readers are perhaps somewhat daunted by the prospect of beginning with Jameson's groundbreaking magnum opus on the subject – *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) – this new and much shorter selection of articles on the same theme will provide an excellent and more readily accessible overview. Contained in this volume are some of Jameson's richest and most illuminating expositions within the field, from his early theoretical interventions in the debate about Postmodernism to later assessments of its more specific, geopolitical dimensions.

The last essay for example in the collection – "The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation" – is Jameson at his critical best, deftly picking out the dialectical twists and turns of the cultural convergence of finance capital, postmodern architecture and real estate exploitation in the city of New York. It is also a piece of radical investigatory writing that is worthy of Dickens and belies the claim that Jameson's prose style is difficult to penetrate. Over the years Jameson has created a body of critical texts which cannot be ignored by anyone who is serious in wishing to understand the cultural and political climate of our times. *The Cultural Turn* represents another essential contribution to this unique, radical commitment.

*Ronald Paul*

*Lars Åhlander,* **Lömska ord och fällor – tysk ordkunskap.** Stockholm: Dialogos Förlag 1998. 183 Seiten. ISBN 91-7504-147-2.

Wer sich mit Fremdsprachen beschäftigt, weiß, wie oft gewisse Lern- und Lehrschwierigkeiten zu bewältigen sind, besonders, wenn die Fremdsprache mit der Muttersprache nah verwandt ist, wie im Falle des Deutschen und Schwedischen. Da Åhlanders Werk auf der Basis einer systematischen und vergleichenden Untersuchung von vier Teilgebieten des deutschen und schwedischen Wortschatzes entstand, ist es besonders geeignet, die Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen diesen beiden Sprachen lernerfreundlich darzustellen. Der Lerner kann systematisch lernen und üben sowie punktuell als Kontrollinstrument bei Zweifelstellen und Ungewissheiten nachschlagen.

*Lömska ord och fällor* ist die zweite, neu bearbeitete Auflage des vor zwanzig Jahren (1978) von LiberLäromedel Lund veröffentlichten Buches mit dem Titel *Tysk ordkunskap*. Die Aktualisierung war in erster Linie nicht wegen der Sprachveränderung während der vergangenen Zeit und der vom früheren Rezensenten Folke Freund vorgeschlagenen Verbesserungen notwendig, sondern hauptsächlich wegen der historischen Wende in Mittel- und Osteuropa, und natürlich wegen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands und der damit verbundenen Veränderungen der geographischen Namen. Die ursprüngliche Gliederung wurde beibehalten, die einzelnen Kapitel aber nach Bedarf mehr oder minder bearbeitet.

Im Vorwort faßt Åhlander sowohl den Inhalt wie auch die vorgenommenen Änderungen in den vier Kapiteln zusammen, dem eine Tabelle der Abkürzungen, Zeichen und ein kurzer Hinweis zur Aussprache folgt. Eine neue und besonders für die Anfänger wichtige Ergänzung dieser Auflage ist die Beschreibung der grundsätzlichen Movierungsregeln anhand der Beispiele

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| „*Präsident* (mask) | *Präsidentin* (fem) | *Präsidentinnen* (plur) |
| *Kanadier* | *Kanadierin* | *Kanadierinnen* |
| *Däne* | *Dänin* | *Däninnen*", |

so daß später nur noch die maskulinen Formen angegeben werden.

Das erste Kapitel *Lömska ord och fällor* besteht aus zwei Teilen: „1.1 Falsche Freunde" (S. 11-26) und „1.2 Homonymer och homografer samt ord med viss ljud-, form- eller betydelselikhet" (S. 27-39), denen je eine Einleitung vorangeht, um das Problem mit den dort angeführten Wörtern kurz zu beschreiben und die notwendigen Anweisungen der richtigen Benutzung der jeweiligen Liste bekannt zu geben. Mit besonderer Rücksicht darauf, daß dieses Buch im Vorwort „som handbok eller repetitorium för den tyskstuderande på gymnasiet, vid universitetet, i vuxenutbildningen eller som hjälpreda åt var och en som sysslar med tyska språket" gedacht ist, würde ich vorschlagen, die jetzige Typographie beizubehalten, aber die Aufstellung der Liste der „falschen Freunde" zu ändern. Da die Zielgruppe des Buchs, d.h. schwedische Deutschlerner, hauptsächlich die falsche schwedische Bedeutung der „trügerischen" deutschen Wörter assoziieren und nicht umgekehrt, sollte von den deutschen, halbfett gedruckten „falschen Freunden" in der linken Spalte ausgegangen werden, zu denen die richtigen schwedischen Äquivalente in der rechten Spalte mit Normalschrift angegeben wären, woran die Fremdsprachenlerner in den schulischen Glossaren schon gewöhnt sind. Die falschen schwedischen Assoziationen sollten dann unter den „falschen Freunden" kursiv gesetzt in der linken Spalte angeführt sein, zu denen die deutschen Entsprechungen wieder in der rechten Spalte halbfett gedruckt zu lesen wären.

| URSPRÜNGLICH | | VORGESCHLAGEN | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *förlåta* | **verlassen** stv | **verlassen** stv | lämna, överge: *Mit diesen Worten verließ er das Zimmer.* |
| **(jmdm.etw.) verzei-** | lämna, överge: *Mit* | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **hen** stv: *Meine unü-berlegten Worte hat sie mir schon längst verziehen.* | *diesen Worten ver-ließ er das Zimmer.* | *förlåta* | **(jmdm.etw.)** **verzei-hen** stv: *Meine unü-berlegten Worte hat sie mir schon längst verziehen.* |

Mit dieser Aufstellung wären die Voraussetzungen für einen erfolgreichen Gebrauch dieser Liste besser, wo Benutzer jedes Sprachniveaus etwas Interessantes unter den 150 Ausgangswörtern finden können, z.B. *öl* – das Öl, *termin* – der Termin, *ränta* – die Rente, *oersättlig* – unersättlich usw. Die Liste der in 126 Paragraphen angeführten Homonyme und Homographe ist dagegen sehr übersichtlich und zur Systematisierung und Übung dieser leicht verwechselbaren deutschen Wörter, wie beispielsweise *die Steuer* (skatt) und *das Steuer* (styre) oder *tauchen* (dyka; droppa, sänka ner) und *tauschen* (byta) sowie *täuschen* (bedra, lura), sehr gut geeignet, weil die Unterschiede nicht nur durch die schwedischen Äquivalente, sondern in den meisten Fällen auch mit Hilfe von deutschen Beispielsätzen beleuchtet werden.

Das zweite Kapitel *Lånord* (S. 40-100) vergleicht die Lehn- und Fremdwörter, einen in beiden Sprachen vorhandenen, hauptsächlich gemeinsamen Teilwortschatz. Die Systematisierung wird hier durch Aufstellung gewisser „allmänna regler angående stavning av lånord" im Schwedischen und Deutschen eingeleitet, dem eine kontrastive Beschreibung der Wortbildung hauptsächlich bei den Substantiven und ein wenig bei Adjektiven und Verben folgt. Der große Abschnitt der Substantive besteht aus zwei Teilen: „I. Översikt över främmande suffix med ledning av det genur de utmärker", der also von deutschen Substantiven ausgeht und diese, nach den verschiedenen Suffixen gruppiert, mit den schwedischen Entsprechungen vergleicht, sowie aus „II. Sammanställning av skillnader i suffix med utgångspunkt i svenskan" (S. 75-89), wo bei vielen Äquivalenten die entsprechenden Querverweise zum Teil I. auch angeführt sind. Besonders für Anfänger sind diese Seiten sehr nützlich, weil sie sowohl die Ähnlichkeiten wie auch die Unterschiede zwischen den in beiden Sprachen vorhandenen Wörtern systematisch darstellen können.

„Geografiska namn, statsnamn och nationalitetsord" werden im Kapitel 3. (S. 101-132) so ausführlich – einschließlich ehemaliger und heute nicht mehr in offiziellem deutschem Sprachgebrauch oder nur von einer deutschen Minorität benutzter Benennungen – und nach allen möglichen, das Erlernen erleichternden Regeln sortiert behandelt, so daß vermutlich auch Personen mit speziellem Interesse auf diesem Fachgebiet eine Antwort auf ihre Fragen hinsichtlich geographischer Namen bekommen können.

Im letzten Kapitel des Buchs wird eine kontrastive Auswahl von „Prepositionen i prepositionsobjekt" dargeboten. Da dieses Gebiet der deutschen Grammatik ein ziemlich großes und schwer zu bewältigendes Problem für viele Deutschlerner bedeutet, könnte das Buch in einer späteren Auflage noch erweitert werden, um die Systematisierung auch hier vertiefen zu können.

Zur punktuellen Kontrolle können alle im Buch angesprochenen Wörter in dem Register schnell nachgeschlagen werden. Dabei sind zwei Listen behilflich: teils ein „Sakregister och svensk ordregister" (S. 147-162) und teils ein „Tysk ordregister" (S. 163-183), in denen zu den Wörtern der entsprechende Kapitel- und Paragraphenhinweis (evtl. mehrere Hinweise) immer angegeben sind.

*Lömska ord och fällor – tysk ordkunskap* von Lars Åhlander ist eine Art zweisprachiges Lernerwörterbuch, wo die Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen den deutschen und schwedischen Sprachen besonders betont und so die Voraussetzung zur selbständigen Systematisierung, Übung und Kontrolle eines gewissen Teilwortschatzes für schwedische Deutschlerner gesichert wird. Für Deutschlehrer kann dieses Buch als Nachschlagewerk oft von Nutzen sein.

*Andrea Kalman*

**Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze – Personen Grundbegriffe. Hg. v. Ansgar Nünning. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 1998, 49,80 DM.**

Mit dem neuen *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie* liegt ein optimistisches Buch vor, denn es trägt einer Studien-, Lehr- und Forschungssituation Rechnung, die – wie der Herausgeber selbst zugibt (S.VI) – so nur bedingt, nur zum Teil und keineswegs flächendeckend institutionell verwirklicht ist. Das verleiht dem Buch einen gewissen theorieavantgardistischen Flair, der es charakterisiert und auszeichnet. Man kann sich dies sehr anschaulich vergegenwärtigen, wenn man die beiden einschlägigen sowie einbändigen Lexika aus dem Hause Metzler anschaut: das *Metzler Lexikon Literaturwissenschaft* aus dem Jahre 1980 und das vorliegende zur Literatur- und Kulturtheorie aus dem Jahre 1998. Der kontrastive Blick zeigt zwei Haupttendenzen: die Zuspitzung des Gegenstandverständnisses von der Wissenschaft zur Theorie und vom Gegenstandsbereich Literatur zum Komplex von Literatur und Kultur.

Gerade die kontrastive Gegenüberstellung zeigt auch, daß beide Tendenzen symptomatisch zusammengehören: Die Ausweitung des Gegenstandsbereiches von der Literatur zum globalen Rahmen der Kultur ist eine Sache der Theorie. Daß dieses Lexikon gerade diesen Begriff im Titel führt, ist daher nicht als Zufallsentscheidung mißzuverstehen. Gleichzeitig betrifft diese Verschiebung fundamental das Selbstverständnis der ‚klassischen' Philologie, deren Standards weitgehend in Frage gestellt, häufig aber auch produktiv aufgegriffen – oder wenn man so will – re- und dekonstruiert werden. Von daher mag man in diesem Lexikon ein Brennglas sehen, das all diese Einzeltendenzen, die zu dieser radikalen Veränderung der Philologie beitragen, als vielschichtiges Spektrum bündelt. Ja mehr noch: Wer skeptisch danach fragt, was sich denn konkret dahinter verbergen mag, wenn von einer aus der Philologie und Literaturwissenschaft hervorgegangenen Kulturwissenschaft die Rede ist, der kann zu diesem Lexikon greifen, das in einer Vielzahl von einschlägigen Artikeln Momente dieser Entwicklung schlaglichtartig beleuchtet.

Ich habe mich nur gefragt, warum man auf den anderen Globalisierungsbegriff einer Medienwissenschaft verzichtet hat, zumal das Lexikon den vieldiskutierten Begriff der Medienkulturwissenschaft, der in der Tat ein heißes Eisen darstellt, als Artikel, zumal von einem der prominentesten Theoretiker auf diesem Felde, S. J. Schmidt, selbst enthält. Hätte man sich diesen Titelbegriff vorgenommen, wäre vielleicht der Medienbereich, der zwar in einer ansehnlichen Reihe von Artikeln sowohl zu einschlägigen Themen wie auch zu namhaften Medientheoretikern präsent ist, noch deutlicher konturiert worden.

Hatte schon die zweite Auflage des *Metzler Lexikons Literaturwissenschaft* von 1984 eine theoretische Kosmetik bzw. Aufrüstung erfahren, so ist diese Schwergewichtsverlagerung nunmehr zum Programm geworden. Es gibt zwar auch noch die Artikel einer herkömmlichen Interpretationspraxis, doch nur insoweit, als sie auch für die moderne und gegenwärtige Theoriediskussion interessant sind, z.B. im Rahmen der Erzähltheorie, und unter dementsprechend veränderten Darstellungsprämissen. Das durchgängige Schwergewicht liegt aber auf der Theoriediskussion selbst. Daß die Lemmata dabei nicht ausschließlich einem einzigen Begriffsraster entstammen, also z.B. reine Fachtermini oder z.B. Theoriebezeichnungen („-ismen"), versteht sich von selbst; von daher ist es ein großer Fortschritt, daß das Lexikon personenbezogene Artikel mit aufgenommen hat, wo sich mit bekannten Namen ganze Theoriegebäude verbinden lassen (z.B. Niklas Luhmann).

Was und wer Rang und Namen hat, ist versammelt: Neben der allgemeineren Literatur,- Kultur- und auch Medientheorie all jene Theorieansätze, die auch zu relevanten methodischen Positionen in avancierter literaturwissenschaftlicher Diskussion geworden sind: Strukturalismus und Poststrukturalismus, Dekonstruktion, dekonstruktivistischer Feminismus, Gender Studies, Diskursanalyse, Psychoanalyse, New Historicism, Gesellschaftstheorie, Konstruktivismus, Systemtheorie. Nennt man auch die Namen wie Saussure, Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Bourdieu oder – wie gesagt – Luhmann, muß man dazu sagen, daß dies nur eine hochselektive Promi-

nentenliste darstellt, zu der sich eine Vielzahl von Namen von Personen dazugesellt, die – wenn auch vielleicht nicht auf den ersten Blick im Rampenlicht stehend – maßgeblich an der Theoriediskussion beteiligt sind oder, immer noch beachtet, waren. Nur ein Beispiel: Schmidt, Siegfried J. ist nicht nur Beiträger, sondern auch ein Lemma (verfaßt von seinem früheren Mitarbeiter Gebhard Rusch).

Daneben versucht das Lexikon, auch die historische Dimension sowohl der Gegenstände als auch des Faches (Fach- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte) aufzunehmen. Daß dies nicht zu einem historischen Lexikon führen kann, versteht sich von selbst. Die Verkürzung dieser Dimension auf jene Aspekte, die im Kontext gegenwärtiger Theoriediskussionen interessant sind, ist daher legitim und pragmatisch.

Die Artikel selbst – es sind über 600 von 152 Beiträgern – sind allesamt zu kurz! Doch dies kann man einem Lexikon nicht zum Vorwurf machen, das auf Einbändigkeit setzt, damit es Eingang in die Handapparate der Literaturwissenschaftler, die nicht mehr nur Philologen sein wollen, finden kann. Es ist vielmehr ein Kompliment. Ich habe eine Vielzahl von Artikeln überprüft, und die Beiträger, darunter wirklich namhafte Autoren, leisten in dem engen Rahmen, was möglich ist: Sie selegieren treffsicher die Eckdaten und geben Grundlageninformationen, die wohl fundiert sind; sie gewährleisten damit nicht nur einen überblickshaften Erstzugriff, sondern fassen Komplexe auch weiter verwertbar zusammen. Die Artikel sind – im Überblick gesprochen – luzide, setzen aber einen Leser voraus, der schon eine Ahnung hat vom dem, worum es geht, der schnell, aber präzise wissen will, worum es sich ‚genau' handelt.

Aber man kann dem Lexikon ein noch größeres Kompliment machen, denn es eignet sich für wirklich Theorieinteressierte – ich habe es ausprobiert – wunderbar dazu, als Lesebuch rezipiert zu werden. Es erlaubt einem, ein breites und hochaktuelles Spektrum der Theorieentwicklung als Panorama zu betrachten, und wer will, der kann dies ‚Schmökern auf höchstem Niveau' nennen. Und noch etwas muß man dem Lexikon zusprechen. Es überblickt durchaus gelungen, so wie es konzipiert ist, und retrospektiv die Theorieentwicklung der letzten Jahrzehnte und Jahre; es kann aber auch einen Impuls für eine weitere Theorieentwicklung geben, z.B. indem es Studenten den Zugang zur Theorie erleichtert und so künftige Theoretiker rekrutieren hilft. Dies bleibt zu wünschen!

*Oliver Jahraus, Bamberg*

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*Michael Lucey,* **Gide's Bent. Sexuality, Politics, Writing.** (New York et Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). ISBN 0-19-508087-4, $ 16.95.

A ce qu'il paraît, la critique universitaire boude André Gide. Rares sont les ouvrages qui épousent la vision d'un auteur tout en remplissant le contrat de Baudelaire, qui disait que «la critique doit être partiale, passionnée, politique, c'est-à-dire faite à un point de vue exclusif». A l'exception d'Emily Apter, de Patrick Pollard, et d'Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, peu de chercheurs, ces dernières années, se sont laissés séduire par celui que André Rouveyre appela un «contemporain capital». A l'occasion de la mort de Gide, en 1951, *L'Humanité* écrivit: «C'est un cadavre qui vient de mourir.» Dans les décennies qui suivirent, le cadavre de Gide se fit enterrer et, petit à petit, oublier. L'auteur de *Corydon,* de *Retour du Congo,* de *Retour de l'U.r.s.s.,* et du *Journal,* le grand écrivain que fut André Gide, cette présence et conscience contemporaine qui domina son époque comme Hugo avait dominé la sienne et comme Sartre allait s'imposer dans l'après-guerre, est bel et bien en passe de devenir le grand oublié de la littérature française du XX$^e$ siècle.

Comment les choses ont-elles pu en arriver là? Serait-ce l'homosexualité de Gide qui trouble encore notre perception de l'écrivain aujourd'hui? Telle est du moins l'idée du livre hautement intelligent de Michael Lucey, *Gide's Bent,* qui vient de paraître aux Etats-Unis chez Oxford University Press. «Gide's sexuality continually troubles discussions of his work, even when those discussions consciously avoid

mentioning it.» (3) D'ailleurs les trois critiques cités ci-dessus s'intéressent justement à la sexualité de Gide. Si notre passion pour Gide s'est éteinte au fil des années, la faute en revient aux critiques universitaires, dirait Lucey. Ce sont eux qui ont préféré les lieux communs sur la sincérité gidienne, sur l'acte dit «gratuit» ou sur la fameuse technique de la mise-en-abyme dans *Les Faux-monnayeurs* (qui a fait couler beaucoup d'encre pendant plus de cinquante ans) aux vraies découvertes dans les tréfonds de l'œuvre gidienne. Ces critiques ont opté pour l'évidence plutôt que d'oser frayer un nouveau chemin dans l'inconscient de l'écriture. Lucey en expliquant ainsi l'échec d'une critique qu'il convient d'appeler «traditionnelle», nous permet d'emblée de mieux cerner la conception de son projet qu'il esquisse dans son introduction: «The alliance of politics, sexuality, and literature in Gide's case almost inevitably has a discomfiting effect. That effect is the subject of my book.» (3) «What I propose to examine are precisely the links one can trace between Gide's literary techniques, his portrayal of his own homosexuality, his discussions of homosexuality more generally, and his involvement in and writing about politics.» (17) Lucey s'en prend à toute une école de critique gidienne, et tout particulièrement à Jean Delay, dont la monumentale biographie, *La jeunesse d'André Gide,* serait trop simpliste et aplanirait les apories et autres obstacles du texte gidien. L'un des chapitres les plus brillants du livre de Lucey s'intitule précisément «Without Delay: *Les Faux-monnayeurs.*» Le titre en dit long sur l'orientation théorique de l'auteur mais aussi sur l'humour et l'amour qui l'inspire d'un bout à l'autre de son ouvrage.

Michael Lucey est professeur de français, de littérature comparée et de «Queer Studies» à l'université de Berkeley en Californie. Cette dernière discipline, qui a vu le jour dans les années 1980, se situe aux marges de «Cultural Studies» (autre discipline neuve dans l'académie américaine) et vise à élucider la contribution gay, très concrète, non seulement à la culture contemporaine mais aussi à la civilisation toute courte. Son sujet de prédilection est presque par définition humaniste (il est difficile de concevoir une science gay malgré la politisation très réelle du Sida) et ses méthodes d'enquête s'inspirent de toutes les sciences humaines et sociales. D'une façon générale, l'on peut dire que l'ambition «queer» est révélatrice et libératrice des mille et un visages de l'oppression.

De tout ce qui précède nul ne s'étonnera que l'approche de Lucey consiste à faire sortir des ténèbres la personne très sexuelle que fut André Gide et de mettre en évidence la place prépondérante qui lui revient tant sur le plan de l'inspiration de l'œuvre gidienne que sur le plan de son style dit «classique». Si le romantisme se caractérise par le pléonasme, le classicisme, quant à lui, se caractérise par la litote. Et chacun sait que la litote tait bien plus de choses qu'elle n'en dit. D'ailleurs Henri Massis, l'un des adversaires les plus acharnés de Gide, l'a bien remarqué dès 1921 dans un passage qui mérite d'être cité en entier:

«Ce classicisme, dont il affirme qu'il est aujourd'hui le 'meilleur représentant', lui sert à rendre son accès plus difficile, à mieux dissimuler... Il ne se veut pas tout livré: il a besoin d'un extérieur austère que rien ne singularise. Sa perversité est trop consciente, trop critique, pour n'avoir pas élu un art qui sait ne pas tout dire et où ses inquiétantes sincérités puissent s'abriter davantage. L'art classique exige, en effet, cette collaboration du lecteur où M. Gide trouve ses plus secrètes délices; car Gide n'admet pas qu'on pénètre d'un coup vers ses étages privés; il nous veut intelligents, attentifs à ses détours; d'où ces demi-mots, ces réserves, toutes ces traverses qu'il dispose savamment pour mieux se dégager plus tard.» (*La revue universelle,* 15 novembre 1921, p. 7.)

A bien entendre Lucey, le classicisme de Gide n'est pas pose ni subterfuge mais plutôt impasse, c'est-à-dire le lieu de penchants plus ou moins ambigus, plus ou moins indicibles. L'ambition de Lucey d'aller au-delà des apparences explique son approche psychanalytique, et plus spécifiquement lacanienne, qui voudrait éclairer cette personne mystérieuse qui se cache sciemment ou non, bon gré mal gré, derrière chaque tournure de phrase. Gide ne fut pas toujours un témoin sûr, si l'on peut dire, de sa sexualité qui put être d'une part aussi coulante et informe qu'une pulsion...

et d'autre part aussi homophobe que le fut l'attitude du monde contemporain dans lequel l'écrivain, en tant qu'être de chair et de sang, fut appelé à se développer.

Ce qui étonne chez Lucey par contre, du moins au premier coup d'œil, c'est son insistance sur la politique de Gide. Jusqu'à maintenant on croyait savoir ce que *ça* voulait dire. L'histoire de l'engagement politique d'André Gide est bien connue après tout. La dénonciation du colonialisme français et belge en Afrique par Gide dans les années 1920 reste aussi connue de nos jours que le roman *Heart of Darkness* de Josef Conrad (Sven Lindquist justement rapproche Gide de Conrad dans son ouvrage controversé, *Utrota varenda jävel*), et constitue pour certains critiques le point d'origine de l'engagement de Gide pour la justice. Gide fut même mêlé au féminisme puisqu'il nous donna aussi, vers la même époque, cette drôle de trilogie toute molièresque qu'est *L'école des femmes*. Et dans les années 1930 chacun sait l'intérêt de Gide pour l'Union Soviétique ainsi que sa déception amère après son malheureux voyage de l'été 1936, qui l'amena à écrire le passionnant ouvrage de rupture qu'est *Retour de l'U.r.s.s.* Cette œuvre fit de Gide une persona non grata dans le monde des intellectuels en France et l'ambivalence de ses opinions un peu trop intéressées pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale jeta Gide dans un exil d'où il n'est jamais revenu.

Cependant Lucey voudrait montrer que Gide a une tout autre conception de la politique: politique veut dire sexualité, en l'occurrence homosexualité, et l'homosexualité de Gide est au cœur de son œuvre, œuvre qui s'avère donc essentiellement politique parce que homosexuelle. Toute la radicalité du projet de Lucey réside là: il voudrait éclaircir la part de l'homosexualité dans l'œuvre de Gide. Précisons d'emblée qu'il ne s'agit pas de ce qu'on pourrait appeler une homosexualité «anecdotique» inspirée par les amours plus ou moins illicites de l'écrivain en Afrique du nord. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de rapprocher le héros de *L'Immoraliste* de l'auteur ni même de ressasser l'évident, que Gide pourrait figurer lui-même sur la liste des personnages du dialogue *Corydon*. Ce par quoi se distingue le projet de Lucey, c'est sa volonté de montrer que Gide érigeait sa propre sexualité en politique. En d'autres termes, Gide tenait coûte que coûte à exprimer sa nature et à coucher sa personne dans l'œuvre. Tantôt ce projet faillit échouer faute de lucidité de la part de l'auteur quant aux implications concrètes de ce projet dans le texte; tantôt Gide céda lui-même au doute, voire à l'homophobie, et déguisa ce qu'il conviendrait bien d'appeler ses «intentions» autobiographiques mais aussi prosélytiques. Nous touchons là du doigt, pour prendre un langage freudien, le rêve d'André Gide, qui consiste à réaliser le paradis sur terre, un nouveau monde où chacun est libre de s'aimer comme bon lui semble sans se soucier du qu'en dira-t-on. On disait par christianisme que Gide se convertit au communisme, que c'était par pitié pour ces naufragés du monde qu'il évoquait si souvent dans son œuvre depuis l'incident du paquebot «Bourgogne» décrit dans *Les Faux-monnayeurs* que Gide prenait le parti d'adhérer pleinement au rêve communiste. J'ai moi-même adopté ce point de vue dans un article publié dans *Le Monde*. Cependant Lucey nous montre d'une façon brillante et bien soutenue que le dernier mot est loin d'être dit sur la sexualité de Gide et que l'analyse freudienne de ce que l'on prend d'abord pour des paradoxes s'impose comme indispensable pour qui voudrait enlever les voiles avec lesquels l'auteur lui-même, par pudeur, s'est couvert.

Lucey passe en revue toute l'œuvre de Gide mais se concentre sur ses œuvres de maturité. Il commence par les années 1920, époque où Gide publie *Corydon,* dont il faut souligner l'originalité et le courage. Quel contemporain de Gide eût osé faire l'apologie de la pédérastie? Qui l'eût fait avec autant de verve et de brio? Gide venait d'apprendre que sa femme, Madeleine Rondeaux, avait brûlé toutes les lettres qu'il lui avait adressées et qui devaient constituer son portrait outre-tombe. Selon Lucey cet incident amena Gide à repenser sa personne littéraire et à assumer publiquement son homosexualité. En 1924 Gide fait publier *Corydon* dans une édition destinée au grand public et plus tard il décide de se livrer tel quel en publiant son *Journal,* un projet qui l'occupa pendant le reste de ses jours.

*Corydon,* le *Journal,* les «retours» d'Afrique et d'Union soviétique, tous ces ouvrages

contribuent non seulement à explorer ce que Lucey appelle le «penchant» (le mot anglais est «bent») de Gide, auquel Lucey donne une connotation essentiellement sexuelle, mais aussi et surtout peut-être à œuvrer pour plus de liberté politique. C'est cette liberté qui rendra possible une libéralisation des mœurs et conduira, pourquoi pas, à une sorte de bonheur, que nous définissons avec Lucey comme la cessation de l'état de frustration et de contradiction, qui caractérise l'écrivain condamné à vivre en exil, dans le monde bourgeois. Ces œuvres sont parmi les plus importantes de Gide. En fait, à plusieurs reprises Gide dit qu'elles étaient les plus importantes et qu'il préférerait renoncer au prix Nobel plutôt que de les désavouer.

En somme, c'est un excellent livre que celui-ci. Les lectures de Lucey sont toutes innovatrices et lucides et nous offrent une image persuasive et cohérente de Gide. Je lui ferai cependant quelques reproches, à commencer par une tendance très nette à la surdétermination de certaines scènes gidiennes, ce qui se traduit par une volonté d'interpréter le moindre geste comme signe qui aurait sa place bien déterminée à l'intérieur d'une sémiotique *queer* dont Gide lui-même ne serait pas toujours conscient. (Fâcheux tic d'ailleurs que l'emploi à bon aloi de ce mot aujourd'hui synonyme d'homosexuel mais apte aussi à exprimer le non-sexuel, quoi que semble suggérer l'emploi du terme chez Lucey.) Si l'analyse de Lucey finit par convaincre c'est que la justesse de ses conclusions dépassent l'ingéniosité. On a reproché à Lucey de multiplier les innuendos et de s'en servir pour faire des rapprochements gratuits, notamment dans la scène chez le docteur évoquée dans l'autobiographie de Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt.* Ici le jeune garçon subit un sermon sur les dangers de la masturbation quand il aperçoit sur le mur du cabinet du docteur Brouardel des dards africains, témoins muets (parce que châtrés?) du peuple Touareg du Sahara, subjugué par les Français après des années de vaine résistance. Selon le critique, dards, verge et impérialisme seraient trois panneaux d'une triptyque érigée à la plus grande gloire de la bourgeoisie métropolitaine et vraie ne fut-elle toujours visible pour le commun des mortels. Ces incursions dans la spéculation sont pourtant rares et le livre de Lucey a bien plus de mérites que de défauts. A la différence des œuvres de Freud, auxquelles on peut faire le reproche d'être parfois réductibles, l'essai de Lucey est à l'image de l'œuvre de Gide: ouvert aux possibilités du texte.

*Tom Conner*

*Christine Kerdellant,* **Les chroniques de l'ingénieur Norton. Confidences d'un Américain à Paris,** Paris: Belfond, 1997. ISBN 9-782714-435026. Pp. 186. 98 F.

Voulez-vous un livre qui amuse et instruise à la fois, un livre aussi drôle qu'utile dans l'enseignement de la culture française? Dans ce cas, précipitez-vous sur ces «chroniques» de l'ingénieur Norton, nouvel avatar d'une race de philosophes voyageurs dont la lignée remonte du moins aux cannibales de Montaigne en passant par les Persans de Montesquieu mais dont les descendants dans notre XX$^e$ siècle, depuis la retraite du major Thompson, se font de plus en plus rares. Quel dommage, car chacun s'y voit d'un autre œil!

Ce petit roman épistolaire, mi-philosophe mi-comique, s'inscrit donc dans la meilleure tradition des récits de voyage qui nous donnent pour héros un étranger, qui, à la manière de Candide, ne s'étonne jamais de rien de ce qu'il voit dans des contrées lointaines mais dont les aventures farfelues permettent à Voltaire en l'occurrence de s'en prendre à la société contemporaine sans complaisance. Ici c'est toute la vie sociale et politique de la nation qui passe en revue sous le regard éberlué de l'ingénieur Norton. Voici un miroir de la vie française au XX$^e$ siècle finissant, où l'auteur mêle l'analyse sociologique au badinage pur et simple. Mille coutumes auxquels les Français sont depuis longtemps habitués ont soudain l'air ridicule, voire absurde. Cependant, Norton s'avère un bon sauvage et ne tarde pas à se laisser séduire par les «froggies» et à faire sienne leur culture, dont la douceur de vivre s'avère irrésistible. Plus d'un étranger s'est trouvé à sa place, n'est-ce pas, et c'est précisément cette identification qui donne tant de charme à son aventure.

Robert J. Norton est l'Américain idéal porté à l'écran par le cinéma: un faux air de Harrison Ford et la taille assez svelte. Divorcé de sa première femme, psychiatre qui quitta le foyer pour aller vivre avec une femme conducteur de bus à New York, notre héros se remaria avec une traductrice-interprète d'origine allemande. Ingénieur en hydraulique dans une compagnie multinationale de raffinages, Norton est muté à Paris pour trois ans. Dans un déluge de courriers électroniques à ses correspondants américains, Norton note ses impressions quotidennes, et ce sont ces témoignages que l'auteur réunit en un petit volume de chroniques fictives, véritable feuilleton intercul-turel, qui retrace bien sûr aussi l'évolution mentale de notre voyageur.

Norton ne savait rien de la France sinon ce que tous les stéréotypes sur le pays de Sartre et de Bardot répètent: que la civilisation française est par définition supé-rieure et que les Français n'aiment pas vraiment les Américains. D'abord franche-ment perplexe devant les particularités de son nouveau milieu et ses curieux habi-tants, dont la conduite le laisse parfois pantois, Norton, en bon ingénieur, essaie de remonter des effets aux causes. Qu'est-ce qui pourrait expliquer l'obsession bien française de la cuisine, du sexe, de la mode, de la conversation, de la langue fran-çaise, enfin, pour tout dire, de la culture? A force de réfléchir sur le monde nouveau qui l'entoure, notre voyageur d'outre-atlantique se pose bien des questions, dont quelques-unes restent très controversées dans l'époque actuelle. Comment peut-on rester aussi attaché à l'Etat Providence en ces temps-ci? Pourquoi les Français font-ils grève à tout moment plutôt que d'entamer un dialogue constructif avec l'adver-saire, comme le font leurs collègues d'outre-rhin et d'outre-atlantique? Pourquoi la solution d'un problème en France passe-t-elle le plus souvent par l'augmentation des impôts? Et pourquoi cette mauvaise foi à droite comme à gauche quant à l'éli-tisme dans l'enseignement supérieur? Il n'y a rien d'étonnant à ce que la réforme de l'université n'aboutisse jamais. D'autres questions prêtent plutôt à sourire, bien qu'elles soient toujours fort pertinentes. Pourquoi perdre autant de temps à se serrer la main et de faire la bise à longueur de journée? Deux milliards d'heures de travail seraient partis en fumée chaque année à cause de ces coutumes bien gauloises! Tout cela paraît insensé aux étrangers, mais il y a plus. Sans doute un étranger ne pourra jamais comprendre la foi quasi totale des descendants de Descartes en la grapholo-gie? Néanmoins la France est la cinquième puissance économique du monde et nous a donné le Concorde, le TGV et Ariane. Aimer, c'est comprendre.

Ainsi, les paradoxes abondent dans l'hexagone et obligent ce Candide amerlo-que à s'interroger sur sa propre culture. Lors d'une visite en famille chez les siens en Caroline du Sud il s'aperçoit qu'il boîte entre deux cultures. Il n'en croit pas ses yeux lorsqu'il voit pour la première fois ses compatriotes tels qu'ils apparaissent aux yeux des européens. Qu'est-ce que les Américains ont à sourire à tout bout de champ, c'est-à dire quand ils ne sont pas en train de grignoter sur quelque chose? Sa feinte candeur donne beaucoup de sel à ses observations et un comique fort original naît de la désinvolture avec laquelle l'auteur discute des questions pourtant fort sé-rieuses.

Et puis, l'étudiant étranger qui se plaint toujours de ce que l'enseignement du fran-çais est trop porté sur la littérature et l'histoire de la civilisation, trouve ici son compte: l'auteur, qui est prof à HEC, nous donne un minicours en management interculturel et nous offre d'innombrables aperçus sur le contexte du business hexagonal. Bref, ce livre me paraît une totale réussite. L'auteur sait décocher le trait qui porte et le livre abonde en formules percutantes du genre: «les Français sont monarchistes, même s'ils croient vivre dans un régime démocratique et républicain.»

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