

BOOK REVIEWS*: Juan Manuel Lopez Muñoz, Sophie Marnette, Laurence Rosier, Malin Rotman, Françoise Sullet-Nylander (coord.). *Le discours rapporté : une question de genre ?* (*Le discours et la langue. Revue de linguistique française et d'analyse du discours.* tome 7.1, 2015); Jean-Louis Pierre, *Identités de C.F Ramuz*, Artois Presses Université, 2011.



Juan Manuel Lopez Muñoz, Sophie Marnette, Laurence Rosier, Malin Rotman, Françoise Sullet-Nylander (coord.). *Le discours rapporté : une question de genre ?* (*Le discours et la langue. Revue de linguistique française et d'analyse du discours.* tome 7.1, 2015)

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How gender differences show up in language is a fundamental issue in Gender Studies. At least two research directions could be identified: the first one focuses on “sexism in language” (Lakoff, 1973: 47), seeking to discard any “linguistic discrimination”, i.e. all linguistic forms which remind of the social inequity between women and men; the second one, originating in the field of sociolinguistics, addresses the question of whether there are modes of speech which could be qualified as feminine.

* The original version of the book review of Mrs. Sue McGregor to Basarab Nicolescu's *From Modernity to Cosmodernity* (HSS IV.2 (2015), pp. 135-139 (Book Reviews and Presentations) DOI: 10.1515/hssr -2015-0019) was published in the *Integral Leadership Review* (2015): <http://integralleadershipreview.com/12916-47-basarab-nicolescu-from-modernity-to-cosmodernity-science-culture-and-spirituality/>

Paradoxically enough, the debates on this very linguistic discrimination could lead some researchers to question, for instance, the legitimacy of titles feminization in French. As Michard (1996) argues, this operation only accentuates the ideological difference between the concept of men, which will always refer to the human being and that of women, which will always be perceived as only related to the human being (Michard, 1996: 44-45, see also Lakoff, 1973). In a broader perspective, which envisages language as essential in women's "political representation", Butler (2006: 2) [1990] puts forward the necessary work on language: "For feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women".

As for the second area of research, the achievements in the theory of accommodation enabled researchers to review William Labov's founding studies on variation and women's role in linguistic change: it is not necessarily always the sex difference that is relevant for variation, but rather the accommodation to the context – which emerges from interaction (see Armstrong *et al.*, 2001 and Gadet, 2001). Thus, the concept of sexolectal variation could no longer be operational.

Is there a difference in the way in which a woman or a man renders the speech of someone else? Is there a difference between the way in which the speech of a woman or that of a man is reported? In other words, is there a relation between gender and reported speech in literature? Answering this question is the point of volume 7.1. of the journal *Le discours et la langue. Revue de linguistique française et d'analyse du discours*, which gathers fourteen papers presented in the 5th conference *Ci-Dit* held at the University of Stockholm in June 2014¹. This special journal issue contributes to the discussion already mentioned about the relation between gender difference and the modes of speech, at the wide level of discourse.

The editors divided the fourteen contributions in two categories (pp. 7-11): those questioning the existence of literary genres based on gender distinction through the analysis of the reported speech; the others trying to find a relation between gender and the type of the reported speech. Certainly, the two aspects are interconnected and it can be noticed that some of the contributions could be treated as belonging to the two categories at the same time. As mentioned above, the articles in the first category address the question of whether a feminine writing really exists. To

answer this question, Fabienne Baider will not proceed to the analysis of the discourse produced by women, but of the “discourse circulating on the woman-author”. Working on historical records of historical dictionaries and on a literary criticism corpus, she remarks the absence of women from this kind of writings. In fact, only the date of an innovation made by a woman is marked, the name of the woman-author undergoing a process of suppression (see the example of Christine de Pizan). Following Butler’s theory of gender performativity, Baider argues that a *sexolect* is built through this type of discourse, namely a “*sexolecte allocentré*”: the allocutor emerges from the locutor’s discourse. The very expression of the woman-author (“*femme-auteur*” in French), a hybrid one, focuses on woman and locks up women’s writing in the framework of a feminine literature.

If in Baider’s paper the image of feminine writing is created from outside, in the next articles, this image emerges from this very writing. Hajar Elarem describes how in Doris Lessing’s novel *The Golden Notebook* the deconstruction of narrative patterns (in a “subversive narrative discourse which transcends the conventional forms of genre and gender”, p. 39) serves this very women’s writing. Lessing’s narrative technique corresponds to Butler’s theory of gender performativity: the subjectivity, reconceptualized, is built through the discourse : “It [Doris Lessing’s book] radically decenters gendered subjectivity and defies categorization as a gendered feminine narrative by enacting a play with genres and gender and by challenging the hierarchical opposition between men and women, subject and object, reality and fiction” (p. 39).

Two papers deal with Assia Djebar’s writings. Marion Colas-Blaise asks herself to what extent some specific reported speech forms contribute to the emergence of a women’s literature. The use of direct speech, free direct speech and empathetic speech in *L’Amour, la fantasia* corresponds to the liberation of women’s discourse: this is no longer reformulated, but showed. The woman who says “I” becomes a subject. It is the French language that allows women to speak, but French which is strongly influenced by the Arabic, between the conqueror’s idiom and the local one. According to Hélène Barthelmebs, what makes the distinctive feature of Djebar’s writing in *Le Quator Algérien* is the hybrid nature of the reported speech forms. The author expresses herself through a wide range of “I”, the voices of other

women. The story within a story technique is used by Djébar as in *One Thousand and One Nights*.

We find that in the two last papers of this first category identified by the editors the issue of women's writing is very different from its treatment in the four other papers. The question is whether the issue of women's writing is of interest in Dominique Maiguenau's article about Molière's *Les précieuses ridicules*. If the precious discourse (as imitation of precious novels' discourse, this precious discourse is neither a reported speech nor a discourse clearly assumed) can be treated as a sexolect and not as a sociolect, then the question is well formulated. In Yana Grinshpun's paper the argument is not about feminine writing but about the effeminates' discourse. In order to prove her theory, she chooses two 16th century texts. There is no direct speech concerning effeminates. Their discourse is not showed. This absence is to be related to the literary genre. This is how the author of this article approaches the subject.

The second group of papers deals with the relation between gender and reported speech. To what extent could gender account for the different features of reported speech (narrative voice, narrative point of view)? What emerges from several articles is the association of specific cases of reported speech with specific treatments of the masculine and the feminine.

The romance novel is a genre which predisposes to such a treatment. Christine Copy's paper on Harlequin romances identifies a series of linguistic phenomena which indicate that "l'univers du roman est construit de façon prépondérante autour et par le personnage féminin, ce qui participe à créer l'illusion d'une intériorité féminine dominante qui sert finalement de trame à l'ensemble du roman conformément au projet initial des concepteurs, ou peut-être des conceptrices, de ce modèle romanesque" (p. 151). These are nominal sentences (which cannot be reported in indirect speech), internal focalization (the feminine character's perception, this feminine character always being referred to by the pronoun *she*, which is not the case for the masculine character), the reporting verbs, which are thinking verbs, not saying verbs. The forms of reported speech such as free indirect speech and semi-free indirect speech bring out the suppression of any link with some narrator: this contributes to painting a picture in which the character's intimacy reveals itself completely.

Laurie Halse Anderson's novel *Speak* provides a very meaningful example of how reported speech can be used as a very subtle narrative technique. According to Grégoire Lacaze, the different features of direct speech (more or less conventional) correspond to the narrator's different attitudes towards the characters. Having been raped, the narrator herself undergoes an evolution from complete silence (a narrator who doesn't speak, but whose actions, gestures are described by the narrator herself, using the "I") to a very loud expression.

Two 18th century epistolary novels, the first written by a man (*Lettres de la Marquise de M*** au Comte de **** by Crébillon), the other by a woman (*Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd* by Mme Riccoboni), are investigated by Anne-Marie Paillet. The narrative pattern is the same in the two novels: the masculine speech only exists through the feminine reported speech. The question of whether the author's sex impacts the manner of reporting the masculine speech is also addressed in the first category of papers. Two different poles can be identified in this article, a masculine one corresponding to the narrated speech (in which what is important is not the form but the meaning) and a feminine one, characterized by the use of direct speech, the autonomous expressions or a particular feature of free indirect speech (use of the 5th person), all these focusing on form. However, Paillet notices a more complex construction of the points of view in Crébillon's novel, combining the two techniques. A complex feminine ethos emerges from this intersection of different points of view.

We find in Isabelle Duarte's paper the two types of relation involving reported speech. In her work on Portuguese novels written by women she notes a more important presence than in novels written by men of a particular feature of free indirect speech, through which the subjectivity of a special category of characters, of the disadvantaged people is expressed.

In Ahmadou Kourouma's novels the narrator-reporter is always a man. Joseph Adjé Anoh assimilates this to the social and cultural reality of Malinké society, in which the *griot* ("poet") relates facts in high-society assemblies, and with the nature of the diegesis itself (about power and war).

In the other articles, the women's voices are heard but the point is not to focus on the feminine discourse. André Leblanc presents the manner in which the reported speech of the characters (women or men) is distorted by Benjamin Constant in his novel *Adolphe* to the benefit of painting a

particular image of men / women and implicitly an image of himself, a favourable one, of course.

According to Sylvain Dournel, the presence of reported speech in Saint-John Perse's lyric poetry is a very special characteristic and, as such, it needs to be explored. Perse gives voice to women and men. The intersection of these multiple voices is only a better way through which the poet's message comes out. Isabelle Lachance's interest is the feminine discourse in travel narratives. While it is the wild man, an excellent speaker, which is sought after by the explorers in French travel narratives of the 16th and the 17th centuries, the wild woman's discourse is present too. But it is more an instrument of argumentative construction than a discourse fact in itself. This discourse is always accompanied by gesture, responding to a stereotype on the wild woman. To return to the question addressed by the title of this special journal issue, we can say that the answer is *yes* and *no*. Finally, the question itself prevails over the answer to the question. No demonstration is needed to prove that the study of reported speech is fundamental in literary analysis. The interest of the subject for Gender Studies is widely proved by the papers gathered here, based on works from very different literary spaces and from different periods.



Jean-Louis Pierre, *Identités de C.F Ramuz*, Artois Presses Université, 2011.

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As the title of the book *Identités de C.F Ramuz* suggests, the act of writing was for Ramuz a sacred activity and it is an embodiment of the various facets of the life and experiences of the author. Jean-Louis Pierre shows

the extent to which Ramuz's life and writings were intimately connected. He endeavors to portray the life and works of Ramuz in all their complexities and contradictions. The interweaving of subjectivity made the Swiss author's work original and unique; so much so that it is very difficult to classify his works under a given model or genre. J-L Pierre cites other reasons for the singularity of Ramuz's books. Firstly, he wrote in French, and as a result, the readership is limited to the francophone world. Secondly, Ramuz was very discreet about his religious or political position and therefore he could not garner much support from any side, be it religious, atheist or political. Finally, his writings never adhered to any particular school of thought. In order to facilitate the reading and understanding of his texts, J-L Pierre divides the author's works into three phases. He names the first phase "The Parisian Period". During this period the novels were centered on a single character, while exploring the different modalities of realism. It ends with the book *Adieu à beaucoup de personnages*, where the author bids goodbye to his protagonists and welcomes a new phase of writing that would highlight life in community. The second phase, which is a transitional one, marks the author's return to his homeland, the *Pays de Vaud*. It also celebrates a new beginning with Ramuz becoming the father of Swiss francophone literature. *Raison d'être*, written by Ramuz during this period, can be considered as the manifesto of this new literature of the homeland. It is also during this period that the author, preoccupied with the World War, introduces the question of the subaltern in his novels. His characters are faced with the unknown. His community of men devoid of moralistic ideologies aspires for the universal. The final phase, which according to J-L Pierre begins in 1920, celebrates the zenith of Ramuz's aesthetic evolution. The natural backdrop becomes prominent. His works focus more on intense moments and characters that represent essential values rather than on the plot.

Identities of C.F Ramuz is divided into three parts, each exploring a new dimension of the author's life and work. Needless to say the two are closely interwoven. The first part evokes the nature of Ramuz's beginnings in relation to his writings. It presents Ramuz's childhood and the death of two of his brothers before him. J-L Pierre believes that these deaths before the writer's birth played a very important role in shaping his conscience and his vocation. Writing meant for Ramuz recreating his identity and

creating a new beginning. It also explains why the author always drew a parallel between the act of writing and the concept of death. The other aspect that J-L Pierre brings to light is the creative dualism in Ramuz's writings, especially when it concerned the return to his roots. On one hand, Ramuz talks about the difficulties of his life in Paris and the need to come back home, on the other hand, he evokes his love for Paris and the feeling of estrangement in his own country. This feeling of anxiety has symbolic manifestations in his works in the form of a mother figure that adorns a dual nature: kind and cruel at the same time.

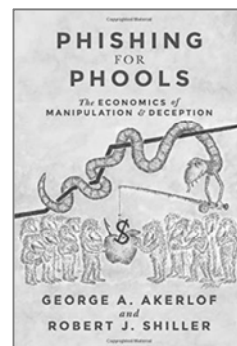
In the second part the critic highlights the author's sensibilities and their reflections in his aesthetical creation. Once the author reconciles with his initial anxiety, it is the geography or the topography of the *Pays de Vaud* that becomes his greatest reassurance. Thus one witnesses the creation of a privileged space in his novels, where time comes to a standstill. The fear of death leads the author to immobilize time in his fictive universe. Time and space are very closely linked in his novels and the connection between them is very strong. Furthermore, certain elements in Ramuz's novels are used as symbols representing the author's sensibilities. J-L Pierre analyzes these symbols in his book, for instance the presence of water in the novels represent Ramuz's emotions, Paris is the symbol of sexual liberation and the mountains are a symptomatic representation of the author's personality and his sensibilities. The mountains in Ramuz's novels not only form the natural backdrop but are as important as the characters in the novels. It is also through the mountains that the author talks of notions such as fraternity and resemblance among men. He also uses this strong symbol to highlight the fragility of man and his human condition. Furthermore, the mountain man is for Ramuz the ideal man, free, uninhibited, and a nomad whose life is conditioned by nature and the natural cycle of seasons.

In the third part, J-L Pierre extends his investigation and explores Ramuz the essayist and the political writer. He believes that Ramuz always harbored a political vision and maintained certain standards of spiritual and human qualities. The author feels that in spite of his discretion, Ramuz's actions represent strong ideological and political stances. His decision to leave Paris and settle in his homeland has, according to J-L Pierre, a strong ideological signification. Furthermore, the thematic of "Returning to one's homeland" can also be seen in his novels, for example soldiers returning to

their homes in *La Guerre dans le Haut Pays* and in *La Guerre aux papiers*. This theme corresponds to the ideological position taken by popular Swiss literature, where the protagonist comes back to the warmth and peace of his own land after having suffered in the cities. The importance given to history and Ramuz's quest to retrace his roots back to the Judeo-Christian era can be interpreted as an extension of the same theme. Ramuz's concept of writing as an act of transformation that brings forth change, the stylistic modifications in his own language etc., can be interpreted from a political perspective. Also, the farmer is at the heart of the Swiss author's political reflection. Furthermore, the decision to abandon the hero and emphasize the importance of the collectivity of man is an example of political action. Ramuz sanctifies the act of writing. While the writer is the chosen one, he feels marginalized. At the same, he disposes of a very strong tool i.e., language. The writer can thus be an agent of real action and change. J-L Pierre focuses on the stylistic modifications brought about by Ramuz to his language to satisfy his creative and ideological quest. One such example is the manner in which Ramuz isolates and repeats a fragment. The repetition is an important figure of speech in Ramuz's texts. Jean-Louis Pierre's book draws a detailed and impartial portrait of the writer and his writings. The author analyzes the various facets of Ramuz's life and personality that have greatly influenced his writings: the nature of his involvement with his surroundings, his experiences and memories of childhood, the role of imagination and the elements from his immediate environment that transformed into powerful symbols. This book thus gives an in depth understanding of Ramuz's aesthetical vision. J-L Pierre evokes themes such as life-death and resurrection, nostalgia of one's origin, separation, the ephemeral nature of life, the alter ego etc., which form the basis of Ramuz's universe. Thus, this book brings out the different faces of Ramuz (writer, visionary, essayist, poet etc.) that have influenced his work. Finally J-L Pierre highlights the greatness of Ramuz, who in spite of enduring the temptation of returning to Paris, stayed in his home town and created a unique universe using the elements from his immediate environment. His narrator is thus a figure of modernity and singularity that is capable of adopting different viewpoints. His originality springs from his introspection and the conflict within him. Ramuz's works will therefore remain an example of originality for time immemorial.

BOOK PRESENTATIONS

George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Shiller, *Phishing for Phools: The Economics of Manipulation and Deception*, Princeton University Press, 2015, 288 p. ISBN-13: 978-0691168319



Nobel Prize-winning economists George Akerlof and Robert Shiller deliver a fundamental challenge to this insight, arguing that markets harm as well as help us. As long as there is profit to be made, sellers will systematically exploit our psychological weaknesses and our ignorance through manipulation and deception. Rather than being essentially benign and always creating the greater good, markets are inherently filled with tricks and traps and will "phish" us as "phools." *Phishing for Phools* explores the central role of manipulation and deception in fascinating detail in each of these areas and many more. It thereby explains a paradox: why, at a time when we are better off than ever before in history, all too many of us are leading lives of quiet desperation. As Akerlof and Shiller remind us, the same incentives that lead sellers to introduce innovations that improve quality and reduce costs also ensure that no profitable opportunity to cheat us will remain unexploited. This highly readable and insightful book will transform the way we think about the role of government.

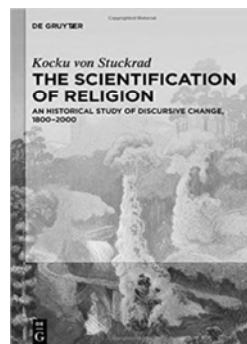


Thomas Piketty, *L'économie des inégalités / The Economics of Inequality*, Paris, Ed. La Découverte, 2015, 128 p. ISBN-13: 978-2707185679

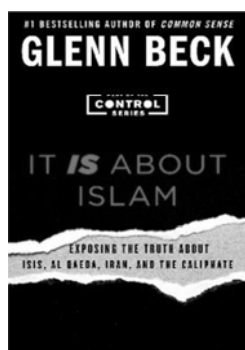
The French well-known economist proposes a concise text in which he explains how inequality evolves and how economists measure it. In subsequent chapters, he explores variances in income and ownership of capital and the variety of policies used to reduce these gaps. Along the way, with characteristic clarity and precision, he introduces key ideas about the relationship between labor and capital, the effects of different systems of taxation, the distinction between "historical" and "political" time, the impact of education and technological change, the nature of capital markets, the role of unions, and apparent tensions between the pursuit of efficiency and the

pursuit of fairness. Succinct, accessible, and authoritative, this book is an ideal start for those who want to understand the fundamental issues at the heart of one of the most pressing concerns in contemporary economics and politics.

Kocku von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion: An Historical Study of Discursive Change, 1800-2000*, De Gruyter, 2014, 225 p. ISBN-13: 978-1614516262



Enigmatic and complex, the relation between science and religion has never stopped being a challenge for the European societies. Often paired as diametric opposites, the boundaries of these two fields are not always as clear as they seem to be. In his book, Kocku von Stuckrad, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Groningen, demonstrates how the construction of what constitutes 'religion' and 'science' was a relational process that emerged with the competition between various systems of knowledge. Key figures in the history of the field of Religious Studies, such as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Rudolf Otto, and Mircea Eliade, played instrumental roles in legitimizing the authority of mysticism, goddess worship, and shamanism. Ultimately, what we discover is that 'religion' and 'science' are not so much distinctive spheres but elastic systems that arise within the particular circumstances of secular modernity.



Glenn Beck, *It IS All About Islam: Exposing the Truth About ISIS, Al Qaeda, Iran and the Caliphate*, Threshold Editions, 2015, 272 p. ISBN-13: 978-1501126123

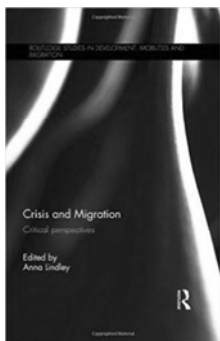
Glenn Beck is a radio host and founder of TheBlaze television network, a bestselling author in both fiction and nonfiction. In this book he explains that one of the consequences of living in a free, open-minded, tolerant society like ours is that we don't see what is really going on elsewhere in the world. In the Middle East, there are many countries where the vast majority of Muslims share the fundamentalist view that Islam is the only true religion and that it must be spread through any means necessary. They are growing in power, influence, and size. Islam - as it is interpreted and practiced by these people - is incompatible with freedom the way

we understand it, and with all the institutions familiar to the Western way of life. Drawing on quotes from the Koran and the hadith, as well as from leaders of ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Muslim Brotherhood, Glenn Beck seeks to expose the true origins of Islamic extremism as well as the deadly theological motivations behind these agencies of destruction.

Halal Matters. Islam, Politics and Markets in Global Perspective, Edited by **Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, Johan Fischer, John Lever**, Routledge, 2015, 204 pages ISBN-13: 978-1-13-881276-5



In today's globalized world, halal (meaning 'permissible' or 'lawful') is about more than food. Politics, power and ethics all play a role in the halal industry in setting new standards for production, trade, consumption and regulation. The question of how modern halal markets are constituted is increasingly important and complex. Written from a unique interdisciplinary global perspective, this book demonstrates that as the market for halal products and services is expanding and standardizing, it is also fraught with political, social and economic contestation and difference. The discussion is illustrated by rich ethnographic case studies from a range of contexts, and consideration is given to both Muslim majority and minority societies. *Halal Matters* will be of interest to students and scholars working across the humanities and social sciences, including anthropology, sociology and religious studies.

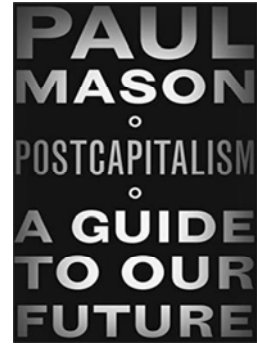


Crisis and Migration: Critical perspectives, Edited by Anna Lindley, Routledge, 2015, 224 p. ISBN-13: 978-0415645027

Crisis and migration have a long association, in popular and policy discourse as well as in social scientific analysis. Despite the emergence of more nuanced accounts of mobility in recent years, there remains a persistent emphasis on migration being either a symptom or a cause of crisis. Moreover, in the context of a recent series of politically controversial situations, terms like 'migration crisis' and 'crisis migration' are acquiring increasing currency among policy-makers and academics. This volume provides fresh perspectives on this routine association, critically

examining a series of contextualised processes around the world, from the Arab uprisings, conflict and famine in the Horn of Africa, cartel violence in Latin America, to the global economic crisis, and immigration ‘crises’ from East Asia to Southern Africa to Europe.

Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to our Future*, Allen Lane, 2015, 368 p., ISBN-13: 978-1846147388



British journalist and economics editor at Channel 4 News, Paul Mason, like Marx, believes that capitalism will collapse under the weight of its own internal contradictions. These include unsustainable levels of debt on the part of both individuals and nations (“2008 was the tremor in advance of the earthquake”). In addition, the rise of information technology will corrode market mechanisms, erode property rights and destroy the relationship between wages, property and work. Mason argues that the internet is bringing another idea within the scope of the achievable: socialism. By socialism, he doesn’t mean the tame social democracy that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, he means the real deal, going right back to the utopians of the early 19th century and their eventual successors, Marx, Luxemburg and Lenin. This is socialism as a challenge to capitalism, the market and the very idea of private ownership. The alternative, warns the author, is chaos.



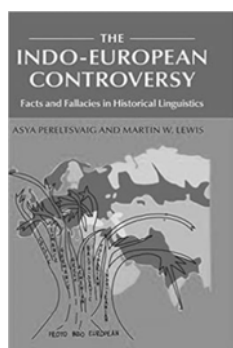
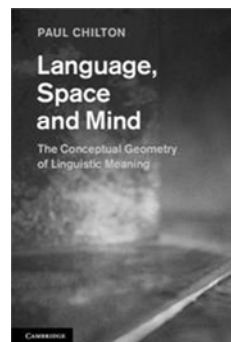
Owen Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism: A History Through Buildings*, Allen Lane, 2015, 624 p. ISBN-13: 978-1846147685

Owen Hatherley is the British author of the acclaimed *Militant Modernism*, a defense of the modernist movement, and *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain*. He writes regularly on the political aesthetics of architecture, urbanism and popular culture for a variety of publications. In *Landscapes of Communism*, Hatherley tries to answer questions about the use of the “grey prefabricated towers” in the Baltic capitals, of the “immense neo-Renaissance blocks” of Warsaw, or of the Moscow Metro and its “staggeringly opulent gilded halls”. Hatherley spent five years wandering

through the former Soviet bloc – Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Vilnius, Kiev, Moscow, Riga, Tbilisi and many elsewhere – trying to understand communist architecture and its cultural, political and social implications.

Paul Chilton, *Language, Space and Mind: The Conceptual Geometry of Linguistic Meaning*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 353 p. ISBN-13: 978-1107010130

Paul Chilton is Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University. The idea of this book is that basic spatial cognition, including navigation and orientation, provides the foundation of linguistic meanings. The author begins by examining the geometric elements that can be used to describe concrete spatial expressions and cognitions but moves rapidly to an abstract space that is still grounded in concrete geometry and preserves deixis and point of view. The Deictic Space Theory proposes a three-dimensional conceptual space that integrates attentional distance, temporal distance and epistemic distance, making it possible to unify a number of well known linguistic-conceptual phenomena, including tense, aspect, counterfactuals and deontic modality. The book makes links to the cognitive sciences throughout and concludes with a discussion of the relationship between language, brain and mind.

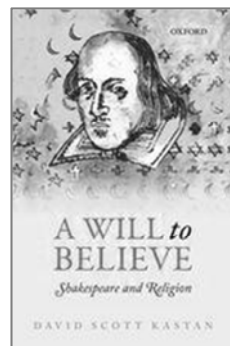


Asya Pereltsveig and Martin Lewis, *The Indo-European Controversy: Facts and Fallacies in Historical Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 338p. ISBN-13: 978-1107054530

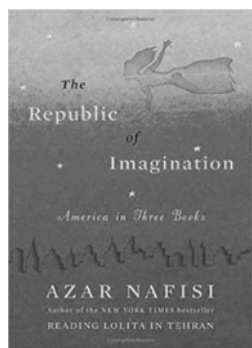
The global media recently announced that the mysteries surrounding the Indo-European languages had been solved by evolutionary biologists using cutting-edge computational techniques. Through the use of phylogenetic and phylogeographical analysis, treating cognates like genes and conceptualizing the spread of languages in terms of the diffusion of viruses, the researchers claim to have located the origin of the Indo-European language family in Neolithic Anatolia, challenging the near-consensus view that it emerged in the grasslands north of the Black Sea thousands of years later. But this new

approach fails to withstand scrutiny. As languages do not evolve like biological species and do not spread like viruses, the model produces incoherent results, contradicted by the empirical record at every turn. This book asserts that the origin and spread of languages must be examined primarily through the time-tested techniques of linguistic analysis, rather than those of evolutionary biology.

David Scott Kastan, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2014, 176 p. ISBN-13: 978-0199572892



David Scott Kastan is professor of English at Yale University and one of the major Shakespeareans of our time. His book offers a provocative account of the ways in which religion animates Shakespeare's plays and provides alert, incisive and often surprising readings in a clear and accessible style. Written and performed in a culture in which religion was indeed inescapable, the plays have usually been seen either as evidence of Shakespeare's own disinterested secularism or, more recently, as coded signposts to his own sectarian commitments. *A Will to Believe* offers a thoughtful, surprising, and often moving consideration of how religion actually functions in them: not as keys to Shakespeare's own faith but as remarkably sensitive registers of the various ways in which religion charged the world in which he lived. The book shows what we know and can't know about Shakespeare's own beliefs, and demonstrates how the often fraught and vertiginous religious environment of Post-Reformation England gets refracted by the lens of Shakespeare's imagination.



Azar Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination: America in Three Books*, Viking, 2014, 352 p. ISBN-13: 978-0670026067

Azar Nafisi is an Iranian teacher leaving in Washington, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. In *The Republic of Imagination*, Nafisi explores the influence fiction has had on life in America, where literature, while not outlawed, is endangered. Her opening tribute to the power of literature segues into revelatory close readings of the three novels she selected, after much

deliberation, as salient expressions of the American spirit, specifically our restlessness, 'unending questioning,' and perpetual sense of outsidership. Nafisi is a master essayist who sinuously weaves together elements of memoir, criticism, biography, and history. In works by Mark Twain, Sinclair Lewis, and Carson McCullers, Nafisi finds the essence of the American experience, filtered through narratives not about exceptionalism or fabulous success, but alienation, solitude, and landscape.

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