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Introduction

This varied issue completes our inaugural year and the first volume of *EnterText*. We wish to thank everyone, near and far, who has contributed to it to date—all those who have submitted their work, whether or not it has appeared, and all those who have participated in the peer-review process. This is also our first edition to be published since the events of 11 September, and the opening poems are placed where they are as our way of marking those losses, and the questions they pose for us all. The poet Chris Moylan had emailed some of his work to me before 11 September but I did not open that mail until just after, and was greatly moved by the added elegiac eloquence the first poem in particular acquired in its fresh historical moment. It is an important reminder that meanings are always on the move, and contingent, and that juxtapositions, sometimes random ones, can produce real significance. Likewise, the inclusion in this edition of some thoughts and writings from the Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif was in train well before 11 September, but it too has acquired something extra. The presentation here of the extract from her latest novel, not only in the English in which it was written but also in Arabic translation, is of symbolic importance at this point of history, as well as, we hope, of lasting interest.

One of the tasks of history as an academic discipline could be expressed as trying to give an account of what went wrong. Heather Nunn's article on the way J. G. Ballard uses fiction to anatomise the psychology of dysfunction in Thatcherite Britain engages imaginatively and productively with some urgent questions about the politics of culture. The shock of a comfortable community at the murderous propensities of its children represents a drama being played out in many parts of the world, with fantasies and actualities in complex symbiosis. Nunn's perspective on some paradoxes around gender is compelling, as she relates Ballard's story *Running Wild* to the difficulties that contemporary criticisms of Thatcher had in negotiating the crucially gendered aspect of her political persona.

The dysfunctional is also Nick Redfern's topic in his fresh look at Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. He examines Hitchcock as practical joker, setting up his audience for a fall with the film's trailer, and deliberately undermining any emerging readings as it unfolds. Redfern's application of psychoanalytical criticism leads to the intriguing thesis that the film's subject is really the Freudian analysis of cinema itself. A companion-piece to this is Lynne Macedo's study of Hitchcock in relation to the 2001 winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, V. S. Naipaul. She identifies the moral ambivalence which the two artists deploy in parallel, in the context of similar concerns, and demonstrates both how the films of Hitchcock influenced the young Naipaul growing up in Trinidad, and how he incorporates references to them in his work. She argues that their work shows both artists to be interested in the problematics of identity formation, and in particular, what happens when it goes wrong. In both she identifies an overriding philosophical pessimism.

The philosophical is the concern also of a number of the creative items included in this edition. Not only Chris Moylan, but Gray Kochhar-Lindgren and

Andy Weaver in their different poetic idioms raise a number of searching questions around thought, language, and experience, while Davis Schneiderman's story is a witty postmodern excursus into the idea of language as power, in which the unfolding strangeness yet surreal logic of the story's language distances the reader, to unsettling effect. This is a sci-fi dystopian world like no other. Robert Miltner's poems are also simultaneously ludic and serious, though in a more painterly way. Above all, each of these works is a delight, with a relish of language and of the human condition, in all its contradictions and imperfections.

Our previous issue marked the designation of 2001 as Year of Languages. This issue develops that commitment by including a stimulating range of work in and about translation. We have some sharp and sparkling poems from a Romanian poet and dramatist, Saviana Stănescu, currently a Fulbright scholar in the USA, in their original Romanian and in English translation. We also have some poems from the Arctic region, where the implications of a "minority language" have an acute and urgent meaning. Inga Ravna Eira who lives in northern Norway writes in her mother tongue, Sami, a drily ironic poetry which is informed by a very specific politics of gender and culture. Her poems are given here in three versions—in Sami, and in translation into Norwegian and English. These triple texts are fascinating, in that the shape of the words and their patterning becomes almost more evident to the eye which reads without knowing the language. Thus although a translation to a familiar language may make meaning transparent but lack some of the patterning of the original, this patterning can be glimpsed in the prototext, even without understanding.

To be between languages may be intrinsically a growth experience. Certainly many great writers have built on their ability to draw on more than one linguistic or cultural tradition in their art. In the transcript of a public appearance at Brunel

University, London, Ahdaf Soueif talks about why she writes in English and about her approach to her work. This is followed by a memorable chapter from her much-translated novel *The Map of Love*, in the English in which it was written but also in the Arabic of the author's mother tongue—a phrase of particular resonance in that it is her mother who is the translator. The appearance of the flowing Arabic script may be strange to many of our readers, who may also find the idea of reading from right to left disorienting—an ironic term in this context—but it is an eloquent reminder of the distinctiveness of all cultural traditions, and of the particular versatilities and graces which come with being able to move between them. The chapter is chosen because it talks not only of a very human story, but also of language, providing a glimpse of the conceptual structure of Arabic, and its elaboration of root terms to encompass their opposites.

David Scott's study also focuses on translation, telling an intriguing story which begins in the Arabic world of the fifteenth century, with the text written at that epoch by Nikitin, a Russian merchant who visited India. As well as recording his travels he was also recording his conversion to Islam, but his nineteenth-century translator, Wielhorski, a Pole who was a diplomat in London, drew a veil over the more explicitly Islamic elements of the text by leaving them untranslated in his English version. As Scott shows, the selective failure to translate produces a major distortion in the meaning of that which is translated, traducing history and witness.

Poland is also represented in this issue by the “tour” in words and pictures of “Joseph Conrad's Polish Footprints,” inspired by the conference of the same name. Excerpts from the writings of Conrad, his friends, family, biographers and critics—some of them from hard-to-access primary sources in Polish, being translated into English for the first time—are accompanied by photographs of the places mentioned.

The homes of Conrad's childhood and the places where he stayed on his visit at the outbreak of World War I are pictured, as well as some of the public places, particularly in Cracow, where he lived and moved. It gives an insight into the Polish roots of a writer who chose his fourth or fifth language, English, as the medium for his aesthetic expression.

Perhaps others would like to develop the genre of the cultural "tour" in words and pictures. The editors are interested in receiving submissions of this kind, as the web is an ideal place for the genre. Paper publication makes the reproduction of images prohibitively expensive, but this is not the case online. Also, readers are warmly invited to respond to us via our Forum. Our concept in founding the journal, and naming it as we did, was that it would differ from the conventional academic journal on paper in two principal ways. First, the new technology offers means of communication which were not available hitherto—the video clips in the "Hamlet on Screen" supplement to *EnterText* 1.2, for example—but secondly, the reciprocal dimension is also important. The invaluable opportunity is there for the reader to *enter* his or her own *text* and to embark on a dialogue with authors and other readers. So please, give us some feedback. And please, do talk about us to your friends.

What are our hopes for our second year and beyond? We would like in the future to extend our outreach to continents outside Europe and North America. We request the help of existing readers in getting a wider readership. To keep the full range of our remit in play is another central objective: *EnterText* is for anything within our technical capabilities that comes under those three broad umbrellas of historical studies, cultural studies, and creative work. We would like to maintain and develop our interest in translation, which is not going to end with 2001. Also we hope to receive material about cultural events and publications, and interesting websites,

for our Listings. As already mentioned, we cherish the hope that our Forum will spring into life in the forthcoming months. We have some excellent things in the pipeline already for the coming editions—though we need more—and are planning ahead for our third volume. Every issue carries creative work and every third issue is an open issue, so please send us your work. To check out the email and find a new submission from somewhere and someone fresh is an unfailing thrill.

The opportunity which the web offers for contact between cultures and regions of the globe is unparalleled in the history of the world, but while a *lingua franca* may be vital, we need to guard against cultural hegemony. These things are never simple. It is an old truism that the Americans and the British are divided by a common language. Indeed, one of the things Ahdaf Soueif says here in talking about her work is that sometimes too much is assumed when a language is shared, whereas people may try harder to understand each other when more than one language is in play. It is a timely reminder that there is always a politics to language practice, and that we all need to think creatively about this, not just wring our hands over the past, if we are to build a better future. As Ahdaf Soueif also reminds us in her novel *The Map of Love*,

If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of 100 people, with all existing human ratios staying the same, it would look like this: There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Americas and 8 Africans. 80 would live in substandard housing, 70 would be unable to read. 50 would suffer from malnutrition. 50 per cent of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people. And all 6 would be citizens of the United States. (p.489)

In the final analysis the internet is a luxury, but it is also a tool. We must learn to wield it well.