

Dedication and Introduction

This issue is dedicated to the memory of John La Rose, founder of New Beacon Books, London. He lived to see the fortieth anniversary, in 2006, of the publishing house—or maisonette, as he sometimes called it, wryly—bookshop and cultural centre he had established. Having come to London from Trinidad in the early 1960s, he always had the intention to start a bookshop in the British capital because he understood how important ideas are if we are to act on our dreams of changing the world. And it was this phrase, so often on his lips, which Horace Ove chose as the title for his feature film about John La Rose’s life, *Dream to Change the World* (2005). In the intervening decades since its foundation, New Beacon’s impact on the cultural map of Britain, the Caribbean and the wider world has acquired real significance, not least as a bright beacon of what a few individuals can achieve with intelligence, passion and dedication (not money, which nowadays tends to be seen as the only prerequisite).

New Beacon was named after the Beacon political movement of 1930s Trinidad, which was associated with the slogan “Agitate! Educate! Federate!” While these words have a particular resonance in Trinidad, of course, they also echo round the wider Anglophone Caribbean, where the West Indies Federation, which had promised a realisation of the dreams of John’s generation, lasted so few years, from 1958 to 1962. And they remain resonant on the global stage, reminding us, as they do, of the need to

rouse ordinary people's awareness and feelings, to deepen dialogue and understanding, and to co-operate with one another if our puny individualities are to be able to exert real influence. John La Rose was a constructive political thinker who always took the broader, internationalist view of the particular struggle, and was never seduced by what he called the politics of resentment. He was keen to understand people and events as part of an ongoing, unfolding history, the direction of which could always be influenced today. And he was always ready to stand up in the street and make his (gentle) voice heard—and to lead.

His attitude was unfailingly constructive—deeply committed, but always with an intelligent, dispassionate handle on the strategies most likely to succeed. Central to this understanding was his awareness of the role of culture, and of historical consciousness. And central to his personal impact was a serene personality with a beatific smile and great eloquence, for John La Rose could win over the opposition where others with more abrasive ways so often failed. Literature he loved not only for its own sake, but because he knew how it could help to deliver the project to “Agitate! Educate! Federate!” He was himself a respected poet who published two slim volumes, but who perhaps would have done more as a writer if he had not devoted so much of his life and time to New Beacon.

He leaves behind a thriving bookshop (and international book-ordering service), as well as the George Padmore Institute with its budding research archive and cultural and political events, and, not least, the numerous works which he published under the New Beacon imprint, often now classics in their field, from C. L. R. James's *Minty Alley* to Anne Walmsley's magnificent history of the cultural “federation” which united, in London, a hugely talented generation of migrants, amongst whom John La Rose was

focal—*The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966-1972*. He also leaves behind the impact on countless people who grew, intellectually, through what he made happen. The founding of the first International Book Fair of Radical, Black and Third World Books in 1982 was the start of what became an annual institution for twelve years. It filled the floor of Islington's old Town Hall with a heady mix of bookstalls laden with publications from all over the world, and, at the evening performances, filled the stage with international poets and writers, some familiar, others new, who enthralled packed audiences. It seemed there were almost as many standing at the back and round the sides as had managed to secure seats. It was not just what these artists presented, individually, which was so stimulating. It was the juxtaposition of so much talent and thought-provoking diversity on one platform. And they addressed a rapt audience, many of whom had never been to an event like it but were willing to stand for a couple of hours to hear what touched and moved them.

It was a real demonstration of intercultural exchange and possibilities, in a world which at times seemed—and still seems—implacably opposed to such osmotic cross-fertilisation. The rhetoric of multiculturalism has, in the intervening years, been taken up by many of our institutions, but practice has often lagged behind, and there is a strong impetus now, in certain quarters, towards discrediting it. Whatever label we use, and there are several, we need to be wary of the subtle undermining of what John La Rose and his generation worked for and achieved, their acts of practical faith in the possibility of a better world, which New Beacon so memorably exemplified.

It is therefore pleasing that this issue of *EnterText* is packed with just such interesting individual voices and stimulating juxtapositions, weaving in and out of diverse approaches to cultural and social history and the contemporary world, and embracing creative work in several genres, from painting to poetry, fiction to photography. The editorial task of sequencing the *EnterText* contributions is always fascinating, if sometimes daunting, since the journal's interdisciplinary and intercultural remit attracts a wide range of scholarly work in a sweep of disciplines and genres. However, for this issue it was obviously right to begin with two Caribbean contributions.

First is the commemorative story “Bookmarks for John La Rose” by E. A. Markham, like John La Rose a Caribbean-born world citizen, which grows imaginatively, and with characteristic wit, from the conundrum of how best to honour the memory of a respected friend and thinker. The second is an essay of social history, from Trinidad. Ron Sookram writes on a subject which has received little attention hitherto, the social integration of Grenadian society, which is developing rather differently from that of its bigger neighbour, Trinidad. The argument analyses the reasons why, in Grenada, descendants of indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent are so well integrated with their African-Caribbean fellow-citizens—a good-news story for the communities of the Caribbean and for other culturally plural societies. This is followed by an essay also about social cohesion, but from the other side of the Atlantic. Nigerian analyst A. O. Adesoji examines the recent history of West Africa's Yoruba communities and wrings his hands over their wrangling which thwarts the chance to co-operate or unite.

The next two essays relate to an older history. Vivienne Westbrook's study of the iconic Elizabethan figure, Sir Walter Rawleigh (the spelling preferred here, though it is variously spelt Raleigh and Ralegh), also has a Caribbean dimension, because one of his voyages took in Trinidad and an expedition up the Orinoco, during which his son was killed. The article's focus, however, is the process of mythification which Rawleigh underwent, both in his own lifetime and subsequently, from his execution right up to the present. This study is followed by one offering a new look at a branch of literary theory. New historicism has become a familiar critical concept to those working on the literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, but Jennifer Rich's essay gives it a fresh perspective in a searching discussion of the rhetoric of historical form. She argues that Greenblatt's anecdotal method is only itself, and should not be taken, on the principle of synecdoche, as an adequate base from which to theorise an understanding of the whole early modern period.

While Rawleigh was no stranger to the vagaries of political power and, as a historian and poet, understood the importance of effective communication if objectives were to be secured, the next two papers take questions of power, representation and legitimacy to very different realms, both relating to the USA. Robert Williams's far-reaching discussion of the ethics of democratic governance looks at the implications of anti-nuclear protest in America. It examines whether what the power politics of a self-styled liberal democracy produce is necessarily legitimate, as the dominant view holds, with its faith in due process, or whether different account should be taken of widespread dissent. In the next paper Timothy Gleason focuses on a special issue of the influential magazine *LIFE* from the early fifties, and analyses its portrayal of Asia to the American

public in the context of the unfolding West/East power strategies of the day. Questions of representing an Asian alterity are likewise a theme of British artist Michael Croft in the following series of paintings and related texts, creative and reflective, arising from his life in Thailand, set against personal memory.

New approaches to historical discourse are also the topic of the following three essays. Paul Arthur considers the use of interactive digital resources modelled on computer games to communicate history, with a discussion of three examples, and Stephanie Ceraso discusses the visual narratives of Art Spiegelman, which use a graphic style more familiar from fantasy entertainment—comics—to tackle deeply serious historical subjects, the holocaust and 9/11. The spotlight falls on the evolution of popular culture also in Darren Jorgensen's essay on the emergence of postcyberpunk in the 1990s. In a discussion focused on the work of Greg Egan and Bruce Sterling, he considers the emergence of a new type of protagonist in the science fiction genre as it responds to unfolding technologies in the real world.

The theme of rhetoric returns in the next two essays. Mark Hill and Jane Cromartie offer a fresh approach to consumer theory using a classic philosophical style. Countering the tendency of market analysts to build on fixed assumptions, they posit the concept of the indefinite consumer, one continuously constituted and reconstituted through Deleuzian difference—hence the fragmented form they have chosen for their essay, structured as a series of questions and answers. They adduce Nietzsche's rejection of deterministic notions of truth in favour of a focus on interpretation and flux. Nietzsche is also the subject of the following essay in which Steven Michels scrutinises his use of the preface. He counters the common perception that Nietzsche intended his esotericism

to keep his readers at a distance, arguing instead that the Prefaces to his work demonstrate his will to communicate clearly and effectively with as wide a public as possible. If Nietzsche is one of the iconic figures of nineteenth-century philosophy, one of the iconic figures of nineteenth-century American literature, Thoreau, is the topic of the next essay. In their different ways both are explorers of spirituality. By focusing on one of his less well known works, *The Maine Woods*, David Scott challenges conventional views of Thoreau, showing how his response to nature centred on spiritual awe, and analysing his perception of the place of the American Indian at nature's heart.

The oblique approach to Nietzsche and Thoreau by paying close attention to what is often passed over as peripheral to their work is mirrored in James Brogden's photographs of the contemporary world through marginal urban landscapes, scenes of dereliction and abandonment which he reveals to have their own abject beauty. By focusing on their eloquence as sites which can stimulate the imagination—somewheres rather than nowheres—he calls in the accompanying essay for them to be reconsidered for their potential as socially valuable locations rather than non-places to be ignored, and reminds us in tandem of their special ecological resource value. Marginalised people are Claire Spivakovsky's subject. She considers the place of Aboriginal Australians in relation to the provisions of Australian law. While the Indigenous offender has historically been relegated to a kind of non-place, she argues there is evidence now of moves towards a more inclusive and liberal practice.

Marginalisation because of sexual orientation is a theme common to the two final essays. Both consider literary texts—from opposite ends of the twentieth century—which treat the losses and loneliness of gay experience in a homophobic society, as well as

affirming the value of the different self. Janice Stewart offers a fresh reading of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* while David Fulton gives a close analysis of the poetry of Thom Gunn and Mark Doty as exemplifying a new genre, that of the AIDS elegy.

The intellectual sweep of the issue thus begins and ends in elegiac commemoration. It concludes, fittingly, with a poetic sequence, also by David Fulton, charting not only personal loss but affirmation of human relationships and potentialities in an eloquent narrative which encompasses death and birth, east and west.

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