

REVIEW

ANETT SCHÄFFER

Péter Gaál-Szabó.
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*Intertextuality,
Intersubjectivity and
Narrative Identity*.
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Wandering through the Spaces of Literature

Intertextuality, Intersubjectivity and Narrative Identity features eleven essays written by Hungarian scholars introducing the reader to a wide range of topics from contemporary literature to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons, from plays to the narratives of British and Hungarian women in the First World War, and from modernism to slave narratives through the lens of concepts circumscribed by the three key words of the volume's title. These concepts are used to open up, question, and analyse a variety of issues within the larger framework of issues connected to modernism and postmodernism.

The three concepts defined in the title constitute a great choice for a transdisciplinary discussion, which is the aim of the volume, writes the editor Péter Gaál Szabó in his Introduction (p. 1). Intertextuality alone gives a lot of freedom to discuss literary works from almost any era, and, probably due to this effect, most of the essays indeed centre around this topic.

However, intertextuality, intersubjectivity, and narrative identity gesture at distinct ideas that are also fruitfully connectable, as the volume shows. Interestingly, although the term "narrative identity" is referred to in the title, Paul Ricoeur's name, the father of the concept, is nowhere to be found.

theoretical topoi –
transdisciplinary
investigation

The volume is not divided thematically into sections; rather, it is organized according to the theoretical topoi, which shows the multidimensionality of the topics themselves as well as the conscious effort at a transdisciplinary investigation.

As we read in the editorial introduction, the book starts with essays on narrative identity. János V. Barcsák in his "Formalization, Politics, Creativity" introduces Paul Livingston's *The Politics of Logic* and examines the crossing of syntax and semantics, also outlining a related

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narrative identity new project. He analyses how Derrida's and Gödel's views differ and how Livingston uses their ideas when he creates his own concept. This essay is certainly the most theoretically engaged in the volume.

As we move forward, analyses of literary texts start to dominate the discussions. The second chapter is László B. Sári's, which analyses Clevenger's *Contortionist's Handbook* and *Dermaphoria*. Sári focuses on the identity construction and identity crises of the narrators, who are both cases "lower-middle-class, white, heterosexual" males (p. 21). In the third chapter Lilla Farmasi deals with Nabokov's posthumous novel or more precisely novel-like book in "Corporeality and Mediality in Vladimir Nabokov's *The Original of Laura*." Although *The Original of Laura* can hardly be read as a customary novel—and there are many questions surrounding its publication—the narrative analysis provides interesting results.

place, memory, culture The following two chapters address questions of place, memory, and culture. Mária Kurdi examines the intertextuality of J. M. Synge's plays and how intertextual connections appear in recent critical works. Zsuzsanna Nagy-Szalóki analyses another kind of stage, the suburb and the suburban home in Kate Atkinson's *Human Croquet*.

With a thematic jump to the Civil Rights Movement, Péter Gaál-Szabó's essay introduces the reader to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons. Gaál-Szabó analyses their relation to cultural memory and their connectedness to different cultural traditions and patterns.

Péter Kristóf Makai's essay moves the reader back again to contemporary literature: he analyses narrative space in Jasper Fforde's *Oeuvre*. Lenke Németh compares the space and the spectator's roles in two contemporary plays, Tina Howe's *Museum* and Chantel Langlais Carlson's *The Exhibit*. The innovative plays and the excellent analysis open up the discussion about gender roles, the use of stage in contemporary theatre, and the "relation between the artist and reality/realities" (p. 108).

trauma The last three chapters focus on texts that represent personal and social traumas, showing how the background, the social atmosphere, roles, and changes are reflected in them. Eszter Edit Balogh analyses British and Hungarian women's testimonies from the First World War. She

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compares how the Great War and the changing female roles appear in these texts and how these changes are treated by society. Otilia Veres investigates Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and Beckett's *Molloy*. The comparison of the two novels concentrates on intersubjectivity. In the last essay of the volume András Tarnóc analyses slave narratives with respect to the type of patterns they do (or do not) follow as well as he investigates narratorial identity.

In conclusion, the book represents an intellectually vibrant collection of essays, attesting to the productivity of transdisciplinary investigations by connecting methods, eras, topics, authors, and texts that traditionally would not engage with one another.