



Editorial

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This issue of the *Literary London Journal* features four research articles, one interview and five reviews.

The first two articles each focus on Iain Sinclair, whose diverse productions have been a perennial source of interest among both contributors to this journal and presenters at the Society's annual conference. In the first article, David Anderson identifies a source inspiration for some of Sinclair's speculative topographies of London in an obscure text, Elizabeth Oke Gordon's 1914 'wilfully archaic' study *Prehistoric London: Its Mounts and Circles*, which Sinclair discovered in the 1970s. Oke Gordon's text, Anderson argues, is shaped by the same 'strange, radical ambivalence' that propels Sinclair's 'urgent pedestrianism'. In the second article, Anthony Paraskeva is similarly interested in delineating Sinclair's influences. However, Paraskeva demonstrates that Sinclair's thinking and writing about London have been defined less by a single text than by the techniques of cinema, in particular editing, which Sinclair learnt in his formative years as a filmmaker. Paraskeva argues that if, for Sinclair, London is 'a carousel of disorientating jumpcuts', the grammar of non-linear editing also helps him to articulate counter-narratives that resist the standard heritage version of the capital.

The other two articles in this issue each comprise an examination of a book by a living writer; earlier versions of each article were delivered at the Society's 2018 annual conference, which had the theme of 'Conflict and Resolution'. Rebecca D'Arcy's chapter examines *The Grass Arena* (1988), the autobiography of John Healy, a child of Irish immigrants. Healy's autobiography offers a gruelling account of a life in the capital defined by poverty and violence, and the fraught navigation of brutalising institutions: the army, prison and

hospital. Drawing of Giorgio Agamben's work, D'Arcy reads these institutional spaces as 'states of exception'. These sites are profoundly exclusionary yet also foster a sense of belonging; this contradiction, D'Arcy argues, is a defining quality of mid- and late twentieth-century Irish immigrant experience in London. Rebekka Rohleder's article examines Monica Ali's third novel *In the Kitchen* (2009), which employs a mystery-thriller plot to examine the conditions of work in twenty-first-century London and Britain. Rohleder notes that the novel's eponymous hotel kitchen, and the wider economic networks in which it is situated, are defined by individual and structural conflicts of interest. What particularly concerns Rohleder is the way that these conflicts are never resolved but are always transposed into a 'language of emotions'. However, rather than unconsciously re-enacting this displacement and thereby disabling political critique – a charge that others have levelled at Ali's novel – Rohleder argues that *In the Kitchen's* account of the internalisation of conflict renders the fault lines in British society painfully visible.

I am delighted to include in this issue Alan Ali Saeed's recent interview of Professor Philip Tew, a Londoner who has published extensively on twentieth-century and contemporary British literature, and on several writers closely associated with the capital, notably B. S. Johnson. Tew has recently had published three books of fiction with Brigand Press, most recently *Clark Gable and His Plastic Duck: A Novel* (2020). Saeed invites Tew to reflect on, among other things, the nature of 'Literary London', how important a sense of place is to novelists, and how London functions in and shapes his own fiction-writing. Tew's responses are both sparky and illuminating.

The reviews section of this issue feature three reports of the 2019 annual conference 'Neighbours of Ours: Cities, Communities, Networks'. Each of the authors – Colton Valentine, Kristen H. Starkowski and Adam Borch – presented a paper at last year's conference and was the recipient of a graduate student travel bursary. In addition, Lisa Robertson reviews John Boughton's *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (Verso, 2018), and Christopher Cook reviews Tate Britain's 2019 exhibition 'Van Gogh and Britain'.

I would like to thank everybody who kindly agreed to peer review articles, and two individuals for the considerable time and attention they have put into bringing this issue to completion: Flore Janssen, who has commissioned and edited the reviews; and our web editor Craig Melhoff, who has published the issue to our website, which I appreciate is a trickier and more involved procedure than it sounds!

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