

***Az angol irodalom története. VII: Az 1930-as évektől napjainkig. Második rész* [The history of English literature. VII: From the 1930s to the present. Part 2], edited by Tamás Bényei, Kijárat, Budapest, 2024.**

*Melinda Dabis*⁹

Volume 7 is a worthy closure of the mega project to provide an overview of the history of English literature(s) for a Hungarian audience. The last unit covers the time range from the 1930s to the present, divided into two parts (volumes 6 and 7, respectively). Spanning over 660 pages, excluding bibliography and index, volume 7 starts with the swinging sixties and ends with Brexit literature. The chapters mostly follow a chronological order, and the majority of them contain subchapters which makes navigating the book easier.

In the list of contributors, Tamás Bényei's constant presence dominates the volume, having written twenty-one out of the total of thirty-seven chapters. On the one hand, this results in a uniform approach with almost no overlap (or serious gap, as a matter of fact) in the discussion of literature in the past half a century. Additionally, Bényei inserts chapters and subchapters that describe a wider context, showcasing societal, political, and theoretical changes that are essential to understand the literary scene, such as the postmodern, the cultural turn, postcolonialism, or even larger tendencies, like the globalization of English literature or the institutional background of literature and publishing. On the other hand, his focus on fiction, especially the novel, outshines all the other genres. He discusses novels throughout the decades, from Holocaust literature, through the swinging sixties, magical realism, and diaspora literature to contemporary historical novels. Andrea Kirchknopf adds a chapter on the Neo-Victorian novel ("A neo-Viktoriánus regény"), and Tibor Fischer is discussed separately by Judit Friedrich ("Tibor Fischer és a kulturális emlékezet" [Tibor Fischer and cultural memory]).

⁹ Pázmány Péter Catholic University, dabis.melinda@btk.ppke.hu.

István D. Rácz, member of the editorial team of the volume, made a substantial contribution to the analysis of poetry. The chapter on elegies (“Elégiák az 1960 utáni angol költészetben” [Elegies in post-1960 English poetry]) delves into various thematic concerns in the works of Douglas Dunn, Peter Porter, and Thom Gunn. Separate chapters are dedicated to Tony Harrison and George Szirtes (also by Rácz), while the discussion of women poets from the recent past is collectively addressed in a single chapter (Rácz, “Női hangok a közelmúlt költészetében” [Female voices in recent poetry]).

The literature from different regions of the United Kingdom is addressed separately, at least in a few chapters. Attila Dósa analyses Scottish poetry, Angelika Reichmann explores English-language poetry in Wales. Northern Ireland receives two chapters, Marianna Gula explores the socio-political background of The Troubles and its literary representation, whereas Péter Dolmányos focuses on post-1950 Northern Irish poetry.

The evolution of drama is examined across multiple chapters. Iván Nyusztay explores the theatre of the absurd, Béneyi provides an overview of the parallel tendencies in the 1960s and 1970s, with particular focus on Edward Bond and Howard Baker. The chapter “‘Thatcher gyermekei’. A közelmúlt drámairodalma” [Thatcher’s children: Dramatic literature of the recent past], co-written by Tamás Béneyi and Natália Pikli, discusses Thatcherism in theatre, the *in-yer-face* drama, and other tendencies of the 1990s, whereas Pikli explores contemporary drama and Caryl Churchill in a separate chapter. Although a few other chapters briefly mention drama, theatre and drama receive significantly less attention compared to other literary genres.

The topic of graphic novels/comics has finally been admitted into the company of literature. Eszter Szép’s chapter “A *Punch* magazintól a képregénykönyvig. A brit képregények egyik története” [From *Punch* magazine to graphic novels: One of the histories of British comics] provides a still too brief, nonetheless comprehensive and informative, overview of the genre’s development in Britain.

The speculative genres are discussed in two chapters, one dedicated to science fiction, co-authored by Vera Benczik and Károly Pintér (“Angol science fiction a 20. században” [English science fiction in the 20th century]), and one to fantasy and other speculative genres by Vera Benczik and Tamás Béneyi (“Fantasy és spekulatív irodalom” [Fantasy and speculative literature]). The bestseller of the early 2000s, the Harry Potter series and the related societal phenomenon, is discussed in a short chapter by Ildikó Limpár (“A Harry Potter-sorozat” [The *Harry Potter* series]).

The challenges posed by such a comprehensive volume are extensive. Making selections, defining the endpoint of the “contemporary” is problematic, as many oeuvres are still being written, and societal and political trends are still unfolding, awaiting recognition by both experts and the general public. Recent events that occurred after the manuscript went into publishing, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or armed conflicts within and near Europe, have fuelled new public debates, anxieties, and sensibilities that were previously unforeseen. Additionally, Bényei explores the complexity of British and English identity, and the intricacies of the related literature in several chapters. He argues that it is more fitting to refer to “literatures in English”, as this broader framework allows for a more nuanced recognition of the diverse array of voices and perspectives that contribute to the literary landscape. The selection process inherent in a work of this scope inevitably results in the exclusion of certain voices and perspectives. Nevertheless, the volume still successfully meets these challenges, acknowledging its own limitations while offering further reading suggestions. Finally, it does so in Hungarian and in a language accessible not only to literary scholars but also to a broader audience interested in English literature.



PÁZMÁNY

Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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