

Editorial

The third issue of *Text Matters* focuses on eroticism and its representations in literature and film. The authors approach this issue from various theoretical perspectives, often foregrounding in novel ways the preoccupation of the analyzed works with the notion of the erotic and their infusion with the subversive, eruptive and disquieting side of the erotic experience.

The issue consists of four broad sections, organized chronologically as well as according to a thematic key. The first of these, entitled “Eroticism in Medieval and Renaissance Literature,” opens with two articles that approach the problem of the erotic by interrogating the immediate associations of the notion with the bodily sphere of human existence. Piotr Spyra’s study of the Middle English poem *Pearl* attempts to reconcile the erotic undertone of the dream vision with the parental/filial bond between the two focal characters, positing eroticism as a conceptual framework for understanding the feeling of longing. His engagement with the erotic as a mode of yearning not always entangled in direct sexual somaticism establishes irony as a dominant rhetorical technique in the poem. Following this, Barbara Kowalik provides a fresh outlook on the memorable opening of *The Canterbury Tales* by regarding the famous description of spring as if it were a Shakespearean sonnet, a perspective that allows her to trace and compare Chaucer’s and Shakespeare’s understanding of pilgrimage and desire.

Chaucer’s collection of tales is again taken up by Andrzej Wicher, who devotes his article to the investigation of the cult of eroticism in the context of “The Merchant’s Tale” and the anonymous lay of *Sir Orfeo*. The argument of the article centres on the indebtedness of the two texts to the folktale tradition, often reaching out towards the biblical and classical inspirations behind the stories to highlight the analogies and differences

between them. The next contribution, in turn, focuses on the somewhat startling eroticism found in the writings of medieval English female mystics. In his study of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, Władysław Witalisz investigates the medieval female erotic imagination by collating the English mystics' discourse and imagery with that of Hadewijch of Brabant and the affective spirituality of Bernard of Clairvaux, shown to have had a substantial impact on Julian's and Margery's somatic vocabulary. The next two articles are devoted to Renaissance drama. In his reading of *The Faithful Shepherdess* by John Fletcher, Steve Orman studies the early modern understanding of Youth in connection with the erotic excess of the youthful body, subjecting the play to critical scrutiny from the perspective of Galenic theory. The section ends with Urszula Kizelbach's essay on *King Richard III*. Drawing on the thought of Georges Bataille and Greenblatt's notion of self-fashioning, Kizelbach rationalizes the seduction scenes featuring Shakespeare's deformed villain.

"Eroticism in Modern Drama, Film and Prose" is the title of the second section of the issue. It opens with two articles devoted to Irish playwriting, both of which accentuate eroticism as an element attributed to the female characters of the discussed works. Jadwiga Uchman's exploration of Samuel Beckett's early radio drama *All That Fall* focuses on the figure of Mrs Rooney and her quest for the erotic in her life. The article seeks to demonstrate that the protagonist perfectly illustrates Georges Bataille's contention that "Eroticism . . . is assenting to life up to the point of death." Katarzyna Ojrzyńska analyzes Christina Reid's *The Belle of the Belfast City*. Comparing the presentation of the male and female characters of the play, Ojrzyńska provides an insight into the use of eroticism as a means of subverting patriarchal values embedded in Northern Irish society. Ewa Kęłowska-Ławniczak grounds her explorations in contemporary urban studies. Her article offers not only a thought-provoking outlook on the genre of urban drama and on the nexus between theatre and urban space, but also a comprehensive overview of philosophical ideas informing the concept of the eroticism of the city. Another article focused on contemporary British drama, Edyta Lorek-Jezińska's study of Sarah Daniels's *Masterpieces*, uncovers the ways in which categories of the erotic and the sexual are combined in the play. Exploring the notions of the male gaze and female victimization, it engages in the debate over the play's stance in the discussion on pornography. Paulina Mirowska examines Harold Pinter's adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel *The Comfort of Strangers*. Contextualizing Pinter's screenplay in his political playwriting, she points to the ways in which eroticism and death intersect in the text, inducing the audience to ask basic questions about human nature. Mirowska's article connects both with the above studies of drama and with the subject of the next two explorations, which focus on film.

Tony Barker's article investigates changes in the presentation of sexually explicit content in the European cinema of the last four decades. Tackling the issue of pornography in film, Barker's essay is thematically related to Jacek Fabiszak's examination of nudity in stage and screen adaptations of Shakespeare. Emphasizing the effect this element may exert on the viewer, Fabiszak points to the crucial differences in the reception of nudity in film and in stage or television theatre. The section ends with Dana Bădulescu's article, which scrutinizes eroticism in Salman Rushdie's novels. Offering a comprehensive outline of the development of erotic imagination in the last two centuries, the author argues that Rushdie's works represent a new stage in this process.

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The theme of the second issue of *Text Matters* is continued in the last two sections of *TM* 3. The first one contains an article by Bernth Lindfors. This time the author focuses on the life of Ira Daniel Aldridge in Australia. The section "Reviews and Interviews" includes Soumitra Chakraborty's review of *Writing as Resistance: Literature of Emancipation* (edited by Jaydeep Sarangi). It is followed by Dorota Filipczak's review of the fifth edition of Cuddon's dictionary, and Wit Pietrzak's review of a new scholarly journal set up in the Institute of Polish Studies at the University of Łódź. The section ends with Michał Lachman's conversation with the British scholar, critic and playwright Dan Rebellato and Dorota Filipczak's interview with Rukmini Bhaya Nair, a critic of postcolonialism, a linguist and a poet from India.