

**Alison Baverstock, Richard
Bradford, and Madelena
Gonzales, eds.**
**[*Contemporary Publishing
and the Culture of Books*]
London: Taylor and Francis.
First Edition, 2020**

Oh, books! The more, the merrier! Welcome to the world of book connoisseurs and everything related to publishing. However, let's not be mistaken – no matter how romantic the relationship might be, it is business first, after all. You read books, you write books, you listen to books, you buy books, you sell books, you love books, you may detest (some) books, and participate in so many more activities related to the field. Do you consider yourself an insider in the business, or just a fan? Either way, this book has something in store for each of us.

Recent months have been a tremendous challenge for the publishing industry due to the global pandemic situation. The industry has been tested by some abrupt changes (i.e. shifting more on-line, sales moving into e-shops, various platforms offering access to libraries).

This book reaches bookshelves in a very timely manner. It is divided into 15 chapters, accompanying an introduction, and an index. The chapters are written by various authors. The content is contextually rooted in the British publishing market, literary scene, and academia. Therefore, it probably has more informative value for readers outside the English-speaking country/ies.

The essays read very smoothly; the tone is quite popular and highly approach-

able (yet highly informative) rather than strictly academic. The target audience could be rather broad. Certainly, the book is more targeted at readers outside the industry, since it is written in an explanatory, methodical tone. The business insider is already familiar with the nuts and bolts; however, the motivated student and/or graduate, or the aspiring writer/author, might gather a lot of informative and inspiring information.

Each essay covers a particular angle and/or segment within the industry. The reader learns about the structure and workings of a publishing house, publishing rights (the time line, the reasons for choosing a title/an author, and the marketing/sales impacts for the publishing house), illustrated by specific examples of specific authors, explaining rights to different outlets (i.e. audiobooks, e-books).

The essays present organizational structure, types of publishing houses, issues connected with self-publishing, and the figure of the modern literary agent. The compilation does not concentrate merely on publishing itself; it also covers much broader issues related to literature. It examines the historical roots of literary traditions, the culture of readership (predominantly in the UK), and how different sales strategies can be used to reach readers. It also presents a typology of consumers, discusses the relevance of book clubs, and explains how they are related to sales strategies.

Other essays respond to the very current topic of food writing and travel writing (with its very rich literary tradition in the UK). The reader also learns about the different marketing strategies behind hardcovers, paperbacks, e-books and audiobooks (the choice of cover, budgeting,

time line, and different target audiences). The book also introduces the topic of creative writing courses and pragmatic aspects of publishing.

The only part of the book related to a different linguistic territory (French-speaking countries) describes French children's literature and discusses autism with reference to carefully chosen, supportive and stimulating literature.

As mentioned, all the essays presented in the book are highly informative for a person who possesses an interest in literature beyond reading for pleasure and might have an ambition to become an insider in the book business.

The presented topics and issues are applicable to the global market; however, there are also specific features that are rooted in the English-speaking world. Thanks to the English language, this market benefits from a strong ability to penetrate numerous countries and regions, and it benefits from the fact that English is used as a lingua franca in the world of business; the benefit of the English language is literally the ability to speak to the masses. In that light, translating a book into a local language requires several steps (different time lines, different planning/scheduling, taking into consideration the quality of a translation) within the publishing process. Also, in that context, there is a cultural (even political) question concerning which authors should represent a national literature outside its territory, and should be a part of the national canon with the ambition of being presented outside of their own country of origin. This question might be relevant for smaller linguistic groups; however, it is not so salient in the case of texts in the English language.

The book brings to the table highly informative, current topics, especially in the light of changing dynamics of publishing, and it reflects on the need to go to meet the readers and address their changing reading/literary needs and wants.

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Ema Jelínková and Rachael Sanders, eds. [*The Literary Art of Ali Smith: "All we are is Eyes." The Transatlantic Studies in British and North American Culture, vol. 31.*] Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang, 2019.

This volume comprises papers from an international team of researchers exploring the multifaceted work of the contemporary Scottish writer, playwright, academic and journalist Ali Smith – who has become known especially for her short stories and novels addressing complex political and cultural issues, including feminism, philosophy or national identities.

The popularity and critical awareness of Smith's fiction are documented by multiple essays and one collective monograph edited by Monica Germanà and Emily Horton: *Ali Smith: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (Bloomsbury 2013), which predominantly explores the aspects of space, the uncanny, and queer identities. Since the publication of this 2013 monograph, Smith has authored several acclaimed works, including the novel *How to be Both* (2014), the novel quartet *Autumn* (2016),