



In and Out: Eccentricity in Britain

By Sophie Aymes-Stokes

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The aim of the book is twofold: first, to provide an overview of the critical history of eccentricity; and secondly to conceptualise a notion that is often presented as a defining feature of the English character. It addresses the key issues raised by eccentricity and brings out interdisciplinary links between science, politics, literature and the arts: the sources and dissemination of the concept of eccentricity; its relationship with the English national character as historical and ideological construct; the structural need for variation and divergence within accepted social norms; the paradoxical status of the eccentric as outsider - when eccentricity is transgressive and alienating - and as insider - eccentricity as socially acceptable deviation. Fundamentally eccentricity is a normative notion: being ex-centred enables eccentrics to delineate and negotiate boundaries between the margins and the centre, the canon and the norm. The contributors question the links between eccentricity and diversity and originality, the value of individual experience and character, and as a corollary, the struggle to retain individuality against increasing standardization, commoditisation and channelling within the normative discourse of normality. Eccentricity as display and performance is also tackled in several chapters, which focus on reception, image and (self)-representation, exhibition and voyeurism.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Sophie Aymes-Stokes is Senior Lecturer at the Universite de Bourgogne in Dijon (France) where she teaches English literature and visual culture. Her research focuses on intermediality in Britain in the first half of the 20th century. She has written a number of articles on artists and/or writers such as Mervyn Peake, Graham Greene, John Piper, Benjamin Britten, and subjects such as Neo-Romanticism, landscape and illustration. She has co-edited issue 32 of Interfaces with Marie-Odile Bernez and Christelle Seree-Chaussinand on Text and Image: Theory in the 21st Century. She is currently researching a book about modernist wood-engraving and print culture. Laurent Mellet is Senior Lecturer in 20th and 21st-century British literature and cinema at the Universite de Bourgogne in Dijon (France). He is the co-author with Shannon Wells-Lassagne of Etudier l'adaptation filmique-Cinema anglais, cinema americain (PUR, 2010), and the author of L'OEil et la voix dans les romans de E. M. Forster et leur adaptation cinematographique (PULM, 2012). He has written several papers on modernist and contemporary literature, and on film theory and aesthetics. He will be the editor of the 2012 issue of academic e-journal Textes et contextes, entitled Early Literary Centuries. He is currently working on a monograph on Jonathan Coe.

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