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Published in:

Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie

DOI:

[10.1515/ang-2012-0518](https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2012-0518)

Publication date:

2012

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

O'Sullivan, E. (2012). Waldemar Zacharasiewicz. Imagology Revisited. Studia Imagologica. Amsterdam. Studies on Cultural Identity 17. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, 571 pp. *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie*, 130(3), 459–463. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2012-0518>

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BESPRECHUNGEN

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Waldemar Zacharasiewicz. *Imagology Revisited*. Studia Imagologica. Amsterdam Studies on Cultural Identity 17. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, 571 pp., € 110/\$ 149 hb.

Waldemar Zacharasiewicz' engagement with imagology almost predates the term¹ itself. As a doctoral student at the University of Graz in the 1960s, his interest in the literary representation "of foreign landscapes, cultures and people inhabiting distance and strange climes" (11) was encouraged by his academic supervisor, Franz K. Stanzel, and resulted in the thesis, *Die "Cosmic Voyage" und die "Excursion" in der englischen Dichtung des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*.² Since then, he has written numerous books and articles on various aspects of literary images. This welcome and substantial tome, published as volume 17 in the series "Studia Imagologica. Amsterdam Studies on Cultural Identity" (editors Hugo Dyserinck and Joep Leerssen) on the occasion of Zacharasiewicz' retirement at the University of Vienna, where he was appointed Professor of English and American Studies in 1974, brings together 23 essays, some translated into English especially for this collection. They document an involvement lasting four decades and covering a wide range of issues from the emergence of national and ethnic stereotypes in the early modern age, their evolution between the 16th- and early 20th-centuries in such literary texts as travelogues, diaries, novels, plays and poetry, to their various and wide-ranging functions in these different texts and epochs.

Imagology is an approach rooted in comparative literature which researches the literary expression of mental images of the 'other' and of the 'self'. Ton Hoense-laars and Joep Leerssen recently defined it as follows:

Imagology is based on, but not limited to, the inventory and typology of how nations are typified, represented, and/or caricatured in a given tradition or corpus of cultural articulations. On the basis of the analysis of texts or cultural artefacts, it raises questions about the mechanism of national/ethnic 'othering' and its underlying self-images. Questions raised concern the relation between 'character' and 'identity'; historical variability; genre, canonicity, and irony; and intermediality.³

Its origins lie in early 20th-century France where scholars were interested in changes in the image of Germany and the Germans in French literature and how these were influenced by the social and historical context. However, this nascent branch of comparative studies was dismissed by René Wellek in his lecture 'The Crisis of Comparative Literature' in 1958 as being extrinsic to the proper concern of comparative literary criticism; he saw in it nothing but national psychology, sociology, and 'Stoffgeschichte' under a different name.⁴ Despite this, Hugo Dyserinck, Professor of Comparative Literature in Aachen, continued to develop imagology from the late 1960s on, focusing on both the intrinsic literary function and

¹ The term 'imagology' is a technical neologism. While French and German scholars are happy to use the term 'Imagologie', its English counterpart is regarded as un-gainly by some who prefer to use the term 'image studies'.

² (Wien: Notring, 1969) Revised edition of thesis submitted in 1966.

³ Ton Hoense-laars and Joep Leerssen, "The Rhetoric of National Character. Introduction", *European Journal of English Studies* 13 (2009): 3, 251–255, at 251.

⁴ René Wellek, "The Crisis in Comparative Literature", *Concepts of Criticism*. Ed. Stephen G. Nichols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963) 282–95.

the general ideological importance of national images.⁵ Around the same time, Zacharasiewicz was embarking on his own imagological path. In his introduction to this volume, he situates his work in the context of the development of this “new branch of the discipline of literary studies” (10) and reminds today’s reader that

[l]ong before Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) alerted academics to the significance of myths supporting collective self-images and strategies of exclusion and the erection of borders, European philologists and comparatists, prominent among them disciples of Dyserinck, began addressing these issues. (11–12).

Joep Leerssen, a leading scholar in the area who continues Dyserinck’s Aachen programme within the framework of European Studies at Amsterdam University, names Zacharasiewicz as one of those Anglicists (like Stanzel) who kept up the tradition of imagology while it was marginalised within comparative literature.⁶ Since the end of the 1980s, work on orientalism, postcolonialism, the study of alterity and the history of mentalities has moved literary representation of what is ‘foreign’ and ‘other’ to the centre of cultural and literary studies. Hand in hand with the general rise of interest in cultural stereotyping and identity constructs goes a renewed interest in imagology itself as indicated by the seminal encyclopedic compendium *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters* (2007), edited by Leerssen and Manfred Beller, and the special issue of the *European Journal of English Studies* in 2009 on ‘The Rhetoric of National Character’. It also explains the publication of this collection of essays in the *Studia Imagologica* series, which accords a fitting place to Zacharasiewicz’s work and makes it available, between two covers, as a significant contribution to the field.

The 23 essays are preceded by an introduction, “A Personal Memoir: Towards the Study of Imagology” (11–17), in which the author traces his interest in and engagement with the area and provides a chronological context for the essays. He comments, for instance, on the shift in focus of interest to other texts and contexts after his transition in the 1970s from an Anglicist to one “tasked with building up American Studies” at the University of Vienna (13). (Although he doesn’t say this himself, it also provided him with the expertise to subsequently study the transfer of British stereotypes to America.) The volume is rounded off with an extensive, 60-page bibliography and an index.

There are eight sections, each containing between one and five chapters. The first, “National Stereotypes in Literature in the English Language: A Review of Research”, consists of just a single survey article, originally published in 1982, with the same title. The second section, “Imagology and the Theory of Climate”, has a conceptual focus, the other six are arranged thematically according to the spected (those ‘seen’ or represented) and the spectant (those who see or represent): “Images of Europe and Its Nations” (this section contains, amongst others, a stimulating contribution on the competition between European nations as a literary

⁵ Cf. Hugo Dyserinck. “Zum Problem der ‘images’ und ‘mirages’ und ihrer Untersuchung im Rahmen der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft”, *arcadia* 1 (1966): 107–120.

⁶ Joep Leerssen, “Imagology. History and method”, *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey*, ed. Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2007) 17–32, at 25.

theme in the 17th-century), “Imagology of Germany in American Culture”, in which, for instance, Germany as an alternative model in the search for an American national identity from the 1830s to the 1930s is explored, “Images of Vienna and Austria in Anglophone Cultures”, “Images of the English and Scots Abroad”, “Images of Jews in North American Culture” and “Images of Italians in Anglophone Cultures”. The two chapters in the final section resemble bookends to Zacharasiewicz’ imagological career: in “Perfect Revenge: Observations on the Image of Italy in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, his “first imagological essay” (7) published in 1971 when he was still an Anglicist, he identifies, as sources for the image of the “insatiable desire for revenge of Italian villains”, Gentillet’s *Anti-Machiavell* (1576), Jean Bodin’s science of politics *De republica* (1586) and Henri Estienne’s polemical treatise *Traité Préparatif à l’Apologie pour Herodote* (1566). This listing of titles alone reveals much about the classical training and the array of sources and languages at Zacharasiewicz’ command. The final essay, “Perspectives on the Mediterranean: Americans as Transatlantic Sojourners”, published by him as an Americanist in 2010, documents his interest in Southern Studies: Here he traces the Italophilia of leading members of the Southern Agrarians in the 1920s, who challenged the ‘Yankee’ ideology of progress that went hand in hand with increasing urbanisation and industrialisation. What both essays have in common is that they “illustrate the fact that the use of national stereotypes in literature and in the specific context of regional or national cultures is related to the perennial attempts of groups to maintain their collective identities by distinguishing themselves from other cultures” (16).

Contemporary imagology emphasises that national stereotypes are discursive conventions and not representative of social realities, and that the imagologist’s frame of reference is a textual and intertextual one.⁷ One of Zacharasiewicz’ greatest achievements lies in having reconstructed key elements of this discourse of representation; these are documented in the second section “Imagology and the Theory of Climate”, a particularly strong and homogeneous section which contains three conceptual contributions written in 1997, 1998 and 1999 respectively. Climate theory,⁸ a pseudo-science which emerged in the 16th-century, was a deterministic idea of milieu which led to a theory of cultural-temperamental difference. It divided the known world into three zones (hot, cold and temperate) and argued that the nature of the respective inhabitants of these zones might be read as a product of the climatological conditions: “Schemata, such as the theory of climate, helped the humanists to integrate new knowledge and also assisted them in reshaping information received to fit in with long-held assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes” (67). The first article in this section, “The Theory of Climate and the Tableau of Nationalities” revisits the famous Styrian *Völkertafel*, an oil painting created around 1725, which shows 10 male, costumed, ethnic types, each characterised by a tabulation of traits in 17 categories such as ‘Sitten’, and ‘Lieben’, but also, intriguingly, ‘Ihr Leben Ende’ according to their national character – the Frenchman at war, the Pole in the stable and the Turk or Greek by cheating (a

⁷ Leerssen 2007, 27.

⁸ Zacharasiewicz’ habilitation thesis of 1973, *Die Klimatheorie in der englischen Literatur und Literaturkritik von der Mitte des 16. bis zum frühen 18. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Braumüller, 1977), is still the standard work on the climate theory and English Renaissance literature.

section from the *Völkertafel* serves as the cover illustration for this volume). In this essay, an English version originally published in a volume on the *Völkertafel* which he co-edited,⁹ Zacharasiewicz writes about the popularity of the theory of climate zones in early 18th-century Europe, and links the table to the didactic cosmic poem, “The Nature of Man” (1711) by Richard Blackmore, to illustrate the ethnocentricity of the theory, according to which “the talents and intellectual gifts of the various Europeans were said to depend on their respective situation” (73). He shows that, when the author of the Tableau “drew on the storehouse of epithets in his search for suitable attributes in his numerous categories, various reflections on the theory of climate in ethnographic, apodemic and cosmographic texts, as well as their offshoots in verse, offered themselves as appropriate guidelines” (78). The rapid rise of physiognomy as a further determining scheme in the genesis and dissemination of national types in literature in the late 18th-century is linked by Zacharasiewicz in Chapter 3 with the continuing popularity of various models of thought “which seemed to substantiate the national identities postulated” (85).

On the editorial front, the collection would have benefited from a contextualising footnote at the beginning of each chapter with the original dates and places of publication as well as a note of changes made for this publication (otherwise contained in ‘Acknowledgements’). Many readers will go straight to the chapters they are interested in, and, in the absence of an annotation, may not be aware of their age. This applies particularly to the chapter “National Stereotypes in Literature in the English Language: A Review of Research” which opens with: “The last decades have seen a strikingly increased awareness among literary scholars of the various factors that influence or determine the depiction of foreign nations and the use of national clichés in literature” (22). The temporal reference is to the decades preceding 1982, and not 2010, so the review – although its findings remain interesting – is not of current research but of work undertaken up to 30 years ago. And while the desiderata with which it closes were fitting in 1982, a few updated footnotes might have briefly pointed new readers towards significant studies which since have addressed these. What we have here is Zacharasiewicz, rather than imagology, revisited. But Zacharasiewicz is, as the entire volume reveals, well worth revisiting. To the field of imagology has been added a grand collection of articles, rich in content, which document the engagement of this erudite scholar with an admirable range of issues, periods and genres.

LÜNEBURG

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⁹ Cf. *Europäischer Völkerspigel: Imagologisch-ethnographische Studien zu den Völkertafeln des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Franz K. Stanzel, Ingomar Weiler & Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999).