

I.

TRADITIONS, HISTORY AND CHANGE

INTRODUCTION | PART I

An anniversary is an occasion to celebrate the present, but it also calls upon us to survey the past that has made this present moment possible, as well as to look ahead for the avenues open towards a productive future. Accordingly, the papers in Part 1 are all history-oriented – as retrospects of the beginnings and growth of the Department, and as prospects for its subject fields and disciplines.

Opening the section is **Alexander Shurbanov's** *Ninety years on the move: English-language literatures at Sofia University*, which offers an overview of the teaching and research in the area of literature. He begins by going back to the early years and the people whose often single-handed efforts gradually gave real academic and scholarly presence to the newly formed degree course. Central among them is the figure of Professor Marco Minkoff, whose scholarly output and teaching in the literary field set international standards for the future generations. Alexander Shurbanov then presents the personalities that form those generations, showing a dynamic of constant expansion of the range of disciplines taught and of individual specialisms in areas important in a worldwide context.

In his similarly entitled *The study of English at Sofia University: Ninety years on the Move. English Linguistics* **Christo Stamenov** traces the developments in the field of linguistics by first returning to the founding figures, who spread their energies across this field and that of literature. The paper pays special tribute to the next generations and to the climate of innovation they brought to the Department by opening its scholarship to the dynamic developments in linguistics worldwide. Like Alexander Shurbanov, he does not forget to note that the introduction of new disciplines and modern specialisms took place against sometimes serious odds that impacted on the careers of some of the leading figures among the Department's linguists. Overall, Stamenov's paper indicates, teaching and research in the field of linguistics has managed to reflect the changing paradigms within the discipline and to combine theoretical and practical concerns in a fruitful way.

A field that gradually charted its own territory is that of Cultural Studies. **Tatyana Stoicheva's** paper *Culture and Cultural Studies at the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University* begins with a brief account of how it came to be established as an area comprising specific taught disciplines and individual specialism. She then presents the individual courses offered at Bachelor's and Master's level, emphasizing that Cultural Studies functions as a site where the scholarly interests and teaching efforts of the Department members are not only brought together into topic-specific groups but can also open up in new directions, meeting the new realities of a complex global culture.

Strategically important for consolidating a tradition of ongoing innovation and modernization, but also of personal significance to its participants, is the Sofia-Leeds university exchange which started in 1968. For over thirty years it enabled hundreds of Bulgarian and English undergraduates to study in England and Bulgaria respectively and gave members of the Department the opportunity to spend extended periods at Leeds University as lecturers in Bulgarian or as visiting scholars. The history of the exchange is the subject of the paper offered by **Michael Holman**, who was the initiator and key organizer of the scheme. In his *BG and GB working together against all odds: The Sofia-Leeds university exchange 1968–1999* he records each of the stages and the efforts on the part of people within the Department and at various levels of the University, as well as within the two countries' state administrations, to meet the manifold challenges and make possible what at that period was an exceptional, and for many, barely conceivable collaborative experience.

The last two papers in this section illustrate the potential of the Department's tradition to propel the transition from past and current paradigms in teaching and research to new ones. **Liliana Grozdanova's** *Applied Linguistics – A fast lane to professional competence in ELT* offers an innovative approach to equipping future professionals in FLT with the relevant knowledge-base and practical skills. Using a course specially devised for Master's students at the Department of English and American Studies, Grozdanova advances a conception of Applied Linguistics as an area of integration of the relevant findings of the human sciences with empirical sources and practical experience, with the aim of developing effective personal models and styles of teaching. She draws special attention to the need for and ways of developing research skills as a vital element of teachers' professional competence.

This, the paper shows, can form the foundation of the acquisition of lifelong-learning skills and techniques.

Finally, **Mira Kovatcheva's** *Semiotics in some recent linguistic approaches* aims to raise awareness of an existing theoretical and analytical paradigm and to demonstrate its applicability to new and wider areas of linguistic analysis. The premise of the paper is that Peircean semiotic tradition has been flourishing too fruitfully too long too far from the achievements of "linguistics proper." Kovatcheva argues forcibly in favour of an overt adoption of Peircean semiotics as a stepping stone in modern linguistic endeavours where it naturally belongs. This, according to her, might reduce the current fragmentariness of an "ailing discipline." In addition, she presents evidence for the actual covert use of some Peircean ideas in popular new approaches such as Blending Theory.