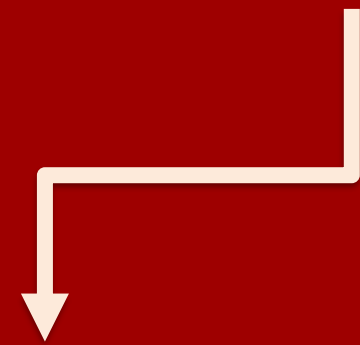


Reading the Root Words: Literature in Radical Bookshops

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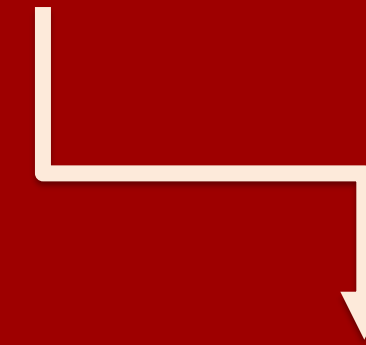
Introduction

Radical bookshops are independent bookshops with a sociopolitical commitment and anti-fascist awareness that self-identify as 'radical', and are oriented towards being community spaces. This project explores what makes literature 'radical', and similarly what it means to be a 'radical' establishment. It is multidisciplinary, attempting to place literary analyses in an anthropological context. Fieldwork was conducted in Lighthouse Bookshop in Edinburgh, and Calton Books in Glasgow, both members of the UK-wide Alliance of Radical Booksellers.



Anthropological Analysis

The bookshops were analysed in terms of their physical nature, as well as by the nature of interactions that people shared within them. It was seen that the physical edifices represented the values that their staff and owners were guided by, down to the smallest organizational details, be it merchandise, shelving or even browsing space.



Literary Analysis

Alan McCombes and Roz Paterson's *Restless Land*, that presents a radical retelling of Scottish history from a working-class perspective came on recommendation from staff at Calton Books. *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise* by Lola Olufemi came as recommended radical literature from staff at Lighthouse Bookshop.

Methodologies

- Semi-structured interview
- Participant observation
- Close reading texts on recommendation from interviewees

References

- McCombes, Alan & Paterson, Roz, 2014. *Restless Land: Volume One*. AK Press: Edinburgh.
- Olufemi, Lola. 2021. *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*. Hajar Press: London.

Conclusion

Bookshops are depicted as 'body' and being 'bodied', meaning they are both physically realized social spaces, and are constituted by a literal concentration of bodies that form their community at any given point. On an individual case basis, the project is able to establish that with increased access to acquiring knowledge, the vaster the capacity to self-determine and the room to determine oneself translates to the existence of thriving communities.

Acknowledgements

This project and accessible would not have come to fruition without the resources given to me by Lord Laidlaw and the Laidlaw Foundation, as well as the University of St Andrews' School of English, and my mentor Dr. Rosa Campbell. I would especially like to thank the research participants who took time out of their busy schedules to respond to my questions.



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