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Remembering Alun Munslow

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Remembering Alun Munslow

RIP Alun Munslow – 15 December 1947–1 October 2019

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Robert A. Rosenstone

My friend, Alun Munslow: modest, fair, approachable — and tough

A few weeks before his passing, Alun wrote to me that he had finished a new book on the aesthetics of history, his first in five years. Characteristically, he added that he was not certain that he had anything worthwhile to say on the topic, but he had written it because he liked to keep busy. It was pretty much the same remark he made to me after each book he completed, seven in all during the twenty-three years of our association. That was Alun, as modest, approachable, fair, and open-minded a scholar as I have met in more than half a century of academia.

When, after I pestered him with emails in the late nineties to take me on as his co-founding editor of *Rethinking History*, and he finally offered me the position, I told him I would do it on two conditions: that the journal would be open to, indeed seek out, 'experimental' or 'innovative' works that did not follow the traditional ways of writing history, as well as to essays on film as history (two of my own strong interests at the time). Neither had been part of his original proposal to Taylor and Francis for a journal that was meant to take a new and contemporary approach to writing the past, but he immediately saw their value. He had, after all, pitched a journal of 'theory and practice,' and such works would certainly serve as a practical balance to theory, his own area of expertise. And though over the years theoretical articles have certainly predominated in *Rethinking History*, there were enough 'innovative' works to allow us to publish a separate book of them, *Experiments in Rethinking History* in 2004, seven years after the first issue. We also had enough essays on film for a separate book, but somehow never got around to putting one together.

As an editor and as a friend, Alun was always thoughtful and caring with all scholars, whether they were famous in the profession or graduate students working on a dissertation. Indeed, this egalitarianism marked all his dealings with people. He and I certainly had occasional disagreements over the selection of essays, but when I would become fed up with certain pieces as too obscure, too technical, or too badly written, Alun would often take it off my hands and go to work, editing and helping the scholar to rewrite until the essay suited both of us. His judgements were generous and his attention to detail amazing. Even in the years after I stepped down as co-editor, we remained in

close contact over issues surrounding the journal, consulting on both individual essays and overall plans.

Nice he was, but I would not want anyone to think Alun was a pushover. To the contrary. In intellectual combat, he could be as tough as hell. I well remember a seminar he delivered at my home institution, the California Institute of Technology (in which, despite the name, undergrads can major in the Social Sciences or Humanities). The exact topic has long faded from my mind, but not the intense wrangle launched by my colleagues in quantitative economics and political science, who disdain precisely the kind verbal theorizing that was Alun's forte. When several of them collectively jumped on his assumptions and assertions as vague, woolly-headed, and nonsensical, the normally unflappable Alun not only stood his intellectual ground against this group onslaught, but went on the attack so strongly that by the end of the afternoon my colleagues, if not wholly routed, had been argued to a draw in what we might call of those non-terminating, philosophical discussions.

For me, Alun was always a steadying force. He was a great intellectual counsellor, especially when I was doubtful about certain of my own attempts to write history in new ways or explore the contributions of film to our understanding of the past. At moments when I grew unsure of my own assertions, Alun was always capable of producing apropos theoretical insights that served to validate what I was doing and encouraged me to continue. He played that same role for other historians as well.

Lest I make him seem too much like a sober-sides and workaholic, let me add that Alun very much liked to have fun. He had one of those dry, straight-face, ironic senses of humor – British I am tempted to call it – that means you have to listen very carefully since his tone of voice never signaled that he was being humorous. The first time we met face-to-face was in Manchester, where I was a visiting professor at the university. He took my wife, Nahid, and I to dinner in what turned out to be the best Indian restaurant in which we have ever eaten, and the only one in which, following his lead, I joined him in drinking two scotches before the meal. It was the same with restaurants in Uttoxeter, the nearest town to Rose Cottage, where Alun and his wife, Jane, lived in the Staffordshire countryside. He was a wonderful host, who took us on boat rides on local canals and tours of the countryside to visit various National Trust estates such as Chatsworth.

Alun was not English. He was Welsh, and proud of the difference. He seemed to me to be much fonder of American culture than English, and his first book (*Discourse and Culture: The Creation of America, 1870–1920*) was devoted to U.S. History. He was the first person to wake us up early on the morning of 9/11 with a phone call from England. On the three occasions he and Jane visited with us in the United States (twice in California and once in New York). Alun enjoyed the openness of my home state as he drove up the West Coast to San Francisco on our famous Highway One, visiting William Randolph Hearst's enormous estate, San Simeon, and stopping for a night in the Big Sur along the way. On these American trips, his favorite word was 'terrific,' which he used to express his enjoyment of the freeways, the mountains, the beaches, the sea, and the various ethnic bars and restaurants that served hybrid cuisines mixing East and South Asian, European, Middle Eastern, and

native American (north and south) dishes. He was also a sports lover, of baseball almost as much as cricket, a game he unsuccessfully tried to explain to me many times – clearly my fault, not his.

I sorely miss Alun, for as different as we were in our approaches to ‘historying,’ a word he loved to use, ours was an unusually nurturing academic relationship for me, and I hope for him as well. Much as he is missed by so many of us in the history community, he has left a tremendous legacy in terms of the journal, *Rethinking History*, and the books he produced on the theory and practice of history. We will be reading them and remembering his important contributions for years to come.

Rest in peace, Alun, my friend.

* * *

James Goodman

Alun and I worked together closely for a dozen years, but we met in person only once, at the 2009 Board meeting in New York. Afterward we went out to dinner, together with Alun’s fellow founding editor Robert Rosenstone and Robert’s wife Nahid Massoud. We talked for hours and had a wonderful time. But it was just one time. To put it as Alun would, my Alun was the narrative I wrote and regularly rewrote about him, not to be confused with the man himself; however, much my narrative was grounded in his books and essays and especially our correspondence. We exchanged hundreds of emails a year, year after year, emails in which we wrote not just about our shared work, the editing of *Rethinking History*, nor our shared vocation, thinking about and writing history, but also about our lives on two sides of the pond, the latest news and information about our families, hometowns, his garden, my parks, the weather, politics and international relations, the sky at sunrise and sunset, and more.

Alun and I thought about the past and history identically. We had radically different ways of writing about them. From the moment Robert and my predecessor as U.S. editor, Craig Harlan, introduced us, Alun was nothing but open-minded about and supportive of my way and about the much wider range of prose, poetry, and images that I solicited and accepted for my experimental history writing issues. His rave email ‘reviews’ of those issues – shortly after publication, sometimes an essay-by-essay analysis – are some of the most thoughtful and generous reviews I’ve received.

There will be no more emails from Alun. Happily I have them all saved. All I need to do is search for his name, scroll down the screen, and open one at random to be reminded of his brilliance as a reader and interpreter, his small ‘c’ catholicity as an editor, his extraordinary generosity (especially with his time), his warmth and kindness as a human being. To be sure, there were people, ideas, and practices that frustrated him and me. Some of them drove us nuts. But I do not recall the slightest bit of tension between us, and I can’t find it anywhere in our correspondence. The only real heat I ever detected coming from Alun was aimed at his computer, the journal’s electronic editing system, and postmodern technology more generally.

Perhaps most precious to me, during a difficult decade for both of us, was his sense of humor, his quiet, subtle, deadpan wit, which was also often wisdom. Once he, Robert, and I were going around and around about a proposal for a special issue that we had been considering and working on with the scholar who had proposed to guest edit it. It had been a while, and it wasn't coming together. Invariably, Alun was a collaborator, not a dictator. 'Obviously,' he wrote, 'I am in the hands of colleagues on this. I have no strong feelings one way or another.' On one hand, he thought we should give the person one more chance. On the other, he thought that in giving him one more chance we would be making a 'big concession.' He explained his frustration: 'Frankly his emails are often unintelligible to me. He writes in a way I cannot always fathom. It is from time to time stream of consciousness and occasionally the title of the email is the message and there is no content.'

'I like experiments,' he concluded, 'but not in emails.'

I have no doubt that Alun's memory will be a blessing and that his books will be a gift to readers for years to come.

* * *

Keith Jenkins

I knew Alun for about 25 years. We first met at a conference in Cheltenham, UK, in the mid-1990s and became friends. We often attended conferences and seminars together in the UK, Europe, and North America, often sitting on the same platform. We co-edited a Reader together (The Nature of History Reader) and, with Sue Morgan, edited a collection of essays (Manifestos for History). In 1996/7 – at the initiative of Heather McCallum, the then History Editor at Routledge who said she wanted to start a 'postmodern' history journal – we kick-started Rethinking History, of which Alun became the first Editor and for which I often wrote papers. For some years Alun also acted as an internal examiner for PhD candidates at the University of Chichester where, on his retirement from the University of Staffordshire, he became a Visiting Professor, examining theses not only in history theory but across the board. And we met regularly with our partners (Jane Munslow and Sue Morgan), at various cafes when Sue and I visited Derbyshire, occasions when time seemed to fly by as we put the world to rights over tea and scones. Alun was excellent company, always cheerful, and often hilariously funny (not always intentionally) and always able to move into serious, engaged mode at the drop of a hat. To say I miss him immensely is an understatement not least because of his sincerity, reliability, unfailing kindness, his passion for the philosophy of history and history theory, and his unquenchable desire to make a real difference to the way in which the discourse of history should be understood and changed for what we both thought of as 'the better'. In that regard – and looking back – I think both of us underestimated the scale of that particular task, coming up against, as we were, a professional disdain for 'theory' deeply rooted in the mindset of most mainstream academic historians who not so much negatively engaged with theory but, on the whole, blithely ignored it. It takes two to tango and we were the only party to turn up.

So, this was a long, productive, and positive relationship that lasted until Alun's death. I regularly spoke to him on the phone and, once I'd mastered it, communicated by email, our last exchange being in the week before his totally unexpected death when we agreed to next meet up in early 2020. I have occasionally heard it said that there developed of late certain differences between us; that we became at odds with one another, but that wasn't the case. Our commitment to the promulgation of poststructuralist, deconstructionist, and, what I think we would still both want to call postmodern ways of thinking and doing history – as well as our respective positions on the political left – never faltered. Our only differing viewpoint was that Alun remained much more optimistic about radically rethinking history whereas I became increasingly pessimistic about making any significant inroads into the wayward ways of the 'professional historian.' But this difference served only to provide us with an impetus to keep analyzing what, in changing circumstances, we could and should continue to do. We were always on the same page.

And now, all too young, Alun has gone. But the task of radically rethinking history – the most conservative of discourses imaginable – remains. One cannot be sure if and how the gauntlet will be picked up and run with, but Alun leaves a substantial and generous legacy on which one could build. In a very tangible sense, there is, of course, this journal, which he lovingly edited (along with several co-editors over the years but Alun always did the bulk of the work), a twenty-year commitment into which he invested his time, energy and intellect. And then there are his books, some 15 of them, plus dozens of articles and papers which were always engaged and polemical: there was never any pretense at an anyway impossible objectivity. In his writing he often used the phrase 'so let me be clear', and nobody who has read his work can fail to understand exactly where he stood. And although as he himself ruefully recognized he often repeated himself in his later texts – believing his message still needed to be hammered home – his commitment to a reflexive but positioned 'postmodern historying' remained undiminished till the end.

As you go through life you meet many people you wish you hadn't. But then there are others – fairly few and far between in my experience – whose meeting turns out to be wholly for the good. Alun fell squarely into the second category. He was not just a colleague or a sometime collaborator but a dear friend with whom a genuine friendship existed. And, in my increasingly rare but nevertheless better days, I would like to think he felt the same way about me. He was, simply, a good man.

* * *

Patrick Finney

I first met Alun in 1996 at a conference in Cheltenham, an interdisciplinary exploration of history and literature. Alun gave a barnstorming lecture showcasing the ideas that would find full expression in *Deconstructing History*, published in 1997. Modest, affable and supportive, it was a pleasure to get to know him over the conference dinner. Later that year I was invited to join the inaugural editorial board of *Rethinking History* which was also launched in 1997. Over the following two decades, as we worked together on the journal and other projects, it was a privilege to enjoy his friendship. I did not get to know him as closely as others writing here did: ours was a professional friendship rather than a close personal one. But it was always a delight to catch up with him at editorial board meetings

and at conferences. I particularly cherish memories of our Rethinking History 'road trips' to successive European Social Science History Conferences in The Hague, Berlin, Lisbon and Ghent. Out of his home surroundings, Alun's charming idiosyncrasies were cast into stark relief, whether he was trying to navigate the technological challenges of a foreign mass transport system or the gastronomic ones of a restaurant menu.

This is not the place for a full assessment of Alun's hugely significant intellectual contribution to our disciplinary and interdisciplinary dialogues. Instead, there are two facets of the man to which I would call attention. The first is his generosity. The existence of this journal is his lasting monument, and he poured his heart and soul into it for well over twenty years. It was evident to me as an editorial board member that Alun put an uncommon amount of time into corresponding with authors, advising them how to improve submissions and reviewing repeated re-drafts. I always thought that this was good of him, but it is only now that I have become one of his successors as Editor that I truly appreciate the colossal amount of work he undertook. It was quite remarkable, and scores of colleagues across the globe have benefitted from his patient and wise counsel in developing their own ideas and careers. The second, and related, characteristic is his kindness. Alun was a fundamentally nice and decent man: if it is not too much of a cliché, he was a true gentleman. In my youthful naivete when I met him in 1996, this did not strike me as particularly unusual; twenty-plus years on, I am better placed to appreciate how rare and precious a quality it is. This makes his loss all the more painful to bear. Alun, you are sorely missed.

* * *

Kalle Pihlainen

I remember counting Alun as a friend years before we met. We first communicated concerning a submission I sent to Rethinking History in 1997, while a doctoral student, when his prompt and generous emails made an immediate impression on me. Not only was Alun unfailingly encouraging from that first contact on, he responded as to an equal, not something to be taken for granted in such communications. In the following years, he read and commented on other articles of mine, only a few of which I offered to Rethinking History, advised on different journals, possible conferences, and various research proposals, even writing recommendations for funding applications – always with the utmost kindness and reliability. I think he was also the first to refer to my work in a book, something of a thrill to discover! In those early days, he was to all intents a much-needed academic mentor, doing all these things despite lack of any formal connection or obligation. And, a testament to Alun, I know that I was one of many lucky enough to benefit from his time and attention in such ways.

When we finally met in person, at a conference on theory of history in Budapest in 2004, he greeted me with a warm, enthusiastic handshake that assured me we were indeed, by then, old friends. Alun's talk at the conference was entitled simply – and quite boldly, given all the other big-name theory of history colleagues in attendance – 'History, Narrative and Truth.' The focus was largely on re-reading Louis Mink, but what I remember best from the session are his joking preliminary – albeit quite extended – comments concerning the incredibly low cholesterol scores he had received in a

recent test. Somehow he managed to segue smoothly from these health concerns to the paper, having, importantly, put everyone to ease prior to turning to what I think he might well have described as the less essential matters. This good-naturedness was, I'm sure, memorable to all who met him as was, hopefully, the compassion and humility undergirding the abundant humor.

During those days in Budapest, I remember Alun speaking joyfully of his marriage, already by then of 30 years, to Jane, as well as of his father, a steelworker, I think, who he described as having been a gentleman in the most literal sense of the word: 'a gentle man' – a quality I could not but see reflected in Alun throughout our friendship. I wish I could remember more of our conversations now, including Alun's stories of his uncle (Uncle Bob?) and details of life lessons learned (for now I remember: 'never sleep on an argument' and 'always give people good news right away'). Then and later, he also shared stories of academic worlds with which I was unfamiliar: involving his background in socioeconomic history, the setting up of *Rethinking History* and the struggle to defend postmodernism in the UK, meetings of the American Historical Association and his experiences of the US scene, and, later, even of teaching in the University of the Third Age. To me, it was descriptive of his full and varied career that, when asked to 'evidence' his CV on acquiring a new affiliation, it came up that he had edited another journal in the 1970s and that, to be able to document this, he needed to go to a library to copy the cover from the journal – a situation the absurdity of which he put to good comic use.

Happily, many meetings followed that initial face-to-face encounter. These included trips to London, Chichester, Brighton and Ghent, most often in the company of Keith Jenkins and other friends and colleagues, but also regular and memorable visits to see Alun in Stoke-on-Trent, with outings to surrounding areas – to a select few 'historical' and even re-enactment sites, to cosy restaurants (on the last occasion both eating venison and splurging on Eton Mess while joking about the calories and our respective cholesterol levels; his low, mine too high), even to Uttoxeter, the intense glamour of which he often spoke. Aware that it might be six months or a year again before another visit, I remember always returning home inspired and accountable, with a renewed will to get to work. In the intervening periods, Alun would email with reminders to keep the momentum going, providing much-needed encouragement and the assurance that, even if working in a periphery, I was not alone but part of a larger intellectual community. Naturally, we would also regularly compare notes relating to theory of history and practices of historical representation, albeit on many if not indeed most occasions simply noting a meeting of minds.

Now, privileged to be able to continue the project of *Rethinking History* with my co-editors, I often find myself asking 'WWAD?' As an editor, Alun was not only fiercely dedicated and highly effective but courageous, in many situations deciding against one referee or another, willing to take risks, and sometimes, when a particular piece just was not suitable for the journal, very direct (with friends as much as with strangers). The occasional fallout from these situations, combined with his kind nature, is what inspired, I think, his cautions that one needs 'to have thick skin' for this work. He also appears to me to have been exceptional in his understanding that, however serious our investments with various academic preoccupations may at times feel, 'it's just a job,' and theoretical disagreements need not be taken personally – yet all the while appreciating, too, that it's an exceptionally privileged position to be in; or, as Alun characteristically put it: 'It's not like you're out

at sea.' In these and so many other things, he was an example as an academic professional and for life. But above all, he was a true gentleman and friend, greatly missed.

* * *

Beverley Southgate¹

As UK editor of *Rethinking History* from its inception in 1997, Alun played an important role in defining the journal's character and ethos. He oversaw its enormous growth – not only in actual size, but also in reputation and readership – and he amply succeeded in achieving his aim (as expressed in his first editorial) 'to participate in and help guide the debates on the nature of history' (Munslow 1997a, 1).

One of Alun's major achievements as editor was to include work from both established scholars and younger students. The inter-generational nature of the journal is well illustrated by the two edited collections of its articles that have already been published: one (*Authoring the Past*, 2013), is a selection of personal statements by well-known historians and theorists, the other (*Experiments in Rethinking History*, 2004) includes a number of attempts at deliberately experimental approaches to the subject embracing work by a number of younger contributors. Whatever their official academic status, submitting authors could always rest assured that they would receive a courteous reception from Alun, who unfailingly gave advice and encouragement, and who contrived to endow the journal with a character that was at once 'academic' and 'human.'

Those characteristics applied equally to Alun himself. Not only did he, at an 'academic' level, continue to publish his own many well-received essays and books on historical theory, but he also, wearing a more personal and 'human' hat, entertained many diverse audiences with his lectures and seminar appearances. I recall seeing him brilliantly win over a sceptical audience of school sixth-formers, with a masterly synthesis of education and entertainment in which he made good use of his dog Rosie; and he regularly (though all too seldom) brightened our Philosophy of History seminars at the Institute of Historical Research in London. I personally always found Alun a friendly, thoughtful, and sympathetic man – and one who was always extremely generous with his encouragement. Too late, I now regret that, owing to his (from a metropolitan perspective) eccentric choice of a remote and rural lifestyle, I never had the chance to know him better.

* * *

Neil Wynn

I cannot recall exactly how long I knew Alun – it must be more than 40 years, probably since a British Association for American Studies (BAAS) conference at Swansea in the 1970s. We became friends through BAAS, mutual external examining, and through Alun's contribution to a book I edited with Iwan Morgan, *America's Century* published in 1993. Alun was a great conference companion – his

dry, even acerbic, wit livened up many a dull academic gathering. He was so dead-pan it was often impossible to tell when he was joking, and when he wasn't. We spent many evenings in various bars with Geoff Stoakes, Iwan Morgan, Will Kaufman, Ian Purchase and others – usually. He and Geoff used to test everyone's knowledge of popular music from the 1960s – 'Nights in White Satin' seemed to strike a particular chord! Rather than attend the AGM, Alun once led us, dressed in his perennial leather jacket (the same one seemed to last for 30 years), to what was then the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television in Bradford, and on another occasion to Cadbury World (we followed him eagerly!). Ever the iconoclast, Alun was outraged when a chair of BAAS in the 1980s refused to send a letter of support to American Studies departments under threat of closure. Alun and others opposed this and also called for the representation of non-elite institutions in BAAS – earning them the title of 'Young Turks.' Nonetheless, Alun was successful and went on to serve BAAS as editor of the Newsletter and as treasurer, both jobs he did with his usual thoroughness and humour.

Alun's contribution to the discussions of post-modernism and the theory of History in the UK was of course enormous. He and I had different approaches to History – he never quite forgave me for being a protégé of Arthur Marwick, and when he introduced me in one conference as 'an unrepentant empiricist,' I never knew quite whether he meant it as an insult or compliment, but as chair of the session, he was very kind. I did tease him that he should stop all this theory nonsense and write some real history, and he did just that in his chapter in *America's Century*. But for a theoretician Alun was never dull – I remember when he kindly came to Cheltenham to talk to a class of students and gave a fantastically lively and entertaining lecture on History and Narrative which made the subject accessible even to me. But what I remember most was how fondly Alun would talk of his life in the countryside with Jane and with their beloved dog, and I treasured his friendship. Latterly, we used to compare our medical conditions, operations and general health as well as the state of the world, like two old codgers. It was always fun to catch up with him (even if he did over-play the role of the country mouse on his visits to Birmingham to meet Ian Purchase and I). He described his new home in the retirement complex in his usual sardonic fashion – variously describing it as 'the gulag' or 'camp' – but clearly had adjusted well to life there and become part of various committees and groups. Getting him away to meet up was sometimes quite an effort, but always worth it. We were planning a get together with Ian Purchase when I heard the sad news of Alun's death – I was looking forward to him pretending that he knew nothing of Italian cuisine again. Now I will never know whether that was just another pretense.

* * *

Jaume Aurell

The fate of innovation: from Lucian of Samosata to Alun Munslow

Historiography has always negotiated the dilemma between tradition and innovation. This should not surprise anyone, since Thomas Kuhn famously argued that every science experiences, in one or another way, this essential tension:

Only investigations firmly rooted in the contemporary scientific tradition are likely to break that tradition and give rise to a new one. That is why I speak of an 'essential tension' implicit in scientific research. [...] The successful scientist must simultaneously display the characteristics of the traditionalist and of the iconoclast. (Kuhn 1977, 227)

More specifically, historians have always been on guard against two poles: the imaginative impulse which impels them to move beyond acceptable objectivity into more creative engagements and against the tendency to reduce historical writing to scientific categorization. While scientific research 'is a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education' (Kuhn 1970, 5), historians feel they should not fall into this scientific reductionism, since history deals with less predictable elements than the functioning of nature and it should deploy the dynamics of narrative (White 1978, 81–100). But they are also aware that, as Michel Foucault argued, categorization is a cultural act designed to include and exclude (Foucault 1994, xv). So, while history resists classification as fiction or scientific writing, it cannot avoid the traps of these fields.

The history of historiography has been a key location for the development of this tension. Until the mid-nineteenth century, historical genres were less defined and carried important similarities to literary forms. The development of the social sciences shifted the manner of articulation of historical knowledge in the last century. But in both extended periods, visionary historians have reflected not only on the facts of history but on the process of historical writing, taking into account the ways the forms available to us shift our perspectives on cultural production. These reflections have usually come from countercultural historians who were often censured for their impulse towards innovation and experimentation. They were aware of the risks they ran in taking that position. In their time, they were often considered mavericks and some have been omitted in the creation of the historiographical canon. They were ready to assume this cost. But they believed in their approach.

One of these historians was Lucian of Samosata, originally from a village in South-East Anatolia. I did not 'meet' this fascinating historian until well into my career – another of the signs of the fate of these disruptive historians. Lucian was very active around the mid-second century, when classic Rome suffered its period of a 'crisis of history.' The degeneration of history, which led to the popularity of biographies, memories and panegyrics, was noted by the diatribe of Lucian against contemporary historians in his works 'How to Write History' and 'A True Story'.

Lucian's 'How to Write History' is considered one of the few works dealing with the theory of history-writing surviving from antiquity. It inaugurates the reflection of the writing of history itself. Lucian spends the entire first section detailing faults to be avoided when writing history. In the early chapters, he discusses, among others, the ruinous effect in the history of flattery. He attacks those who pass over the events and instead spend their time flattering their own generals and denigrating those of the enemies. He criticizes the methodology used by consecrated historians such as Herodotus and Ctesias, since they focus on writing colorful descriptions of places and events they have never seen or experienced. The historian should avoid any partisanship, since he should act and write not in terms of the present, but thinking of the future. For this reason, Lucian feels closer to

Thucydides than to any other historian, since the latter famously argued that ‘my work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever’ (Thucydides 1964, 24–25). Following this tradition, Lucian states:

In short, the one standard, the one yardstick is to keep in view not your present audience but those who will meet your work hereafter. Whoever serves the present will rightly be counted a flatterer – a person on whom history long ago right from the beginning has turned its back, as much as has physical culture on the art of make-up. [...] History then should be written in that spirit, with truthfulness and an eye to future expectations rather than with adulation and a view to the pleasure of present praise. (Lucian 1959, 55 and, 73)

Flattery is understood by Lucian as a concern for gratifying contemporary readers, possibly powerful ones, but, he argues, truth is to be found in history by thinking of the future time and audience, rather than on the present. Subversive and innovative historians are not sympathetic to their time. Lucian does not hide his admiration for Thucydides, as he declares that

Thucydides laid down this law very well: he distinguished virtue and vice in historical writing, when he saw Herodotus greatly admired to the point where his books were named after the Muses. For Thucydides says that he is writing a possession for evermore rather than a prize-essay for the occasion, that he does not welcome fiction but is leaving to posterity the true account of what happened (Lucian of Samosata 1959, 57).

Lucian’s explicit criticism to his contemporaries through ‘How to Write History’ resonates in the debates around postmodern historiography (Greenwood 2006, 120–121). So, the connection between Lucian and Alun Munslow comes not only from their shared ability to rock the boat of historiographical conventions but also from the form they use in their arguments. Lucian presents himself as an ‘honest liar’ and proceeds to approach the narrative as though writing a veridical account, using different historiographical techniques to promote its credibility:

Well, on reading all these authors, I did not find much fault with them for their lying, as I saw that this was already a common practice even among men who profess philosophy. I did wonder, though, that they thought that they could write untruths and not get caught at it. Therefore, as I myself, thanks to my vanity, was eager to hand something down to posterity, that I might not be the only one excluded from the privileges of poetic licence, and as I had nothing true to tell, not having had any adventure of significance, I took to lying. But my lying is far more honest than theirs, for though I tell the truth in nothing else, I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar. I think I can escape the accusation of the world by my own admission that I am not telling a word of truth. Be it understood, then, that I am writing about things which I have neither seen nor experienced nor learned from others – which, in fact, do not exist at all and, in the nature of things, cannot exist. Therefore, my readers should on no account trust them. (Lucian 1913, 251–253)

There is much in common between Lucian's ironic approach and postmodern theories on the narrative nature of historiography, which have turned to the classic ideas on the use of different rhetorical and imaginative discourses (epic, myth, romance, tragedy, comedy, farce) to construct the historian's text. Hayden White's, Frank Ankersmit's, Alun Munslow's and other postmodern theorists' challenging conception of traditional 'historical truth,' based on the formal identification between historical and fictional narratives, and their assumption that the historian provides the reader with a (more or less explicit) pact based on historical verisimilitude using formal strategies to arrive at it, parallels Lucian's assumptions argued in the above quote. Lucian actually uses these historiographical techniques and tropes in his 'A True Story' to persuade the readers of the accuracy of his facts, supporting his veracity and authority, the so-called 'rhetoric of accuracy': the symbolic and formulaic use of the numbers, the dating of events, the rationalization of myths, the omniscient narrative point of view (Greenwood 2006, 121–128).

I was working on an article on the historicity of historical genres – and its continuities and changes through history – when the editors of *Rethinking History* asked me to write this tribute to Munslow. The connection with these subversive ancient historians I was reading at that moment – Hecateus and Lucian among them – and Munslow came immediately to my mind. These ancient historians are not usually quoted as members of the canon of Classic history, as Herodotus, Thucydides or Polybius. But they decisively contributed to lead history to new paths and larger horizons.

At one point in his career, Munslow assumed the task of challenging some modern historiographical assumptions – realistic language and meaning among them. His *Deconstructing History* (1997c) clearly pivoted towards postmodernist history and proposed a radical rethinking of the discipline. He then conceived, designed, promoted, and created the journal *Rethinking History* with several colleagues, especially Robert A. Rosenstone, which turned into practice what he thought in theory, as I have discussed elsewhere (Aurell 2018). The themes, approaches, and perspectives in that book shaped the journal, founded in 1998, which evidences Munslow's scholarly methods: radicalism in theoretical expositions, the desire to challenge established conventions in the discipline, and the search for innovation and experimentation in historical theory and practice. Re-thinking history implied for Munslow the ambitious program of 'expanding the study of the nature of history in all its forms and conceptualization, [and] questioning the boundaries of how we study the past' (1997a, 15–16).

To me, one of the greatest of Munslow's legacies was well summarized by his colleague and friend Robert Rosenstone: 'it is easier to foresee a new way of doing history than to actually create one' (Rosenstone 2016, 131). The pair collaborated on the publication of the inspiring volume *Experiments in Rethinking History* (Munslow and Rosenstone 2004), the reading of which still inspires scholars today. They disputed the discipline's secular conservative propensity, which implied 'a worrying tendency for historians to be dismissive of almost any theory or revisionist method or philosophy that challenges the traditional ways of our thinking' (Munslow 1997b, 116) and proposed a revision of old axioms, principles, convention, standards, practices, customs, canons, and epistemological beliefs (Munslow 2001, 355)

I would like to end these brief reflections with two personal memories. Just after publishing my first international monograph (Aurell 2012), I received an email from Alun. He was saddened because of the unintended coincidence of the title I had chosen ('Authoring the Past') and the designation of the volume in which he gathered some autobiographical essays (Munslow 2013):

Now, by one of those coincidences that never seem to happen where winning large amounts of money is involved we have a book title in common! I am just finishing the proofing for a collection of our 'Invitation to Historians' feature (which we have run since the start of the journal) and I called it Authoring the Past: Writing and Rethinking History. I hope we will not be in competition! But the coincidence of the title of your book and the RH Invitations collection is only the first coincidence. This is because in another book of mine out at the end of this year (A History of History) I also discuss the concept of historical genre as great length – which as you say (below) is central to your book. So your comment that it would be interesting to address the flexibility of historical genres in RH either as a themed issue or as a single article is overdue maybe. For myself I would prefer the former – a themed issue – to do justice to the idea. It would fit in splendidly with the 'mission statement' of RH. (Email from Alun Munslow to Jaume Aurell, 24 June 2012)

I was moved by Alun's generosity and magnanimity since I was beginning my own career and he was a consecrated – although, admittedly, contested – historian. He did not only 'regret' the coincidence, but he also offered me the possibility to edit a themed issue on historical genres, which would come out some years afterward (Aurell 2015). I then decided to invite him to my university, to give a lecture. As I expected, he did not leave anyone indifferent. For the good of historiography, he was this way. He followed Lucian's advice on how to conceive and write history: 'with truthfulness and an eye to future expectations rather than with adulation and a view to the pleasure of present praise.' For his excellent scholarship, for his generosity with his colleagues, and for his friendship, I am grateful. Rest in peace, Alun.

* * *

Mark Donnelly

I only met Alun after he had retired. I'd read his books and knew about his role in the Rethinking History journal. The first time I spoke to him was when Claire Norton and I asked him to be a Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Twickenham. Alun accepted, and for the following three years he was a delight to work with. He was funny. He was self-deprecating. He had an eye for turning the absurdities of academic life and pretensions into a good story. Alun was one of the least pompous people I've met. Our students thought that he was great. He treated them with respect and listened to what they had to say. He asked them what they thought, and then pushed them to think a little more. He made them laugh. He told the same jokes (about his family, his dog, his PhD work) in the same order to every group, but somehow it worked. We filmed a short interview with him and put it on YouTube. It's still there, above some affectionate comments from his former students. Alun's lectures were a 'hoot' said one. Readers of this journal know that he was a serious thinker. Others can better explain his intellectual contributions. I'll remember him as kind, supportive and gently mischievous.

* * *

Douglas Booth

Alun Munslow: a master teacher

I was 'introduced' to Alun Munslow by a colleague and friend at the University of Queensland. Murray Phillips directed me to Alun's work in the early 2000s and in so doing launched what I call an historiographical turn that sent me on a set of radically new research ventures. Alun became an inextricable part of my journey and I was fortunate and privileged to know him and to have learned from him.

Through his writings (e.g. Munslow 1997c, 2006, 2007, 2010a; Jenkins and Munslow 2004; see also Munslow 2015), Alun convinced me that history is first and foremost a narrative representation of the past, and that it is the historian-author's choices as they create their narratives that determine how we understand the past. Historian-authors make choices at every turn. They select the content, including the empirical evidence and analytical concepts; they decide the form of the narrative including the metaphors, tropes, plots, arguments, voice and perspective. Alun's representational approach to the past was far more than an explanation of a discipline. It also sharpened my historical practice: it made me more alert to the silences in historical sources, more skeptical of theory and theoretical concepts, more questioning of given contexts, more aware of the literary structure of historical narratives, and less willing to accept claims of certainty.

My Alun-inspired historiographical turn led me to interrogate my own historical works which I conceptualized as a form of emancipatory social history that espoused freedom from constraining social structures and repressive political systems. Interrogation revealed a contradiction in my practice. On the one hand, I made no claim of neutrality; on the other hand, my empirical-analytical methods assumed a commitment to presenting a real past. Alun resolved this contradiction with his proposition that meaning in the representational approach to history 'flows from what is good or socially responsible to believe about the evidence of the past rather than to discover its true moral content' (Munslow 2006, 13).

As a part of my self-interrogation, I wrote a series of articles in *Rethinking History* (Booth 2008, 2010, 2012), the journal which Alun co-founded. I also devoted considerable space to reflexivity – a bedrock notion in Alun's work (Munslow 1997a) – in *The Field*, a text in which I explored the historiography of sport history (Booth 2005). Alun provided constructive feedback on the articles; his editorials were generous in their praise. His introduction to my piece on racism in apartheid and post-apartheid South African sport (Booth 2010), for example, included the comments 'luminous analysis' and 'incisive dissection' (Munslow 2010b, 457). Encouragement was Alun's forte and he kindly called *The Field* a 'tour de force' (Munslow 2008, 566). Later he invited me to write a piece in the 'Invitation to Historians' section of *Rethinking History* (Booth 2014).

I met Alun on several occasions, including at his home (Rose Cottage outside Stoke-on-Trent) and at the 2010 American Historical Association (AHA) conference in San Diego. During the AHA conference I joined Alun and his close friend Robert Rosenstone (the founding US editor of *Rethinking History*) at an evening meal. I especially remember their general joie de vivre, and their acknowledgement that they had been fortunate and lucky to have worked in the academy at a time of expansion and opportunity, and during a period when scholars enjoyed autonomy and freedom from the burden of incessant and pointless auditing and from the threat of their departments being disestablished. In 2009, Alun invited me to join the Editorial Board of *Rethinking History* and I also met him at a meeting of the board in London. Alun's steady demeanour, sharp wit and composure as both a presenter and a chair commanded attention and respect.

Among many of Alun's gifts to the academic discipline of history, two stand out in my mind. The first was the clarity and precision of his prose. Alun rendered the technical concepts and language of the philosophy of history and historiography eminently comprehensible. In this respect, he was a master communicator. A favourite example of mine, one I have cited on several occasions and one which I continue to use with my students, was Alun's explanation of the difference between reference and representation:

histories can, and invariably do, contain referential sentence-length descriptions. But to then assume willy-nilly that we can now 'tell the truth' in a narrative is akin to saying that we can 'tell the truth' of *The Rocky Mountains* as a painting, or that we can 'tell the truth' about *Macbeth* as a play. Descriptions allow historians to refer and attribute properties, but not at the level of representations. [...] representation is not reference; it is about its subject. That history contains references does not authorize our access to the past's meaning. (Munslow 2006, 223)

This distinction between reference and representation underpinned Alun's work. It was the foundation upon which he separated history (as a narrative representation) from the past (as a category of real bygone events and people). It provided the logic by which he transformed the historian from a 'scientist' who pretends to reconstruct the past into an author who presents her/his story of the past. It was the essence of his notion of historical narrative as the means by which historians create 'the-past-as-history.'

Alun's second gift was *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*. Launched in 1997, *Rethinking History* is the forum for scholars with an interest in the past but who are critical/suspicious of the modernist claims to truth that underpin so much of the discipline. *Rethinking History* gives these scholars the freedom to express their views, thoughts and arguments and, above all, to experiment with the presentation of the past (Rosenstone 1997; Munslow & Rosenstone 2004). As per its title, the journal has given a generation of scholars the confidence to critically rethink the discipline. Much of this confidence, I suggest, derived from Alun's encouraging editorial feedback on manuscripts submitted for publication and on his complimentary editorial introductions. And with each passing year, the journal enhances its credibility by simply adding to the volume of literature.

A new generation of historians is now unhesitatingly embracing the representational approach to the past. They are putting Alun's words into their own. Emily Rosenberg's encapsulation is a case in point. History, Rosenberg (cited in Finney 2008, 117) writes, is

inevitably selective, mediated, and structured, [arising] situationally from particular times, places, and interpretive communities: empirical evidence is essential, but its selection and interpretation remain so contingent, so dependent upon questions asked, and upon diverse narrative and metaphorical frames [that closure is an illusory goal]. History and other forms of public memory are not avenues to some authentic version of the past but ever-changing and inevitably mediated fields of contestation over how to structure the past's representation.

Statements such as Rosenberg's, which are appearing with increasing regularity in theses, monographs and articles, are a ringing endorsement of Alun's intellectual contribution to the field and a reminder of his enduring presence.

* * *

Gabrielle M. Spiegel

While I did not know Alun well, having had the chance to meet him in person only once as I recall, I nonetheless had great admiration for his founding and running of *Rethinking History*, especially because, when he established the journal in 1997, Britain was not particularly open to the sort of postmodern and deconstructionist principles that he endorsed and sought to promote in the journal. Nor was Britain alone in this. At the time, few historical journals were favorable to publishing articles with such an orientation. The fact that *Rethinking History* welcomed them was of enormous importance to those of us who were interested in historiographical theory and principles and wrote on such topics. It was particularly encouraging to know that there was a journal that promoted this work and, as it developed, generated a wide readership for it. Together with *History and Theory*, *Rethinking History* served as a platform for the dissemination of postmodern principles of historical investigation and analysis and served an important function in legitimizing them, especially at the time of its creation.

Moreover, by his own writing, such as his opening Editorial on the occasion of the first issue of *Rethinking History*, as well as in his book *Deconstructing History*, Munslow helped to explain in compelling ways how postmodern thought revised the basic postulates of historiography that had been in place since Ranke, both in terms of its modification (if not outright rejection) of traditional positivist empiricism and positivism's narrative notion of the adequacy of language to mirror and wholly convey the reality of the past. In contrast, Munslow sought to instruct us in novel ways of understanding and explaining the past that, like all postmodern theory, emphasized the role of language – that of the past in the texts deployed to study history, as well as that of our own discourse in the present – as the point of access to history and hence central to historiography. His insistence that history is a form of narrative and therefore cannot avoid literary modalities of reading and understanding helped to elaborate the postmodern agenda in sensitive and persuasive

terms. For this, as doubtless for much else, we shall miss his voice and contributions to the theory and practice of history.

* * *

Rila Mukherjee

I never met Alun Munslow, but I like to think we became friends.

We 'met' through our interest in the works of Aziz Al-Azmeh and the Medieval History Journal, started by my former teacher Harbans Mukhia of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in 1998. Alun launched Rethinking History in 1997. Both journals appeared at a time when the world of history was in ferment, seeking redefinition of the discipline for the twenty-first century. I was then at Jadavpur University in Kolkata and the university subscribed to both journals.

Rethinking History was interesting, so I contacted Alun sometime in 2004. He replied immediately, and he came across as a very gentle person. He usually braided his conversations with personal details; he wrote he enjoyed long contemplative walks with Rosie, his dog. He also had strong convictions. He once wrote that he eschewed entering the US after 9/11. He had apparently been confined for some traumatic hours at JFK for checking by Homeland Security.

We usually discussed the nature of History. He said using the past to just recover an account of what happened was as prosaic and mundane a task as that of a plumber who turns the tap on and off. This conversation made a deep impression; I was in the mid-stage of my career and he taught me to look at the discipline more critically. I would have liked to reproduce it here but have lost it. I remember it was around 2004 or 2005. At that time India used a clunky Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited dial-up connection with a vsnl.com or vsnl.net email-address which mysteriously migrated from my desktop once broadband came in [yes, those were pre-laptop days] and I lost for good all my vsnl conversations with Alun. This is a loss I deeply regret.

Our conversations continued after I shifted to the University of Hyderabad in 2007, but they became less frequent. I was busy in a new job environment; he was perhaps grappling with health issues. The last message I had from him was in March 2015 on my gmail account; he mentioned his hip revision that enabled him to walk without pain and even to play golf!

Alun was kind enough to invite me to join Rethinking History's editorial board, and this was to be helpful in my professional career. He was meticulous in inviting me to attend the editorial board meetings of Rethinking History (and the lunches that followed); alas I could not attend any of these, so I feel doubly honoured to write these few words about Alun.

* * *

Michihiro Okamoto

After having entered the postgraduate course of the department of western history at Tokyo University, I began to study the history of the Chartist movement. Because of this interest, and after I moved to Toyo University which provided me the chance to study abroad, I visited the United Kingdom almost every year since 1989. I also had another major then: 'the relationship of history and globalization.' This latter prompted my first book, *History in the Borderless Age*, published in 1993. In addition, I planned to translate Tony Spybey's *Globalization and World Society*, one of the first textbooks on globalization. In order to consult with Spybey, I visited Staffordshire University where he was working in 1998. There I met Owen Ashton, a leading historian of the Chartist movement. Ashton was also a member of the Advisory Board of *Rethinking History*, which had just been founded then, as well as an intimate friend of Alun due to their shared Welsh origins. Through his introduction, I met and talked with Alun for the first time. This was soon after *Deconstructing History* had been published, and I shared my impressions of it with Alun and also gave him the first two translated chapters of my *History in the Borderless Age* to read. According to my memory, he told me that he had begun his career as an empirical historian and gradually became interested in historical theory, which then became his major focus.

Taking a sabbatical from April 2000 to March 2001, I stayed in the United Kingdom, mainly in Manchester, to further study the Chartist movement. At first, I spent almost every day visiting the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. After half a year had passed, I heard that a seminar on the philosophy of history was being organized at the Institute of Historical Research in London. It sounded attractive to me, so I decided to join it, going to London for almost every meeting. This afforded several opportunities to see Alun again, as he sometimes joined in. There I also met Keith Jenkins for the first time. Each time before the start of the seminar he and Burns would talk about plans for upcoming meetings in the common room of the IHR. The seminar was stimulating and sometimes exciting, especially when Richard Evans spoke. On that occasion, a heated discussion took place between him and Jenkins who was sitting next to me, as was often the case. Taking this opportunity, I offered to translate *Re-thinking History* into Japanese if I could find a suitable publisher. Hosei University Press accepted my proposal and the Japanese translation was published in 2005 as the first book that introduced postmodernist thinking on history to Japanese readers. Fortunately for us, the translation was based on the revised edition that included Alun's introduction and a conversation between Alun and Keith. This was the first time that Alun's thought was introduced to Japanese readers.

Although postmodernism itself was popular in Japan through the translation of the works of Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard, historical thinking under its influence was not viewed favorably by scholarly historians in Japan. This rejection related to the 'history wars' in Japan in the 1990s, triggered by controversy about the Nanking Massacre and 'consolation women,' in other words sex slaves, during World War II. In this controversy, conservative revisionists insisted that the atrocities said to be committed by the Japanese military forces could not be established as historical fact despite the evidence. Some of them likened their relativistic argument to that of postmodernists. This caused misunderstanding about the postmodernist way of thinking about

history. Many historians in academia, captivated by conventional empiricism, adopted a critical attitude toward it as it was supposed to amount to the argument of denying the real past. In this situation, Hayden White's books, even *Metahistory*, had not been translated into Japanese. This caused me to invite first Robert Rosenstone and then Hayden White to Japan. Their visits had a wide-ranging impact and paved the way for an affirmative reconsideration of postmodernist thinking on history.

Encouraged by this success, I next planned to invite Alun and went to Staffordshire to meet him in August 2010 to discuss this. Unfortunately, he could not accept the offer because of other commitments, but my visit gave us the chance for a long talk. Alun kindly took me to a restaurant near the station, and our four-hour meeting was unforgettable for me. He shared many things: his first name's exact pronunciation, his Welsh connection, the influence that *Metahistory* had on him when he first read it in 1978, his recollection of his first meeting with Keith Jenkins in a parking lot at a conference site, and his thoughts about the experimental aspects of a postmodernist way of approaching history. I remember especially well an impressive question and answer when our meeting neared its end. It was about who the most influential British historian in the world was. My answer was Edward Gibbon, but Alun expressed his dissatisfaction with this and then asked me who it was in Japan, in the twentieth century. I was at a loss who to choose. My answer was G. M. Trevelyan or L. B. Namier perhaps, in terms of academic influence. Alun was again dissatisfied and asked why I didn't mention E. J. Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson. To this I had no explanation, since my opinion of them was equally high and they had greatly influenced me in my younger days. As this exchange illustrates, I think, sympathy with radical thinking undergirded his critical approach to proper history. This may be why Alun and I both became interested in a postmodernist way of thinking on history and its possibilities for democratizing society by advocating the right of ordinary people to history.

* * *

Helena Hammond

It was the chance to hear Alun Munslow speak that first brought me to the Philosophy of History Seminar hosted by the Institute of the Historical Research (IHR), part of the University of London's School of Advanced Study. My being based outside London had kept the seminar sadly out of reach until relocation meant I finally found myself happily wandering the corridors of Senate House in search of Alun's paper, on 'Authoring the Past,' one Autumnal evening in 2012. In trying to account for the lack of interest in the narrativist underpinnings to their own work, on the part of what Alun termed 'historians of a certain kind,' the paper was on classic Munslow terrain of course. But as memorable as the paper itself were traits that I would come to recognize as 'Alunisms.' The hand-out to accompany the paper pointed to the tendency of many historians 'to ignore not just Munslow – which is understandable – but more worryingly ignore Hayden White's most lucid examinations of the issue of authoring the past.' This self-effacing modesty about his own work and generosity towards that of colleagues was characteristic of Alun. As was a readiness to credit his wife, Jane. Bringing her into discussions as 'a scientist,' Alun would regularly invoke Jane, especially as an arbitrator when it came to sticking points.

Alun soon returned to the seminar, speaking on 'The Aesthetics of Historying: Imagination and the Fictive' at the 'History and Fiction' themed colloquium devised and convened by Robert Burns and held at the IHR the following May. Alun next spoke to the seminar in Autumn 2016. Emailing his thanks after this last paper, which Alun impishly entitled 'A Paper with No Title' and – when understandably pushed on this – 'A Paper with no title ... but it is about how we turn the past into history,' he made light of an incident in an otherwise uneventful train journey back to Staffordshire. A neighbouring passenger had spilled a 'large Latte' on Alun and we joked that this was in fact a libation on his paper. Even though a hospital stay was by then in the offing for Alun, he had also kindly offered to come down to London to chair another meeting of the seminar just a month earlier (though that session did not in the end transpire for other reasons, unconnected to Alun). I like to think that the coffee spilling episode was a libation not only for the paper therefore but for Alun's spirited collegiality and committed support of communities drawn to the philosophy and rethinking of history more generally.

Alun's approach had other ways of making others feel welcome and at ease. Sometimes it was the sheer range of his coverage that worked this effect by virtue of its inclusivity. Giambattista Vico is regularly cited in the philosophy of history but Vico's contemporary, Pietro Giannone, much less so. Yet Alun drew on Giannone's *Dell'istoria civile del Regno di Napoli*, published in 1723, in *The New History* (2003), so imparting to his own book a meridionalist reach. A foundational text in Neapolitan liberational historiography, Giannone's *Civil History* is nonetheless otherwise critically overlooked in Anglophone historical theory despite its early translation into English in 1729. As the writer of a PhD on historical representation in the eighteenth-century Italian South, it meant a lot to me that Alun was aware of – and involved – this text in post-linguistic discussions of philosophy of history. More recently, as I wrestle to pin down (in relation to African American performances of history) the complexities of pragmatist historical thought in the work of W. E. B. Du Bois and Jane Addams, I am not surprised to learn that, again, Alun got there first, and decades earlier at that. Checking in some of his publications, I happily discovered that both figures feature in Alun's *Discourse and Culture: The Creation of America 1870–1920* (1992). I now have that book on order and look forward with much anticipation to continuing to be illuminated by Alun in this, as in so many other connections.

* * *

James Connelly

Alun Munslow and the journal *Rethinking History* were part of the permanent background to the Philosophy of History Seminar at the IHR which I now convene. Although Alun, being based in Stafford, was unable to attend the seminars regularly, he presented papers on two occasions. Both were well received and well remembered.

I remember speaking with Alun on the occasion of Keith Jenkins's inaugural lecture at the University of Chichester. On that occasion, as on any and every occasion, our opinions did not coincide and perhaps they never coincided. But so what? Why should that matter? For Alun it certainly didn't: I

can hear his voice saying that now. For him, differences of opinion, and the clash or dialectic thereby set up, were the driving force of historical understanding. So our differences of view were positive, welcomed and, more important, not only inevitable but also vital to thinking about historical thinking itself. I know that I would sometimes read his work with gritted teeth: and I'm sure he would have approved. Looking now at my copy of *Deconstructing History* I can see the visible signs that (gritted teeth or otherwise) I read it thoroughly and with care. I'm sure that Alun would have been happy with that.

Another occasion – again in Chichester: Alun and I had been invited by Keith Jenkins to be the examiners for Peter Icke's PhD thesis on Frank Ankersmit. From our different ends of the spectrum we converged in an examination of the thesis, its evaluation of Ankersmit's development and the coherence of his thought. And we had a thoroughly wonderful time. Our perspectives, in dialogue with each other, and with the thesis, generated an excellent discussion. This illustrated perfectly that we would and could never sing in unison, but that somehow we generated a choir bigger than the both of us in which our melodic thrusts and counter thrusts generated an interesting harmony which rarely descended into mere discord.

Alun is missed and will continue to be missed, not only for the loss to scholarship, but more importantly because of the generous and rounded view he took of it and his fellow scholars.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. This is a slightly modified appreciation as published in *Rethinking History* 21:3 (2017), p. 355.

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