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## REVIEWS

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**Vera Nünning, Philipp Löffler, and Margit Peterfy. *Key Concepts for the Study of Culture: An Introduction*. Trier: WVT, 2020. 364 pp.**

In this voluminous handbook, Vera Nünning, Philipp Löffler, Margit Peterfy, and Corinna Assmann (who co-authored two articles with Nünning) cover a series of concepts that are undoubtedly central for the study of culture. In addition to an introductory overview, each of the following eleven concepts or conceptual pairs is dealt with in a chapter of its own: worldmaking, emotions, civilisation, performance and performativity, identity, intersectionality, visual studies, globalisation, material culture and intermediality, cultural memory, and, last but not least, values. As Nünning explains, since all the categories overlap in one way or another, the individual chapters are meant to complement each other, with identity being "awarded the place in the centre" (38). Hence, while they can be used as stand-alone contributions, the reader gains a great deal by reading them as an ensemble. The book is designed as an introduction, which is why the authors "focus on a middle level of abstraction" (35), and successfully so: the chapters provide fluent reading without compromising the complexity of the various methodological approaches; examples animate and clarify the theoretical reflections. The authors also provide visual scaffolding, not only by interspersing the text with graphs and images but also by rendering important terms and phrases in bold print, which helps readers to orient themselves and reconstruct the line of argumentation when going back to the text at a later stage. Considering that historical knowledge is indispensable for any scholar of culture yet many students have only a shaky grasp of it, it is highly welcome that the authors understand their project as an endeavour in cultural history as well: in addition to the many illustrations taken from contemporary culture(s), Nünning's chapter on "Cultural Ways of Worldmaking," for instance, introduces students, *inter alia*, to the interdependence of dynastic, political and religious constellations and processes relevant in 16<sup>th</sup>-century England; or, to name another example, Löffler's piece on "Civilisation" discusses poems by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century American writer Philip Freneau to shed light on how tropes of primitivism and the elevation of Nature went hand in hand with the mythicization of the frontier and the development of American republicanism. The contributions clarify that none of the selected concepts is simple: dealing with them will unavoidably lead to other, interdependent, concepts and ideas that have to be taken into account and historically situated in their own right. This, in turn, will involve taking heed of other disciplines: Cultural Studies always works interdisciplinarily. Hence, Peterfy, in her essay on 'performance' and 'performativity,' elaborates on how to distinguish these two terms by introducing related ones, such as 'habit' via the philosopher and psychologist William James (151), 'dramatism' via the literary theorist Kenneth Burke (152), 'social drama' via the ethnographer Victor Turner (154), 'face' via the sociologist Erving Goffman (155-156), and 'speech act' via the linguist J.L. Austin (157-159). In this way, the handbook provides its readers with an immense intellectual wealth of ideas, approaches and thoughts, inviting them to take these as mere starting points for further exploration. In keeping with its own logic, therefore, the last subchapter in Nünning's final

contribution on "Culture and Values" chooses to offer no conclusion. Instead, by way of formulating "Open Questions and Challenges" (353-356), it encourages the readers to become active themselves.

When looking at the title of the handbook, *Key Concepts for the Study of Culture*, most Cultural Studies scholars, at least those situated within English Studies, will probably think of Raymond Williams's influential *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976/1983), as well as *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2005), edited by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, which successfully offered a 21<sup>st</sup>-century continuation, expansion, and 'update' of Williams's project. The volume under consideration could easily be seen as being part of this trajectory, were it not for the fact that the authors – with the notable exception of Margit Peterfy, especially in her fine article on "Material Culture and Intermediality" – seem to avoid such association, i.e., an association with the so-called Birmingham School and the American, as well as Australian, variants of Cultural Studies that have grown out of it. Neither *Keywords* nor *New Keywords* is mentioned even once, and formative Cultural Studies scholars belonging to this tradition are referred to either only in passing (such as Stuart Hall) or not at all (e.g., Angela McRobbie or Lawrence Grossberg). Admittedly, even in their preface the authors try to pre-empt such criticism by stating that they "reluctantly left out information about founding figures and their ideas [...] and even the development of cultural studies in Great Britain [...] or recent developments in American studies" (n. p.). And of course, there is nothing wrong at all with sticking to "German *Kulturwissenschaft*" (136) instead. However, it is one thing to point out, say, the undoubted importance of Norbert Elias for the study of "Civilization," as Löffler does in the respective chapter, yet quite another to do so by wrongly accusing "neo-Marxist cultural and literary criticism or studies following the groundbreaking work of Birmingham School scholars" (136) of adhering to a naïve economism ("universal history of class struggle," 137). Unfortunately, such a reductive stance is also evident in his chapter on "Intersectionality in/and Cultural Studies." It goes without saying that any theoretical concepts, especially recent ones, need to be considered with a view to their historical becoming. It is surprising, however, that the chapter hardly offers any discussion, let alone examples, of intersectional analysis. Instead, Löffler spends considerable space elaborating on Kant and Herder to shed light on the philosophical shift towards 'inwardness' around 1800 (213-218), whereas the references to "Contemporary Responses" by Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and others are compressed into a few sentences, which moreover seem to serve the sole aim of confirming the continued relevance of Kant et al. (220). Particularly for readers new to the field, this creates the problematic impression that intersectionality studies is mainly a 'contemporary response' to Western philosophy around 1800. In addition, interested students are informed that existing definitions of intersectionality are very fuzzy (221), that cultural studies must not be political (which intersectionality studies undoubtedly is, although everything depends on one's definition of 'political,' of course; 221-222), and that scholars should stop bothering about class: "**class is not an identity in and of itself.** And for that reason, the category does not require recognition" (225; original emphasis). Since the explanation that precedes this apodictic statement is anything but

transparently argued, those readers in the Cultural Studies community who, like the reviewer, still put value on the 'Birmingham tradition' are left somewhat flabbergasted. After all, is it not the whole point of intersectionality studies to prove that none of the discursive axes (gender, race, ethnicity etc.) is sufficient 'in and of itself,' especially when it comes to mechanisms and experiences of discrimination? (Ethnicity, by the way, is covered in a scant eight lines, 208). The confusion is heightened due to the fact that the often-used phrase 'subject position' is never explained in detail, just as alternative, 'anti-humanist' understandings of subjectivity (such as Althusser's 'subject interpellation' or Foucault's notion of 'discourse') are mentioned nowhere in the entire volume, not even in Vera Nünning's otherwise very wide-ranging chapter on identity.

Despite such reservations yet also because of them, I recommend the handbook for use by everyone in the English and American Studies community who engages in Cultural Studies. While it may of course be used as a stand-alone introduction, I suggest following the model it proposes: just as its individual contributions should be considered as complement pieces and hence read in order to mutually enrich each other, *Key Concepts* as a whole will best unfold its rich potential when used *along with* other Cultural Studies introductions, handbooks and dictionaries. Just as *Key Concepts* could do with a bit more input from 'British Cultural Studies,' it makes up for this lack by yielding illuminating perspectives on topics only reticently dealt with in comparable publications, for instance by repeatedly pointing out the importance of narrative for all instances of cultural worldmaking or by foregrounding relevant aspects such as 'emotions' or 'values.' Obviously, there is more than one way of doing Cultural Studies, which should be understood as an advantage. Cultural Studies will only grow as a discipline as long as its practitioners engage in critical dialogue with each other.

GEROLD SEDLMAYR

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**Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen. *With Bodies: Narrative Theory and Embodied Cognition. Theory and Interpretation of Narrative*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2021. 226 pp.**

This book develops an embodied narratology by showing how narrative understanding is grounded in the bodies of readers. Caracciolo and Kukkonen demonstrate that narrative engagements share a background of sensorimotor and affective patterns with real-world cognition. To this end, they draw on research in the context of 4E approaches to cognition, according to which mental processes are *embodied* (i.e., connected to a body), *embedded* (i.e., coupled with an environment), *extended* (because technologies participate in our thinking), and *enactive* (since the interactions of organisms with environments involve past and present experiences). The book's central goal is to reconceptualize core concepts of narrative theory from the perspective of situated cognition.

In Part 1, Caracciolo and Kukkonen challenge the understanding of immersion as the sense of 'being there' in a storyworld by looking at the moment-by-moment dynamic of mental model construction. For them, there is never a single world-like representation that we populate with existents, because it would be too demanding to

entertain such a global model (36). Instead, they define immersion as the experiential thickening of situation models: the sense of being transported is intensified by narrative strategies that enrich our mental models through sensory and emotional traces. Moreover, they argue that narrators emerge from the "joint attention" (51) that readers devote to the events, while also paying attention to the narration that creates these events. The location, presence, and self of this narrator can then be described in scalar terms, i.e., as a more or less bodily appearance. Caracciolo and Kukkonen also state that the physicality of a focalizing character always orients the reading experience; and the more this character's bodily experiences are spelled out, the thicker and more vivid the reader's situation model will become (70). In addition, they argue that space is no mere backdrop for the situations conveyed by the narrative; affect is more important in our relation to the experience of space than the details of spatial arrangement. This global affect drives the readerly modeling of space and usually transforms it into an imagined place infused with emotional and cultural meanings (such as moods or atmospheres) (91).

In Part 2, they show that time takes a supporting role in our understanding of narrative because it does not give rise by itself to readerly predictions about the plot. Instead, such predictions depend on the embodied experiences of characters, and they lead to the experience of flow, i.e., the readers' feelings of ease and control as they progress through a narrative (117). Furthermore, Caracciolo and Kukkonen define action as the synthesis of external happenings and characters' intentionality. For them, a mechanism of motor resonance establishes an embodied link between characters and recipients; the patterning of actions and mental states evokes an affective structure of expectation and resolution; and narrative sequences are organized by image schemata, i.e., templates derived from our bodily experience of the world (143). Plot comes from the situated conceptualizations developed in combination with embodied resonances. These situated conceptualizations, constellations of characters, and relations are transformed through events that cause readers to infer changes in the constellation along underlying principles. The principle of inference that informs revisions in the context of predictive processing is what they call the "plot principle" (148). In addition, Caracciolo and Kukkonen show that narrators and authors shape processes of joint attention through "temporal control" (162), i.e., the pacing and timing of the embodied situation models constructed by readers. Finally, they discuss their embodied narratology in relation to the situatedness of literature, the limits of anthropocentrism and biological models of the mind, the connection between sex and gender, and the notion of world literature (174).

*With Bodies* demonstrates convincingly that narrative can be seen as an inherently embodied practice. I would recommend the book to everyone who is interested in the question of what situated cognition can tell us about narrative processing. Despite this overall positive impression, I also have a few misgivings that concern the theoretical conceptualization and the status of their close readings. To begin with, Caracciolo and Kukkonen remain rather vague when it comes to the question of how exactly extracranial factors shape mental processes: they never tell us whether they follow the "strong reading" (according to which cognitive processes are constituted by extracranial processes) or the "weak reading" (according to which they are only partially dependent

on them) (Newen et al. 2018, 6).<sup>1</sup> The authors also never explain what happened to their earlier suggestions regarding 6E cognition (which included both "emotional" and "experiential") (Kukkonen and Caracciolo 2014, 261).<sup>2</sup> In *With Bodies*, they only state that "'emotion' *almost becomes another E* in 4E cognition" (7; my emphasis). Also, since they resort to all 4, 5, or 6 Es in their analyses, they might have explained why they use 'embodied' (rather than, say, 'situated') to name their new kind of narratology.

Moreover, I would classify their close readings as proto-interpretations that primarily draw attention to the role of embodiment in literary narratives. In their analyses, they focus on "the embodied common ground" (12) and say very little about the embeddedness of the examples in different contexts. However, such a discussion might have been important since they look at various cultural-historical moments (namely authors ranging from Apuleius to Marie-Madeleine de La Fayette, Laurence Sterne, and Leo Tolstoy, and from there to Virginia Woolf, Italo Calvino, and Virginie Despentes). Furthermore, they state that in their readings, they draw on their "own intuitions in ways that are perhaps not unlike reader-response theory or rhetorical narratology" (14). This is also not unproblematic: Caracciolo and Kukkonen do not only establish themselves as ideal or model readers; they also seem to believe that what they do is (more or less) what all readers do. However, it would surprise me if recipients did not differ greatly with regard to the degree to which they rely upon their sensorimotor skills: readers can be more or less visual (Esrock 1993, 123-124), but presumably also more or less embodied.<sup>3</sup> I also wonder whether one can really deal with the body's role in narrative meaning-making by focusing on the operations of two (highly embodied) expert readers. I think that one also needs to address what other flesh-and-blood readers do. One of the central assumptions of situated cognition is that we do *not* all think, read, or interpret alike; rather, different mind-bodies generate various enactments because they operate in different contexts and bring various experiential backgrounds to the narrative. A stronger empirical outlook (see Alber et al. 2020) would perhaps enable the authors to determine the similarities and differences between groups of readers, and I would be very happy to test some of their ideas and claims with them.<sup>4</sup>

JAN ALBER

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- 1 Newen, Albert, Leon de Bruin, and Shaun Gallagher. "4E Cognition: Historical Roots, Key Concepts, and Central Issues." *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition*. Eds. Albert Newen et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 3-15.
  - 2 Kukkonen, Karin, and Marco Caracciolo. "Introduction: What is the 'Second Generation'?" *Style* 48.3 (2014): 261-274.
  - 3 Esrock, Ellen J. *The Reader's Eye: Visual Imaging as Reader Response*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
  - 4 Alber, Jan, Caroline Kutsch, and Sven Strasen. "Empirical Methods in Literary Studies." *Methods of Textual Analysis in Literary Studies: Approaches, Basics, Model Interpretations*. Eds. Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning. Trier: WVT, 2020. 273-296.

**Katja Sarkowsky and Mark U. Stein, eds. *Ideology in Postcolonial Texts and Contexts*. Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill Rodopi, 2021. 262 pp.**

In December 2013, playwright David Greig started to use Twitter to engage with the impending 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. Creating miniature plays in which a character called 'Yes' and a character called 'No' confronted each other on such mundane issues as how to cook 'proper' porridge, Greig acknowledged how a highly complex issue was being reduced to a simple yes-no question, dividing communities, families, and friends. This tendency to simplify and divide, often along binary oppositions, has shaped many debates in recent years, as witnessed in the Brexit referendum, the Trump administration, or protests around COVID-19 and vaccinations.

It is this climate of an increasing division and re-hardening of seemingly past political labels and camps that makes the present volume on ideology in postcolonial texts and contexts so timely. It is published as volume 23 of the ASNEL/GAPS papers and volume 213 of the *Cross/Cultures* series published by Brill Rodopi. As the editors outline in their introduction, 'ideology' is a highly contested term, and their volume combines meta-critiques of ideology as a concept with individual criticisms of specific ideologies in the more traditional sense of *Ideologiekritik* in texts and contexts ranging from Nigeria, the Caribbean, via South Africa, the UK, or Canada to Estonia or the German *Kaiserreich*. The diversity of contexts is tackled by academics, both young and established, across a variety of disciplines. This broad scope is the boon and bane of the volume: It definitely shows the multifaceted debate surrounding the concept and uses of ideology, and many of the case studies yield highly interesting results, but it also struggles with its own heterogeneity, creating a conceptual vagueness in some of the articles. Given that the editors ask whether there is a "reality that [can] be accessed from a 'neutral' position" (3), it is surprising that many of the articles do not make a point about their own position in this matter.

Some exceptions do arise, notably in the essays by Caroline Koegler and Mavis Reimer, who explicate their critical positions in relation to ideology. Koegler addresses the fundamental concern raised by the meta-critical chapter by Michael Freeden – namely: how to write outside of ideology. In doing so, Koegler disentangles the binaristic thinking typical within the Marxist tradition, attempting to rescue the concepts of marketization and commodification from being too cleanly identified with 'false consciousness.' Similarly, Reimer actually takes a step toward *historicizing* young adult fiction within the material conditions of bourgeois social structures, and even positions her article alongside ideas and concepts one expects in this tradition. She engages the *textuality* of ideology as expressing the symptoms of a social unconscious, taking cues here from Jameson's discussion of genre and form.

The volume groups its twelve articles into three larger sections. Section one deals with a meta-critique of ideology as a concept (with articles by Michael Freeden, Laura Chrisman, and Caroline Koegler). Section two presents analyses of specific postcolonial contexts (with articles by Taiwo Soneye, Eva Canan Hänsel, Andreas Athanasiades, and Simon Rosenberg), and section three, entitled "Continuities, Complications, Critique," sets out to "expand the nexus of postcolonial ideology and thereby further highlights the complexities of ideological formations in postcolonial

constellations," as stated in the introduction (8). This section contains articles by Lars Eckstein, Ana Sobral, Elizabeth le Roux, Mavis Reimer, and Larissa Lai. While the decision to divide meta-critique from individual analyses makes sense in the context of the volume's overall aim, section three is not self-explanatory. In particular, there appears to be no obvious manner in which the third section departs from the second one. Some of the articles in part three provide individual readings of very specific contexts, e.g., Sobral's analysis of the veil in contemporary British culture or le Roux's interpretation of crime fiction and censorship in South Africa before and after apartheid. How these articles provide continuities, complications, or critique (and of what) rather than additional readings of specific regional and/or historical contexts is not clear, and the editors do not explain their choices in the introduction either.

It is true, of course, that any text contending with the conceptual legacy and limitations of ideology will run into issues of a shared consensus. Anticipating these concerns, Freedén's early chapter thoroughly prepares readers for the complications that come with *Ideologiekritik*. This orientation toward ideology as an object of study, though, raises the stakes for the authors to actually use the term in a critically useful manner. In fact, authors in the volume rarely take up the injunction to properly address the complexity of ideology (vis-a-vis power, class, commodification, hegemony, and knowledge). To be sure, all of these lines of thought are confronted in the introduction and the articles of section one. However, as the essays proceed, the particularity of ideology *as such* seems to fall away. What is left, then, are several authors seemingly taking for granted that ideology's meaning is readily available to us as readers. Or, when actually deployed, several of the authors seem to conflate ideology with 'social attitudes' or 'social discourse.' These forces, as we learn from Foucault and others, are emphatically *not* the same as ideology, related though they are to questions of social and cultural knowledge. Some of the essays thus demonstrate a missed opportunity to re-claim ideology in the service of critiquing the systems of power that naturalize, intervene in, or valorize social hierarchies.

Finally, one finds a pattern of poor editing and proofreading within this volume. Bad grammar, syntactical issues, formatting mishaps, and punctuation mistakes all make the complicated arguments even less legible. In addition, the spelling of central critical terms like 'postcolonial' (as both 'postcolonial' and 'post-colonial') is inconsistent, even within the introduction itself, opening up the question of the different critical meanings of these spellings (not to mention the *ideological* implications entailed in each spelling). Despite these issues, the volume offers interesting case studies and meta-critical discussions of ideology – a term that is not only central for postcolonialism, but also crucial in dealing with a public sphere so keen on dividing, judging, and (dis)liking.

SARAH HEINZ AND KEVIN POTTER

**Verena Jain-Warden and Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp, eds. *Representing Poverty in the Anglophone Postcolonial World*. Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2021. 262 pp.**

In this recent addition to the series *Representations & Reflections: Studies in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, Verena Jain-Warden and Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp illustrate the geographical and generic scope of researching poverty from literary and cultural studies perspectives. No longer the sole concern of economists and sociologists, "poverty has emerged as a significant thematic focus" (7) in the study of literary and audiovisual texts as well as cultural practices from across the Anglophone postcolonial world. A renowned expert in the new poverty studies, Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp, who has just co-edited a similar volume on *Representing Poverty and Precarity in a Postcolonial World* (2022), traces the reasons for the growing interest in poverty among humanities scholars in her excellent introduction. While global capitalism, including the ever-expanding gap between rich and poor, affects the Global South and the Global North alike, the last decades have witnessed a broadening of the term's definition according to which poverty is closely "linked with deprivation of social capabilities" (8). Capability approaches necessitate attention to context, and it is one of the chapters' strengths that they stress the regional specificities of poverty representations in Australia, India, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe and the UK and, testifying to the overlapping concerns of postcolonial and poverty studies, critically reflect on the privileged positions from which they emerge. Another strength lies in the literary and cultural studies outlook; fully aware that "poverty reduction requires political measures," the chapters persuasively demonstrate that literary and cultural representations, precisely because of their ambivalence, can "envisage alternative futures" and "spur action" (7).

Dominated by literary and cultural studies approaches (except for Vijaya John Kohli's chapter which deconstructs the linguistic concept of the 'Indian English' myth), the thirteen chapters are divided into five parts. Part I interrogates "The Ethics of Representing Poverty." Barbara Korte examines the representational strategies of two texts that establish outside perspectives on Mumbai's Annawadi slum, Katherine Boo's creative non-fiction book *The Beautiful Forevers* (2012) and David Hare's eponymous stage adaptation (2014); focusing on structures of narration and address, she finds that the texts paint a multi-layered picture of the slum inhabitants and thereby soften the dichotomy between observer and observed. Similarly, Katharina Engel, whose chapter concentrates on contemporary poverty discourses in the UK, investigates Kate Tempest's spoken word epic *Brand New Ancients* (2013) to contend that its hybrid form functions to "remind [audiences] of their shared responsibility for their fellow citizens" (67). Rainer Hillrichs looks at the aesthetics of the film *Soul Boy* (2010) which provides inside perspectives on Nairobi's Kibera slum and, using magic neorealism, offers "an affirmative slum politics" (72).

Part II addresses "Intersecting Aspects of Poverty and Agency." Devindra Kohli approaches agency through a study of Indian socio-fictions like Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and contrasts them with R.K. Narayan's bildungsroman *The Guide* (1958) to disclose that its shifting narrative perspectives and dialogic mode, rather than



embracing global economic hierarchies, construct spiritual transformation as a means of agency. Unveiling the non-linear relations between poverty and class, Verena Jain-Warden turns to Lauren Beukes's *Zoo City* (2010); combining the realism of detective and speculative fiction with animalised characters, i.e. characters who, following criminal or traumatic experiences, have animals attached to them, the novel untangles socio-economic disparities from gender and race issues, offering an ambivalent realm that allows for negotiations of "poverty and exclusion, as well as the pitfalls of their representation, without being weighed down by them" (125).

That representations are capable of "Transforming Stereotypes, Rewriting Poverty Discourse," is shown in Part III. Taking issue with Western approaches to acceleration, Miriam Nandi reads Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) to modify the sociological concept so as to challenge Eurocentric stereotypes about the 'idle poor.' While Nandi scrutinises the novel's spatio-temporal constructions, Jan Alber's chapter reveals the capacity of humour and satire to destabilise prejudices; drawing on his expertise in narrative theory, he convincingly demonstrates how Dot Collard's life narrative *Busted Out Laughing* (2003) and Alexis Wright's novel *Carpentaria* (2006) "counteract the representation of Aboriginal poverty" by "mock[ing] the absurd contrast between the spiritual richness of poor indigenous characters and the metaphorical poverty [...] of economically wealthy white characters" (147).

The contributions to Part IV, "Spatial Representations of Poverty," expand the discussion of ethical concerns. Comparing two young adult dystopian novels, Miriam Gertzen discloses that Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* (2002) and Ally Condie's *Matched* (2010) subvert the centre-periphery dichotomy by employing adolescent and liminal characters, encouraging their young readers "to confront their own notions of what is 'central' or 'marginal'" (189). Ellen Grünkemeier's reading of South African townships as "symbols of [...] social, cultural, racial and economic divisions" (192) stands out methodologically because it juxtaposes (semi-)fictional texts by Sindiwe Magona with policy papers or surveys, offering useful reflections on the role of literature "[a]s a polyvalent aesthetic construct" (204). Grünkemeier studies Magona's contrasting constructions of suburbs and townships, finding that the latter are "defined by what they lack" (192); metaphors and other stylistic devices, in turn, deconstruct such binaries, stressing the "complex and ambiguous ways" (204) of representing poverty.

Pursuing the significance of space further, Part V zooms in on "Global and Local Displacements." Katrin Berndt analyses food metaphors in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) to argue that the novel interweaves "Material, Cultural, and Emotional Poverty" and thus its central settings in Zimbabwe and the US. Katrin Althans looks at "Representations of Australian Refugee Experiences" to illustrate that the anthology *A Country Too Far* (2013), rather than framing poverty in material terms, "call[s] for an entirely different set of categories" (230), including Giorgio Agamben's notion of 'bare life.' The concluding contribution by Marion Gymnich turns to representations of homelessness in the BBC1 drama series *Cathy Come Home* (1966) and the Christmas special of *Call the Midwife* (2012); scrutinising the series' generic patterns, Gymnich uncovers similarities in terms of character or camera work that differ in effect: while the former "made some difference in the way homeless people were treated," the latter "caters to a 'seasonal' interest in homelessness" (259).

Without doubt, the chapters prove that poverty constitutes both a valuable topic and tool in literary and cultural studies, even if the section headings and the chapter arrangement conceal the volume's conceptual contribution to the study of poverty. Structured along broad terms like agency, ethics or space, the collection puts the chapters into dialogue, offering stimulating insights into related concerns; on the other hand, arranging them along theoretical and/or methodological lines would have been instrumental in defining the parameters of examining literary and other representations of poverty in more precise terms. Putting this minor issue aside, this rich collection can only be recommended. Scholars with an interest in the new poverty studies and the many ways of practising it will cherish the authors' sound textual analyses across various genres and geographies.

HANNAH PARDEY

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**Christoph Ehland and Jana Gohrisch, eds. *Imperial Middlebrow*. Leiden: Brill, 2020. 246 pp.**

In an age of cult, pulp, pop, post-, and digital literature, I must confess that the genre of middlebrow was nowhere near my literary radar. I was in fact skeptical whether this seemingly forgotten genre has anything to offer to contemporary readers when I first laid my eyes on this niftily bound volume, *Imperial Middlebrow*. But it is the 'imperial' side of the middlebrow that glued my eyes to the editorial Introduction, which fittingly departs from the nostalgia associated with contemporary British society in the wake of Brexit. Capitalizing on this pervasive "imperial disquiet" (3) since the heydays of the Commonwealth, Brexit, and the process of globalization set in motion by the colonial enterprise, the editors cleverly situate literature as a link between the middle-class subjects, middlebrow writers/readers, and the political will for a total conquest of the colonies on part of the British Empire. This is a far cry from many of the existing approaches to middlebrow literature today, which tend to focus exclusively on the market, reception, and formal-aesthetic devices and parameters of the middlebrow genre. In stating that "the writers of the middlebrow imagined life on the colonial periphery" (4), the editors set out to unpack the political motifs of the genre that went unnoticed in postcolonial cultural studies. While contextualizing the notion of the middlebrow ('Mittelware') through the German critic Hans von Weber and Virginia Woolf's disdain for the genre, particularly for its "propensity to a dangerously seductive cultural inertia" (5), the editors also challenge the reactionary treatment of the genre by highbrow culture, and draw attention to the aesthetic merit of the middlebrow which does enough to draw, influence, and convince a large group of readers and social classes both within and outside of the colonies on matters of imperial domination.

Here, it is important to see that middlebrow is not something that lies between pulp and high art. Rather, it is seen – at least in the catalogue of highbrow culture – as a bad imposter of high art which undermines the latter's aesthetic merit and corrupts both art and readers alike by exposing them to bad tastes, and cheap and unchecked emotions. Drawing on the postcolonial scholarship of Shuchi Kapila and Bart Moore-Gilbert, the editors provide solid ground to position middlebrow literature in the wake of, in the

service of, and more importantly, in the throes of imperialism. The essays featured in this volume do more than mere justice towards this endeavour.

Jochen Petzold's essay on the magazine *Girl's Own Paper*, an imposter of *Boy's Own Paper* issued by the Religious Tract Society in the 1880s, traces how the magazine was pitched as an antidote to the penny dreadfuls and the pernicious, cheap literature that appealed to the working classes at the expense of presumed aesthetic and moral poverty on the part of the middlebrow literati. The magazine in effect sought to fill in the moral void by injecting vices, values and virtues among British women, and bid their support – both domestically and militaristically – for the imperialist missions abroad, from India to Canada to South Africa. Kate Holterhoff's essay on the adventure fictions of H. Rider Haggard follows suit through a creative intertextual and intermedial reading of the illustrations of select scenes from the former's novels. Both the novelist and his various illustrators, as Holterhoff's essay demonstrates, unfailingly succumb to a pan-African Orientalism of sorts in which Zulus are portrayed as noble savages, and African women as strong-willed and powerful – all in an overt attempt to justify imperialist dominance. The subsequent essay by Christoph Singer and Samuel Caddick delves into the anxieties of Anglo-Indians in transgressing the boundary that separates the colonizer from the native, and the need to take refuge (from the Indian cultural influences) into a hill town (Shimla) where the Anglo-Indians eventually cultivate a class system of their own. Such anxieties, as Singer and Caddick show in their own distinct ways, have become the subjects of middlebrow fictional plots by middle-class Anglo-Indian authors themselves. A similar pattern of imperialist tendencies could be observed among lesser-known Caribbean fictions of the time, namely Augusta Zelia Fraser's late-Victorian novel *Lucilla* (1895) and Margaret Long's novel *The Golden Violet* (1936). As Jana Gohrisch's essay shows, these two works, among others, "explore white European middle-class femininities in a colonial West Indian setting by contrasting them with post-emancipation black and brown femininities of both middle- and working-class origin" (105). Subsequent essays on Victoria Cross's imperial fiction (Cornelia Wächter) and Somerset Maugham's classic *Rain* (Victoria Kuttainen), including two more readings on the Anglo-Indian contexts (Melissa Edmundson and Robert Wirth), and Black British and Asian fiction (Gesa Stedman) unravel the middlebrow constituencies of the authors, texts and readership in both critiquing and affirming imperialist values. Finally, Hannah Pardey's coinage of "middlebrow 2.0" based on the discourses of reception of new Nigerian fiction offers a refreshing remediation of "middlebrow 1.0" for the earlier years (1750s&1830s): "Nigerian novels foster a feeling of belonging that serves both to counteract and to reinforce consumers' enmeshment in late capitalist social and economic structures" (221).

In sum, this is a valuable collection of essays which sheds light on the ideological blindspots not just the middlebrow, but the (per)received legacies of all high and lowbrows that remained complicit with imperialist visions even if they appeared to critique it. However, Anglo-Indian contributions are somewhat overrepresented in the collection, and it could have been even richer with more material from Africa, East Asia, and Indigenous Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

PAVAN KUMAR MALREDDY

**Lena Mattheis. *Translocality in Contemporary City Novels*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. 251 pp.**

In *Translocality in Contemporary City Novels*, Lena Mattheis refers to ideas from urban studies, narratology and translocality to present an inventory of narrative features and techniques that contribute, at different scales and levels, to the translocal narratability of city novels. Taking heed from scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Arjun Appadurai, Mattheis associates the translocal with the idea of "a network of imaginaries and lived experiences" that give rise to the individual's "experiences of different cityscapes, specific mental maps and perspectives" (4). Translocal stories, as such, "take specific local ties, experiences and behaviours and layer them with ties, experiences and behaviours belonging to another place" (6). Mattheis's monograph focusses on a corpus of 32 Anglophone novels published between 1997 and the 2010s, all of which are set in mainly contemporary times. According to Mattheis, techniques reflecting the ubiquitous translocal in urban fiction are simultaneity, palimpsest, mapping, scaling, silence, absence and non-place, as well as haunting.

Speculative simultaneity and implied readerly participation affect the narratability of the translocal, where different diegeses of readers, characters and narrators exist as concurrent storyworlds during the reading process. Often comprising multi-strand narratives, translocal city novels highlight the liminality of translocal simultaneity through non-places and borders. Next, the strategy of palimpsest "incorporates movement on the axis of *space* as well as through time, [which] is essential to understand how the novel constructs its palimpsests" (50). Exemplified by the observation of street/public art and former city structures, the urban palimpsest in translocal texts is "a mix of spatially related or unrelated layers" or "a parchment with *unrelated*, [...] partially erased layers of text on it" (51). While novels with one main setting and layers of other locations tend to exhibit palimpsestic features, those with two or three primary settings, while gesturing to additional locations, tend to illustrate simultaneity instead. The chapter on mapping discusses the function of paratextual elements such as authorial maps and provides Mattheis's mappings of Huchu's *The Maestro* based on one dataset and different parameters. Illustrating the positives of distant reading, the maps reveal political spatial dynamics at play while revealing characters' emotional connections to space that affect their movements and decision-making process.

Next, scaling, which ranges from the local to the global via hyperobjects, produces varying perspectives that "reflect the tension between the part and the whole, or the global and the local" (15).<sup>1</sup> While translocal works focus on local effects, the local and global exist symbiotically, and the scaling of time and/or space facilitates the connecting of stories in distant spaces to reveal "what is happening *between* cultures" (141; original emphasis). Mattheis's consideration of paratextuality is interesting;

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1 Regarding movement and scaling, it is useful to examine the notion of looming, which explains the effects of zooming and how the approached object (or affordance) dynamically becomes larger and vice versa. See Käufer, Stephan, and Anthony Chemero. *Phenomenology: An Introduction*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Oxford: Polity, 2015; and Gros, Frédéric. *A Philosophy of Walking*. Trans. J. Howe. London: Verso, 2015.

however, a deeper dive into the effects of punctuations (such as brackets) could be helpful. Furthermore, the difference between the researcher and the reader is unclear in Mattheis's description of translocality as a form of hyperobject (cf. 140). Following scaling are the features of silence, absence and non-place, which subvert readerly expectations in translocal texts. Appearing in the form of empty spaces or spatialised memories, silence reflects translocal disconnection and unresolved traumas. In addition, given the very sense of absence in non-place affords "an abundance of potential connections" (169), any non-place can become a translocal place through the eyes of characters and readers with their subjective experiences and contextual knowledge. The last strategy, haunting, uncovers "which stories, people and locations are generally considered important and central and which ones remain spectral and liminal" (16). For Mattheis, paratextual signs such as italics, footnotes and unexpected narrative voices in the main narrative illustrate how such signs of haunting can affect and mould the setting.

Throughout the book, "the reader" is mentioned to demonstrate the effects of the strategies of narrating translocality. For instance, maps "require readers" to "contain or convey any information" (85; original emphasis); indeed, readers make sense of maps (as texts) through their own experiential traces. Readers' (self-)positioning and intersectional experiences also influence their comprehension of city novels, and their mappings can provide insights into place attachments, desires and lived realities. However, the book often refers to implied authorial intentions even though it is the reader (in this case, Mattheis herself) who imbues the signs in the texts with meaning. While the book states that it is people who imbue texts and space with meaning, it contradicts this when it accords the text more agency over the meaning-making process (e.g. 151). In other parts, readers are said to be able to mentally map cityscapes even if they "have no relation to any of the layered and overlapping settings" (52). Yet, the book later notes that "the visibility of layers depends on the onlooker" (53; see also 152 for readers and scaling/perspectives). It is unclear how readers without experiences of such cityscapes would be able to mentally map them out.<sup>2</sup> A more precise consideration of the diverse types of readers would help to clarify the confusion.

Nevertheless, Mattheis's *Translocality in Contemporary City Novels* not only effectively identifies some main narrative devices in the extensive corpus of city novels featuring translocal space; her analysis also opens up the possibility of empirically examining different or intersectional identities in translocal writings, and how characters as well as readers change and expand beyond expected scales to become "hyperobjects in their own universes, in a way" (155). These next steps are particularly meaningful as scholars in literary (urban) studies seek to challenge ethnic stereotypes

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2 Taking on the lens of cognition, discussions of the reader can be expanded upon, for instance by examining how the embodied reader's experiential background (see, for instance, Caracciolo, Marco. *The Experientiality of Narrative: An Enactivist Approach*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014; Kukkonen, Karin, and Marco Caracciolo. "Introduction: What is the 'second generation?'" *Style* 48.3 (2014): 261-274), which accounts for readers' memories, cultural influences, spatial and sensory experiences as well as biological tendencies.

and strict categorisation of people.<sup>3</sup> The book as well as the possible future findings reflect our lived urban experiences, which are always filled with layers as well as particularities that account for our translocal identities.

KAI QING TAN

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**Kai Wiegandt. *J.M. Coetzee's Revisions of the Human: Posthumanism and Narrative Form*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 280 pp.**

J.M. Coetzee is renowned for his postmodern metafictional plots and for the philosophical richness and complexity of his texts that have found readerships around the world, often appealing to scholars and intellectuals in particular. In his study *J.M. Coetzee's Revisions of the Human* (2019), Kai Wiegandt engages with Coetzee's literary negotiations of the human, illuminating the transhistorical reservoir of Western philosophy that is reworked in Coetzee's oeuvre and that ranges, for example, from Plato to Martin Heidegger, from Wolfgang Iser to Giorgio Agamben, Bruno Latour to Michel Foucault, and to literary writers such as Heinrich Kleist and Franz Kafka. Engaging chronologically with the whole breadth of Coetzee's texts, from early novels such as *Dusklands* (1974) to those written in Australian exile such as *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), Wiegandt is interested in how Coetzee's novels performatively explore and reshape meanings of the human – if this category remains at all tenable in his texts; how they produce a new epistemology with which to approach and approximate (though never contain) the human. Wiegandt argues that Coetzee's own revisionary practice ultimately coalesces in a critique of "how the line between human and non-human life is drawn" (8; my emphasis), which points to a meta-discursive negotiation of the very "politics of the human" (2) that Wiegandt sees Coetzee's novels as performing.

Two categories stand out in the Introduction, four chapters and Epilogue that make up Wiegandt's inquiry: embeddedness and embodiedness. For his theoretical explications, it is particularly chapter two, "Method and Matter of the Revisions: Coetzee's Posthumanist Poetic," that builds a foundation for what Wiegandt positions as Coetzee's revisions of the human. Wiegandt's starting point is Wolfgang Iser's theory of "literary anthropology." Iser's theories have regained popularity in literary studies over recent years and they assist Wiegandt in illuminating Coetzee's quirky brand of realism that Wiegandt suggests is an "anthropological realism" (9). It is a realism that becomes palpable, for example, when read in conjunction with Dostoevsky's understanding of dialogism as described by Mikhail Bakhtin and the latter's notion of "double-voiced discourse" (28). Wiegandt suggests that Coetzee re-situates the epistemological focus of these theories by anchoring them in experience: they are bound both by embodiment and embeddedness. This means that Coetzee to some extent decentres the human in quasi-posthuman fashion, though Wiegandt puts this cautiously so as not to overdetermine Coetzee's notoriously multi-dimensional and self-subverting philosophical stances. Wiegandt departs from Iser where the latter's understanding of

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3 See, for instance, Shaw, Kristian. *Cosmopolitanism in Twenty-First Century Fiction*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017.

intertextuality is concerned. For Wiegandt, Iser's concept of intertextuality chimes with the common poststructural understanding (à la Barthes or Kristeva) that every text is made up of a plethora of possible intertexts that transcend the control or intention of any single author. Coetzee, argues Wiegandt, does things differently, as he seems to purposefully draw on specific "philosophical, literary, and anthropological intertexts" when engaging "with the question of the human" (21). While this may be accurate, it is surprising that such purposefully intertextual practice is presented as somewhat unique. Seen from a postcolonial perspective (or from other fields that routinely have engaged in this practice – neo-Victorianism comes to mind), overt intertextual engagement seems more common. After a cursory glance at posthumanist thinkers such as "Heidegger, Agamben, Derrida, Cary Wolfe, and Matthew Calarco" (37), and a much more in-depth engagement with Heidegger in conjunction with *Elizabeth Costello*, Wiegandt closes his considerations by suggesting that Coetzee's performative exploration of epistemology's embeddedness ultimately extends Latour's understanding of agency as "flat ontology" (55).

In the chapters that follow, Wiegandt opts for "staying close to the texts" (5) and provides a series of informed readings that – like his previous, more theoretically invested engagements – are admirable in their clarity and lucidity. In reading *Dusklands*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Lives and Times of Michael K*, Wiegandt introduces the concept of the "minimal human" (chapter three). Embarking on a dialogical reading, for example, of Roland Barthes' semiology of myth and Frantz Boas's *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Wiegandt shows how *Dusklands* "demystifies the humanity of Westerners and the inhumanity of non-Westerners as political mythologies" (75). Engaging with Agamben's notion of "bare life," he suggests that Coetzee shows that power routinely subjects even bare life to meaning-making in line with power's own interests (meaning-making which, in a sense, conceals the bareness of bare life). In chapter four, "The Human, the Animal, and the Body," Wiegandt looks at *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello* in particular, which mark the point when, as Wiegandt suggests, the idea of humanness becomes particularly salient in Coetzee's works. Wiegandt reads *Disgrace* for its juxtaposition of psychoanalysis and romanticism; *Elizabeth Costello* for its illumination of Latour's concept of nature-culture to argue that, in Coetzee's brand of an embodied epistemology of the human with fuzzy edges, the characters find transcendence through embodied practices such as eating, dancing, the erotic, and so on. Chapter five, "Humanity and Collectivity: Nation, State, and Community," deals with *Slow Man*, *The Childhood of Jesus* and *The Schooldays of Jesus*, i.e. with works written after Coetzee's move to Australia. Here it is concepts such as "nationality and belonging" (178) that are brought to the fore, and in particular, of course, Coetzee's accelerating interest in animal rights which defines his later years.

Wiegandt's study is marked by a sense of affordance, as Wiegandt indicates he wishes to remain attuned to the texts' shifting ideas, linkages and directions. As part of his preferred method, different theories, approaches, and philosophies can gain relevance at different times of a particular reading, can be adjusted or replaced depending on the directions that the literary texts take. While this bespeaks a welcome openness to the literary text and a well-balanced deployment of secondary sources, it is

surprising that this openness is not replicated where a possibly more diverse set of sources is concerned. Why does the study's commitment to meta-analysis not more fully extend to Coetzee's own embeddedness in white, Western and very often male intellectualism? Coetzee began writing during South Africa's Apartheid years and repeatedly has been criticized for his apparent distance from the historical conditions that produce anti-black racism – and indeed we must ask how much political inspiration or change truly can spring from revisions of the human that remain so firmly embedded in white, western and overwhelmingly male thinking, however self-interrogatory. While the salient philosophical tradition was more homogenous when Coetzee began his literary career, it seems counterintuitive that Wiegandt would so closely follow the author's own methodology of choice when curating his sources, especially given his understanding that "Coetzee's revisions of the human sit on a narrow basis, given the notable lack in his novels of voices that are not male or white" (43). While Wiegandt's references to Judith Butler or Donna Haraway do something to diversify the picture, it seems that the generally revisionary impetus of Coetzee's novels would allow for a more sustained, revisionary scholarly approach.

To further diversify his perspective, Wiegandt could have connected to the by now long-standing canon of black and postcolonial critiques of white (post-)humanism. For example, most poignantly for this study, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson demands to know: "What and crucially *whose* conception of humanity are we moving beyond?" (Jackson 2015, 215). As she and others have suggested, in white posthumanist theory, the wish to 'move beyond the human' often becomes salient as an attempt "to move *beyond* race, in particular blackness" (Jackson 2015, 216; original emphasis). This sits awkwardly with the fact that "gestures towards the 'post' or the 'beyond' effectively ignore praxes of humanity and critiques produced by black people" (Jackson 2015, 216).<sup>1</sup> In more specific relation to Wiegandt's suggested 'demystification' of black people's 'inhumanity' in *Dusklands*, we could refer to Jackson's important indication towards "the violence of humanization or the burden of inclusion into a racially hierarchized universal humanity" (Jackson 2020, 18). It is because of this 'violence' that many "key texts in black cultural production move beyond a demand for recognition and inclusion" in the 'human' – a disidentificatory shift evident in works by "Frantz Fanon, Lewis Gordon, Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers, Fred Moten, Aimé Césaire, Sylvia Wynter, Frank Wilderson III, Katherine McKittrick, Christina Sharpe, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Achille Mbembe, and Alex Weheliye" (Jackson 2020, 19).<sup>2</sup> If, as Wiegandt himself writes, "Coetzee's narratives show how contingent cultural or personal beliefs are, but it is precisely *their* responsiveness to counter-voices that affirms the singularity of the authorial voice" (34-35), then we remain curious how the inclusion of a different set of "counter-voices" – who thankfully are becoming more mainstream – into the

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1 Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman. "Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement 'Beyond the Human'." *GLQ* 21.2-3 (2015): 215-218.

2 Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman. *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.



study's intellectual framework might further enrich our understanding of Coetzee's revisions of the human.

CAROLINE KOEGLER

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**Roman Bartosch, ed. *Towards Transformative Literature Pedagogy*. Trier: WVT, 2021. 168 pp.**

This anthology offers a choice of eight articles setting out to create "a revised notion of the transformative potential of literature and the diversity inherent to literary writing and literature pedagogy" (4). Roman Bartosch's introduction, with abstracts of all contributions, criticizes the lack of official recognition of literature's transformative efficacy, arguing that sustainability, diversity, and inclusion are inextricably linked to literary fiction in transformative education (7). The volume consists of two parts, divided evenly between four articles on "Teaching Transformation: Affect, Agency, Ambiguity, and Scale" and four articles on "Reading Transformation: From Early English to Higher Education."

In the first section, Jürgen Wehrmann argues that the posthuman horizon must be a constant part of foreign language teaching. He emphasizes the difference between pedagogic objectives and political concepts such as education for sustainable development, a distinction which so far has often been overlooked. Connections between various global issues and the perspective of (social) justice are key components of his discussion of science fiction texts with EFL learners. As an example, the short story "The People of Sand and Slag" by Paolo Bacigalupi (2004) can support learners in gaining a critical attitude towards purely anthropocentric ideas of sustainable development and the role of nature in being human.

In her contribution, Mareike Tödter challenges the generally pessimistic focus on climate catastrophe. She argues that "people tend to doubt their self-efficacy in the face of climate change" (43), especially in fatalistic scenarios. Moreover, transformative efforts must include a differentiation between individual and collective responsibilities. A translation of the 'political' as advocated by Hannah Arendt, she avers, could be a means towards bridging "the gap between awareness and action taking" (41). As an example, the deconstruction of dominant narratives surrounding money allows learners to experience both power and controversy in the classroom. However, the question of how to successfully translate the resulting methodological questions into actions remains unsolved as the author herself admits.

Similarly, Svenja Rosenau affirms that developing tolerance of ambiguity in learners is a vital component of living in a complex, globalized world full of conflicting information and data framing. Using the storybook *When Santa Turned Green* by Victoria Perla and Mirna Kantarevic (2008), she proposes an "experiential space" (70) developed along Gerhard de Haan's model of *Gestaltungskompetenz*. The goal is for young learners to experience themselves as actors and problem-solvers in a scenario based on the literary text.

To conclude the theoretical section of the anthology, Roman Bartosch advocates including scale as a vital component in making climate change tangible to learners.

Scalar literacy, he avers, is part of narrative diversity, and must become a central concern of education. In his argumentation, the inability to harmonize different scales is linked to significant individual problems, including poor mental health and inaction towards the climate catastrophe. Examples from Alexander Payne's film *Downsizing* (2017) illustrate this on-point analysis by using iconicity and the multiple narratives included in iconic images from the film in a transformative teaching and learning scenario.

In the second section, "Reading Transformation," Christian Ludwig and Frank Erik Pointner propose looking at the events and discourse around Hurricane Katrina (2005) from both an ecological and a social justice perspective. In line with the central tenets of New Historicism, they aptly claim that literary reactions have shaped the public discourse around the event. Through such literary texts, learners are presented with an effective selection of social reactions, interpretations, and biographical stories in the form of graphic novels, novels, rap songs, and news coverage, allowing them to gain multifaceted and multidimensional impressions.

Claudia Deetjen, using the claim that the environmental crisis is, in fact, a cultural one, discusses how to successfully employ climate fiction in the EFL classroom both to generate knowledge and to engage learners emotionally. Using Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries* series (2009, 2010) as an example, she points out the merits of literary texts vis-a-vis non-fiction in terms of the higher emotional investment of the learners, the relatability of the protagonists, and the illustration of intergenerational conflicts. Aiming to trigger learners' critical engagement with alternative habits of consumption and behavior, as well as enabling them to discuss measures towards a sustainable society, excerpts from the texts are used as thought experiments and discussion prompts. In a compelling analysis, the article highlights the efficacy of young adult climate change fiction both as a means of information and as a way of generating emotional investment in the topic, hopefully encouraging learners to take action.

By contrast, Christiane Hansen shows some critical distance from claims that present teaching climate fiction as an appropriate means of bridging the gap between "theoretical knowledge and effective action" (125). She proposes a "sideways" (127) approach to teaching climate change in ways that allow learners to be part of transformational processes. Liz Jensen's popular (eco)thriller *The Rapture* (2009) serves as an example. By discussing the concept of a tipping point catastrophe in the novel, the approach helps to dispel the myth of climate change events having a clear cause. Ultimately, by understanding the prophetic mode of disaster-focused texts as what it is, learners may find it easier to take action.

In the final contribution, Marta Janachowska-Budych stipulates that education for sustainable development is not merely an integral part of education as such, but also offers a chance to "reform education" (144) itself. She outlines the determining factors of a university seminar in Poland centered around German-language migration literature by well-known authors. The argument convincingly links the qualities of multi-perspectival, multidimensional migration literature to the demands of an "ecological canon" and underlines the importance of creative, action-oriented tasks that force learners to change perspective and challenge ideas about the dominant systems of

power, ultimately unfolding a "transformative potential of (re)uniting discourses and crossing every imaginable border" (151).

The volume under review provides a valuable and necessary contribution to functional concepts and practical applications of the potential literature has in creating educational contexts powerful enough to transform in a sustainable manner the environment, politics, society, culture, and ultimately education itself.

FRANZISKA PUKOWSKI

**Robert Mailhammer. *English on Croker Island: The Synchronic and Diachronic Dynamics of Contact and Variation*. Topics in English Linguistics 109. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2021. 253 pp.**

Croker Island is situated in Australia's Northern Territory, off the coast of Northwestern Arnhem Land, not too far from Darwin. It is inhabited almost exclusively by Aboriginal people, and the present study investigates and documents their use of English in impressive depth and detail. While the location as such may seem rather insignificant at first sight, Mailhammer's research is quite the contrary, for two reasons at least. First, this is a region and a type of variety and contact setting which so far has been essentially uncharted territory, so from a World Englishes perspective the study fills an important research gap and offers a really interesting novel perspective and data set. Second, while in this area we broadly would expect varieties similar to Kriol, a creole spoken in northern Australia, or "Aboriginal English," a variety described in general terms and summarily in some sources, including a recent book,<sup>1</sup> the author insists that the dialect spoken on Croker Island is a variety of English but one characterized by a huge amount of idiosyncratic variability, which, in turn, can be accounted for by a wide range of contact processes and influences. In other words, he challenges some established notions on the nature of language contact and variation and the character of Australian Aboriginal English, found to be much less homogeneous than had been implied, and he does so in a most convincing fashion, through a high-quality in-depth analysis.

The first chapter concisely summarizes "[o]verview and context" (1), including Australia's settlement and its linguistic consequences, earlier work on Aboriginal English, and a short description of the field site and methodological procedures of data collection. Chapter 2 describes the sociohistorical context of the spread of English into the region and resulting contact patterns in remarkable detail and with great sensitivity, with some attention to shifts and loss of Aboriginal languages. It showcases the displacements and sufferings which Aboriginals had to endure due to the European invaders' feeling of superiority and lack of cultural tolerance. Aboriginals were exposed to military outposts, mission schools, and economic pressure, oscillating between forced assimilation and cultural self-determination.

In chapter 3, the phonetics and phonology (consonants, vowels, phonotactics, and stress and intonation patterns) of Croker Island speakers are presented and discussed in great detail, including acoustic analysis with formant descriptions and plots, lists of

1 Malcom, Ian. *Australian Aboriginal English: Change and Continuity in an Adopted Language*. Boston, MA and Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.

idiolectal allophonic realizations, and considerations of possible crosslinguistic influences. Quite a lot of variability is pointed out, but the overall pronunciation basis is largely close to general Australian English. Chapter 4 covers morphosyntax, also very thoroughly and with many examples, subdivided into verbal and nominal morphology, syntactic patterns, and an explicit and extensive comparison with the feature list established by the Mouton World Atlas of Variation in English (WAVE) project, notably with the profile provided for Aboriginal English. Except for tense marking, verbal endings are often omitted, and some creole-like periphrastic marking occurs (e.g. preverbal past *bin*), but overall the majority of patterns conform to standard rules. Some nonstandard phenomena familiar from other varieties are also attested, though mostly infrequent, including nouns uninflected for plural, exclusive first person plural pronouns, zero copulas, or the omission of subject or object complements. The documentation is essentially qualitative and exemplary, often supplemented by information on the frequency of specific features. Overall, in the WAVE feature profile Croker Island English is shown to be most similar to Aboriginal English and Australian Kriol, and less so to Vernacular Australian English, displaying a high amount of individual variability. Chapter 5 documents lexical features (borrowings, code switching, innovative function words) and constructional changes (in verb complementation or other patterns).

Subsequently, three chapters (before a short summary and conclusion) embark on variation-theoretic interpretation. Chapter 6 highlights the huge amount of fluidity and variability found both within speakers, produced by varying speaker biographies and input settings, and across speakers, analyzed quantitatively for verbal -s omission, copula deletion and past tense marking. Much of this appears to be random variability, impossible to account for using standard variationist tools and concepts. Consequently, in chapter 7 the author challenges the implicit assumption of some degree of homogeneity implied in the categorization of "Aboriginal English" (10) as "a homogeneous variety" (135), an ethnolect, and identifies multiple historical and social "layers of contact" (165). These are exemplified by close documentation of some speaker biographies and possible substrate influences for a large number of phonological and morphosyntactic features, showing that in most instances sources of specific contact-derived features cannot be pinned down. Chapter 8 then considers "[t]heoretical implications" (209) – the positioning of Croker Island English in the "[d]ynamic Model" (210) of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes<sup>2</sup> and an attempt at explaining the speakers' behavior as "repertoires" (223), sets of linguistic choices, rather than "a variety" (10), produced by multilayered "filtration processes" (228).

In sum, this volume presents not only a thorough and most comprehensive investigation of a hitherto undescribed but interesting variety of English; it also offers a lot of food for thought for linguistic theorizing on language variation, change, and contact. The Croker Island dialect, despite, or perhaps because of, its rather marginalized location, turns out to be an exciting reservoir of "lesser-known" forms and settings of English.<sup>3</sup> At the same time the author shows that the manifestations of

2 Schneider, Edgar W. *Postcolonial English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

3 See Schreier, Daniel, Peter Trudgill, Edgar W. Schneider, and Jeff Williams, eds. *The Lesser-Known Varieties of English. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

linguistic variability and the constraints governing it may be much more complex than has been suspected – it seems that our desire, as linguists, to develop relatively simplistic and transparent models and explanations may be misleading to some extent. And I suspect he is right, so this book is also an invitation to pursue new directions of research and explanatory thinking.

EDGAR W. SCHNEIDER

