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## REVIEWS

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**Russell West-Pavlov.** *German as a Contact Zone: Towards a Quantum Theory of Translation from the Global South.* Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2019. 358 pp.

*German as a Contact Zone*, perhaps irritatingly, opens with an absence of German, observed in Abderrahmane Sissako's film *Rostov-Luanda*, in which Berlin is a zone of meeting and departure and German is marginalised. The discussion of the film prepares us for a study which features many entry points, reflected in its altogether thirteen chapters and in its introduction, conclusion, and appendix, which in themselves are quite substantial. German, in this study as a whole, also plays a comparatively marginal role. That linguistic translation is indeed only one minor aspect of "cosmic translation" is a recurring point emphasised throughout the book's three parts: Part I, "Translation in Theory," spirals around and eventually towards the book's main claim, i.e. that translation can be considered through the lens of quantum theory as a generative process characterised by multiplicity and entanglements – an approach that reminds us of the rhizome projected by Deleuze and Guattari. Part II, "Theory in Translation," presents four case studies that exemplify such entangled engagements – or "planes of intensity," to stay with Deleuze and Guattari – in its exploration of aspects of translations of texts by W. G. Sebald, Ivan Vladislavić, John Kinsella and Fiston Mwanza Mujila, texts that are themselves inherently translational. These case studies apply the method of "thick translation" beyond the ethnographically inflected realm of "cultural translation," conceptualisations of which West-Pavlov has summarised at the outset of his theoretical chapters (37ff.). The case studies go beyond "cultural translation" in that they consider processes of linguistic and translative meaning generation which are complexly mirrored and inflected in literary texts and, as a result, pose particular challenges for literary translators. Part III "Translating Translation in Teaching" engages with the muted presence of translation in the classroom, from which it has largely retreated as an integral component of philological study programmes. This part, as well as the appendix, can be read as a plea to integrate translative practice and an awareness of translativity as essential components in a "pedagogy of planetary awareness and citizenship education" (270).

West Pavlov's critique of German translation practice (especially 214-247) and German pedagogy (249ff.) for their devaluation of multiplicity is certainly justified, but sometimes lacks precision with regard to the embedding en-/disabling institutional frameworks. That translativity has been "hitherto understood as irritating interferences and impurities to be suppressed" (22) is only one of many claims that would require further specification. West-Pavlov critically dissects aspects of Klaus Martens's "anti-translative translation" of Walcott "in the hope of repairing the damage his translations wreak" (240), and in his chapter on Mujila's *Tram* 83 points out the German translators' failure to capture Mujila's play with "Northern Modernity's" conceptualisations of time (214-217). In neither instance does West-Pavlov take into account the constraints imposed by rights policies and the responsibility of publishers,

who not only contractually fix translations but dictate cutthroat deadlines for the delivery of translations, especially in cases in which literary prizes are involved.

West-Pavlov's recurring claims – that linguistic translation is only a part of processes of cosmic translation, that the Global South offers still neglected alternatives to Western linear thinking and that an openness to (cosmic) translation processes must be fostered in teaching as well as in acts of linguistic transfer in order to do justice to complexity and to avoid reproducing the hegemonic, anthropocentric frameworks of the Global North – are compelling, the range of materials he discusses is impressive and the angles he has chosen both in his discussion of theories and in his case studies thought-provoking. A closer look at the details, however, reveals that he has not entirely succeeded in engaging in the practice that he advocates himself. His own indebtedness to "Global North" frames of thinking shows itself in his politics of theorisation and referencing: The overarching majority of references he cites are derived from a canon of "Euro-American" thinking and theorisation, as he concedes in a marginal observation, which is immediately qualified by the claim that these "often conceal a debt to the diverse thought of many zones of the Global South" (293). The latter, however, remain remote and unduly generalised throughout the book.

"In most African philosophies, it would appear, life is understood as an exuberant plenitude, not an entropic process" and time "created performatively out of social interactions," West-Pavlov offers, for instance, with a reference to Mbiti's classic on *African Religion and Philosophy*, published in the Heinemann African Writers series in 1969 (289). A reading of Walcott's poem "Morning Moon" (1976) offers thoughtful observations about the agency of the natural world in translative processes, but lumps Walcott's alleged "vision" together with that of "other oceanic-insular perspectives from the Global South" (240) to the detriment of the highly specific context of the poem's Northern Trinidadian locale and highly specific speaking position that is so often overlooked in Walcott's works, which indeed offer ample material for translational approaches: linguistic, medial cultural and planetary.

Mbiti updated his educational book on African religions in several new editions, one of which was to eventually include the role of women. This brings me to the second point of criticism: What does it mean, if we use this book as a sort of classroom in its own right, that virtually all the literary texts discussed have been penned by men? The canon of referenced theories, too, is mostly male-dominated. Spivak, who seems to have inspired West-Pavlov's engagement with quantum theory (114-115), remains a marginal presence, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, when mentioned in passing, is misspelled (266). This, in turn, provokes a third point in my associative chain of criticism – a practice West-Pavlov himself indulges in (e.g. 276): The in many places inspiring reading experience is hampered not so much by the author's at times dense, but overall repetitive (in a useful way) argument, nor his occasional habit of phrase dropping (e.g. 273) but, unfortunately, by the frequency of spelling mistakes. If ever a second edition should see the light of day, an elimination of these would significantly enhance the book's and individual chapters' usefulness as course reading.

EVA ULRIKE PIRKER

**Susanne Jung. *Bouncing Back: Queer Resilience in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century English Literature and Culture*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2020. 240 pp.**

News, social media and research studies consistently highlight the challenges and disadvantages facing lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ+) people around the world. From the damning poor mental health statistics, to reports of hate crimes, to ongoing stories of family rejection and stigmatisation, one could be forgiven for believing that life for many LGBTIQ+ people is bleak.

Of course, this is not the case for everyone, and as Susanne Jung argues in *Bouncing Back*, amidst the hardship and challenges, LGBTIQ+ people have also adapted strategies to navigate the challenges of living a queer life in a heteronormative world. Jung focuses on the concept of resilience and analyses an array of literary and cultural texts and performances from across the English-speaking world since the early twentieth century. Jung explores ways that LGBTIQ+ characters, authors, films and performers have expressed resilience through embodied, special, performative and textual expressions of queerness and identity.

The book is structured into an Introduction and five chapters, with each pursuing a different theme and literary or cultural examples which demonstrate the relevant concepts. The Introduction explains the overarching concept for the book, queer resilience, by bringing queer theory into dialogue with psychology and sociology studies on LGBTIQ+ trauma and resilience. Chapter one explores ways in which queer subjects construct their identities amidst challenging heteronormative environments. Jung also addresses the importance of meaning-making by both authors and readers when they explore queer subjecthood. Chapter two explores examples of queer artists resisting society's imposition of ideological subjecthoods upon them. The final three chapters examine what Jung describes as strategies of queer resilience: performative, spatial and bodily. Jung demonstrates different ways that LGBTIQ+ characters, performers, authors, artists and communities have expressed resilience – whether as individuals, in groups or just in specific moments – to challenge heteronormativity.

Perhaps the biggest strength of *Bouncing Back* is the wide reading of sources and concepts that inform the research. Jung deploys the normal canon of scholarship expected in queer theory (e.g. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler), but she moves beyond this work to include scholarship drawing from psychology, history, sociology and neuroscience as well as literature and cultural studies. Indeed, Jung's explanation of resilience in the introduction frames her argument well, and she effectively justifies the significance of this concept to (re)read queer texts – or in some cases, texts about LGBTIQ+ themes which should not necessarily be defined as 'queer.'

The concept of queer resilience that Jung poses is interesting, particularly as it provides an opportunity to shy away from the all-too-common negative trauma tropes associated with LGBTIQ+ people navigating heteronormativity. Still, across *Bouncing Back*, Jung examines many of the common themes associated with LGBTIQ+ life (e.g. coming out, queer spaces, depression). In that sense, Jung is not shifting towards a new queer narrative but rather is using a different lens to address the same themes. Queer resilience, as a concept, thus is more about looking for

adaptive solutions or pathways to navigate heteronormativity, building on other scholarship in LGBTIQ+ studies.

Jung explores so many textual and cultural examples that I lost count; some that stand out in my mind were analyses of the film *Shortbus*, Sir Ian McKellen's coming out, the history of queer spaces in San Francisco, slash fiction and the book *A Single Man*. However, by engaging with so many texts and themes, at times the theme of queer resilience fades into the background – especially after the Introduction and first chapter. In the chapters on 'strategies' of queer resilience – performative, spatial and bodily – it is not always clear how the analyses are expressions of resilience *per se*. Moreover, while the examples and analyses are of themselves interesting, it is not always clear how Jung came to select them, nor how they all cohere and relate together. The Conclusion begins to rectify this by being more explicit in drawing connections across the chapters and examples, but still much of the book reads disparately.

Overall, *Bouncing Back* reflects a great deal of research and demonstrates a wide reading of diverse concepts, brought together to explore queer resilience. The book is heavy on critical theory and concepts, which is not surprising given its target audience of scholars of queer theory and literary studies. At times the theory and use of concepts and jargon can be dense and complicated, but scholars in those fields are generally accustomed to such a writing style. Fundamentally, *Bouncing Back* will be of great interest to queer scholars, with many ideas that can inform further research on LGBTIQ+ literature and cultural studies.

NOAH RISEMAN

**Sandra Dinter. *Childhood in the Contemporary English Novel*. New York and London: Routledge, 2019. 222 pp.**

Starting from the observation "that childhood has apparently never been more popular as a literary theme [in English literature] than it is today" (5), Dinter's monograph *Childhood in the Contemporary English Novel* seeks to unearth the reasons behind this audience appeal and sets out to examine "how [the depiction of childhood in contemporary literature] departs from earlier literary periods" (2). Focussing on the depiction of childhood in novels for an adult target group, Dinter conducts close readings of a number of influential contemporary British novels. Locating the scope of the ever-shifting epithet "contemporary" as the 1980s to 2015, the monograph's introduction convincingly argues that Margaret Thatcher's rise to power constituted a turning point not only in British politics but also in the English literary landscape and that Thatcherism and neoliberalism remain ongoing influences on English discourses (not only of childhood). Dinter herself aptly calls her approach a "metatheoretical stance" (14) as she deconstructs the approaches to constructivist concepts of childhood in twenty-first century literature as well as in its scholarship.

Before the actual case studies, the book extensively theorizes its subject field, moving from basic tenets of constructivism towards the rather uneasy relationship between constructivist literary criticism and childhood studies, before introducing the additional concepts of 'interdiscourse' and 'normalism' employed in the book. The first

part of the chapter that introduces Foucauldian theory is somewhat lengthy, especially because, given the target group of the book, the chapter presumably is engaged in preaching to the converted. Yet, the reading of childhood as a 'dispositif' is certainly indispensable to an approach to literary childhood and the problematic interfaces between constructivism and childhood studies need pointing out. Dinter's examples show well in what ways constructivist and essentialist scholars will (and do) talk at cross-purposes due to conceptual misunderstandings. With Link's theory of interdiscursivity and her critically reflected stance on the concept of normalism, Dinter introduces two additional very productive theoretical frameworks for her close readings.

The third chapter establishes the socio-cultural and historical framework on which the following case studies are based, starting from a meticulous dissection of the notion of the contemporary. After outlining a number of aspects of late modernity that have contributed to its discursive foregrounding of childhood, Dinter foregrounds the ways in which "childhood [in its discursive symbolism] breaks with late modern maxims" (46). A particularly useful starting point for her later close readings is provided by the discursive entanglement of childhood and risk, as Dinter points out. The chapter closes with a well-researched, informative and entertaining survey of the development of the social and political parameters that shaped childhood from 1979 to 2015.

Six case studies form the heart of the book. Each can be read independently, but nonetheless they build on one another in chronological order from 1987 to 2015. These outstandingly well-argued case studies brilliantly underline Dinter's claim that contemporary literature interdiscursively employs constructivist scholarly paradigms, but simultaneously retains and affirms underlying essentialist metanarratives. The success of the case studies is further enhanced by the narratological framework the study employs, and by its exceptionally clear argumentative structure which eases orientation within the text. The well-informed and critically reflected literature reviews that accompany each of the case studies are sometimes partly overshadowed by the very "metatheoretical" (14) agenda that makes them so readable and informative. Dinter repeatedly and quite zealously attacks essentialist scholarly approaches to the primary texts, yet these sections tend to rehearse points already dealt with at length in Chapter 2, which makes for some repetitiveness.

The first case study analyzes Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987) as a text that "is critical of and simultaneously perpetuates [...] essentialist constructions of childhood" (68). The second case study is concerned with Doris Lessing's novella *The Fifth Child* (1988), which, Dinter argues, takes up a metaperspective on how English culture constructs the discourse of childhood, but undermines this project in its sequel that provides exactly the form of (essentialist) closure the original novella shies away from. The third case study on P.D. James's *The Children of Men* (1992) yet again deconstructs a novel that doubles back on its constructivist approach to childhood. A "palpable awareness of the notion of childhood as a discursive construct and dispositif" (110) in the first half of the novel gives way to a reinstatement of childhood as an essentialist given, framed conservatively by the discourse of Christianity. Dinter's fourth case study deals with Nick Hornby's lad novel *About a Boy* (1998) which, in using the discourse of childhood to affirmatively frame

narratives of normalisation, heterosexual masculinity and consumerism, Dinter exposes as "symptomatic of Britain in the 1990s" (127). The following case study on Sarah Moss's *Night Walking* (2011) centres around the argument that even this poststructuralist novel, which is highly aware of childhood as a constructivist dispositif, ultimately reaffirms essentialist notions of childhood. The final case study addresses Stephen Kelman's *Pigeon English* (2011), which, as Dinter argues, is self-conscious about its essentialist, hegemonically Romantic approach to childhood. Focussing on both the book's ethical and political agenda and its mode of employing a child as first-person narrator, Dinter traces how *Pigeon English* "points to the limits of poststructuralist conceptions of identity and therefore also [her] own approach of conceiving of childhood as a discursive construct" (169). In thus providing something akin to a counterpoint to the previously discussed texts, this close reading makes for an ideal final case study to the book.

I would also like to draw attention to the rather comprehensive chronology of anglophone childhood novels for adults in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century in the appendix that can prove very useful for researchers following in Dinter's footsteps.

ANJA HÖING

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**Melanie Babenhauserheide. *Harry Potter und die Widersprüche der Kulturindustrie: Eine ideologiekritische Analyse*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2018. 532 pp.**

Even today, popular culture is still eyed warily in literary studies and other humanities. This is why Melanie Babenhauserheide begins her impressive interdisciplinary thesis in educational sciences with a justification of its topic. That such a justification still seems to be necessary is both surprising and remarkable in as far as by now it should be taken for granted that the analysis of works of popular culture can provide insights into the prevailing paradigms, underlying belief systems, and general ideological tendencies of the periods that produce them.

Ideology thus is the main focus of Babenhauserheide's book. Using methods of ideology critique, she applies the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (especially relating to the works of Theodor W. Adorno) to a product of popular culture: J.K. Rowling's book series *Harry Potter*. As Babenhauserheide argues, in the series both affirmation and implicit critique of the prevailing ideological settings of the storyworld can be found: "Hoffnung auf eine grundsätzliche Wandlung" (331, 'the hope for fundamental change') is opposed to "recht selbstverständlich am Status Quo festzuhalten" (331, 'sticking to the status quo as a matter of course'). It is the resulting contradiction that Babenhauserheide is most interested in and constantly draws her readers' attention to.

Thorough close readings and a self-critical approach to her activities as a literary scholar and as a reader allow Babenhauserheide to analyse plotlines consistently throughout all seven volumes of the Potter series, taking into consideration a wide range of international research literature. What is more, she follows through suggestions or indications in the text that are not told explicitly, i.e. unfinished

storylines as well as plot inconsistencies within the book series, and lays open which ideological positions are conveyed to (not only) young readers who are intrigued by the books. Babenhauserheide examines a multitude of relevant aspects, subsumed under the topics of family ties, the significance of loss, discrimination and stereotyping, representations of economics, competitiveness and law, and political, especially authoritarian, structures. As a result, several main contradictions emerge: Harry Potter's larger-than-life father figures seem to render his growing-up more difficult, which according to Babenhauserheide is especially stipulated in the epilogue of the last volume of the series: It shows Harry as a father of children who partly bear the names of his predecessors, "wodurch gesellschaftlicher Wandel eingefroren wird in der Ähnlichkeit der Generationen" (454, 'whereby social change is frozen through the similarities between generations'). Other contradictions Babenhauserheide discovers are cases of stereotyping despite a general criticism of discrimination as well as a single authority (Dumbledore) and an idiosyncratic system of grading and sanctioning at school while, at the same time, explicit criticism of the arbitrariness of authoritarian regimes is put forward. Regarding representations of law or of the cultural industry, Babenhauserheide concludes that these are often embodied by a single character so that they evade any real critique of the form itself.

Thus, representations oscillate between confirming and breaking with power relations that are criticized but then again, in some other form, re-established throughout the story. A footnote provides a possible explanation by considering a possible attempt at balancing any conservative tendencies with emancipatory ones in the text: "Man könnte die Erzählung auch [...] als Versuch lesen, mittels der emanzipatorischen und kritischen Aspekte die Vorwürfe und Schuldgefühle bezüglich der affirmativen, konservativen und reaktionären Tendenzen zu beschwichtigen" (347, 'One could also read the narrative as an attempt at pacifying attacks and feelings of guilt resulting from the affirmative, conservative and reactionary tendencies of the text'). This explanation may also apply to Rowling's later comments on her series, trying to strengthen aspects of emancipation and diversity.

Reflecting her results with regard to pedagogy and didactics, Babenhauserheide recommends a creative approach to teaching popular works of fiction or children's literature at schools, for example by taking a look at fan fiction, which she demonstrates by pointing out methodological benefits and disadvantages. Generally, she questions the often uncritical way in which works like *Harry Potter* are taught (47-49). In order to analyse how German literature teachers prepare their lessons, she reviews German-language teaching materials offered by online provider Amazon. The mentioned samples are meant to be purchased, though, which also puts into focus the role of the bookmarket as a powerful space for affirmative writing.

What does this mean for writing children's literature – in particular children's literature that makes children read? The 'old question' remains to be discussed whether children's literature that reaches a mass audience should be didactic or entertaining. Ever since the first attempts at producing didactic entertainment for children in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most writers and readers have come to believe in a combination of both. The consensus seems to be that children's literature needs to proceed from children's actual contexts, their comfort zones, for the purpose of

identification and entertainment in order to gradually incite critical thought, thus unsettling those very comfort zones. The problem seems to be that the function of entertainment is usually bound to the familiar – to affirmative images of media, just as cultural products usually remain what they are: products of their cultural environment.

UTA WOIWOD