REVIEWS

Andrew James Johnston. *Beowulf Global: Konstruktionen historisch-kultureller Verflechtungen im altenglischen Epos*. **Mediävistische Perspektiven 11. Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2021. 72 pp.**

Beowulf Global: Konstruktionen historisch-kultureller Verflechtungen im altenglischen Epos is largely based on the third lecture on Medieval Philology at the University of Zurich and constitutes a discussion of the cultural-historical connections within the Old English poem *Beowulf* and the globality it constructs. Andrew James Johnston bases his analysis of transcultural entanglements and global connections within the epic on the careful construction of a temporal and cultural globality, as well as the text's strategic introduction of archaeological artefacts to deliberately deconstruct the world created.

Throughout the book, Johnston explores two interconnected theses. Firstly, he postulates that the poem *Beowulf* provides a new concept of globality, by at first meticulously constructing a closed fictional world that only allows for Germanic culture and tradition within its borders, with the aim to then strategically deconstruct this homogeneity in a highly complex, aesthetic way (12).[1] This deconstruction, according to Johnston, is predominantly realised through the introduction of archaeological artefacts within the text. Secondly, he also suggests that since the construction of globality takes place by means of incorporating these artefacts, this aspect demands a precise temporal placement.[2] He comprehends every culture within the world of *Beowulf* as correlating with its own time and assumes that differences in cultures suggest and imply a difference in temporal realisation. This then results in a diachronic understanding of globality rather than an exclusively synchronic distribution of cultural frames, which is reflected in the internal globality that is constructed based on an interconnection with not only other cultures but also with times past (13).

Johnston opens by referencing a real-world example of an archaeological artefact: Offa's Dinar. A gold coin that was supposedly minted between 773 and 796 in Anglo-Saxon Mercia, which is embossed not only with the name of the Mercian king in Latin script (*Offa Rex*) but also decorated with an Arabic inscription echoing the *Shahada*, an Islamic creed. In his first chapter, he then continues to contrast this coin with several artefacts found in the poem. Here he specifically focuses on the hilt of the giant-forged sword Beowulf uses to kill Grendel's mother. The most notable similarity between the two artefacts, he states, is that they both implicitly carry references to different cultures and religions. Johnston here sees a globality that is realised in two different ways:

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1 "*Beowulf* entwirft sein Konzept von Globalität gleichsam im Sinne einer didaktischen Prozessualität. Mit großem Aufwand gestaltet der Text eine fiktionale Welt scheinbarer germanischer Homogenität und Abgeschlossenheit, die er mit mindestens ebenso großem Aufwand auf ästhetisch höchst komplexe Weise wieder dekonstruiert." (12)

2 "Eben weil diese besondere Globalität vor allem über archäologische Objekte konzeptualisiert wird, eignet ihr eine spezifische zeitliche Dimension. Im *Beowulf* sind transkulturelle Verflechtungen immer auch diachron, bedeutet Globalität eine Vernetzung nicht nur mit fremden Kulturen, sondern auch mit anderen Zeiten." (13)

globality can work either on a geographical level, as is the case with Offa's Dinar, or it can take place on a temporal level, as is the case with the hilt that tells the story of times long gone, and thus connects the past with the present. Johnston here also provides a detailed discussion of the two terms "wreoþenhilt ond wyrmfáh" (l. 1698ª), used in the ekphrasis of the sword hilt, where the first description of the hilt, "wreoþenhilt," causes most of the controversy. This results in Johnston reading the dragon-ornamentation as a historical-theoretical, and as a poetological, metaphor (26). Towards the end of the chapter, he provides further impulses by putting *Beowulf* in the context of other Old English poems such as *The Wanderer* or *Widsith*, which similarly incorporate a sense of globality.

Johnston dedicates his second chapter to the discussion of the *Schriftbildlichkeit* of the ekphrasis and tries to determine how the established historical-theoretical and poetological metaphors are connected. Here he meticulously carves out the function of the hilt, by acknowledging that it might simultaneously carry an aesthetic, as well as an informative, value. The golden belt buckle of Sutton Hoo here serves as another fitting real-world example, as its ornamentation is close to what we could imagine as having been embossed into the hilt. In *Beowulf*, pagan history and the Christian message, as well as the destiny of Grendel and Beowulf are interwoven, but still independent from each other. They exist side by side within the narrative, just like the animal-shapes found on the belt buckle – closely intertwined but never fully joined. Johnston suggests that *Beowulf* incorporates the intertwining dragon-ornamentation as a metaphor for an entanglement of culturally diverse experiences (31).

In the following chapter Johnston continues to skilfully read the dragon-ornamentation on the hilt as a cultural-historical metaphor. He notes that the ornamentation does not serve an exclusively artistic purpose. Rather, it provides reference to the dragon fight to come, but with that it also indirectly foreshadows Beowulf's death and consequently the downfall of the Geats. The ornamentation tells a story on one level only: its main purpose is to be aesthetically pleasing, a function everyone can decode. The text on the hilt, however, leads to a more unique process of decoding text, as it needs to be imagined twice. In a first step, what the runes themselves look like needs to be imagined before then moving on to visualise the situation described by them. This creates an instance of dramatic irony, as the latter information is only available to the narrator and the audience, who, in contrast to the Danes within the world of *Beowulf*, are able to decode the script. Regardless of whether the characters understand the runes, the lines between aesthetic ornamentation and content-bearing script are becoming sufficiently blurry. Johnston determines that the introduction of the hilt at such a central position puts a clear focus on the hilt as an archaeological artefact and thus strengthens its role not only as an aesthetic fragment but also in creating a sense of globality.

In his last chapter, Johnston suggests a second interpretation of the dragon-ornamentation on the hilt, in which the bodies of the serpents are seen as biting each other's tails, thus creating a dynamic of the consuming and the consumed, and consequently establishing a clear hierarchy. There is an aesthetic self-reflexivity to the story, which also shows up in the way it uses ekphrasis. This new interpretation has certain implications for the metaphor since the different cultures do not co-exist side by

side anymore, but one must eventually consume the other, and certain groups seem to be favoured within the text. This might suggest that the plot itself is largely based on the teleological success and victory of Christianity. While at first pagan culture is established as a unique, homogenous framework, there is a clear shift in the second part of the poem, which then culminates in the death of Beowulf. It seems that aesthetically pleasing archaeological artefacts, like the hilt with its dragon-ornamentation, can be present when Beowulf is at the height of his success, but with his downfall, the power of pagan culture (and the Geats) comes to an end, and the dragon itself and the religious implication of the hilt are the only things that remain. After Beowulf's death, the treasures and artefacts disappear with the hero. Johnston observes that *Beowulf* only allows for global connection as long as it occurs under Christian conditions (52).

In his conclusion, Johnston highlights the importance of transcultural entanglements, which ultimately make the poem a complex piece of literature. He further stresses that "[j]ust as the epic *Beowulf* cannot disconnect itself from its Christian perspective, Christianity will always be inevitably tied to pagan cultural and aesthetic traditions, through which it initially learned to express itself" (55; my translation).[3]

Though only 72 pages long, *Beowulf Global: Konstruktionen historisch-kultureller Verflechtungen im altenglischen Epos* is no 'introductory' text and requires a certain familiarity with the poem and related concepts. Johnston presents a sophisticated and complex argument, and his book offers a wide variety of thought-provoking observations on the way in which globality is constructed within a world that, at first sight, seems so homogenous. Johnston's analysis not only invites readers to rethink the notion of globality and skilfully identifies the underlying structures that serve as a foundation for the creation of a closed homogeneity, but he also recognises the measures that lead to its deconstruction. As a result, Johnston's book provides a solid and conclusive analysis that shows how *Beowulf* weaves together notions of time, temporality, and distant cultures to create its own globality, thus presenting some intriguing new perspectives on the transcultural entanglements in *Beowulf*.

LARISSA PIA ZOLLER

Elizaveta Strakhov. *Continental England: Form, Translation, and Chaucer in the Hundred Years War*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2022. 256 pp.

The master-stroke of *Continental England*, which takes up the torch from Ardis Butterfield's *Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (2009) is its focus on form. This gives it a precision that binds its arguments together across authors, languages and locations; a precision that is technically adept and richly informative.

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3   "So wie sich Beowulf nicht von seiner christlichen Perspektive befreien kann, so bleibt wiederum das Christentum an pagane kulturelle und ästhetische Traditionen gebunden, durch die es sich zuallererst auszudrücken gelernt hat." (55)

The animating idea of the book is "reparative translation," which Strakhov introduces as an alternative to the "Roman model" of "translation as displacement" (with its Bloomian, zero-sum assumptions of insecurity, competition, advantage; 6). Reparative translation, by contrast, represents a recuperative and collaborative, Hieronymian ethic, a counter-current against the centuries-long conflict through which these writers lived. It prioritises "preservation" (7): the reconstitution of poetic kinships, especially those with ambits wider than political borders, and the shoring up of connections in the face of attrition. Form emerges as the perfect mode "for revealing phenomena that are blurrily visible but refuse to come into focus when viewed under the individual lenses of *author*, *language*, and *nation*" (224; original emphasis), because it keeps traversing those categories' borders. One feature of *formes fixes* lyric, its iterability, emerges as the currency in which its practitioners traded: fungible, "combinatorial" (17) elements – rhyme patterns, stanza forms, repeatable metaphors, classical exempla, 'sixth of six' topoi – become the communal matter for a conversation about poetry's place in geopolitics, its allegiances, its responsibilities towards governing authorities and nation states, and things more lasting than them.

Chapter One begins in France, with Deschamps's *Art de dictier* and other manuals that codified the *formes fixes*, their Machauldian origins, and their trajectory away from musical form and towards public recitation (in the *puys*, or regional poetry competitions). Strakhov deals briskly with the question of whether the Penn "Ch" poems might be Chaucer's lost French "balades, roundels, virelayes" (36): they cannot be, "for a very simple reason: the main taxonomic principle inside this anthology is lyric form," not authorship. The manuscript serves as a case study in what mattered about the genre to its compilers and readers. A satisfying habit here (used several times to good effect) is the summative, enumerated list, deployed to recapitulate the argument at pivot points with a kind of syllogistic clarity.

Chapter Two sets the pattern of thinking of *formes fixes* poets in clusters. It begins with the Picard pastourelles, Deschamps and Froissart, repurposing the *pastoral* in time of chevauchée ("scorched earth, scorched poetry;" 59). Strakhov enjoys all the details (puns, intercalated names, homophones) that populate a densely specific, local poetry, mourning local calamity. Her take on the idyllicizing work that pastoral does for Froissart sits well alongside its more heartbreaking power in the hands of Deschamps. The discussion gets spirited when she turns to the accusations levelled by Philippe de Vitry at Jean le Mote (writing bad poetry on bad soil), and Le Mote's defence (that "geographic distance from cultural centers – and aesthetic distance from cultural precepts – is no exile;" 77). This is the first of several points at which Strakhov makes evident the instrumentalization of Italian humanism in Francophone discourses surrounding translation and statecraft. In the yet more vituperative exchange between Jean Campion and Le Mote, these positions ossify further. This feels like the book's conceptual heart: the responsibility of poetry to stabilize national borders (Vitry and Campion) or to transcend them (Le Mote).

The third chapter asks "what happens when the formes fixes are composed in English?" (94). Military-dominance-with-cultural-subjection is the animating contradiction (101) from which Strakhov argues that Deschamps "is invested in Le Mote's borderless vision for Francophone literature rather than in Vitry's gate-keeping"

(102). In Deschamps's wistful dried-up native soil and plentiful foreign garden, Strakhov suggests that "form stabilizes what language loses" (110). The chapter concludes with the prologues to the *Legend of Good Women*, including a close reading of the *glenyng* imagery from the book of Ruth, which casts them as "a rhetorical exercise in opposing argumentation rather than a real-life alteration in Chaucer's views on English poetry" (126). F and G emerge looking like a staged exchange, not so far from those of Vitry and Le Mote.

The fourth chapter thinks first about Gower, whose trilingual poetic output included *In Praise of Peace* and the *Cinkante Balades* among its final works. Meditating on the claim to address the king in "perfit langage" in the dedicatory verse of the Trentham manuscript, Strakhov suggests "that Gower views multilingualism as […] a kind of metalanguage" (136). She then considers the *Traitié*, whose yawning interlingual gulfs between text and rubric suggest a kind of intentional failure of mediation. Pondering with Sebastian Sobecki whether the hand of Trentham might be Gower's own, Strakhov ponders the practised conventionality of the *formes fixes* speaker: a deeply personal and deeply iterable posture. The comparison with Hoccleve's Huntington holographs is unusual and productive: both writing autobiographically and yet publicly and formally; both nearing the end of their lives and curating, or at least reflecting on, their own oeuvre; and both reflecting at the same time on a multilingual stage, politics and form. The Hoccleve of his *formes fixes* looks "radically alternate from the anxious poet petitioner of his earlier work" (152).

The final chapter considers another pairing, John Shirley and John Lydgate, in a switch from asking "what it means to emphasize one's command of French just as the Lancastrian regime […] executed its invasion of France" to "what it means to emphasize a Francophone poet's English during the English occupation of France that flooded England with Francophone texts" (174). Strakhov's study of Shirley's "gossipy rubrics" (179) is illuminating, as is her reading of how *So as the Crabbe Gooth Forward* "flirts with mistranslation, not unlike Gower" (181). Her reflections on what the laurel means to Lydgate, charting "a new course toward Italian humanism that eclipses France from England's aspirational gaze" (189) are rich and provocative. Her reframing of 15th-century dullness as the familiar game of iterability makes a powerful case for "a fundamentally generative, rather than derivative, poetics" (193), and the interpretation of *The Mumming for the Mercers*' recapitulation of Deschamps's imagery of dryness and plenty is superb. The chapter ends with a survey of three personal libraries (those of Bedford, Fastolf and Charles the Bold), a seam woven through the book concerning what the magnates of northern Europe were reading, what they were seen to be reading, what they were having translated and what they weren't.

A coda on Ashby follows, then a witty backwards glance at what the thought experiment of reparative translation has afforded ("an argument that reparative translation wholly displaces the Roman model […] would be somewhat ironic;" 223). Strakhov's concluding comment, that "literature rebinds what war and conflict tear apart," and that form is what "suture[es] those binds" (225) captures the wistful aspirations of the poets considered in her pages, caught in their particular times and places yet yearning for their renewal. Strakhov's brilliance is the leanness of her writing

in argumentation and analysis, and the singularity of vision that weds wide-wheeling range to clarity and brevity.

<div align="right">JOANNA BELLIS</div>

William E. Engel and Grant Williams, eds. *The Shakespearean Death Arts: Hamlet Among the Tombs*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 346 pp.

The Shakespearean Death Arts assembles a range of essays that explore how the premodern death arts are performed in Shakespeare's plays. In contemporary culture, Shakespeare is often credited with offering deep insights into universal themes; his plays are thought to teach lessons about politics and tyranny, love and desire, and many other fundamental aspects of the human condition. Although the idea of an ahistorical, universal meaning is highly problematic, it is true that we all have to die; this essay collection will therefore be of interest to all those who wonder what Shakespeare might teach us about 'good' or 'bad' deaths, about memory, remembrance, and legacy, and about ways of representing the end of all endings. The practices, functions, and representations of death are, however, deeply historical: thankfully, the editors and contributors avoid platitudes by approaching representations of death as cultural phenomena that are most interesting and revealing when perceived through a historicist lens.

The essays interrogate the diverse ways in which the plays construct cultural forms of expression and practices relating to dying, death, and the dead. The use of the plural 'death arts' corresponds to the plurality of both practices and forms of knowledge and representation that surrounded death in early modern culture. The term 'art' signals a key difference between premodern and modern perceptions of death: in contrast to modern medicine's investment in postponing death as long as possible, it acknowledges "the lessons and limits of nature" (4), accepting "death as something you could not cheat". In their introduction, William E. Engel and Grant Williams acknowledge the influence of Philippe Ariès on their own work; they explicitly position the death arts as a divide rather than a link between premodernity and the Enlightenment ("a historical firewall," 4). Appropriately for a discussion of the death arts in Shakespeare's plays, the editors emphasize the theatrical dimensions of the *ars moriendi*. Their comprehensive and lucid introduction is followed by two sets of essays: the first looks at various plays by Shakespeare; the second concentrates on *Hamlet*.

The first part of the collection addresses *2 Henry IV*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, and other plays. Andrew D. McCarthy provides a discursive and historical frame by reading some of these plays in the context of *ars moriendi* tracts. His essay offers an excellent introduction to key texts of the *ars moriendi* tradition and the ways in which plays by Shakespeare (and Marlowe) engage with these ideas. Brian J. Harries and Grant Williams approach *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, respectively, from the point of view of rhetorical commemoration. Read together, their essays emphasize the constructive nature of commemoration as a form of interpretation. Williams additionally highlights the imaginative quality of the *exemplum* in the age of commercial theatre and printing practices. Eileen Sperry explores how the dialectic structure of *tu fui*, *ego eris* intersects

with and is ultimately replaced by linear narrative in *2 Henry IV*. She uses this play as a lens to examine the precarious constellation of king and heir apparent. Dorothy Todd discusses tombs and entombment in *Pericles* to draw attention to the creative and regenerative potential of the death arts, while Maggie Vinter identifies speaking corpses in *Othello* that "reach out to the living" to remind audiences of human finitude, turning tragedies themselves into instances of *memento mori*. Jessica Tooker claims performative language in *Othello* as a death art. Her essay stands a little apart in that it is the only one in this fairly coherent collection that engages with neither the cultural and political contexts of *Othello*, nor with the rhetorical tradition that informs its use of language.

Part Two of the collection focuses on *Hamlet*, the play that is most deeply invested in death and adjacent themes such as ways of dying, burial, memory and narrative, legacy, and, more broadly, relations with the dead. Jonathan Baldo reads *Hamlet* as "a play about buried pasts" (180) that invites audiences to think about their own lost historical memory in relation to Catholicism, as well as to the Danish and Norman conquests. An investigation into how *Hamlet* sorts characters into a cosmographic scheme is at the centre of Zackariah Long's article, which relates the play to the symbolic topography of early modern playhouses as well as to premodern "theatres:" "theatres of memory" as well as "theatres of God's judgement" (204). Amanda K. Ruud explores the power of descriptive rhetoric to navigate absence and death and represent moments of grief. She positions the use of *descriptio* and *enargeia* as a poetic death art with elegiac and dilatory effects that works against the progression of the action. While Lina Perkins Wilder explores suicide in *Hamlet*, linking it to gender, Pamela Royston Macfie discusses Ophelia's drowning scene in terms of a *locus amoenus*. Macfie stresses Ophelia's union with nature that emerges in Gertrude's account; it allows Ophelia to "achieve[…] in primal liquiescence the release Hamlet originally desired" (244). In her essay "Artless Deaths in *Hamlet*," Isabel Karremann examines how Hamlet registers continuity and change in the *ars moriendi* tradition from medieval to early modern times. She discusses the *danse macabre* as a religious motif and didactic device that dates back to pre-Reformation times and frames Christian notions of the "bad death" (309). Michael Neill's essay delineates the "narrative yearnings" (309) expressed in *Hamlet*, sketching its ambivalences in relation to death in an ending that may prove unsatisfactory considering "the traumatic severance of connection with the dead that was occasioned by Reformation theology" (318).

The well-conceived collection concludes with an afterword by Rori Loughnane that reflects on the form and nature of material and rhetorical *memento mori*, on the work of memory and authors' works as their legacy. Although the collection rehearses well-known material and canonical plays, it has much to offer to readers who are interested in the cultural phenomenon and theatrical performance of death. The essays engage in suggestive and lucid ways with material practices, rhetorical figures, and historical tracts, sometimes forging new connections and almost always contributing to a deeper and broader understanding of the early modern death arts between Catholicism and the Reformation, medieval and modern constellations.

<div align="right">ANNE ENDERWITZ</div>

William E. Engel. *The Printer as Author in Early Modern English Book History: John Day and the Fabrication of a Protestant Memory Art*. **New York and London: Routledge, 2023. xii + 220 pp.**

Situated at the "intersection of book history, authorship studies, and mnemonic criticism" (8) and informed by the works of Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, Edgar Wind, and Raymond Klibansky, this monograph sets out to place the publications of the English printer John Day (c. 1522-1584) within the context of early modern print culture to facilitate a better understanding of "how the material products of his ingenuity ended up shaping the reformed religious views that bolstered an emergent national consciousness in Tudor Britain" (3). For Engel, Day was not only a printer, but also an author in the sense of producer, publisher, reader, reviser and corrector of the scripts submitted for print in his shop (see 39-40). Engel's main argument is that because of this close involvement in the publishing process (and his mastery of the technology), Day played a substantial role in the fabrication of a Protestant memory art. Through specific editorial choices, such as insertions, additions, illustrations and glosses, Day "consolidated and advanced the Protestant agenda in Tudor England" (106).

Engels focuses on six, mostly religious, works that left Day's printing press between 1553 and 1581, and which played a crucial role in shaping England's Protestant consciousness after the counter-reformation of Mary I. In close readings of these works (in five chapters), Engel explains in greater detail how Day advanced the agenda of the reformed church in England by reusing and updating pre-Reformation Christian motifs, ideas and topoi. Day's books thus played an important role in transforming the collective memory from imagined, mental spaces into material physical spaces. His editions of William Cunningham's *Cosmographical Glass* (1559), *Catechism* (1562), *Metrical Psalms* (1562), Foxe's *Act and Monuments* (1563), the first Protestant emblem book from 1568 and *Queen Elizabeth's Prayer Book* (1569) thus functioned as visual mnemonic aids in expressing and projecting "a unified sense of communally experienced national consciousness" (8).

In his interpretations, Engel pays close attention to the specific mnemotechnic strategies employed in each work. He shows, for example, how, in Cunningham's *The Cosmographical Glass*, by using a light, "crisp smudge-free italic font of the highest quality" (49), Day distances the text from earlier works with comparable serious intent written in "thick and heavy" (49) Gothic type and in doing so sets it up as a work of new radical consequence. An investigation of Day's characteristic memento mori colophon (printer's mark) further reveals the printer's attempts at assuming authority over the work. In his discussion of Day's role in "establishing a solid religious foundation for English reformed habits of thought and related memorial practices" (64) with the printing of the *Catechism* and *Metrical Psalms*, Engel shows the extent to which the inclusion of chapter numbers into running titles, descriptive "mnemonic couplets" (68) and marginal references to biblical books serve as "memory cue[s]" (72) and thereby endow the texts with greater "authoritative sanctity" (73).

The discussion of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* focuses primarily on the woodcut illustrations and how their mnemotechnic features (such as margin glosses, the combination of image and textual banners as well as banderoles) functioned as

"mnemonic triggers for the recollection of words imprinted in the memory of the reformed Christian reader" (112). In the short chapter on *A Theatre for Worldlings* (1569), the first emblem book published in England and the first English book to be illustrated with etchings, Engel explores the interplay between the parts of the emblem and how they "clarify, guide, and constrain the viewer's interpretation of the symbolic images presented in the twenty illustrations" (147). The final and longest chapter, on *Queen Elizabeth's Prayer Book*, reveals how Day repurposes stock illustrations from the pre-Reformation manuscript tradition and how he infuses them with Protestant content. By adding emblems in the margins, readers are invited "to see themselves allegorically reflected" (169), and Day's rich illustrations can be seen as a separate book-within-the-book, serving as a "devotional guide in its own right" (175). Similarly, the inserted seven woodcut narratives (showing, among others, the Life of Christ, Virtues triumphing over Vice, and Acts of Corporal Mercy), Engel sees as "mnemonic itinerar[ies], in many ways reminiscent of portable devotional objects" (179-180).

Engel's richly illustrated, although unfortunately somewhat carelessly edited monograph (including misspellings [51; 86; 108; 165], missing closing parentheses [116; 130] and faulty syntax [117]) provides valuable insights into the practical and material side of collective book production in early modern England. Engel's analyses reveal the intricate interplay between text and image and how the printer John Day, through his increasing mastery of printing techniques, influenced, enhanced and ultimately 'authored' a Protestant memory art. However, as convincing and informed as Engel's readings are, I would have wished for a more consistent application of the three "mnemotechnically oriented concepts" (11) introduced at the beginning of the book (psychogram, mnemotope, engrams/mnemic energy). As it stands, Engel more often than not seems to lose sight of these concepts in his readings, which becomes particularly evident in those moments when he introduces further terms, such as mnemonic loci and mnemotopes, and neglects to differentiate between them (with regard to the concepts of engrams and mnemic energy, Engels himself concedes that these are not "explicitly referenced throughout;" 10). This lack of methodological clarity may also account for the impression that Engel at times gets a little carried away in his interpretations of stylistic and editorial features, as when he argues that the symbol of the ampersand in an illustration in the *Prayer Book* "is intended to set up or cue the recall of the rest" (183) or when he states that the depiction of Latimer's execution in *Acts and Monuments* can be read "as a step in the steady providential march toward the ultimate victory of Protestantism" (114). Setting these points aside, however, Engel's book proves to be a highly impressive and valuable contribution to the fields of authorship and material studies.

ROLAND WEIDLE

Katrin Berndt and Alessa Johns, eds. *Handbook of the British Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century*. **Handbooks of English and American Studies 16. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2022. 596 pp.**

Several years back, setting out to specialize in English literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, I received reactions from friends and colleagues which ranged from "Really? Isn't that kind of… boring?," via "Students won't sign up for your seminars," to "Didn't you mean the Long *Nineteenth* Century?"

With their *Handbook of the British Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century*, Katrin Berndt and Alessa Johns impressively demonstrate that such thoughts could not be further from the truth for a field of study as diverse and fascinating as the 18th-century novel. The handbook is designed to offer orientation to both students and researchers in the history, forms and themes of the 18th-century British novel, spanning a time frame from the Glorious Revolution to Romanticism. In its theory-based first section, its authors tackle systematic questions and current debates in 18th-century studies, such as the relation of individual liberty and governmental control, reason and sentiment/subjectivity, gender, sexuality and intimacy, postcolonial perspectives on the novel, print culture, and ecology. The second section complements these reflections with analyses of significant 18th-century novels, bringing together both established and recent critical approaches and cultural perspectives. In their introduction, the editors conceptualize the Long Eighteenth Century as *translatio* (13), referring, at the same time, to the period's diversity of literary forms, the mobility of its characters, and the dynamics of its ideas, a richness of themes reflected in the selection of novels for the individual text analyses.

The text corpus includes a range of authors found on many university syllabuses on this period, such as Behn, Defoe, Fielding, Haywood, Johnson, Richardson, Sterne and Swift, concluding with Romanticism represented by Austen, Scott and Shelley. Those analyses are, however, complemented by a variety of texts the editors have characterized as 'underexplored' and 'rediscovered,' such as Robert Paltock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, a Cornish Man* (1751). Unlike other publications with a similar focus and agenda, the case studies devote more chapters to texts written by female than by male authors, highlighting the importance of women as literary producers for the shaping of the novel genre from its inception.[1]

The structure of the handbook is well-suited for readers who are looking for a comprehensive overview of the 18th-century novel and aim at reading the entire book, but also for those who research a particular topic with a more limited scope: abstracts and keywords are provided for each chapter, so readers can quickly identify which

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1   The ratio of female to male authors is 13:11 (excluding *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, published anonymously in 1808). For comparison, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (ed. John Richetti, 1998), the ratio is 1:6, with one additional summarizing chapter on "Women Writers." The more recent *Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (ed. J.A. Downie, 2020) also includes chapters focussing on "Social Structure, Class, and Gender" and "Gendered Fictions." However, in the case studies tackling individual texts, the ratio is 1:5. David Richter's more balanced *Reading the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Wiley, 2017) has a ratio of 4:6.

chapters are especially relevant to their research interests. Students wishing to enhance their knowledge of the 18th-century novel should start with Ina Schabert's section on "Individual Freedom and Civic Order," as it traces the political changes in Britain following the Glorious Revolution, then proceed to Natalie Roxburgh's contribution on "The Novel and the Literary Marketplace," which provides useful contexts on print culture and canon formation.

A wide range of excellent readings of canonical 18th-century texts include, for instance, Nicholas Seager's exploration of the numerous paradoxes of Jonathan Swift's 'anti-novel' *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), "surely the most controversial inclusion in this Handbook" (178), or Tobias Menely's analysis of *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), which, in addition to established criticism reading Johnson's novel as a moral fable of the human condition, offers innovative critical perspectives on *Rasselas* as a novel of education, its characterisation as a "very Ethiopian" (187) text, and its depiction of the nonhuman world. Concerning texts less likely to be found on a university course syllabus, two contributions shall be singled out to illustrate the richness and scope of themes and forms of the 18th-century novel: Jakub Lipski's discussion of Robert Paltock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751), which is considered a predecessor of science fiction and Utopian literature and whose eccentricities Lipski portrays in a fact-oriented but very entertaining manner; and Susan Carlile's contribution on Charlotte Lennox' *The Female Quixote* (1752). Carlile sheds light on an astonishing variety of narrative and aesthetic strategies, comprising not only satire and wit, but also political allegory, intertextuality, metafiction, and reminders of the text's fictionality, by which Lennox puts to the test criteria of canon formation established by male authors as well as patriarchal projections of female narcissism, rendering the novel "both a cautionary tale about the problems of silencing women and a call to arms" (263).

These examples already hint at the greatest strength of the handbook: though the richness of detail may at times be a little overwhelming, it constitutes an inspiring read which challenges researchers to explore the 18th-century novel from a perspective they have not considered before, such as Robert Markley's analysis of Austen's idealized English countryside in terms of environmental thinking during the Little Ice Age (127), or Christoph Houswitschka's thought-provoking characterization of *Clarissa* as an "eighteenth-century contribution to the #MeToo movement, particularly with regard to historical differences of gendered perceptions" (49).

The chapters on individual novels are labelled 'close readings.' For a future edition of the handbook, the editors might consider an alternative, as 'close reading' might be confusing to students, as in New Criticism it implies an intrinsic approach completely disregarding external factors, such as its production context or its cultural dimension, which is clearly not the approach of the volume at hand. In a similar vein, some individual chapters may create confusion when claiming that "the characters merely channel the author's […] concerns" (100), which may easily be misunderstood in terms of literary intention, or in gendering 'the reader' consequently as 'she' or 'her' ("what the reader has in front of her is an authentic document;" 354; "the reader is exceptional in her relish for the text;" 356). It is unclear whether the pronoun is used here as generic feminine to raise gender awareness or whether the author is suggesting that the novel

at hand is addressed exclusively to a female readership. Such inaccuracies, albeit small ones, should be avoided with the student reader in mind. Another aspect one might want to mend if the publisher considers a reprint would be the poor resolution of William Hogarth's "The Enraged Musician" (53), whose details are blurred and difficult to recognize.

Taken together, the contributions in this volume testify convincingly that – to borrow Austen's phrase which precedes the *Handbook*'s introduction – a novel is rarely ever "only a novel;" instead, a novel permits a plethora of interpretative approaches which do not merely reveal the complexities of a past on the cusp between early modern and modern society, but which also offer innovative perspectives on many themes that, in the sense of the editors' preface, *translate* into our present age, such as philosophical anthropology, the ideal society, the interpretation of history, or the complex interactions between human beings and the natural world.

I warmly recommend this book to anyone wishing to enhance their understanding both of the 18th-century novel as a whole and of individual texts, whether they are new to the study of the 'Long' Eighteenth Century or experts looking for some refreshing and innovative theoretical and interpretative perspectives.

SIMONE BRODERS

Simone Broders. *The Age of Curiosity: The Neural Network of an Idea in Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. Anglia Book Series 72. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021. 316 pp.

In *The Age of Curiosity*, Simone Broders identifies curiosity as a central idea to the Long Eighteenth century. Her main goal is conceptual, namely to "illustrate […] how the history of ideas can benefit from the analogy of historical processes with the way information is stored and learning is endorsed both in the human brain and in artificial implementations of these processes in computing" (5).

In the theoretical part, Broders refutes Lovejoy's concept of a history of ideas due to its linear and teleological character (Chapter 2). She also disparages previous research in the history of ideas of curiosity (especially Blumenberg) which suggested a linear development from the church fathers' condemnation of curiosity as hubris to the revaluation of curiosity as a necessary impulse to the advancement of knowledge or the formation of an individual self during the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Broders argues that such a narrative ignores the simultaneous existence of ambivalent, often gendered implications of curiosity that have always constituted a conceptual network of the idea, with shifting constellations and configurations. An erudite chapter on the etymology of the term (Chapter 4) presents these implications, for example, care, charity, progress, prying or hubris. To assess this semantic complexity, Broders resorts to neurophysiology and the metaphor of the neural network.

> There is a formal analogy between the different notions of curiosity and the cells in the human body – they come in different sizes and shapes, are widely spread, and connected to each other. More importantly, ideas communicate with each other. They grow and shrink by impulses or lack thereof. (59-60)

The main part applies the neural network model to analyses of representative texts, covering a variety of fictional and non-fictional genres from the early 17th to the early 19th century. Chapter 5 considers the function of curiosity in science and philosophy as well as the work of collectors. Despite its title ("Curiosity Across Different Media") the analyses are largely based on textual material and concerned with conceptual issues. Media-related questions are only considered when Broders touches briefly on the essay as a genre for curiosity or on the existence of curiosity cabinets (ignoring the existing research on those media of curiosity, e.g. by Barbara Stafford). Media concerns are also absent from the network diagrams Broders develops for each text, illustrating the dynamic relationships between the various aspects of curiosity ("cells," as Broders calls them). Chapter 6 scrutinizes *virtuosos*, voyeurs and proto-scientists as "Agents of Curiosity" in works by Swift, Pope, Lillo and Johnson. Chapter 7 focuses less on "Objects of Curiosity" than on the detrimental, destructive or liberating and emancipating effects of characters' indulgence in curiosity. Gauging the precarious notion of curiosity in gothic novels, Broders convincingly demonstrates that positive or negative evaluations of curiosity are not necessarily gendered. In Radcliffe's novels, curiosity even is an indispensable and essential factor for the female characters' "Grand Tour of the Mind" (259 and passim).

Concluding, Broders concedes that applying the neural network metaphor to her text corpus did not yield "'the' network of curiosity in eighteenth-century literature" (279), but numerous individual networks. Accordingly, the diagrams of these networks in the previous chapters have provided instructive maps for the semantic dynamics of the idea of curiosity in the respective texts without attempting a synthesis of the monadic analyses. Nevertheless, Broders's summary of the major results of her readings lucidly condenses in one page what one may regard as quintessential elements of 18th-century ideas of curiosity. Despite her previous rejection of narratives of development, she also discerns a shift in the literary representations of curiosity. This shift is one of focus rather than evaluation, namely from an Enlightenment "epistemological" (280) to a Romantic psychological curiosity, as it were. This valuable insight would have been a more satisfying ending to Broders's book than her concluding analyses of contemporary 21st-century US-American works that are of little relevance to the study and appear to be mostly motivated by a(n unnecessary) desire to bolster a study in the history of an idea with voices from the present.

Broders successfully demonstrates the usefulness of the network model for the assessment of ideas in cultural history, but her exclusive preference of the neurophysiological model failed to convince me. Mapping elements, impulses, and interrelations of the various ideas of curiosity is not unique to neural networks. Nor does Broders sufficiently acknowledge the network-based approaches that have existed in the humanities for decades (e.g. intertextuality, adaptation or transmedia studies, Foucault's *dispositif* or ANT). After all, the 'neural network' is itself only a metaphor representing how neurons are organized in the human body. It seems as if Broders were looking for a supposedly objective 'scientific' corroboration of a research project in the humanities, instead of asserting and trusting the reliability and validity of that discipline's own methods.

The book contains a few minor methodological and content-related weaknesses: In the first four chapters, the alternating repetitions of the critique of linear, teleological histories of ideas and of etymologies of 'curiosity' create redundances. In Chapter 5, Broders misreads Hume's statement that curiosity may destroy "'the implicit faith and security, which is the bane of all reasoning and free enquiry' (*EHU* IV, 19)," overlooking the distinction between implicit faith (blind trust in what the church tells you) and explicit faith (experienced-based belief in what God has revealed to the believer). She is wrong to conclude that "curiosity destroys faith and security" (121) and "is therefore not, as he claims in Section I, an entirely 'innocent' pursuit, as it has the power to shatter an individual's world and belief," because Hume, in fact, suggests that curiosity is necessary to overcome the deficient type of implicit belief, leaving the more profound form of explicit belief unaffected. When discussing the periodical essays, Broders ignores the emblematic character of Gimcrack's testament in *The Tatler* 216, reading the figurative episode literally (132-137). Her analysis of Butler's "Elephant in the Moon" anachronistically refers to "science" (172) and "scientists" as if 21st-century assumptions about "good academic practice" could be applied to 17th- and 18th-century natural philosophy.

These minor flaws do not diminish the overall strength of Broders's book, which consists in the perceptive analyses of a representative selection of texts that unearth various layers of the idea of curiosity in 17th- and 18th-century English literature. Her diagrams abstract the dynamics of curiosity in the individual texts, illustrating lucidly the multiple significances and dimensions of the aptly named 'Age of Curiosity.'

<div align="right">ANJA MÜLLER</div>

Marlene Dirschauer. *Modernist Waterscapes: Water, Imagination and Materiality in the Works of Virginia Woolf*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. 221 pp.

In the Blue Humanities, a field that has seen a vast expansion in the last two decades, it has become a commonplace that water should not be studied figuratively but as the real thing, a substance with specific chemical and physical qualities. Hester Blum's programmatic statement that "[t]he sea is not a metaphor" (2010, 670) has been echoed in various seminal contributions to the field, such as Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters's proposal of a "wet ontology" (2015, 247) as a new methodological paradigm.[1] The aim of this new materialist approach is to make water visible in its own right in cultural studies, and to overcome an anthropocentric perspective that conceptualises nature as essentially passive and static, reserving agency for human actors. This methodological shift has not only successfully drawn attention to the depth, volume, liquidity and material force of the oceans, and indeed all bodies of water, but has also invigorated theoretical debates in the environmental humanities in general. However,

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1   Blum, Hester. "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies." *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 670-677. <www.jstor.org/stable/25704464> [accessed 27 August 2019].
     Steinberg, Philip, and Kimberley Peters. "Wet ontologies, fluid spaces: giving depth to volume through oceanic thinking." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33 (2015): 247-264.

where does the repudiation of a figurative reading of water leave literary studies? Water is, after all, one of the most powerful tropes in the literary archive.

Marlene Dirschauer's *Modernist Waterscapes* is one of several recent studies that take on board insights from the Blue Humanities and Ecocriticism, without giving up on the strengths of established formal, stylistic and rhetorical analyses of literary texts. This two-pronged approach allows her to tease out Virginia Woolf's multifaceted poetics of water: "water's metaphorical ubiquity, its structural and metapoetic relevance, its ecological sovereignty, its intertextual character and its feminist implications" (4). Water is so omnipresent in Woolf's oeuvre that Dirschauer can rightfully claim that the sea and water are "indeed *congenial* to Woolf" (1; original emphasis). The importance of nature, and water more specifically, has received some critical attention in Woolf studies; astonishingly, however, *Modernist Waterscapes* is the first comprehensive study of Woolf's lifelong and varied engagement with water.

With the exception of *Flush: A Biography* (1933), *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940) and *Three Guineas* (1938), Dirschauer covers almost the entirety of Woolf's writings, both her fiction and non-fiction, following a rough chronological order but also establishing many thematic and aesthetic connections that complicate any idea of a teleological development of Woolf's aquatic poetics. Dirschauer shows that waterscapes – the seaside setting of *Jacob's Room* (1922), the frozen Thames in *Orlando* (1928), the Isle of Skye in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) – are not only the physical environment for her characters, but that water is also the fuel that drives Woolf's poetic practice, allowing her to develop her modernist voice through a series of 'liquid' experiments. Woolf's style – often described by critics as 'fluid' – is closely intertwined with an ecocritical and political project aimed at undermining fixed cultural signifiers often framed as dichotomies (the male and the female, reason and madness, nature and culture, life and death). Language and nature or, in Dirschauer's words "the metaphorical potency of water" (12) and "the material voices of water" thus form two fundamental levels of analysis in this study; a third is the attention to the intertextual embeddedness of Woolf's writings, in particular her continuous references to the English Romantic poets. If a sustained consciousness of water is a structuring principle of Woolf's writing, so is her immersion in the literary tradition that establishes an interconnectedness between the present moment and the past, or even a transcending of past and present – timelessness.

Following the introduction and a prefatory chapter exploring the affinities between Gaston Bachelard's philosophy of water, Woolf's poetics of water, and the English Romantics, Dirschauer offers in four further chapters detailed readings of Woolf's aquatic writings, mainly her early and late short fiction and the major novels. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the novels in which water as a theme resonates most strongly with an experimental aesthetic realisation, namely *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931), yield the most powerful contributions to our understanding of Woolf's work. Especially in her readings of the latter, Dirschauer convincingly shows how Woolf moves beyond waterscapes as a setting and a personal realm of experience, and deploys water as the ontological condition of both her characters' fictional identities and her narrative. In the novel's circadian frame narrative, the sea emerges as "the *poetic matrix* of *The Waves*' fictional world" (159; original emphasis), aligned not only with the six

individual life cycles depicted in the novel, but also with non-human time, and thus, with impersonal nature. The strength of Dirschauer's study consists not only in such interpretations of Woolf's best-known works but in her engagement with the entire oeuvre, showing the ubiquity and breadth of Woolf's use of water, even in the dryness in *Between the Acts* expressive of the boundaries of human language. In the online version, the chapters of *Modernist Waterscapes* are available separately. However, this book is worthwhile reading in its entirety, to discover the whole panorama of Woolf's aquatic universe.

VIRGINIA RICHTER

Silvia Mergenthal. *A Man Could Stand Up: Masculinities in British and Australian Literature of the Great War*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2022. 226 pp.

As someone who grew up in times of a decidedly masculine-coded compulsory military service, I can still remember my being upset by the fact that military service for women in Germany allowed training in the medical services (or the music corps) only. I guess it was my consternation in the face of how deeply ingrained the image of women as caregivers was in the ideology of the German forces (subscribed to by the authors of the *German Grundgesetz*, cf. Art. 12a IV a.F.) that made me decide to join the British Army Prosecuting Authority Germany for an internship – and why the topic of Silvia Mergenthal's new book *A Man Could Stand Up: Masculinities in British and Australian Literature of the Great War* attracted me.

In this very thoroughly researched book, the author discusses the cultural (in the broadest sense of the word) context of ideas of masculinities and how fictional works dealing with WWI engage with, i.e., support, question, or criticize, these ideas. Mergenthal identifies three interrelated issues at stake here, which inform her analysis especially of the Australian examples chosen:

> the interconnectedness between masculinities and nationhood, […] the nexus between theatres of war and the types of warfare conducted in these theatres […] and representations of men at war […] and to what extent […] generic differences influence representations of the Great War and its soldiers. (131)

After introducing the reader to the basic premises of her review in chapter one, Mergenthal, in chapter two, sets the scene by providing examples of the soldier's tale, works written during the "'War Books Boom' of the late 1920s and early 1930s" (23) which showed an "unvaryingly anti-heroic inflection" (24). As she writes in her introduction, her book offers re-readings of various novels, both written during the war and in later decades, vis-à-vis the generic pattern of the soldier's tale and its representation of male (and female) characters. It is, therefore, only reasonable to begin, in chapter two, with novels written around the 10th anniversary of the Armistice and during the "War Books Boom" (23). However, this raises the question why Mergenthal, who is very careful to address the problem of "gender issues of […] later decades […being …] projected onto those of World War I" (22), does not discuss her choice of an anti-chronological approach to reading the representation of masculinities in novels written a decade earlier. This is all the more surprising as she otherwise follows a well-

thought-out trajectory in both chronological and structural terms: in chapters two to seven, she deals with war novels and immediate post-war responses and different topoi of gender issues, before, in chapters eight to ten (with chapter nine being the first to introduce Australian literature), turning to questions of genre and in chapter eleven discussing a number of cultural histories which inform the kind of commemorative fiction which is at the heart of chapter twelve. Both the introduction and the first few chapters are very rich in terms of contextual detail, to the detriment, however, of clear-cut reasoning in terms of literary analysis. Clearly, those chapters are addressed to an already knowledgeable audience.

In the first part, up to and including chapter seven, chapters four, on the representation of "Same-Sex Relationships," and seven, "The Reciprocal Gaze," stand out by their much more in-depth analysis of the chosen literary examples than can be found in the other chapters in this part. Here, Mergenthal's focus is on the literary works she reviews and her line of argument as to their representations of gender concerns is much more tailored to the issue in question than it is in those chapters dealing with, e.g, "Shell Shock" (chapter five) or "Non-Combatants and Others" (chapter six). It is, however, chapters ten to twelve which completely abandon attention to rich contextual detail and fully concentrate on a very clear line of argument. In these last chapters, Mergenthal meaningfully connects the three issues she considers key to her analysis of WWI literature and focuses on the implications of narratological choices for representations of different forms of masculinities. Especially noteworthy is her discussion of how cultural histories of the 1970s and 1980s have come to shape today's perception of the Great War (chapter eleven) – and how this plays out in commemorative fiction in the late 20th and early 21st century (chapter twelve). These last two chapters also refer back to some of the points Mergenthal has discussed in earlier chapters, such as the gendered representation of shell shock in medico-military discourse (chapter five), so that the book here comes full circle.

A Man Could Stand Up: Masculinities in British and Australian Literature of the Great War is a very welcome addition to a number of academic fields, among them studies of war literature, masculinity studies, or studies of cultural memory. Due to its discussion of a plethora of works (twenty novels, two plays, and four cultural histories) and of different issues in terms of masculinities, it is, at times, necessarily more superficial than the reader would have wished for. Nevertheless, it offers a very thoroughly researched picture of how different forms of masculinities are represented in literature on and of WWI. While the book reads representations of masculinities in novels written during the war through the generic lens of the soldier's tale, it shows its strengths when it turns to more recent representations of the Great War and how they need to be understood as products of a kind of cultural memory which, in the case of Australian literature, also intersects with issues of national identity. Its publication in 2022 also allows it to take into account recent re-workings of cultural memory in terms of how WWI is remembered in Australia and Britain after the 2015 centenary of the landing at Gallipoli and the 2018 centenary of the Armistice, respectively, even though it misses the chance to include perspectives dealing with the forgotten voices of women in the cultural memory of, e.g., the ANZAC myth.

KATRIN ALTHANS

**Nadine Böhm-Schnitker and Marcus Hartner, eds. *Comparative Practices.
Literature, Language, and Culture in Britain's Long Eighteenth Century.* Bielefeld:
transcript, 2022. 224 pp.**

Among the many things the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us, or reminded us of, is
that comparisons are never neutral operations but matters of "judging, and choosing,"
driven by "political and often ideological agendas" (8-9). This observation takes the
reader into the book *Comparative Practices. Literature, Language, and Culture in
Britain's Long Eighteenth Century*, edited by Nadine Böhm-Schnitker and Marcus
Hartner. It underlines the urgency of research today into such connections of
comparing, selecting, and judging. As a conceptual tenet, the non-neutrality of
comparison therefore runs through the entire volume, along with a second key tenet:
comparing comes in the form of practices, "entrenched in networks of circulation of
bodies, artefacts, discourses and ideas" (16). Of course, this is where Literary Studies
enters. As the title announces, the present volume sets out to investigate "Comparative
Practices" in their historical contexts, and it chooses to do so with regard to the Long
Eighteenth Century as a period of profound social and cultural changes and a period
that oversaw the formation of empire. Three fields of pertinent comparative practices
are singled out by the editors: comparison superseding analogy in the sciences,
comparing in social discourse (at home), and the encounter with different cultures.

If the title promises a range of literary genres, forms, and discourses of the period,
the volume indeed prioritises one particular genre. Above all, it is the emerging novel
that stages, engages in, and also critiques comparative practices. Given that scholarship
has tied the novel to the formation of the middle class and, subsequently, to colonialism
and empire, this makes sense, and, almost inevitably, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*
serves as the principal point of reference for the editors' introduction. As the volume
moves from social comparisons to encounters with others in the global terrain, it
entwines Defoe and Behn's seminal texts with autobiography and travel narratives, and
eventually branches out further to include sea poetry. A final chapter leaves the field of
literature altogether to explore 18th-century grammars.

The first three essays set the stage at home. Julia Wiedemann reconstructs how
comparative references to King Alfred served as a "Role Model" in the various
conflicting endeavours to construct a post-union national identity, while Ralf Schneider
tackles the complex network of reading practices, the novel, class shaping and class
performance, the materiality of books, and the institution of circulating libraries.
Circulating libraries, Schneider argues, were key sites "that invited the comparison of
behaviour deemed adequate for the broad and diverse social group that came to be
called the middle class" (70). Comparative practices that were acted out in and through
access to circulating libraries negotiated social standards and performed distinctions.

The following chapters move *into* the text, exploring practices of comparison on
different levels. Marcus Hartner and Ralf Schneider study (in persuasive non-
chronology) a range of canonic novels, from Edgeworth's *Belinda* via Smollett's
Humphry Clinker and Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* to Burney's *Evelina*, with respect
to their "general preoccupation with questions regarding social norms and behaviour"
(78). In this light, characters placed in comparison come to the fore as a "key

compositional feature" (80) of novels engaging in middle-class social and moral self-fashioning, while the reader is prompted to also draw comparisons.

The comparative function of literary characters may not come as a surprise but it presents the opportunity to initiate a typology of comparisons. Hartner and Schneider mark out the key difference between direct and indirect comparisons, followed by Anne Lappert's further differentiation: "imagery comparisons, narrative comparisons and intertextual comparisons" (106). Bringing these facets into play in her analysis of "Narrative Comparisons" in Wollstonecraft and Lennox, she adds narratological finesse to the reading of comparative practices, be it with regard to the comparative function of intradiegetic narratives in *Maria; Or, the Wrongs of Woman* or its intertextual dialogue with Wollstonecraft's second *Vindication*.

The volume proceeds to take a significant turn, both in terms of broadening the horizon and further considering how genre affords and informs comparative practices. Monika Class's intricate reading of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* shows how the construction of Oroonoko as an incomparable and singular figure "corroborates" the text's "foundational role" (144) in the history of the novel – the very genre that lends itself so much to comparative practices in this period of colonial expansion sets out with a figure of incomparability. The postcolonial angle is further pursued in Nadine Böhm-Schnitker's essay on Behn and Defoe's colonial novels in intertextual relation to the conventions of travel writing and autobiography. Her analysis shows that it is by way of comparative practices and narrative moves that the novels' autobiographical narrators establish whiteness as a "norm" (151 and passim), in Crusoe's case endowed with an "Anglo-Saxon genealogy of 'Englishness'" (173).

The sea as liminal space provides yet another angle for thinking about comparative practices and empire. In her reading of three poems spanning the period from 1740 to 1846, Caroline Koegler details similar affective patterns in Thomson's "Rule, Britannia!" and Brontë's "The Letter," with oceanic imagery playing a key role. Through the mechanism of constructing in/comparability and establishing "non-relation" (198), she argues, others are expelled from subjecthood, whilst Hannah More's "The Sorrows of Yamba" is seen to challenge "Thomson's normalization of narcissistic imperialism" (198).

Finally, Göran Wolf undertakes to shed light on practices of (both intra- and intercultural) comparison in 18th-century English grammars. As these grammars relate to the language of the culture elite, they promote the emancipation of English as opposed to Latin, with attending notions of imperial superiority of English culture.

This book, then, approaches the Long Eighteenth Century from an innovative angle and at the same time introduces a new critical paradigm – comparing as practices – into English Studies. Almost inevitably, given its scope, the selection begs a question or two: if comparative practices are so pertinent to the formation and self-negotiation of the middle class, one feels inclined to wonder about the absence of the periodical essay. Also, in view of comparative practices in and by the novel, sentiment is notably absent. Yet, how would the sentimental novel's preoccupation with sharing affect and identification qua sympathy fit in? Notwithstanding such open threads, this book offers a lot. As a collection of essays, it works well, adding conceptual and thematic breadth and complexity by way of sequence. The flipside of this arrangement is that some of its

theoretical surplus is not flagged out prominently, but this may inspire further work. Designed and written as clearly as it is, this book will also find its way into teaching the 18th century.

HELGA SCHWALM

Christine Schwanecke. *A Narratology of Drama: Dramatic Storytelling in Theory, History, and Culture from the Renaissance to the Twenty-First Century.* Narratologia 80. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2022. 419 + xvi pp.

As the title states, this weighty and comprehensive study proposes "a narratology of drama" in order to address a gap in existing research with regard to the use of narrative strategies in drama, both from a broader transgeneric point of view and as far as the functioning of actual plays is concerned (22-24). This results in two main perspectives in the book which to some extent merge in the key research question of "*how* drama (written and/or staged) narrates" (77; original emphasis): On the one hand, Schwanecke sets out to show that narrative modes are an inherent part of dramatic storytelling in all kinds of plays. On the other hand, she examines concrete ways in which narrative and dramatic modes (can) intersect productively in different periods of British drama history by engaging in contextualised close readings of selected plays with "heightened degrees of narrativity" (90).

While the study's primary focus is thus narratological, it has pronounced strengths which ensure its relevance far beyond this field: Both in her theoretical considerations and in analysing individual plays, the author gives ample weight to the functions that can be performed by different forms of dramatic storytelling. These effects relate both to the audience's potential perceptions of the work's genre and the repercussions this can have for the overall genre system of the time, and to the social and cultural context. Specifically, it is a leitmotif of the book that in all periods under consideration the foregrounding of narrativity enables drama to lay bare the constructedness of hegemonic narratives in its society. These processes can encourage the play's addressees to reflect critically on the dominant ideologies, power imbalances and injustices which shape their culture so deeply that they have long become naturalised (369-371) – and this recurrent concern of the study allows researchers, for instance in British Cultural Studies, to build on Schwanecke's results and take them further.

The theoretical "Part I" uses a broad range of findings in transgeneric narratology (e.g. on the gradeability of narrativity; 49) to explore the semantic dimensions of *narrative* and *drama* as well as the levels of story and discourse in drama and develop a communication model for dramatic narration. This comprises five levels (four of them intra- and one extra-textual) on which dramatic and narrative modes "*can*" but "*do not have* to" (90; original emphasis) meet. This part of the book is structured in analogy to the first half of Aristotelian drama. Preceded by a "Prologue" inviting readers to experience dramatic and narrative modes in (conventionally) unlikely generic contexts, it builds up to "a Peripeteia in Drama and Narrative Theory" (chapter 3), i.e. the detailed elucidation of Schwanecke's narratological model of drama and dramatic narration as well as the ways in which the respective cultural contexts can come in here. The chapter

closes on a list of hypotheses about the functions which narratives and narrative structures can be made to perform in drama (93-94) – thus preparing the transition to the application of the model to concrete plays in "Part II."

In this part, the analogy to the dramatic momentum of Aristotle's structure is dropped (probably because the wealth of examples makes this section about three times as long as "Part I," so that the parallel no longer works). Instead, the author prioritises the structural consistency and comparability of the thematically often divergent case studies in order to prepare for the "trans-historical" (360) focus of the conclusion. While addressing the same questions in exactly the same order with regard to each work can sometimes seem a bit schematic, the visualisation of key results in tables and diagrams is very helpful to keep track of the overall argument in this tour de force of drama analysis from early modern times to the early 21st century. As Schwanecke explains, the individual plays under consideration not only lend themselves well to studying the "forms and functions of dramatic storytelling and narrative in drama" (29) in a particular period. They were also selected for having been influential and often popular in their day and age, but at the same time to some extent neglected by subsequent literary criticism (30-31), presumably because of their tendency to stretch and transcend conventional genre limits. In addition to explicitly stating her selection criteria, the author also tackles outright a recurrent conundrum of drama and theatre research, namely the relationship between the dramatic text and its performance(s) in studying individual works. While she aims at including "possible performances latent in the written text" (29), the central focus of her project is the script instead of its performative realisation(s), and close readings of "the materiality and mediality of narrative forms" (374) in staged, performed plays are rather recommended for further research building on the present.

On this basis, "Part II" presents in-depth and convincingly argued analyses of sixteen plays, which are clustered to represent five different periods of British drama history. With regard to the early modern examples (chapter 4), the main emphasis of the analysis is on competing versions of national and biographical narratives which the plays combine to allow critical reflection on their respective truth value, thus becoming part of the ongoing "general projects of nation-building and history-writing" (144). In the subsequent chapter on Restoration and early 18th-century drama, conflicting stories are still identified as a key element of the case studies, but the plays are rather shown to try and contain or unify difference(s). They make disparate narratives (as well as stylistic approaches) stand side by side in one and the same work and thereby mirror a period marked by constant change and the coexistence of diverse perspectives (149; 159). Moving on to late 18th-century and Romantic drama (chapter 6), Schwanecke foregrounds the "transgeneric" (204) phenomena of sensibility and Gothic aesthetics (220) which encouraged genre transgressions in this period to such an extent that the examples regularly show "strategies of de-dramatisation" (215) or even "de-theatricalisation" (244). Stories are used to instruct audiences about their world, and they increasingly highlight psychological aspects which then come to the foreground in later periods. Chapter 7 concentrates on "Victorian and early-twentieth-century plays" (254) – again zooming in on a transition period in both drama and society at large. In this case, however, the (apparently automatic) understanding of 'Victorian' as

'fin-de siècle' (i.e. 1890s) plays comes across as slightly reductive, as it completely omits melodrama – the dominant theatrical form of the 19th century which was highly popular with Victorian spectators (as well as neglected by drama research for a long time) and also intertwined dramatic and narratives modes very effectively. Apart from this caveat, the chapter presents convincing findings on late-Victorian 'New' Drama, illuminating its more and more argumentative and explicitly political use of narratives (267; 283) and demonstrating how "the act of narration and the narrative itself" (292) can then also turn into a "life-changing force" for individuals, both within plays and with regard to post-World War I audiences. In a last step, Chapter 8 focuses on the "drama of (performed) stories" (304) in the late 20th and early 21st centuries where narrative modes come to dominate and often make the plays' "generic status […] ex-centric," also through the use of intermedial connections and strategies. Schwanecke expounds how these new techniques are employed by playwrights to put marginalised groups and issues centre stage and open up new perspectives to their audiences, highlighting lies, narrative manipulation and corruption in contemporary society (336; 349; 354).

The final chapter of the study then abstracts from this plethora of period-specific results to distinguish different, "astonishingly stable" (366) forms of dramatic storytelling with regard to their use of narrative (and transgeneric) modes (361-364). On this basis, Schwanecke draws her central conclusion that the "dramatic and narrative modes [discussed] are default parts of dramatic storytelling" and "intersect within plays as well as without" (365). The concrete realisations of the dramatic and narrative elements then vary in the course of drama history (367-368). Obviously, this variation also holds true for the functions that narratives and storytelling perform in British plays throughout the centuries, in close connection with the genre system as well as the cultural context of the time. Nevertheless, on the basis of her findings in "Part II," the author in the end stresses again how the use of narrative modes always allows drama to stay innovative and experimental as a genre and address the social and cultural conditions of its period in a range of critical, inherently "political" (370; 372; 377) ways. All in all, *A Narratology of Drama* thus clearly fulfils the title's promise of a broad, programmatic study with a pronounced theoretical orientation. At the same time, the convincing case studies of selected plays are far more than means to this end and make the book relevant for a wide spectrum of academic audiences.

MERLE TÖNNIES

Erik Redling and Oliver Scheiding, eds. *Handbook of the American Short Story*. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2022. 702 pp.

The *Handbook of the American Short Story*, edited by Erik Redling and Oliver Scheiding, is one of the latest additions to the De Gruyter Handbooks of English and American Studies in Text and Theory. In a new millennium that confronts both students and scholars of American and English literature with an ever-expanding and hence more and more overwhelming field of research and publications, this series on

Anglophone literary texts is conceptualized to provide a "compact orientation" ("Editors' Preface," v) towards specific areas in their disciplines.

The fifteenth volume of the series reassesses the genre of the American short story through the lens of bibliomigrancy: the physical and virtual movement of the short story. Thus, it covers the short art form's emergence, circulation, and distribution from its beginnings as sketches and tales in the early 19th century to its current, technology-oriented state where, apart from experimentation with innovative and dynamic print forms, digital, transmedia, and electronic formats offer new storytelling/publication possibilities. Despite resurging articulations of anxiety, such as Joyce Carol Oates' "Is the short story an endangered species?" in the *New York Review* from summer 2000[1], the editors deem the short story very much alive and kicking due to its manageable length, epitomizing the 21st century's stress of brevity, readers' decreasing attention spans, and increased use of mobile devices. More importantly, the genre's prolific output can be attributed to its inherent socio-poetic dimensions that speak to both contemporary writers and readers.

After a brief introduction by Scheiding and Redling, the handbook presents a theory section consisting of four chapters, with detailed background information on the historical-political development of the American short story, the concurrent formation and intersections of the American literary canon and the American short story, current critical approaches to the short story, and the American short story in the context of material culture and magazine studies. Particularly the latter two chapters by Basseler and Scheiding give perceptive insights. Basseler compiles miscellaneous critical approaches that have recently emerged after a hiatus of comprehensive short story theory that lasted almost three decades. What seems particularly significant is the turn towards the performative function of short stories in regional and transnational approaches. Scheiding, on the other hand, elucidates the complex relationship between short stories and material culture, which is impressively demonstrated by close readings of Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Tommy Orange's "Freyr." In this context, the short stories' past and contemporary publication venues can also not be overlooked (from the traditional print magazines to short story cycles labeled as novels for reasons of saleability, to digital offers, such as e-platforms, blogs, social networks, or print-on-demand, self-publishing services); indeed, the chapter reinforces the necessity for future studies that are concerned with the correlation between the short story's aesthetics and economy.

These theory chapters are followed by a hands-on section, in (mostly) chronological order, concerned with 35 American authors who contributed in a major way to the evolution of the (American) short story tradition. The editors aspire to a balance between commonly canonized masters of the short story (e.g. Irving, Poe, Anderson, Hemingway, Faulkner), renowned writers from diverse backgrounds (e.g. Zora Neale Hurston, Louise Erdrich, Sandra Cisneros), and more recently discovered, contemporary artists (e.g. George Saunders, Lydia Davis, N.K. Jemisin). Each of the 35 chapters has the same efficient three-part structure of fifteen to twenty pages: context

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1   Oates, Joyce Carol. "An Endangered Species." *New York Review of Books* (June 29, 2000): 38-41.

information about author, time, and oeuvre; close readings of two outstanding short stories; and theoretical perspectives on the author's work.

The two sections' various chapters assist readers with ample cross-references between important concepts. Each chapter is introduced by an abstract and keywords and concluded by an extensive Works Cited list and recommendations for further reading. On top of that, an author and subject index makes it easy to quickly locate more specific information.

Most handbooks on short stories which have been published recently and are of superb quality, cover neither short story developments after 2000 nor issues of print/publication culture in the digital age, nor do they combine a theoretical foundation with concrete close analysis of several stories by eminent authors. In contrast, the *Handbook of the American Short Story* fills these gaps. Therefore, it will be a highly valuable acquisition for research and college libraries. Similarly, it deserves a prominent spot in the private collections of scholars of Anglophone literature(s) or comparative literature(s).

As far as students are concerned, it provides excellent authoritative information, linking samples of academic writing and sophisticated academic language with profound, yet concise information. For more advanced undergraduates and graduates, it offers a (mostly) student-friendly theoretical basis that goes beyond the historical-political combined with compact close readings of primary texts readily accessible via the WWW or in libraries. Moreover, each chapter is introduced by an abstract and keywords, most of which do an excellent job helping readers gain a quick overview before delving into the fastidious details of the chapters. Concluding the various contributions, the additional recommendations for further reading can help readers access even more expanded knowledge without being inundated.

One aspect that might still be added for the benefit of (student) readers is a more systematic chapter on currently popular or emerging writers and their publications, for instance, Lorrie Moore, Lauren Groff, Brandon Taylor, or Mary South, to name but a few. Otherwise, the handbook represents an ambitious project that has been convincingly brought to fruition. It is both accessible and insightful.

STEFANIE HUNDT

Christoph Schubert and Valentin Werner, eds. *Stylistic Approaches to Pop Culture*. **New York: Routledge, 2022. 270 pp.**

Stylistic Approaches to Pop Culture (*SAPC*) is an engaging anthology that brings together a collection of research articles exploring the language and stylistic features of popular culture. The twelve chapters in this volume draw on a broad range of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches which are presented in four thematic parts, I) Pop fiction, II) Telecinematic discourse, III) Pop music and lyrics, and IV) Cartoons and video games.

The opening chapter, "Zooming in: stylistic approaches to pop culture" by Valentin Werner and Christoph Schubert, establishes the framework for the rest of the book. It not only introduces and contextualizes each chapter, but also offers a brief yet insightful

discussion of the significance of popular culture in linguistics, the need for stylistic analyses of popular culture texts, and a concise summary of the five key strands of stylistics (pragmatic, cognitive, social, corpus-based, and multimodal) used by the various authors contributing to this volume.

The first thematic section of *SAPC* ("Pop fiction"), starts with Christiana Gregoriou's article "Misdirection (re)strategizing in Robinson's *A Dedicated Man*." Gregoriou uses a cognitive stylistic approach to analyze techniques such as false leads, red herrings, and plot twists used to misdirect readers away from the true solution to a mystery. She draws on early novel drafts and personal correspondences of the author, Robinson, to enhance her analysis. The following chapter, by Rocio Montoro, showcases corpus linguistic methods to compare and contrast linguistic representations of race and sexuality in the TV series *True Blood* (2008-2014) and one of the novels on which it is based, *Dead Until Dark* (2001). This chapter adds valuable insight to the field of linguistic analyses of adaptations, which is currently under-researched.

The second part of *SAPC* shifts the focus to "Telecinematic discourse." Tatyana Karpenko-Seccombe's article on communicative processes in the reality TV show *Love Island UK* (2015-present) highlights how interactions in this show differ in interesting and unexpected ways from those in scripted fictional programs as well as in naturally-occurring speech. In the following article, Susan Reichelt uses a multimodal approach to examine code-switching as a stance marker in the TV series *Jane the Virgin* (2014-2019). Reichelt presents a compelling and well-illustrated discussion of how ideologies are woven into the series with the help of audiovisual narration and English-Spanish code-switching. Christoph Schubert's chapter follows with a qualitative, pragma-stylistic analysis of the stylistic techniques used to create suspense in Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight* (2016). Schubert convincingly demonstrates how sequential organization (e.g., discontinuity and postponement) and communicative non-cooperation (e.g., prolonged silences and delayed responses) are key features in producing suspenseful dialogue in Tarantino's script. Christian R. Hoffmann uses conversation analysis and speech act theory to study the turn-taking structure of phone call openings in four film genres: action, comedy, drama, and horror. Aided by a corpus-informed method, Hoffmann unpacks the differences between scripted phone call openings and natural speech and considers whether any significant differences can be identified in relation to the four genres studied.

SAPC's third major section focuses on "Pop music and lyrics." Lisa Jansen and Anika Gerfer's article on the lead singer of *The Arctic Monkeys*, Alex Turner, analyzes his pronunciation using a socio-stylistic method. It is noteworthy here that the authors examine a live performance, which is a unique social interaction between performer(s) and audience. The study reveals that Turner's pronunciation combines a stylized Yorkshire accent with American characteristics, but more importantly, this work suggests a promising future avenue for research on how analyses of live shows can aid in better understanding performance styles and performance personae while also providing useful data for comparisons with recorded material. In the following chapter, Valentin Werner presents a corpus-stylistic analysis of the rapper Eminem's lyrics, showcasing his stylistic evolution over time in terms of features such as key words, semantic domains, and profanities, among others. Werner not only presents an

impressive quantitative and qualitative analysis, but also provides a much-needed example of how corpus-stylistics can be applied to song lyrics.

Part IV of the book, "Cartoons and video games," leans more heavily on a multimodal perspective to stylistics. Cecelia Cutler's chapter is an excellent exploration of the print cartoon *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905-1911) in which she shows how the working-class New York City dialect of the time is used in establishing the social status and linguistic identity of the characters in the cartoon. Cutler deftly illustrates how the semiotics of the cartoon (including speech bubbles, misspellings, fonts, etc.) also index race, culture and social differences. Video games are understudied in linguistics, which makes Dušan Stamenković's contribution particularly noteworthy. Stamenković examines the semiotic evolution of the video game series *Football Manager*, illustrating how technological advances have changed the balance of texts and images and how the structure of the game has adapted to present more real-life images.

In a fitting final chapter to *SAPC*, the redoubtable Michael Toolan discusses the increasingly acknowledged acceptance of the language of popular culture as highly relevant for linguistic study. Toolan also highlights the anthology's main findings, the innovations and fresh perspectives of the articles in this collection.

A major strength of this book is its eclectic, yet consistent and coherent approach. Regardless of one's theoretical proclivities, readers will undoubtedly find research here that is current, relevant, and innovative. Another strength of this book is its accessibility. Despite the depth and complexity of the analyses, the contributors provide a wealth of examples and write in a clear and engaging style that makes the book accessible to a broad audience. This is particularly important given the widespread interest in pop culture and the impact it has on our daily lives.

Overall, *Stylistic Approaches to Pop Culture* is a well-edited anthology that sheds new light on stylistic perspectives to the study of the language of pop culture. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the intersection of language and popular culture, and it will be of particular interest to scholars and students in linguistics, stylistics, literary studies, media studies, cultural studies, and sociology.

JOE TROTTA

Sebastian Domsch, Dan Hassler-Forest, and Dirk Vanderbeke, eds. *Handbook of Comics and Graphic Narratives*. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2021. 635 pp.

In the past two decades, comics studies has emerged as an exciting and dynamic field of research within a number of disciplines. Various excellent readers, introductions, and handbooks have provided surveys of the field from diverse perspectives. Heer and Worcester's *A Comics Studies Reader* (2008) and Kukkonen's *Studying Comics and Graphic Novels* (2013) were among the first to provide students with entry points for reading comics. More recently, *The Oxford Handbook of Comic Book Studies* (2020) presented a comprehensive programmatic statement that aims to consolidate "Comic Book Studies" as an interdisciplinary field from a global perspective, while *Comics Studies: A Guidebook* (2020) and *Key Terms in Comics Studies* (2022), demonstrated

the significance of comics as a well-established subject, especially in media studies and literary and cultural studies programs. In this context, the *Handbook of Comics and Graphic Narratives* appears not as a competitor, but rather as a complementary volume that builds foundations for approaching anglophone comics in media and literary studies. Together, all of these books suggest a broad and growing interest in the academic study of comics across disciplines.

Addressing both advanced students and scholars, the Handbook is part of a series that provides excellent entry points for research in key fields in English and American studies. As such, the volume is well positioned to fulfill its promise of combining "a systematic investigation of the subject with an overview of the field's central contexts and themes and a broad selection of close readings of seminal or exemplary works" (1). Each of the chapters provides an overview of the state of the art as well as original insights that serve as case studies for the practice of criticism in the field. Like all volumes in the series, the Handbook has three major parts that also signal its purpose as a comprehensive and accessible guide to comics studies as a field: Part I, "Systematic Aspects," Part II, "Contexts and Themes," and Part III, "Close Readings." The list of contributors, writing from positions in (English or American) literary studies or film/media studies, reflects the interdisciplinary nature of comics studies even as the field moves to becoming an (inter)discipline.

Part I provides a historical and theoretical framing for comics studies from within (anglophone) literary and cultural studies, with excellent and accessible chapters on "Comics Terminology and Definitions" (Sebastian Domsch); "History, Formats, Genres" (Dirk Vanderbeke); "Text-Image Relations" (Rik Spanjers); "Comics Narratology" (Jan-Noël Thon); "Seriality" (Daniel Stein); and "Adaptation" (Juliane Blank). These are superb choices of cross-cutting issues, and each chapter provides immensely useful discussions that help readers understand key issues in comics studies today.

Part II engages with themes, genre distinctions, and concepts that have shaped the study of comics in recent years, with chapters on "Politics" (Stephan Packard), "World-Building" (Dan Hassler-Forest), "Life Writing" (Astrid Böger), "Gender" (Anna Oleszczuk), "Queerness" (Kay Sohini), "Science Comics" (Heike Elisabeth Jüngst), "Postcolonial Perspectives" (Sandra Heinen), "DocuComics in the Classroom" (Marie Vanderbeke), and "Superheroes." As the only theme in the volume, "Superheroes" has four separate subchapters that first provide a "Historical Overview" (Dan Hassler-Forest), and then focus on three key periods in the development of Superhero comics, "The Golden Age: Batman" (Matt Yockey), "The Silver Age: Nick Fury" (Matt Boyd Smith), and "The Dark Age: Superheroes in the 1980s" (William Proctor). Giving so much space to exploring the Superhero genre emphasizes its relevance to the Anglo-American comics tradition and signals its significance to comics studies.

Part III showcases close readings of canonical comics and graphic narratives that are designed to primarily serve as models for students learning the ropes of analyzing comics. These chapters follow a set structure of "Context: Author, Oeuvre, Moment," "Concrete Analysis of Primary Sources," and "Central Topics and Concerns" that most of the authors adhere to, making the essays both more usable and less able to accommodate broader original insights. The selection of comics and graphic narratives

that are the focus of the close readings cover a wide range of genres, from humor and satire in works like *The Yellow Kid* (Christina Meyer) and *Cerebus* (Eric Hoffman), to fantasy and adventure in classics such as *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (Sebastian Domsch) and *The Sandman* (Evan Hayles Gledhill). Historical fiction is well-represented with titles like *From Hell* (Monika Pietrzak-Franger) and *Persepolis* (Harriet Earle), while (semi)autobiographical works like *Maus* (Joanne Pettitt) and *Dykes to Watch Out For* (Erin La Cour) provide deeply personal insights into the human experience. The collection also delves into the realms of post-apocalyptic narratives with *When the Wind Blows* (Dawn Stobbart), literary fiction in *Jimmy Corrigan – The Smartest Kid on Earth* (Gerry Canavan), and coming-of-age stories like *Ghost World* (Erik Grayson). Metafictional elements are explored in Martin Rowson's adaptation of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, *Gentleman* (Luisa Menzel) and Grant Morrison's superhero comic *Flex Mentallo* (Oliver Moisich), showcasing the versatility and creative potential of the comics medium. This diverse selection of titles not only demonstrates the rich history and evolution of comics and graphic narratives, but also highlights the unique ways in which these stories tackle complex themes, engage with readers, and contribute to the broader literary landscape.

The *Handbook of Comics and Graphic Narratives* provides a very nearly comprehensive overview of the field and in many ways constitutes a major contribution. The selections – and omissions – of the volume are well grounded in its purpose to provide both a systematic overview of comics studies and a historical sense of Anglo-American comics and graphic narratives, even if these choices are not always made explicit. The chapters are richly connected with each other, and the volume is excellently edited for both coherence and consistency throughout. Each of the chapters comes with an abstract and a list of key terms, adding to the usability of the volume for teaching. The only two minor quibbles I have are (1) that although the series clearly announces the focus, the title of the volume does not immediately make clear that it largely presents research on anglophone comics and graphic novels – to the virtually complete exclusion of other traditions such as *bande desinée* and manga. It is true that "comics" in the title already signals as much, but as a reader I did expect more explicit attention at least to anglophone comics' relation to other cultural traditions. (2) I also would have wished for more extensive coverage of science fiction and Afrofuturism in comics. Quite a few of the chapters reference science fiction as a genre, but to my mind, there is space for science fiction next to or across postcolonial perspectives, superhero comics, and science comics. These, however, are minor issues that ultimately highlight the patent usefulness of the volume as a whole, particularly for teaching and advising students and young scholars entering the field. The volume provides a sophisticated overview of the major issues and questions in the field, while also attending to the practice of close reading that is the major contribution English and American studies provide to the interdisciplinary field of comics studies.

<div align="right">JEANNE CORTIEL</div>

Wendy Scase. *Visible English: Graphic Culture, Scribal Practice, and Identity*, *c. 700-c. 1550*. **Turnhout: Brepols, 2022. 408 pp.**

As the digitization of manuscript collections has proceeded towards its current critical mass over the last two decades, there has been a rise in critical attention to all of those "other" texts that manuscripts contain, scattered with sometimes surprising density around the margins, flyleaves, and the unused bottom halves of pages in both early and late manuscripts from all over Europe. Indeed alphabets, inscriptions, penmanship exercises, and colophons have long been the first texts that modern readers notice when they examine a medieval manuscript for the first time. And yet when the curious turn to the published descriptions of medieval manuscripts, they are likely to discover that these sorts of texts are mentioned only briefly, if at all, as if they were opaque to critical examination. Wendy Scase's capacious and magisterial study *Visible English: Graphic Culture, Scribal Practice, and Identity, c. 700-1500*, establishes itself as a new first point of reference for anyone investigating these intrinsically fascinating traces of medieval literate practice in English manuscripts, and it makes a compelling case for imagining them as crucial evidence of the formation of Anglophone literary identity.

Scase's primary thesis is that "Englishness" in English writing is not just nor even primarily a theme that medieval English-language authors encode into their works. It is – literally, in more than one sense – writing in English, rooted in the medieval concept of *littera* itself. The various orthographic markers of script and dialect now used to date and localize manuscripts were just as visible to medieval scribes as they are to us today, and Scase presents a wealth of evidence that scribes made their choices quite carefully. The scribes and owners who produced and used English-language manuscripts were communities of practice who may have always imagined these practices in continuity with the larger tradition of formal education in Latin writing, but who demonstrated signs from their very beginning of developing and disseminating practices of specifically English-language textual production. Indeed, since the emphasis on Latin literacy made English writing unnecessarily difficult to learn, Scase suggests that the ability to write in English was actually rather rare and specialized for most of the period she surveys.

The book's first chapter begins with graphs, alphabets, and scripts, to consider primary education in reading and writing individual letter-forms, and in particular the relative prestige of Latin graphs and English graphs like yogh, eth, and thorn. The second chapter, "Graphic Models," looks at texts that appear to be basic exercises in what we would now call penmanship, sometimes undertaken in pedagogical contexts and sometimes undertaken as an individual practice of self-reflection or self-improvement. The third chapter, "Graphic Play," looks at the rather more advanced exercises of puzzles, riddles, and literary games like the "ragman roll" and Chaucer's "ABC." Chapter four turns to "Graphic Display," to look beyond the manuscript to the monumental forms of writing instantiated by the Ruthwell cross and by many other church inscriptions. Chapter five comes full circle to consider the practice of "reprography," a superior and more expansive term for what has sometimes been called "facsimile copying," which is to say copying that aspires towards the sort of exact reproduction of graphic features that photocopies, microfilm, and digitalization are now

able to afford. The result of these chapters' interlocking studies is a thorough and thoroughly necessary survey of what, in the most pragmatic sense, writing English actually meant to the professionals and amateurs who actually put pen to parchment and made the books we have in our archives today.

Each chapter is packed to the brim with detailed examinations of fascinating manuscripts and artifacts, and scholars looking to develop critical arguments about the ABCs and signatures they've run across in the various manuscripts they've worked on will find much to contextualize their findings. There are also many compelling synthetic arguments that emerge from Scase's systematic approach. For example, in chapter 2, Scase convincingly suggests that name and ownership inscriptions were an important kind of writing exercise, which merit evaluation as such. Then in chapter 3, Scase points out that the few amateur scribes known by their signatures – Robert Thornton, John Shirley, and so on – likely came to their practice not as individuals, but as part of an informal network of amateurs, who we could equate with modern hobbyists pursuing their craft for the pleasure of it. At the same time, as chapter 3 argues more generally, games and riddles were often pedagogical tools used to train scribes at the advanced level in particular, whose performance was therefore a demonstration of professional skill – a point, indeed, that is largely consonant with the oft-discussed purposes of medieval English courtly verse more generally, written both as an entertaining game and as a method for gaining patrons and advancing careers. Given that the signatures of these amateur scribes were performances of a sort of exercise, then, they both instantiate the larger playfulness that these hobbyists must have brought to their work and also by the same fact establish their authority within a community of practice.

The capaciousness of the book also invites further investigation of finer distinctions. One that I found myself curious about was the distinction between legal and literary communities of writing practice. Though later English bookhands and legal hands are clearly interrelated, there remains nonetheless a set of important distinctions between the copying of a poem or Wycliffite sermon and the copying of a monastic charter or parliamentary roll. Orthographic style and formatting conventions can have a bearing on the efficacy of legal documents which is more direct than the more general forms of cultural authority that orthography in English language literature has: if they look wrong, their claims can be invalidated. It would be worth continuing the discussions started here, to see how these sorts of finer distinctions between the sorts of evidence martialed might impact the book's larger claims.

Ultimately, however, such questions are beside the point. One of the most important things that this book accomplishes is to lay the foundation for such future studies, by showing how these apparently ephemeral texts have a great deal to tell us about the core research questions of literary history. Examples abound throughout the study of Scase's sophisticated, compelling readings of texts that have left generations of scholars at a loss. Particularly at this moment when our methodologies continue to seek ways of taking full advantage of our unprecedented access to medieval manuscript images, this study is sure to be an important one for years to come.

STEPHEN YEAGER

Merle Tönnies and Eckart Voigts, eds. *Twenty-First Century Anxieties. Dys/Utopian Spaces and Contexts in Contemporary British Theatre*. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2022. 253 pp.

It is not without irony that the workshop from which *Twenty-First Century Anxieties* originated was not only delayed by a year but had to take place digitally as well – both thanks to the pandemic, an actual-world source of anxiety. There is a strong sense of precariousness in such contingencies that are part and parcel of our current realities. Having seen the light of day in such calamitous times, the present volume sheds light on one of literature's most powerful paradigms of negotiating a precarious present: the interplay of utopian and dystopian imagination and speculation. Indeed, given the challenges and wrenching changes in society induced by a global pandemic, climate change, and a war currently fought on European soil, this is a very timely endeavour. However, the volume goes off the beaten track of research on utopian/dystopian visions of ourselves by turning towards contemporary British theatre rather than narrative fiction or film/TV.

Edited by Merle Tönnies and Eckart Voigts, the volume features sixteen articles with contributions primarily by German-based researchers, plus a few from the UK and one from Sweden. The range of authors covers everything from PhD candidates to the professorial level and gathers literary studies, cultural studies, and theatre studies specialists. As stated in the introduction, the volume's fundamental concern is the notion of theatre potentially being

> itself a utopian space of coming together in transient affective community, temporary emotional assembly and fleeting dialogues of feeling. The congregation of theatre thus promises an inherent respite from the threat of complicity with a toxic political landscape. (2)

The sheer 'now' of dramatic performance is crucial when it comes to immediately addressing the audiences of dys/utopian theatre, who may also immediately respond in return. Drawing upon its etymological roots, the theatre is a "viewing place" (2) in which possible futures can be acted out and discussed. Theatre, as highlighted in Elaine Aston's contribution, cannot transform society, or save the future single-handedly – but it can make us look (and look again, whenever necessary). Is a theatrical performance already comparable to political activism? Yes, according to Nicole Pohl: "performance art can be and perhaps should be both ethical witnessing and utopian performativity" (29).

Revolving around this focal point, the volume follows several major paths of inquiry. Path number one focuses on the various genres, modes, and forms of dystopia and utopia, including a welcome excursus into Young Adult dystopias by Julia Schneider. The articles insightfully draw upon established research on the literary tradition (by Raffaela Baccolini, Tom Moylan, and Raymond Williams, to name but the central scholars) and aptly transfer central aspects to the theatre or confidently develop them out of theatre studies. Accordingly, one of the most notable strengths of the entire volume is its delicate approach to utopia and dystopia as "two interconnecting threads of a double-sided fabric" (11). The interplay between the two, not as a binary structure but – as described by Trish Reid – "two sides of the same coin" (96), is

especially helpful when turning to the spatial dimensions of theatre, performance, fictional utopian/dystopian worlds and our neoliberal actual world. Virtually all articles touch upon this notion in one way or another.

The second path of inquiry investigates the dramatic potential of utopia. "One standard response would be that utopianism's lack of conflict makes for poor theatre" (4). However, especially given contemporary engagement with climate change, theatre seems indeed to be capable of instigating utopian feeling, hope, or ethical witnessing by means of what is (not) 'done' on stage. For instance, anger, an immediate affective response on the audience's part, may convey a sense of agency beyond the stage, as demonstrated by Paola Botham. Several contributions pay close attention to plays abandoning realist modes of representation precisely because they fail to capture the abyss that is neoliberalism. Strategies – or "new vocabularies," to use Luciana Tamas's fitting term – of coming to terms with this dissatisfaction include irony and the absurd (a case made by Anette Pankratz) as well as comedy and satire (as shown by Matthias Göhrmann, taking Bean's *The Heretic* as his example). These contributions brim with astute attention to the way utopia can contest dystopian spaces by means of performance.

However, the volume also scrutinizes the limits of theatre's dys/utopian potential in times of capitalist realism/neoliberalism. As argued by Vicky Angelaki, contemporary theatre needs to redefine itself in a (post-)pandemic world that struggles with the unrepresentability of what is commonly discussed under the label of 'crisis.' Consequently, articles following this path of inquiry rather deal with actual-world anxieties (Leila Michelle Vaziri) and/or the precariousness of theatre as an institution (as in Maria Marcsek-Fuchs's investigation of theatre's 'digital turn' in the course of the pandemic). Plays such as those investigated by Peter Paul Schnierer and Ilka Zänger emphasize how close "dystopia has come […] to our skin" (220). Strikingly, the plays that lean towards the pessimistic end of the spectrum not only display neoliberalism's impact on individuals but also on the dramatic form.

Two articles stand out because they do not explicitly deal with theatre. Regardless, they productively broaden the scope of the volume. Sebastian Berg's chapter on exemplary discursive positions on capitalism and democracy is worth reading as a political-economic backdrop to the plays explored elsewhere in the volume. Similarly, Dennis Henneböhl's chapter on nostalgia in Brexit Britain nicely ties in with notions of utopian/dystopian temporalities also touched upon in other articles.

Twenty-First Century Anxieties offers a neat balance of illuminating readings of contemporary plays and attempts to unearth new avenues for discussing theatre in relation to dys/utopian contexts. The volume makes for highly insightful reading against the backdrop of current political and social events. More importantly, it is a valuable resource that sheds light on an underexplored area of the dys/utopian tradition.

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