REVIEWS

Nicole D. Smith, ed. *A Christian Mannes Bileeve*. MET 60. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2021. 117 pp.

Medieval manuscripts offer interesting surprises in terms of unfamiliar genres and unexpected combinations of texts. One of these surprises is (at least to me) the Middle English genre of "Creed commentary." Such a commentary does not necessarily offer tedious repetitions of expository prose and religious instruction but an astonishing variety of text excerpts: dialogues, stories, poems, meditations and many more. The present book is an edition of the Middle English *A Christian Mannes Bileeve*, a commentary on the Apostle's Creed, probably composed in the second quarter of the 14th century. One of the noteworthy things about this text is that it does not only contain many citations from the Bible, the Church Fathers and other pieces of religious instruction proper but also a large selection of rather different genres, sometimes embedded in an affective fictional dialogue between author and reader.

Nicole D. Smith, the editor, points out that this text as well as the genre has not received much scholarly attention so far. One of the merits of this book then is that it makes this remarkable piece available in a reliable and well-annotated edition. Furthermore, it unfolds the rich religious and cultural milieu in which this book was composed, read and passed on, a world which, as the editor suggests, was to a large extent influenced by women.

The Apostle's Creed was a cornerstone of the practice of Christian faith in medieval England, a text that virtually could not be avoided anywhere in life. It contains the major tenets of the Christian belief and was used, for example, on public and private religious events as an affirmation of faith, but also as a tool for religious instruction and in examinations during confession. Every Christian was required to memorise and know it. Creed commentaries were, of course, designed to meet this basic requirement and their basic structure served that aim. They start with a presentation of each of the twelve articles in Latin, followed by a translation into Middle English, and then add various kinds of explanation and commentary.

A Christian Mannes Bileeve stands out here due to the size, range and originality of the excerpts it offers in the commentary sections. These contain, among others, the Church Fathers, Scripture, poetry and several exempla (i.e., short, entertaining stories to illustrate a point) and many meditations. The commentary texts are sometimes in Latin, with English paraphrases attached to them. The length of the individual entries varies considerably, ranging between about 60 words (article eleven) and 6,211 words (article four). The commentary on this fourth article, which deals with Crucifixion and Death, includes – among many citations from the Church Fathers, the Bible and a variety of texts reaching up to the 14th century – a fictional dialogue between a rather reproachful "speaker" and a "you" that is being addressed ("Vnderstonden yu, cristen man, wate payne, wat schome, wat bismere he tholed for yhe luue of ye […]" (3-4) 'Do you understand, Christian man, what pain, what disgrace, what ridicule he [i.e. Christ] suffered for the sake of the love of you?'). There are also several meditations (for example, about Christian love, about Christ's passion, about temptation and penance),

Middle English and Latin lyrics (with Christ speaking from the cross) and an eccentric exemplum about a pilgrim in the Holy Land who is led by a Saracen to a wood showing trees with dead birds (that will, as the Saracen explains, resurrect on what must be Easter morning). The commentaries on the other articles of the Creed are less extensive and encyclopaedic but still tend to offer a variety of texts passing the borderline of religious instruction proper.

The present edition comprises, apart from the text, a substantial introduction, an apparatus recording important variants, an extensive commentary section and a selective glossary. The introduction contains a detailed account of the four manuscripts which comprise the complete text, including physical description, collation, textual presentation, language and provenance. A notable fact is that all of the four manuscripts, except for C (Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.1.2), are somehow associated with female owners: H (London, British Library, MS Harley 4012) probably belonged to Dame Anne Wingfield, a devout aristocratic laywoman with many connections to various churches, priories and orders; Lp (London, Lambeth Palace, MS 3597) was owned by a woman called Elizabeth, probably Elizabeth Throckmorton, who later became abbess; and Lc (Washington D.C., Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections, MS 4) is associated with Benedictine nuns. This corroborates Smith's suggestion that the text and its transmission reveal a network of communication among women's religious houses, devout laywomen and a special kind of affective piety (xii).

The next section is devoted to a detailed presentation of the linguistic profiles of the four manuscripts and their localisation. Since only manuscripts H and Lc are mapped in *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (*LALME*),[1] Smith has compiled additional linguistic profiles for C and Lp. While Lc clearly offers a mixture of Northern forms which seem to have been copied over several generations, the other manuscripts' provenance can be located in the Midlands and London area. Smith's presentation and analysis certainly do justice to the complex range of evidence found in the four manuscripts.

The following sections of the introduction deal with the history the Apostle's Creed in medieval England and an overview of the contents and structure of the text, providing short summaries of the pieces of texts that are included as commentary for each article of the Creed. Further sections address problems of dating the text, give a detailed description of the lyrics and, lastly, discuss the reasons why the editor chose manuscript Lc as a base text for this edition.

As for the date of composition, Smith's careful and balanced argumentation (including also linguistic and codicological evidence) points to the second quarter of the 14th century as a likely date of composition. Manuscript Lc was chosen as the base text since, as the oldest manuscript, it offers a large quantity of unique readings that are probable witnesses of an archetype of the text and, in addition, has the more accurate Latin. Smith also gives convincing examples showing that readings in Lc provide better and more plausible senses that are also closer to a Latin original, where the other manuscripts only tend to create repetition and imbalance.

1 Angus McIntosh, Michael L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, eds. *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. 4 Vols. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986.

The apparatus records all the variants in the three other manuscripts that are different from the readings in Lc and what the editor assumes to be scribal additions. The commentary contains full details of all the sources mentioned in *A Christian Mannes Bileeve* and gives additional information about the background of the emendations. Lastly, a glossary provides a selective but very instructive list of (forms of) words with their meanings. This is an extremely helpful tool for tracking the many Northern features of the text and its sometimes unfamiliar word forms and senses.

In all, this edition is very accurate and reliable. There are very few misprints and oversights (note 38 (xxviii) seems to be misplaced and on page xxvii a section heading has ended up as the last line of the page). So, this is a volume in the Middle English Texts series that meets very high scholarly standards. What I particularly like is that it manages to situate the text in its cultural and religious context, delineating a possible network that may reflect the religious attitudes and theological interests of devout aristocratic (lay)women in England during the 14th and 15th centuries.

THOMAS KOHNEN

Margaret Connolly and Thomas G. Duncan, eds. *The Middle English Mirror: Sermons from Quinquagesima to Pentecost.* MET 62. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2021. 226 pp.

"Many men it ben þat han wille to heren reden romaunce and gestes" (Duncan and Connolly 2003, 3).[1] This opening line, which warns its readers against this reading practice, is taken from the first volume of the MET edition of the Middle English *Mirror*, a collection of 60 sermons that were translated in the mid-14th century from the Anglo-Norman *Miroir*. The 13th-century Anglo-Norman text, written in rhyme by Robert de Gretham opens differently by addressing a "lady Aline" at whose request he has undertaken the task of writing the text (Duncan and Connolly 2003, 2). This edition of the Middle English *Mirror* – based on Glasgow, University Library MS Hunter 250 – is published with the Anglo-Norman edition of *Miroir* – based on Nottingham, University Library MS WLC/LM/4 – in parallel. From the very first lines, the edition points to the different types of vernacular audiences that read *Miroir* and *Mirror*.

The manuscript tradition of *Mirror* indicates that the prologue and 60 sermons were planned and disseminated as a coherent unity (Duncan and Connolly 2003, liii). Even though none of the extant Anglo-Norman manuscripts seem to have served as an exemplar for the translator (Duncan and Connolly 2003, xi), comparison between the two texts is still fruitful. As the editors write in their introduction, the Middle English translator was "expanding and adding to his source text when he felt it necessary to explain a point more fully, but also cutting and suppressing material he judged to be extraneous" (Connolly and Duncan 2021, xx). These expansions and suppressions "may sometimes have been driven by contemporary concerns and by a sense of the particular needs of his late fourteenth-century audience" (Connolly and Duncan 2021, xx). The

1 The opening lines can be found in volume I of the edition. See: Margaret Connolly and Thomas G. Duncan. *The Middle English Mirror: Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima.* MET 34. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2003.

Middle English *Mirror* survives in six full manuscripts, one derivative copy and some fragmentary witnesses (Connolly and Duncan 2021, ix). The six full manuscripts of *Mirroir* – plus two fragments and two extracts – are generally speaking of finer quality than their later English counterparts. Duncan and Connolly suggest that this movement "from a noble household to urban clientele may reflect the demand for spiritual reading of any kind and especially scriptural material in the vernacular" (Duncan and Connolly 2003, lx).

The first volume of the Middle English *Mirror* and the Anglo-Norman *Miroir* was already published in 2003 and contains the prologue of the text and the first twelve sermons according to the Use of Sarum (from Advent to Sexagesima). This second volume (2021) presents the sixteen following sermons, from Quinquagesima to Pentecost. The most elaborate introduction to the text can be found in Volume I. In this introduction, the editors stress that the way in which French is used in the Middle English text, for instance by the marked influence of French syntax, does not necessarily reflect the translator's abilities, but rather the trilingual character of 13th- and 14th-century England (Duncan and Connolly 2003, xliii). By publishing a bilingual edition, the editors have underlined this important point. England "remained a multilingual society where readers could access scripture in more than one vernacular" (Duncan and Connolly 2003, lx). Anglo-Norman tends to be neglected by scholars of medieval England in favor of Middle English. It is therefore especially important that the Anglo-Norman *Miroir* is now made available alongside *Mirror*.

In the introduction to the second volume, the editors present some new manuscript evidence and additional observations on the comparison between *Mirror* and *Miroir*. They note that "the English translator continued to use the same tools throughout the cycle," expanding and adding to his source text, but also cutting and suppressing material (Connolly and Duncan 2021, xx). Sermons thirteen to 28 of *Mirror* and *Miroir* are followed by an elaborate commentary section on the Middle English text that records variant readings from the other manuscripts, glosses of difficult or particularly relevant words, and additional background information. The briefer appendixes one and two contain emendations and textual annotations of the Anglo-Norman text. The edition ends with a helpful glossary of words and phrases that "despite the help of their immediate contexts, may not be readily comprehensible even to readers with some familiarity with Middle English" (Connolly and Duncan 2021, 217) and a bibliography.

This edition – which not only considers all the manuscript witnesses to the Middle English text but is also the first to compare the Middle English translation of *Mirror* to its Anglo-Norman source – is an important addition to the field of 13th- and 14th-century vernacular religious literature in England. The edition of *Mirror* is part of the 'Middle English Texts' series published by Winter Verlag. The volumes in the MET series are compact and accessible. The series mainly focuses on "shorter works in Middle English" and on "parts of longer texts where a complete edition is not likely to appear."[2] This explains why this edition of the *Mirror*, which is in fact a long text, will be published in several shorter volumes. From the point of view of the reader, however, it might have been more helpful if this excellent edition, which is now about halfway

2 See the section 'Aims and Coverage' on the website of the Middle English Text Series: <https://met.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/about/> [accessed 23 November 2021].

complete, had been published in one or at most two larger volumes. For the moment it is not possible to refer to the complete text of *Mirror*. I am looking forward to the publication of the further volumes of this edition, containing the next 32 sermons of the cycle.

DIANA DENISSEN

Kirsten Sandrock. *Scottish Colonial Literature: Writing the Atlantic, 1603-1707*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021. 240 pp.

Whereas the role played by Scotland in the emergence and development of the British Empire after the 1707 Acts of Union has been the subject of heated scholarly debate, the history of Scottish colonialism before 1707 has attracted much less attention – with one exception: this exception is the so-called Darien scheme, namely, the attempt, backed by Scottish investors, to found a colony on the Isthmus of Panama in the late 1690s, a venture which crippled the Scottish economy to such an extent that it is often held to be one of the contributory factors to the 1707 Acts. However, the Darien scheme was preceded by two other 17th-century Atlantic colonial enterprises in which Scotland was involved, the Nova Scotia and Cape Breton settlements in the 1620s, and the East New Jersey settlement in the 1660s. Investigating Scotland's Atlantic activities in the 17th century from a literary and cultural perspective, Kirsten Sandrock's *Scottish Colonial Literature: Writing the Atlantic, 1603-1707* revisits (and in some cases visits for the first time) a large and generically heterogeneous body of texts which do not merely describe these activities, but shape them through specific aesthetic practices. Most of the primary sources under consideration – literary and non-literary, in manuscript or in print – are near contemporaneous with the respective historical events. In the context of the Darien scheme, which has left a strong imprint on both Scottish and English cultural imaginaries, Sandrock's corpus includes more recent engagements with the Darien material, among them Douglas Galbraith's and David Nicol's novels *The Rising Sun* (2000) and *New Caledonia* (2003) and Alistair Beaton's play *Caledonia* (2010).

All three of Scotland's colonial endeavours were unmitigated disasters. Yet, to call Scotland's short-lived colonies "failed" is to adhere, as Sandrock reminds us, to the cultural logic of Western colonialism according to which failure is still seen as the exception to the rule of successful colonisation, and successful colonisation, in turn, as a precondition for, as well as a sign of, economic, social, and political progress. This may already indicate that Sandrock, while rightly suspicious of postcolonial readings of the relationship between Scotland and England after 1707, is herself firmly rooted in postcolonial theory (Paul Gilroy, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty et al.). From this perspective, she regards Scottish colonial literature as an early instance of a dichotomy which underlies many postcolonial formations of nationalism, that of possession and dispossession: domestic dispossession is used, in text after text, to rationalise the acquisition of overseas possessions, at the cost of the dispossession of indigenous populations. Responding to the precarious socio-economic situation of 17th-century Scotland and to long periods of

political and religious conflict, Scottish colonial writers exhort their audience to improve their prospects by venturing across the Atlantic, and, at the same time, to help Scotland take, albeit belatedly, its rightful place among the great European nations. The Atlantic is envisioned, then, as a paradigm shift with both spatial and temporal dimensions: working in two places, Scotland and America, and propelling premodern Scotland into modernity.

Although the possession/dispossession dichotomy is undoubtedly the key to deconstructing the Scottish – and, indeed, any other – Western narrative of colonial expansion, it is, perhaps, unnecessary to rehearse it so often as to render it almost formulaic: the same is true, incidentally, for another assertion of the book's postcolonial credentials, the (all too frequently repeated) statement that Scottish colonial literature is characterised by a bias towards Lowland, Protestant, male Scots writing in English.

While there are no obvious intertextual links between Scottish-authored texts and the early modern utopian tradition, the latter, starting with Thomas More's *Utopia* itself, provides a widespread framework for representing colonialism in Scottish colonial literature. As a result of these intergeneric conversations, 16th- and 17th-century transformations of the utopian canon, from the fictional to the reformist, and from the dialogic to the monologic, are reflected in Scottish colonial texts as well. Another intergeneric connection which has left its traces in these texts is that between utopian and travel writings, the most potent example of this being, in Sandrock's corpus, Robert Gordon's *Encouragements. For Such as Shall Have Intention to Be Under-Takers in the New Plantation of Cape Briton, now New Galloway* (1625). In it, the detailed descriptions of the fauna and flora of Cape Breton and of the uses to which these natural resources are to be put by industrious colonists can be aligned with the tropes of lavishness and abundance of utopian writing, but are actually copied verbatim from Thomas Hariot's 1588 *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*: this, of course, references a geographical region the fauna and flora of which are rather different from those of the Canadian maritime provinces. Needless to say, Gordon himself had not been to either Virginia or Cape Breton, and neither he nor his readers would have known what these places were "really" like. As Sandrock remarks: "The Cape Breton Gordon describes never existed in the physical world. It is a projection of the author's wishes on to the Atlantic territory" (60). This wishful thinking, Sandrock continues, is visualised in early modern cartography, as when a map in another 1620s text, William Alexander's *An Encouragement to Colonies* (1624), creates rather than represents the space which is to be named Nova Scotia, its rivers Tweed and Clyde now coexisting with their Scottish namesakes.

Scottish Colonial Literature does not aim at comprehensiveness but rather establishes what might be called a core canon of 17th-century Scottish colonial texts. Additionally, by relating Scottish colonial writing to other literary traditions of the period, predominantly the various permutations of early modern utopianism, it situates these texts in their 17th-century transatlantic mediascapes and proposes a concerted theoretical and methodological approach to them. Given its survey format, *Scottish Colonial Literature* thus invites scholars working in the field of Scottish Studies to return to the archives with a view towards enlarging Sandrock's core canon, and to

subject the texts retrieved by both her and them to thorough and perhaps more nuanced analyses.

SILVIA MERGENTHAL

Kristen Case, Rochelle L. Johnson, and Henrik Otterberg, eds. *Thoreau in an Age of Crisis. Uses and Abuses of an American Icon*. Paderborn: Brill/Wilhelm Fink, 2021. 302 pp.

This anthology offers a choice of fourteen talks presented at a conference held in Gothenburg in May 2018. In the face of multiple crises, which the globalized world in the 21st century is dealing with, the contributors discuss the question in how far Thoreau's work can be relevant in times of climate change, racism, social injustice, migration, and post-truth politics.

Rochelle L. Johnson's "Grieving with the Kingfisher: Thoreau's Mourning Work in an Age of Political and Environmental Violence" marks the beginning of this new collection of essays. As Johnson demonstrates, Thoreau's grief about personal loss, political abuses and environmental degradation is accompanied by recurrent sightings of the kingfisher "figuring as a signal of nature's tendency toward rejuvenation" (13).

Robert Sattelmeyer's "The Evolutions of Thoreau's Science" takes a closer look at Thoreau's scientific findings. Based on unpublished work such as the "Kalendar," a phenological manuscript comprising the years 1860 to 1862, and the hydrological study of the Musketaquid watershed, Sattelmeyer gives us a deeper insight into Thoreau's expertise "as an early ecological as well as physical scientist" (37).

Dennis Noson's "Thoreau's Wild Acoustics: (Re)sounding in the Concord Landscape" investigates Thoreau's passion for sounds created by frogs, birds, and crickets. Gifted with an extraordinary sense of hearing, Thoreau studies the soundscape of Concord and its surroundings by elaborating an acoustic lexicon, situating specific animal voices in their context, and documenting the spectrum-shaping effects of sound in relation to a certain environment. As Noson concludes, "Thoreau's value lies in his ability to inspire, to breathe life into soundscapes" (52), which is documented with scientific precision and poetic imagination.

The following essay entitled "Thoreau's Extra-vagant Sublime and the Milder Majesty of Nature" by Ronald Wesley Hoag explores Thoreau's relationship to scenery. While Edmund Burke distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime, Thoreau discovers "sublimity in wild and mild nature, regarding both as beautiful" (73). This mingling of aesthetic categories enables him to take a differentiated view of the wild sublime.

Mark Luccarelli's article "Thoreau and the Desynchronization of Time" shows how Thoreau plays with the concept of linear temporality. While the national narrative of progress proves to be a perfect model of synchronization, his approach of landscape "as a palimpsest of the histories of peoples" (92) leads to the desynchronization of world time.

James S. Finley's "Henry David Thoreau and the Creation of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument" offers a close reading of "Chesuncook," the second

essay of *The Maine Woods*, where Thoreau advocates the creation of protected areas, explaining why the status of national monument is appropriate in this case. Finley argues that the idea of national parks excludes the presence of human settlements within their premises. National monuments, however, represent a synthesis of nature and culture faithful to the spirit of *The Maine Woods*.

John J. Kucich's "Thoreau's Indian Problem: Savagism, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Place" emphasizes the fact that Thoreau, although committed to abolition, does not fight the Indian genocide. Despite his interest in and admiration for the Natives, he never overcomes his latent savagism, a legacy of settler colonialism.

"Henry David Thoreau's Lifelong Indian Play" by Brent Ranalli continues the discussion of Thoreau's quasi-ethnographic passion for Native Americans, concluding that the writer and naturalist never stops playing Indian to express his identification with Native virtues and skills.

In "The Whiteness of *Walden*: Reading Thoreau with Attention to Black Lives," Rebecca Kneale Gould seeks to "engage critically with Thoreau's whiteness" (165) by confronting his attitude to nature as a place of joy and solace with that of African-American writers, especially women. Suffering from a cultural trauma, their vision of wild nature remains ambiguous while Thoreau enjoys the privilege of gender and race when going into the woods.

Mark Gallagher's "Live Deliberately, Stay Woke: Thoreau's Influence on William Melvin Kelley" analyses the impact of Thoreau's œuvre on a 20th-century Black novelist and short story writer. Kelley's novel *A Different Drummer* (1962) constitutes an explicit intertextual reference to *Walden* which the author transforms into a satire of the myth of the American Adam. Thoreau remains a powerful source of inspiration for Kelley who, like Thoreau, is "part of a tradition of radical empowerment" (192).

Michelle C. Neely's essay "*Walden's* Utopian Legacies" tackles the problem of literary genre. If the term utopia applies to the vision of an ideal society, B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* fulfils the semantic requirements of the definition. Thoreau's hypotext, on the other hand, must be called a failed utopia. Neely questions this content-based concept by defining utopia in terms of "its ability to challenge the status quo, to either facilitate or prevent social change" (202), which aptly describes Thoreau's retreat to Walden Pond.

Bergur Þorgeirsson follows with his "Notes on Thoreau, Carlyle, and Nordic Echoes", illustrating the influence of the medieval Icelandic poet and historian Snorri Sturlusson (1179-1241) on Thoreau. According to the author, the study of Old Icelandic literature but also Norse mythology was motivated by the Romantic passion for the Middle Ages as well as the American Anglo-Saxons' search for identity, characterising most writers of the American Renaissance.

"Standing Up to Trump, with Thoreau" by Andrew McMurry is a humorous critique of Donald Trump and explains how stand-up paddle boarding along with Thoreau's "gnomic wisdom" (236) helped him overcome negative affect caused by the former US president.

Finally, Kristen Case explores "Thoreau's Vulnerable Resistance," questioning the "masculine ideal of self-sufficiency" (250) which has become Thoreau's trademark. Case instead confronts us with his last years of illness, "trying to establish a link

between Thoreau's vulnerability and his various modes of social and political resistance" (261).

All in all, this volume leaves well-trodden scholarly paths, offering refreshingly new perspectives on an icon of American literature who, although inviting polemic and veneration, is still worth reading, all the more so in troubled times.

WALTER WAGNER

Martin Riedelsheimer. *Fictions of Infinity: Levinasian Ethics in 21st-Century Novels*. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2020. 246 pp.

In his study, winner of the 2021 dissertation award of the German Association for the Study of English, Martin Riedelsheimer brings together the two concepts that seem to make an uneasy relationship in the title and subtitle of his book, infinity and Levinasian ethics. He argues for the interdependence of a structural, aesthetic phenomenon and the ethical dimension of the texts he reads as fictions of infinity: "To the extent that an ethical appeal derives from the infinite textuality of fictions of infinity, the ethical outlook of such texts also suggests its 'translation' into an aesthetic that pays heed to infinite alterity – and textual infinity would seem to be one way of achieving this" (21). The novels chosen for this investigation are David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, and John Banville's *The Infinities*. In each of them, a different textual strategy is recognized as the basis for a notion of textual infinity: David Mitchell employs a *mise en abyme* structure, Jeanette Winterson circularity, Ian McEwan intertextuality, and John Banville an unlimited perspective within a narrative multiverse.

First of all, it is, of course, necessary to come to terms with the notoriously difficult concept of infinity that almost by definition exceeds all understanding. Riedelsheimer touches on various approaches from Aristotle to Cantor, Christianity, and the sublime, but for the actual analyses he settles on the Basic Metaphor of Infinity as established by George Lakoff and Rafael Núñez: "The Basic Metaphor of Infinity may then come into operation whenever there is an indefinitely iterating process that is then understood as a complete infinite thing. Since it is not restricted to mathematical use, it should likewise apply to the understanding of a literary text whose structure is one of iteration" (37). Of course, as Riedelsheimer points out, not each and every process of iteration automatically results in the notion of infinity, but for his analyses Lakoff and Núñez's Basic Metaphor remains the most important and more or less sufficient indication of infinity (e.g., 106; 130; 181; 201).

It is a bit tricky to tie literature to Levinasian ethics. Levinas was "surprisingly reluctant when it comes to conceding ethical potential to art" (76), but Riedelsheimer suggests that it is nevertheless possible to establish a "tentative link" (66) between Levinas and the fictions of infinity. He suggests that the philosopher's early rejection of literature as a form of empty rhetoric gave way to a more favourable understanding according to which in literature or poetic language 'saying' could resist the fossilization into the 'said.' Poetic language may, then, be able to exceed the limitations of signification, partake in the radical openness that the encounter of the other requires,

and evoke the infinite unknowability of absolute alterity. Riedelsheimer argues that this is realized through aesthetic form and writes: "Such an aesthetics is the aesthetics that can be found in fictions of infinity. It is a disruptive aesthetics that goes beyond the self-mirroring and endless repetition of ontological fixity and breaks open, in the contemporary novels (but not only there), a path to alterity" (83). It remains to be seen in the following analyses, how such an aesthetics can be squared with the Basic Metaphor of Infinity that relies on a repetition of fixed and complete elements.

In David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas,* the most important element for the creation of the infinite is the *mise en abyme* structure turning the novel into the narrative equivalent of a matryoshka doll. Riedelsheimer, in addition, recognizes a 'strange loop' à la Hofstadter and, in consequence, a circularity which reflects what he perceives as the novel's central topic, the Nietzschean eternal recurrence (100). I am not totally convinced of this argument as a strange loop results from a unidirectional movement – e.g. up or down – that still brings us back to its beginning. *Cloud Atlas*, however, clearly changes the temporal direction – we first move into the future and then back into the past – and so it is not really surprising that the novel closes with the ending of the first story. Another problem results from the structure of the *mise en abyme* or the matryoshka doll, as it does not evoke an incomprehensible vastness but rather a turn towards the infinitely small, which is less suitable for a Levinasian reading. But Riedelsheimer suggests that the structure also undermines the rather conventional closures of the stories; in consequence, each ending is potentially only provisional, which then implies that the narrative could go on indefinitely. The ethical appeal of the novel thus extends beyond the numerous encounters of the other within the stories, and the episodic form evokes the infinity of stories. This, in conjunction with the references in the Zedelghem episode to the Nietzschean eternal recurrence, results in a narrative and structural infinity; the limited text becomes limitless and thus ties in with Levinas's idea of a scintillating poetic language. "In this way, *Cloud Atlas* 'scintillates' in Levinas's sense, that is, it presents its own multiplicity and ungraspability while at the same time challenging readers to engage with and take up responsibility for this impermeable unintelligibility of alterity" (123).

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* shares some features with *Cloud Atlas*, e.g. characters in later sections read earlier parts, and at the beginning of the Post-3 War-section, the narrator finds a pile of papers titled *The Stone Gods*. In this novel, circularity moves to centre stage, and this particular circularity results from humanities' inability to learn from previous mistakes, leading to a vicious circle of self-destruction – the idea is not uncommon in post-apocalyptic fiction. The repetition and iterability of the cyclical processes can, then, be linked to the Basic Metaphor of Infinity (130). But here the easy association may also be questioned; of course, cyclicality may imply infinity, but is it a sufficient marker, e.g., will a hamster running in a wheel evoke infinity or futility? Moreover, does cyclicality allow for a Levinasian reading in which the text transcends the limits of signification? Riedelsheimer avoids these issues, arguing that the text moves beyond a simple repetition of the eternal same; instead, minuscule modifications are introduced to intertextual references and allusions – e.g., John Donne's "The Sun Rising" is regularly misquoted, dropping the "and" from the line "She is all States, and all Princes I, Nothing else is." Similarly, Robert Herrick's

poem "Whenas in silks my Julia goes" is rendered "When in silks my Julia goes." These slight differences, if they are, indeed, noticed by the reader, imply that strict cyclicality is suspended in favour of a more open perspective that allows for minimal variation within a generally repetitive pattern. The resulting openness of the narrative is then mirrored by the disruptive and infinite possibilities of queer love, and Riedelsheimer links this aspect of the novel to Levinas's dictum that "Love is possible only through the idea of the Infinite …" (quoted 152): "Textual infinity is the novel's own metaphorical nutcracker that enables love to crack open the walnut shell of closed repetition – the infinite and circular text eschews teleology and ends of all sorts and is an aesthetic manifestation of the Levinasian idea of the infinite" (152). Cyclicality, repetition with a difference, and the self-reflexivity of a text that reads itself then combine to invite and challenge the reader into a perpetual re-reading which allows for plurality and openness to the other and resists the closure of interpretation and cyclical destruction.

Intertextuality is ubiquitous in literature, and, as Riedelsheimer perceives it as an inherently infinite phenomenon (157), this would necessarily turn each and every text into a fiction of infinity. McEwan's novel *Saturday*, however, offers itself for a close analysis as "from the rampant intertextuality at its core, the text attains a radical ungraspable plurality, a sense of 'textual alterity:' the aesthetic composition of *Saturday* thus performs the encounter with textual otherness that is also a major topic of the novel" (157). There are hosts of intertextual allusions and references that riddle the text. Moreover, intertextuality seems to move through concentric circles, and the intertexts may trigger further associations. Thus, "*Ulysses* is indirectly present in *Saturday* from its very beginning, as McEwan's epigraph is taken from Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, itself a literary response modelled on Joyce's novel, which sets the tone for Perowne as modern individual partaking in city life" (180). But it is Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" – unrecognized by Perowne, hopefully recognized by the reader, and recognized for its beauty by Baxter – that is at the centre of the novel's intertextuality, and the various responses to the poem mirror the Levinasian ethics which the text evokes. Perowne's perspective throughout the novel and in his encounter with Baxter is marked by categorization and, in consequence, a refusal to accept and embrace the infinite unknowability of the other. The reader is, naturally, first drawn towards this perspective by the figural narrative situation, but the text challenges us to overcome this bias and to question the easy insistence on facticity and rigid rationality. Perowne's categorical dismissal of imaginative fiction serves as an important clue, and intertextuality then becomes the crucial feature that allows the necessarily limited novel to partake in the immensity of unlimited literary imagination via the Basic Metaphor of Infinity. In contrast to Perowne, Baxter responds to the poem with wonder and amazement, he is emotionally touched, but his reaction remains enigmatic, it resists understanding and thus presents the reader with the gap of unknowability that marks Levinasian ethics. The final act of the novel then presents us with an ambiguity that cannot easily be resolved – is Perowne's altruistic decision to operate on Baxter an indication of a turn towards ethical responsibility or does he re-assert his dominance and authority? The novel thus refuses "any definitive closure of meaning" (183), it remains irreducibly

ambiguous, and it is this openness that informs the ethical engagement and once more marks *Saturday* as a fiction of infinity.

On the first pages of Banville's *The Infinities*, the god Hermes watches Adam Jr., the son of the family's patriarch, who looks from a window and notices that he in turn is regarded by a small boy on a train – but is he really? It is a situation of uncertainty, as the boy probably cannot see anything behind the dark windows, but still continues to stare at the house intensely. As a result of this encounter, Adam Jr. is struck by "the mystery of otherness" (qtd. 188), and he contemplates that it is a matter of perspective. Indeed, it is, and this scene of multiple perspectives serves as Riedelsheimer's first example of an encounter with an unknowable other and also ties perspective to alterity. The novel is set in an alternate universe that has branched off from ours within the multiverse theorized by the novel's patriarch Adam Sr. This infinity of universes – akin to Hugh Everett's and John Wheeler's 'many world' interpretation of quantum theory – then clashes with the creationist version according to which the Greek gods created the universe as well as the Earth with close attention to detail, e.g., faking the echo of the Big Bang or planting fossils in rocks. The radical contradiction is repeated on a narratological level, and Hermes on the one hand functions as an omniscient narrator with access to the thoughts and feelings of all characters, but on the other hand he is a homodiegetic narrator whose reliability can certainly be doubted (205-206). If we add the possibility that the narrator may, in fact, be Old Adam who imagines everything on his deathbed, it becomes quite understandable that the narrative situation of the novel has been discussed controversially. Rather than solving this complex issue, Riedelsheimer regards it as a productive aspect of the novel: "The narrative perspective here mirrors the novel's overall movement from totality, the narrator-god's self-assured claims to omniscience, to infinity, the ultimate dissolution of narrative boundaries and hence of this absolute viewpoint" (209). This dissolution is then crucial for the Levinasian reading of the novel; if omniscient narration with its access to the inner life of the characters pretends to bridge the infinite gap that marks alterity, in *The Infinities* any attempt at totalisation is met by uncertainty and indeterminacy. In conclusion, Riedelsheimer writes:

> At its heart, *The Infinities* raises questions about perspective. In the novel, infinity, or *infinities* – whether the infinite alterity of the gaze of the boy on the train, the infinite worlds of equal ontological status of the multiverse, the truly infinite narrative perspective –, calls into question the observer's, and hence the reader's, claim to a stable centre of observation inherent in any perspective, whether that is a settled concept of self, the actuality of the observer's world as opposed to the non-actuality of all other worlds, or the Olympian bird's eye perspective of omniscience. (215)

The ungraspability of the infinite which resists totalizing perspectives then allows for the ethical reading in a Levinasian sense.

Some questions remain in the end. As some of the defining features of infinite texts, e.g., iterability, ambiguity or intertextuality, are almost ubiquitous in literature it would follow that literary texts are *per se* also fictions of infinity – and, indeed, Riedelsheimer addresses a "fundamental plurality, an infinite plurality, inherent in each literary text" (194) or "the inevitable incompleteness, the infinity, of any narrative" (200). It is, however, doubtful whether in the face of Levinas's cautionary perspective on literature,

each and every literary work should qualify as an instance of Levinasian ethics. In addition, the significant features can be easily 'ticked off;' they turn into fixed categories which allow us to approach the respective texts with an interpretative causality – if the categories are matched, infinity and, in consequence, the transgression of the graspable is demonstrated and Levinasian ethics apply. Riedelsheimer writes in his conclusion:

> In presenting the reader with its ungraspability, the infinite text thus confronts them with something that is akin to alterity, with a language that cannot be subsumed under the finite category of sameness. This eschewal of the same is the way in which fictions of infinity disrupt the reading process, in which they call into question the spontaneity of the reader, i.e. their capacity to subordinate the text to the ontological category of the known, and so become ethical in Levinas's sense. (217)

A tendency towards such an interpretative automatism can especially be detected in the regular application of the Basic Metaphor of Infinity as an indicator of infinity in the chosen novels. But are well-defined categories and features, indeed, compatible with Levinas's insistence on unknowability and radical alterity? In particular, can the infinity achieved by iteration according to the Basic Metaphor of Infinity be identified with the infinity in Levinasian ethics? In his introduction, Riedelsheimer points out that there are very different concepts of infinity, and abstract mathematical infinities are not the same as the absolute infinity of the divine (10). Such differences need to be heeded in the discussion of Levinasian ethics, and we have to keep in mind that even ungraspability and unknowability can easily become knowable and turn into catchphrases, once they are established as tools for the literary critic and serve to analyse and categorize literary works.

DIRK VANDERBEKE

Paul B. Armstrong. *Stories and the Brain: The Neuroscience of Narrative.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. 259 pp.

It comes as a welcome surprise that this magisterial book goes beyond the 'Neuroscience' of the subtitle as it is firmly grounded in philosophy and literary theory: "This book offers a neurophenomenological model of narrative that charts the correlations between our lived, embodied experiences as tellers and followers of stories and the neurobiological processes that underlie and constrain these interactions" (2). Armstrong concedes that the explanatory gap between material brain processes and the lived experience of storytelling and following cannot be closed but hopes it can be bridged through pointing out numerous correlations (3; 52-53).

In terms of psychology and philosophy, Armstrong draws on William James, Heidegger, and above all, Merleau-Ponty. In literary studies, Ricoeur and Iser provide significant reference points for his model of narrative. Armstrong criticizes Chatman's and Genette's taxonomies without discarding their basic categories, but he complements these by insights into the cognitive processing of time and plot in discourse and story. He criticizes 1st-generation cognitive narratology with its structuralist heritage and computational model of the brain as too rigid to account for the dynamic, interactive, and recursive processes of the embodied brain stressed by 2nd-generation cognitive

narratologists (16-22; 201-202). Each chapter on temporality, action, and interaction in narrative correlates core concepts of the phenomenological experience of life and stories with insights into embodied brain processes.

Based on psychology and phenomenology, Armstrong argues that the dynamic, recursive, and interactive process of pattern formation, dissolution, and reformation in the embodied brain is relevant to cope with the changing circumstances of reality and the telling and reading of stories. Seeing x as y is one of Merleau-Ponty's concepts of perceiving something as a pattern or 'gestalt,' which is related to the experience of the moment as connected to the horizons of the past and the future. Ricoeur captures the 'seeing as' in narrative time: narrative as communication begins with the (bioculturally informed) prefiguration of experience (x as y), configured in stories, which readers refigure. According to Ricoeur, stories, which emplot parts into wholes in "concordant discordance" (12), appeal to the brain's capacity of categorization and flexibility. Stories may either confirm or transform their readers' prefigurative understanding of experience. In order to specify narrative configuration, Armstrong harks back to Chatman's distinction between discourse and story. Rather than stressing their opposition as structural properties, Armstrong focuses on the interaction between configuring events in plots and configuring order in telling: "If congruent processes of figuration in the telling and the told can facilitate immersion or instruction, disjunctions between discourse and story can defamiliarize and foreground cognitive processes that may ordinarily go unnoticed in reading or in life […]" (34). Armstrong presents samples of realist and modernist fiction for the two forms, which is convincing, but not necessarily surprising.

Meaning is emergent in living and reading forward but understanding backward. The asynchronous temporality of oscillation between sense perception and its synthetic integration into conscious and synchronic patterns, in turn, desynchronized through new information, correlate with pre-reflective anticipation and conscious retrospection in experiencing and understanding stories. Emotions attune us to others and situations. It seems that in life as in stories, pre-reflective affective appraisals guide our responses and precede conscious, retrospective monitoring in a recursive cycle that mirrors neuronal processes (95-103). This process accounts for curiosity, suspense, and surprise in reading, wandering viewpoints and shifting horizons, and the reciprocal configuration of parts and the whole, beginnings and endings (81-82; 100-101). Referring to Phelan, Armstrong points out that the instability on the level of the story, e.g., conflicts between characters, can be compounded by instabilities in discourse, e.g., of values and beliefs, which impacts the relationship between the narrator and the recipient, e.g., in the case of an unreliable narrator, who disrupts attempts at integration (78-79).

Action in context is key to perception and cognition in life, as these are exploratory and responsive to differences. In turn, the imitation of action in stories impacts perceptual and cognitive activity, understanding action as a 'gestalt' with a purpose (7; 107-109). Understanding stories takes the shape of simulation based on embodied experience, but not as a simple cause-effect relationship because simulation is an 'as- and as-if relation,' like and unlike real experience. That said, immersion through the

fluent and consistent reconfiguration of the story world and its meaning is punctuated by reflection in a dynamics of aesthetic illusions and breaking illusions (140-142).

Armstrong criticizes psychological and philosophical research that overestimate the positive effect of reading through simulating social experience. The cause-effect argument that readers are better at understanding others or moral judgment is misleading. Armstrong stresses – with references to Wolfgang Iser, Terence Cave, and Guillemette Bolens – that the literary text is underspecified and thus affords an open-ended, unpredictable dialog with readers (42-44). Understanding others does not simply happen through simulation and identification. Individuals are both solipsistic and able to share the potential perspectives of others as alter egos in a paradoxical process similar to the 'as-if' of understanding fictional characters. Empirical evidence that reading refines empathy and ethics is scarce at best. The 'as-if' doubling of reality and fiction as well as self and other allows for identification or detachment. Besides, empathy can be employed for either beneficial or harmful behavior. Nevertheless, stories have social and cultural power as they allow for the sharing of intentionality and perspectives in "fundamentally collaborative interaction" (169) across time and space.

In conclusion: Armstrong's triangulation of narratology, phenomenology, and cognitive science is exceptionally well informed, wide-ranging, and up to date. Readers can learn much about the phenomenological experience and understanding of reality as of stories, a fact that makes the book potentially attractive for the classroom. Despite the accessible writing, the complexity of the subject matter calls for using it at advanced levels, complemented by more in-depth readings of stories. Reader response advocates will be pleased to have their approach 'confirmed' by cognitive studies and may be interested in cognitive concepts that specify phenomenological readings. How could they profit from each other? Cognitive studies could refine concepts of representing consciousness in literature and processes of gap-filling, fuzzy areas that deserve more attention. Neuroscience, which has discovered that brains in interaction behave differently from brains in isolation, may profit from insight into narrative interaction (203). Narrative theory and phenomenology offer theories of reading that can be empirically tested, for example, the role of memory and emotions in the reading process (204). Neuroscience also needs to be aware of differences of individuals and interpretive communities in reading, but the biocultural hybridity of human beings should make it possible to generalize beyond historical contingency (207).

Armstrong's astute arguments and highly sophisticated reflection of structuralist, philosophical, and cognitive concepts are compelling. At times, he could have refrained from hammering home the limitations of structuralist concepts and the benefits of phenomenological and cognitive ones, but his rhetoric does not diminish the logical force of his book.

MICHAEL MEYER

Christian Ludwig and Claudia Deetjen, eds. *The World Beyond: Developing Critical Environmental Literacies in EFL*. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2021. 198 pp.

Climate change is omnipresent. Impacts such as global warming, natural disasters, food and water shortages dominate the media, give rise to new green movements like Fridays for Future, and put pressure on policy makers to tackle the *climate emergency*, which was chosen as word of the year by Oxford Languages in 2019. However, "in order to limit the effects of climate change and promote a more sustainable lifestyle, environmental legislation and public campaigns may not be sufficient. Education also plays a vital role in combating climate change" (9) – and education also comprises TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), which has to address global environmental issues as well. Our learners must become familiar with environmental issues, analyse their risks, and take action on climate change.

That is why this volume assembles ten profound articles which convincingly show how various texts and media can be used to promote an environmentally literate TEFL classroom in a motivating way. It is based on a 2019 conference at the University of Würzburg exploring the integration of eco-pedagogy and EFL and developing a concept of environmental literacies.

The introduction by the editors clearly justifies the need for an integrated approach, provides an illustrative historic survey of pedagogical approaches (ecocriticism, environmental education, education for sustainable development, global education, global citizenship education), describes three suitable models for promoting environmental literacies (including methodological suggestions for syllabus and task design as well as types of eco-artefacts), and previews the contributions that follow. Janina Kuhn-Deutschländer skillfully explores nine current TEFL textbooks in Germany from year nine to thirteen with regard to students' environmental literacies, emphasizing with good reason that not only knowledge and skills should be promoted but also deeper environmental awareness because students should "realize that they too can be a decisive member of the local and global community and make a difference" (34). Based on a joint classroom experiment between Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso in Chile, Laurenz Volkmann and Katharina Glas conclusively demonstrate that ecocriticism can be combined with inter-/intra-/transcultural and postcolonial/minority perspectives in TEFL courses, providing the reader with concrete and helpful suggestions on goals, text selection and task design. In the next contribution, Kylie Crane draws our attention to one of the biggest polluters, i.e. plastic; regarding the classroom as a place for thinking through materials together, she suggests a number of sensible activities which make her learners develop tool-kits of critical global engagement.

The great potential of young adult dystopian fiction to further environmental education in the TEFL classroom is compellingly illustrated by Maria Eisenmann and Nadine Krüger, who have selected illuminating examples from two suitable contemporary collections of dystopian short stories, i.e., T.C. Boyle's *After the Plague* (2001) and Ellen Datlow's and Terry Windling's *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia* (2012). Christian Ludwig also prefers dystopian fiction, but in the form of animated short films as teenagers' reading and viewing habits have changed, shorties

are entertaining, motivating, didactically exploitable and, in particular, can be comfortably employed in a single lesson; starting from David Armsby's successful *Being Pretty* series, the author conclusively justifies a fan fiction approach. Another suitable genre to foster environmental literacies is the graphic novel, as Christian Ludwig and Frank Erik Pointner lucidly demonstrate via Laurence Hyde's wordless woodcut novel *Southern Cross* (1951), which not only lends itself perfectly for a critical reflection on nuclear weapons tests but constitutes the medium per se for teaching visual literacy. Digital media are focused by Roman Bartosch, who engages his learners in issues like biodiversity and human-animal relations; making skillful use of augmented reality technology, different 'scales' and task designs, he suggests a very creative scenario, i.e. interactive global extinction tours. Theresa Summer convincingly pleads for integrating eco-artefacts into TEFL classrooms; in a very precise und structured manner, she first defines eco-artefacts, then classifies them into five categories, justifies their use, suggests five approaches, and finally delineates an appealing and diversified teaching unit on sudden catastrophes, which employs picture-book excerpts, eco-songs and a TED talk video. In the last article, Claudia Deetjen suggests creating two wide-ranging digital multi-media archives on climate change; the two very inspiring projects excel through a multitude of multi-modal texts and practice-oriented task-based lesson sequences.

To conclude, this 198-page volume constitutes a very valuable contribution to eco-TEFL, which can be highly recommended to EFL trainees, pre- and in-service teachers as well as teacher educators. It persuasively justifies the integration of eco-artefacts into TEFL, covers a wide range of facets, recommends a plethora of attractive texts and media, and offers concrete teaching ideas for promoting our students' environmental literacies. As it lacks articles covering the implementation and evaluation of the various teaching scenarios, it would be very rewarding to see how these teaching units have actually been carried out and reflected on – maybe in a sequel.

ENGELBERT THALER

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