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REFERENCES


1 This volume contains the papers read at the 2003 conference organised by the Association for the Study of New Literatures in English. It is arranged into six sections: “Glocal Identities: Mapping, Itineraries,” “Consuming Globality: Performance, Difference, Desire,” “Imagining Communities: Representation, Distortion, Affiliation,” “Local Colour in Global English” and “Teaching New English Literatures and Cultures.” From this brief description, the problems that such a volume presents are clear to any reader: a large number of concepts; an ambitious range, and a subject matter, which, by its very nature, is ever-shifting. In addition, the New Literatures include “novels and plays, also films, pop music and video clips, theory, advertisements, internet websites, cartoons, and language itself” (x). This might appear over-ambitious, but the editors sensibly limit their scope in order to “articulate the global with the local from a perspective of immersion in the actual diversity of life worlds” (xi). On a personal note, I would have preferred an introduction that dealt in greater detail with the issues involved.

2 The first section opens with two competent essays on Australian identities, the first by Russell West-Pavlov and the second by Anja Schwarz. They share similar interests and a common strategy, by which a literary text is foregrounded as a manifestation of what West-Pavlov pithily describes as home becoming foreign while foreign becomes home. The former concentrates on Hsu-Ming Teo’s *Love and Vertigo* and the latter on Christos
Tsiolkas’s *Loaded*. What remains open to question is to what extent the two texts are indeed representative of the political reality they supposedly interact with. Frank Schulze-Engler’s essay on ethnicity and contemporary British fiction begins with an interesting discussion on the distinction between primordial ethnicity and instrumentalism, but the critical analysis is not sufficiently developed. The most interesting essay contribution is Mala Pandarang’s discussion of emigration, based on the cohabitation of the will to emigrate and the resistance to assimilation. Her insistence on the importance of the discourse of departure is well argued and documented.

The second section opens with two essays that should be read in partnership: both Mita Banerjee and Christine Vogt-Williams discuss Bhangra, identity problems, and refer to the same novel: Meera Syal’s *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. Both share the Spenglerian belief in the decay of Western culture: for the former, it is dull and for the latter, monotonous; such an enormous generalisation requires a lot more definition than what we are given here. Banerjee frames her argument in a series of questions whereas Vogt-Williams provides a good introduction to Bhangra and a detailed reading of the text. Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak brings out the implications of Salman Rushdie’s “At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers” in a well-written, coherent essay, which, like the other contributions, makes great use of Jameson’s diagnosis of late capitalism. Written from a different angle, is Ulkrike Kistner’s analysis of the Love Life, a South African HIV prevention campaign. Kistner does not simply describe the campaign but delivers a perspicacious analysis of its shortcomings and incoherence. The account of the sexual value of a mobile phone (100) makes very sombre reading. She concludes that the campaign “potentially exacerbates a crisis” (102).

The third section, “Imagining Communities: Representation, Distortion,” presumably an allusion to Benedict Anderson, sees a slight dip in the quality of the volume. It is clear that individual contributors write knowledgeably on their subjects: Knopf on Native-American presence in the media; Riemenschneider on Maori films; Wieman on *Lagaan*; Raupach on Obeah, and Stroh on Scotland. It is clear that some of the arguments are coherent and stimulating: Wieman’s analysis of cricket and Knopf’s account of *Imagining Indians* are good examples. At the same time, there is a marked tendency to retell at some length at the expense of analysis. This is particularly evident in the case of Knopf; Riemenschneider only gets going when he turns to the third film he deals with. Consequently, on several occasions, the excess of description makes some of the opinions difficult to maintain. I am not sure that either Wieman is that convincing when he puts forward the suggestion about scopophilia or that Knopf’s arguments about dentistry and anaesthetics carry sufficient weight. On the whole, not all have heeded Stroh’s words about “simplistic binarisms” (180).

Four essays deal with networks. Khair writes well on the terminology and, more specifically, on the use and abuse of that dreaded word “universal.” His analysis of Marx and materialism is extremely helpful, though generalisations about “vulgar materialism” (201) are unnecessary. Frank Lay’s account of Livergood and the New Enlightenment starts off promisingly but fizzles out. Of greater use, is Hepp’s discussion of networks; in a volume dominated by discussion of terminology, his explanation of “container thinking” is one of the most clarifying terms. Clarity is also a virtue of O’Sullivan’s survey of children’s literature and the possibility or impossibility of an international children’s literature. Interesting though her discussion undoubtedly
is, I would have preferred clearer indications about the present and future. A complete contrast is provided by the two essays which form the next section; the first by Mesthrie is on ISAE (Indian South African English) while Schröder deals with “Camfranglais.”. Instead of abstraction, we have two linguistic analyses, well put together and convincingly argued. Mesthrie’s examination of stereotypes and Schröder’s conclusion that Camfranglais represents a conscious effort by some Cameroonian to create a new and secret code would suggest that linguistic diversity is on the increase.

6 The volume closes with four essays on teaching, which, like the two previous essays, present a different panorama and a different discourse. Volkmann emphasises that his strategies “introduce students to theories of postcolonialism” (317), though perhaps of equal importance, bearing in mind that we are dealing with secondary students, is Duppé and Gantner’s emphasis on “motivational problems” (328). The essays by Hermes and Feurle are somewhat descriptive, though the latter’s account of intercultural learning is lucid.

7 On the whole, this thought-provoking volume will presumably attract interested readers to one or another section rather than invite them to read it through from beginning to end. Are there any general conclusions to be drawn? If that is a justifiable question, I would emphasise two. First, there is a careful if not obsessive treatment of, or perhaps it is simply respect for, terminological questions. Second, if “glocal” is the key concern, it is clearly unfair, given the format of each essay, to expect that writers can really conflate local and global; so, in the end, those essays which best define the local, Kistner’s and Pandarang’s, for example, are the most rewarding.

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Andrew Monnickendam is Professor of English at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. His research interests are focused on two areas. The first is the Scottish historical romance of the early romantic period and particularly the figure of Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781-1857), journalist, novelist and leading liberal thinker. He has edited her historical novel, Clan-Albin (1815) for the Association of Scottish Literary Studies. The second is the literature of war and its aftermath. Recent publications include a collection of essays, edited with his colleague Aránzazu Usandizaga, entitled Back to Peace: Reconciliation and Retribution in the Postwar Period, Notre Dame UP, 2007.