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BOOK REVIEWS

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ALASTAIR PENNYCOOK, *Language and mobility: Unexpected places*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2012. Pp. xviii, 190. Pb. $44.95.

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In *Language and mobility*, Alastair Pennycook confounds the conventional librarian with a work that is ethnography, autoethnography, biography, autobiography, travel writing, social history, linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and literature all at once. He presents for scrutiny his griot-like grasp of the art of storytelling like a true cipher as he constructs in multiple narrative-frames discussions of the theses of his hydra-headed scholarship to date. The book reads in part like a Man Booker Prize entry in its craft—in plot development and narrative structure. It is entertaining scholarship.

In reviewing this book, the first thing I did was to check that all of the works and authors mentioned and thanked in the front matter, such as Makoni & Pennycook (2006), were also listed in the bibliography. This is now an important item on the checklist for research students' training to steer them away from the cunning and unethical practice of ideas appropriation by annotating collaboration in the front matter and then re-inventing material in the body under sole authorship without referencing the former for the citations index. Pennycook's ethical decency is without question.

As Brian Morgan & Ryuko Kubota observe in the preface to the book, Pennycook is constantly pushing and testing the boundaries. He does it not just with the restructuring or reconfiguration of theoretical paradigms but also with the methodology of his research. He prepared me for my encounter with Phyllis Chew's (2013) choice of what she calls "a long-term view" because of her interest in "how telling such a history through a linguistic lens may give us unexpected insights" (2013: xiii). In employing autoethnography, Pennycook generously shares his family (hi)story with readers, and events in their lives become teachable moments in our attempt to grapple with his departure from the traditional insistence on treating "language" as a discrete unit.

On page 7, the journey into the past is the raw strategy of autobiography. BUT when the writer undertakes journeys of rediscovery into his mother's past in

attempting to understand his own identity, he then crosses the fine line between autobiography and autoethnography, journeying back and forth dexterously balancing his theses on intellectual stilts.

The term "unexpected places" is borrowed from Heller's (2007) remark that the idea of bilingualism does not fully capture "languages turning up in unexpected places" in unexpected forms, resulting from movement and creating multiplicity. This is the launch pad for his exploration of languages and mobility and commitment to opening up "ways of thinking about language in order to capture its unexpected ways" (17). He pushes an agenda that was first introduced in the collaborative project with Sinfree Makoni on language disinvention (2006) when he suggests that "terms like multilingualism and multiculturalism didn't seem to do enough to capture the dynamics of language use" (18). We witness the return of the transgressor extraordinaire. He declares unrepentantly that his objective is to be different, not to produce the conventional scholarly text. In this regard, I commend Tommi Grover and the folks at Channelview for their bravado. I expected no different. But considering the principal, the odds were always in their favour.

In Ch. 3, Pennycook moves from the conventional engagement with constructing "the other" and thinking about the other to exploring and thinking about what and how the other perceives, following work by de Souza & Andreotti (2009). The description of Hunan Province, of ShaoShan, Mao Ze Dong University and the dining hall in particular are, however, rendered in prose that is precise in its capture of a state of being rather than of BECOMING, as Pennycook insists we need to conceptualise space! His account of the culinary cultural encounter with Fu Shifu, the head cook, underlines the dilemma of attempting to interrogate difference and Others' eyes. Still, it is fascinating how Pennycook deploys seemingly mundane illustrations in laying out highly strung philosophical arguments (p. 45, paragraph 2)—"What is it that I saw when Fu Shifu rejected the cheese, and I, in a sense rejected myself?" I like the section on critical resistance (46). It spells out in clear terms the theoretical basis of Pennycook's rejection of "language" as an absolute unit of analysis or object of scholarly investigation and the need for a "deconstructive genealogy." In what Pennycook calls "the process of unlearning," the familiar becoming unfamiliar and the expected becoming unexpected serve as trigger. Be that as it may, the process of unlearning must also be conceptualised as part of a new process of learning—there cannot be a void! Isn't there always a kind of knowing, of knowledge whether it is of the cheese, the other to whom it is offered, or the offerer's perception of the offeree's offer?

Ch. 4 draws on the story of transnational romance between Frank Dawking, WW1 veteran in India, and Dorothy in England whom he married in Colombo in 1922 after several letter ministrations. She joined him on the Cheruvally Estate, South India where he worked. Joan, their daughter, arrived in 1927 (see figures 6.7, 6.8); they had a second daughter, Jen. Letters again assumed significance in their relationships when Dorothy returned to England in 1937. Dorothy wrote to

her daughters from aboard the SS Orontes: "I didn't like leaving you two little sprats at all—But I know you are both very sensible, and will be perfectly happy and well cared for till I see you again" (nd).

Pennycook expands the concept of mobility beyond referring to human relocation and dislocation and the associated cultural disjunctures to include the mobility of texts (letters). He writes, "For people for whom Home is always written with a capital H and is always somewhere else, life will always have a sense of displacement" (72). Letters were the means by which "long-distance intimacy and the ties within the Empire were maintained" (65). Using the experiences of "children of the British Empire" sent to or abandoned in England to be educated, Pennycook provides an incisive critique of the thinking that informed those decisions; certifying the children's membership of an aspirant middle or upper class observable in their social graces. Letters moving between three generations of family and between three continents present invaluable synchronic and diachronic texts for analysis. The data haul included Frank's letters to Dorothy, Dorothy's letters to friends and her family, Frank and Dorothy's letters to Joan and Jen, and those they received from these sources in return.

In Ch. 5 Pennycook rides the hump of a delicate metaphor into the native versus nonnative speaker debate at the core of global Englishes scholarship. He lures his readers into popular culture, an area in which he has asserted authority with his "dope socioblinguistic" research. Here he introduces the complementary dimension of speech from the sport of football. He taps into the age-old rivalry between English and German for the metaphor of "passing"—that is, to be "taken as a competent, legitimate or native speaker of a language." My headache with this chapter is that Pennycook wants to eat his cake and have it in interrogating and dismantling the notion of language as a discrete unit in the disinvention thesis and then discussing native and nonnative English teachers, failing Frantz and therefore not passing "as someone with an adequate knowledge of Bavarian" (75). The chapter ends with Pennycook CONDITIONING his claim that "We do not pass as a native speaker of some imaginary thing called language; IF WE PASS AS ANYTHING, it is always in a particular context, in a particular genre, style, discourse or practice" (100; my emphasis). In his account he resourcefully "finally managed to pass as a non-native speaker of English" (100). I am beat.

In Ch. 6, like a time-traveller, Pennycook steps in to fill the painful void in his grandfather's lament that they "do not have within our ranks that leisured class of lecturers or writers who could speak for us" (102), and in one fell swoop repairs their representation as "exploiters and enslavers." The chapter also unveils walls as another unexpected place we associate with language practice. The printed farewell addresses that adorned the walls were testimonials to the nature of relationship between European estate managers and their local Indian staff (figure 6.4, p. 108). The letters were in English, they reflected the social backgrounds of their recipients, they drew on a variety of sources stylistically: Latinate vocabulary, 'Malayalam practices of politeness and praise' (115). He argues that

mobility is not exclusively a phenomenon of globalization but rather that locality is equally fluid.

As a poet in a second life, I find Ch. 7 aptly titled and most intriguing. Pennycook attempts to "recreate the everydayness of doing critical education" (147) through teaching practicum process. He intersperses his discussion with the stanzas of Wallace Stevens' poem "Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird" with an ESL pun on *blackboard*. Readers are left to trace links between each stanza and the surrounding critical discussion and thus shift from "the realism of academic prose into the realm of imagery, opacity, language that cannot be pinned down so easily" (148).

In Ch. 8 Pennycook's eclecticism is again evident. The objective is to look at language mobility, movement, and indigenization through cricket to see what light it sheds on practices of localization generally and that of English more specifically. So we are presented with the cases of several relocated or displaced (im)migrant cricketers playing in various leagues in Britain, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and West Indies, to name a few.

Two parting questions for readers to deliberate on: First, how do we, within the framework of language disinvention, translanguaging, and other such constructs that challenge the notion of languages as discrete units, engage with Ghil'ad Zuckermann's language reclamation and reconstruction project with Bargala and other Aboriginal languages after the linguicidal policies of the Australian government of the last century? Nonrecognition of language(s) also makes any claim of linguicide untenable; that which does not exist cannot be killed. Second, if according to Arnhem worldview, language belongs to the land (Evans 2013), can language be mobile? With migration, individuals' capture of a language, idiolects move into a diaspora.

I was secretly delighted to find two editorial glitches on page 5—"West cost of Malaysia" and "Teochow"—in a seemingly flawless book.

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