



Contested Communities: Small, Minority and Minor Literatures in Europe ed. by Kate Averis, Margaret Littler and Godela Weiss-Sussex (review)

By Alice Flinta (University of York)



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Contested Communities: Small, Minority and Minor Literatures in Europe. Ed. by KATE AVERIS, MARGARET LITTLER, and GODELA WEISS-SUSSEX. Cambridge: Legenda. 2023. xiii+248 pp. £85. ISBN: 978-1-839542-23-7.

Guided by the ‘Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of minor literature as linguistic disruption, political immediacy and anticipation of an as yet absent collective’ (p. 8), *Contested Communities* is an ambitious study that uncovers a complex net of relationalities, within Europe and beyond, starting from the language question within the literary domain.

Chapters by Kate Averis, Margarida Rendeiro and Christinna Hazzard remind us of the colonial legacies of France, Portugal and Denmark respectively: Averis focuses on Latin American expat writers writing in French, thereby detaching themselves from the tradition of Spanish; Rendeiro exposes Portugal’s ongoing ‘denial’ (p. 54) of its colonial past by examining Afro-Portuguese literature that challenges the ‘Eurocentric memory projects’ (p. 55); Hazzard compares Danish representations and self-representations of the Greenlandic minority, pointing at the ‘ongoing imperialism in the Arctic region’ (p. 65).

The debate on cultural and linguistic hegemony within the continent drives Catherine Barbour’s, Mari Jose Olaziregi’s and Stefan Willer’s chapters, which question the politics of (self-)translation of minor languages – Galician, Basque and Low German respectively – into hegemonic languages such as Castilian and German, calling for ‘foreignizing translation strategies that can work to counteract the invisibility’ (p. 105) of “‘peripheral” literatures’ (p. 97), and for the establishment of strong relationships among minority languages in Europe. The politics of marginality are nonetheless complex and intersectional, as Godela Weiss-Sussex, Pamela McCallum and Teresa Ludden show: from Jewish women writers in early twentieth-century Germany, and narratives of the new migrant communities emerging in a hostile Britain,

to reflections on translation, absence, and non-identity in Terézia Mora's Hungaro-German *Das Ungeheuer*, Europe appears still to be strictly reliant on its nation states and thus establishes, socially and privately, hierarchical relationalities on the basis of otherness.

Otherness, nonetheless, also becomes a way to 'overcome exclusionary discursive tendencies and move beyond the nation where subjectivity is coded male and the migrantized woman remains an "unsubject"' (p. 213), as Áine McMurtry demonstrates in her posthuman reading of German Afrofuturism. Similarly, it is an integral part of the creative process in Madalena Gonzalez's chapter on multilingual minority theatre which exposes the linguistic and cultural affinities of the Breton, Cornish and Welsh European peripheries, and in Margaret Littler's exploration of Berkan Karpat and Zafer Şenocak's poetic production where medieval Sufi poetry meets modern science and technology to create a "'new man"' evoking Gilles Deleuze's "'dissolved self"' (p. 167).

These chapters exemplify how 'literature [...] actively participates in social processes and changes' (p. 134), but crafting a new, multilingual, and diverse Europe also depends on the participation of publishing houses and public reading spaces: on this note, Simone Brioni and Shirin Ramzanali Fazel dialogically expose the difficulties of publishing faced by migrant authors. Briony Birdi's sociological study of minority Black British and Asian British fiction shows how libraries play a crucial role in diversifying the taste of the British readership and in broadening our 'interpretation of terms such as "fiction" and "literature"' (p. 94).

Transnational projects easily lend themselves to the thorough scrutiny of the absences they allow. There is in fact a gap in literature from the Scandinavian peninsula and the Baltic countries, which speaks for academic collaborations yet to be established and geographies yet to be fully embraced by the European literary landscape. The case of Eastern Europe is more

complex. In fact, McCallum and Ludden move the volume's axis eastwards by analysing narratives of Eastern European migrants in the UK and Germany respectively. Yet within the novels they explore, the Eastern European characters remain an otherness, a reflective surface held in the face of Britain and Germany and their representative characters, who are thereby prompted to think about themselves in relation to these stranger others. The volume nonetheless succeeds in minoritizing Europe, highlighting its rich and complex inner and outer relations, and opening a space for further explorations.

It is undeniable that Averis, Littler and Weiss-Sussex have crafted a masterful piece of edited work that is coherent in its theoretical positioning, and diverse in its methodology. It would be a mistake not to recognize how the careful editorial work does not just bring together some penetrating essays that would be of interest to the specialized reader, but also makes of *Contested Communities* the material representation of the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome that constitutes the theoretical cornerstone of the volume. This is a valuable text for researchers in the fields of European transnational literature and multilingualism.

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

ALICE FLINTA

Ms Alice Flinta

Centre for Women's Studies, Law and Sociology Building,
Freboys Lane, University of York – Campus East
York, YO10 5GD

alice.flinta@york.ac.uk

Publisher's email: legenda@mhra.org.uk