

BOOK REVIEWS

also shows us bedrock human capacities for agency and innovation, for resilience and adaptive success in confronting new circumstances. In various ways, many of those who left Trackton and Roadville, and even more persons from among the next generation, found entry points into more “mainstream” channels of employment and education. These lifelong projects were accomplished, as were the lifelong developments of personal repertoires of language and literacy practices, not in the absence of difficulties but within them.

As the author states in her epilogue, “Anthropologists have been accused of representing an essential linearity about generations across time. That is not the case for the individuals whose stories are told here. They follow few lines or paths that might have been predicted for them. Instead they have worked and played in spots of time and place; theirs are dotted rather than straight lines. All indications are that these dotted lines will continue to go in many directions and will have beginnings and endings along the way, spinning out into webs of differing proportion, strength, and connection” (166).

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YASEMIN YILDIZ, *Beyond the mother tongue: The postmonolingual condition*.
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In their position paper “Superdiversity and language,” Blommaert & Rampton (2011) assert that “named languages have now been denaturalised.” In it they sum up the emergent consensus in sociolinguistics—and, indeed, the obvious fact—that the contemporary global linguistic landscape is characterised by multilingual superdiversity. Exploring this linguistic superdiversity, multilingual practices—or “metrolinguism” in Otsuji & Pennycook’s (2011) striking term—has

become an immensely productive research agenda. Ideologically, however, monolingualism remains predominant. The resulting tensions continue to undermine the educational success of minorities (e.g. Clyne 2005; Menken 2008) and their access to socioeconomic opportunities more broadly (e.g. Piller 2011; Lippi-Green 2012). In that sense the research frontier in sociolinguistics is not in linguistic diversity per se but at the fault zones where multilingual practices meet monolingual ideologies.

Beyond the mother tongue is one of the most concerted and lucid efforts to date to explore precisely that fault zone. The author, Yasemin Yildiz, identifies monolingualism as “a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social life, from the construction of individuals and their proper subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as imagined collectives such as cultures and nations” (2). For about three centuries, the monolingual paradigm has provided the lens through which we see multilingualism. The new visibility of linguistic diversity that contemporary scholarship so amply documents is not only the result of an increase in its frequency—multilingualism has existed all along—but also a result of the loosening of the monolingual paradigm due to the ongoing renegotiation of the status of the nation state vis-à-vis the local and the global. Albeit undergoing change, the force of monolingualism as a structuring principle remains and thus creates a range of tensions between multilingual linguistic realities and monolingual ideologies. It is this condition that Yildiz identifies as “postmonolingual.” To view language in society through a postmonolingual paradigm means to engage with the significance of multilingualism AND monolingualism and, even more crucially, their intersection. *Beyond the mother tongue* does exactly that in a tour de force enquiry into German-language writing of the twentieth century in its historical and sociocultural context.

The introduction presents a highly readable overview of the German language-philosophical tradition, which has played an important role in establishing the monolingual paradigm. Yildiz shows how the “mother tongue” came to be “the affective knot at the center of the monolingual paradigm” (10). Even if “mother tongue” is rarely used as an analytic concept in contemporary sociolinguistics any more, the intertwined conceptions of language competence on the one hand, and national and/or ethnic origin, belonging, and identity on the other are rarely unravelled consistently, and thus continue to remain in effect today. Therefore Yildiz is interested in the work of those authors who address precisely those effects. Writing “beyond the mother tongue” does not simply mean to write in a “nonnative” language or to write in multiple languages. Rather, “it means writing beyond the CONCEPT of the mother tongue” (14).

Ch. 1 explores the postmonolingual condition in Franz Kafka’s work. Kafka only ever wrote in his mother tongue, German. Yet he did so from the context of early twentieth century multilingual Prague and its well-documented tensions between Czech and German. Yildiz goes beyond specific language conflicts to show that the city was also the site of tensions between an older multilingual paradigm—where language did not follow an exclusively identitarian logic—and the emergent

monolingual paradigm, which postulates a homologous relationship between language and identity. Prague's German-speaking Jews constituted a particular challenge for this postulate as they did not fit into the equation of language and ethnicity. Kafka explored the impossibility of his linguistic situation "from within"—by writing in German about other languages, particularly Yiddish, which might have offered linguistic "normalcy," that is, a match between language and identity. In the process, the mother tongue became *unheimlich* 'uncanny' (lit. 'unhomely'). Alienation from the "unhomely mother tongue" is thus one distinct post-monolingual response. The chapter also provides a brilliant overview of the relationship between Yiddish and German, the linguistic division between Eastern and Western Jewry, and multilingualism in the Austro-Hungarian and German Empires.

Ch. 2 is devoted to another modernist Jewish writer, the philosopher Theodor Adorno. By the time of Adorno's late writing, the German language had changed forever, as it had become the "tainted" language of the Holocaust. Adorno, who was frequently criticized on linguistic grounds for the seemingly unrelated reasons that he continued to write in German after the Holocaust and that his German was too elitist, brings the internal multilingualism of the supposedly monolingual language to the fore through his excessive use of loanwords. The chapter also takes the reader through the history of German linguistic purism.

With Yoko Tawada, Ch. 3 moves to contemporary writers. Tawada has produced two distinct literary oeuvres in German and Japanese and has received literary awards for both. In contrast to Kafka and Adorno, her perspective on the monolingual paradigm is not informed by exclusion from the mother tongue, but by the inclusions it enforces. Moving from Japanese to German was a way for her to escape from limiting gender identities associated with Japanese. Indeed, language learning has become a conventional way for Japanese women to escape patriarchal Japan, as also documented by Takahashi (2013). German, however, does not provide a new home for Tawada, nor does she join in celebratory discourses of multilingualism as enabling hybridity and multiple sites of belonging. Instead, for her, bilingualism is a detachment strategy from either language. The chapter can also be read as an introduction to the emotional journeys of adult bilinguals.

The focus of Ch. 4 is on another refugee from her mother tongue, Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Moving to Germany from Turkey as a young adult, Özdamar is one of the most established literary figures in contemporary Germany. In contrast to Tawada, Özdamar writes exclusively in German, with her particular literary style characterized by the frequent use of literal translations from Turkish. Literal translation serves as a strategy to overcome the violence of the "mother tongue" and specifically the trauma resulting from the state violence experienced by young leftists in Turkey in the 1970s. The chapter also serves as an introduction to the monolingualization of Turkish since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 as well as the emergence of Turkish as a German language.

Ch. 5 continues the German-Turkish theme by exploring multilingualism in Feridun Zaimoğlu's work. In contrast to Özdamar, Zaimoğlu is not a migrant but

a “native,” albeit the son of migrants. Yildiz calls the second generation—the children of migrants who have not actually ever migrated themselves—“postmigrants.” Similarly to Kafka and Adorno a century earlier, this particular group of “native speakers” is widely seen as illegitimate. Being ascribed racialized illegitimacy deforms the speaker, and Zaimoğlu inscribes this deformation into the German language by writing in a confronting and jarring mix of genres and registers. Yildiz’ analysis draws mostly on *Kanak Sprak*, which became an instant sensation when it was published in 1995. In a defiant appropriation of German, *Kanak Sprak* combines the racist slur *Kanake* with a dialect version of *Sprache* ‘language.’ The chapter can also be read as an overview of postmigrant writing in contemporary Germany, the debates around German identity since reunification and the role of global hip hop in the cultural expression of postmigrants.

The conclusion sums up the complex tensions inherent in the postmonolingual condition where monolingualism continues to inform multilingualism. Kafka, Adorno, Tawada, Özdamar, and Zaimoğlu all chart points on the way towards an emergent multilingual paradigm. At the same time, reading them makes clear the challenges ahead before a full delinking between language and ethnicity will be achieved. Germany—as most other “Western” societies—currently finds itself in the grip of an attempted reassertion of homogeneity. Whether these are the death throes of the monolingual paradigm or whether it is gaining a new lease on life remains to be seen. The emergent multilingual paradigm, too, is fraught with contradictions, as Germany’s embrace of bilingual German-English education and its simultaneous disavowal of bilingual German-Turkish education vividly demonstrates.

Beyond the mother tongue is a rare book that combines wide-ranging interdisciplinary inquiries in language, literature, history, and cultural studies. I hope postmonolingualism will become foundational for a new research agenda in language in society: multilingualism cannot be understood without monolingualism and vice versa.

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