

These two books refocus us on the voices from within adult literacy studies which we need to keep reading and revisiting, such as Jane Mace and Deborah Brandt, as well as reminding us of the other voices which have a lot to teach us about adult literacy, such as Charles Dickens and Alice Walker. They also present us with new theory which can help us better understand literacy use and learning, for example 'Charles Taylor's notion of the modern social imaginary' (Hamilton) and the concept of literacy as 'unbidden' (Howard).

Literacy and the Practice of Writing in the 19th Century and *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* are of course very different books, just as the careers of these two matriarchs of adult literacy studies, Howard and Hamilton, have been very different. *Literacy and the Practice of Writing in the 19th Century* is a historical study, making use of – breathing life into – extraordinarily rich primary sources. It is also concerned with writing in particular, not reading. *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* addresses literacy as both reading and writing and is more of a sociological study, or analysis, of present-day representations of literacy. It may also be that readers will approach these two books differently, greedily moving back and forth between Hamilton's chapters while working their way through Howard's book more slowly and steadily, from the first page to the last.

Yet for all their obvious differences, both books end up telling us what literacy means, has meant and can mean to different people, in different ways. The pages of each book are full of ghost voices, spiriting up and away. Everyone should read both of these books, for this reason as for so many others. To give just one example: on page 302 of *Literacy and the Practice of Writing in the 19th Century* is a facsimile of a page from the diary of a man called John Ward. It was written on April the 10th, 1864 in careful, beautiful handwriting, and then, somehow, ended up on a 'rubbish heap' from which it was later 'rescued' by a person 'feeding a furnace'. Ward writes that it has been a hard time for his mill, because the 'American war' and 'I have not earned a shilling a day this last month and there are many like me my clothes and bedding is wearing out very fast and I have no means of getting any more ...' I read this and John Ward was standing in front of me. I started worrying about how to help him; I found it — and find it now — a genuine mental effort to understand that this man is now long gone. His words are not; his literacy is not.

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Neoliberalism and applied linguistics, by David Block, John Gray and Marnie Holborow, London, Routledge, 2012, 168 pp., £26.99 (hardback), ISBN-10 0415592054; ISBN-13 978-0415592055

Neoliberalism and Applied Linguistics is an extremely original work that tackles the connection between a field of study and the ideology of a political economy. This unlikely marriage is one that highlights the influence of neoliberalism, whose emphasis on the market, individualism and competitiveness has permeated some key concepts in Applied Linguistics (Chapter 4), language itself (Chapter 3) and language education (Chapters 5 and 6). The book is co-written by three different authors who co-refer to each others' work and make the

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resulting product a very coherent and engaging read. Rather than presenting an ordered account of this books' content, I will review the book in the order I read it, following my own interests and itinerary through the book.

But first, to give you a brief summary of the book, the thesis of this book develops the idea that whereas the aims of Applied Linguistics may be better served by the use of more social, cooperative ethics and philosophical aims, the meanings and ways of conceptualising the world of the Neoliberal ideology are gnawing away at a growing number of governments and international organisations. Such a phenomenon is coterminous with the extension of its utilitarian and market-driven philosophy, the *McDonaldisation* of production, and stretching of neoliberalist key meanings to areas such as Education and Applied Linguistics. As Holborow explains 'Never has higher education become so blatantly an outgrowth of the economy' (49).

I will now home in one of the most exciting chapters I read in this book: Chapter 5: 'Neoliberalism, Celebrity and "Aspirational Content" in English Language Teaching Textbooks for the Global Market' by John Gray. This chapter gives a very convincing account of how Neoliberalism and its emphasis on individual success and celebrity culture has taken hold of authors and publishers imagination in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry. Gray starts his argument by giving us his own definition of celebrity borrowed from the 1930s literary figure and journalist Stefen Zweig. Analysing Zweig's quote, he comes up with his own definition of 'celebrity' as a subjectively defined phenomenon, so that celebrity is 'the capacity to embody and generate affect' (88). Gray amply demonstrates the book's mission of expanding the remit of Applied Linguistics by borrowing from outside the field of Second Language Acquisition or Language Pedagogy as he skilfully refers to theories from Philosophy (e.g. The Frankfurt School, Slavoj Žižek), Sociology (e.g. Zygmunt Bauman), Journalism (e.g. Janice Peck), to mention a few. He weaves this through to support and analyse his strong dataset taken from the ELT publishing world which includes a content and critical analysis of a large number of ELT textbooks and interviews with ELT teachers. His conclusion points towards the need to rethink content in ELT books and the role of ELT teachers to become more socio-politically active.

In a similar vein, Chapter 6, Gray and Block's chapter on 'The marketization of language teacher education and neoliberalism: characteristics, consequences and future prospect', bemoans the emphasis of teacher education on bureaucracy which emphasizes instrumental rationalism and produces an accumulation of organisational mechanisms. Following Ritzer, they call this the *McDonaldisation* of teacher training. Two examples illustrate such an approach: the postgraduate teacher training programmes for secondary Modern Language teachers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Postgraduate Teaching Certificate in Education) and the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Such bureaucratic processes exert an unnecessary and stifling control and homogenization on the training of teachers in detriment of more context-sensitive, sociocultural and, above all, interdisciplinary understanding of teachers' knowledge. Only by taking this standpoint, they suggest, can teacher education become informed by theory rather than 'just subject knowledge and skills in effective delivery of lessons and reflective on the place of education in real-world problems such as political economy'.

Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume, Holborow addresses the very complex connection between the Neoliberalist economic policy and the aim of Applied Linguistics with an exquisite use of language. Here the author defines the economic policy of Neoliberalism as an ideology and analyses how it has 'colonised' language rather than collapsing ideology and discourse together, or as she herself puts it, 'how an ideology makes its appearance in language' (32). Indeed, she is very careful to make a distinction between ideology and discourse

and she gives us some examples such as the failings of the argument of linguistic imperialism by Philippon and the excessive agency that discourse has in the work of Fairclough. She backs this up with great skill by weighing her words very carefully to explain the relationship between language and neoliberalism. Rather than endowing language with agency she reserves a lighter role for language (or 'discourse') than some of her contemporaries. She is coherent with such a view by using language in a nuanced way. She uses the terms 'coalesce', 'flit', 'evoke', 'cement', 'stretch', or 'tag' to explain how ideology is represented in meanings. As she herself points out, language is not merely an ideological blanket, but a site and a battleground where meanings compete with each other: 'lexical items can be ideologically dense but also represent the bundling together of irreconcilable meanings, wherein lies the potential for ideological contestation' (54). Holborow is a wordsmith and gives us a lesson on how keywords embody ideology. She argues this by explaining how certain words have expanded and stretched their meanings to include new social realities, for example, the key word 'entrepreneur' has become to signify not only economic success but also social work and personal development.

Given the originality and depth of the ideas and research gone into this volume, there are some areas that I thought could have been further explored. In particular, how a focus on neoliberalism as an ideology can throw some light on the connections of Applied Linguistics to real-world problems and help to approach Applied Linguistics within a more interdisciplinary lens. Whereas there are two very convincing and well argued chapters on the workings of neoliberalism on language teacher training and ELT language materials, I would like to have seen some examples on how to extend the remit of applied linguistics to fields outside language teaching. Indeed, the only two chapters concerned with 'real-life' problems (outside language itself) are based on language teaching issues. The potential of looking at neoliberalism as an ideology that exposes some of the important choices made in a variety of 'world problems' outside language education is not fully exploited. Even when in Chapter 4, the author sets out to establish between Applied Linguistics and 'the real-world problems' through the re-visiting of the definition of identity within globalisation and a globalised economy, a reference to some empirical data which exemplified this would have been useful. There is however a very interesting discussion where Block advocates for the study of Applied Linguistics within a neo-liberalist political-economic 'backdrop' by including the discussion and analysis of the concept of 'class', which he proposes should be added to other identity inscriptions. But we are left wishing he linked this with the very interesting arguments he develops on globalisation and identity.

Neoliberalism and Applied Linguistics is a fascinating and highly erudite incursion into the links between these two fields of enquiry by bringing in a wealth of references to philosophy, sociolinguistics and economic policy. Despite its in-depth analysis, it manages to make the topic accessible to a reader not well versed in political economy. By linking Applied Linguistics to political economy the authors of this book have made Applied Linguistics more interesting.

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